

Note: Original spelling is retained for this document and all that follow.

Appendix 1: Primary source and background documents

Document No. 1: Germany's Declaration of War with Russia, August 1, 1914

Presented by the German Ambassador to St. Petersburg

The Imperial German Government have used every effort since the beginning of the crisis to bring about a peaceful settlement. In compliance with a wish expressed to him by His Majesty the Emperor of Russia, the German Emperor had undertaken, in concert with Great Britain, the part of mediator between the Cabinets of Vienna and St. Petersburg; but Russia, without waiting for any result, proceeded to a general mobilisation of her forces both on land and sea.

In consequence of this threatening step, which was not justified by any military proceedings on the part of Germany, the German Empire was faced by a grave and imminent danger. If the German Government had failed to guard against this peril, they would have compromised the safety and the very existence of Germany.

The German Government were, therefore, obliged to make representations to the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias and to insist upon a cessation of the aforesaid military acts. Russia having refused to comply with this demand, and having shown by this refusal that her action was directed against Germany, I have the honour, on the instructions of my Government, to inform your Excellency as follows:

His Majesty the Emperor, my august Sovereign, in the name of the German Empire, accepts the challenge, and considers himself at war with Russia.

Several of these have openly violated the neutrality of Belgium by flying over the territory of that country; one has attempted to destroy buildings near Wesel; others have been seen in the district of the Eifel; one has thrown bombs on the railway near Carlsruhe and Nuremberg.

I am instructed, and I have the honour to inform your Excellency, that in the presence of these acts of aggression the German Empire considers itself in a state of war with France in consequence of the acts of this latter Power.

At the same time, I have the honour to bring to the knowledge of your Excellency that the German authorities will retain French mercantile vessels in German ports, but they will release them if, within forty- eight hours, they are assured of complete reciprocity.

My diplomatic mission having thus come to an end, it only remains for me to request your Excellency to be good enough to furnish me with my passports, and to take the steps you consider suitable to assure my return to Germany, with the staff of the Embassy, as well as, with the Staff of the Bavarian Legation and of the German Consulate General in Paris.

Be good enough, M. le President, to receive the assurances of my deepest respect.

(Signed) SCIIOEN.

Document No. 2: Germany's Declaration of War with France, August 3, 1914

Presented by the German Ambassador to Paris

Several of these have openly violated the neutrality of Belgium by flying over the territory of that country; one has attempted to destroy buildings near Wesel; others have been seen in the district of the Eifel; one has thrown bombs on the railway near Carlsruhe and Nuremberg.

I am instructed, and I have the honour to inform your Excellency, that in the presence of these acts of aggression the German Empire considers itself in a state of war with France in consequence of the acts of this latter Power.

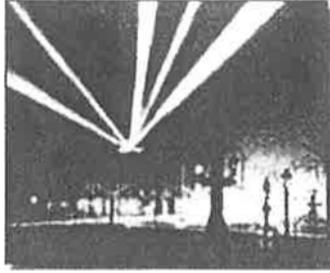
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Be good enough, M. le President, to receive the assurances of my deepest respect.

(Signed) SCIIOEN.

Document No. 3: "Who Declared War and When"



The 'Great War', which began on July 28, 1914 with Austria-Hungary's declaration of war with Serbia, was the first truly global war. It began in Europe but quickly spread throughout the world. Many countries became embroiled within the war's first month; others joined in the ensuing four years, with Honduras announcing hostilities with Germany as late as July 19, 1918 (with the record going to Romania, who entered the war—albeit for the second time- one day before it finished, on November 10, 1918).

Detailed below is a list of the nations who formally declared hostilities during World War One, along with their date of entrance. Nations of the British Empire, e.g. Australia, Canada and New Zealand, automatically entered the war with Britain's decision to enter the fray on 4 August 1914.

Note that on numerous occasions hostilities were assumed without a formal declaration, e.g. Russia with Germany and Austria-Hungary in August 1914.

Australia

Entered war together with Britain on August 4, 1914

Austria-Hungary

Declared war with Serbia on July 28, 1914

Declared war with Russia on August 6, 1914

Declared war with Belgium on August 28, 1914

Declared war with Portugal on March 15, 1916

Belgium

Invaded by Germany on August 3, 1914

Bulgaria

Declared war with Serbia on October 14, 1915

Declared war with Romania on September 1, 1916

Canada

Entered war together with Britain on August 4, 1914

China

Severed relations with Germany on March 14, 1917

Declared war with Germany on August 14, 1917

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on August 14, 1917

Costa Rica

Severed relations with Germany on September 21, 1917

Declared war with Germany on May 23, 1918

Cuba

Declared war with Germany on April 7, 1917

Ecuador

Severed relations with Germany on December 8, 1917

France

Invaded by Germany on August 2, 1914

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on August 12, 1914

Declared war with Turkey on November 5, 1914

Declared war with Bulgaria on October 16, 1915

Germany

Declared war with Russia on August 1, 1914

Declared war with France on August 3, 1914

Declared war with Belgium on August 4, 1914

Declared war with Portugal on March 9, 1916

Greece

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on June 27, 1917

Declared war with Bulgaria on June 27, 1917

Declared war with Germany on June 27, 1917

Declared war with Turkey on June 27, 1917

Guatemala

Declared war with Germany on April 23, 1918

Haiti

Declared war with Germany on July 12, 1918

Honduras

Declared war with Germany on July 19, 1918

Italy

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on May 23, 1915

Declared war with Turkey on August, 21 1915

Declared war with Germany on August 28, 1915

Declared war with Bulgaria on October 19, 1915

Japan

Declared war with Germany on August 23, 1914

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on August 25, 1914

Liberia

Declared war with Germany on August 4, 1914

Montenegro

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on August 5, 1914

Declared war with Germany on August 8, 1914

Declared war with Bulgaria on October 15, 1915

New Zealand

Entered war together with Britain on August 4, 1914

Nicaragua

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on May 8, 1918

Declared war with Germany on May 8, 1918

Panama

Declared war with Germany on April 7, 1917

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on December 10, 1917

Peru

Severed relations with Germany on October 6, 1917

Portugal

Entered war against Germany on March 9, 1916

Entered war against Austria-Hungary on March 15, 1916

Romania

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on August 27, 1916

Exited war with Treaty of Bucharest on May 7, 1918

Re-entered the war on November 10, 1918

Russia

Declared war with Turkey on November 2, 1914

Declared war with Bulgaria on October 19, 1915

San Marino

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on June 3, 1915

Serbia

Declared war with Germany on August 6, 1914

Declared war with Turkey on November 2, 1914

Siam

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on July 22, 1917

Declared war with Germany on July 22, 1917

Turkey

Declared war with Romania on August 30, 1916

Severed relations with United States on April 23, 1917

United Kingdom

Declared war with Germany on August 4, 1914

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on August 12, 1914

Declared war with Turkey on November 5, 1914

Declared war with Bulgaria on October 15, 1915

United States of America

Declared war with Germany on April 6, 1917

Declared war with Austria-Hungary on December 7, 1917

Uruguay

Severed relations with Germany on October 7, 1917

Document No. 4: Significant Battles of the First World War: 1914–1916



All images in this document are from <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-significant-battles-of-the-first-world-war>.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment under shrapnel fire, September 8, 1914.

The Battle of the Marne

At the start of the First World War, Germany hoped to avoid fighting on two fronts by knocking out France before turning to Russia, France's ally. The initial German offensive had some early success, but there were not enough reinforcements immediately available to sustain momentum. The French and British launched a counter-offensive at the Marne (6-10 September 1914) and after several days of bitter fighting the Germans retreated.

Germany's failure to defeat the French and the British at the Marne also had important strategic implications. The Russians had mobilised more quickly than the Germans had anticipated and launched their first offensive within two weeks of the war's outbreak. The Battle of Tannenberg in August 1914 ended in German victory, but the combination of German victory in the east and defeat in the west meant the war would not be quick, but protracted and extended across several fronts.

The Battle of the Marne also marked the end of mobile warfare on the Western Front. Following their retreat, the Germans re-engaged Allied forces on the Aisne, where fighting began to stagnate into trench warfare.

The opening months of the war caused profound shock due to the huge casualties caused by modern weapons. Losses on all fronts for the year 1914 topped five million, with a million men killed. This was a scale of violence unknown in any previous war. The terrible casualties sustained in open warfare meant that soldiers on all fronts had begun to protect themselves by digging trenches, which would dominate the Western Front until 1918

The Battle of Gallipoli

The Gallipoli campaign (April 25, 1915- January 9, 1916) was the land-based element of a strategy intended to allow Allied ships to pass through the Dardanelles, capture Constantinople (now Istanbul) and ultimately knock Ottoman Turkey out of the war. But Allied plans were based on the mistaken belief that the Ottomans could be easily overcome.

At dawn on April 25, 1915, Allied troops landed on the Gallipoli peninsula in Ottoman Turkey. General Sir Ian Hamilton decided to make two landings, placing the British 29th Division at Cape Helles and the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) north of Gaba Tepe in an area later dubbed Anzac Cove. Both landings were quickly contained by determined Ottoman troops and neither the British nor the Anzacs were able to advance.

Trench warfare quickly took hold, mirroring the fighting of the Western Front. Casualties mounted heavily and in the summer heat conditions rapidly deteriorated. Sickness was rampant, food quickly became inedible and there were vast swarms of black corpse flies. In August a new assault was launched north of Anzac Cove. This attack, along with a fresh landing at Suvla Bay, quickly failed and stalemate returned.

In December, it was decided to evacuate- first Anzac and Suvla, and then Helles in January 1916. Gallipoli became a defining moment in the history of both Australia and New Zealand, revealing characteristics that both countries have used to define their soldiers: endurance, determination, initiative and 'mateship'. For the Ottomans, it was a brief respite in the decline of their empire. But through the emergence of Mustafa Kemal (later known as Ataturk) as one of the campaign's leading figures, it also led to the foundation of modern Turkey.



Damage to the deck of *HMS Chester* sustained during the Battle of Jutland.

The Battle of Jutland

The Battle of Jutland (May 31- June 1, 1916) was the largest naval battle of the First World War. It was the only time that the British and German fleets of 'dreadnought' battleships actually came to blows.

The German High Seas Fleet hoped to weaken the Royal Navy by launching an ambush on the British Grand Fleet in the North Sea. German Admiral Reinhard Scheer planned to lure out both Admiral Sir David Beatty's Battlecruiser Force and Admiral Sir John Jellicoe's Grand Fleet. Scheer hoped to destroy Beatty's force before Jellicoe's arrived, but the British were warned by their codebreakers and put both forces to sea early.

Jutland was a confused and bloody action involving 250 ships and around 100,000 men. Initial encounters between Beatty's force and the High Seas Fleet resulted in the loss of several ships. The Germans damaged Beatty's flagship, HMS Lion, and sank HMS Indefatigable and HMS Queen Mary, both of which blew up when German shells penetrated their ammunition magazines.

Beatty withdrew until Jellicoe arrived with the main fleet. The Germans, now outgunned, turned for home. Although it failed to achieve the decisive victory each side hoped for, the battle confirmed British naval dominance and secured its control of shipping lanes, allowing Britain to implement the blockade that would contribute to German defeat in 1918.

The British lost 14 ships and over 6,000 men, but were ready for action again the next day. The Germans, who had lost 11 ships and over 2,500 men, avoided complete destruction but never again seriously challenged British control of the North Sea.



French troops manning a captured German Maxim gun at Fort Douaumont, Verdun, 1916.

The Battle of Verdun

The Battle of Verdun (February 21–December 18, 1916) was the longest battle of the First World War. It was also one of the costliest. It began in February 1916 with a German attack on the fortified French town of Verdun, where bitter fighting would continue for most of the year. The ten-hour opening bombardment saw an unprecedented concentration of firepower and although the French were forced back they did not break. In the summer, the Germans were forced to reduce their strength at Verdun after the British and Russians launched their own offensives elsewhere.

The French retook lost ground in the autumn and through careful management of their army, efficient logistics and the resilience of the troops fighting for their homeland, the French secured a defensive victory before the year's end.

The Germans had lost over 430,000 men killed or wounded and the French approximately 550,000. The trauma of this loss not only affected French political and military decision-making during and after the war, it had a lasting effect on French national consciousness.

Verdun also had serious strategic implications for the rest of the war. The Allies had planned to defeat Germany through a series of large co-ordinated offensives, but the German attack at Verdun drastically reduced the number of French troops available. Britain and its Empire would have to lead the 'Big Push' on the Western Front.



French troops manning a captured German Maxim gun at Fort Douaumont, Verdun, 1916.

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Bernafay Wood, Looking Towards Trônes Wood, 1929, Edward Handley-Read.

The Battle of the Somme

The Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 1, 1916) was a joint operation between British and French forces intended to achieve a decisive victory over the Germans on the Western Front. For many in Britain, the resulting battle remains the most painful and infamous episode of the First World War.

In December 1915, Allied commanders had met to discuss strategies for the upcoming year and agreed to launch a joint French and British attack in the region of the River Somme in the summer of 1916. Intense German pressure on the French at Verdun throughout 1916 made action on the Somme increasingly urgent and meant the British would take on the main role in the offensive.

They were faced with German defences that had been carefully laid out over many months. Despite a seven-day bombardment prior to the attack on 1 July, the British did not achieve the quick breakthrough their military leadership had planned for and the Somme became a deadlocked battle of attrition.

Over the next 141 days, the British advanced a maximum of seven miles. More than one million men from all sides were killed, wounded or captured. British casualties on the first day- numbering over 57,000, of which 19,240 were killed - make it the bloodiest day in British military history. The Somme, like Verdun for the French, has a prominent place in British history and popular memory and has come to represent the loss and apparent futility of the war. But the Allied offensive on the Somme was a strategic necessity fought to meet the needs of an international alliance. British commanders learned difficult but important lessons on the Somme that would contribute to eventual Allied victory in 1918.



Russian troops resting in captured Austro-Hungarian trenches during the offensive, summer 1916.

The Brusilov Offensive

The Russian Army had suffered a series of crushing defeats in the first year of the war, but the Brusilov Offensive (June 4–September 20, 1916) would be the most successful Russian offensive - and one of the most successful breakthrough operations- of the First World War.

Named after the Russian commander Aleksei Brusilov who led it, the offensive used tactics that were to also prove successful on the Western Front. Brusilov used a short, sharp artillery bombardment and shock troops to exploit weak points, helping to return an element of surprise to the attack.

The offensive coincided with the British attack on the Somme and was part of the effort to relieve pressure not only on the French at Verdun, but on the Western Front as a whole. The Russian attack also drew Austro-Hungarian forces away from the Italian Front and put increased pressure on the already strained and increasingly demoralized Austro-Hungarian Army.

Germany was forced to redirect troops to the Eastern Front in support of its ally. This was part of an emerging pattern of Austria-Hungary's growing dependence on Germany, which in turn would create a strain on German resources.

The Russians were never able to duplicate Brusilov's success. It was their last major offensive of the war and led to an overall weakening- both militarily and politically- of both Russia and Austria-Hungary. The war stoked political and social unrest, leading to revolution and eventually the total collapse of the Russian Army.

Background reading and video No. 5: "The Sinking of the *Lusitania*"

On May 7, 1915, less than a year after World War I (1914–1918) erupted across Europe, a German U-boat torpedoed and sank the *RMS Lusitania*, a British ocean liner en route from New York to Liverpool, England. Of the more than 1,900 passengers and crewmembers on board, more than 1,100 perished, including more than 120 Americans.

Nearly two years would pass before the United States formally entered World War I, but the sinking of the *Lusitania* played a significant role in turning public opinion against Germany, both in the United States and abroad.

View video of *Lusitania* leaving the harbor in New York City at <https://www.c-span.org/video/?325864-1/rms-lusitania-departing-york-city-final-voyage>.

Document No. 6: "The Zimmerman Telegram"

This English translation of the cipher telegram—from Arthur Zimmerman, German foreign secretary, to Heinrich von Eckardt, the German ambassador in Mexico—is transcribed from a telegram of Walter H. Page, American ambassador in Great Britain, to Robert Lansing, American secretary of state (File No. 862,20212/69) and mirrors a typescript discovered in October 2005 in British archives (assumed to be the actual copy shown to the American ambassador in 1917).

The telegram was sent January 16, 1917.

We intend to begin on the 1st of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace. Signed, Zimmermann.

Background

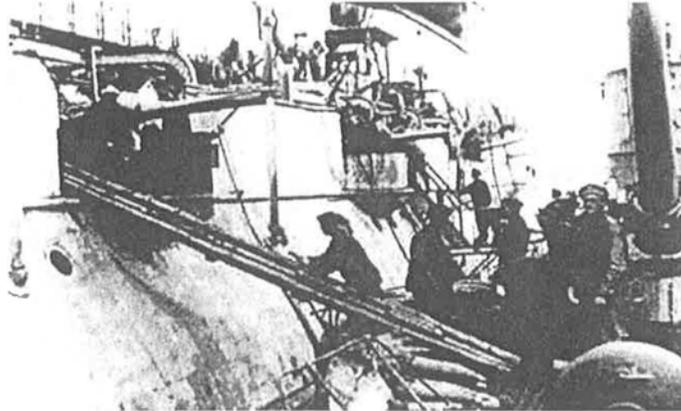
Between 1914 and the spring of 1917, the European nations engaged in a conflict that became known as World War I. While armies moved across the face of Europe, the United States remained neutral. In 1916, Wilson was elected president for a second term, largely because of the slogan "He kept us out of war." Events in early 1917 would change that hope. In frustration over the effective British naval blockade, in February, Germany broke its pledge to limit submarine warfare. In response to the breaking of the *Sussex* pledge, the United States severed diplomatic relations with Germany.

In January 1917, British cryptographers deciphered a telegram from German Foreign Minister Zimmerman to the German minister to Mexico, von Eckhardt, offering United States territory to Mexico in return for joining the German cause. This message helped draw the United States into the war and thus changed the course of history. The telegram had such an impact on American opinion that, according to David Kahn, author of *The Codebreakers*, "No other single cryptanalysis has had such enormous consequences." It is his opinion that "never before or since has so much turned upon the solution of a secret message." In an effort to protect their intelligence from detection and to capitalize on growing anti-German sentiment in the United States, the British waited until February 24 to present the telegram to Wilson. The American press published news of the telegram on March 1. On April 6, 1917, the United States Congress formally declared war on Germany and its allies.

The story of British intelligence efforts to decipher the German code is fascinating and complicated. *The Zimmerman Telegram* by Barbara Tuchman recounts that story in all of its exciting detail. It is an excellent historical account for high school students.

Background reading no. 7: "Unrestricted Submarine Warfare"

The use of unrestricted submarine warfare was announced by Germany on January 9th, 1917. The use of unrestricted submarine warfare was to have a major impact on World War One as it was one of the main reasons why America joined the war.



When the German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg announced Germany's intention to use unrestricted submarine warfare, his one major concern and fear was that it would provoke an American response- in this he was to be correct.

Why did Germany resort to such a tactic that was likely to provoke such a response from America? By 1917, the war was not going well for Germany on the Western Front. Unrestricted submarine warfare was a result of desperation and the belief that the ferocity of such a tactic might just keep America out of the war if the results were spectacular and shocking enough. The Battle of Jutland showed that the German Navy was not strong enough to defeat the Royal Navy. Therefore any attempt by the German surface fleet to attack British merchant ships was not tenable as any fleet leaving bases like Kiel would have been met with a considerable fleet from the Royal Navy. Therefore, any attacks on Britain's lifeline of shipping from America would have to be done by submarines. Rather than do this piecemeal, Bethmann Hollweg decided on a policy of wholesale unrestricted attack.

The impact of U-boats was overestimated in Germany. At the start of the war, the German submarine service had a couple of high profile successes against British naval targets but after this, successes became rare. However, the public in Germany had a high opinion as to the ability of the submarine to turn a campaign.

U-boats first attacked commercial targets as early as February 1915 but it was a piecemeal campaign. This ended in January 1917 when Bethmann Hollweg, persuaded by senior officers in the German Imperial Navy, ordered unrestricted attacks as part of policy. The one issue that had held Bethmann Hollweg back was the sinking of neutral ships. At that time America was a neutral state whose ships frequently and legally crossed the Atlantic with supplies for the Allies. Bethmann Hollweg's views seem to have been based on a political perspective- the thought of angering America. The only person who was known to have expressed humanitarian views was the Kaiser who stated that the drowning of innocent civilians was "a dreadful thought".

Document and reading No. 8: Excerpts: Woodrow Wilson's War Message to Congress, April 2nd, 1917 and Historians' Reactions to Woodrow Wilson's War Message

Background: After the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, Wilson called Congress into an extraordinary session to ask for a declaration of war against Germany. Within four days, both the Senate and the House voted overwhelmingly to support the president. Source: Address delivered at Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, April 2, 1917; U.S. 65th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Document 5.

Excerpt 1

Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth insure the observance of those principles. Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people.

Excerpt 2

We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretense about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty.

Excerpt 3

...we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts,—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments, for the fights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Walter A. McDougall:

Twenty-five years before FDR coined the phrase, therefore, Wilson made “all aid short of war” the American policy toward Britain. He doubtless expected that U.S. economic support would enable the Allies to prevail or at least force Germany to negotiate. That expectation enabled him to seek – and barely win – re-election in 1916 on the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War.” As late as January 1917 Wilson stated categorically, “This country does not intend to become involved in war. We are the only one of the great White nations that is free from war today, and it would be a crime against civilization for us to go into it.” So he instead he issued his grand appeal for a Peace Without Victory because punitive settlements would only prolong the cycle of vengeance.

Wilson must have been sorely disappointed when, over that same winter, the British war cabinet, now led by David Lloyd George, quietly confessed that its cupboards were bare

and credit exhausted. That forced the president to make a fateful choice independent of Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare and provocative Zimmermann telegram to Mexico. Wilson's choice was either to cling to neutrality and accept the risk of a German victory – or to explain to the nation that technology and geopolitics obliged the U.S. to enter the war for its own security, Monroe Doctrine notwithstanding – or to preach a universal crusade on behalf of a Progressive new world order.

Scholars such as Niall Ferguson have speculated that the first choice might have been best. This was not Hitler's Germany, after all, and after their sacrifices in a total war the Germans themselves would likely have demanded democratic reforms. Moreover, a German victory in the Great War might well have meant no fascism, no communism, no World War II, no Holocaust, and no Cold War.

Scholars such as Henry Kissinger have speculated that the second choice – Teddy Roosevelt's choice – might have been best, with the U.S. waging war to restore a balance of power on terms the Allies, Germans, and American Senate could have lived with.

But Wilson made the third choice, because he believed God was now calling his nation to wage holy war – and, possibly, because he judged the American people could be unified and incited to wage total war on no other basis. But the ominous outcome was that Wilson had to imagine himself a new Martin Luther making a Reformation that turned Washington's civil religion on its head and declared America the world's messiah.

Appendix 2: Wilson's War Message to Congress, April 2, 1917

Background: Wilson's reelection in 1916 owed a great deal to the campaign slogan "He kept us out of war." But the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by Germany in 1917 significantly changed the international situation. Several U.S. merchant ships were sunk in March by German U-boats. That April, Wilson called Congress into extraordinary session to ask for a declaration of war against Germany. Within four days, both the Senate and the House voted overwhelmingly to support the president. Source: Address delivered at Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, April 2, 1917; U.S. 65th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Document 5.

On the third of February last I officially laid before you the extraordinary announcement of the Imperial German Government that on and after the first day of February it was its purpose to put aside all restraints of law or of humanity and use its submarines to sink every vessel that sought to approach either the ports of Great Britain and Ireland or the western coasts of Europe or any of the ports controlled by the enemies of Germany within the Mediterranean. That had seemed to be the object of the German submarine warfare earlier in the war, but since April of last year the Imperial Government had somewhat restrained the commanders of its undersea craft in conformity with its promise then given to us that passenger boats should not be sunk and that due warning would be given to all other vessels which its submarines might seek to destroy, when no resistance was offered or escape attempted, and care taken that their crews were given at least a fair chance to save their lives in their open boats. The precautions taken were meager and haphazard enough, as was proved in distressing instance after instance in the progress of the cruel and unmanly business, but a certain degree of restraint was observed. The new policy has swept every restriction aside. Vessels of every kind, whatever their flag, their character, their cargo, their destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning and without thought of help or mercy for those on board, the vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of belligerents. Even hospital ships and ships carrying relief to the sorely bereaved and stricken people of Belgium, though the latter were provided with safe conduct through the proscribed areas by the German Government itself and were distinguished by unmistakable marks of identity, have been sunk with the same reckless lack of compassion or of principle.

I was for a little while unable to believe that such things would in fact be done by any government that had hitherto subscribed to the humane practices of civilized nations. International law had its origin in the attempt to set up some law which would be respected and observed upon the seas, where no nation had right of dominion and where lay the free highways of the world.... This minimum of right the German Government has swept aside under the plea of retaliation and necessity and because it had no weapons which it could use at sea except these which it is impossible to employ as it is employing them without throwing to the winds an scruples of humanity or of respect for the understandings that were supposed to underlie the intercourse of the world. I am not now thinking of the loss of property involved, immense and serious as that is, but only of the wanton and wholesale destruction of the lives of non-combatants, men, women, and children, engaged in pursuits which have always, even in the darkest periods of modern history, been deemed innocent and legitimate. Property can be paid for, the lives of peaceful and innocent people cannot be. The present German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind.

It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken, in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of, but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way. There has been no-discrimination. The challenge is to all mankind. Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it. The choice we make for ourselves must be made with a moderation of counsel and a temperateness of judgment befitting our character and our motives as a nation. We must put excited feeling away. Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion.

With a profound sense of the solemn and even tragical character of the step I am taking and of the grave responsibilities which it involves, but in unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty, I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less war against the government and people of the United States; that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it; and that it take immediate steps not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defense but also to exert all its power and employ all its resources to bring the Government of the German Empire to terms and end the war.

While we do these things, these deeply momentous things, let us be very clear, and make very clear to all the world what our motives and our objects are. My own thought has not been driven from its habitual and normal course by the unhappy events of the last two months, and I do not believe that the thought of the Nation has been altered or clouded by them. I have exactly the same things in mind now that I had in mind when I addressed the Senate on the twenty-second of January last; the same that I had in mind when I addressed the Congress on the third of February and on the twenty-sixth of February. Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth insure the observance of those principles. Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states.

We have no quarrel with the German people. We have no feeling towards them but one of sympathy and friendship. It was not upon their impulse that their government acted in entering this war. It was not with their previous knowledge or approval. It was a war determined upon as wars used to be determined upon in the old, unhappy days when peoples were nowhere consulted by their rulers and wars were provoked and waged in the interest of dynasties or of little groups of ambitious men who were accustomed to use their fellow men as pawns and tools....

We are accepting this challenge of hostile purpose because we know that in such a Government, following such methods, we can never have a friend; and that in the presence of