

America and the great war 1914-1920

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America and the Great War (1914-1920) The United States was not prepared to participate in the First World War. It is until 1918 that the American government published the official reasons why the United States chose to participate in the World War, in order to show its support for the war. The Committee for Public Information was responsible for distributing this information. The reasons for America's involvement in the First World War include the renewal of Germany's submarine warfare; Germany was becoming an international desperado; Prussian autocracy and military threatened to destroy the international equilibrium and interfered with the balance of power; the American tradition of isolation had become out of control, and it could no longer be sustained in the era of growing independence, and the quest for America's independence (Abbott et al. 123).

Back in 1917, President Woodrow Wilson, before a joint Congress session, requested for a declaration of war against Germany. He claimed that the Germans violated the American request to suspend unrestricted submarine warfare in the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic (Goldfield et al. 464). Germany also attempted to persuade Mexico to collaborate with them, and wage war against the United States. The U. S. senate, on April 4, 1917, voted in favor for declaring war against Germany. On December 7, 1917, the United States waged war against Austria-Hungary (Ford 23).

Germany's submarine attack on merchant and passenger ships, in 1917, is one of the key reasons that motivated the U. S. senators' decision to participate in the World War I. Wilson threatened to frustrate the U. S. diplomatic relations with Germany, following the sinking of the Sussex, an unarmed French boat, in the English Channel, in March 1916 (Goldfield et al. 473). He

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asserted that the U. S. was not going to have any diplomatic relation with Germany, unless Germany desists from attacking crew merchant and passenger ships. In response, German Government accepted to refrain from these attacks, under terms and conditions that was referred to as “Sussex pledge” (Goldfield et al. 473).

German Government’s pledge changed later, in January 1917.

Representatives from the German navy, during a wartime conference meeting that month, claimed that continuation of unrestricted submarine warfare was a strategic move that will see them defeat Great Britain, in the Great War. They based their arguments on the basis that they were capable of violating “Sussex pledge” since the United States was no longer a neutral party after offering financial assistance and supplying munitions to its Allies (Zieger 117). However, Theobald von Bethmann, Germany’s Chancellor, rejected this decision because he believed that by reassuming unrestricted submarine warfare, the U. S. will be drawn into this war, and fight on behalf of its Allies, which will lead to defeat of Germany. The German Government, however, defied this warning and decided to reassume unrestricted submarine warfare. They believed that they would end the war before the first American troopship docks, in Europe (James & Wells 59).

Violation of Sussex pledge stunned President Wilson, who then asked Congress to arm the American merchant ships with naval equipment and personnel (Ford 27). His request was rejected by the Congress. He, therefore, used his executive powers to order for the arming of American merchant ships. During this time, Arthur Zimmerman, German Foreign Minister, sent a telegram to the German Ambassador, in Mexico, promising that the German Government will allies with Mexico, and help them to

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recover the land they lost to Americans, following the Mexican-American War (Abbott et al. 207). This alongside Germany's continued submarine attacks on unarmed merchant ships, made the Congress support President Wilson's decision to wage war against Germany. This marked the beginning of the U. S. involvement into the Great War of 1914 to 1920.

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