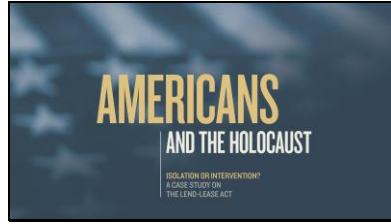


Slide 1




Slide 2



Twenty years after World War I ended, 70 percent of Americans polled believed that US participation in the war had been a mistake. In the 1920s, the US government took measures to reduce the threat of foreign conflict by signing treaties limiting naval construction, signing the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, and outlawing aggressive war. International unrest in the 1930s, including Japan's occupation of Manchuria, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, Nazi Germany's remilitarization and territorial seizures, and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, threatened US isolationism.

Slide 3

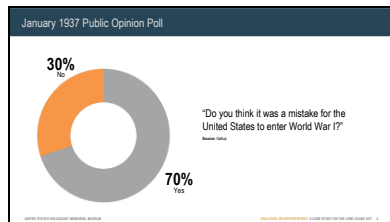
Neutrality Act of 1935



On August 31, 1935, Congress passed the first in a series of laws designed to prevent the United States from being embroiled in a foreign war. The 1935 Neutrality Act prohibited the export of "arms, ammunition, and implements of war" from the United States to foreign nations at war and required US arms manufacturers to apply for an export license.

In response to these conflicts, the US Congress passed a series of Neutrality Acts designed to prevent American involvement in these conflicts. The Neutrality Act of 1935 prohibited exporting arms and ammunition to any foreign nation at war. In 1937, a new neutrality act prohibited Americans from traveling on ships owned by any belligerent nation and declared that American-owned ships could not carry any arms intended for war zones.


Slide 4



This poll further shows the isolationism prevalent in the United States during this time. This public opinion poll, taken in January 1937, asks Americans if they thought it was a mistake for the United States to enter World War I. As you can see, 70 percent of those polled say it was.

Slide 5

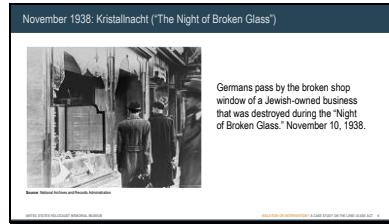
1937-1938 Recession



A migrant family walks down a road, pulling its belongings in carts and wagons, in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, in June 1938.

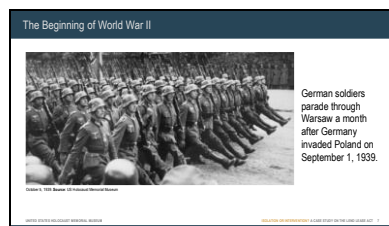
During this period, the United States was still suffering the long-term effects of the Great Depression, which started in 1929. Despite President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation, measures passed by Congress in 1933-37, in 1937 another economic recession began, with real GDP dropping 10 percent and unemployment hitting 20 percent.

Slide 6



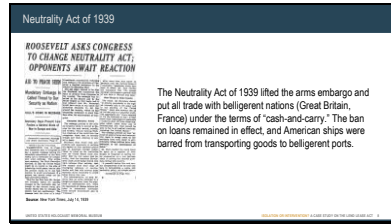
Americans also paid attention to what is going on overseas. In 1938, the Nazi party had controlled Germany for five years, and in March of that year, German troops entered Austria and incorporated it as a province into the German Reich in an event known as the *Anschluss*. Nazi sympathizers attacked Jewish people and destroyed their property throughout the spring, summer, and autumn of 1938. Then on November 9–10, 1938, Nazi party members and sympathizers burned synagogues, looted Jewish homes and businesses, killed at least 91 Jews, and imprisoned more than 30,000 Jewish men and boys in concentration camps. This was the first widespread state-sponsored violence against the Jewish community in Europe. After these attacks, known as *Kristallnacht*, or the “Night of Broken Glass,” tens of thousands of German and Austrian Jews joined the long waiting lists to emigrate out of the Third Reich.

Slide 7



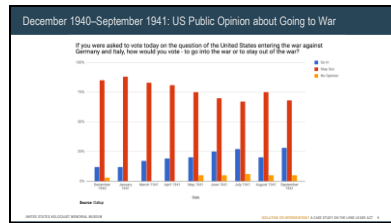
On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. Honoring an alliance with Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Soviet forces invaded Poland from the east a few weeks later. After Poland’s defeat, Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned the country.

Slide 8



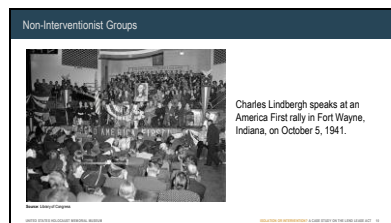
In November 1939, the last of the four Neutrality Acts was passed. It lifted the arms embargo and put all trade with belligerent nations, including Great Britain and France, under the terms of "cash and carry," which meant that favored nations could purchase non-military products in the United States, provided they paid with cash and transported the goods on their own ships. The ban on loans remained in effect, and American ships were barred from transporting goods to belligerent ports.

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At this time, American public opinion began undergoing a significant shift. Gallup polled Americans almost every month from December 1940 to September 1941, asking their opinion regarding whether or not the United States should enter the war against Germany and Italy. Slowly, the number of Americans who believed that the United States should enter the war rose.

Slide 10



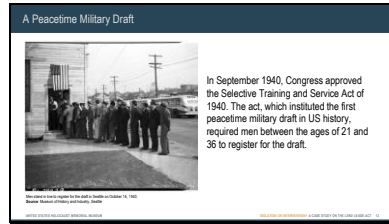
Numerous groups advocated against American involvement in World War II. The largest and most influential non-interventionist group was the America First Committee, which was founded in the summer of 1940 by a group of Yale University law students. At its height, America First reported more than 800,000 dues-paying members in more than 450 chapters across the country. The committee encouraged civic engagement, such as letter-writing campaigns to elected officials, and sponsored rallies and speeches throughout the country.

Slide 11



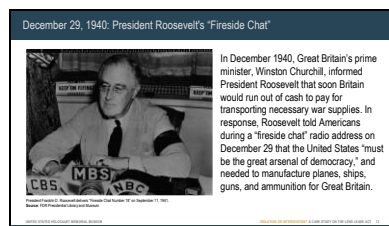
In contrast to non-interventionist or isolationist groups, interventionist groups often advocated a variety of different policies, but generally agreed that the United States should actively support the Allied war effort economically and militarily. The Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies was founded in May 1940 by William Allen White, a prominent Republican publisher from Kansas, and was directed by Clark Eichelberger, the head of the League of Nations Association. The committee, which ultimately boasted 750 local chapters and an estimated membership of 750,000, staged rallies and performances, took out full-page newspaper ads, and handed out flyers in an effort to increase support for aiding Great Britain.

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In September 1940, Congress approved the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. The act, which instituted the first peacetime military draft in US history, required men between the ages of 21 and 36 to register for the draft. The act called for 900,000 men to be drafted, all of whom would be enlisted for one year of training and service and could only serve in the Western Hemisphere or in US territories. Though there were anti-draft protest on college campuses nationwide, in December 1940 78 percent of Americans polled favored the military draft.

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In December 1940, Great Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, informed President Roosevelt that soon Britain would run out of cash to pay for transporting necessary war supplies. In response, Roosevelt told Americans during a "fireside chat" radio address on December 29 that the United States "must be the great arsenal of democracy," and needed to manufacture planes, ships, guns, and ammunition for Great Britain. "The sole purpose" of supplying Great Britain, he reassured them, "is to keep war away from our country and our people." But by the time Roosevelt began his third term in 1941, fewer Americans believed the United States would be able to stay out of war. In January 1941, Roosevelt's Congressional allies introduced HR 1776, a bill that granted the president the power to "sell, transfer title to, exchange, lend, lease, or otherwise dispose of ... any defense article" to another country. America First Committee members referred to HR 1776 as the "War Dictatorship Bill," but most Americans knew it as "Lend-Lease." Polls showed that 68 percent

of Americans approved of the lend-lease proposal.

Slide 14

Document Analysis

- What group or individual did you read about?
- Summarize this person's or group's stance on the bill.
- What evidence (if any) does your individual or group provide to support their/its argument?
- What external factors might have shaped this perspective? Consider political, social, and economic conditions.

Slide 15

Class Discussion

- How would you characterize public opinion in America regarding the lead-up to and start of World War II from 1939–1941? As Americans engaged in debates over US involvement, what was happening in Europe?
- What factors influenced Americans' attitudes and opinions on these issues?
- Were there particular arguments that you found convincing? Why? Was there additional information you would need to accurately assess the validity of these arguments?


Slide 16

Class Discussion

- What is the role of informed public debate about policy decisions in a democracy?
- What questions does this case study raise about America's role in the world?

Slide 17

Lend-Lease Act Passed



The Lend-Lease Act passed both houses of Congress by wide margins on March 11, 1941. By the end of the war, the United States had transferred a total of \$50 billion to 38 Allied countries and had received goods valued at about \$8 billion.

On March 11, 1941, the Lend-Lease Act passed both houses of Congress by wide margins. An initial appropriation of \$7 million was depleted rapidly. Congress repeatedly renewed the program. By the end of the war, the United States had transferred a total of \$50 billion to 38 Allied countries and had received goods valued at about \$8 billion. The largest lend-lease recipients were Great Britain (\$31 billion) and the Soviet Union (\$11 billion). Included in these figures is the value of goods such as aircraft, weapons, ammunition, clothing, medicals supplies, foodstuffs, and raw materials transferred by land, sea, and air. The bill played a vital role in keeping the Allied war machine operating, especially in the months preceding the US entry into the war. Lend-Lease cemented the role of the United States as the arsenal of democracy.

Slide 18

