Chapter 22: A Global Power, 1914-1919

Overview

President Woodrow Wilson believed that the progressive ideal of order could be imposed on foreign policy. Like his peers, Wilson believed that because the United States was an industrialized democracy superior to all other nations that other nations should follow the Americans’ lead. This attitude was particularly obvious when he considered nations and regions that were not as industrialized as the United States. President Wilson also believed that the United States had a special superiority to the other imperial powers. Imperialism and revolution threatened the environment in which free trade and global peace could prevail and threats had to be eliminated. How the United States reacted to events in Europe and Mexico illustrate Wilson’s belief that the U.S. could stay out of war and impose an American definition of order. Perhaps because it seemed more likely, peace activists became more vocal and active in their opposition to the war. Theodore Roosevelt, on the other hand, clamored for action. Preparedness leagues called attention to the pathetic state of American armed forces. The nation mobilized for war. Three million men were needed for military service and they needed food, uniforms, ammunition, and equipment. The requirements of a nation at war placed heavy burdens on the American people and the economy. How Americans would react, no one could predict. American servicemen arrived in France certain they could change the war and the peace. The optimism, so characteristic of the American forces, was soon diminished. Back home the armistice was celebrated with parades and prayers. In Germany, revolutionaries took power and in eastern Europe revolutions broke out. From Flanders to the Sea of Japan, not a single government remained intact. In the United States, Americans experienced the first outbreak of a “Red Scare,” a conviction that communist-inspired revolution was imminent in the United States.

Key Topics

The information in chapter 22 introduces your students to the following key topics:

- In Mexico, the Caribbean, and Europe, Wilson tries to replace war and revolution with a new order based on free trade and international law.
- War in Europe requires Wilson to choose between two threats: the external danger posed by an allied defeat and the risk of widening political divisions in the United States.
- Regimenting the economy for war requires central direction and efficiency, accelerating a trend started in the progressive era.
- The war’s destruction and America’s rapid victory reinforce Americans’ faith in modernism and the virtues of their own society.
- Revolution in Europe raises new fears of internal subversion in America.

Chapter Outline

Walter Lippmann

The Challenges of Revolution and Neutrality
- The Mexican Revolution
- Bringing Order to the Caribbean
- A One-Sided Neutrality
- The Lusitania’s Last Voyage

The Drift to War

Feature: Focus on Youth: Plattsburg
- The Election of 1916
- Last Attempts at Peace
- Wilson’s War Aims
- The Fight in Congress

Mobilizing the Nation and the Economy
- Enforcing Patriotism
- Advertising the War
- Regimenting the Economy
- The Great Migration
Annotated chapter outline with review questions

Walter Lippmann: Like so many young, idealistic American servicemen, Walter Lippmann had come of age during the progressive era. He was confident in his abilities and those of his nation to attack and solve any problem, local, national or international. Like so many of his generation, his war experiences in Europe called his assumptions into question and tempered his optimism with the harsh realities of the world. Like Lippmann, the nation faced a new world, one in which it had international obligations as well as international challenges.

The Challenges of Revolution and Neutrality: President Woodrow Wilson believed that the Progressive ideal of order could be imposed on foreign policy. Like his peers, Wilson believed that because the United States was an industrialized democracy superior to all other nations that they should follow the Americans’ lead. This attitude was particularly obvious when he considered nations and regions that were not as industrialized as the United States. President Wilson also believed that the United States had a special superiority to the other imperial powers. Imperialism and revolution threatened the environment in which free trade and global peace could prevail and threats had to be eliminated. How the United States reacted to events in Europe and Mexico illustrate Wilson’s belief that the U. S. could stay out of war and impose an American definition of order.

- In 1914 the United States invaded Mexico in an attempt to overthrow its revolutionary government which promised to nationalize foreign property and threatened American-owned businesses in Mexico. Wilson’s actions insulted and alienated the leaders of Mexican revolutionary factions. The result of Wilson’s actions was to unify the factions against their common enemy: the United States. Nothing positive came from the American invasion of Mexico and American troops withdrew.
- Although he never supported the use of force in principle, Wilson’s administration relied on American military intervention time and again in the Caribbean and Latin America. He used the military to protect American investments, restore order, and open markets to American goods and businesses. It was as if the means (military) were justified by the ends (free trade, order, and progress). Wilson’s actions brought out detractors, some of whom also called themselves progressives. Many of those detractors argued that the United States should stay out of the war in Europe.
- Wilson reacted to Germany’s invasion of Belgium in August 1914 by declaring a policy of strict neutrality. With so many foreign-born immigrant Americans, Wilson cautioned all Americans to act and think in an impartial manner. Wilson urged the combatant nations to the peace table and he offered to arbitrate the discussions. But in truth, trade with the British and French was very lucrative and the American economy grew as a result. American bankers extended credit to Britain and France and Germany. British naval blockades kept American trade with Germany to a minimum, but then Germany announced its intention to use submarines to destroy enemy ships in the Atlantic “war zone.”
- Despite Germany’s threats to the contrary, Americans wrongly assumed that the proclamation of neutrality and travel on civilian ships would protect them even though the Europeans were at war. On May 7, 1915, a German submarine torpedoed the luxury liner Lusitania off the coast of Ireland. Of those killed, 124 were Americans. Wilson’s advisers as well as Americans’ opinions were divided. In the end Germany agreed not to attack passenger liners without warning (known as Sussex Pledge) and calm was restored although American public opinion was decidedly anti-German. American involvement was no longer considered impossible.
The Drift to War: Perhaps because it seemed more likely, peace activists became more vocal and active in their opposition to the war. Theodore Roosevelt, on the other hand, clamored for action. Preparedness leagues called attention to the pathetic state of American armed forces.

- The election of 1916 gave Woodrow Wilson a razor-thin victory over the Republican candidate Charles Evans Hughes. With re-election confirmed, Wilson pursued a more vigorous foreign policy.
- In January 1917 in a speech before the Congress Wilson called for a “peace without victory” based on self-determination for all nations and the creation of an international organization to enforce peace. Germany was on the brink of winning and ordered the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. American and British civilian passenger ships were torpedoed. The Zimmerman Telegram provoked alarm in the West and fueled anti-Mexican sentiment. On the surface there were good reasons for the United States to enter the war: attacks on American ships, for example. Wilson added that the U.S. had to enter the war so that she could influence the peace settlement.
- On April 2, 1917, Woodrow Wilson went to Congress to proclaim that American neutrality had failed. The only hope for preventing future wars he claimed was to place the United States in a position to dictate the peace. He urged Congress to vote for war on American terms. Wilson proclaimed that the United States was not fighting for the same goals as England or France instead the U.S. would be fighting for democracy and self-determination. As the United States prepared for war a secret committee named Inquiry met to draw up plans for peace. Their fourteen recommendations fell into three categories: free trade, freedom of the seas, and ethnic determination.
- On April 6 the Congress voted a declaration of war in spite of an assumption that a referendum would have failed. Congress then tackled the problems paying for the costs of war and deciding who would fight it. Despite opposition, a draft law was passed which required men between the ages of 18 and 45 to register with newly created draft boards.

As a progressive, Wilson was committed to order, efficiency, and gradual reform. How did his policies toward Mexico and Europe reflect this commitment?

Mobilizing the Nation and the Economy: The nation mobilized for war. Three million men were needed for military service and they needed food, uniforms, ammunition, and equipment. The requirements of a nation at war placed heavy burdens on the American people and the economy. How Americans would react, no one could predict. The nation mobilized for war. Patriotism and supporting the war effort were the common responses to America’s entry in the war and while soldiers in Europe fought to make the world safe for democracy, at home dissenters were quashed. Political and labor activists were imprisoned, and citizens who dared question America’s motives were arrested. Even religious faiths that opposed all wars were persecuted.

- World War I saw the sophisticated use of propaganda designed to mold public opinion. Films, advertising, press releases, in addition to other media told Americans they were fighting to save their homes. The images portrayed the Germans as evil brutes; progress and patriotism were characterized in feminine figures. As the war effort and propaganda machines continued, American attitudes were also mobilized to include the assimilation of immigrants, women’s suffrage, and a reconciliation between labor and management.
- The term “total war” was introduced with World War I. War was fought to protect territory and national interests as well as values and ways of life and to do so required all of the resources of the combatant nations. In the United States this meant economic reorganization and centralized planning to manage military personnel and war material. It also require that business and business’s priorities be subordinated to the government. Businesses that resisted the power of the federal government was used to coerce cooperation.
- The draft took eligible workers from the workplace and the war in Europe prevented immigrants from moving to the United States. The labor shortage stimulated immigration from another source: rural America. African-American and white sharecroppers abandoned their southern poverty in droves. Jobs in the North and West offered something unavailable in the South: opportunity. Those blacks who immigrated became residents of predominantly black ghettos and faced similar white oppression, but African-American urban populations began to organize themselves into strong, protective, potentially powerful forces.
Social and political change was often justified by the phrase “war effort”, and soon blacks and women employed the same argument. Advocates of social change soon demanded that the United States fight for democracy at home as well as abroad. The rights of workers to unionize and collectively bargain were supported by the national government. Prohibition and sobriety were also linked to patriotism. But where Americans and the federal and state governments were willing to regulate social behavior for the war effort they were unwilling to challenge racial injustice even when lives were at stake. The war effort justification was used to keep blacks employed at prewar wages.

The Philippine-American War of 1899 and U.S. involvement in World War I in 1917 each provoked dissent at home. Why did the government tolerate opposition in the first case but suppress it in the second?

**Over There:** American servicemen arrived in France certain they could change the war and the peace. The optimism, so characteristic of the American forces, was soon diminished.

- The American Expeditionary Force under Commander John J. Pershing arrived in France in June 1917. The Americans, including President Wilson, assumed that the nation’s greatest contribution would be in money, supplies, and food but in October as the war on the eastern front closed down, America’s contribution to the war effort was soldiers. The race between the United States and Germany was to see who could place the most men on the western front in 1918. For the United States logistical obstacles, like transportation had to be overcome.
- The report written by Wilson’s private panel, called Inquiry, became the core of Wilson’s January 8, 1919, report to the Congress. The report became known as the Fourteen Points. There were four themes: national self-determination, freedom of the seas, enforcement of peace by a league of nations, and open, instead of secret, diplomacy. Wilson was looking at the past and hoping to prevent the same problems from creating yet another war. By recognizing imperialism and commercial rivalry as the causes of World War I, the intent of the Fourteen Points was to prevent a replay. He was also hopeful that a just peace would dispel any enthusiasm for socialist revolution as war occurring in Russia. Wilson’s plan for the future was used to counter Vladimir Lenin’s Bolshevick government and sent 7000 American troops to Russia and Japan to counter the revolution.
- Spring 1918 found most of Germany’s troops on the western front preparing for the final assault. Germany’s economy was exhausted and hunger and despair the common companions of Germans at home. The Americans were desperately needed on the front so the British and French commanders pleaded. The Americans hit the battlefield, succeeded in halting the German advance, but suffered enormous casualties. By mid-July the Allies were on the offensive and as casualty figures escalated during the next four months, Germany announced it would accept the Fourteen Points as the basis for a truce and negotiations. The guns fell silent at 11:00 a.m. on November 11, 1918. American participation in World War I was decisive.

- Allied commanders wanted to use American troops as a reserve, but Pershing wanted his soldiers to enter the battle as an army. Why was that so important to him?

**The Black Cloud in the East:** Back home the armistice was celebrated with parades and prayers. In Germany, revolutionaries took power and in eastern Europe revolutions broke out. From Flanders to the Sea of Japan, not a single government remained intact. In the United States, Americans experienced the first outbreak of a “Red Scare,” a conviction that communist-inspired revolution was imminent in the United States.

- Woodrow Wilson was exhausted when the war in Europe ended and perhaps his exhaustion caused him to misplay his role in the victory. He tried to turn the victory to political advantage by encouraging American voters to vote Republican Congressmen out of office. Secondly he went to Paris to lead the American peace delegation. The delegation was composed solely of Democrats even though Republican-controlled Senate would have to ratify any treaty. Wilson saw his Fourteen Points dismantled and disregarded as the victorious nations expanded their imperial empires. This disheartened, exhausted president returned home with a treaty that resembled those of the past that had brought more bloodshed.
- The Republican-controlled Senate received the Treaty of Versailles with closed arms. They had had no hand in drafting the treaty or battling to preserve its integrity and they were unwilling to embrace it on the president’s word. Wilson argued that the League of Nations would prevent future conflict; the Senate believed otherwise and went on record opposing it. Wilson believed the Senate would eventually come around to his side and to hasten and encourage that day he hit the campaign trail hoping to garner public
support for the treaty. A debilitating stroke silenced Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive president was powerless to lead the Senate were it refused to go. One year and eight days following the armistice, the United States Senate voted to refuse ratification of the Treaty of Versailles.

- The horrors of World War I, the revolution in Russia, and post-war political unrest in Europe caused Americans to be scared that the causes of social and political changes were occurring at home. Many were convinced that revolution was sweeping the nation and their concerns swept up others. Soon the nation was in the grip of full-blown paranoia. Immigrants and unionized workers were lumped together with socialists, anarchists, communists, and labor unionists. They were all dangerous. The “Red Scare” had begun and it was in that atmosphere that Americans dealt with labor strikes, lunatic bombings, and simple robberies. Democratic freedoms, which had seemed so important as to be worth dying for in Europe, had taken leave of the United States.

Did Senate Republicans reject the League of Nations because they wanted the United States to withdraw from the world, or because they wanted to deal with the world in a different way?

Did the war help or hurt the progressive movement?

Feature: Focus on Youth, Plattsburg: With the possibility of war as a backdrop, America’s elite, young, educated, white men, signed up for four weeks of military drill. The summer military camp was designed to train a group of men from whom commissioned officers could be identified if war broke out. By the next summer, other professional men were asking for the same opportunity. For many of the recruits, their experiences at the Plattsburg camp provided the training and leadership experiences that would sustain them through two world wars and in the years to come.

Conclusion: The war years had produced a sense of unease in Americans. The progressive ideals that had motivated and sustained them were called into question and President Wilson’s call for a “New World Order” also concerned them. The future seemed far more uncertain after the war that it had seemed just a decade before.

Making links to other ideas Using the maps and websites, in addition to your prepared lectures and other assignments, can give you more resources to enable your students to see that history is much more than memorizing names and dates. You will find that the websites are even more comprehensive and adaptable than described and because they have been collected here in one volume you have a world of information no further away than the click of your mouse. If you are new to the web’s opportunities, you will be pleasantly surprised at the breadth and depth of the information available in these sites.

Map 01. How far south did Pershing’s troops go into Mexico? Why did they stop where they stopped?
Map 02. Describe the information depicted in the election map. Correlate your description with that in the chapter.
Map 03. What is the line depicted that runs from the North Sea to the Swiss Border? What reasons would explain the locations of the Somme Offensive and the Aisne-Marne Offensive? What were the allies hoping to accomplish? What is the line depicted that runs from the Scheldt River in the north to the Swiss border in the south? Identify the events that indicate that not everyone in the United States was satisfied with the status quo during and following the war. What accounts for the riots in 1917?

Web connections and resources Consider using these websites to supplement your students’ reading and analytical skills. The sites were chosen because of their relevance to the material in the chapter -- not just to mirror it but to provide additional materials and perspectives. Questions from the student study guide have been included so that you can use or amend them to your own needs. Your students may find it insightful for you to guide them through the site as you help them develop research strategies.

“A Global Power” www.prenhall.com/boydston/immigrants

During the period of American neutrality several ethnically-based organizations vigorously lobbied against American entry into the conflict, criticizing the Wilson administration for being pro-British. This led others, self-proclaimed “100 % Americans,” to doubt the loyalty of so called “hyphenates.” Would German-Americans abandon their love for the “Fatherland,” would Irish-Americans overcome their hatred for England? Doubts about immigrants and their children led to a vast campaign to “Americanize” them.
1. What did the Americanizers mean by “American?”

   This site consists of some 300 images, including political cartoons, that depict the distrust of immigrants and radicals following World War I.
   1. Look at the cartoon images of immigrants and labor and consider the information in this chapter’s reading. Why do the editorial cartoonists link immigrants with communists and anarchists?
   2. What caused Americans to fear these immigrants?

War Message of World War I http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1917/wilswarm.html
   President Woodrow Wilson delivered the speech featured on this site to Congress on February 3, 1917. In it, he severed diplomatic relations with Germany, drawing America into the Great War.
   1. What specific issues or events did President Wilson cite as reasons for the U.S. entering World War I?
   2. Why did he go to such lengths to state that the U.S. had no ill-feelings toward the German people or people of German origin?

“Talking History” http://www.albany.edu/talkinghistory/archive/goinnorth.ram
   Beginning with part 2 of “Goin’ North, Great Tales of the Great Migration,” hear African Americans talk through audio files about their experiences in going to Philadelphia for jobs during World War I.
   1. Listen to several of the audio files. What do these immigrants from the South to the North have in common with one another.
   2. Why would black workers be lured to the North during the war? What issues had to be resolved before black laborers were encouraged to move North to war industries?
   3. In what ways did blacks leaving the South affect the South? Did Southerners do anything to prevent black laborers from leaving the South?

“World War I Document Archive” http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/
   This archive consists of official primary documents such as conventions and treaties concerning World War I. Also, the site contains personal stories of men and women who were involved with the war.
   1. Since the United States did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles, it had to conclude treaties with Austria, Germany, and Hungary, which it did in August 1921. Read these three treaties and summarize the provisions.
   2. Read the provisions of the Haugue Convention (1899, 1907, ...). Why would nations agree to “laws of warfare?” What kinds of provisions are covered in the Hague Convention?

Analytical reading
   Your students may need more experience analyzing a short reading passage so that he or she can determine its component parts. They may need help identifying primary and supporting information as well as the author’s analysis. The analytical reading passages and the questions from the student study guide have been duplicated in the instructor’s manual for your use. Your students may need direction and encouragement in using them.

   Opponents of Wilson’s policies in Mexico and the Caribbean also urged the United States to stay out of the Great War in Europe. On August 29, 1914 some 1,500 women, dressed in black, marched down Fifth Avenue in New York to oppose the occupation of Veracruz and war in Europe. In April 1916, progressive writers and social workers met at the New York’s Henry Street Settlement House to organize the American Union Against Militarism and protest against intervention in Mexico. Jane Addams regarded war as a “throwback in the scientific sense.” She and Carrie Chapman Catt founded the Woman’s Peace Party, whose 25,000 members supported a mediated settlement to the European conflict. Addams, who later won the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts, traveled through Europe meeting with leaders of the belligerent countries in an attempt to convene a peace conference. Peace advocates supported Wilson’s policy of neutrality but saw ominous signs that the United States was being drawn into war.
1. Based on your readings in earlier chapters about women reformers, why were these women opposed to American intervention in foreign nations?
2. Were they opposed to war or were they opposed to other sorts of intervention as well? In the preceding discussion what sorts of intervention might they oppose?
3. What did Jane Addams mean when she characterized war as a “a throwback in the scientific sense?”

Writing  The questions or writing prompts from the student study guide have been duplicated here for your use. These writing topics make good lecture topics especially if you help your students see the development of the idea in lecture format before they refine the idea in their writing assignments.

1. What lessons did the American military learn in Mexico that helped them when they entered the war in Europe?
2. What was President Wilson so opposed to in Mexico’s revolution?
3. Discuss President Wilson’s belief that free trade and international law were preferred to war. Why did his Progressive ideals not prevail in Mexico or in Europe?
4. In what ways did Americans’ experiences in World War I reinforce their sense that the United States was superior to all other nations?
5. In what ways did Americans’ war experiences cause them to believe that Europe and European ideas were not good for the United States?
6. Why did World War I cause Americans to become so paranoid where immigrants, foreigners, and political radicals were concerned?
7. Define the “red scare” and describe the actions taken by the government to secure Americans’ safety. How did the government go about defining who was acceptable and who was not?

Lecture Strategies  Ultimately the lecture is where you impart, or profess, your knowledge for the benefit of your students. These strategies were designed around the textbook and if your classroom strategy is to use the organization of the text to organize your course content, these lecture ideas may prove helpful. However, if you lecture around themes please see the section entitled “Thematic Lecture Topics.” You may find that you are more comfortable with and your students are more responsive to a combination of the two.

Woodrow Wilson, the last of the progressive presidents took the unprogressive option of going to war -- in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Europe.

The Mexican Revolution is the source of animosity between the United States and Mexico. It is also an excellent opportunity to examine the arrogance of the United States where other nations were concerned.

World War I can be seen as the last of the imperial wars and as such is a war fought for territorial and economic gain. This war can also be understood as the culmination of the old social darwinistic thinking that the most powerful nations survive often at the expense of the weaker nation. Discuss the difficult notion that order and efficiency and economic growth can come about because of war.

Progressivism is easily discussed in light of Wilson’s Fourteen Points. The failure of the Fourteen Points is also understandable because of the threat Wilson’s plan posed to the economic domination of Britain and France over Germany and Austria.

Consider this topic: World War I is the last of the nineteenth century wars; it brings about the birth of the twentieth century.

Discuss the industrialized technology of the war and the antiquated logistics of fighting the war. This is especially helpful when trying to explain the enormous loss of life.

Look at social change in the U.S. as a result of the war: Mexican-American and black migrations north; women’s advances; governmental regulations of industry and labor.

Discuss the “red scare” and the Russian Revolution and the threat of communism or “bolshevism” to the U.S. Help your students understand why President Wilson sent troops to Russia to fight on the side of the Romanovs.

Help your students understand the conduct of the war: how it was fought, by whom, and for what ideals.
In *Immigrant Voices: Twenty-four Narratives on Becoming an American*, edited by Gordon Hunter, New York: A Signet Classic, 1999, see the excerpts from Constantine Panunzio’s *The Soul of an Immigrant*. Panunzio immigrated from Italy on July 4, 1902, only to return to Italy as an American soldier. His book was written to explore the injustices of American deportation plans for European immigrants it found undesirable. See also Ernesto Galarza’s *Barrio Boy* for an autobiographical story of his childhood in California in the World War I era and the pain of having part of his family refused entry to the U. S. See also Mary Paik Lee’s *Quiet Odyssey* which portrays a Korean-born woman’s experiences in California.

Louis Auchincloss, *Woodrow Wilson* (A Penguin Life), New York: A Lipper/Viking Book, 2000. In this short (125 pages) biography of Woodrow Wilson, Louis Auchincloss examines Wilson’s childhood and career to look at this man who was the twenty-eighth president of the United States but who was also so much more: complex, contradictory, idealist, and in the end incapable of handling the duties of his job. An excellent, readable, and brief study of one of the men who could have changed the direction of the twentieth century if his personality had been more generous to his political detractors. The power of First Lady Edith Wilson may prove interesting to a generation of young history students who believe they have seen in their life the first First Lady to wield power and influence events.