

Chapter 26 Outline - The United States in a Troubled World, 1920–1941

- I. Introduction

After World War I, America assumed an independent position in the world, and most people considered themselves isolationists.

- II. Searching for Peace and Order in the 1920s

- A. Peace Groups

Several peace organizations began working after World War I to ensure international stability.

- B. Washington Naval Conference

Nine countries met in Washington, D.C., in 1921–1922, and set arms limits in a rare example of disarmament.

- C. Kellogg-Briand Pact

The Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 renounced war. The accord had no provisions for enforcement, making it more a statement of moral preference than a diplomatic policy.

- III. The World Economy, Cultural Expansion, and Great Depression

- A. Economic and Cultural Expansion

The United States underwent great economic expansion that lasted through the 1920s.

American culture, aided by mass production, began to influence the world.

- B. War Debts and German Reparations

Many European nations wanted America to cancel the tremendous war debts they owed the United States, but American leaders insisted on payment. When Germany defaulted on reparations, American investors offered loans to Germany to meet its obligation.

- C. Decline in Trade

By the 1930s, the international economy faced collapse; economic nationalism manifested itself through tariff wars.

At the urging of Cordell Hull, Congress passed the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act to stimulate trade.

In 1934, Hull helped create the Export-Import Bank to provide loans to foreigners for the purchase of American goods.

- D. U.S. Recognition of the Soviet Union

American businesses profited from Soviet purchases in the early 1930s. Roosevelt recognized the Soviet Union in 1933 to improve trade and to deter Japanese aggression.

- IV. U.S. Dominance in Latin America

- A. American Economic Muscle

Critics saw American involvement in Latin America as imperialistic. Many people feared reprisals against American-owned businesses in the region.

- B. Good Neighbor Policy

Roosevelt called his approach of exerting more subtle control in Latin America the “Good Neighbor Policy.” American popularity and economic influence increased throughout the hemisphere.

Despite the Good Neighbor Policy, the Roosevelt administration continued to support dictators in Latin America in the belief that they

would promote stability and preserve U.S. economic interests.

- C. Clash with Mexican Nationalism

In 1938, Mexico nationalized foreign-owned petroleum companies. Fearing that Mexican oil would end up in Germany or Japan, Roosevelt acquiesced to the move.

- V. The Course to War in Europe

- A. German Aggression Under Hitler

In 1936, German troops moved into the Rhineland and Hitler formed an alliance with Italy and Japan. The Anti-Comintern Pact united Germany and Japan against Russia.

Hitler convinced representatives of Britain and France to not oppose his annexation of Czechoslovakia.

- B. Isolationist Views in the United States

Isolationist views were expressed by both conservatives and liberals. Although strongest in the Midwest, isolationist sentiment was a nationwide phenomenon accepted by a majority of Americans.

- C. Nye Committee Hearings

Isolationists in the 1930s believed that American involvement in World War I had been a mistake and feared that business interests might take the nation into a war because of ties to Germany and Italy.

Roosevelt supported isolationism, a position reflected in the Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937.

- D. Roosevelt's Evolving Views

Roosevelt became increasingly troubled by the aggressive behavior of

Germany, Italy, and Japan.

- E. Poland and the Outbreak of World War II

Britain and France announced that they would defend Poland's independence. When Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, they declared war on Germany.

In 1939 at Roosevelt's request, Congress repealed the arms embargo and approved cash-and-carry exports of arms.

- VI. Japan, China, and a New Order in Asia

- A. Jiang Jieshi

In the 1920s, Jiang Jieshi ousted Mao Zedong and won the support of the United States, which increased Japanese suspicions of Chinese-American relations.

- B. Manchurian Crisis

Japan seized Manchuria in 1931, and the United States responded with the Stimson Doctrine of nonrecognition.

- C. Roosevelt's Quarantine Speech

In October 1937, Roosevelt denounced international aggression in his "quarantine speech."

- VII. U.S. Entry into World War II

- A. First Peacetime Military Draft

The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 resulted in 16 million young men signing up for the draft.

The Lend-Lease Act of 1941 went into effect to help Britain avoid defeat. The United States became the "arsenal for democracy" by

lending and leasing American military goods to those fighting the Axis powers.

- B. Atlantic Charter

In August 1941, Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter, which set war aims of collective security, self-determination, economic cooperation, and freedom of the seas.

When a German U-boat fired at an American destroyer, the United States entered into an undeclared naval war with Germany.

Relations with Germany deteriorated further when a German submarine torpedoed the U.S. destroyer *Kearny* in October 1941.

Congress scrapped the cash-and-carry policy and revised the Neutrality Acts after the sinking of the *Reuben James* in late October 1941.

- C. U.S. Demands on Japan

When Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, the United States stopped selling aviation fuel and scrap metal to them. With the occupation of French Indochina, America froze Japanese assets, ending most trade, including oil, with Japan.

- D. Surprise Attack on Pearl Harbor

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i. This attack turned American sentiment sharply against the Japanese.

- E. Explaining Pearl Harbor

Roosevelt did not conspire to leave the fleet vulnerable to attack; the Japanese caught the American forces off guard because no one thought they would attack so far from home. The United States

declared war on Japan, and three days later Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

The war came because of a fundamental clash of systems. The United States sought a liberal capitalist world order with all nations enjoying freedom of trade and investment. The dictators did not.

- F. Avoidable War?

More flexibility in the American negotiating posture in the fall of 1941 could possibly have delayed a showdown with Japan.