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A Comparative Study of America's Entries into World War I and World War II

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of History  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in History

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by  
Samantha Alisha Taylor  
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## ABSTRACT

### A Comparative Study of America's Entries into World War I and World War II

by

Samantha Alisha Taylor

This thesis studies events that preceded America's entries into the First and Second World Wars to discover similarities and dissimilarities. Comparing America's entries into the World Wars provides an insight into major events that influenced future ones and changed America.

Research was conducted from primary sources of Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. In addition, secondary sources were used that study the events preceding America's entries into World War I and World War II. Research was also conducted on public opinion.

In World War I, German actions angered Wilson and segments of the American public, persuading Wilson to ask for a declaration of war. While German aggression shaped American opinion in World War I, Japanese action forced the United States to enter the war. In both cases, the tone of aggression that molded the foreign policy of Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt and shaped American public opinion originated from Germany.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Great War began in August 1914, and for the first three years, it was a European War. The United States entered the Great War on 6 April 1917, changing it into a World War. The US entered the World War in response to German actions that cost American lives and violated neutral rights. The promise that the Great War would be the war to end all wars was broken with Adolf Hitler's conquests in Europe and Japan's invasion of Asia that began the Second World War. America would be drawn into this war as well, but unlike WWI it would not be German actions but a Japanese attack on US Naval Forces on 7 December 1941.

The US entered World War I and World War II due to the aggressive actions of Germany and Japan respectively. The American intervention has been questioned in both wars. The American intervention of WWI has been questioned because of US financial ties with Britain, this was later used to keep the US isolated before World War II. The US entry into WWII has been questioned because of the personal relationship between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Most of the resources used for WWI focused on the economic ties between the US and the Entente during WWI as a primary reason the US entered the war. These sources argue that by allowing the Entente to have unlimited access to American trade during WWI and later obtain loans to pay for these purchases forced the US to enter the war to ensure that the Entente would repay their debts. These sources provide detailed information on America's entry beyond this argument, but they overlook that the main reason the US entered the war was the German use of submarine warfare. These sources also note the pro-Entente and pro-British sympathies that the

majority of Americans, including President Wilson and his administration, had during the war. World War II resources provide a less biased view of American intervention; however, biases still exist in some arguments. Some of the more prolific arguments are that Roosevelt wanted the US to enter WWII, that Roosevelt was influenced by Churchill, and that Roosevelt's policies toward Germany and Japan forced Japan to attack the US.

This study is not to support, contradict, or further any of these arguments; its purpose is to study America's entries into the World Wars by comparing similarities and dissimilarities in events leading to the US entries. This study focuses on Presidents Woodrow Wilson's and Franklin D. Roosevelt's war policies and actual events during the wars. These areas were most influential to American intervention by determining when the US supported acting in the war and when the US was physically willing to enter the war.

America's intervention into the World Wars had many factors; however, this study focuses on the comparison of events that led to a similar situation in WWI and WWII that influenced America's entry. The main catalysts for the US entry into the wars were actions by the belligerents: Germany's use of unrestricted submarine warfare that caused the deaths of American citizens and Japan's attack on the US Naval Forces at Pearl Harbor Hawaii on 7 December 1941.

These events were deciding factors in America's course during the wars, but they were partially influenced by Wilson and Roosevelt. These two presidents implemented war policies in a manner that was originally designed to keep the US out of the wars, but eventually these policies changed under the impact of the war in Europe and Asia. Wilson's policy was designed not only to keep the US out of the war; it was also designed to initiate a peaceful settlement between the belligerents, which was abandoned when Germany began unrestricted submarine



warfare. Roosevelt's original policy was also designed to keep the US out of war but it was ultimately adapted to provide Britain with supplies and aid.

The final influence on the US interventions was public opinion. Public opinion in the years prior to the US entering the wars was completely against America intervening. This opinion changed during the wars to supporting the war declarations. The democratic nature of the US requires that the national majority support these options, but it does not require unanimous support, which was important during WWI. The nature of public support during WWI was one that reluctantly accepted the war, although a minority remained attached to pacifism. Public opinion in WWII was also not one of unity; however, the attack on Pearl Harbor provided unanimous support for entering the war.

The US entry into the First and Second World Wars was based on a mixture of these three factors. These factors would work to determine how the US would enter the war as well as when. Public opinion, presidential policies, and foreign events while dissimilar during each war, caused similar responses in America that led the US to enter World War I and World War II.

## CHAPTER 2

### WORLD WAR I

In the summer of 1914, events transpired in Europe that ruptured world peace. Following the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the major nations of Europe declared war against each other. These events were viewed in the United States first with disinterest and later disappointment. At the outset of hostilities, most Americans failed to grasp the ramifications a European war had on America.

On 1 August 1914, the first war declaration was issued and by 10 August, England, France, and Russia announced themselves as the Triple Entente opposing Austria-Hungary and Germany, known as the Central Powers. On 4 August, President Woodrow Wilson issued a statement that declared the US a neutral nation in the war. On 10 August, Wilson appealed to the American public to act and speak in accordance with strict neutrality. He warned Americans against breaking American neutrality and having sympathies for one side over the other.<sup>1</sup>

#### Britain Tries to Control Trade

About the same time Wilson called for American neutrality, the British government had decided to establish a blockade of the Central Powers. The British blockade was established in an attempt to halt all trade to and from the Central Powers. The British blockade was the first problem Wilson's neutral policy encountered, as demonstrated by British determination to maintain the blockade in spite of American protests. Wilson's attempts to get the belligerents to

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<sup>1</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "An Appeal to the American People," *May 6-September 5, 1914*, vol. 30 of *The Papers*, edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst and John E. Little, Edith James, and Sylvia Elvin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) 393-394.

accept the 1909 Declaration of London was his first attempt to gain British acceptance of American rights. The British government objected to the Declaration because it restricted the British ability to extend the blockade beyond blockaded ports and coasts. The Declaration also prohibited the use of the continuous voyage that allowed a belligerent to stop a ship if it believed the cargoes final destination was to an enemy regardless of its initial port destination. The principle of continuous voyage was used by the British and United States prior to World War I.<sup>2</sup>

### German Submarine Warfare

During World War I, the British blockade denied the German government the use of most of its surface fleet, leaving it only one naval weapon that could be used—the submarine. The use of the German submarine was initially restricted because of questions over classifying the submarine as a different type of cruiser. The decision to use the submarine was due to events that occurred on 5 September 1914. On 5 September, the German submarine U-9 sank three British battle cruisers.<sup>3</sup>

The success of the attack quickly gained recognition from German officials who decided to begin submarine attacks. It was not until 4 February that Germany decided to use the submarine as a weapon against British trade. On 4 February, Germany declared the coast off Britain and the English Channel a war zone. They announced that merchant ships travelling into the war zone risked attack and while steps would be taken to avoid neutral ships, the British use

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<sup>2</sup> C. Hartley Grattan, *Why We Fought* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969) 203-204

<sup>3</sup> Ross Gregory, *The Origins of American Intervention in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1971) 47-48.

of neutral flags made it impossible for Germany to guarantee the safety of neutral merchant ships.<sup>4</sup>

The success of the U-9 created a positive weapon against the British blockade. However, submarine warfare was a new method of naval warfare that could raise moral and legal issues. Germany decided the risks were acceptable due to the starvation from the British blockade and the lack of neutral protests against the starvation of the German people.<sup>5</sup> In spite of the German government's decision, the US government protested the submarine campaign. Wilson replied that the US would hold the German government strictly accountable for its actions with the submarine.<sup>6</sup>

When Germany declared the war zone, it noted that Britain's use of neutral flags exposed neutral ships to German attacks; Wilson took notice of the claim and replied to Britain. Wilson's note to the British was a mildly stated argument that the British use of the American flag gave British ships no protection while endangering American ships. It greatly differed from the protests issued by the other neutral nations that expressly demanded that British ships not sail their flags to avoid attack.<sup>7</sup>

The German government began submarine warfare in retaliation against the British Order in Council in December 1914. The Order in Council expanded the contraband list from twelve

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<sup>4</sup> Alice M. McDiarmid, *The American Defense of Neutral Rights, 1914-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939) 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory, *Origins of American Intervention*, 48-49.

<sup>6</sup> McDiarmid, *American Defense*, 52-53.

<sup>7</sup> McDiarmid, *American Defense*, 54-55.

to twenty-nine items and abolished the difference between conditional and absolute contraband.<sup>8</sup> Eventually Germany would become frustrated with its inability to contest the British blockade, gain American acquiescence to its policies, or gain diplomatic assistance from neutral nations, in particular the US.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the German submarine campaign, the main obstacle to American foreign policy was the British blockade and its effect on American trade with Europe. The commencement of submarine warfare with its impartial sinking of war ships and merchant ships, enemy and neutral alike, became the main obstacle to American foreign trade and foreign policy. While German submarine warfare took priority in American foreign policy, British attempts to control trade to Europe often forced Wilson to address American grievances with Britain.

#### American War Policies

From 1914 to 1915, American trade was hurt by the British blockade. It was not until 1916 when the US conceded to the blockade that the American economy began to profit from the war. At this point American trade had been adopted to supply the Allies needs because they were the only nations to which they could ship supplies. As American trade adapted, Wilson was forced to reconsider a portion of his neutral policy.<sup>10</sup> In August 1914, in accordance with strict neutrality, Wilson announced that American banks were not to grant loans to belligerents. In October 1914, this policy was altered to allow commercial or credit loans to the belligerents.

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<sup>8</sup> Contraband are those items that are illegal to ship to countries at war. Conditional contraband are those items that are considered contraband in certain forms like chemicals and raw materials, and their military or civilian applications. Absolute contraband are those items that are always contraband regardless of form or application.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory, *Origins of American Intervention*, 46-47.

<sup>10</sup> Grattan, *Why We Fought*, 140.

By allowing the belligerents to gain American loans, Wilson allowed further acquiescence to British control of trade in Europe. While the US acquiesced to most of British control, it did not do so quietly as the Wilson administration sent the British government repeated protests against its policies.<sup>11</sup>

Germany issued its first protest against continued American munitions shipments in December 1914, mainly because it aided the Entente against Germany. In June 1915, Austria-Hungary also protested American munitions trade to the Entente. Prior to these protests, the Central Powers had accepted American munitions trades to Europe.<sup>12</sup> However, as the British blockade ensured that only the Entente benefitted from American munitions the Central Powers became hostile to it and began protesting. In addition, Wilson and his administration believed that any change in the current policy would have been contrary to neutrality, this opinion was aided by American biases against the Central Powers, especially those against Germany due to its submarine campaign.<sup>13</sup>

### American Response to Submarine Warfare

During the war, the Central and Entente Powers both conducted policies that angered the US. However, the German government's initiation of submarine warfare was a greater factor than the British blockade. From March 1915 to March 1917, the deaths of American citizens on torpedoed or sunken ships eventually forced America to enter WWI. Throughout the war, Germany's submarine campaign was a greater factor in determining America's intervention in

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<sup>11</sup> McDiarmid, *American Defense*, 22-23.

<sup>12</sup> McDiarmid, *American Defense*, 57.

<sup>13</sup> Grattan, *Why We Fought*, 152.

WWI than any other issue. During the war, Wilson's decisions against the German policy placed Germany in an unattainable position.

On 28 March 1915, the British ship *Falaba* was torpedoed by a German submarine causing the death of Leon C. Thrasher. The Thrasher incident was the first case where the Wilson administration denounced the submarine attacks as violations of international law and humanity. On 7 May 1915, the British liner the *Lusitania* was sunk off the Irish coast causing the deaths of 128 American citizens. Following the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the German and American government entered into negotiations, and eventually Germany agreed to restrict its submarine campaign.<sup>14</sup> On November 1915, the *Ancona* was torpedoed by a German submarine flying the Austro-Hungarian flag. This incident was resolved with the Austrian government providing assurances that it would conduct submarine warfare as the Germans did. By January 1916, German-American relations were reaching an impasse; still, the two nations reached an accord in which the German government limited its submarine campaign to attacking cruisers.<sup>15</sup> The US viewed this compromise as ensuring that the submarine issue was resolved. At the same time, Britain had begun to arm its merchant ships and use decoys or "Q-ships" to attack submarines. The British policy made it suicide for submarines to obey the rules of cruiser warfare and observe international laws regarding the warning and searching of merchant ships.

During the war, both Britain and Germany used legal arguments to support their policies, yet the British were better able to gain American acquiescence to its legal arguments. This was because the British blockade policy seized American ships; it did not violate American morality or humanitarian principles. On the other hand, German arguments referred to British policies to

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Millis, *Road to War; America 1914-1917* (New York: H. Fertig, 1970) 240-241.

<sup>15</sup> McDiarmid, *American Defense*, 58-62, 120-123.

defend submarine warfare, but their submarine attacks offended American moral convictions and humanitarian principles. British orders to arm merchant ships to attack submarines in 1915, forced the German government to renew its submarine campaign against armed merchant ships on 1 February 1916.<sup>16</sup>

On 10 February, Germany issued orders to attack armed merchant ships without warning. On 24 March, the *Sussex* an unarmed merchant ship was torpedoed by a German submarine. Interestingly, no American lives were lost in the attack; however, Wilson protested the attack and increased his protests against German submarines. Wilson responded by demanding that Germany completely cease its submarine campaign because the German government was either unable or unwilling to control its submarine commanders. Following this, Wilson decided to send demands to Britain to amend its blockade policy. Wilson sent the note to Britain in an attempt to preserve diplomatic relations with Germany by demonstrating that the US government held Britain and Germany to the same standard. While, this failed Germany still ended its submarine campaign.<sup>17</sup>

#### Final Moves for Peace Fail

In the autumn of 1916, the war situation and internal politics in Germany initiated a chain of events that would bring the US into the war. By this time, the war in Europe had progressed into a full war of attrition. Still both sides refused to accept peace negotiations in spite of the fact that both sides were nearing exhaustion in attempts to gain a military victory.<sup>18</sup> In this environment, the German government began debating whether it was more favorable to its

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<sup>16</sup> Millis, *Road to War*, 262-267.

<sup>17</sup> McDiarmid, *American Defense*, 110-111, 125-126, 133.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Callan Tansill, *America Goes to War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1938) 627-629.



situation to avoid actions that would bring America into the war or resume attacks with its submarines. In September, Germany informed Wilson that unless he could convince the Entente to accept a peace settlement by the end of 1916 Germany would resume submarine warfare.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, German Ambassador to the US Count Johann von Bernstorff adjusted his diplomatic talks with the US to reflect this decision. Bernstorff urged Wilson to initiate a peace conference between the Entente Powers, the Central Powers, and the neutral nations. The Entente refused the gestures as they were passionately against any early peace settlement with the Central Powers. The Entente decision influenced Germany's decision to begin unrestricted submarine warfare. On 24 October, Wilson received information that the German government would no longer wait for Wilson to convince the Entente Powers to accept a peace settlement. Around 4 November, German navy and army officials had decided that German submarines should attack British and American and other neutral ships.

In spite of this news, Wilson continued to conduct peace talks between the two sides in the hopes of initiating a peace conference. By January after peace negotiations with the Entente Powers failed, officials in the German government decided that it was necessary to conduct unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917.<sup>20</sup> Wilson also concluded by this time that the US could no longer remain neutral. These actions influenced Wilson to demand the war's end or the US would exit neutrality and fight against Germany, yet Wilson received advice that caused him to postpone this announcement until December.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> McDiarmid, *American Defense*, 158-159.

<sup>20</sup> Tansill, *America Goes*, 628-630.

<sup>21</sup> Harry Notter, *The Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1965) 560-561, 572.

### British-American Relations Decline

While German actions were the actual determining factor that instigated American intervention in WWI, British conduct during the war did not increase American support for the Entente Powers. In the summer of 1916, British-American relations reached their lowest point during the war. The first issue was the British anger over Wilson's 27 May speech in which he reiterated American neutrality and disinterest in the belligerents' reasons for the war. Another issue was the Entente's Economic Conference from 14 June to 17 June that created American anger against additional Entente attempts to maintain its control over trade to Europe.<sup>22</sup>

This was followed by the publication of the British blacklist on 18 July. The American public vehemently opposed the blacklist even though it was directed against German- and Austrian-Americans. In spite of this, the blacklist was the final "British blunder" that Wilson would allow.<sup>23</sup> While developing a response, Wilson's administration split over adopting a tone of conciliation or remonstrance of which Wilson supported conciliation, especially as he was more willing to make allowances for Britain's violations of US neutrality. In response, Wilson gained powers from Congress to prohibit British or Entente ships from using American harbors if they refused American cargo. This forced Britain to accede to American demands, the only time it happened during the war. Due to massive opposition from the US, the blacklist became Britain's final attempt to control American trade to Europe though it continued to prevent US trade with the Central Powers.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 538-540.

<sup>23</sup> Tansill, *America Goes*, 535-542.

<sup>24</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 545.

## Towards World War I

Between January and April 1917, events progressed that brought the US out of neutrality and into World War I. On 9 January 1917, the German government issued orders to commence unrestricted submarine warfare. On 1 February, the German government ordered its submarines to conduct unrestricted attacks on ships off the British coast and in the English Channel. On 4 February, Wilson ordered diplomatic relations with Germany severed. On 26 February, the British government gave Wilson a copy of a telegram from the German Secretary of Foreign Affairs Arthur Zimmermann to the Mexican government. In the telegram, Zimmermann proposed an alliance with Mexico offering the territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona if the Mexican government would invade the US. The Zimmermann telegram created the greatest backlash against Germany since the sinking of the *Lusitania*.<sup>25</sup>

Between 12 March and 21 March, eight American ships were sunk during Germany's unrestricted submarine campaign. These acts were the final overt measures that pressed Wilson to get Congressional approval to declare war against Germany. On 21 March, Wilson instructed his administration to construct legislation for Congress to be presented on 2 April. On 2 April, Wilson addressed Congress; between 2 April and 6 April, the House and Senate voted to approve Wilson's war declaration.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Millis, *Road to War*, 403-408.

<sup>26</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 633-636, 640-651.

## CHAPTER 3

### WORLD WAR II

World War II officially began in 1939; however, events in 1931 created new hostilities around the world. As aggression increased, the chain of events that would bring the United States into the Second World War began. In the 1930s, the nations of Germany, Japan, and Italy had installed militaristic or totalitarian governments and adopted policies of aggression. For Americans and the safety of the United States, the greater danger was posed by Germany and Japan. German and Japanese actions would prompt American intervention in World War II.

#### Early Steps to War

In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria to expand its empire into China; however, the Great Depression forced Japan to stall this policy. The invasion of Manchuria created international outrage that encouraged Japan to withdraw from the League of Nations. In 1937, Japan resumed its expansionism by extending its aggression to China initiating the Sino-Japanese War. Japan called its plan to expand in Asia the “Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere,” although it was designed to eliminate Japanese dependence on imported goods.<sup>27</sup>

#### War Begins

In 1938, Germany began its territorial expansionist policies. In March 1938, Adolf Hitler, Führer of Germany, annexed Austria into Germany. On 22 September, he demanded the transfer of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. The Sudetenland crisis was averted by the

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<sup>27</sup> David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 14-15.

Munich Conference between Britain, France, and Germany. The Munich Agreement gave Hitler the Sudetenland and established the policy of appeasement, but it prevented him from gaining a military victory.<sup>28</sup> Hitler's demand for the Sudetenland encouraged Roosevelt to propose a new budget with \$1.3 billion allocated for national defense. FDR defended the extra expenditures on fears a war was coming to Europe and might endanger the US. One year later FDR's warnings came true.

During the early stages of the war in Europe, Secretary of State Cordell Hull conducted Japanese-American diplomacy. Hull's control over the diplomatic talks was second only to FDR's, who repeatedly denounced Japanese actions as atrocities. In response to Japanese aggression in China, FDR decided to abrogate the 1911 Commercial Treaty between the US and Japan. From 1937 to 1939, Japan fought with the Soviet Union over the Soviet-Manchurian border. Following the invasion of Mongolia, Japan attempted to enter into an alliance with Germany. However, on 23 August 1939, Germany signed the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> Articles II and IV of the Non-Aggression Pact were responsible for terminating Japanese plans with Germany. Article II stated that the signing parties would not lend their support to a third power if a third power attacked one of them. Article IV stated that neither signing nation would participate in an alliance aimed at the other signing nation. The signing of the Non-Aggression Pact forced Japan to halt its expansionist plans until 1940.<sup>30</sup>

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland beginning World War II in Europe. Germany quickly conquered Poland using a military technique of rapidly moving mechanized

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<sup>28</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 39-40.

<sup>29</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 41, 58-62.

<sup>30</sup> Joachim Remak, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976) 111-112.

divisions and aerial bombardments known as the *blitzkrieg*. On 3 September, FDR publically declared America a neutral nation in the conflict. By the end of 1939, the war had forced Congress to redraft American neutrality legislation; on 4 November, Congress passed the Neutrality Act of 1939. The Neutrality Act of 1939 maintained most of the stipulations from the previous Neutrality Acts but forced belligerents to provide cash payments and transportation for shipments and prohibited the arming of merchant ships.<sup>31</sup> The first Neutrality Act signed in 1935 prohibited export trade with belligerents, granting loans to belligerents, and travel of Americans on belligerent ships.<sup>32</sup> The Neutrality Act in 1937 continued the prohibition from the 1935 Act and added an impartial arms embargo.<sup>33</sup> Following the passage of the new neutrality law, Congress approved additional defense spending and the Selective Service Act.<sup>34</sup>

Following Germany's victory over Poland, there was a lull in aggression as neither the Allies nor Germany engaged in direct military action against each other. This period between the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940 was called the phony war in the US. During this time, Britain and France prepared for war while conducting peace negotiations with Germany. Beginning in April 1940, German resumed its offensive by quickly conquering Denmark and Norway.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Neutrality Act of 1939," *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943) 494-505.

<sup>32</sup> U.S., Department of State, "Neutrality Act of August 31, 1935," *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941* (Washington, D.C.: U.S., Government Printing Office, 1943) 265-271

<sup>33</sup> U.S., Department of State, "Neutrality Act of May 1, 1937," *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941* (Washington, D.C.: U.S., Government Printing Office, 1943) 355-365.

<sup>34</sup> Robert A. Divine, *The Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry into World War II* (Huntington: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1976) 67-68.

<sup>35</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 56, 69, 71.

### Beginning of American Aid

In May 1940, Germany defeated France; on 21 June, France signed an armistice with the German government and installed the Vichy government. The French defeat left Britain alone to fight Germany in Europe. It also encouraged FDR to increase the volume of supplies sent to support the British war effort.<sup>36</sup> During the summer and fall of 1940, FDR achieved numerous gains that granted him greater opportunities to aid the Allies. On 2 July, Congress passed the National Defense Act authorizing FDR to limit or forbid exports of military equipment, armaments, or other materials necessary for military equipment by proclamation.<sup>37</sup> FDR also ordered the US Navy to increase its size to create a two-ocean naval fleet.<sup>38</sup> On 9 December, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent FDR a note detailing the worsening war conditions in Britain and its desperate need for American supplies. On 17 December, FDR responded by publically revealing his Lend-Lease plan to supply Britain. On 18 January 1941, Lend-Lease went to Congress for approval, but it was not approved until 11 March.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to supplying British war needs, in January 1941, British military advisers arrived in Washington, DC seeking American cooperation to ensure the delivery of supplies to Britain. These advisers came from the British Ministry of War. While in Washington, they worked with Admiral Harold Stark and Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall to develop a plan for British and American joint operations. These officials created a report titled ABC-1 that became the blueprint for British-American actions for the war. In the report, the US and

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<sup>36</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 78-79.

<sup>37</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Proclamation No. 2413" 2 July 1940, in *1940 War—and Aid to Democracies*, vol. 9 of *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1941) 277-281.

<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich*, 78-79

<sup>39</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 104-106.

Britain agreed that they would defeat Germany first and Japan second. The report detailed the defensive nature of the war in the Pacific until Germany's defeat. In spite of some differences of opinion, the two sides agreed that the majority of the US Pacific Fleet would remain at Pearl Harbor while some ships went to support the Atlantic Fleet and Singapore.<sup>40</sup>

### Japan and the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere

German victories in Europe encouraged Japan to expand its aggression into Southeast Asia as well. In response to resumed Japanese aggression, FDR ordered the Pacific Fleet to conduct maneuvers off the Hawaiian Islands. In May 1940, FDR extended these orders, indefinitely stationing the fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in an attempt to thwart further Japanese aggression in Southeast Asia. However, by the end of April 1940, FDR and his administration agreed that while Japan needed to be constrained in Southeast Asia, Germany posed the greater threat to American security.<sup>41</sup>

In October 1940, Japan demanded the Vichy French government grant Japan access to French Indochina. Japan also demanded the British government cease providing aid to China in the Sino-Japanese War. On 27 September, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy. The main reason behind Japan and Germany signing the pact was to dissuade the US from acting against them. The Tripartite Pact provided this by stating the signing nations would unite if they were attacked by a nation not currently involved in the present war.<sup>42</sup> On 16 October, the

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<sup>40</sup> A.A. Hoehling, *America's Road to War, 1939-1941* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1970) 119-120.

<sup>41</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 94-95.

<sup>42</sup> Remak, *Origins of Second World War*,



Roosevelt administration ordered an embargo of scrap metal against Japan under the National Defense Act.

In January 1941, Japan sent Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura to take over the position of Japanese Ambassador to the US. Nomura was sent to improve Japanese-American relations through diplomatic talks. On 14 February, Nomura was officially received by FDR, at which time FDR informed Nomura to meet with Hull to discuss the issues dividing Japan and the US. Unfortunately, these meetings would prove incapable of preventing America's intervention in December.

#### Breakdown of Japanese-American Relations

In April, Japanese-American negotiations stalled mainly due to a Japanese note sent to the US. The Japanese note requested that the US cease aiding China and persuade Chiang Kai Shek to accept Japanese terms for peace; Japan in return offered to honor the Tripartite Pact only if the US attacked Germany. Hull received the note and rejected it; he then sent Japan a note that requested Japanese acceptance of American principles in Southeast Asia, which was rejected by Japan. Following these attempts at negotiation, Hull recognized that a successful settlement with Japan was impossible. Still, this did not stop Hull from continuing negotiations with Japan.<sup>43</sup>

As Japanese-American talks stalled, the Japanese government decided to take steps to further its conquest in Southeast Asia. Japan decided to take French Indochina as a precondition for invasions of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. In preparation, Japan signed a Non-Aggression Treaty with the Soviet Union in mid-April 1941. Unfortunately, Germany disrupted

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<sup>43</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 116-117.

this plan two months later by invading Russia.<sup>44</sup> The German invasion of Russia only allowed Japan two policy choices: continue expansionist policies in Southeast Asia to counter American economic sanctions or invade Siberia and force the Soviet Union to fight a two front war. Japan chose to expand into Southeast Asia, by demanding the Vichy French government grant it permission to use French Indochina as a staging area for its troops.<sup>45</sup>

In July, Japanese actions and covert policies increased the Roosevelt administration's desire to force Japan's acquiescence to US demands. On 23 July, Hull stopped negotiations with Japan after he was informed that Japan had demanded the right to build bases in southern French Indochina from the Vichy government. In February 1941, the Treasury Department was informed that Japan had a secret cache of gold and American dollars. In response, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. began prodding FDR to freeze Japanese assets. In July, FDR decided to expand American economic sanctions against Japan. On 26 July, FDR ordered all Japanese assets in the US frozen, thus completing his policy of economic sanctions against Japan. FDR's orders establishing an oil embargo against Japan is discussed below.<sup>46</sup>

### Beginning of the Anglo-American Alliance

In the summer of 1940, Hitler ordered the German Navy to begin submarine warfare after the Battle of Britain failed. These orders forced FDR and his administration to reconsider escorting convoys to Britain even though escorts were prohibited in the 1939 Neutrality Act. FDR overcame this legal barrier by extending the Western Hemisphere Neutrality Patrol instead

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<sup>44</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 133-134.

<sup>45</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 116-118.

<sup>46</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 118-122.

of obtaining Congressional authorization to begin escorts.<sup>47</sup> On 11 June 1941, the American ship *Robin Moor* was sunk by a German submarine. FDR retaliated by issuing an executive order freezing all German assets in the US. This was followed by closing the German consulates in the US on 16 June, though the Ambassador Bernstorff remained in Washington.<sup>48</sup>

On 2 August, Churchill and FDR met off the coast of Newfoundland and held the Atlantic Conference. During the Atlantic Conference, the two leaders created the Atlantic Charter to address the dangers posed by Germany and Japan. During the conference, FDR made promises to Churchill; one of which was that he would order American naval vessels to begin escorting convoys to Britain after the conference. It was not until September that FDR was able to fulfill this promise when German submarine attacks provided FDR with the reason to issue an order for the active defense of the US. On 9 October, Congress abolished portions of the 1939 Neutrality Act that prohibited escorts.<sup>49</sup>

### The War Takes a Turn

On 22 June, Hitler broke the Nazi-Soviet Pact and invaded Russia. Codenamed Operation Barbarossa, Germany quickly overtook Russian forces, providing Britain with a lull in warfare. This was important since Hitler was determined to defeat the Soviet Union before the winter began. The German invasion of Russia also encouraged FDR to offer the Soviet Union supplies under Lend-Lease to impede the German advance and provide Britain more time.

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<sup>47</sup> Hoehling, *America's Road*, 133.

<sup>48</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 125-127.

<sup>49</sup> Hoehling, *America's Road*, 142-143, 145-146.

Nevertheless, many in Washington and London did not believe the Soviet Union would survive more than six months of warfare with Germany.<sup>50</sup>

On 2 July, Japan occupied French Indochina to gain access to oil and raw materials, this led to the American oil embargo and freeze of Japanese assets. In August after the Atlantic Conference, Japan attempted to get FDR to hold a meeting with the Japanese Premier Konoye. This proposal was rejected by the State Department. In September, the Japanese government presented its final offers to gain a settlement with the US. Japan offered to end all its activities in Southeast Asia, evacuate French Indochina, and guarantee the Philippines neutrality after the Sino-Japanese war ended if the US would cease aiding China, restore trade with Japan, and not install bases in China, Thailand, and the Dutch East Indies. Hull rejected the Japanese offer.<sup>51</sup> In October, Hull presented Japan with an ultimatum to accept American terms. On 16 October, Japan decided to begin military preparations for war but decided to postpone any action until 30 November to provide time for negotiations to succeed.<sup>52</sup>

### Japan Forces American Intervention

Confidences in the Roosevelt administration and Britain were high around 25 November that Japan would attack soon in Southeast Asia. From November to 6 December, Japanese-American negotiations slowly failed. On 6 December, FDR attempted a final settlement by appealing to the Japanese Emperor Hirohito. However, Japan had already decided to sever relations with America and sent Nomura a message from the Japanese government. This letter

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<sup>50</sup> Hoehling, *America's Road*, 135-138.

<sup>51</sup> Hoehling, *America's Road*, 139-140, 158-160.

<sup>52</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 160-161.

charged the US with collusion with Britain to prevent Japan's expansion and officially severed diplomatic relations. Nomura was instructed to deliver the message at 1 pm on December 7, but due to a delay, the note was not delivered until after Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor.<sup>53</sup>

On 8 December 1941, Roosevelt addressed Congress and declared that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had initiated a state of war between Japan and the US. He described American attempts to create peace between the two nations and Japan's break with negotiations after the attack had already started. He noted the preparations the Japanese had made for the attack and that the attack was premeditated. FDR also announced that he had ordered all measures taken to ensure American defense. He then stated that "No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion the American people in their righteous might will win through absolute victory.... With confidence in our armed forces—with unbounding determination of our people—we will gain the inevitable triumph."<sup>54</sup>

He concluded by asking Congress to declare war with Japan. When Roosevelt finished his address, Congress immediately voted to declare war and by 4:10 pm on 8 December, Roosevelt had signed the declaration.<sup>55</sup> The 8 December declaration did not include Germany and Italy. Those declarations were passed on 11 December 1941 after the remaining members of the Axis Powers declared war on the United States.

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<sup>53</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 155-156.

<sup>54</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address to Congress Asking that a State of War be Declared Between the United States and Japan," 8 December 1941, in *1941 The Call to Battle Stations*, vol. 10 of *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt* compiled by Samuel I Rosenman, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1950)

<sup>55</sup> *Time*, December 22, 1941.

## CHAPTER 4

### WOODROW WILSON'S WAR POLICIES

In August 1914, Woodrow Wilson faced maintaining peace for the US while the European nations fought a war. From August 1914 to April 1917, Wilson presented himself as a neutral mediator to the Central Powers: Germany and Austria-Hungary, and the Entente Powers: Britain, France, and Russia. At the beginning of the Great War in Europe, Wilson decided to maintain strict neutrality in the United States. He also tried to protect US neutral rights in trade and access to the seas. However, Britain's naval blockade and Germany's retaliatory submarine campaign made this impossible. In addition, Wilson's desires to use the US as the world's moral compass were incompatible with the Central and Entente Powers' determination to achieve an absolute victory as a guarantor for peace. Wilson's foreign policy was designed to protect American neutrality and establish the US as a mediator to negotiate an end to the First World War.

#### Foundations of Woodrow Wilson's Foreign Policy

Wilson's foreign policy from 1914-1917 was based on utopian, progressive, and moralistic ideologies. Wilson tried to use these ideologies as a foundation for policies that would encourage the European powers to accept a peaceful settlement. When the war began in August 1914, Wilson's concept of neutrality was so severe that in 1916 he refused a rose cutting from Verdun to avoid appearing biased. In spite of his good intentions, Wilson was not a good

diplomat: he was greatly hindered by his inability to judge foreign or international events properly.<sup>56</sup>

From the beginning of WWI, Wilson believed that America had a unique moral obligation to all of humanity because Americans were linked to all of humanity through blood. He believed America's greatest achievement was peace for humanity. He also believed that America's destiny included service to humanity, justice, and to set an example for the world. In light of these responsibilities, Wilson viewed America's neutrality as a duty. In addition to these lofty goals, one of Wilson's central objectives was the creation of a righteous peace. To achieve this peace, Wilson needed the US to remain neutral. This objective was also the reasoning behind his disinclination to protest Germany's invasion of Belgium in 1914, because he believed neutrality was necessary for his acceptance as a neutral mediator.<sup>57</sup>

As Wilson conducted his foreign policy, it became obvious that he was an idealist, he was personally offended by the war, and was "singularly lacking in appreciation of the European crisis."<sup>58</sup> Wilson's idealism and his practical nature made him a danger when conducting foreign policy. To offset this obstacle, Wilson desperately needed an advisor, like Colonel E.M. House, who was acquainted with European political leaders' current practices and aims. However, Wilson often rejected advice that contradicted with his own opinions and due to this House was unable to perform this duty. House only remained Wilson's advisor through flattery and pretense; he was never able to get Wilson to understand European views fully.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Harvey A. DeWeerd, *President Wilson Fights His War, World War I and the American Intervention* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968) 5, 7-8.

<sup>57</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 324-325.

<sup>58</sup> DeWeerd, *President Wilson*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> DeWeerd, *President Wilson*, 8.

## Founding America's Position for Peace

When the war began, Wilson was encouraged by the US Ambassador to England Walter Hines Page and Franklin Knight Lane to extend “the good offices of the U.S. for peace.”<sup>60</sup> From 1914 to 1917, Wilson held the opinion that the European war was wrong and had to be stopped. During American neutrality, he believed the US mission was to prevent the destruction of Europe from a long war of attrition. Wilson also believed that an absolute victory would instigate harsh terms and lay the foundation for a future war.<sup>61</sup> In this mindset, he willingly accepted the advice from Page and Lane and extended the good offices of the US for peace negotiations.

On 4 August 1914, Wilson extended to the belligerent leadership “under article three of that [Hague] convention to say to you in a spirit of most earnest friendship that I should welcome an opportunity to act in the interest of European peace”.<sup>62</sup> Part of Wilson's desire to encourage European peace was his belief that European resources and manpower would be exhausted at a rate that would eventually force Europe to call upon the US for aid. By 1917, Wilson's determination to end the war had been pushed to the point that he believed America would have to enter the war. At this time, the deciding factor that forced American intervention was the German government's unrestricted submarine campaign. During American neutrality, Wilson believed he had a special responsibility for establishing peace in Europe.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “From Walter Hines Page to Wilson,” *May 6-September 5, 1914*, vol. 30 of *The Papers* edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, John E. Little, Edith James, and Sylvia Elvin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) 329-331.

<sup>61</sup> DeWeerd, *President Wilson*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Wilson, “A Press Release,” *May 6-September 5, 1914*, 342.

<sup>63</sup> DeWeerd, *President Wilson*, 9-10.



When WWI began on 1 August, Wilson described it as “this incredible European catastrophe.” On 3 August, Wilson described it as “this dreadful European conflict.” Wilson’s attitude on America’s responsibility to the world is best summed up by his statement to the newspapers on 3 August: “I want to have the pride of feeling that America if nobody else has her self-possession and stands ready with calmness of thought and steadiness of purpose to help the rest of the world.”<sup>64</sup> In the early period of WWI, Wilson refused to pass judgment on the war. This caused uncertainty in Wilson’s attitudes on the justice of the Entente’s cause; therefore, Wilson asked the American people not to judge European events thus initiating his policy of neutrality.<sup>65</sup> However, some parts of the American public had already judged the war’s events and taken sides. In addition, being an Anglophile and passionate admirer of English culture and its political system, Wilson was intensely biased towards the British.

#### Defending American Neutral Rights

On 4 August, Wilson proclaimed American neutrality. He also used this time to acquire an agreement from the Central Powers and Entente Powers to respect American neutral rights on trade and access to the seas. Wilson based this protection on the 1909 Declaration of London. The Declaration of London was the only summarizing statement of neutral rights and dictated peaceful trade during a war. It also defined the relationship between the Central Powers and Entente, and the relationship between belligerents and neutrals. However, the Declaration of

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<sup>64</sup> Notter, *Origins of the Foreign Policy*, 315.

<sup>65</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 317.

London was never ratified because America and England refused to sign it. During the latter part of 1914, Wilson tried to get the belligerents to accept the Declaration of London.<sup>66</sup>

Gaining acceptance of the Declaration was the first objective of Wilson's foreign policy. Wilson was under pressure from domestic businesses to continue export of US raw materials and goods as well as to secure the right of American ships to travel wherever they wanted uninterrupted. He viewed the Declaration of London as the best way to lessen these pressures. This policy was hindered by Britain's determination to use its naval fleet to blockade the Central Powers. On 16 August, Wilson began his attempts to gain unanimous acceptance of the Declaration from the belligerents. Eventually, Wilson realized the British were unwilling to limit their blockade, yet he was unwilling to allow the British to continue seizing US ships without protest. Wilson was able to get the Central Powers to agree to the Declaration, but the Entente placed their acceptance on the decision of the British government.<sup>67</sup>

The British responded to the Declaration of London with the Order in Council. The Order in Council removed and altered parts of the Declaration of London—including the conditional and absolute contraband list—it allowed the British to alter the list as needed and allowed Britain to use the continuous voyage policy.<sup>68</sup> On 9 October, US Ambassador to Britain Walter Hines Page, British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey, and British Ambassador to the US Cecil Spring Rice sent Wilson a note in an attempt to persuade Wilson to accept Britain's Order in Council. Yet, Wilson continued to refuse to accept the Order in Council as a replacement for

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<sup>66</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 319-322.

<sup>67</sup> Arthur S. Link, *The Struggle for Neutrality 1914-1915*, vol. 3 of *Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960) 104, 106, 108, 115.

<sup>68</sup> Grattan, *Why We Fought*, 206

the Declaration of London. On 21 October, Wilson withdrew his suggestion for the belligerents to adopt the Declaration of London and accepted the British blockade.<sup>69</sup>

During the Declaration negotiations, the main problem was the British attempt to change articles in the Declaration that affected neutral trade. In a note to London, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan noted that the British conditions would “arouse a spirit of resentment among the American people toward Great Britain, which this government would extremely regret but which it would be unable to prevent.” The note also stated that Wilson did not want to issue a formal protest against British acceptance of the Order in Council.<sup>70</sup> Even after informing the British government that the Central Powers had conditionally accepted the Declaration of London, Anglo-American negotiations were unable to gain an accord on the Declaration of London with or without the Order in Council by October 21, 1914.<sup>71</sup>

### American Economic Policy

As Wilson’s negotiations on the Declaration of London were deteriorating, his administration had to determine the neutrality of allowing belligerents to gain loans from US banks. On 10 August, Bryan informed Wilson that J.P. Morgan and Company had asked if the US government objected to American banks issuing loans to the belligerents. Bryan proposed three reasons loans were objectionable:

First: Money is the worst of all contrabands because it commands everything else...Second...a loan would be taken by those in sympathy with the country in whose

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<sup>69</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 115, 118-119, 124.

<sup>70</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “From Robert Lansing to Wilson with Enclosure,” *September 6 – December 31, 1914* vol. 31 of *The Papers*, edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, and John E. Little (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) 90-91.

<sup>71</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 321-322.

behalf the loan was negotiated... Third: the powerful financial interests which would be connected with these loans would be tempted to use their influence through the newspapers to support the interests of the Government to which they had loaned because the value of the security would be directly affected by the result of war.<sup>72</sup>

On 16 August, the Wilson administration's opinion was expressed to Sir Edward Grey:

There is no reason why loans should not be made to the neutral Governments, but in the judgment of this Government, loans by American bankers to any foreign nation who is at war is inconsistent with the true spirit of neutrality... This decision is stated to represent absolutely the harmonious views of the President and Mr. Bryan... The administration believes that the position thus adopted by them will indirectly curtail the duration of the war.<sup>73</sup>

In spite of this declaration the British blockade and American neutral trade continued.

The British blockade allowed the Entente Powers to gain a monopoly on American exports, thus causing the US to become an Entente supply base. In spite of the Entente supply status, Wilson refused to allow the governments to gain loans and Bryan was successful in advising Wilson that allowing American banks to grant loans to belligerents was contrary to U.S. neutral policy.<sup>74</sup> Although Wilson originally disagreed with providing loans, he accepted the war business—even if it was only with the Entente powers—because it created full employment and prosperity. From this time on, Bryan clearly recognized the danger of a neutral power becoming financially committed to one side of a war.<sup>75</sup>

As Entente purchases increased, Wilson attempted to enlarge his neutral policy by allowing American banks to provide loans to the belligerents. In an attempt to allow the loans legally, Counselor to the State Department Robert Lansing suggested the use of “credit” loans

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<sup>72</sup> Wilson, “From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson,” *May 6-September 5, 1914*, 372-373.

<sup>73</sup> Wilson, “Colville Barclay to Sir Edward Grey” *May 6-September 5, 1914*, 386.

<sup>74</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 323.

<sup>75</sup> DeWeerd, *President Wilson*, 12-13

over “general” loans because “credit” loans were not a “public issue.” In spite of this, Wilson continued to recognize that loans created unneutral feelings and that to allow the loans he would have to retract his moral policy. Wilson used the information provided to prove the inability of the Executive to prevent credit loans legally, because they were considered commercial debt instead of money loans. Wilson continued to believe that loans were unneutral and that the new policy kept the government’s loan policy intact. Wilson regarded this as a minor episode and believed that he was still in control of unneutral influences in America. He also saw American trade as a right under international law, and he preferred to enlarge American influence through American trade.<sup>76</sup>

Wilson’s method that allowed the Entente powers to gain loans from American banks was deceitful. Wilson informed Lansing of his opinion that “we should say that parties [the American Government] would take no action either for or against such a transaction but that this should be orally conveyed... and not put in writing”.<sup>77</sup> On 15 October, the Wilson administration announced that American banks could make loans to the belligerents. Even though it had stopped banks earlier, it had simply used moral dissuasion because the Executive did not have the power to stop them. The Wilson administration also announced that Americans could sell contraband and conditional contraband to the belligerents “without violating the neutrality of the United States.”<sup>78</sup> Wilson based his decision to allow the belligerents American

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<sup>76</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 323, 353-354.

<sup>77</sup> DeWeerd, *President Wilson*, 13.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson, “A News Report,” *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 153-154.

loans on The Hague Convention of 1907 and American precedence set in the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>79</sup>

On 23 October, Lansing released a memorandum that detailed Wilson's description of the difference between loans and government bonds. Wilson stated that government bonds, which were based on American gold, directly financed the war while "The acceptance of Treasury notes or other evidence of debt in payment for articles purchased in this country is merely a means of facilitating trade by a system of credits which will avoid the clumsy and impractical method of cash payments."<sup>80</sup> Numerous actions during October 1914 demonstrated that America was no longer strictly neutral, especially as a few unneutral individuals were becoming publically vocal of their thoughts and sympathies.<sup>81</sup>

### Wilson's Response to Submarine Warfare

As Wilson was clearing the way for loans to the belligerents, Germany's submarine campaign was beginning to draw attention. At this time, Wilson expressed no apprehension of the campaign in spite of Entente warnings. In addition, the submarine campaign posed a greater danger to warships and cruisers, the only danger merchant ships faced were from mines deployed in the North Sea.<sup>82</sup> This situation placed Wilson's foreign policy between Britain's blockade and Germany's submarine campaign. Wilson believed the solution to this problem was for Britain to end its blockade and Germany to end its submarine campaign. However, neither side was

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<sup>79</sup> Wilson, "A News Report," *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 153-154.

<sup>80</sup> Wilson, "A Memorandum by Robert Lansing," *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 219-220.

<sup>81</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 356.

<sup>82</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 355.

willing to abandon a successful naval weapon when their armies were deadlocked in Europe. Wilson raised this issue several times, all ended in failure. Eventually Wilson would come to hold Germany culpable for the war because its campaign killed people, while Britain only seized ships and cargo.<sup>83</sup>

In February, the German submarine campaign changed as the German government issued a statement warning that commercial ships sailing to Britain or Ireland did so at the risk of sinking. On 10 February, Wilson issued a warning to the German government. It stated that the US government vowed to hold Germany, “to a strict accountability for such actions [sinking of American ships] of their naval authorities, and to take any steps it might be necessary to take to safeguard American lives and property and to secure to American citizens the full enjoyment of their acknowledged rights on the high seas.”<sup>84</sup>

### Overtures of Peace

Wilson wanted to spread a peace agenda based on his belief that war never permanently settled any issues, and that to ensure permanent peace war would have to be eradicated in the future. He believed that understanding, enlightenment, and moral responsibility were needed to advance peace. Wilson felt that peace was founded on a balance of just national forces by eliminating domestic exploitation and had formulated his war policy by mid-August. This policy

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<sup>83</sup> DeWeerd, *President Wilson*, 15.

<sup>84</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “From Wilson to James Watson Gerard,” *January 1-April 16, 1915*, vol. 32 of *The Papers* edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, John E. Little, and Dexter Gordon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 207-210.

consisted of establishing a mediated peace between the belligerents and maintaining American neutrality so he could become a mediator.<sup>85</sup>

On 19 September 1914, Bryan sent Wilson a note urging Wilson to assume the initiative for peace because the Entente and Central Powers believed that peace could only be achieved through a military victory. Bryan also suggested terms to ensure future peace that included getting the belligerents to agree to a government monopoly on munitions manufacturing, reducing military forces, and respecting territorial boundaries as initial steps for peace. Bryan wrote

I believe that a compulsory investigation of disputes before hostilities begin, such as our [Bryan] treaties provide for, would go far toward preventing war, but the most potent of all influences for the promotion of peace is the substitution of friendship for hatred, and your plan of taking away the pecuniary interest which private corporations now have in war, will make it easier to cultivate friendship.<sup>86</sup>

Wilson was also urged to publically appeal to the belligerents to conduct peace negotiations before an armistice was agreed to.<sup>87</sup> Bryan presented two reasons for peace mediations. First, all the belligerents denied responsibility for war and desired peace. Second, responsibility for continuing the war was the same as starting it, and in this way responsibility also belonged to the US if the US could assist in creating a peaceful settlement and did nothing. Bryan encouraged Wilson to earnestly appeal to the belligerents and to remind them that an armistice was not essential to mediation.<sup>88</sup> Unfortunately, Wilson did not undertake it upon himself to conduct policy based on this advice until late 1916 when it was too late. Wilson only

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<sup>85</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 329, 332.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson," *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 56-57.

<sup>87</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 345.

<sup>88</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson," *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 57.



turned to this policy because secret negotiations had failed and he was desperate to find an avenue that would create a mediated peace.<sup>89</sup>

During WWI, Wilson repeatedly protested British amendments to the list of absolute and conditional contraband. These protests focused on satisfying public resentment toward the British blockade rather than addressing the illegality of the British changes and creating an acceptable list. Wilson designed the protests to state the US opinion and still maintain friendly relations between the US and Britain. His decision to avoid a break in relations with Britain was based on Wilson's understanding of the influences that led the US into the War of 1812. Wilson believed the US entered the War of 1812 because of the harm inflicted on American trade from the British blockade. He also believed he needed cooperation with Britain to achieve his peace policy.<sup>90</sup>

#### German Grievances Against the United States

As early as November 1914, Wilson and his administration were becoming aware of growing German-American hostility to the administration's policy of neutrality, in particular its policy that allowed the sale of war munitions to the Allies. German-American hostility was most clearly described in a letter to Wilson from Professor Hugo Münsterberg of Harvard University. Professor Münsterberg's letter arrived after the 1914 mid-term elections.<sup>91</sup> In the seven-page letter, Münsterberg described the hostility of German sympathizers to the Wilson administration's neutrality policy. In particular, German-Americans were alienated by the administration's willingness to allow wireless news to be censored, the detaining of German and

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<sup>89</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 345.

<sup>90</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 347-349.

<sup>91</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 161-162.

Austria-Hungarian ships, and the permitted violation of the Hague Convention on conditional and absolute contraband. Münsterberg noted that German-Americans resented these issues the most.

Münsterberg also described additional grievances over the administration's willingness to allow Britain to interfere with American harbors and American ships, the unlimited sale of munitions to the Entente Powers, and granting American loans to the Allies. Münsterberg noted that, "The friends of peace had firmly hoped the President would denounce the sale of ammunition or any other sale which would be likely to prolong the war." In addition, he also called attention US acceptance of British interception of mail from Dutch ships even though it contradicted international laws. Münsterberg also wrote that, "The friends of Germany cannot forget this sympathetic attitude of the State Department under the conditions which objectively exist is not only helpful to the prolongation of the war, but helpful exclusively to the Allies against Central Europe."<sup>92</sup>

On 1 December, Wilson forwarded Münsterberg's letter to Robert Lansing for a memorandum with answers and comments to address the hostility the administration was facing from German-Americans and German sympathizers.<sup>93</sup> On 9 December, Lansing sent Wilson an eleven-page memorandum on Münsterberg's letter. In the memorandum, Lansing denounced Münsterberg's letter for distorting the truth, making false allegations of injustice to Germany, and "undue friendliness" to the Allies. Lansing wrote that Münsterberg's letter was part of a "campaign of misrepresentation and vilification."<sup>94</sup> American claims were aided by the German

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<sup>92</sup> Wilson, "From Hugo Münsterberg to Wilson," *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 336-340.

<sup>93</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 376.

<sup>94</sup> Wilson, "From Robert Lansing to Wilson with Enclosure," *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 432-446.

government's admittance that belligerents had the right to buy munitions from the US.<sup>95</sup> This reinforced Bryan's 26 December suggestion to Wilson that he publically announce that "the right of belligerents to purchase arms and ammunitions in neutral countries is so well settled that we have had no protest or complaint from an belligerent as to purchases made by any other belligerent in the United States."<sup>96</sup>

### Moves Towards a Munitions Embargo

However, these steps by the Wilson administration did not silence the opposition to the continued sale of munitions to the belligerents. By January 1915, anti-British hostility had forced Congress to begin debating an embargo of war munitions. This hostility only increased to the point that Senator Stone Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee reported the change of unneutrality to Bryan for an explanation.<sup>97</sup> On 6 January, Bryan informed Wilson that the House Foreign Affairs committee was hearing arguments for the passage of Representative Bartholdt's resolution for an arms embargo in the US. Bryan also informed inquiring Representatives that initiating an arms embargo was unneutral because it was designed to assist one party over another.<sup>98</sup> This response only further increased anti-British resentment and resentment with American neutrality policy. While this was happening, Britain and other Allied forces were disturbed. American export of munitions placed Wilson in a conundrum, and

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<sup>95</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson," *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 521-522.

<sup>96</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson," *September 6 – December 31, 1914*, 533.

<sup>97</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 161-163.

<sup>98</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson," *January 1-April 16, 1915*, 24.

it took him three weeks to make his decision and even then, he was not firm on his moral grounding. Eventually, Wilson decided to allow the export in munitions to continue.

In an attempt to defuse anti-British and anti-administration feelings, Wilson announced that the President did not have the authority to place an embargo on munitions to belligerent. Unfortunately, this did not stop German-American protests against the Wilson administration.<sup>99</sup> In October 1914, Wilson attempted his first of several efforts to get the Central and Entente Powers to accept a mediated peace. Wilson extended the offer on the belief that the powers would use reason as a determining factor in their decision. Unfortunately, the Entente and Central Powers were unwilling to use reason to determine their actions.<sup>100</sup> Throughout the war, Wilson was unable to get the belligerents to accept peace mediation to end the war.

#### Wilson and Preparedness

In November 1914, Wilson was beginning to grow concerned over the possibility that his foreign policy would not succeed in Europe. He began to consider military preparedness though he continued to reject the need for preparations. When Wilson was presented with a plan for military preparedness, he informed House that such a plan would shock Americans, and more importantly would not be needed. Wilson argued that even if Germany won WWI, there would be enough time for America to prepare because Germany would be exhausted from the war and would be in no position to threaten the US.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 163, 167-169.

<sup>100</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 356-357.

<sup>101</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 365-366.

By January 1915, Wilson began to receive criticism for his anti-preparedness stance and his neutral policy. On January 22, Wilson and Bryan received accusations from Britain of having pro-German sympathies.<sup>102</sup> Wilson and Bryan replied by noting that pro-German sympathies existed in America mostly with German and Irish-Americans. They described the influence and representation of German and Irish-Americans in American life, yet they assured Britain that “there need by no fear that his [Senator Bartholdt] proposals will be adopted, but they are a sample of our difficulties. Notwithstanding such influences the vast majority of the American people are genuinely friendly in the attitude towards Great Britain.” In addition, Wilson and Bryan noted that British policies that hindered US trade weakened British support in America. The note also presented the administration’s position in other cases Britain has protested.<sup>103</sup>

By March 1915, the majority of the trade and submarine controversies had developed. These controversies demonstrate the development of Wilson’s foreign policy as a disagreement with Britain was solved without leading to a conflict between the US and Britain, while a dispute with the German government immediately led to a crisis between the US and Germany. This dispute centered on the German government’s refusal to abandon its submarine warfare and US unwillingness to protest Entente surveillance of neutral trade.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 382.

<sup>103</sup> Wilson, “From Wilson to William Jennings Bryan with Enclosure,” *January 1-April 16, 1915*, 101-105.

<sup>104</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 390-391.

## The Wilson Administration and Submarine Warfare

The first American death from Germany's u-boats was Leon C. Thrasher on April 1. Thrasher died when the British ship he was on, the *Falaba*, was sunk by a German torpedo. This was Wilson's first dilemma from the German tactic; he did not want to retaliate because it was contrary to his peace policy. This led to a debate to find a response that avoided retaliation, in which Wilson decided that he could not allow belligerents to use American lives to protect their ships. He issued a protest to Germany against the immorality of Thrasher's death and illegality of sinking the *Falaba* without warning. Wilson's decision to use moral and legal arguments against German actions placed him in an inflexible course that directed his policy with Germany for the war.<sup>105</sup>

From 6 April to 8 April, Bryan and Wilson debated the use of a balanced neutral policy when dealing with Britain and Germany. Bryan recognized some justification for the German government's actions; however, he did not extend that justification to taking lives. Bryan argued that American citizens should avoid areas that were known to be dangerous. However, Lansing, the State Department, and the Navy disagreed; they argued that Germany should not be allowed to deny Americans their neutral rights including use of the seas. Bryan also suggested that Wilson publically appeal for peace in response to Germany's submarine campaign and Britain's starvation blockade. Wilson replied that he was not confident that strong declarations should be made to Germany. In addition, Wilson argued that a public appeal would be futile and seen as "offensive." He continued that, "We would lose such influence as we have for peace," that

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<sup>105</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 398-399.

Germany had not spoken of peace conditions and that reason had not persuaded the belligerents into thinking of “the peace and prosperity of Europe but their own aggrandizement.”<sup>106</sup>

Bryan wrote Wilson a note on 19 April, questioning the morality of allowing millions to starve over the morality of allowing a few people to drown over war policies. He urged Wilson to defend American neutrality by forbidding the use of the American flag on ships and prohibiting Americans from sailing on belligerent ships. Bryan suggested that Wilson persuade Germany and Britain to negotiate. He suggested that in return for Britain allowing food into Germany, Germany would stop sinking merchant ships. He repeats his urging that Wilson call the belligerents to a conference because he doubted that “secret proposals will suffice—a public appeal strongly worded might have effect.”<sup>107</sup>

In a second note on April 23, Bryan warned against protesting German actions and not British actions on moral ground. Bryan argued that those Americans who travelled on belligerent ships took the same risk as those Americans who lived in belligerent countries. He also warned that the Thrasher note could cause a crisis with Germany. Bryan once again urged Wilson that it is “this nation’s right and duty to make not a secret but an open appeal for the acceptance of mediation.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 399-402.

<sup>107</sup> Wilson, “From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson,” *April 17-July 21, 1915*, vol. 33 of *The Papers* edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, John E. Little, and Dexter Gordon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 28-29.

<sup>108</sup> Wilson, “From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson,” *April 17-July 21, 1915*, 66-67.

On 1 May, the German Ambassador to the US Johann von Bernstorff issued a warning in the American press because he feared the “US government ‘underestimated the dangers of the situation’.”<sup>109</sup> Bernstorff’s warning stated:

Travelers intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government vessels flying the flag of Great Britain or any of her allies are liable to destruction in those waters and that travelers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.<sup>110</sup>

Lansing viewed the warning as an attempt by the German government to force a diplomatic break with the US, while Bryan thought the note was the German’s attempt to avoid any additional issues between Germany and the US. More importantly, Bryan thought that no American citizen would take the risk involved with traveling on a belligerent ship.<sup>111</sup>

### The *Lusitania* Changes Wilson and His Administration

On 1 May, the *Lusitania* set sail from New York, on May 7, as it neared the Irish Coast the *Lusitania* was sunk by a German submarine. The *Lusitania* sank within eighteen minutes with 1198 passengers dying of which 128 were American citizens. The sinking of the *Lusitania* and the deaths of the 128 Americans on board was viewed as murder by most in the US. For most of the American public, Germany could not mitigate or justify the deaths as part of its retaliatory campaign against the Allies.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 368.

<sup>110</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 369.

<sup>111</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 369.

<sup>112</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 371-372.



The rise in moral indignation at the loss of American lives on the *Lusitania* forced Wilson to try to find an avenue that would express America's moral outrage without risking US involvement in the war. From 8 May to 10 May, Wilson pondered the best way to accomplish this without input from his advisors. He was determined to find the proper course of action that would protest the deaths without threatening war. Wilson recognized he had to respond to the submarine campaign and properly represent American desires, he had to "know and to do the things that the now and his nation needed."<sup>113</sup>

On 9 May, Wilson received letters from House and Bryan. House's letter confirmed the loss of American lives and urged Wilson to send a demand to Germany. He suggested that the demand include Germany grant assurances that events like the *Lusitania* would not be repeated and a warning that if Germany refused then the US government would take necessary measures to protect American citizens even if it meant war with Germany. House also wrote:

Our intervention will save rather than increase the loss of life. America has come to the parting of the ways, when she must determine whether she stands for civilized or uncivilized warfare. [I] Think we can no longer remain neutral spectators. Our action in this crisis will determine the part we play when peace is made, and how far we may influence the settlement for the lasting good of humanity.

On the other hand, Bryan's letter noted an editorial that supported Germany's warning on the first. He also suggested that Wilson consider prohibiting ships that carry contraband from also carrying passengers, especially because Germany's campaign was designed to prevent its enemies from receiving contraband. Bryan argued that, "a ship carrying contraband should not rely upon passengers to protect her from attack—it would be like putting women and children in front of an army."<sup>114</sup> To support his arguments, Bryan noted the *Lusitania*'s cargo manifest

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<sup>113</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 375, 380-381.

<sup>114</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson," *April 17-July 21, 1915*, 135.

included cartridges and ammunition, which was used by the Germans in their defense of sinking the ship.<sup>115</sup>

Wilson received Bryan's advice for warning Americans against traveling on belligerent ships, especially those carrying contraband. However, Lansing rejected Bryan's suggestions and made his own which included a formal protest that Wilson accepted.<sup>116</sup> On 10 May, Bryan forwarded to Wilson a note and memorandum prepared by Lansing in response to the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Lansing's memorandum confirmed that the *Lusitania* carried contraband, but argued that if the German government was aware of this then they were also aware whether or not it had also been armed, which evidence had proven it had not been. Lansing continued the German government could not argue knowledge on one hand and ignorance on the other. He argued that, "If the German government had knowledge in one case, they are chargeable with knowledge in the second."<sup>117</sup> Lansing also pointed out that the German Embassy's warning did not absolve Germany of responsibility for illegal actions that caused the death of US citizens. He also argued that by sending the warning the American press instead of the US government the German embassy ignored the US government and denied it the ability to act on the warning. Lansing argued that because the State Department failed to receive the warning and had not advised Americans to heed it, Americans ignored the warning.<sup>118</sup>

Lansing's 10 May note to Wilson suggested a strong reply to Germany's response to the *Lusitania*'s sinking. Lansing advised Wilson to demand that the German government disavow

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<sup>115</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson," *April 17-July 21, 1915*, 134-135.

<sup>116</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 381.

<sup>117</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson Enclosure I," *April 17-July 21, 1915*, 142.

<sup>118</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson Enclosure I," *April 17-July 21, 1915*, 142-143.

the act and apologize, that the guilty officer be punished, the German government acknowledge liability, pay a just indemnity, and guarantee future measures would be taken to ensure the safety of American lives unless they were on an armed belligerent ship or convoyed by belligerent war craft. Lansing further suggested that if Germany refused to accept American demands then the government should break diplomatic relations with Germany but not necessarily enter the war. In addition, Lansing wrote that the US government should reach out to the other neutrals to protest German and British international law violations. He offered that the note to Germany should cover breeches in principles of humanity in addition to violations of international law, and that the British note should cover its illegal interception of neutral trade.<sup>119</sup>

On 11 May, Wilson sent Bryan a copy of his response to Germany on the *Lusitania* case. In the note, Wilson adopted Lansing's proposals for the terms Germany needed to agree to in order to settle the *Lusitania* crisis.<sup>120</sup> Wilson opened the letter by describing the problems inherent with Germany's submarine campaign in particular the inability of the u-boats to take ships to prize court and the need to guarantee the safety of the ship's crew and passengers. Wilson also noted that the US government did not believe the German government authorized its submarine commanders to endanger the lives of civilians. Wilson then demanded the German government disavow the sinking of the *Lusitania*, make reparations for the deaths, and take steps to prevent a similar action in the future. Wilson concluded by reaffirming American neutral rights and asked the German government to respond quickly.<sup>121</sup> The Cabinet agreed to Wilson's note and that it should be sent immediately. This was after the Cabinet was unable to agree to

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<sup>119</sup> Wilson, "From William Jennings Bryan to Wilson Enclosure II," *April 17-July 21, 1915*, 144-145.

<sup>120</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 381.

<sup>121</sup> Wilson, "From Wilson to William Jennings Bryan with Enclosure," *April 17-July 21, 1915*, 155-158.

the cost of breaking relations with Germany, warning Americans against travel on belligerent ships, and waiting for the end of WWI to settle the *Lusitania* case.<sup>122</sup>

Following the *Lusitania* incident, Bryan repeated his suggestion that the US either equally acquiesce to British and German actions or equally protest British and German actions. While Wilson agreed, he was not completely willing to send Britain a strong note protesting its interference with American trade. On 1 June, Wilson held a cabinet meeting where he and Bryan disagreed over sending a strong note to Britain, and Bryan accused the cabinet of pro-Allied sympathies. On 2 June, Wilson began composing the second *Lusitania* note and turned to Lansing and Bryan for advice. Lansing sent Wilson legal data, while Bryan tried once more to get Wilson to agree with his opinion. After receiving the letters, Wilson used Lansing's data and his own opinions. Upon receiving a copy of Wilson's second note and a personal note from Wilson describing his inability to support Bryan's ideas, Bryan accepted the fact that he needed to resign. On 9 June, Bryan officially resigned as Secretary of State after clearly noting that Wilson was no longer acting in a neutral manner.<sup>123</sup>

Bryan's resignation allowed Wilson's foreign policy to become discernibly pro-Allied, because Bryan represented the small restraining force against Wilson. Bryan's resignation effectively allowed Wilson to become his own Secretary of State even though Robert Lansing officially became the Secretary of State. Following Bryan's resignation Wilson also ignored Walter Hines Page, US Ambassador to England, and James W. Gerard US Ambassador to Germany.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 384.

<sup>123</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 390-424.

<sup>124</sup> DeWeerd, *President Wilson*, 16-18.

In addition to administrative difficulties created by Bryan's resignation Wilson's second *Lusitania* note increased diplomatic difficulties with Germany. The German government realized with the second *Lusitania* note that Wilson refused to recognize their declared war zone. However, the tone of Wilson's note appealed to German morality and diplomatic friendship, and many in the German government recognized it and thought that attempts should be made to come to an understanding with the US. Germany's willingness to come to an understanding with US was limited to maintaining some part of the submarine campaign.<sup>125</sup>

Before Germany replied to the second *Lusitania* note, Wilson and his administration had begun to reflect the American public's suspicion of German activities and fear the German and Austro-Hungarian governments were supporting plots to encourage strikes in munitions plants. From June to August, American police and British officials discovered evidence of German activities for sabotage against the US and Wilson administration at home. In August, additional documents were released by the Wilson administration that publicized German activities and propaganda in the US. At this time, numerous arrests of German-Americans and German officials in the US added to American resentment against Germany.<sup>126</sup>

On 8 July, Germany replied to the second *Lusitania* note. The German reply only offered appeasement as it defended the German violation of Wilson's principles to retaliate against the British blockade. It also offered to allow Americans to travel on neutral ships that were specially marked if the German government was given advanced notice. Wilson noted that the note offered an improvement of u-boat conduct that persuaded Wilson that submarine warfare could be conducted legally. Still, Wilson refused the German offer and argued that the issues between

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<sup>125</sup> Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 383-456.

<sup>126</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 426-427.

Germany and Britain could only be considered separately. In the third *Lusitania* note, the US settlement demands went beyond American neutral rights to include the rights of all neutral nations and preventing violations in the future. The third note reiterated the US demand for Germany to disavow the u-boat commander's actions.<sup>127</sup>

It was not until July 1915 that Wilson realized that he could not achieve a satisfactory settlement with Germany over its submarine attacks; although, he was able to get Germany to suspend its unrestricted submarine warfare. This realization forced Wilson to begin considering preparedness plans for American defense. These plans included an enlargement of the US Navy and Army. Wilson's preparedness campaign became public when he asked for appointments with Congressional committees that would conduct the preparations. In addition, a letter from Sir Edward Grey on 10 August suggested the formation of a "League of Nations" and American membership in the League. Grey also linked US peace negotiations to a guarantee for future peace. This pulled Wilson towards stronger pro-British sympathies especially as he received information that increased his unfriendliness to Germany.<sup>128</sup>

From August to September, Wilson's determination to solve the German submarine problem came to a breaking point, as the *Arabic* was torpedoed causing additional American casualties. Austria-Hungary took responsibility for the sinking, though the ship was sunk by a German u-boat flying the Austrian flag. Towards the end of August, Wilson allowed Lansing to push Germany aggressively to settle the *Lusitania* case. On 1 September, Germany acquiesced and ordered its submarine commanders not to sink passenger liners without warning and provide

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<sup>127</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 427-429.

<sup>128</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 431-432.

for the safety of civilians if the ships did not flee or attack. Wilson viewed these concessions as a success.<sup>129</sup>

### Belligerent Policies Force Wilson's Hand

From September 1915 to May 1916, Wilson's foreign policy and neutral policy faced great difficulties. Wilson was increasingly forced to meet the belligerents on their terms and as a result, he abandoned his pacifist policy for military preparedness. He continued to face issues from Germany's submarine campaign that severely tested his will to keep the US out of WWI. At the same time, Wilson was unable to protect US neutral rights from extension of the British blockade to mail and all contraband. During this period, Wilson was also frustrated by his inability to initiate peace negotiations.

Wilson was forced to abandon his use of American moral force for demands that the belligerents agree to disarmaments, a League of Nations, and to begin negotiations. However, this final demand was offered without ensuring definite commitments. By this time, Wilson had concluded that a turning point had been reached. This turning point required Wilson to rely on British cooperation to begin peace negotiations. Wilson was therefore forced to avoid actions that consisted of uncompromising demands on Britain to observe American trade rights or risk losing British support.<sup>130</sup>

In March 1916, Wilson was plagued by armed merchant ships and its affect on the German submarine campaign. During this time, Wilson attempted to develop an armed ship policy that would get Congressional approval, was defensible to the Allies, and would not start a

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<sup>129</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 434-438.

<sup>130</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 528-529.

conflict with Germany. On 2 March, Wilson decided to urge Britain to pledge that its armed ships would not fire on submarines while they warned or searched British ships. He also decided that if Britain refused he could justifiably treating armed ships as men of war. However, Lansing wanted to distinguish between offensive and defensive weapons. Lansing researched the situation and drafted a proposal to establish US policy on armed ships. It stated the US accepted the right of ships to arm for defense and the duty of war ships to warn and allow people to evacuate armed ships. It also stated that the US would consider armed ships auxiliary cruisers if US government learns that these ships sail under orders to hunt and destroy submarines or armed ships behave in the same manner. Lansing sent the message to Wilson on 24 April, who had it published on 26 April.<sup>131</sup>

#### The *Sussex* and the *Sussex* Pledge

On 24 March, the *Sussex* was torpedoed by a submarine injuring four Americans. Wilson viewed this incident as another threat from the u-boat campaign, while his administration saw it as a reason to break off relations with Germany. In response to the *Sussex*, Wilson preferred to wait while his cabinet wanted to break relations with Germany if the German government refused to admit that submarine warfare was illegal. By 7 April, Wilson was still searching for a way to hold Germany responsible for its actions and avoid war. At this time, Wilson's administration became adamant that Germany would have to abandon its submarine campaign to avoid a break in relations with the US.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Arthur S Link, *Confusions and Crises 1915-1916*, vol. 4 of *Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964) 222-224.

<sup>132</sup> Link, *Confusions and Crises*, 242-249.



In March, Lansing sent Wilson a note that stated the attack on-the *Sussex* repeated the *Lusitania* incident at a time when the American and German governments were close to “an amicable settlement” of the *Lusitania* case. He wrote, “In these circumstances I do not see how we can avoid the issue and remain inactive,” as “Germany has renewed the method of warfare which we so strongly protested.”<sup>133</sup> Lansing also argued, “The time for writing notes discussing the subject has passed.”<sup>134</sup> He continued the US could not allow the submarine campaign to continue and he urged that Bernstorff be sent back to Germany and diplomatic relations severed to force the German government to accept US arguments that the submarine campaign was illegal and stop it.<sup>135</sup>

On 10 April, Lansing sent Wilson a copy of the *Sussex* note. The note stated that the torpedoing of the *Sussex* violated the rules of civilized warfare. It also stated that the US realizes the German government has ordered or allowed its submarine commanders to attack merchant ships and that this action violates a previous agreement between the US and German governments. The note concluded that the US declared its intentions to severe diplomatic relations with Germany unless the German government abandoned submarine warfare against merchant ships.<sup>136</sup> After sending the *Sussex* note, Wilson was determined to force Germany to end its u-boat campaign at the risk of war. During the negotiations, Wilson agreed to allow a

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<sup>133</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “From Robert Lansing to Wilson,” *January 27-May 8, 1916* vol. 36 of *The Papers* edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, John E. Little, and Dexter Gordon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 371-373.

<sup>134</sup> Wilson, “Robert Lansing to Wilson,” *January 27-May 8, 1916*, 372.

<sup>135</sup> Wilson, “Robert Lansing to Wilson,” *January 27-May 8, 1916*, 371-373.

<sup>136</sup> Wilson, “From Robert Lansing to Wilson with Enclosure,” *January 27-May 8, 1916*, 447-452.

legal submarine campaign against enemy cruisers to continue. On 7 May, Germany acceded to Wilson's demands, and Wilson accepted the new submarine campaign.<sup>137</sup>

### The Peak of British Commerce Control

In the summer of 1916, antagonism developed between the US and the British. Britain became incensed over one of Wilson's speeches where he announced that America was not interested in the "causes or the objects of this war". The main source of the British outrage was Wilson's use of the word "objects." The British were also upset over Wilson's continued efforts to begin peace negotiations. Americans were reciprocally upset with a new British trade policy that was developed at the Allies' Economic Conference in Paris from 14 June to 17 June. This conference decided to limit postwar trade with former allies, neutrals, and enemies effectively starting a trade war.<sup>138</sup>

In addition to the Allies' Economic Conference, on 18 July, Britain blacklisted eighty-five American firms from trading with Britain. This was viewed as further British attempts to control neutral trade. This action aroused a great deal of anger from the American public, Wilson's cabinet, the State Department, and Wilson himself. However, Wilson refused to act against the blacklist because he was running for re-election.<sup>139</sup> On 25 July, Wilson sent a note to the British Foreign Office protesting the blacklist. He argued that the blacklist would have "harsh and even disastrous effects upon the trade of the United States."<sup>140</sup> He charged Britain

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<sup>137</sup> Link, *Confusions and Crises*, 261-275.

<sup>138</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 538-540.

<sup>139</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 543.

<sup>140</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "From the United States Government to the British Foreign Office," *May 9-August 7, 1916* vol. 37 of *The Papers* edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, and John E. Little (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) 478.

with subjecting American citizens to arbitrary measures and stated that the blacklist allowed unlimited interruption of American trade. It also charged the British government had “too lightly and too frequently disregarded international practices and understandings.”<sup>141</sup> The blacklist became Britain’s final attempt to extend its blockade over neutral trade. Wilson’s protest of Britain’s blacklist was less sharp than his note to Germany over the *Sussex* case. The British note stopped short of making allegations the British policy was unfriendly because Wilson viewed the blacklist as a legal option even if it was detested in America. Wilson’s note to Germany was stronger because he considered Germany’s submarine campaign illegal.<sup>142</sup>

### Final Moves for Peace

Beginning in August, Germany pressured Wilson to move toward peace. Ambassador Bernstorff supported this by encouraging Wilson to mediate a conference of neutrals and belligerents. However, the Allies continued to refuse these moves preferring to conduct negotiations when their military situation had improved. Germany warned that this was impossible, that without peace negotiations the German government would resume its unrestricted submarine warfare. By September, the Allies were pushing for a military victory to ensure peace. On 14 September, French Prime Minister Aristide Briand declared that peace talks were “an outrage against the memory of so many heroes that had fallen for France,” while David Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, said “Germany elected to make it a finish fight...we intend to see that Germany has her way. The fight must be to the finish—to a knock out.” Lloyd

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<sup>141</sup> Wilson, “From the United States Government to the British Foreign Office,” *May 9-August 7, 1916* 477.

<sup>142</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 544-545.

George also said that there can be not outside interference at this stage, and that Britain would not tolerate any intervention for peace.<sup>143</sup>

In spite of this, Wilson continued talks with Bernstorff throughout October as Germany continued to pressure Wilson to start peace talks or prepare for war. The German government did not accept Wilson as a peace mediator at this point, because it believed Wilson was aligned with the Allies. As a result, Germany only accepted Wilson's help to make appeals for peace. On 20 October, Germany's situation was stressed to the point that if Wilson did not make a move for peace, the German government would resume unrestricted submarine warfare. On 24 October, Wilson became aware of this. In spite of this knowledge, Wilson continued to press the belligerents to accept peace. However, Wilson also realized that the US could no longer remain neutral to achieve peace.<sup>144</sup>

In November 1916, Wilson narrowly won his re-election for President. Following his re-election, Wilson refocused on starting peace negotiations. During November, the international situation worsened as Germany drew closer to resuming unrestricted submarine warfare, though Germany had already resumed attacking armed British, American, and other neutral merchant ships. On 14 November, Wilson decided he needed to demand that the fighting cease or the US would enter the war against Germany for breaking the *Sussex* pledge. However, House advised Wilson against this decision. Instead, House advised Wilson to wait even though Wilson felt that waiting would cause a diplomatic break with Germany.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 554-556.

<sup>144</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 557-561.

<sup>145</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 571.

In December, Wilson began demanding a peace settlement independent of preliminary negotiations between the belligerents. On 13 December, Wilson sent letters to the Central and Entente Powers expressing the other side's war terms.<sup>146</sup> On 18 December, Wilson sent appeals to the belligerents to state their war aims.<sup>147</sup> Lansing approved of the note but believed that it demonstrated that the US was moving closer to entering the war. This letter was the first completely neutral gesture Wilson made during WWI because he was desperately struggling to keep the US out of war and begin peace negotiations.<sup>148</sup>

Unfortunately, Wilson's attempt came too late, as the Central Powers rejected his note and interference in the war. On 3 January 1917, Wilson attempted to convince Germany to send him its war terms privately. Unfortunately, Wilson's attempt came too late because the German government decided to resume unrestricted warfare on 9 January. Wilson viewed war with Germany as undesirable; because of his beliefs, Wilson felt that if America entered the war then white civilization would be exhausted by war. Wilson feared this exhaustion would allow the Asian civilizations to dominate the world. This opinion further demonstrated Wilson's belief that the fate of western civilization depended on the ability of America to avoid the war.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "A Draft of A Note to the Entente Powers and the Central Powers," *November 20 1916-January 23, 1917*, vol. 40 of *The Papers* edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, John E. Little, and Fredrick Aandahl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 227-229.

<sup>147</sup> Wilson, "An Appeal for a Statement of War Aims," *November 20 1916-January 23, 1917*, 273-276.

<sup>148</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 587, 590-591.

<sup>149</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 595.

## Preludes to War

On 10 January, Germany declared that it would resume unrestricted submarine warfare in retaliation against armed merchant ship attacks on German submarines. Germany argued that the actions by and orders to armed merchant ships warranted declaring armed merchant ships as war ships in accordance with America's note from 25 March 1916.<sup>150</sup> Following Germany's declaration Wilson believed a break in relations with Germany would soon follow. On 1 February, Germany sent another note that described its reasons for resuming unrestricted warfare. In an attached memorandum, Germany declared that it would begin unrestricted warfare against ships caught in the war zone without additional warning.<sup>151</sup>

Wilson was deeply disappointed and resented Germany's complete renegeing of its earlier pledges because it made peace negotiations impossible due to the continued British to resistance to peace negotiations. In spite of this, Wilson continued his policy to prevent an American intervention in the war. However, Wilson was now willing to sever diplomatic relations with Germany hoping that by breaking relations it would bring "Germany to their senses."<sup>152</sup> From 1 February to 3 February, Wilson discussed the problems created by breaking relations with Germany. Wilson remained adamant that the US stay out of the war in an attempt to ward off domination from the "Yellow race."<sup>153</sup> Wilson also searched for a policy to deal with the u-boat crisis.

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<sup>150</sup> Wilson, "From Robert Lansing to Wilson; Enclosure I," *November 20 1916-January 23, 1917*, 448-452.

<sup>151</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "From Robert Lansing to Wilson; Enclosure," *January 24-April 6, 1917*, vol. 41 of *The Papers* edited by Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, John E. Little, and Fredrick Aandahl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 74-79.

<sup>152</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 612-613.

<sup>153</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 614.

### Wilson Breaks Diplomatic Relations with Germany

On 2 February, Wilson sent Lansing a note describing his intentions to break relations with Germany. Wilson wrote that by breaking relations with Germany America would be in a position to accomplish things it could not in strict neutrality. He wrote that the most important thing the US could do was declare Germany an outlaw nation.<sup>154</sup> On 3 February, Wilson addressed Congress and publically announced that the US had broken relations with Germany. During his address, Wilson described the numerous incidents his administration had dealt with and stated the various defenses Germany had issued to continue its submarine warfare. He also said that the German justifications did not warrant the actions it had taken and that the US could no longer maintain relations with the German government.<sup>155</sup> Wilson broke relations with Germany in continuation of his policy that held Germany strictly accountable for its actions.<sup>156</sup>

Following the break with Germany, Wilson refused to allow American merchant ships to be armed. On 6 February and 16 February, two American ships were sunk, and still Wilson refused to act against Germany much to the consternation of his cabinet. On 10 February, Wilson began final negotiations with Germany through the Swiss Foreign Minister Paul Ritter. These negotiations eventually failed due to the German government's attempts to extend a 1799 treaty with the US. Eventually, Wilson refused to conduct further negotiations and Germany began unrestricted submarine warfare. Wilson also attempted to get Austria-Hungary to accept a

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<sup>154</sup> Wilson, "From Robert Lansing to Wilson," *January 24-April 6, 1917*, 99-100.

<sup>155</sup> Wilson, "An Address to a Joint Session of Congress," *January 24-April 6, 1917*, 108-112.

<sup>156</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 615.

separate peace settlement that guaranteed its territorial integrity. This avenue also failed because Austria-Hungary refused to accept a separate peace from its allies.<sup>157</sup>

### Germany Forces the United States into World War I

From 12 to 21 March, eight American ships including the *Algonquin*, *Vigilancia*, *City of Memphis*, *Illinois*, and the *Heraldton* were sunk without warning by German submarines. These actions forced Wilson to ask Congress to declare war.<sup>158</sup> On 21 March, Wilson gave his administration one week to prepare legislation for Congress that would authorize him to declare war and scheduled a Joint session of Congress. On 28 March, Wilson broke diplomatic relations with Austria-Hungary.<sup>159</sup>

On 2 April, Wilson addressed Congress. Wilson stated that “It will be all the easier for us to conduct ourselves as belligerents in a high spirit of right and fairness because we act without animus.”<sup>160</sup> He continued that “it is a distressing and oppressive duty...which I have performed in addressing you...It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war...But the right is more precious than peace.”<sup>161</sup> Wilson’s address argued that because Germany had taken actions that violated American rights and international law, the US needed to enter the war to stop the German government. He stated that the US was fighting the German government not the German people, as America was a friend of the German people. Wilson also

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<sup>157</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 622-625.

<sup>158</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 633-636.

<sup>159</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 640.642.

<sup>160</sup> Wilson, “An Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” *January 24-April 6, 1917*, 526.

<sup>161</sup> Wilson, “An Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” *January 24-April 6, 1917*, 526.



stated that the US was entering the war to defend the ideals of democracy, liberty, and freedom.<sup>162</sup> On April 6, Congress approved the declaration of war and Wilson declared war with Germany on April 7, officially bringing the US into World War I.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Wilson, *January 24-April 6, 1917*, 519-527.

<sup>163</sup> Notter, *Origins of Foreign Policy*, 651.

## CHAPTER 5

### FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT'S WAR POLICIES

American foreign relations with Britain during the Second World War rested partly on the correspondence and personal relationship between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. It also depended on Roosevelt's preoccupation with averting Britain's defeat as a vital part of American security. FDR used this objective to invite the British leadership into dialogue and allowed Britain to receive American aid during the early years of World War II. FDR's willingness to create a personal relationship with Churchill during the war ensured Britain receiving aid for the duration of the war and laid the foundation for Anglo-American cooperation following America's entry.

#### The Roosevelt-Churchill Correspondence

The origin of Churchill and FDR's relationship during the war was a personal letter FDR sent Churchill on 11 September 1939. While the letter was sent mainly to Churchill, it included an invitation to Churchill and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain: "What I want you [Churchill] and the Prime Minister to know is that I shall at all times welcome it if you will keep in touch with me personally with anything you want me to know about. You can always send sealed letters through your pouch or my pouch."<sup>164</sup> This open invitation provided the British leadership with personal access to FDR even though Chamberlain was cynical of American aid. This letter opened a conduit for the two men to share both personal and professional information,

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<sup>164</sup> Martin Gilbert, "From Roosevelt to Winston Churchill," *Winston S. Churchill; Vol. VI Finest Hour 1939-1941*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), 52.

and develop a friendship during the war. These letters also established the foundation for future cooperation between the British and the United States.

Originally, the correspondence after FDR's initial invitation was sparse, but after Churchill's appointment to Prime Minister in May 1940 the volume of communications rapidly increased. The FDR's and Churchill's personal correspondence did not begin until the war; however, this had not stopped either man from admiring the other from afar. Churchill was known to admire FDR's New Deal attempts to end the Great Depression, while FDR admired Churchill for warning others of the dangers posed by Adolf Hitler and the uselessness of appeasement. Churchill's response to FDR's invitation to open wartime correspondence reflected this mutual admiration.<sup>165</sup> During WWII, Churchill did not hesitate to use this direct channel to request American assistance.<sup>166</sup> Eventually, these letters became an important means of gaining additional American support for British wartime needs.

FDR's invitation to personal correspondence with Churchill provided justification for FDR to ask Congress to provide Britain with military supplies. It was also FDR's attempt to maintain control of his administration by having a private line of communication to Churchill without influence from the rest of his administration. FDR encouraged the communication with Churchill due to Churchill's previous opinions of Adolf Hitler and military preparedness.<sup>167</sup> The Roosevelt-Churchill correspondence was useful because it allowed FDR to avoid some of the problems Wilson faced in World War I with the European leadership, and Roosevelt was

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<sup>165</sup> Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas eds., *Roosevelt and Churchill; Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1975) 3-13.

<sup>166</sup> Warren F. Kimball, *Forged In War; Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 48-49.

<sup>167</sup> Kimball, *Forged in War*, 38-39.

determined to avoid similar problems. The Roosevelt-Churchill correspondence allowed the two men to develop a friendship, unlike Wilson and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George who were allies as well as antagonists.

In addition to fostering a relationship between Roosevelt and Churchill, the communications allowed FDR's military advisors to gain access to Churchill's military advisors. In this fashion, the correspondence also created a basis for future collaboration when the U.S. joined the war. From 1939 to 1945, FDR and Churchill wrote 1,700 letters; these letters differed in style as their authors differed in personality. FDR's letters were concise and occasionally included input from his advisors, while Churchill's letters were longer and were written without additional input. The Roosevelt-Churchill correspondence established the Anglo-American collaboration as FDR and Churchill used it to exchange suggestions and desires. By February 1940, Roosevelt had repeatedly expressed a desire for a face-to-face meeting that Churchill eventually agreed to attend. Both men had different agendas for the conference, but their communications ensured that it did take place.

In August 1941, FDR and Churchill had their first face-to-face meeting of WWII; this was also the first opportunity for the British and American military advisors to meet. In this way, the letters helped establish Anglo-American cooperation and implemented the methods of joint Anglo-American military operations. While these letters were important in the establishment of the Anglo-American unity, they offer little information on the actual conferences and actual joint operations as these were delivered by verbal communications over transatlantic telephone conversations or through envoys.<sup>168</sup> Notwithstanding the lack of information in these letters on actual methods and actions for the war, they reveal other

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<sup>168</sup> Loewenheim et al., *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 3-13.

important information on the various ways Churchill and FDR communicated and what they communicated.

### The Correspondence Initiates American Aid

From the beginning, the letters Churchill and FDR exchanged were open and informal. As the British situation deteriorated, Churchill realized the British would need massive aid from the US to defeat Germany, he also believed that Britain and the United States shared mutual interests and purposes. Acting on this opinion, Churchill used his communications with FDR to keep FDR informed on British problems and needs. While FDR encouraged and sympathized with the British condition, he was often unable to act on Churchill's requests.<sup>169</sup> This predicament repeated itself during the first half of 1940 as German forces conquered Europe.<sup>170</sup>

Eventually, German victories made it possible for FDR to persuade the American public that Britain was a defensive partner against the Axis powers. This allowed FDR to acquire Congressional approval for modification of the neutrality laws to include the cash-and-carry principle, increase defensive spending, and approve the Selective Service Act. Following the French surrender, FDR worked to secure the destroyers for bases deal.<sup>171</sup> After receiving information in the fall of 1940 on the deteriorating British dollar situation, FDR began focusing on the passage of the Lend-Lease Act.<sup>172</sup> The communication channel between FDR and

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<sup>169</sup> Loewenheim et al., *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 3-13.

<sup>170</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 69, 78.

<sup>171</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 98-99.

<sup>172</sup> Hoehling, *America's Road*, 116-121.

Churchill provided FDR with valuable information, but it was not until events occurred that he was able to act on it.

While both men were admirable and friendly with the other, large and small differences existed. Some of the differences between Churchill and FDR's vision of the postwar world included the British Empire and the US open door policy. Churchill also believed a special unity existed between Britain and America as English speaking peoples, an opinion FDR did not share. Once the US entered the war, their differences became apparent. While both men disagreed over strategy and tactics, their personal relationship was important for maintaining Anglo-American cooperation during the war.<sup>173</sup> It was FDR and Churchill's personal relationship that allowed Anglo-American cooperation to continue during the war in spite of their numerous policy differences.

While Roosevelt's correspondence with Churchill was valuable as a conduit for the exchange of information and ideas, it did not provide Britain with all the aid it first requested. It was not until after France surrendered to Germany, that FDR was able to convince Congress to begin sending substantial aid to Britain. Prior to sending aid to Britain, FDR had an obvious pro-Britain opinion, though he did little in 1939 and the first half of 1940 to undo US diplomatic neutrality. FDR was often forced to reject many of the Allied appeals even if it worsened the Allies abilities to wage war.<sup>174</sup> Even with these difficulties, the correspondence between FDR and Churchill was necessary for American and British cooperation. The first requests that Churchill sent to FDR were for American action to encourage the French to continue fighting.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Loewenheim et al., *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 3-13.

<sup>174</sup> Loewenheim et al., "Churchill to Roosevelt; Roosevelt to Churchill," *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 94-96, 98-99, 100-103, 104-106,

<sup>175</sup> Loewenheim et al., *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 46-53.

Churchill wrote to FDR in the hopes that he could encourage FDR to demonstrate America's dedication to the French effort in a manner that would strengthen the French resolve and encourage the French not to sign an armistice with Germany. Churchill urged FDR that "Everything must be done to keep France in the fight and to prevent any idea of the fall of Paris...The hope with which you inspired them may give them strength to persevere."<sup>176</sup>

These requests continued and Churchill further encouraged FDR to "strengthen Reynaud the utmost you can and try to tip the balance in favour of the best and longest possible French resistance."<sup>177</sup> On 14 June 1940, Churchill again requested American intervention "up to the extreme limit open to you." On 15 June, he stated that only "A declaration that the United States will if necessary, enter the war might save France."<sup>178</sup> These requests were circumvented by FDR's replies in which he clearly expressed his inability to provide France with aid, though he continued to encourage cooperation with Britain.

Before the US entered the war, FDR often replied that the US government was doing everything possible to aid the Allies; however, US opinion prevented him from publically making commitments or asking for Congressional authorization for requested actions that he received from Churchill throughout the war.<sup>179</sup> On 15 June, Churchill dispatched a letter describing the likelihood of a German victory in France considering of its current success.

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<sup>176</sup> Loewenheim et al., "Churchill to Roosevelt," *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 98-99.

<sup>177</sup> Loewenheim et al., "Churchill to Roosevelt," *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 100.

<sup>178</sup> Loewenheim et al., "Churchill to Roosevelt" *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 101, 104.

<sup>179</sup> Loewenheim et al., *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 101-102 n3.

Despite Churchill's appeals, FDR continued to avoid directly acting on Churchill's requests for US intervention to prevent the French from signing the armistice with Germany.<sup>180</sup>

Following the French surrender Churchill began sending requests to FDR for thirty or forty obsolete American destroyers to counter the increased number of German submarines in the Atlantic.<sup>181</sup> France's defeat had lowered FDR's caution to transfer American destroyers to Britain, and he began searching for methods that would allow Britain to take possession of the destroyers. In response FDR's administration found legal ambiguity that allowed the United States to transfer the destroyers to Britain. It was not until repeated depictions of a British defeat forced FDR to accept the negotiated exchange of British bases for American destroyers.<sup>182</sup>

#### Major Effects of the Roosevelt-Churchill Correspondence

In spite of the destroyer deal's success, the negotiations were complex and politically difficult as FDR and Churchill had to move within politically acceptable parameters. To ensure success FDR's advisors urged Britain to guarantee that in the event Germany defeated Britain, Germany would not gain control of the British Navy. During early negotiations Churchill refused to provide this guarantee formally, instead he proposed to exchange the American destroyers for leases to British bases in its colonies.

In August 1940, FDR and senior members of his staff began drafting early provisions for the agreement. FDR publically announced that US was involved in negotiations with Britain on 16 August to acquire leases of British bases for greater American defense. The announcement

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<sup>180</sup> Loewenheim et al., "Churchill to Roosevelt," *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 98-99.

<sup>181</sup> Loewenheim et al., "Churchill to Roosevelt," *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 98-99.

<sup>182</sup> Charles Callan Tansill, *Back Door to War, The Roosevelt Foreign Policy 1933-1941*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952) 595-596.



was worded to encourage support from Congress and the American public. Eventually, FDR and his administration overcame the obstacles and transferred the destroyers in exchange for 99-year leases on British bases (after Churchill unofficially agreed to US conditions on the British Navy).<sup>183</sup>

Prior to the American entry into the war, Churchill repeatedly urged FDR to begin escorting convoys to Britain to ensure that orders were successfully delivered. At the time of Churchill's request FDR was unable to comply. FDR supported the idea of escorting convoys through the Atlantic as early as the winter of 1940 and 1941. However, domestic politics made implementation of this policy dangerous.<sup>184</sup> In April, FDR gained public opinion for escorts as heavy damages were inflicted on convoys from German submarine wolf packs. At this time, FDR contemplated expanding American patrols in the Atlantic by dispatching ships from Pearl Harbor to strengthen the Atlantic Fleet, but due to training problems and Congressional opposition FDR only sent a fraction of the ships he originally intended. On 15 April, FDR ordered one carrier and four destroyers to join the Atlantic Fleet to intensify and extend navy patrols in the Atlantic. Still, FDR had no intentions to begin American escorts to Europe even as he sent three battleships, four cruisers, and additional destroyers to the Atlantic in June.<sup>185</sup>

At the Atlantic Conference in August, FDR promised Churchill that the US Navy would begin escorting convoys in the Atlantic and that he would order patrols as far as 300 miles around the convoys to search for submarines to destroy. After the Atlantic conference FDR did not order escorts to begin immediately; it was not until September that FDR ordered escorts to

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<sup>183</sup> Tansill, *Back Door*, 596-599.

<sup>184</sup> Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt; A Rendezvous with Destiny* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1990) 369.

<sup>185</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 125-126, 130.

commence. On 4 September, the US destroyer *Greer* was attacked by a German submarine.<sup>186</sup> FDR responded to the *Greer* attack by ordering the US Navy to conduct search and destroy missions in the Atlantic against German submarines. He also ordered the US Navy to begin escorts on 11 September 1941.<sup>187</sup>

As the war continued and the British situation deteriorated in Europe, FDR worked overtime to increase the aid America provided to Britain. Between 1939 and 1941, the letters between Churchill and FDR were important in developing the destroyers for bases deal and the Lend-Lease Act. In the latter part of 1940, FDR learned that Britain's supply of cash was dwindling to the point that Britain could no longer afford to pay for its orders. On 7 December, Churchill sent an urgent personal letter to Roosevelt describing Britain's desperate financial situation and its continued need for American supplies.<sup>188</sup> Churchill wrote, "The moment approaches when we shall no longer be able to pay cash for shipping and other supplies" he continued that it would be unacceptable for the Allies to win at the physical and financial cost of Britain. Churchill concluded how he hoped the U.S. would not limit its aid "only to such munitions of war and commodities as could be immediately paid for."<sup>189</sup> FDR used Churchill's letter as support for sending the Lend-Lease Act to Congress. The Lend Lease Act allowed the British to pay in kind for its orders and therefore continue receiving American aid.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 150.

<sup>187</sup> Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 393.

<sup>188</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 105-106.

<sup>189</sup> Loewenheim et al., "Churchill to Roosevelt," *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 125.

<sup>190</sup> Tansill, *Back Door*, 602-604.

On 17 December 1940, FDR conducted a press conference in an attempt to garner support for extended aid to Britain and to gain passage for Lend-Lease. During the conference, FDR discussed the various ways the US could provide aid to Britain. To support further increased aid to Britain and to support the costs of Lend-Lease, Roosevelt provided the following illustration:

Suppose my neighbor's home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose four or five hundred feet away. If he can take my garden hose and connect it up with his hydrant, I may help him to put out his fire. Now, what do I do? I don't say to him before the operation, "Neighbor, my garden hose cost me \$15; you have to pay me \$15 for it." What is the transaction that goes on? I don't want \$15—I want my garden hose back after the fire is over. All right. If it goes through the fire all right, intact, without any damage to it, he gives it back to me and thanks me very much for the use of it. But suppose it gets smashed up—holes in it—during the fire; we don't have to have too much formality about it, but I say to him, "I was glad to lend you that hose; I see I can't use it any more, it's all smashed up." He says, "How many feet of it were there?" I tell him, "There were 150 feet of it." He says "All right, I will replace it." Now if I get a nice garden hose back, I am in pretty good shape.<sup>191</sup>

This illustration was devised in a way to demonstrate that while America would pay for supplies to Britain, the British would either return any undamaged supplies or unused supplies or replace used or damaged supplies in kind.

### The Atlantic Conference

FDR and Churchill did more than communicate needs for war materials and possible American intervention. During their correspondence FDR expressed a desire for an in-person meeting, and in August 1941 FDR and Churchill had their first WWII meeting off the coast of Newfoundland. At what would become known as the Atlantic Conference, the United States and Britain took steps to develop further diplomatic and military relations. The conference provided

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<sup>191</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Press Conference December 17, 1940," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/odllpc2.html> (accessed March 19, 2009).

an opportunity for the British and American military to create a military relationship for the remainder of the war.<sup>192</sup>

The main aspect of the Atlantic Conference was the cementing of Churchill and FDR's relationship. FDR's main reason for the conference was to develop a set of ideas and values that the Allies were defending that could also be used in the postwar world. This agreement, named the Atlantic Charter by the press, had a range of issues from basic freedoms to trade restrictions to self-determination to economic liberalism. In spite of FDR's desire, Churchill did not agree with the terms and was seeking war commitments from the U.S., but Churchill recognized that an agreement with the United States was of the greatest importance.<sup>193</sup>

Churchill on the other hand had hoped to use the Atlantic Conference to gain an American commitment on the war. Unfortunately, FDR was unwilling to fulfill Churchill's desires to provide an American declaration of war and refused to discuss details of the war during the conference. At the conference, FDR informed Churchill that he wanted to avoid entering into secret agreements and military or political commitments, although he did accept some of Churchill's war suggestions for further considerations. Still, FDR was only willing to act on some of Churchill's suggestions, mainly expanding the American safety patrol in the Atlantic, but he refused to allow American ships to convoy merchant ships to Britain.

While the Atlantic Conference was able to unite FDR and Churchill further on long-term goals, there were still occasions where neither man was willing or able to agree to the requests the other made. In spite of their differences, the British and American governments were able to create a relationship, and the military leaders were able to create a joint military plan for when

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<sup>192</sup> Kimball, *Forged in War*, 98-99.

<sup>193</sup> Kimball, *Forged in War*, 99-102

the US entered the war.<sup>194</sup> In many ways, FDR's correspondence with Churchill affected many of the actions he took before the United States officially entered the war.

#### American Neutrality and the Roosevelt-Churchill Correspondence

During the war, FDR's diplomacy with Britain provided the British war effort with all aid short of war; however, this did not begin until after France surrendered in June 1940. Despite FDR's obvious pro-British position, he did little diplomatically to undo America's neutrality. His first action implemented cash and carry, which was technically neutral although it mainly aided the Allies' war efforts. This continued through Churchill's first appeal for destroyers in May 1940 that FDR politely responded to but included, "A step of that kind could not be taken except with the specific authorization of the Congress and I am not certain that it would be wise for that suggestion to be made at the moment."<sup>195</sup> By this time, the Germans had amassed numerous victories and FDR continued to circumvent Churchill's appeals and suggestions. It was not until sometime after the French surrender that FDR began plans for the destroyers for bases deal.

While FDR was willing to increase the amount and type of aid sent to Britain after the destroyer deal, his correspondence with Churchill reveals that none of these moves were precursors to US intervention in WWII. These letters demonstrate that while the US was no longer neutral when the destroyer deal was completed it was still a nonbelligerent. Whether FDR's actions destined the US to enter the war or authorized actions that made it harder for the US to avoid active participation in WWII, his correspondence with Churchill did not establish any secret arrangements or commitments that would involve the US actively in the war.

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<sup>194</sup> Loewenheim et al., *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 46-53

<sup>195</sup> Loewenheim et al., *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 50.

From Churchill's communications, FDR was encouraged to take actions that increasingly moved the US from neutral to nonbelligerent. The major developments along this course were cash and carry, the destroyers deal, the Lend-Lease Act, and the Atlantic Conference. As the Roosevelt-Churchill communication continued both men recognized their interdependency and while Churchill desired active American participation at times, FDR refused to provide Britain with more aid than politically feasible.

### Roosevelt and Diplomacy with Japan

In World War II while the war in Europe dominated FDR's foreign policy, Asia repeatedly diverted his attention as Japan conducted expansionist policies in Southeast Asia. The Japanese agenda began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 as a remedy for economic problems caused by the Great Depression. By 1939, Japanese conquests were threatening the rest of the South Pacific, in particular the Allied colonies of Dutch East Indies and French Indochina. As Japanese plans unfolded, FDR was forced to create a policy in Southeast Asia that would maintain peace while he focused on Europe and stalled to make war preparations.

### Direction of Japanese-American Diplomacy

In 1935, FDR approved a foreign policy that used inaction and pacification to deal with Japan. FDR's approval of this policy did not ensure that he personally directed this policy; instead, FDR left this duty to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. It was Hull's responsibility to outline and initiate the specific terms of this policy. By delegating American diplomacy with Japan to Hull, FDR was able to focus on Europe up to 1941 when Japanese actions made it

necessary for FDR to take some actions.<sup>196</sup> From 1939-1940, Hull rarely received input from FDR during his diplomatic talks with Japan. It was not until 1941 that FDR began providing Hull with instructions for conducting Japanese-American talks.<sup>197</sup>

Hull's direction of American-Japanese talks followed a Wilsonian agenda that focused on maintaining the Open Door policy and self-determination. Hull repeatedly used morality in his diplomatic talks with the Japanese Ambassador and tried to get the Japanese imperial government to submit to it.<sup>198</sup> In addition, Hull did not support the use of economic and trade sanctions when he dealt with the Japanese and up to 1940 repeatedly convinced FDR not to authorize such actions. During WWII, FDR and Hull disagreed on how to conduct US policy towards Japan. The main divergence was Hull's preference to use diplomacy to stall Japan, while FDR preferred strong actions.<sup>199</sup>

Hull believed that diplomatic talks were less likely to compel Japan to attack than the alternative of using economic sanctions.<sup>200</sup> FDR believed that strong actions were needed to deter Japan and force it to acquiesce to US demands. FDR based this belief on reports that Japan needed large quantities of US goods to survive and that Japan's diplomatic gestures were insincere. In the 1930s, FDR was forced to decide between authorizing Hull's preference or his own preference. FDR chose to direct the policy by using strong actions and maintaining

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<sup>196</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) 76-77.

<sup>197</sup> Tansill, *Back Door to War*, 642.

<sup>198</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 188-189, 61-62.

<sup>199</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt* 193, 237.

<sup>200</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 237.

diplomacy.<sup>201</sup> Hull's moral diplomatic principles, Wilsonian agenda, and determination to maintain the status quo in the years prior to America's entry into WWII was as much a part of American foreign policy as FDR's unwillingness to direct US policy in Asia.<sup>202</sup>

### American Understanding of Japanese War Finances

Beginning with Japan's invasion of China in 1937, the US government had calculated that Japan could not afford a long war because it lacked hard currency and imported essential raw materials. These raw materials included iron, steel, copper, lead, zinc, petroleum, wool, leather, lumber, chemicals, and food because the Japanese Empire lacked them. Due to Japan's necessity to purchase these exports in gold and hard currency, the US Treasury Department estimated that Japanese banks would be depleted by these purchases thus rendering Japan internationally bankrupt forcing it to abandon the war in China.<sup>203</sup>

The US government used these predictions to determine a policy that observed and studied Japanese finances. These predictions were based on calculations that Japan would go bankrupt as early as September 1939 and as late as mid 1941. Unfortunately, these calculations were made without knowledge that Japan had created a secret cache of gold and US dollars that kept delaying its bankruptcy. It was not until late 1940 that the US Treasury Department discovered this cache, which was capable of financing Japan's war into 1943.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Tansill, *Back Door*, 619-624.

<sup>202</sup> Tansill, *Back Door*, 642.

<sup>203</sup> Edward S. Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy; The U.S. Financial Siege of Japan Before Pearl Harbor* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007) 48-49.

<sup>204</sup> Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy*, 53-55.



### Early American Responses to Japanese Actions

Following Japan's announcement of its plan to create a "new order in East Asia" between Japan, Manchukuo, and China in 1939, FDR and Hull imposed a moral embargo against airplane sales to Japan. The embargo did not compel Japan to cease its plans and it continued expanding in Asia. Hull and FDR responded to continued Japanese expansion by sending additional verbal and written protests. In addition, FDR also authorized a loan to China in an attempt to delay Japan's invasion. In a blow to American policy, the Craigie-Arita declaration, or Tientsin settlement forced Britain to accept Japan's position in China. The Roosevelt administration responded by issuing a new round of diplomatic protests while avoiding strong actions in Southeast Asia.<sup>205</sup>

Upon discovering Japan's hidden assets, the Treasury Department debated freezing Japanese assets to deny Japan money to finance its war. In response, Washington officials considered enacting the Trading with the Enemy Act; however, earlier predictions of Japan's pending bankruptcy dissuaded the administration from enacting policies to initiate Japan's bankruptcy. In 1939, Roosevelt inquired into prohibiting the Japanese sales of gold to the Treasury. Morgenthau informed FDR such policies would hurt the US more than Japan and that an embargo against shipping commodities to Japan was a better policy.<sup>206</sup> The Treasury Department's discovery of Japan's secret cache of dollars forced Japan to quickly remove its money from US banks or spend it abroad. The discovery also revived interests to use strong financial controls against Japan to force an end of the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 192-194.

<sup>206</sup> Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy*, 73.

<sup>207</sup> Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy*, 74.

During this time, domestic opinion pushed FDR to place an embargo against shipping war supplies and materials to Japan. In spite of this, FDR and Hull refused to initiate an embargo; both men hoped that not establishing an embargo would prevent additional hostilities. Negative public opinion increased following the Tientsin settlement; in response, FDR instructed Hull to deliver a presidential protest. On 26 July, FDR announced that the US was abandoning the 1911 commercial treaty with Japan in six months. This announcement provided FDR with the public reaction he wanted while allowing him to avoid imposing an embargo against Japan.<sup>208</sup>

In the second half of 1939, FDR continued to follow a foreign policy that was designed to restrain Japan and maintain peace in the Pacific. FDR's decision to abandon the 1911 treaty was his first authorized use of economic sanctions against Japan. This 1911 treaty between Japan and America allowed US and Japanese companies and citizens the right to conduct domestic commerce and open consulates as well as granting ships free port access and equal travelers' rights. The treaty could only be abrogated by either side with six months notice. By abrogating the treaty, the US could discriminate against Japanese commerce.<sup>209</sup>

#### Beginning of American Economic Restrictions Against Japan

Following the Roosevelt's administrations economic action, an American presence was established in the Pacific as the US fleet was stationed in Manila Bay and Pearl Harbor and ordered to conduct naval maneuvers in the Hawaiian waters. FDR also instructed Hull to inform Japan that economic sanctions would be used if the United States and Japan could not maintain

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<sup>208</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 194-195.

<sup>209</sup> Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy*, 78.

the possibility of reaching an accord. FDR's decision was designed to strengthen Japanese moderates and weaken desires to make additional incursions into the Allied colonies in the Pacific. At first, the policy appeared to be succeeding, but in January 1940 tensions between China and Japan increased, and Japan renewed its efforts to create a "new order in East Asia".<sup>210</sup>

Japan's "new order" included expansion into the British, French, and Dutch colonies in the Pacific. It began with an invasion of French Indochina in 1940. These actions increased calls from China, Britain, and France for US actions, which FDR refused. In July, after Japan forced Britain to close the Burma Road, FDR and his administration began debating the US policy against Japan; part of the debate included a plan presented by Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. to use an oil embargo to deter Japan. However, FDR was in the process of running for a third term and was cautious about initiating an action that could endanger his chances for reelection, although FDR supported Morgenthau's plan he did not execute the proposal.<sup>211</sup>

FDR's reluctance to begin economic and trade sanctions only lasted for so long; by July 1940 FDR was given an opportunity to begin using economic and trade sanctions against Japan. On 2 July, the National Defense Act was passed, which authorized FDR to limit or embargo military equipment, munitions, or military material by presidential proclamation. It also included an article that allowed FDR to limit or embargo those materials considered vital to national security.<sup>212</sup> With Morgenthau's influence, FDR used the National Defense Act to initiate an embargo of petroleum, petroleum products, and scrap metal exports on Japan.

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<sup>210</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 236-238

<sup>211</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 239.

<sup>212</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Proclamation No. 2413" 2 July 1940, in *1940 War and Aid to Democracies*, vol. 9 of *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1941) 277-281.

FDR was also influenced by reports of an increase in Japanese orders for high-grade aviation fuel from the US. in an attempt to deplete US supplies. FDR responded by signing a Treasury Department proclamation limiting oil and scrap metal exports to Japan. This proclamation was delayed when Sumner Welles protested that the State Department had not seen the proclamation and argued that the restrictions in the proclamation would provoke hostilities from Japan. This forced FDR to modify the order to restrict exports of aviation fuel, aviation lubricants, and melting scrap to Japan.<sup>213</sup>

Between July and October 1940, FDR instructed the State Department to ease Japan's ability to purchase American oil in an attempt to keep Japan out of the Dutch East Indies. This included allowing the Japanese to take advantage of a loophole in FDR's proclamation to purchase mid-grade gasoline. FDR also authorized the State Department to fulfill sixty percent of Japan's demand for increased Dutch colony oil shipments.<sup>214</sup> While FDR was willing to tolerate oil shipments to Japan, he was unwilling to allow Japan to receive exports of scrap metal.

As Japan continued its expansionist drive in Asia, it began exerting pressure on Vichy France to grant access to Indochina. Simultaneously, Japan increased its orders for American scrap metal, threatening to create a shortage of scrap metal and oil in the US. On 13 September, in response to Japanese actions, FDR began looking for methods to embargo scrap metal to Japan instead of embargoing oil.<sup>215</sup> On 26 September, following Japan's invasion of Indochina, FDR announced a full embargo of scrap metal on Japan. Embargoes against Japan on shipments

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<sup>213</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 240.

<sup>214</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 241.

<sup>215</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich*, 90-91.

of scrap metal were augmented by other embargoes. In addition to ordering an embargo on scrap metal, FDR instructed the Department of Agriculture to stop paying subsidies for Asian wheat exports because Japan was the main buyer.<sup>216</sup> These embargoes did not stop Japan from signing the Tripartite Pact with Berlin and Rome. However, the signing provoked interventionists in FDR's administration to push for a complete oil embargo and orders sending the Pacific fleet to Singapore.<sup>217</sup>

#### A Division in the Roosevelt Administration

The signing of the Tripartite Pact also increased a division among FDR's advisors over American policy on Japan. The division consisted of a disagreement over the use of diplomacy or sanctions when deterring Japanese aggression. Hull, Welles, and FDR's military advisors preferred diplomacy as a means to discourage additional Japanese aggression, provide time for military preparations, and continue aiding Britain. Morgenthau, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, and Secretary of War Henry Stimson preferred the use of economic and trade sanctions to deter Japanese aggression in the Pacific.<sup>218</sup>

This division often forced FDR to follow one recommendation then alter the decision to include the other side's. This infighting caused FDR to revise several authorizations concerning his Japanese policy. This included the Treasury proclamations on oil and material embargoes that FDR authorized by 1941. One example was FDR's intention to authorize a proposal by Stimson and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to embargo all trade with Japan and conduct

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<sup>216</sup> Tansill, *Back Door*, 627.

<sup>217</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich*, 92.

<sup>218</sup> Tansill, *Back Door*, 624.

naval patrols in the Pacific. After protests from other members of his administration, FDR reneged on this as well. From September 1940 to December 1940 FDR authorized embargoes on everything but oil to Japan in attempts to pressure Japan to end its expansion in Asia.<sup>219</sup>

### American Restrictions Harden

From January to November, FDR also issued moral protests and diplomatic warnings to Japan while he allowed Hull to conduct talks with the Japanese in an attempt to settle Japanese-American differences. Although FDR placed little faith in a successful settlement from the talks, he allowed the talks to continue as a means to stall the Japanese.<sup>220</sup> Between June and July, Japanese actions caused a renewal of domestic pressure on FDR to begin an oil embargo against Japan. Yet, FDR continued not to act fearing an oil embargo would provoke Japan into attacking Russia or invade the Pacific. It was not until the summer of 1941 that Japanese advances forced FDR to authorize economic and financial sanctions against Japan.<sup>221</sup>

Before the US entry into the war, Morgenthau and the Treasury Department were eager to use export controls to wage an economic war against Japan. To be most effective against Japan a financial freeze would provide Morgenthau the necessary powers to ensure that Japan could not purchase the needed materials to continue its war with China.<sup>222</sup> On 25 February 1941, Morgenthau was informed that in view of current problems Japan was vulnerable to financial

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<sup>219</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 241-243

<sup>220</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 271-273.

<sup>221</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 273-274.

<sup>222</sup> Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy*, 86.

crisis if its US assets were frozen.<sup>223</sup> On 24 July, Washington announced that Japanese assets in the US were frozen. By the time the announcement was made Japan had already withdrawn \$29 million out of the original \$160 million it had in American bank accounts for purchases in Latin America or transfers to non-US accounts.<sup>224</sup>

On 24 July, FDR ordered all Japanese assets in the US to be frozen and authorized further restrictions on trade to Japan; however, FDR still refused to order an oil embargo against Japan. Due to a failure of communication, the omission of oil from the trade restrictions was not clearly expressed. This allowed State Department officials to act as though a total embargo of trade and oil was in effect against Japan and Japanese leaders responded in a similar manner. In addition, an ambiguous announcement on 1 August that petroleum export licenses had to be resubmitted was not properly transmitted to Japan creating a *de facto* oil embargo. FDR was originally unaware of the *de facto* embargo; however, after he became aware of it he refused to remove it. From 1939-1941, FDR defended his refusal to order an oil embargo against Japan as a means to keep Japan out of the Dutch East Indies and prevent war from beginning in the Pacific between the US and Japan. FDR refused to remove the *de facto* oil embargo believing it would make the US appear weak and that Japan would exploit it.<sup>225</sup>

In January 1941, the Japanese sent Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura to replace the Japanese Ambassador to the US in an attempt to improve Japanese-American relations. FDR and Hull officially received Nomura in February; at this time, FDR left Hull in charge of the diplomatic talks. These talks continued through November when negotiations broke down days before the

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<sup>223</sup> Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy*, 106-107

<sup>224</sup> Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy*, 179.

<sup>225</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 273-275.

Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. While Hull was conducting talks with Nomura, FDR continued looking for ways to stop Japan including providing aid to China through Lend-Lease. The debate over the diplomacy or sanctions continued and FDR continued to adopt actions from both to maintain peace in the Pacific.<sup>226</sup>

In April, Japanese-American talks began to breakdown as Japan urged the State Department to accept its peace terms that included demands that the US end its aid to China and accept Japanese positions in the Pacific. Hull responded to this demand with American terms that required Japan to respect territorial integrity, national sovereignty, the Open Door Policy, and the status quo in the Pacific. Japan responded with a second proposal that Hull rejected because it did not contain the principles he outlined in his earlier response that he deemed necessary for negotiations to continue.<sup>227</sup> This move created a temporary breakdown in negotiations between America and Japan as both sides reorganized.

Following this breakdown of negotiations, Japan decided to move aggressively and issued demands to the Vichy government to grant Japanese troops access into Indochina. US Naval intelligence provided FDR and his administration with this information from a code breaker called “magic” which deciphered Japanese diplomatic cables. This allowed FDR to view Japanese attempts to resume diplomatic talks as insincere, because Japan continued to make plans for expanding into Southeast Asia. In spite of this belief, FDR allowed diplomatic talks to resume in an attempt to delay war in the Pacific.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent* 116-117.

<sup>227</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 116-117.

<sup>228</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 275.



In August, before FDR had the Atlantic Conference with Churchill, the Japanese Minister to the US presented Hull with a settlement offer. The settlement contained offers that would limit Japanese troops in Indochina and China if the US would cease military maneuvers in the South Pacific, restore normal Japanese-American trade, and allow Japan access to natural resources in the Pacific. Hull did not approve of the offer; he also rejected a proposal on 5 August for FDR and Prime Minister Prince Konoye meet. Hull rejected this proposal as he believed that no gains could be made from a meeting between Konoye and FDR. On 17 August, after the Atlantic Conference, FDR sent Nomura a warning against Japanese expansion into the Pacific. FDR also informed Nomura that he would only meet with Konoye if Japan suspended its expansionist activities and began a peaceful program in the Pacific. On 28 August, Nomura presented FDR with another letter from Konoye pleading for a meeting in Hawaii. FDR replied that Hawaii was too far away while Alaska was more suitable.<sup>229</sup>

On 6 September, a Japanese government meeting was held that decided to continue war preparations to be completed by the end of November as a contingency in case the Japanese Foreign Office failed to force Britain and the US to accept Japanese demands end the same period. This information was also provided by US intelligence and it allowed FDR to refuse answering Konoye's request, leaving the reply to Hull who issued a statement similar to his April 1941 reply that demanded Japanese acquiescence of American principles for a meeting to take place.<sup>230</sup> In spite of these barriers, Japanese-American diplomacy continued as FDR supported continued talks in an effort to gain time for US preparations.

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<sup>229</sup> Tansill, *Back Door*, 638-641.

<sup>230</sup> Tansill, *Back Door*, 641-642.

### Negotiations with Japan Stall

From 1939 to 1941, the majority of talks between Japan and the US centered on resolving differences, though by October 1941, it was becoming evident that these differences were irreconcilable. On 16 October, a new cabinet came to power in Tokyo as Prince Konoye resigned and General Hideki Tojo became the new Prime Minister. This change in leadership increased Japan's willingness to risk war with the US. Still, this move did not alter the advice from FDR's military advisors who continued to argue against issuing a warning to Japan about its expansion. This forced FDR to develop another method to continue his policy to stall Japan and delay for time to prepare.<sup>231</sup>

Diplomatic talks resumed in November under a new direction as FDR considered the various methods to stall Japan to provide the military with more time to prepare for war. On 6 November, FDR discussed plans for a truce with Japan with Stimson. When FDR suggested the truce last for six months Stimson argued against the idea. Stimson argued that a six-month truce would prevent the US from defending the Philippines and would alienate China. On 7 November, FDR stressed the importance of maintaining diplomatic channels with Japan to Hull. FDR asked Hull to "stress every nerve to satisfy and keep on good relations with the Japanese negotiators. Don't let the talks deteriorate and break up if you can possibly help it'...'Let us make no move of ill will. Let us do nothing to precipitate a crisis'."<sup>232</sup> Most of FDR's desire to continue diplomacy was due to information received from "magic" deciphers that covered messages sent from Tokyo to Nomura between 4 and 5 November that stated Japan would try one last time to find an accommodation with the US. If accommodations were not successful,

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<sup>231</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 304.

<sup>232</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 305.

then diplomacy would end by 25 November. This date was later extended to 29 November in later communications.<sup>233</sup>

### Diplomacy Fails

The final negotiations between the US and Japan began on 10 November when Nomura presented Hull with Japan's first offer called Plan A. Plan A discussed Japanese-American differences but offered no solutions; instead Japan offered an agreement similar to the Tripartite Pact that would guarantee Japanese neutrality unless the US went to war with Germany. Hull refused this proposal because it did not include his past proposals. In the period between 14-18 November, Nomura and Saburo Kurusu attempted to present a *modus vivendi* that would be a temporary agreement between the US and Japan. However, Tokyo rejected this on 18 November and ordered Nomura and Kurusu to present Plan B.<sup>234</sup>

Plan B offered that Japan and the US would not make any military advances into Southeast Asia and the South Pacific except for French Indochina to allow the Japanese to fight China. In return, Japan would withdraw troops from Southern Indochina into Northern Indochina and completely withdraw after an "equitable Pacific peace" was established. In addition, both sides would cooperate to gain goods from the Dutch East Indies and restore pre-freeze conditions and the US would not interfere in efforts to restore Sino-Japanese peace.<sup>235</sup>

On 17 November, FDR instructed Hull to get Japan to agree to a six-month plan that would resume Japanese-American economic relations in return for an end to Japanese troop buildup in the Pacific; in spite of these orders, FDR noted he had little faith in the proposal's

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<sup>233</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 305-306.

<sup>234</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 306.

<sup>235</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 306.

success. At the same time, the State Department drafted an American *modus vivendi*. The diplomatic situation continued to deteriorate from 22 to 26 November, as the Japanese refused to stop their expansion into the Pacific while internal and international pressure opposed the *modus vivendi*.<sup>236</sup>

Hull replied to Japan's Plan B on 26 November with a ten-point memorandum that demanded Japan withdrawal from the South Pacific and Japan's acceptance of the *status quo* in return for US trade and financial assistance, which Tokyo rejected.<sup>237</sup> On 6 December, FDR sent a personal message to Emperor Hirohito in a final attempt to maintain diplomacy and stall a war in the Pacific. FDR appealed to Hirohito on the principles of peace and "in the right of nations to live and let live." He argued that by ending the Sino-Japanese War Japan could create peace. FDR also appealed to Hirohito to withdraw Japanese forces from French Indochina as another way to create peace in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, the message was sent at 9pm Washington time that was equal to 11am on 7 December Tokyo time.<sup>238</sup>

At the same time the State Department sent FDR's letter to Hirohito, the US Naval Intelligence Office decoded the first thirteen parts of a fourteen-part reply to Hull's 26 November memorandum. The substance of the letter was a review of the deterioration of Japanese-American diplomacy and an analysis of the 26 November memorandum. The final part of the letter charged the US with conspiring with Britain to stop Japan's "new order in Asia" and severed diplomatic relations with the US. The fourteenth point of the letter arrived on December

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<sup>236</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 307-308.

<sup>237</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 152-153.

<sup>238</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt "The President Sends a Personal Appeal to Emperor Hirohito to Avoid War in the Pacific," 6 December 1941, 1941 in *1941 The Call to Battle Stations*, vol. 10 of *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt* compiled by Samuel I Rosenman, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1950) 511-513.

7 before the attack but due to a delay was not presented to Hull until an hour after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. On 8 December, Congress authorized a declaration of war against Japan, bringing the US into the Second World War.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 155-157.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The US entered World War I and World War II because of the threat posed by Germany in WWI and Japan in WWII. These dangers threatened the national safety of the US, which Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt used to convince Congress to declare war as a measure to defend the US. The physical threat to the US in WWII was greater than it was in WWI. The dangers created by the inability of America's allies to defeat their enemies ensured that at some point the US would have entered the war. The similarities in the US entry into both World Wars were the American responses to events during the wars. Aggressive policies in the First and Second World Wars by Germany—later Germany and Japan—instilled fears of war in the US public. Prior to American involvement, a strong desire existed in the American public to avoid entering the wars because the wars were not an American concern, and because the US should not involve itself in foreign issues. Both of these attitudes demonstrate the inability of the US to comprehend the influence of foreign events on American soil.

To argue the US entered the World Wars because of aggression from another nation would be partially correct. However, this oversimplifies the additional events and trends that lent themselves to directing America's cause toward intervention. Events from 1914-1917 and 1938-1941 greatly influenced American perceptions of its position in the world. By demonstrating that the US could not distance itself from the rest of the world, these wars forced Americans to realize they also had a claim in ensuring world security and peace. The major events of the wars demonstrated this reality, while other happenings during the war reinforced these changing perceptions.

Public opinion during the World Wars was quite a significant factor in directing the US government's course of action. The best examples of public opinion influencing government policies were the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915 and the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Both events created an outpouring of public sentiment that was vehemently anti-German in 1915, and equally if not more anti-Japanese in 1941. An interesting note is that in 1915 while the majority of Americans were anti-German, most did not want to enter World War I. The case was the opposite in World War II where the majority of Americans did demand the US intervene. It is also important to note that while American lives were lost when the *Lusitania sank*, the *Lusitania* was a British passenger ship, and Britain was at war with Germany. This was not the case when Japan attacked American forces at Pearl Harbor because the US was not at war with Japan when Japan attacked the US Pacific Fleet.

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 drastically affected public opinion. The American public responded to the attack with shock and anger; however, Americans quickly rallied to defend democracy from the dangers posed by Japan and Germany. Americans greatly supported the US entrance into WWII partly due to the magnitude of the threat Germany and Japan posed to US security, in addition to optimism that the US would defeat them. The overwhelming majority of Americans supported the US entry into the war because the US had been attacked.<sup>240</sup>

America's entry into WWI was due mainly to the actions of Germany beginning in the summer of 1914. In July, Americans watched European events move toward war with misunderstanding and composure. Most Americans were neutral in their attitudes toward the belligerent; it was not until August that most biases began to favor the Entente except for German- and Irish-Americans. This was mainly due to Germany's refusal to side with Britain to

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<sup>240</sup> Adam J. Berinsky, "Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites and American Public Support for Military Conduct," *The Journal of Politics*, 69, no. 4 (November 2007): 975-997.

curb Austro-Hungarian aggression. In addition, Kaiser Wilhelm II's failure to restrain Austria from starting the war, or failure to support British peace overtures allowed most Americans to focus most of the war responsibility on Wilhelm for precipitating and plotting for the war even though Britain had also done little to restrain its allies from going to war. The German invasion of Belgium completed the alignment of most American press to the Entente's side.<sup>241</sup>

World War I saw the American public react to two major warfare policies: the British blockade and German submarine warfare. The British blockade was viewed as an illegal measure, a violation of US neutral rights. This view softened over time, as Americans became accustomed to this method of warfare. This reconciliation would not be possible for submarine warfare, especially after Germany authorized unrestricted attacks on all ships around the British coast.

American resentment against Britain for its actions against American neutral rights had reached the point that it could have brought the US into the war against Britain. However, American anger was redirected by Germany's submarine warfare. The sinking of the *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915, was the first experience the American public had with the type of warfare waged by the submarine. The sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German submarine roused American passion and opinion against Germany. The anti-German resentment in America did not rouse public support for declaring war.<sup>242</sup> Newspapers printed days after the *Lusitania*'s sinking expressed American resentment and outcry at the "murder" of American citizens by the German attack. The newspapers also included calls for war but most were against declaring war with

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<sup>241</sup> McDiarmid, *America's Defense*, 3-4.

<sup>242</sup> McDiarmid, *America's Defense*, 61-62.



Germany.<sup>243</sup> American public opinion also supported theories that the *Lusitania* had been deliberately sunk because the *Lusitania* sailed from New York City on the same day the German Embassy advertised a warning to Americans not to travel on belligerent ships. Wilson's speech following the *Lusitania* added a calming effect against American desires to go to war.<sup>244</sup> The *Lusitania* case was temporarily settled until the *Arabic* was attacked.

The *Sussex* was attacked on 24 March 1916. American public responded by resuming its demands that diplomatic relations with Germany were severed. However, the American public continued its demands to remain out of the war. Public opinion was not as vehement as it had been in earlier cases mostly because no Americans died when the *Sussex* was torpedoed; however, this did not stop the government from acting. Americans responded negatively to the German government's reply to Wilson's *Sussex* note. Submarine warfare was opposed by most Americans; however, the most fervent protests occurred when an American died in an attack.<sup>245</sup>

American newspapers viewed unrestricted submarine warfare as the deciding factor in bringing the US into the war.<sup>246</sup> The Zimmermann telegram to Mexico added to American ire at Germany and began cementing public opinion. Prior to the Zimmermann telegram, the American public was divided into three groups: those who vehemently advocated fighting Germany, those who opposed the war but were determined to defend America's national honor, and those who wanted to completely keep the US out of the war.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> *New York Times*, May 7-May 9, 1915.

<sup>244</sup> McDiarmid, *America's Defense*, 61-62.

<sup>245</sup> McDiarmid, *America's Defense*, 123-130.

<sup>246</sup> McDiarmid, *America's Defense*, 180.

<sup>247</sup> Ernest R. Dupuy, *Five Days to War; April 2-6, 1917* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1967) 27-28.

British propaganda was one of the many reasons the American public became aware of the war and developed pro-Entente sympathies. The focus on denouncing German militarism, atrocities, and submarine warfare provided the Ententes with the opportunity to positively portray their idealistic war aims to the American public and gain support. While effective and influential on public opinion during WWI, propaganda was the sole determinate that brought the US into WWI.

British propaganda was the most effective during WWI by reinforcing American opinions on the causes of the war. This included American opinions on the Kaiser's failure to control Austria-Hungary and that German militaristic attitudes caused the war. British propagandists released both true and false stories of German atrocities in Belgium to increase anti-German sentiments in the US.<sup>248</sup> Britain was able to use Germany's invasion to distract the American public from the original cause of the war, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. They also hoped that by focusing on the invasion of Belgium, they could eliminate isolationists, consolidate the US government, and gain press support for the war.<sup>249</sup> British propaganda was also designed to push American sentiments favorably toward the Ententes, preferably to the point that the US would enter the war.

German propaganda in WWI was designed to strengthen the German position, weaken its enemies, and keep the US out of the war. German propaganda's method for discouraging American intervention was through discrediting the Entente's propaganda. It attempted to accomplish this by noting the violence of the enemies' imperialism, the German's peaceful progress, and by arguing that the German government acted in self-defense. It also provided

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<sup>248</sup> Millis, *Road to War*, 62.

<sup>249</sup> Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War," *The American Historical Review*, 102, no. 3 (June 1997): 714-747.

elaborate explanations for the German use of mines, interference with neutral rights, sinking neutral ships, and using submarine warfare. However, German propaganda was often ineffective and damaging to the German cause in America. It failed its two objectives: positively influencing American opinion and keeping the US out of the war. The main reason for this failure was the German government's declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare.<sup>250</sup>

Most Democrats supported an American intervention in WWII in early 1941 before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Republicans were still anti-war, but increasingly accepted that America might have to enter the war out of necessity. This change in attitude was the result of increasing internationalist thoughts expressed in public opinion. Pearl Harbor helped to cement internationalist logic further by disproving the effectiveness of isolationism and isolationist logic.<sup>251</sup> Many Americans also wanted to avoid any future involvement in European affairs and crises after WWI. Public opinion following WWI was best summarized by "the United States always wins the war and losses the peace."<sup>252</sup>

As events in Europe continued to unfold, internationalists wanted to direct American policy toward participation in European events, which contradicted with the majority of American public opinion. This majority was uninterested in foreign events and wanted to avoid all things associated with war: death, lost jobs and income, separated families, and the war's financial costs. Most Americans continued to prefer keeping the US out of war. This

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<sup>250</sup> Ralph Haswell Lutz, "Studies of World War Propaganda," *The Journal of Modern History*, 5, no. 4 (December 1933): 496-516.

<sup>251</sup> Berinsky, "Assuming Costs of War."

<sup>252</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 1.

overwhelming desire to avoid war was a lesson learned from World War I: nothing good comes from war.<sup>253</sup>

Following Hitler's demand for the Sudetenland, anxiety and war fears gripped the US. However, FDR was able to calm the American public by reassuring them that the US had no political interests in Europe. The peaceful conclusion at the Munich Conference renewed hopes that the US would avoid intervening in Europe again. November 1938 removed this hope from the American public as it resigned itself to the belief that Hitler wanted to conquer more of Europe. Ninety percent of Americans, including FDR and Washington Democrats, held this view.<sup>254</sup>

Japan's invasion of China in 1937 provoked international outcry, additional Japanese actions in the Sino-Japanese war also created a negative image of Japan in the minds of the American public. Americans viewed the battle of Shanghai and the rape of Nanjing as part of Japanese brutality, and Japan incurred the moral indignations of the American people. Most Americans viewed Japan as a weak people at this time, which increased US policy makers' willingness to enact harsher policies against Japan.<sup>255</sup>

The minority views of Americans supported preparedness; however, they preferred a slow build up of American military forces. Ambassador Breckinridge Long statement supports this view, "Better keep your mouth shut and make a few more battleships. Hitler has not made a mistake yet... The thing to do is to prepare for the time he will make that mistake and not

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<sup>253</sup> Hoehling, *America's Road*, 70-72.

<sup>254</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 53-55.

<sup>255</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 58-59.

interrupt him while he is making it.”<sup>256</sup> Germany’s invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1939 changed many Congressional opinions.<sup>257</sup> Germany’s invasion of Poland on 1 September, instilled anxiety in the public and created anti-German attitudes. FDR informed the American public that in spite of German aggression, “I hope the United States will keep out of this war. I believe that it will.”<sup>258</sup> Americans did not overwhelmingly support the Allies at the beginning of WWII as they had in WWI; in fact, many Americans were biased against the Allies for their behavior and propaganda in WWI. Americans also blamed the Allies for appeasing Hitler thereby encouraging his aggression.<sup>259</sup>

The signing of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940 by Germany, Japan, and Italy provoked hawks in Washington to press FDR to embargo oil to Japan. They also urged FDR to send the fleet to Singapore.<sup>260</sup> America responded to international events by committing the US to provide the Allies with all aid short of actually fighting in the war. The American public by 1940 had come to view the time for appeasement had ended.<sup>261</sup> An overwhelming majority of Americans at this time were committed to defeating Hitler without involving the US.<sup>262</sup> The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor provided Americans with the opportunity to comprehend how vulnerable they were to foreign events by accepting isolationism. The attack also united

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<sup>256</sup> Hoehling, *America’s Road*, 36.

<sup>257</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 57.

<sup>258</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Fireside Chat on the War in Europe” Washington, D.C., 3 September 1939, in vol. 8 *1939 War—and Neutrality of The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1941) 460-464.

<sup>259</sup> Hoehling, *America’s Road*, 41.

<sup>260</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 90-91.

<sup>261</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 97, 122.

<sup>262</sup> Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent*, 106.

Americans to fighting the threat posed by the Axis powers and created overwhelming support for the 8 December declaration of war.

This changing attitude was effective because of significant events during the wars, Presidents Wilson's and Roosevelt's resulting policies and public opinion. WWI and WWII have one specific event that is viewed as directing the US toward active involvement in the wars. In WWI, the event was the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and in WWII, the attack on Pearl Harbor. The sinking of the *Lusitania* in WWI propelled American biases against Germany for costing almost 1,200 people their lives including 128 American citizens. This sinking of the *Lusitania* caused some Americans to demand the US enter the war while the majority demanded concessions from Germany for the deaths.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* was not the event that finally pushed the US into WWI; this was Germany's declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917. However, during the war the sinking of the *Lusitania* repeatedly revived American sentiments against Germany. The attack on Pearl Harbor united the American public against Japan for its unprovoked attack. The American public passionately supported the war as a necessity to protect American lives and defend American values. Unlike the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the attack on Pearl Harbor was immediately met with demands for American action, which brought the US into the Second World War.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* was a result of German submarine warfare. However, the start of unrestricted submarine warfare convinced the US to enter the war as Germany attacked all ships bound for Europe in retaliation for the British blockade. The attack on Pearl Harbor was Japan's attempt to eliminate the obstacle posed by the US at Pearl Harbor to its conquest of the Asia. The nature of these policies and their results contradicted with American principles

because Wilson rejected the German method of retaliation and FDR rejected Japan's expansion into South East Asia.

Wilson's war policies from 1914 to 1917 affected the direction of American involvement in WWI. During the war, Wilson repeatedly attempted to use the neutral offices of the US to appeal to the Entente and Central Powers to accept a mediated peace. Wilson's attempts eventually came to failure because the belligerents were more dedicated to achieving a military victory to force peace terms favorable to the victor. Through America's neutrality, Wilson and the US demonstrated a majority preference for the Ententes and Britain. This preference to the Ententes took away from Wilson's position as a peace mediator with the Central Powers as did his strong stand against Germany's submarine warfare. During WWI, Wilson was less able to gain concessions from Britain than he was from German. This lack of compromise with Britain forced the US to acquiesce to the British blockade out of necessity and because most of America's trade, economic, and finances were tied with Britain.

Wilson did not totally align the US with the Entente until the US entered the war in 1917, though the majority of Americans were pro-Entente if not pro-British. During his presidency, Wilson attempted to guide American public opinion and understanding of the war because he recognized the power of public opinion over politics and government policies. He understood that the public opinion of Americans was the true leader of the government and that it was ever changing. Wilson also recognized the power the American press had influencing the direction of public opinion, that the news often had more power than politicians had over public opinion on national issues.

Wilson's moves for peace in November and December of 1916 were not well received by the American press. American newspapers argued the peace terms would soothe the German

government and weaken the Entente's determination to expel militarism from Germany and install a democratic government. Other newspapers called Wilson's efforts cowardly and an ambitious blunder. Few Americans believed that Wilson's attempts would succeed and end the war because Germany would not give up the territory of Alsace-Lorraine without recouping its colonies. Americans also believed that without peace terms the war would not end unless one side decidedly won or the people of Germany and Austria-Hungary revolted.<sup>263</sup> Unfortunately, Wilson's declaration of war was unable to unite Americans for the war effort as strong-willed pacifist Senators continued attempts to keep the US out of the war.<sup>264</sup> American public opinion in WWI never unified before the war declaration unlike public opinion in WWII, which did unify to support America's entry into WWII.

FDR's war policies from 1939 to 1941 affected America's involvement in WWII as Wilson's had in WWI. Unlike Wilson, FDR did not try to enforce strict neutrality in the US while he originally supported the Neutrality Acts of the 1930s that abrogated American neutral rights from WWI. During the war, German and Japanese invasions in Europe and Southeast Asia respectively provided FDR with a foundation for biases against Germany and Japan. FDR's policy was designed to keep the US out of war though it eventually changed as the war progressed. As German and Japanese offensives were successful, FDR was persuaded by events to align the US with the Allies; eventually, this also progressed to providing Britain with all aid short of entering the war. FDR's policy for aiding Britain included the destroyers-for-bases deal, Lend-Lease, and escorting convoys to Europe. Part of this alliance rested on the relationship between FDR and Churchill that began in 1939. During WWII, FDR was more concerned with

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<sup>263</sup> McDiarmid, *America's Defense*, 169-170.

<sup>264</sup> Dupuy, *Five Days*, 83.



Germany and Europe than with Japanese expansion in Southeast Asia. This changed as Japan's expansion progressed and began creating concerns that it would deny the Allies access to their colonies' resources, forcing FDR to authorize stronger policies against Japan.

In 1939, FDR asked Congress to increase national defense spending in response to increased aggression in the world. Yet, some Washington officials argued against increased military spending; in addition, isolationists argued that increased military spending would not deter Hitler from his plans or minimize possible threats on the US from Europe.<sup>265</sup> The opposition against military spending was strong enough to prevent FDR's plans, especially because the majority of Americans agreed that there were not any reasons to do so. Most Americans continued to hold strong to the belief that America should not involve itself in a European conflict. These Americans viewed attempts to strengthen the military as a step toward war.<sup>266</sup>

While Wilson's and FDR's policies differed, some of their actions created similar results as the US increasingly drew toward the British during the war and created stronger policies against Britain's enemies. The similarities in FDR's and Wilson's policies were that they both drew the US into cooperating with the Allies whether it was through acquiescence or active aid to the Allied war effort. They were both personally pro-British and anti-German, although FDR was more anti-Hitler than anti-German. Wilson's and FDR's policies were partially successful because they were responses to foreign events. The other part of the success of their policies was from public opinion that responded similarly to the original event.

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<sup>265</sup> Hoehling, *America's Road*, 10-11.

<sup>266</sup> Hoehling, *America's Road*, 28-29.

In addition, FDR and Wilson had similar ideas for creating a postwar world, although their methods for initiating it were different. In WWI, Wilson was adamant that to create world peace he would have to get the Entente and Central Powers to agree to peace terms, and he dedicated most of his time during the war to this process. On the other hand, FDR was equally adamant that to create world peace aggressive nations would have to be defeated before any attempts at world peace could be initiated. While, Wilson and FDR had differing views of how to create a postwar world, they both had similar plans to achieve it. At the end of WWI, Wilson publicized his fourteen points to develop the postwar world; these fourteen points were designed mostly to ensure national sovereignty and territorial integrity. It was also anti-British empire in that many of the points undermined the principles the British Empire was built upon. In August 1941, FDR convinced Churchill to sign the Atlantic Charter.

While the Atlantic Charter was not as in depth as Wilson's fourteen points, it was still a blueprint for the postwar world that focused on the main issues that had set off WWII. Ironically, Churchill did not want to sign the Atlantic Charter because it shared similar directives with the fourteen points that were contrary to British desires. The similarities between the fourteen points and the Atlantic Charter was FDR's adoption of Wilsonian ideas pertaining to the creation of world peace after WWII, and both men's desire to create world peace after these two devastating wars.

Public opinion in WWI did not completely coalesce when Congress declared war against Germany, nor did it completely support the Entente's war effort. During WWI, most Americans were biased towards the Entente although Irish and German Americans were not. However, Entente war policies prevented them from gaining complete support from the Americans to the levels that would encourage American intervention in the war. American support for the Entente

was partially influenced by German actions; it was also diminished by the British blockade. In addition, British propaganda in WWI was greatly effective in turning the American public against Germany. British propaganda was aided by the ineffectiveness of German propaganda.

In WWII, foreign propaganda was less effective because Americans rejected it after learning the truth behind many of the propaganda stories and because Americans were strongly against entering another European war. American opinions of the war were influenced by German and Japanese aggression and attacks on civilian populations. These events persuaded Americans to abandon isolationism for internationalism and interventionism. As the war progressed, Americans increasingly adopted internationalism while others staunchly opposed US intervention. Until Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, most believed the Allies could defeat Germany and Japan without Americans actually fighting. After 7 December, most Americans believed the US needed to enter the war.

The US entrance into WWI and WWII was based on many factors including actual war events, presidential policies, and public opinion. These influences jointly worked to bring the US into the wars. Actual war events were the greatest influence, while Wilson's and FDR's policies and public opinion provided additional support that persuaded the US to enter the World Wars. While the events, policies, and public opinion differed from WWI to WWII, similar results came from their combined influences.

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