



American History



Module 4: The vacillating Giant

Talk	Title	Time Period	Date of Talk
23	USA and the 20 th Century	1898-1900	September 2nd
24	The Progressive era	1900-1916	September 16th
25	USA and world War One	1914-1918	October 21st
26	The retreat to “normalcy”	1918-1920	November 4th
26	The Roaring Twenties	1921-1929	November 18th
27	Great Depression and New Deal	1929-1941	December 2nd
29	Isolationism interrupted	1932-1941	December 16th



American History

Talk 26: Retreat to Normalcy (1918-1920)



Talk 25: Retreat to 'Normalcy'

- Post War world and Treaty of Versailles
- A society destabilised
- Great Treaty Fight
- 1920 election



Post War world and Treaty of Versailles

Situation December 1918

- ▶ Fighting in West has stopped
 - ▶ Allied armies demobilising (US army reduced from 4 million to 500,000 by end 1918)
 - ▶ British, French Americans occupy Rhine cities
- ▶ Germany facing financial ruin, civil war and starving
 - ▶ Army withdrawn and engaged in civil war vs Spartacists, monarchists
 - ▶ Blockade continues....500,000 will die during the winter
- ▶ US has replaced Britain as the world premier financial power
- ▶ Warfare across Eastern Europe
 - ▶ Russian Civil War, collapse of Russian, Austrian and Ottoman empires
 - ▶ Multiple ethnic wars breaking out “every ethnic group a nation”

Allied expeditions remain in Russians support “Whites”
..Churchill, Wilson “crusade vs Bolshevism”

Russia 1918 & Allied expeditions

Situation Spring 1918



Bolshevik controlled mid 1918

White controlled

First intervention: Archangel 1918-1919
objective: maintain war vs Germany
...40,000 British, 5,000 US August 1918
...White army collapse
...Bolsheviks attacks repulsed

Second intervention:
Vladivostok: recover munitions,
& rescue Czech Legion
....13,000 US, 2,000 British troops
... 50,000 Czech legion &
...Japan asked to contribute
....send 70,000 to secure gains
from war of 1905 with Czars)

Russian Intervention 1919/1920

- ▶ “Whites” ineffective
 - ▶ Bolsheviks and White atrocities
 - ▶ No alternative policies.....bring back the Czars
 - ▶ “Red Army” better led (Trotsky) and motivated
- ▶ No appetite for renewed major war among allies
 - ▶ US retreats to isolation policy,
 - ▶ Socialists in France, Labour Party in Britain oppose war effort
 - ▶ Mutinies within Allied armies
- ▶ Expeditions abandoned
 - ▶ Murmansk...White army destroyed, Reds attack allies, US leaves June 1919, rest Dec
 - ▶ Vladivostok: mess.... White army collapse, Czechs ship home....skirmishes
 - ▶ British, French, US leave 1920.... Japan 1925 (after Treaty with Bolsheviks)

Churchill (1949) “I think the day will come when it will be recognized without doubt...throughout the civilized world, that the strangling of Bolshevism at its birth would have been an untold blessing to the human race.”

World War the human cost ...US relatively unaffected

Nation	WW1 Military Deaths	% males 10-40 year old
France	1,400,000	20%
Britain	880,000	18%
Germany	2,000,000	15%
USA	117,000	0.1%

Europe devastated, USA relatively untouched

USA the new world financial power

Debt Ratios % GDP during the war

	1914	1918
Britain	15%	120%
France	22%	103%
Germany	6%	150%
USA	2%	41%

US largest lenderwants repayment

	Debt to US in current dollars	Paid off
Britain	\$65 Billion	2006
France	\$30 Billion	1980
Russia	\$5 Billion	...never paid..



World dominated by 3 surviving “Great Powers”: Americans, British and French
.....Germans, Austrians, Ottomans defeated
.....Russia and China in chaos

Everything to be resolved at Versailles
.....January 1919



Wilson's Resolves to fix the world based on "14 Points"

- ➔ "Peace without Victory: "War fought to "make the world safe for democracy"
- ➔ Create new European nations to be created based on ethnicity
- ➔ Future treaties to be open and transparent
- ➔ German and Ottoman colonies...to be run as "Mandates"

.....Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon

Leaves for Europe December 1918

.....won't return till July 1919

Wilson to Britain: "Hope for future" ...British Press



Wilson arrives in France to mass adulation



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Credit: Fotosearch

The "Big Four" at Versailles

Lloyd George
UK

Orlando
Italy

George
Clemenceau
France

Woodrow
Wilson
USA



US Idealism vs European Realism

- ▶ French (Clemenceau): Revenge
 - ▶ Destroy Germany, demilitarised, split up by new Rhineland Republic
 - ▶ Full indemnity for all French financial and human loss
 - ▶ “Fair share” German colonies, Ottoman Empire
- ▶ Britain (Lloyd George): Financial recovery and Balance of Power
 - ▶ Rehabilitate Germany so that reparations can be paid
 - ▶ Recover world trade and financial position
 - ▶ Secure oil fields of Iraq & Kuwait to repay war debt
- ▶ Italy: (Orlando) Reparations and Adriatic coast
- ▶ Japan: Occupy German China colonies.....expand Empire

Germans not invited, neither are Soviets
....nor new Republic of China (Sun Yat Sen)

Wilson's "Vision snubbed"

➤ Lloyd George about Wilson

➤ "He would play a sublime part in the world's history if he knew more about men and less about phrase"

➤ "The trouble with Mr Wilson is that he believed every idea he had was a direct revelation from God and no one could dare challenge it"

➤ Clemenceau about Wilson

➤ "Mr. Wilson bores me with his Fourteen Points; why, God Almighty has only Ten"

➤ "What can a mere French minister do when associated with Lloyd George, who thinks he is Napoleon, and Woodrow Wilson, who thinks he is Jesus Christ?"

The result: Treaty of Surrender

- Germany treated as a vanquished not defeated nations
 - Reparations impossible to pay except by American loans
 - Institutionalised national humiliation...and impoverishment
- Eastern Europe descend into chaos: multiple wars
- Britain: access to (cheap) middle east oil (Iraq)
- France: Revenge....(for now)
- Japanese recognition as new power....licence to loot China

League of Nations

- Officially created January 1920...Wilson awarded Nobel Peace Prize
- Goals
 - Disarmament
 - Resolution of disputes by arbitration
 - Collective security...to support native peoples, end drug trafficking, slavery

No enforcement mechanism...depends on will of "Great Powers"

Wilson must secure agreement of Senate for USA to join
...lost control to Republicans in 1918 'mid terms'

Wilson returns to US after 6 months away: world Messiah





USA :a Society destabilised

The US to which Wilson returns in July 1919 not the same country he left in December 1918

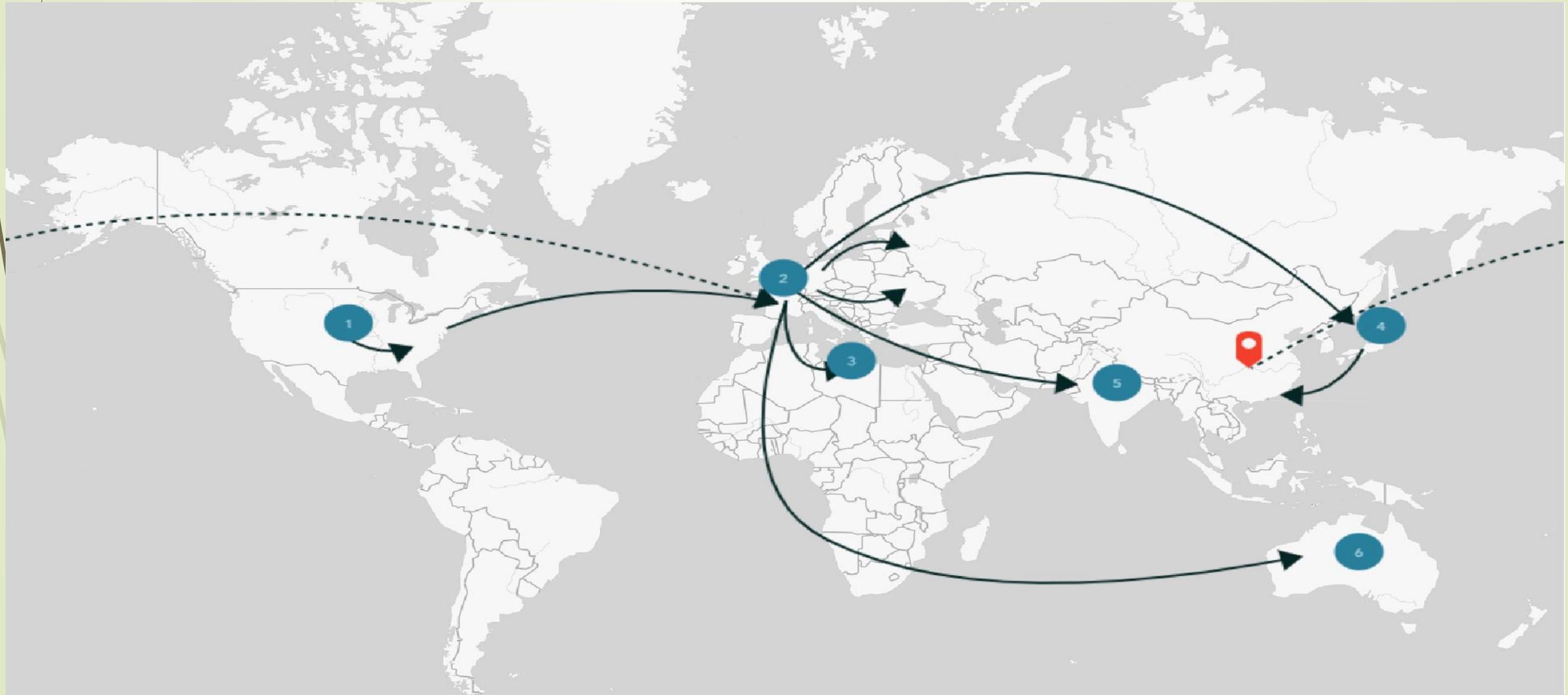
Spanish Influenza

Origins: two theories

- ▶ Chinese “wet markets” ...coolies to Western Front
- ▶ US meat packing plants in Kansas to military bases to Europe

- ▶ 3 Waves & virus mutations
 - ▶ Spring 1918....75% troops infected...deaths as normal flu (.1%)
 - ▶ Autumn-Winter 1918....20% troops infected
 - ▶2 1/2% death rate (higher in places without sanitary facilities)
 - ▶ ..spreads as troops start returning home
 - ▶ Spring 1919....highly infections, lower mortality (approx. 0.2%)
 - ▶ Spreads globally as soldiers return home

Global contagion as troops return home, Vladivostok expedition



Influenza Epidemic 1918-1920

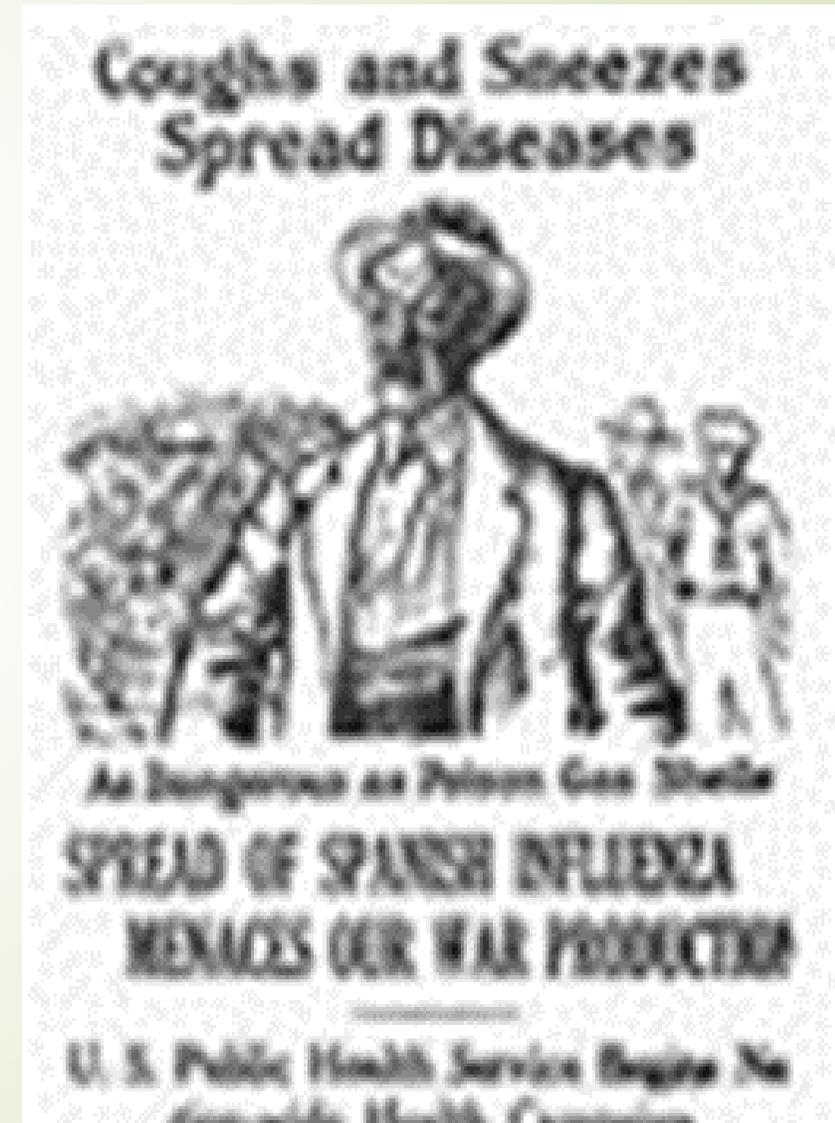
50 million deaths...2.5% population vs 15m Coronavirus...0.2%)

country	Deaths	Population	%
India	12,000,000	250,000,000	4.8%
South Africa	300,000	7,000,000	4.3%
Indonesia	1,500,000	42,000,000	3.6%
Mexico	500,000	14,000,000	3.6%
China	6,750,000	430,000,000	1.6%
Italy	544,288	39,000,000	1.4%
Russia	450,000	60,000,000	0.8%
Germany	426,574	60,000,000	0.7%
Japan	390,000	56,000,000	0.7%
United States	675,000	106,000,000	0.6%
France	237,509	40,000,000	0.6%
United Kingdom	153,152	45,000,000	0.3%

Impact varies by density of population....

US reaction varies by state....no national campaign

“Spanish Influenza” US public messages



Seattle restrictions (“better ridiculous than dead”)



Police in Seattle



Seattle: open air courts



Assembling masks... Cincinnati 1918



Ignored in other places:
Mass prayer meeting Los Angeles



Victory Parade Philadelphia September 1918...200,000 attend...17,000 deaths within a month



EVERETT COLLECTION

US Reaction

- 675,000 deaths ... 10 x deaths from fighting
 - including 60,000 soldiers vs 50,000 from combat
- Wilson reaction: None...except “thoughts and prayers”
 - His priority....getting Versailles Treaty approved by Senate
 - Health “State & City responsibility”. Not Federal Government
- Xenophobiadisease due to “foreign influence” (despite probable local origin)

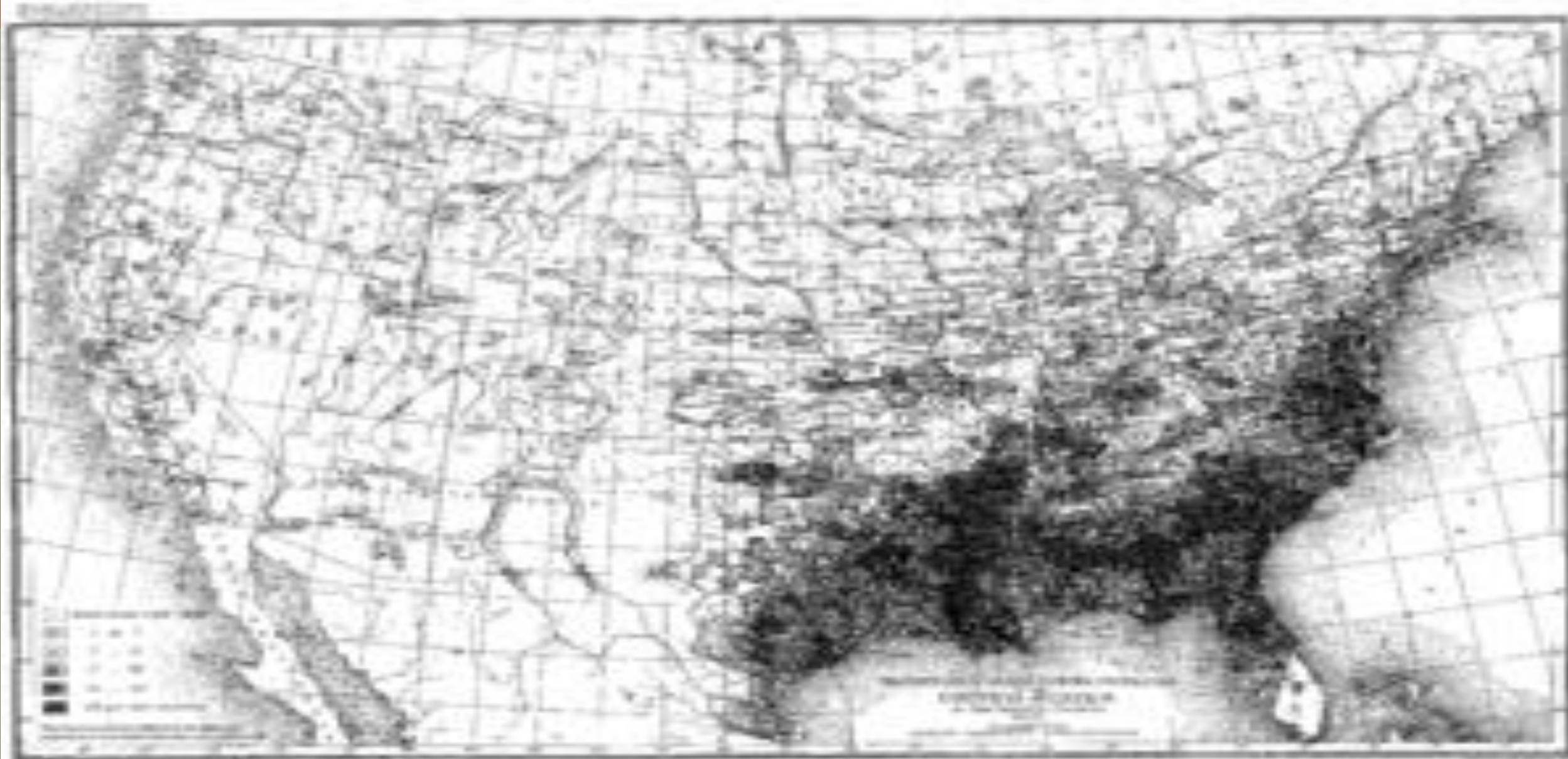


Great migrations

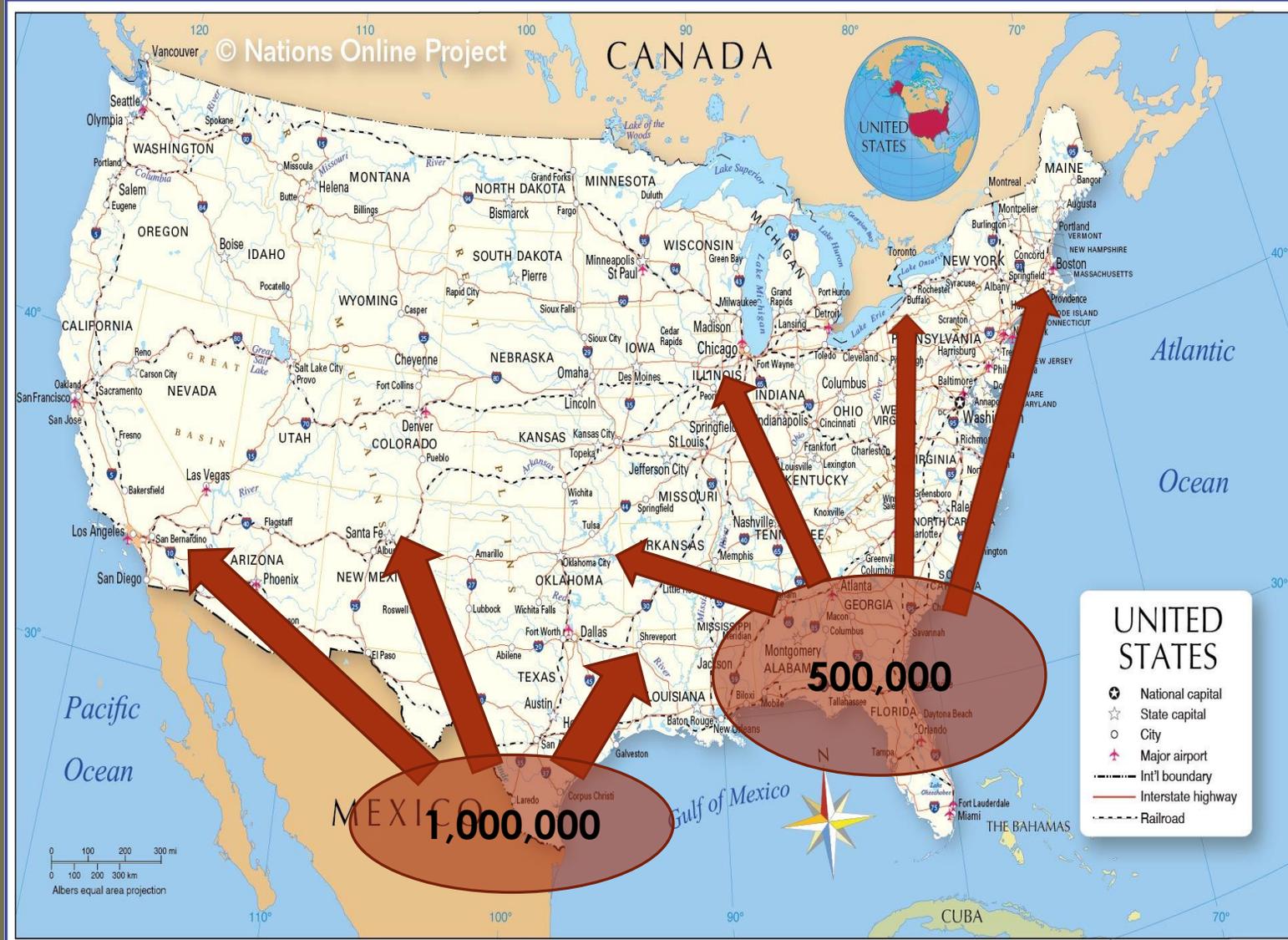
US Labour Market and WW1

- ▶ US Economy grows rapidly during war
 - ▶ Munitions, food, manufactured goods, raw materials
 - ▶ 4% business growth per year
 - ▶ 4 million men mobilised...labour shortage
- ▶ Movement of peoples...within North America
 - ▶ Immigration collapses due to U Boat Threat & shipment disruption
 - ▶ White Women move to clerical jobs.....few to manufacturing
 - ▶ Gaps filled by migrants by migrations within North America

Black population 1900....95% in South



Great Migrations 1910-1920



Mexico to South West/Texas
Refugees from revolution
.... border porous
....reaches 100,000 per year
... area booming/more work
than people

South to North/Midwest
Refugees from Jim Crow
New “war” industries recruit
....Vulnerable to downturn
....Big city demographics
change

Black population triples in Northern Cities

		1900	1920	1930
Chicago	Total	1,700,000	2,700,000	3,400,000
	Black	30,000 (2%)	110,000 (4%)	320,000 (7%)
New York	Total	3,400,000	5,600,000	6,900,000
	Black	60,000 (2%)	160,000 (3%)	330,000 (6%)
Philadelphia	Total	1,300,000	1,800,000	1,950,000
	Black	63,000 (5%)	134,000 (7%)	220,000 (9%)
Detroit	Total	286,000	993,000	1,500,000
	Black	4,000 (1%)	41,000 (4%)	120,000 (8%)

New arrivals Chicago 1920



Economic Downturn 1919-1920

- War time production ends ...rapidly
 - Economy growing 4% per year 1916-1920 shrinks 7% 1919/1920
 - Inflation at 15% due to shortages of materials/ labour
 - Wage cuts imposed across most industries
- Army demobilised – reduced from 4,000,000 to 200,000 by end 1920
- Unions empowered during war/ employers by its end

Wilson disengaged

.....all that matters: getting League of Nations approved by
Republican controlled Senate



There is going to be trouble..1919..."Red Summer"



Republican Opposition

Henry Cabot Lodge
(1850 -1924)



Massachusetts lawyer
& Ph.D. in History

“Progressive Republican”

Supports civil rights for blacks
Restrictions on immigration to
“more favored races”

Ridicules 14 points. Wilson naive
Internationalist, not US first

"I never expected to hate anyone in
politics with the hatred I feel toward
Wilson."

Isolationism

Lodge “Approves Treaty”but with “Reservations”

.....“Supports “League but US must be premier power

.....no US involvement in wars of other nations

.....no other nation interference US and its business

“The United States is the world's best hope, but if you fetter her in the interests and quarrels of other nations, if you tangle her in the intrigues of Europe, you will destroy her power for good, and endanger her very existence. Leave her to march freely through the centuries to come, as in the years that have gone. Strong, generous, and confident, she has nobly served mankind.

Beware how you trifle with your marvellous inheritance; this great land of ordered liberty. For if we stumble and fall, freedom and civilization everywhere will go down in ruin.”

Wilson Response

- ▶ Cannot accept any “Reservations” ...rejects Lodge
- ▶ Any compromise with “isolationists” impossible
- ▶ National Tour to “promote treaty to the people direct”
- ▶ Collapses October 1919 stroke...incapacitated .. to White House

Mrs Wilson first assumes “stewardship” Female President?

The reign of “Mrs Wilson”

Edith Wilson (1872-1961)



Wilson married Ellen Wilson 1883

- 3 children
- Dies in White House 1914
- Wilson depressed

Introduced to Edith Gault 1915

- wealthy widow
- "love at first sight
- fear of scandal
- marries W within year of wife's death

Exemplary First Lady

- war time rationing at White House'
- un mowed lawn
- joins Wilson in Europe
- mixes with dignitaries

Woodrow and Edith ...final year

Woodrow and Edith 1920



Woodrow/ Edith share
hatred for VP Marshall
..no attempt to replace
invalid Wilson

Edith....gate-keeper
--decides what WW sees
--WW invisible 6 months

No compromises made
On treaty....dies

Wilson recovers ability to
Speak July 1920
...Edith assists in meetings
--- Seeks re-election



Election of 1920



The candidates

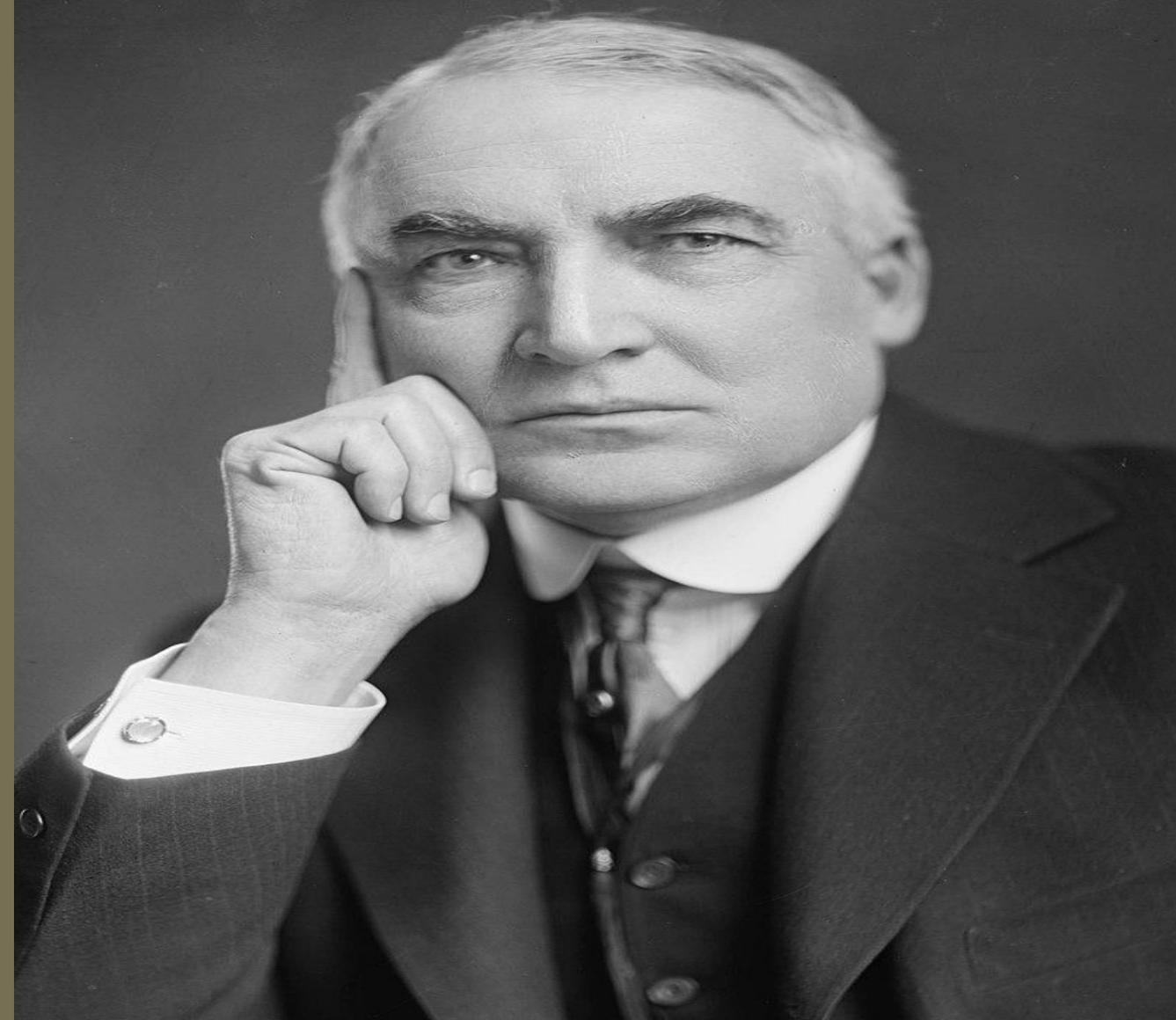
Democrats

- Wilson regains ability to talk April 1920 seeks re-election 3rd term
- Discredited...Treaty unpopular....Wilson “sanctimonious”
- Pick unknown Governor of Ohio...James Cox + Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- Accept “reservations”...but public reject entire Treaty

➤ Republicans

- Blocked convention....unable to agree on candidate
- Pick Ohio Senator...Warren Harding:
 - soothing voice/ inoffensive
 - Ran card games at house
 - Looked like “silent movie” starappeal to the ladies
- Calvin Coolidge...breaker of Boston Police Strike VP

Warren Harding (1865-1923)



Newspaper executive

..State Senator

..Senate...inoffensive

Policies

...pro business/ anti union

...passive support repeal Jim Crow

..peace at home/ abroad

Effective public speaker

"a rambling, high-sounding mixture of platitudes, patriotism, and pure nonsense".

Captures tone of nation..

"America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration."

Democrat Poster: Peace for the world

Their Election Means Peace, Progress, and Prosperity



Woodrow Wilson
Democratic Nominee for President



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Democratic Nominee for Vice-President

Republican "America First"...(Version 1)





The 1920 Choice

Democrats

“solemn referendum”

Approve Treaty....now with reservations

US World Leader

Low tariffs to expand Trade

Reform labour laws

White Supremacy

Republicans

Reject Treaty

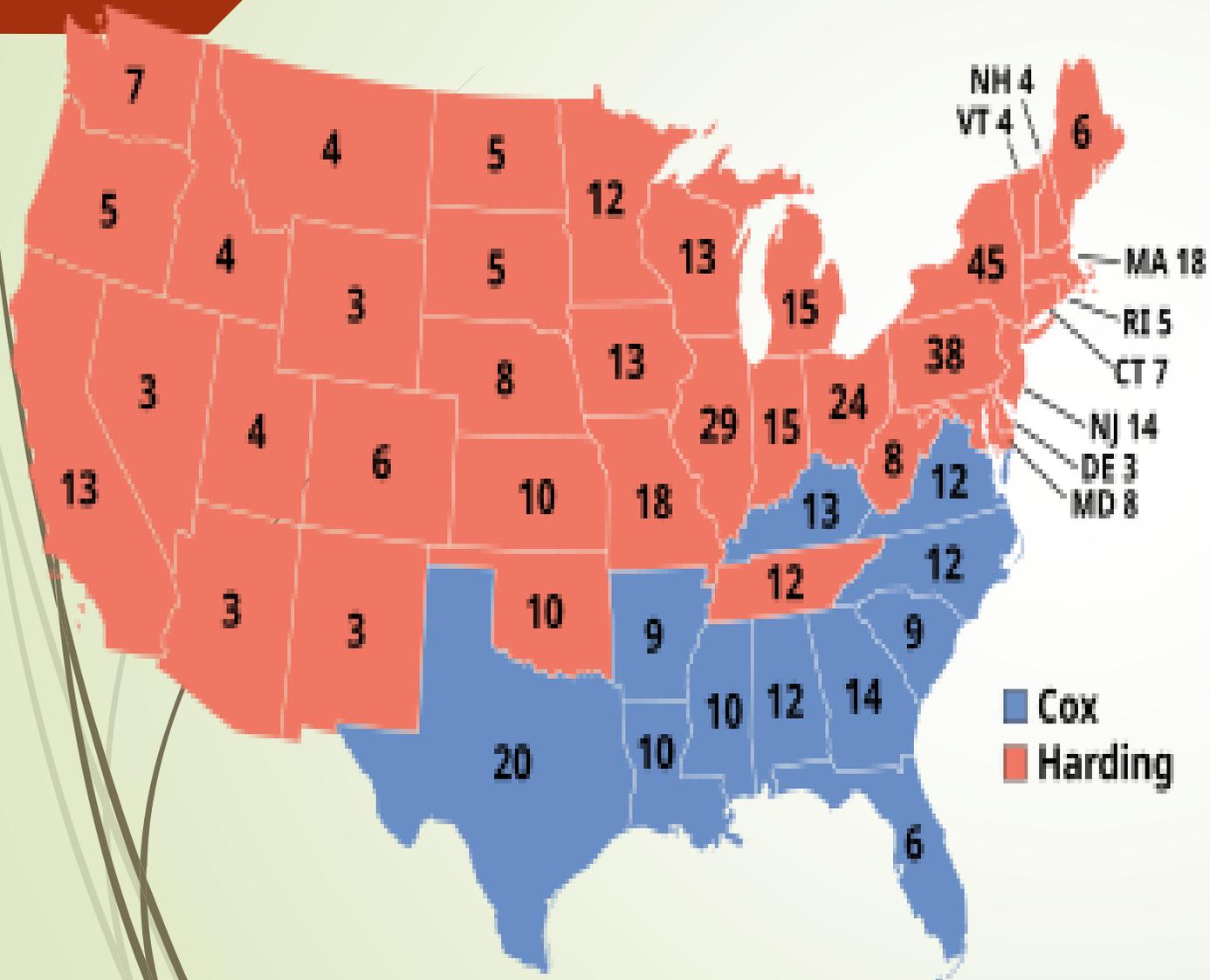
Disarm/ isolate

Impose Tariffs to protect industry

De regulate Industry/ restrict unions

No mention race

Republican Landslide



Republican Landslide

Harding: 16 million ----56% vote

Democrats :10 million46%

Socialist (Debs in Jail) ..1 million.....4%

Message clear

...Normalcy is what people want

.....prosperity and peace

...USA not world's policeman



As far as Americans of 1920 were concerned:

....the non US world not its problem

....all the US wanted was to be left alone & debts paid

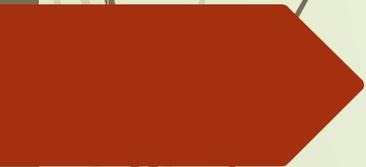
....what mattered now was the prosperity of Americans

The Roaring Twenties were about to begin.....Talk 26

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Talk 26: Retreat to Normalcy (1918-1920)

Part Two



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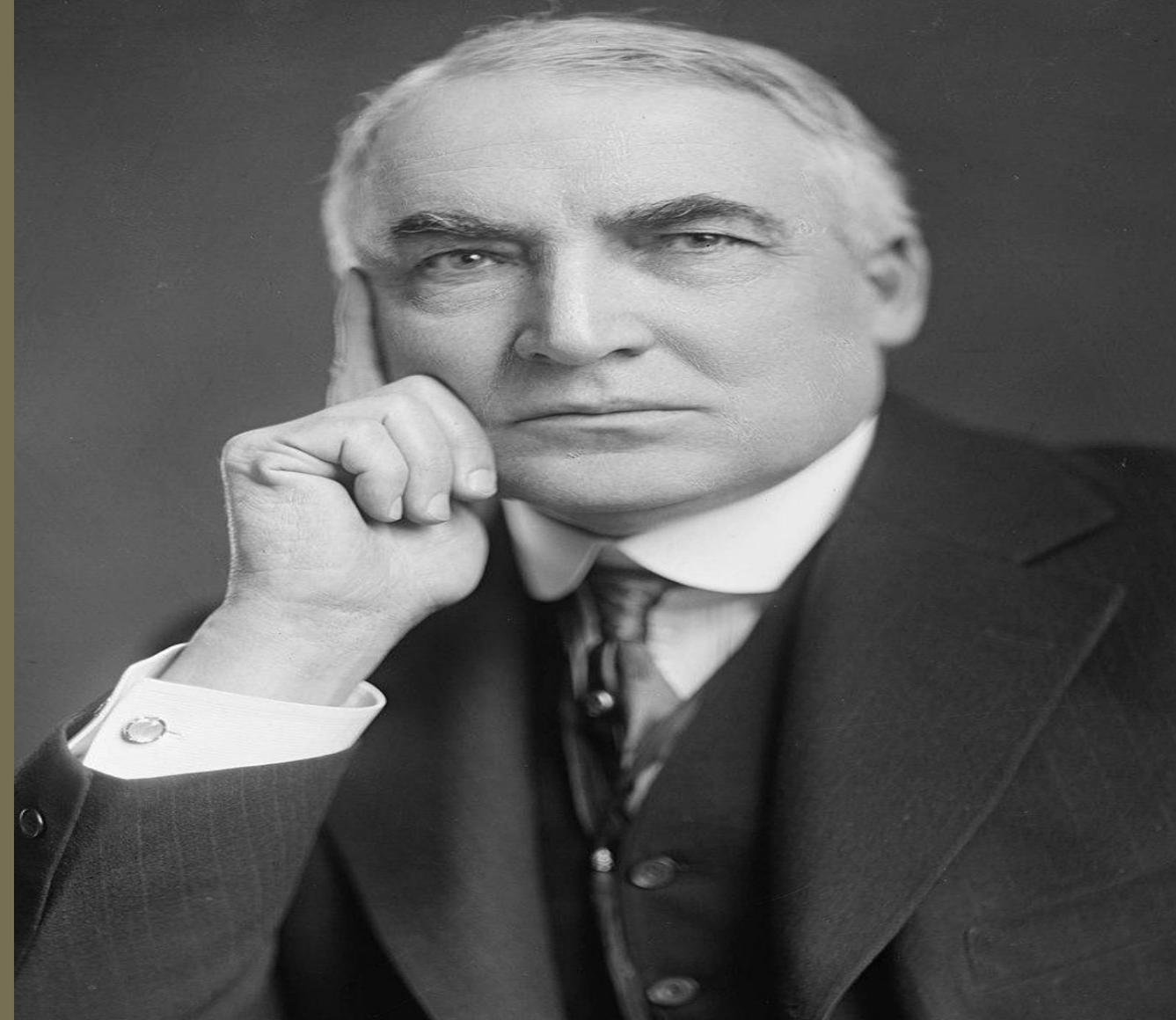
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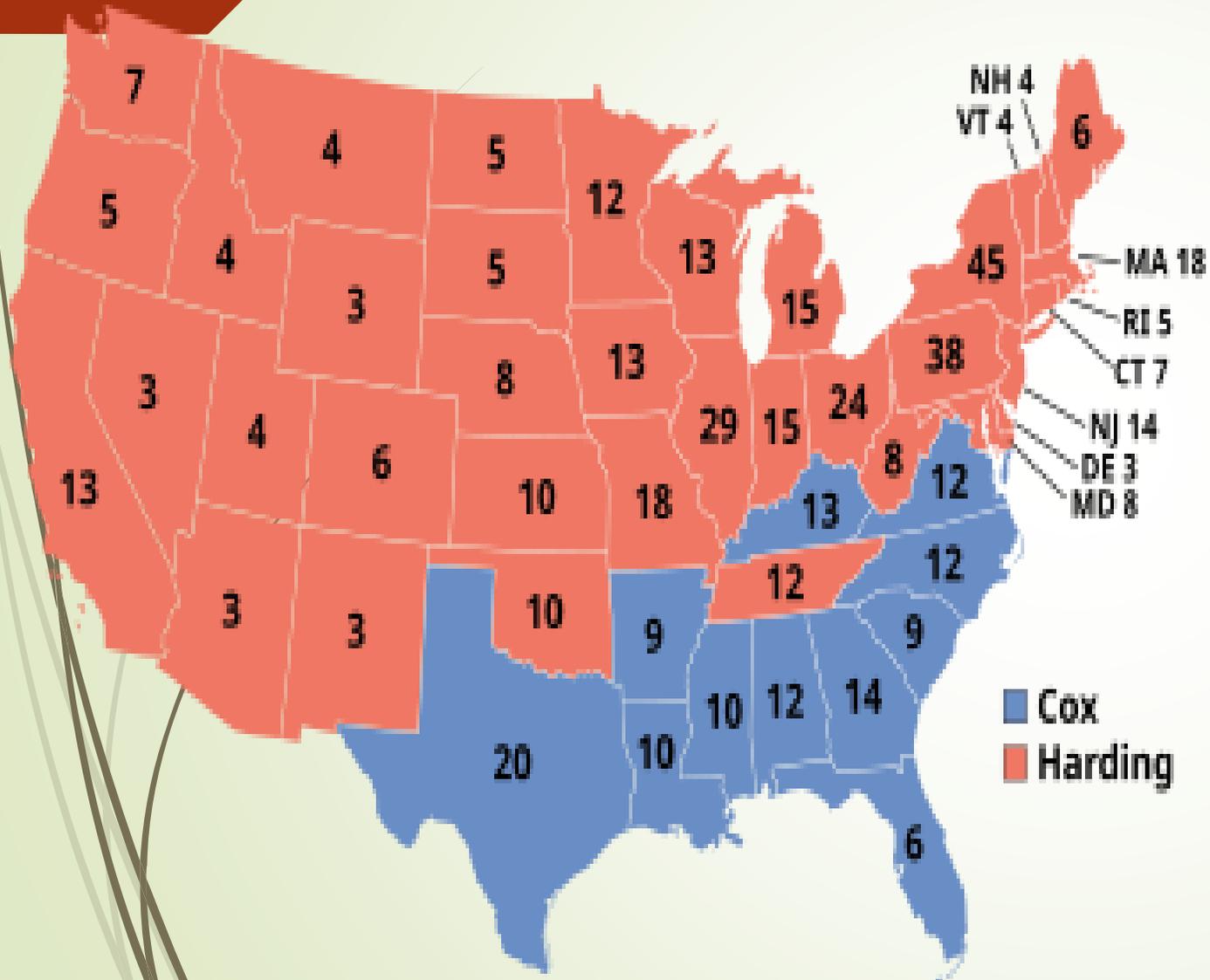
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