

Christina Chai

Mr. Rutherford

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Foreign Policy

Before World War I, the United States viewed itself as an emerging power that needed to extend its influence throughout the world in order to compete with other great powers, such as Russia and Germany. The United States was eager to build relationships with countries from different continents; imperialist policy dictated that it was U.S. duty to spread democracy, allowing people to have the right to self-determination. Wilson, McKinley, and Theodore Roosevelt were presidents who expanded America's influence abroad by annexing colonies throughout the world, including the Philippines and Cuba. China, on the other hand, mainly focused on their war with Japan, which was trying to conquer Chinese territory. The Chinese government did not want too much involvement in global conflicts, especially when it came to World War I. China remained neutral for a long time; perhaps surprisingly, so did the United States.

Under President Wilson's presidency, the United States got involved with their Latin American neighbors, attempting to help Nicaraguan and Haitian rebels and involving themselves in the Mexican revolution. What's more, in 1916 Wilson persuaded Congress to pass the Jones Act, which gave the American-occupied Philippines significantly more political autonomy. He also encouraged Chinese independence and supported China in its territorial dispute with Japan. From isolationism to internationalism, America's involvement in World War I was inevitable, although both Congress and president agreed to maintain neutrality at the beginning of the war. Many citizens also thought America should not get involved in European political entanglements.

However, America's neutral position did not last long due to the German U-boat campaign. *Lusitania* (British), *Arabic* (British), *Sussex* (British, later transferred to the French): these are only some of the ships that were attacked by German U-boats. Eventually, the United States became afraid of the unrestricted submarine warfare, first begun by Germany in February 1915. The U.S. declared war in April 1917.

Before World War I, China was busy consulting with Japan. On January 8th 1915, the Japanese government issued "Twenty-One Demands" to China. These demands imposed political structures and gave considerable economic privileges to Japan, especially in Manchuria and Mongolia. Japan also wanted power in the province of Fujian. In addition, the central government was to be put under Japanese control.

When it comes to World War I, there were divergent opinions as to whether China should enter into the war, and on which side. China had never taken an active role in a global event being played out far from its national borders. By expanding its global influence, some Chinese Hoped to regain their sovereign rights to Shandong in the event of a German defeat. However, other Chinese saw Germany as a potential future ally—especially when they compared Germany with England and Russia who were known for imperialism, the country's greatest threat. Ongoing domestic political resistance did not led China to war against Germany in the National Assembly until August 1917. The main reason that China entered the war also had to do with unrestricted warfare, the sinking of a ship called "Athos I" with 900 Chinese workers.

When I asked my host dad his view on America's involvement in World War I, he told me that a lot of people in 1900 thought the conflict was far from America, which is true. Most of them wanted America out of the World War I at first. However, opinion gradually changed with

Germany's nonstop attacks on neutral ships and Wilson's position that America had to play a role in making the world safe for democracy.

People were working hard to keep their farms alive as industrialization slowly encroached. At the same time, they were trying to produce supplies, food and clothes as much as they can in order to win the war. Some were activists trying to protest and fight for equal rights for women in this democratic country. On the other side, since the Chinese people had already suffered years of oppression by Japan, some of them were afraid of wars. My family reacted to the unpeaceful time by moving from Liaoning province(which was invaded by Japan long before the Second Sino-Japanese War) to Gansu province, which is considered inland China. My great-grandpa thought a different place could offer a peaceful environment for my family. After asking my grandpa's thoughts on World War I, he said that the largest concern at that time was to protect Chinese territory.

All in all, although both Americans and Chinese tried to remain neutral during World War I, unrestricted warfare lead them enter the war and fight on the same line. In some way, both countries also hope expand their international influence. China wanted to protect its territories from imperialism. And America viewed itself as an expander and protector of democracy.