America & the Great War

American Neutrality

- Economic Benefits
  - Private US industry served as arsenal ($2.4 billion) & bank ($3 billion) for Allies;
  - Trade with Central Powers was open, but difficult—no great loss ($169 million)

- Isolationism ↔ Neutrality
  - Re-established cultural & economic ties with England
  - Spread of British propaganda to US
  - 11 million Americans w/parent from Central Power nation;
  - Large urban Irish & Jewish populations did not favor Allies;
  - Division exacerbated natural isolation of Americans.

- End of Neutrality
  - Progressive Idealism
  - Response to German Actions & Atrocities
  - Final Straw? Zimmerman Telegram

Military Mobilization--Volunteerism

- National Defense Act (1916)
  - Increased the enlistment of Army & National Guard
  - Called for training of “Citizen Soldiers”

- Naval Act (1916)--Largest expansion of Navy in US history.

- Selective Service Act (1917)--Required registration of all males 21-30 (later 18-45)
  - Specifically intended to prepare the nation for battle;
  - Also meant to instill patriotism & aid in assimilation of ethnic Americans—“Heat up the melting pot”

Economic Mobilization--Voluntary Compliance

“It is not the army that we must shape & train for war; it is the nation.”—Woodrow Wilson.

- Cost of the War
  - $760 million each month;
  - $33.5 billion total, but more than three times that when veterans’ benefits & interest on loans paid after war.

- Greatest Need: Mobilizing all resources toward war effort
  - Americans accepted that the war would require sacrifice;
  - But would they accept formal control & regulation?
  - Mobilization & the Food Administration
Herbert Hoover’s agency relied on Voluntary Compliance to ↑ production & ↓ consumption
Prohibition & 18th Amendment were part of this strategy—restrictions on using grain to produce alcohol
Pushed people to grow “Victory Gardens” & follow “wheatless” Wednesdays & “meatless” Tuesdays;
Never implemented a system of rations.
Voluntary Compliance was a success
Farm production increased 25%
Food exports to Allies tripled;
Policy was used by Fuel Administration & bond drives.

Mobilization & War Industries Board
Bernard Baruch’s agency worked with trade associations to regulate production & costs
Late in war after conflicts between military & industry;
Some attempts to mobilize labor without recognizing the rights of labor.
Most policies were clearly pro-industry
Antitrust laws abandoned for duration
  • Competitive bidding was abandoned during war & Cost-Plus contracts guaranteed companies a profit no matter costs cost;
Despite pro-industry stance, arguments that arms merchants & bankers brought about—Myth

Opposition to Mobilization
Labor Unrest
Over 6,000 strikes during the war, especially those by the Wobblies;
Government was forced to form National War Labor Board, prohibiting strikes but also encouraging reform & further recognizing rights of labor.

Henry Ford’s Unrest
Refused to accept War Industry Board’s limit on automobile production;
Baruch threatened to send troops & seize Ford’s plants;
These types of threats were used repeatedly but never came to anything.
The 14 Points & Treaty of Versailles
From Progressive Idealism to Imperialist Reality

Wilson’s 14 Points--January 8, 1918
- Abolish Secret Treaties;
- Freedom of the Seas;
- Remove Economic Barriers;
- Reductions in Armaments;
- Adjustments in Colonial Claims;
- Self-Determination, especially in Austria-Hungary;
- Realignments & Readjustments for Italy, Russia, Belgium, Balkans, Turkey, Poland & France;
- Formation of League of Nations

From 14 Points to Treaty of Versailles
- Clemenceau, Lloyd George & Orlando were not as idealistic as Wilson & politically more savvy;
- Political Self-Determination limited to European colonies & denied to those in Africa & Asia.
- Article 231--War-Guilt Clause
  - Placed sole blame for war on Germany;
  - Obliged Germany to pay $31 billion in reparations;
  - Forced Germany to accept restrictions on military & loss of Sudetenland & Rhineland.
  - German bitterness arose out expectations that Treaty of Versailles would more closely mirror 14 Points.

Senate Undermines Wilsonian Idealism
- Constitution gives the Senate role of “advice & consent” over treaties negotiated by the Executive Branch.
- Opposition to League of Nations in Senate
  - Henry Cabot Lodge bogs down Treaty of Versailles;
  - Major fears of US giving up American sovereignty to an international body;
  - Irreconcilables (Borah & Johnson) opposed the League on any terms;
  - Lodge Reservations--Reserved rights of US to have an independent foreign policy.
- Wilson Overestimates US Idealism
  - Wilson attempted an “end-run” around the Senate, going directly to the people
  - Went on a whistle-stop tour to drum up support;
  - Fairly successful, but ability to mobilize popular support hindered by a stroke.
- Wilson’s Political Blunder
  - Attempted to win support without the Lodge Reservation;
Ordered Democrats to vote w/ Irreconcilables against treaty;
80% of Senators supported the treaty but was never ratified.
US signed separate peace w/ Germany on July 25, 1921.

**Mobilization gone too far?**

**Opposition to Difference & Dissent during & after the Great War**

**Creel’s Committee on Public Information**

- Propaganda seen as necessary for Volunteerism & Voluntary Compliance
- Established voluntary censorship in press;
- Supported newsreels, documentaries & anti-German movies including *The Kaiser: Beast of Berlin*;
- Sent out “Four-Minute Men” to directly drum up support.
- Supported several controversial measures
  - “100% Americanism” movement whipped anti-German sentiment against recent immigrants;
  - Creation of Liberty Leagues in communities across the country, advocated spying on neighbors, especially those with foreign-sounding names.

**Restrictions on Dissent & Speech**

- **Espionage Act** (1917)--Fines & prison for those making statements that impeded draft or promoted insubordination in the military.
- **Sedition Act** (1918)--Went further to include anything that impeded sale of war bonds or any “disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language used to describe the US government, Constitution, flag or allies.
- **Schenck v. US** (1919)--Constitutionality of Espionage Act
  - Supreme Court argued that certain speech did not deserve protection on its very face (Shouting fire in a crowded theater);
  - Determined wartime represented special circumstances; speech representing a “Clear & Present Danger” could be restricted.
Red Summer & Red Scare

- Red Summer (1919)--Limits of Mobilization
  - Great Migration part of wartime industrial mobilization;
  - Race riots in 2 dozen cities, worst in Chicago.

- Red Scare (1919-20)--Mobilization Out of Control
  - Anti-Immigrant sentiment turns from Germans to Socialists/Anarchists
  - Real fears of bombings--38 mailed to prominent Americans, one exploded on Wall Street, anarchist blown up outside home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer;
  - Major strikes continued across the nation;
  - Led to Palmer Raids & deportations of radicals & leftists (4000 alleged communists arrested, 556 aliens deported, most w/out trials)
  - No major violence developed, support for Palmer Raids waned.