

Chapter 29: Wilson Progressivism in Peace and War (1913-1920)

Wilson: The Idealist in Politics

- Woodrow Wilson was the second Democratic president since the Civil War (besides Cleveland)
 - He was the first Southern president since Taylor
- Wilson had strong Democratic beliefs
 - He believed in the self-determination of nations
 - He believed in popular sovereignty by an educated people
 - He believed that the president should be a strong leader for Congress
 - He believed that there was the negative "triple wall of privilege" that caused economic inequality: "the tariff, the banks, and the trusts"
- Wilson was more of a quiet but moralistic person, and did not incur roaring fervor from the masses (as Roosevelt had done)

Wilson Tackles the Tariff

- Wilson appeared in person before Congress to present the Underwood Tariff (1913) that lowered tax rates
 - This was a precedent-setting act with the President himself presenting the bill— shows Wilson's determination to get his act through
 - Wilson also called on the people to support this bill in spite of Congressmen who approved it
 - This tax was quickly approved by Congress as a result of these actions
- Wilson also approved a graduated-income tax
 - The majority of the federal income tax came in from graduated-income tax (as opposed to the tariffs) by 1917

Politics and Power: President Wilson's inauguration was significant because he was from the Democratic platform and immediately put Democratic values into the forefront of economic policy. He immediately has a decisive anti-Republican (anti-business) stance on the tariff, which he lowers immediately. In its stead he places graduated-income taxes, which hurt the large businessmen (who are typically Republican) and generally help the poor masses (who support the Democrats). Thus, adding graduated-income tax and lowering the tariffs with the Underwood Tariff were very effective in promoting Wilson's own party. Of course, this engendered some outcries from businessmen and Republicans, but Wilson also believed that he should wield much power in leading Congress, and therefore his laws were accepted. Wilson's early presidency shows the power of a heavy-handed president and the use of presidential power to get things done efficiently (i.e., enact laws quickly and switch the government's position towards one's party goals).

Wilson Battles the Bankers

- The banking system before Wilson's presidency was flawed because money was concentrated in large cities and could not easily be mobilized in times of financial crisis
 - Wilson passed the Federal Reserve Act (1913) that combat this

- This act created regional “reserve districts” that could easily mobilize their money within their designated regions
- The act gave more power over the money in the federal banks to the people rather than to private banks
- The act allowed “Federal Reserve Notes” (our current system of paper money) to be issued by the new Federal Reserve Board

The President Tames the Trusts

- Wilson passed the Federal Trade Commission Act (1914) that increased the government’s control over monopolistic practices
 - This act created a commission that outlawing “unfair trade practices, including unlawful competition, false advertising, mislabeling, adulteration, and bribery”
- Wilson passed the Clayton Anti-Trust Act (1914) that targeted unfair business, especially in trusts
 - This was similar to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act but more specifically towards trusts and not towards labor unions
 - It made illegal some practices such as “price discrimination and interlocking directorates,” and it weakened the power of holding companies
 - Holding companies were large organizations that overlooked a series of other ones, and thus could coordinate those smaller companies’ efforts to essentially form a monopoly

Wilson at the Peak

- Wilson initiated many other reforms when he was president
 - He passed the Federal Farm Loan Act (1916) that “made credit available to farmers at low rates of interest”
 - He passed the Warehouse Act (1916) that insured the security of staple crops with government loans
 - He passed the La Follette Seaman’s Act (1915) that improved conditions and wages on merchant ships
 - He passed the Workingmen’s Compensation Act (1916) that helped financially disabled civil-service workers
 - He passed the Adamson Act (1916) that established the eight-hour workday and overtime pay for railroad workers
- Wilson nominated Louis D. Brandeis, a progressive (reformer) for a Supreme Court position
- Wilson was somewhat racist, did not promote progressive movement towards black equality

Work, Exchange, and Technology: Wilson passed a great multitude of laws that affected the economy in general, from commerce to labor unions. The large banks and other trusts were the first target of his economic policies, for which he passed the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, the Federal Commission Act of 1914, and the Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914. These acts weakened the power of large businesses and gave more power to the average, poorer American. Later acts such as the Federal Farm Loan Act and the Warehouse Act specifically targeted farmers, La Follette Seaman’s Act specifically targeted sailors, and the Workingmen’s Compensation Act specifically targeted industrial workers. The number and

increasing specificity of these governmental actions on different forms of work and exchange show the government's increasing role in managing the economy.

New Directions in Foreign Policy

- Wilson didn't like excessive foreign policy and dollar diplomacy
 - He opposed government support to foreign investors
 - He also opposed imperialism (as did other Democrats such as Bryan)
- Wilson signed the Jones Act (1916) that gave the Philippines a territorial status and the promise of independence once it had formed a stable government
- Wilson was forced to intervene (and turn back on his non-imperialistic words) in the Caribbean
 - In Haiti, there was a great disorder that caused Wilson to make Haiti an American protectorate and send in troops to protect American economic interests in lives there; they remained for 19 years
 - In the Dominican Republic, there were riots that made Wilson make it a protectorate as well for eight years
 - The U.S. also bought the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean

Moralistic Diplomacy in Mexico

- The Mexican people were poor and had been exploited by foreign powers for too long; they revolted in the early 1900s
 - A ruthless General Victoriano Huerta became president
 - Many Mexicans emigrated to the U.S. because of the revolutionary conflict in Mexico
 - Some Americans wanted to intervene in the Mexican revolution
- Wilson tried to "steer a moral course in Mexico" by refusing to recognize the new government and creating an embargo on Mexico
 - However, he later turned to military means by asking the navy to seize a Mexican port
 - This was stopped by some South American countries asking for mediation
 - He was offended by the Tampico Incident (1914), in which some American sailors were captured by accident
- Huerta was overthrown and Venustiano Carranza became president
 - His rival Francisco Villa tried to oust Carranza by provoking the U.S. into war with Carranza by killing Americans
 - Killing Americans only led to an American lashback with a military campaign into Mexico
 - The American forces in Mexico were withdrawn in 1917 because of the threat of war with Germany

Thunder Across the Sea

- World War I broke out in Europe
 - It started with an Austrian-Hungarian assassinating a Serbian prince
 - Russia was Serbia's ally, France was Russia's ally, Britain became their ally; these were the main Allied Forces (Allies)
 - Germany was Austria-Hungary's ally

- The U.S. declared that it would remain neutral in the conflict
 - However, political propaganda from Britain and other European nations often portrayed the Germans as evil and the Allies as the good guys, causing many Americans to feel anti-German

American Earns Blood Money

- America had a prosperous arms trade with the European nations involved in the war
 - The British created a blockade to stop the U.S. from trading with Germany, and this was largely successful (trade with Germany almost stopped)
 - Germany retaliated by using its U-boats to sink American merchant ships
 - The U-boats were the first submarines and were very advanced and deadly
- The sinking of ships by German U-boats greatly infuriated many Americans
 - The Lusitania, a large ocean liner, was sunk
 - Agreements with Germany said that the Germans could not sink a merchant ship without warning, but with the U.S. having to stop the British blockade in exchange
 - The U.S. reluctantly accepted this to avoid conflict

America in the World: Wilson's idealistic isolationism seemed to follow the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary. Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine still stood strong, and conflict in Haiti and the Dominican Republic initiated the military occupation of both of these nations as U.S. protectorates for multiple years. The Mexican conflict started a larger military campaign that eventually took the lives of a few civilian Americans, and there was still political turmoil with President Carranza in power (because of his political rival Villa). On the other hand, the U.S. tried very hard to stay out of the beginning of WWI, despite the loss of hundreds of innocent American lives and multiple attempts to reconcile over the issue of German U-boats against American merchant ships. This shows that, at this time, the U.S.'s influence extended (deliberately) only to the Americas — they had no need nor want to be involved in foreign military conflicts that were violent, thus their high tolerance against the German impudence.

Wilson Wins Reelection in 1916

- The Progressive (Bull Moose) Party did not have a presidential nominee for the election of 1916
 - Theodore Roosevelt, their main candidate, refused to run
- The Republicans nominated Charles Evans Hughes, a Supreme Court Justice and former governor
 - The Republicans didn't like the lowered tariff and antagonism of trusts
- The Democrats chose Wilson
 - His supporters chanted "He Kept Us Out of War," despite this not being a promise of his
- Wilson won the presidential election of 1916 with 277 to 254 electoral votes against Hughes

War by Act of Germany

- Wilson declared in an address (January 1917) that "peace without victory" would be possible with Germany; i.e., that America could remain neutral and continue trade with European nations without being involved in war

- Germany responded by revoking what they had said about sinking ships without warning; they said that they would sink any ship, regardless if it were neutral or not
 - Germany's motive was likely that it was too impractical to distinguish between war vessels and merchant or civilian ones
 - Wilson did not yet declare war after this act, instead deciding to wait for deliberate acts against the U.S.
- Germany sent the Zimmermann note that involved German secretary Arthur Zimmermann, who had secretly asked the Mexicans to join the Germans in fighting the U.S. and potentially regaining some of the land lost in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
 - This enraged many Americans and increased the anti-German sentiment
- Continued U-boat attacks on merchant ships were recognized by Wilson as deliberate actions against the U.S., and Wilson asked for a declaration of war of Congress in April 1917
- Some people think that the war was caused by ammunition makers, who were making profitable business that wasn't too hampered by the British embargo and heavy taxation; their continued trade allowed the German U-boat attacks to continue, which caused the U.S. involvement in the war

American and National Identity: American policy has always existed on the balance between the power of the central, federal government and the popular wants of the people; this is a fundamental part of American identity detailed in the Constitution. The clash between these two motives is shown in this era: while President Wilson and the central government try their best to uphold the tradition of American isolation from foreign conflicts, the American masses fervently advocate for war. This is similar to the commoner "war hawks" during the War of 1812 that were so eager to go to war against Britain, except that in this situation the government was reluctant to engage in this conflict. Eventually, however, the popular sentiment is satisfied when President Wilson does declare war on Germany and join the war; this victory of the popular demands of the ordinary people, even if against more practical and logical federal interests, is also a facet of the Americans' national identity and its democracy.

Wilsonian Idealism Enthroned

- The U.S. had not taken part in major European wars for over a century (since the War of 1812)
- Wilson greatly invigorated the American people by making the goal of the war "to make the world safe for democracy"
 - He believed that America and other democratic nations would greatly benefit from the loss of the dictatorial powers such as Germany
 - His idealism was greatly taken up by the citizens of the U.S.

Wilson's Fourteen Potent Points

- Wilson delivered the Fourteen Points to Congress in January of 1918, which were the main idealistic motives behind the war
 - The first five were very broad, including:
 1. The abolishment of secret treaties
 2. Freedom of the seas (especially against the British fleet)
 3. Removal of economic barriers

4. Reduction of weapons
5. An “adjustment of colonial claims in the interests of both native peoples and the colonizers”
 - Other points included self-determination and the creation of an international organization
 - The League of Nations was later created as a result of the latter point
- Some people opposed the Fourteen Points
 - The more conservative Republicans didn’t like the economic policy, instead wanting higher tariffs
 - Imperialistic nations didn’t want to have their colonies altered or removed from them

Manipulating Minds and Stifling Dissent

- Wilson created the Committee on Public Information that essentially brainwashed the Americans with anti-German political propaganda meant to up their war spirits
 - It employed 75,000 “four-minute men,” named for their short pep talks that were widely distributed
 - Many forms of media (e.g., billboards, movies, magazines, and even song) took on to this propaganda
 - The propaganda was perhaps too realistic and its end when the war finished caused disillusionment among the American people
- German-Americans were numerous (around 8,000,000 out of a total 100,000,000 Americans (8%)) and were somewhat discriminated against
 - German-created products and literature were often hidden or renamed (e.g., the German word “hamburger” became “liberty steak”)
- The Espionage Act (1917) and the Sedition Act (1918) showed the fears of Americans towards Germans and anti-war Americans
 - Socialists and members of the radical labor group Industrial Workers of the World were especially targeted
 - In the Supreme Court Case Schenck v. United States (1919), the Supreme Court ruled that these new laws were legal, saying that speech could be limited if it was dangerous to the nation
 - Only later after the war were some of the persecuted people pardoned

Culture and Society: Interestingly, the people were very enthusiastic to go to war after being provoked by Germany’s attacks, and despite the fact that the people had chosen Wilson to be their president because he had avoided going to war in his first presidential term. This was influenced largely by political propaganda with the newly-formed Committee on Public Information, specifically created to disseminate this kind of encouraging and patriotic message to the people. This is similar to the “yellow journalism” that racked up interest in the American people towards imperialism in the Caribbean, especially in Cuba. In both cases, there is a clear correlation between the exaggerated persuasion of the press and the public opinion. This shows the power of words on society, which is greatly swayed by contemporary literature.

Forging a War Economy

- The U.S. was largely unprepared for war, and needed a steady source of food and weapons
 - People didn't know how much ammunition and weaponry the U.S. was able to produce
- Wilson created the War Industries Board (1918) that was short-lived but set a precedent for government economic planning
- Herbert C. Hoover, the head of the Food Administration, rallied the people's support on a voluntary, popular basis
 - He asked people to save food for export using a voluntary basis, and this was fueled by the people's enthusiasm in war
 - His method was very successful, increasing farm production and food exports
- The restrictions on food were especially strict on alcohol, which helped the temperance movement
- The government-initiated popular movements increased the power of the federal government
 - The War Industries Board, for example, "issued production quotas, allocated raw materials, and set prices for government purchases"
 - Daylight-savings time were created by the U.S. government for practical purposes

Workers in Wartime

- Men were persuaded to work by the government's "Work or Fight" idea; i.e., if a man was not employed, he was likely to be quickly drafted into the war
 - This also discouraged labor strikers, whose voluntary unemployment could have caused them to join the war involuntarily by draft
- The American Federation of Labor, led by Samuel Gompers, was one of the major labor unions of the time
 - They loyally supported the war and ended up with good business and higher wages by the end of the war
- The Industrial Workers of the World were a radical labor union group that spoke out against the war
 - The workers in the IWW were often in very poor conditions and therefore had reason to speak out for better conditions
- The largest strike in American history was the steel strike (1919)
 - It involved over 250,000 steelworkers who wanted their "right to bargain collectively" to be recognize
 - The companies employed low-pay African-American strikebreakers to end the strike, and the strike collapsed
- Many African Americans and other migrants moved in the Great Migration to the North from the non-industrial South to look for work in factories
 - A small part of these people were the strikebreakers employed to break strikes
 - Movement of African Americans into predominantly white communities led to racial violence, such as the riots in in St. Louis (1917) and Chicago (1919)

Work, Exchange, and Technology: Many people in America still worked in a factories and industries during the war, and ordinary patterns of this type of work were continued through this time period. One pattern that characterized this time period, as well as the Gilded Age prior to this era, was the prevalence

of organized strikes. Distinctive to this time period were the existence of large labor unions, which had recently been legitimized by Wilson's early Clayton Anti-Trust Act. However, to match the feverishness of the time period, the strikes were becoming ever more momentous and risky. The steel strike of 1919 involved over 250,000 workers, and it still failed. The AF of L and the IWW rose to power as major labor unions, and they organized strikes that sometimes became violent. The factories and industry also opened up a little to Southern blacks in what was known as the "Great Migration" of Southerners to work in Northern industry. As a result of the migration and the strikes, industrial workers generally had better conditions and were more diversified by the end of the war.

Suffering Until Suffrage

- Women's suffragists were split between pacifists and pro-war suffragists
 - The pacifists were united under the National Woman's Party, and they opposed war and women's involvement in the war and organized strikes against the war
 - A majority of the suffragists were in support of the war, including the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and believed that women should take a part in the war effort
 - Showing women's capability for protecting democracy by being involved in the war was seen as another reason to allow women's suffrage and to prove their worth
- President Wilson was impressed by the women's efforts in the war, and he thought that they were necessary in the war effort
 - Many states and even some European countries too became progressive with women's suffrage and voted for suffrage at the state (or national) level
 - The Nineteenth Amendment was passed, and it allowed women to vote in the U.S.
 - There was the Women's Bureau that was created in the Department of Labor as well to further protect women's rights
- Although Congress was progressive and supported women's political lives with the right to vote, it also passed the Sheppard-Towner Maternity Act (1921) that financially supported mothers in their conservative sphere of influence: the home
 - It provided "federally financed instruction in maternal and infant health care"

Culture and Society: With American government based on the fundamental ideals of democracy and equality, women had long fought for equality in voting and other rights. Beginning with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, the women's suffrage movement had increased as women formed large organizations vying for federal enfranchisement of women, such as the National Woman's Party and the National American Woman Suffrage Association. This increasing fervor of the women towards their suffrage rights, as well as the general societal trend of social and economic reform under President Wilson, prompted the federal government to (finally) grant the women the right to vote, thus legalizing the last of the Americans to vote. Furthermore, the federal government passed the Sheppard-Towner Maternity Act that further supported women, albeit in the home— still, this was another reform-minded act towards better treatment of women. This increased political power of women started a general trend that emphasizes equal rights for women, and from then on the equality of women has become a cultural norm in American society.

Making Plowboys into Doughboys

- The Allied nations began to run out of manpower, and required lots of American manpower to support the war
 - Wilson and Congress reluctantly passed a bill allowing a draft to fulfill the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in Europe
 - The draft increased the size of the U.S. military from 100,000 to 4,000,000 men
- Some women were also enlisted into the military (but not the army)
- Some African Americans were also enlisted into the war, but often for non-combative positions (e.g., construction or unloading)
- There was a great urgency with the draft, and, as a result, many of the new recruits were very poorly trained for fighting
- N.B.: “doughboy” means a U.S. infantryman, especially in WWI

America Helps Hammer the Hun

- The Russians were tired and retreated from the war in 1918
 - This meant that Germany could concentrate its attack on its western front with France
- A great number of American soldiers arrived, and they were lighthearted and patriotic like they were in America
 - The first major battle they engaged in was the breach at Château-Thierry
- The U.S. formed its own army (now separate from the French army) in 1918 under General John J. Pershing
 - His army did the Meuse-Argonne offensive until the end of the war, and the largest military campaign of the U.S. up till that time (with 47 days and 1,200,000 Americans)
- The Germans were ready to give up due to lack of supplies and high rates of desertions
 - The U.S. also demanded that the kaiser be overthrown, and he was
 - The war ended on 11/11/1918 at 11:00 with an Allied victory
 - The Americans rejoiced
- The war had a large toll on the soldiers
 - There were 9 million deaths and 20 million injured people
 - 30 million people died in a flu pandemic
- The U.S. had not shown itself to be a world superpower, not winning many major battles and taking most of its supplies from Europe rather than from the U.S.

America in the World: America became an important world power when it not only supplied armaments to the Allied powers across the ocean, but also entered the stage of the world war by itself directly against the powerful German enemies. By establishing their own army that continued to fight through to the end of the war, the Americans showed themselves as a capable fighting force, even when abroad and against developed European powers. This greatly proved its worth to the great powers of Europe, who had previously only witnessed America engage successfully in military campaigns in the local region of the Americas (i.e., the American successes in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War, and the conflicts against the Native Americans were all fought in or near their home country, while Europe was thousands of miles away). In addition,

the optimism and sheer numbers of the American reinforcement to the Allies also improved their standing in the eyes of the Allies. Both of these factors contributed in giving the U.S. (through President Wilson) such a big say in the Treaty of Versailles with the League of Nations and with anti-imperialist compromises.

Wilson Steps Down from Olympus

- President Wilson was very popular amongst the Allied nations around the world
- Wilson lost some of his popularity and reputation when there was a Republican majority in the Congressional elections of 1918
- Wilson went to Paris in person to help negotiate the peace treaty
 - He was the first president to have travelled to Europe during his presidency
 - This angered Republicans, whose trip to Europe “looked to [the Republicans] like flamboyant grand-standing”
- Wilson angered the Republicans further by not including a single Republican senator in his party
 - This especially angered Henry Cabot Lodge, a Republican

An Idealist Amid the Imperialists

- Wilson joined with three other Allied leaders to draft the Treaty of Versailles in Paris
 - Premier Vittorio Orlando of Italy, Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Britain, and Premier Georges Clemenceau of France joined him in writing the treaty
 - The first major point in the drafting of the treaty was to figure out how to redistribute colonies and land claims of the Central Powers
 - Syria was given to France, and Iraq to Britain
 - The French demanded the Saar basin from Germany, and the Japanese demanded the Shandong province from China; both of these claims were allowed, but with compromises
 - This went against his anti-imperialist stance a little, but was in the interests of the Allied nations
 - Wilson created the League of Nations, which was an international assembly to settle international matters
 - Only about four of the original 14 points were actually carried out
 - Germany was forced to accept the treaty
 - The treaty was more vengeful than reconciliatory
 - This allowed for Germans to hate the Allied powers and again go to war against them in WWII

Wilson's Battle for Ratification

- Many people opposed Wilson's treaty, especially the new League of Nations
 - Some people rejected the League of Nations as an entangling agreement; these were the “irreconcilables”
 - Some people thought that the treaty was not harsh enough on the Germans
 - Others thought it was too harsh on the Germans
- There was still a majority of the people that supported the treaty in early 1919

- However, Republican Senator Lodge, who despised President Wilson's Democratic policies, went through the treaty and added "reservations" that attempted to solve the grievances in the treaty
 - At the same time, Wilson had a stroke and could not do much to promote the treaty
- Two senatorial votes could not pass the treaty (with Lodge's reservations added) with the required $\frac{2}{3}$ majority
 - Wilson himself did not want to pass it because he did not believe in Lodge's appendations at all

The "Solemn Referendum" of 1920

- Wilson wanted the presidential election of 1920 to have a "solemn referendum" for the people, a vote during the campaign for or against the treaty without Lodge's reservations
 - This was thwarted by Republican Harding, who confused the idea of a referendum to the people and prevented it from happening
- The Republicans nominated Senator Warren G. Harding as the presidential candidate and Calvin Coolidge as their vice president
- The Democrats nominated James M. Cox as the presidential candidate and Franklin D. Roosevelt as their vice president
- The Socialists chose Eugene V. Debs to be their candidate, even though he was in jail at the time
- Coolidge won the presidential election of 1920, with 404 electoral votes to 127
 - This was the largest difference in popular or electoral votes up to that point
 - Coolidge had the newly enfranchised women mostly vote for him (the Republican party, which supported women's suffrage)
 - Debs won almost a million votes, which was the most ever for the Socialist Party

The Betrayal of Great Expectations

- The League of Nations was greatly hurt by the lack of the U.S. in it; U.S. inclusion may have potentially prevented WWII (but this can never be known)
- The treaty was too complicated and ended up without one of its contributors (the U.S.), leading to its failures

Politics and Power: Despite his great acclaim as a moralistic leader abroad, President Wilson failed to attract the enthusiasm of his people again after the fervor of war had ended. The Republicans had again gained the majority of the Congressional elections of 1918, which lessened his power as president. Criticism at the treaty—which some people considered too lenient and others considered too harsh—further lessened support for the treaty. Senator Lodge's persistent attacks against the treaty weakened the treaty even more, and Harding's shrugging-off of the referendum that Wilson called prevented the last-ditch effort at a referendum in order to pass the treaty. All of these anti-Treaty of Versailles efforts were caused by the rift between the ideologies of the two political parties and the desire of those parties to pass their policies through Congress. As a result of not signing the treaty, the U.S. was left out its brainchild, the League of Nations, which was arguably incomplete without the U.S. Many people even argue that the lack of America's presence in the League of Nations allowed WWII to happen.