

Dbq: foreign policy



During the early to mid-twentieth century, the United States entered a period of deep isolationism in response to the policies of foreign countries. American foreign policy consisted of two goals, isolationism and neutrality, however, the countries views changed during the time period of 1930-1941 in response to the Great Depression, attempted neutralities with foreign countries, dictatorships, and attacks from other countries. In the very beginning of the 1930s, the United States was faced with a major crisis, the Great Depression.

This low period was a time that America was in a severe economic decline which affected their relationships with other countries. In response to this, many nations came together at the London Conference to develop a worldwide solution to the Great Depression and how to pay back their massive debts which had accumulated during WWI, since they all agreed they could not pay them. However, Roosevelt wanted America to remain isolated from everyone else, therefore he left the conference and as a result no solution to the economic problem was found.

One year later, the Johnson Debt Default Act was passed which forbid any countries, who owed debt, to borrow more from the United States, and in response to the other nations' only agreement at the London Conference (Document B). Following his isolationistic views, Roosevelt adopted a "good neighbor" policy with Latin America in hopes of getting rid of any liabilities that might occur. As a result, the Tydings-McDuffie Act was established giving the Philippines their independence after a certain number of years, as long as they could support themselves financially and politically.

Next, Roosevelt, along with Secretary of State Hull, passed the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act which lowered any active tariff policies and allowed for a future of a free-trade economic system with other countries, further strengthening America's isolationism. These isolationistic ideas of ignoring what went on in other countries caused America to not recognize certain countries and their problems (Document A). However, these isolationistic viewpoints would be strained as other countries would seek to attack and conquer each other, knowing that the U. S would not get involved.

As America drifted further and further into isolationism, many countries, such as Japan and Germany, took notice and began to plot ways of taking over other countries. After World War I, many dictatorships emerged, specifically Mussolini of Italy, Stalin of the Soviet Union, and Hitler of Germany, most feared for his ruthlessness and brilliant strategic planning. Going back to the London Conference, problems with Japan arose as they isolated themselves from the world by walking out of the conference, arming themselves heavily with military goods, and beginning to scheme a takeover of the Pacific while the U.

S. was involved with Latin America. Later, in 1937, Japan invaded China, yet Roosevelt did not see this as a war, and therefore allowed the Chinese to receive arms from the United States, directly violating American isolationism as a result. It was in this same year that he issued his famous "Quarantine Speech," which called for a "quarantine" of Japan because war is a bad negative when trying to preserve peace (Document D). Not only was Japan causing problems abroad, but as were the European powers also, such as Hitler and Mussolini's alliance in the Rome-Berlin Axis.

Now that the European powers were starting to ally and fight for the takeover of each other, the United States began to worry that these alliances could be used against America and therefore, adopted a neutrality perspective that would also be tested in the following years. As WWII fired up and many countries were drawn into it, the United States passed the Neutrality Acts, in 1935 that pledged that America would stay neutral, not take sides, and supply goods to enemy countries (Document C). However, these new acts would be tested in 1937, after the Japanese bombed the U.

S. gunboat, the Panay. While, over in Europe, Hitler was rapidly claiming lands by force and the Allies, hoping that each conquest will stop, appease him by giving him more land, such as the Sudetenland, which he takes advantage of by taking over all of Czechoslovakia. If that was not worse, the Soviets and Germany signed a nonaggression treaty causing more worries for the Allies. After Hitler took over Poland, European Allies were low on supplies and tested the U. S's neutrality by asking for more goods.

As a result, America issued an act that was based on a "cash-and-carry" basis, which meant that the European nation's had to pay for the goods in cash and get them themselves. After the fall of France by Hitler, Britain was the only power fighting against Germany, and Roosevelt had to decide whether to remain neutral or help Britain. While Roosevelt made his decision, a couple groups were formed either in favor of helping Britain or not, and included people such as Charles A. Lindbergh, who was against helping Britain and believed there were alternatives to entering the war, because democracy fails if the people o against it (Document F). Because Britain was running low on supplies, America basically abandoned their neutrality policy

by issuing a Lend-Lease Agreement that would send supplies overseas, with which they would be returned after they were no longer needed (Document I). Hitler sensed this and began attacking American ships, which resulted in the Atlantic Charter by Roosevelt and Churchill, with the main points being disarmament, peace of security, and a new League of Nations (Document H). However, problems with Japan were still present.

As Japan battled China, the United States imposed embargoes on key supplies on Japan, leaving Japan with no choice but to attack America. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, killing thousands of men causing the United States to declare war on Japan. This example clearly shows the direct abandonment of the neutrality policy. A few years back, public opinion polls were issued to people asking their opinion on whether they should go to war or not, and many of them said no (Document E). However, these opinions changed after the bombing of Pearl Harbor as many infuriated Americans now wanted to go to war.

During the time period of 1930-1941, American foreign policy changed drastically because of problems from the Great depression, alliances with foreign countries, and European wars which greatly impacted the American ideas of isolationism and neutrality. In the beginning, the United States wanted to remain isolated and neutral, so they could rebuild themselves from the Great Depression and stay out of other nations' problems. However, as stated previously, the United States broke both of these ideas after receiving direct attacks on America, causing them to enter into WWII, and abandon any hope of ever remaining politically neutral again.