

America and the Great War

- ❖ **How did Wilson's foreign policy lead to American involvement in Latin America?**
- ❖ **What were the causes of the Great War in Europe?**
- ❖ **Why did America enter the Great War, and what was its role?**
- ❖ **How did Wilson promote his peace plan?**
- ❖ **What were the consequences of the war in America and Europe?**

- **Why American got involved in European conflict:**

- World trade entwined American national interests with the fate of Europe
- Development of ships and submarines posed threat of foreign navies
- Wilson's determination to impose standards of right conduct on renegade nations

Wilson and Foreign Affairs

- **Foreign affairs issues dominated Wilson's administration**

An Idealist's Diplomacy

- **Wilson saw himself as a man who would create a new world order of morality and idealism**
 - Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan
 - Religious duty to advance democracy
 - **"cooling-off"** treaties: participating nations pledged not to go to war—not effective in the end

Intervention in Mexico

- **Mexico was a problem for Wilson**
 - Military dictator, Porfiro **Diaz dominated Mexico**
 - Diaz suppressed opposition and gave favors to wealthy allies
 - In 1910 popular resentment boiled over into revolt, 1911 Diaz Fled
- **Francisco Madero was leader of the rebellion**
 - Madero's chief of staff **General Huerta** assumed power, Madero murdered later
 - Wilson was threatened by military dictator
 - **Wilson asserted that government rests on the consent of the governed**
 - Immoral government would not be recognized by the US
- **Wilson expressed sympathy to the revolutionary movement in Mexico and began to put diplomatic pressure on Huerta**
 - 1914: Wilson removed an embargo on arms to help insurgent faction under Carranza of the Constitutionalist party
 - **Tampico incident:** American sailors accidentally went into restricted area and were arrested by Mexicans, Mexicans apologized and set them free, but officer demanded that Mexicans salute to the American flag—conflict could have ended there
 - Wilson authorized use of force
- **American occupation of Veracruz aroused opposition of all factions, Huerta tried to rally support**

- Wilson accepted offer of mediation by the **ABC Powers (Argentina, Brazil, Chile)** which proposed withdrawal of US forces, removal of Huerta, installation of provisional government and reform
- **Huerta was forced to leave office, Americans left in late 1914, Carranza recognized as president**
- **Tension between revolutionary factions caused civil war**
 - Independent gang of bandits arose
 - **Francesco “Pancho” Villa’s** seized a train and murdered Americans in an attempt to trigger US intervention—failed
 - Villa crossed the border and led raids in Texas and New Mexico, killed Americans
- **Furious Wilson abandoned policy of “watchful waiting”**
 - Sent General John Pershing and troops to chase Villa—no luck in catching him
 - Carranza passed liberal constitution

Problems in the Caribbean

- **The “dollar diplomacy” practiced by the Taft administration had encouraged bankers in the US to aid debt-plagued governments in the Caribbean**
 - **Wilson was against using military force to back up American investments, but still sent marines to Nicaragua**
 - Marines entered Haiti and the Dominican Republic later
 - Repeated use of military force only increased Latin Americans’ hatred toward the US

An Uneasy Neutrality

- **Wilson’s wife died, devastated, remarried six months later**
- **Americans were surprised by war in “civilized Europe”**
- **Peace ended when an Austrian citizen of Serbian descent who wanted an independent Serbia assassinated the Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand**
 - Austria wanted to punish Serbia for the murder
 - Led to mobilization of Russian army in sympathy for Serbia
 - Led to trigger of European system of alliances:
 - **Triple Alliance (Central Powers): Germany, Austria, Italy**
 - **Triple Entente (Allied Powers): France, Great Britain, Russia**
 - Germany backed Austria, Russia backed Serbia
 - Germany declared war on Russia and France
 - Germany invaded Belgium to get at France, which brought Great Britain into the war
 - Japan was eager to seize German holdings on the Pacific, declared war
 - Turkey joined Central Powers
 - Although allied with Central Powers, Italy initially stayed out of war and then struck a bargain under which it joined Allied Powers
- **WWI was unlike any previous conflict**
 - Scope and carnage
 - Machine guns, rifles, aerial bombings, poison gas, flame throwers, land mines, long-range artillery, armored tanks
 - 9 million killed, 19 million wounded
- **Battlefields were horrid**

- Quick fighting developed into slow stalemates, mediocre generals
- **Battle of Verdun:** devastation of landscape in northern France
 - Germans vs French
 - High casualties on both sides
- **Trench warfare gave WWI its character**
 - 475 miles of trenches
 - Miserable trench-life

Initial Reactions

- **Casualties soared and pressure for American intervention increased**
 - In **Battle of Somme**, 20,000 British soldiers were killed
 - **Shock in the United States gave way to gratitude that an ocean stood between America and the killing fields**
 - **President Wilson urged public to be neutral in thought and action**
- **American found it hard to be neutral due to many “hyphenated-American” immigrants**
 - Largest group was German American, supported Central Powers
 - Irish Americans were opposed toward England, supported Central Powers
 - Americans of British origin supported Allied Powers
 - American leaders were pro-British

A Strained Neutrality

- **Allied demands for food and war supplies generated economic boom, after initial threat of depression**
 - Allies financed purchases by disposing American securities and with loans
 - **Wilson approved short-term credit to sustain trade with Allies**
 - It became apparent that Allies needed long-term credit; more money was lent by investors
- **Administration clung to neutrality and tried to uphold freedom of the seas**
- **Secretary of State Bryan called upon belligerents to accept the Declaration of London**
 - Reduced the list of contraband and specified that blockade was legal only when effective just outside enemy ports
 - Central Powers accepted the declaration, **British refused**; didn't want to lose advantage of sea power
 - British declared the whole North Sea a war zone, subjected neutral ships to searches
 - **British announced that ships carrying goods to Germany would be seized—despite American protest**

Neutral Rights and Submarines

- **German government proclaimed a war zone around British Isles**
 - Advantage of U-boat was surprise; established procedure of stopping an enemy vessel and providing safety to passengers before sinking it was forgone
 - British ships flew neutral flags as a ruse, so neutral ships were also in danger
- **United States pronounced the German policy of “an indefensible violation of neutral rights” and warned that German would be held to “strict accountability” for destruction of American lives and property**
 - German submarine sunk the *Lusitania*
 - German embassy had published warnings that travel to the war zone was dangerous
- **Americans were outraged, Roosevelt claimed the sinking was an act of piracy**
 - **Wilson urged patience—immediately knew he had misspoken, critics bashed him**

- Secretary of State Bryan signed a note demanding that the Germans abandon unrestricted submarine warfare, disavow sinking, and pay reparations
- Germans responded, saying that the *Lusitania* was armed (actually wasn't) and that it carried weapons (actually was)
- Second note repeated demands, signed by Bryan's successor, **Robert Lansing**
- **Bryan resigned due to pressure**
- **German government secretly ordered U-boat captains to avoid sinking large passenger vessels**
 - However, two American lives were lost in the sinking of the *Arabic*—Germans paid reparations and pledged to warn before attacking
 - With the ***Arabic* pledge**, it seemed Wilson's resolution stand had won
- **Colonel House visited London, Paris, and Berlin in an effort to negotiate an end to war**
 - Neither side was ready to begin serious negotiations
 - **Wilson warned that if the US accepted a single abatement of neutral rights, "the whole fine fabric of international law might crumble under our hands piece by piece"**
 - **U-boat torpedoed the French steam *Sussex*, Wilson threatened to break off relations, Germany renewed its pledge that U-boats would not torpedo merchant and passenger ships**
 - **The *Sussex* pledge** implied the virtual abandonment of submarine warfare

The Debate over Preparedness

- ***Lusitania* incident and quarrels over neutral commerce contributed to demand for stronger army and navy**
 - **National Security League** promoted cause of defense
 - **Wilson asked War and Navy Departments to draft proposals for military expansion**
- **Progressives, pacifists, residents of South and West were opposed to defense buildup**
 - Traditional American suspicion of standing armies
 - Administration's plan to enlarge army and create national reserve force ran into opposition in the House Military Affairs Committee
 - **Wilson was forced to accept a compromise: National Defense Act of 1916** expanded regular federal army from 90,000 to 175,000 and permitted gradual enlargement to 223,000
 - Also increased national guard, made provision for training, gave federal funds for summer training camps for civilians
- **Bill for increased navy aroused less opposition because less danger of militarism from strong navy than strong standing army**
- **The Naval Construction Act of 1916 authorized funding for three-year expansion program**
- **Opponents of buildup insisted that the financial burden should rest upon the wealthy**
 - Income tax became their weapon
 - **Revenue Act of 1916** doubled basic income tax rate, lifted the surtax to a maximum of 13% on income over \$2 million, added estate tax, levied 12.5% tax on gross receipts of munitions makers, added a new **tax on excess corporate profits**—most clear-cut victory of radical Progressives

The Election of 1916

- **Republicans hoped to regain their normal electoral majority, Roosevelt hoped to be leader again**
 - Roosevelt's eagerness for the United States to enter war scared many voters
 - Republican regulars turned to **Justice Charles Evans Hughes who had Progressive record**
 - Progressive National Committee disbanded the party and endorsed Hughes

- **Democrats chose Wilson**
 - Platform endorsed social-welfare legislation, neutrality, reasonable military preparedness
 - Commended women's suffrage to states and pledged support for a postwar league of nations to enforce peace
 - **Democrats' most popular issue was insistent pledge to keep the nation out of war in Europe**
- **Wilson and Hughes were similar**
 - Both sons of preachers
 - Both attorneys and former professors
 - Both had been Progressive governors
 - **Wilson proved to be better campaigner**

Last Efforts for Peace

- **Wilson offered to mediate an end to the war in Europe, but neither side was willing to abandon war aims**
- **Wilson asserted the right of the US to share in laying the foundations for a lasting peace**
 - **Peace must be based on democratic government, freedom of the seas, disarmament, and those ideals must be enforced by an international league for peace**
- **Although he didn't know it, Wilson was too late**
 - Impatient German military leaders decided to wage war
 - They took risk of arousing American anger in hope of a quick win
 - New policy announced that all vessels would be sunk without warning
- **Wilson told Congress that US had broken diplomatic relations with the German government**
 - Asked for authority to arm merchant ships but non-interventionists filibustered to prevent it in time
 - State Department announced forgotten law of 1792 allowed arming of merchant ships
- **Wilson learned that the British had intercepted and decoded an important message from the German foreign secretary Zimmermann to ambassador in Mexico**
 - Note instructed the envoy to offer an alliance with Mexico in case of war between US and Germany
 - **Zimmerman telegram** broke in the American press and infuriated public
 - Revolution overthrew Russian czarist government and established provisional government
 - Americans thought all Allied powers were now fighting for democracy, but then Bolsheviks led by Lenin seized power in Russia and established Communist dictatorship

America's Entry into the War

- **1917 German submarines sank five US merchant vessels in the North Atlantic**
 - **Wilson's cabinet and Congress declared war**
 - **"The world must be made safe for democracy" – Wilson**
- **Explanation for America's entrance into the war**
 - **British propaganda in the US**
 - **America's deep involvement in trade with the Allies**
 - **German domination of Europe would be threat to American security**
 - **Submarine warfare**

America's Early Role

- **Army remained small and untested, as did the navy**

- **Americans made two important contributions to Allied naval strategy**
 - William Sims persuaded Allies to adopt **convoy system**
 - US Navy laid gigantic **minefield** across the North Sea, limiting U-boat access
- **Liberty Loan Act: added \$5 billion to the national debt in liberty bonds, \$3 billion could be lent to Allies**
 - US was willing to give naval support, financial credit, supplies and munitions, but not train and equip a large army
 - French insisted that US send troops to boost morale
 - Wilson sent General Pershing to Paris
- **The need for large numbers of troops forced Wilson to embrace conscription**
 - **Selective Service Act of 1917:** all men aged 21 to 30 had to register

Mobilizing a Nation

- **Economic mobilization on the home front was necessary**
 - **Arm Appropriation Act of 1916** created a Council of National Defense
 - **Lever Food and Fuel Control Act of 1917:** created Food Administration
 - Headed by Hoover—"Food will win the war"
- **War Industries Board (WIB) became the most important of all the mobilization agencies**
 - Headed by Bernard Baruch
 - Purchasing bureaus of the US and Allied governments submitted needs to the board, set priorities, planned production, allocated raw materials, fix prices

A New Labor Force

- **Closing off of foreign immigration and allocation of men to the armed forces created labor shortage**
 - Women, African Americans, minorities were encouraged to enter industries
 - Northern businesses sent recruiting agents into the Deep South
 - North portrayed as land of promise, migratory pattern
- **Newcomers were not always welcomed in the North**
 - Racial tension
 - White angered by influx of blacks
- **WWI had more positive effects for women**
 - Organized war bond and relief drives
 - Supported Red Cross
 - Joined army nurse corps
 - Eventually worked in industry and agriculture
- **Changes in female employment were brief**
 - Most were young and single
 - Most returned to previous job after war ended
 - One lasting result of women's contributions to the war effort was Wilson's decision to endorse women's suffrage

War Propaganda

- **Gospel of efficiency suggested mobilization of public opinion**
 - **Committee on Public Information** headed by **George Creel**
 - Propaganda instead of censorship

- **“Four-minute men”** gave short speeches on liberty bonds, need to conserve, other topics

Civil Liberties

- **War effort channeled the zeal of Progressivism into grotesque campaigns of “Americanism” and witch-hunting**
 - Anything German was equated with disloyalty
 - Discrimination in music, foods, German nomenclature
- **Espionage and Sedition Acts: Congress outlawed criticism of government leaders and war policies**
 - **Espionage Act:** set penalties for anyone who have aid to the enemy
 - **Sedition Act:** extended penalties to those who did or said anything to obstruct the sale of liberty bonds
- **The Espionage and Sedition Acts generated more than 1,000 convictions**
 - Socialists were primary targets
 - Eugene Debs and Victor Berger were victims
- **Supreme court upheld Espionage and Sedition Acts**
 - **Schenck v. United States** reaffirmed conviction of a man circulating anti-draft leaflets
 - Congress had right to prevent evils during time of war
 - **Abrams v. United States** Court upheld conviction of man who circulated pamphlets opposing American intervention

“The Decisive Power”

- **Role of American troops increased after 1918**
 - Through 1917, Allies were on the defensive
 - After Bolshevik revolution, Soviet Russia dropped out of the war
 - American war effort became “race for France”

The Western Front

- **Germans began the first of several offensives in France and Belgium before US arrived**
 - In May 1918, 1 million US troops arrived in Europe and made a difference for the first time
 - American victories against Germans
 - Increased Ally morale
- **The turning point of the western campaign came in the Second Battle of the Marne**
 - Germans assaulted French lines
 - British, French, and American reinforcements arrived
 - 500,000 soldiers staged the first strictly American offensive of the war—the **Meuse-Argonne offensive**
 - Involved 1.2 million troops, Germans were in retreat
 - **America became decisive power in the war**

The Bolsheviks

- **Russia began as an Allied power**
 - Czarist government was in disarray
 - After czar’s abdication, provisional government under Lenin took over
- **Bolsheviks unilaterally stopped fighting in WWI**
 - **White Russians (anti-Bolshevik)** resisted Germans in Russian territory
 - Bolsheviks concluded separate peace with Germany in **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk**

- Wilson wanted to prevent military supplies from falling into German hands—sent forces to Russia’s Arctic ports, Siberia
- Allied intervention in Russia failed because the Bolsheviks were able to consolidate their power
- Soviet suspicion of the West developed

The Fourteen Points

- **Neither warring party openly stated what they hoped to gain through fighting**
 - Wilson insisted that US had no selfish ends
 - Interallied Conference in Paris in 1917 failed to agree on war aims—Wilson formulated his own
- **House drew together experts in a panel called the Inquiry**
- **Wilson drafted Fourteen Points—“only possible program for peace”**
 - First five points called for **open diplomacy** rather than secret treaties, **freedom of seas, removal of trade barriers, reduction of armaments, impartial adjustment of the victor’s colonial claims based on desires of the populations involved**
 - Remaining points dealt with **territorial claims**
 - Central Powers were to evacuate occupied lands and to allow self-determination for various nationalities
 - Point 13 proposed an independent **Poland** with access to the sea
 - Point 14, capstone in Wilson’s thinking, called for the creation of a **“league” of nations**
- **Fourteen points embodied Wilson’s sincere commitments, but also served the purpose of psychological warfare**
 - One aim was to keep Russia in the war
 - Another aim was to reassure the Allies that they were involved in a noble cause
 - Another aim was to drive a wedge between the governments of Central Powers and their people
- **German general Ludendorff advised his government to seek the best terms possible**
 - Peace was made on basis of the Fourteen Points
 - **Allies accepted Fourteen Points as a basis of peace, but with two significant reservations:**
 - They reserved right to discuss limiting freedom of the seas
 - Demanded reparations for war damages
 - **Germans lost morale, Germany’s allies dropped out, Kaiser abdicated, German republic was claimed**
 - **Germans surrendered**

The Fight for the Peace

Domestic Unrest

- **Wilson’s decision to attend peace conference in Paris dramatized his desire to ensure his goal of a lasting peace**
 - Lost touch with political developments at home
 - Western farmers complained about government control prices
 - Eastern businessmen opposed revenue policies
 - Organized labor was unhappy with inflation
- **In the midterm elections of 1918, Wilson made matters worse when he defied the advice of his wife and aides and urged Democratic Congress to support war measures**

- Democrats lost control of both houses of Congress
- Wilson weakened his standing by failing to involve Republicans in peace negotiations
- Parisians greeted Wilson like a hero
- The Paris Peace Conference included delegates from all countries that had declared war or broken relations with Germany
 - Control by the **Big Four**: prime ministers of Britain, France, Italy, United States
 - Japan restricted interests to Asia
 - **Georges Clemenceau (French prime minister)** didn't share Wilson's idealism, wanted harsh measures
 - **David Lloyd George (British prime minister)** won "hang the Kaiser" campaign
 - **Vittorio Orlando (Italian prime minister)** came to pick up spoils promised by Treaty of London
 - Italy was promised Dalmatia in exchange for entry into the war

The League of Nations

- **Wilson insisted on League of Nations**
 - Article X pledged members to impose military and economic sanctions against aggressors
 - Use of armed force would be last resort
 - Each member would have equal voice in the Assembly
 - **Big Five: Britain, France, Italy, Japan, United States** and other nations would make up Council
 - Administrative staff would make up Secretariat
 - **World Court** would hear disputes
- **Ratification of the League of Nations was blocked by Republicans, Roosevelt also opposed**

Territory and Reparations

- **Wilson accepted French demands for territorial concessions and reparations from Germany**
 - Clashed with Clemenceau, settled on demilitarized Rhineland
- **Wilson had to compromise his principle of national self-determination**
 - Mixed populations were scattered
 - One part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire became Czechoslovakia
 - Yugoslavia formed
 - Many parts passed to Poland
- **Discussion of reparations was longest part of the conference**
 - Clemenceau and Lloyd George proposed reparations for the entire cost of the war
 - Germany accepted "war guilt"
- **Germany refused to sign, French threatened with army, Germans signed in Versailles**

Wilson's Loss at Home

- **Popular support greeted Wilson when he came back to the US**
 - Wilson dismissed critics of the League as "blind and little provincial people"
- **Senator Henry Cabot Lodge insisted that the treaty exhibited weakness**
 - Americans were too prone to keep promises
 - Public could not sustain treaty
 - Republicans were gaining strength; German, Italian, Irish resentment
 - Liberals were also disappointed by Wilson's compromises
- **Group in Senate called "irreconcilables" was unwilling to allow America to enter the League on any terms**

- Western and Midwestern Progressives who feared foreign commitments
- Lodge belonged to “**reservationists**”—insisted limited participation in League
- **Lodge proposed set of amendments, reservations**
 - Wilson especially opposed weakening of Article X, which provided collective actions against aggression
- **Momentum for the treaty was slackening**
 - Wilson went on railroad tour
 - Wilson suffered severe stroke
 - Outlook hardened due to hardened arteries
- **Lodge was determined to amend the treaty**
 - Wilsonians found themselves among irreconcilables and reservationists
 - **Ratification was defeated**
- **Public opinion aroused Senate to reconsider**
 - Wilson said the US should either join the league or retreat gracefully
 - Democrats joined reservationists
 - **Irreconcilables were the real winners**
- **War was officially declared as over when Harding became president**

Lurching from War to Peace

- **Demobilization was haphazard**
 - Sudden cancellation of war contracts left workers to cope with their own reconversion

The Spanish Flu

- **Spanish flue spread around the globe**
- Pandemic killed more than 22 million, twice as WWI
- **American soldiers returning from France brought the flu**
 - People began wearing masks
 - Public places were locked up
- **Pandemic ended in 1919**
 - Population grew resistant
 - Postwar population was resilient

The Economic Transition

- **Postwar problems worsened labor unrest**
 - Prices rose
 - Workers were more willing to strike
 - **Public opinion turned against labor demands after strike in Seattle**
- **American Federation of Labor campaigned to organize steelworkers**
 - **Suffered charges of radicalism due to its leader, William Z. Foster**
 - Focus on 12 hour workday and seven-day week
 - Workers walked out, public opinion favored but it was too late
- **Most celebrated postwar labor dispute was the Boston police strike**
 - Massachusetts governor Calvin Coolidge mobilized national guard to keep order
 - Samuel Gompers appealed for reinstatement of police

- Coolidge: “There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, at any time”

Racial Friction

- **Race riots in North and South**
 - James Weldon Johnson was African-American leader, called summer of 1919 the **Red Summer**
 - Whites invaded Longview, Texas
 - War in the streets
 - Chicago riot of late July

The Red Scare

- **Public reaction against labor strikes reflected impact of Bolshevik revolution**
 - Socialist party became dominated by radicals
 - Left-wing members formed Communist Party
 - **Hysteria against all things German transformed into postwar Red Scare against communists**
- **Communist terror campaign sent bombs in the mail**
- **Government was soon promoting witch hunts**
 - Justice Department decided to deport radical aliens, *Buford*
 - Deportation to Russia without hearing
- **By summer of 1920, the Red Scare began to evaporate**
 - Communist revolutions in Europe died out
 - Bolshevism was isolated in Russia
 - Crazy minds, not widespread revolution
 - 100% Americanism, restrictions on immigration lasted
 - American plan against unions
 - **Profound disillusionment of cultural life**