

Identifying Alternatives

Identifying alternatives means finding one or more possible solutions to a problem. In the previous section, you read about the conflict in the United States over how to react to the war raging in Europe. The passages on this page make the case for two responses the United States might have made. Passage A presents the views of then President Woodrow Wilson, as stated in August 1914. Passage B, which was published in January 1915, presents the thoughts of former President Theodore Roosevelt.

Use the following steps to identify and analyze the alternatives presented in the passages.

1. Identify the nature of the problem under discussion. Before you can identify alternative solutions to a problem, you must understand what the problem is. (a) What is the issue that both passages address? (b) Does each passage present the same approach to the problem?

2. Identify the solutions proposed in the two passages. (a) What does Passage A suggest is the proper response of the United States to the war raging in Europe? (b) How does Passage B propose that the United States respond to the war? (c) In what ways are these two viewpoints similar or different?

3. Evaluate the potential effectiveness of each view. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. For example, you might ask the following questions about Passages A

and B: (a) What difficulties do you see in Wilson's suggestion that the United States not judge the actions of other nations? (b) What might happen if the United States acts in a "disinterested" way, as Wilson suggests? (c) Does Roosevelt make clear what he means when he refers to a nation that "does ill"? (d) Does Roosevelt explain the basis by which nations should be judged "highly civilized" or "well behaved"?

4. Consider other alternatives. Recall the nature of the problem under discussion. Then, using insights you

gained above, think of other possible solutions. Ask: (a) What should be the goal of the United States in responding to the war in Europe? (b) What steps are most likely to achieve that goal?

TEST FOR SUCCESS

Do you think President Wilson or President Roosevelt would have been the first to declare war on a nation that provoked the United States? Explain your answer, based on Passages A and B.

A

"My thought is of America. . . . [T]his great country of ours . . . should show herself in this time of peculiar trial a nation fit beyond others to exhibit the fine poise of undisturbed judgment, the dignity of self-control, the efficiency of dispassionate [unemotional] action; a nation that neither sits in judgment upon others nor is disturbed in her own counsels and which keeps herself fit and free to do what is honest and disinterested and truly serviceable for the peace of the world."

Woodrow Wilson, *Appeal for Neutrality*, August 19, 1914

B

"Our true course should be to judge each nation on its conduct, unhesitatingly to antagonize every nation that does ill [at the point] it does ill, and equally without hesitation to act. . . .

One of the greatest of international duties ought to be the protection of small, highly civilized, well-behaved and self-respecting states from oppression and conquest by their powerful military neighbors. . . .

I feel in the strongest way that we should have interfered, at least to the extent of the most emphatic diplomatic protest and at the very outset—and then by whatever further action was necessary—[when Germany invaded Belgium]."

Theodore Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, 1915

May
1915
Lusitania
sunk

March
1916
Sussex sunk

November
1916
Wilson reelected

February
1917
Germany resumes unrestricted submarine warfare; Zimmermann note

March
1917
Russian Revolution; City of Memphis, Illinois, and *Vigilancia* sunk

April
1917
United States declares war on Germany

1915

1916

1917

1918

2 The United States Declares War

SECTION PREVIEW

Objectives

- 1 Describe German submarine tactics during World War I.
- 2 Identify events that moved the United States toward war.
- 3 **Key Terms** Define: U-boat; Sussex pledge; filibuster; Zimmermann note; Russian Revolution.

Main Idea

German submarine warfare helped push the United States into World War I.

Reading Strategy

Organizing Information Imagine that you are a member of Congress in 1917. You must decide whether the United States should go to war against Germany and the other Central Powers. As you read the section, list the events that influence your decision.



This German poster urged U-boats on their mission. The translation is, "Submarine: come out!"

From 1915 to 1917 friction between the United States and Germany increased. The preparedness movement continued to gain support in the United States, and the pressure to join in the war intensified. Ultimately, actions by the Central Powers pushed Congress and the President into entering the war on the side of the Allies.

German Submarine Warfare

One action that provoked angry calls for war in the United States was the German use of submarine warfare. This tactic was effective militarily, but it cost the Germans dearly in terms of American public opinion.

The German **U-boat**, short for *Unterseeboot*, or submarine, was a terrifying new weapon that changed the rules of naval warfare. Passenger and merchant ships had no defense against the submarine, which could go undetected nearly anywhere in the ocean. Submarine attacks depended on the element of surprise. Unlike other naval ships, U-boats

issued no warning to their targets. This struck many Americans as uncivilized.[†]

The British encouraged such anti-German feelings. Shortly after the war began, the British cut the transatlantic cable connecting Germany and the United States. All news of the European front henceforth flowed through London. Its pro-Allied bias helped shape the opinion of the people in the United States in favor of punishing Germany for its use of the submarine.

American public opinion of the Germans sank even lower on May 7, 1915, when a U-boat sighted the *Lusitania*, a British passenger liner, in the Irish Sea. Suspecting correctly that the ship carried weapons for the Allies, the U-boat fired on the liner. Eighteen minutes later the *Lusitania* disappeared beneath the waves along with its almost 1,200 passengers. Included among the dead were 128 Americans, who had

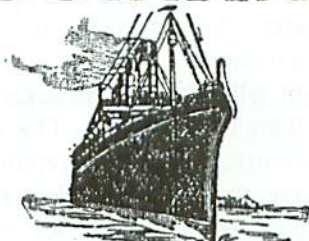
[†] Americans did not react the same way to the British blockade of Germany, even though it threatened freedom of the seas and was slowly starving the German people. They generally thought that such a blockade was reasonable during wartime. In contrast, German attempts to break the blockade with submarines seemed unfair.

NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS 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 of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 22, 1915.

CUNARD



EUROPE VIA LIVERPOOL LUSITANIA

Fastest and Largest Steamer
now in Atlantic Service Sails

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 10 A. M.

Transylvania - Fri., May 7, 5 P.M.
Orduna, - - - Tues., May 18, 10 A.M.
Tuscania, - - - Fri., May 21, 5 P.M.
LUSITANIA, - Sat., May 29, 10 A.M.
Transylvania, - - - 5 P.M.



American public opinion was extremely critical of Germany and its use of U-boats. The cartoon (right) suggests that Germany felt no remorse for the loss of American lives. Germany, however, did warn travelers—including passengers of the *Lusitania*—to stay out of the war zone (left). **Foreign Relations** What does this cartoon suggest about Wilson's response to the sinking of the *Lusitania*?

boarded the *Lusitania* in spite of German warnings to stay off British ships. Nevertheless, the American press went wild over what they called Germany's act of "barbarism."

Wilson urged patience. He demanded that Germany stop its submarine warfare and make payments to the victims' families. Germany's reply that the ship carried small arms and ammunition did not quiet American anger. Wilson sent a second, stronger note of protest. In response, Germany promised to stop sinking passenger ships without warning, as long as the ship's crew offered no resistance to German search or seizure.

Still, U-boats continued to torpedo Allied ships. On March 24, 1916, a German submarine sank the *Sussex*, a French passenger steamship. The United States threatened to cut diplomatic ties to Germany. In what came to be called the **Sussex pledge**, the German government again promised that U-boats would warn ships before attacking.

The series of demands and broken promises that led up to the *Sussex* pledge frustrated Wilson. He could not threaten force without entering the war. During this time, however, Wilson did embrace the concept of preparedness. He also authorized New York bankers to

make a huge loan to the Allies. American neutrality was beginning to weaken.

Moving Toward War

In the presidential election of 1916, Wilson ran on the slogan "He kept us out of war." The Republicans, who nominated Supreme Court justice Charles Evans Hughes, criticized Wilson for not taking a stronger stand against Germany. American voters gave Wilson a narrow victory.

Germany soon tested Wilson's patience. On February 1, 1917, Germany violated the *Sussex* pledge by resuming unrestricted submarine warfare. German strategists knew that it might bring the United States into the war. But they felt fairly confident that they could defeat Britain and win the war before American entry could make a difference.

Germany's action dashed Wilson's hope of maintaining freedom of the seas—and American neutrality. On February 3 the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. Wilson asked Congress for permission to arm American merchant ships.

Main Idea CONNECTIONS

What was the impact of Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare?



President Woodrow Wilson reluctantly led the nation into World War I.

The Zimmermann Note In the Senate, a group of antiwar senators tried to prevent action on Wilson's request by using a **filibuster**. (A filibuster is a tactic in which senators take the floor, begin talking, and refuse to stop talking to prevent a vote on a measure.) While this was taking place, the British revealed the contents of an intercepted German telegram. In the note Arthur Zimmermann, Germany's foreign secretary, made a secret offer to Mexico.

“We shall endeavor to keep the United States neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance. . . : Make war together, make peace together, . . . and . . . Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.”

—Arthur Zimmermann

Neither Wilson nor Mexico took the **Zimmermann note** seriously. Its release, however, scored another public relations victory for Great Britain. The United States edged closer to war.

Revolution in Russia By early 1917 Russia already had suffered enormous casualties in the war: 1.8 million killed, 2.4 million taken prisoner, and 2.8 million sick or wounded. Austrian

and German forces had advanced deep into Russian territory. Poorly fed and miserably equipped, the Russians fell back farther and farther into their interior.

Then, in March 1917, Czar Nicholas II, Russia's autocratic leader, was forced to give up power. The Russian monarchy was replaced with a republican government. This **Russian Revolution** elated the prowar faction in the United States. Concern over being allied with the czar had helped slow the nation's move toward entry into the war. The fall of the czar removed a last stumbling block to a full American commitment to the Allies.

The War Resolution Between March 16 and March 18, Germany sank the United States ships *City of Memphis*, *Illinois*, and *Vigilancia*. On March 20 Wilson's Cabinet voted unanimously for war. Casting the issue in idealistic terms, Wilson told Congress on April 2 that “the world must be made safe for democracy.” He stated:

AMERICAN VOICES

“It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace.”

—Woodrow Wilson

A war resolution passed 82 to 6 in the Senate and 373 to 50 in the House. On April 6, 1917, the President signed it.

SECTION 2 REVIEW

Comprehension

- 1. Key Terms** Define: (a) U-boat; (b) Sussex pledge; (c) filibuster; (d) Zimmermann note; (e) Russian Revolution.
- 2. Summarizing the Main Idea** Why did German submarine warfare upset Americans so much?
- 3. Organizing Information** Create a flowchart that shows the events leading up to American entrance into World War I. Charts might consist of a series of boxes connected by arrows.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. Which event do you

think most directly caused the United States to declare war on Germany? Explain.

- 5. Identifying Alternatives** Consider the causes that brought the United States into World War I. What would the United States have had to do to avoid the conflict altogether? For what reasons did the United States not take such steps?

Writing Activity

- 6. Writing a Persuasive Essay** Choose one of the events that led to American involvement in World War I. Imagine that the event has just taken place. Write an essay to try to persuade the President and Congress that the United States should enter the war now, based on that one event.