



Adjusting to Peacetime

Objectives

1. Explain how economic factors led to the election of Republican Warren Harding.
2. Compare and contrast the administrations of Harding and Calvin Coolidge.
3. Describe the U.S. policy of isolationism.
4. Explain how the threat of communism abroad raised concerns in the United States.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Paraphrase Text for Understanding

One way to clarify text is to paraphrase. Paraphrasing is simply restating the text in your own words. If you can restate text in your own words, you will be more likely to understand it. As you read Section 1, pause at an indicated side note, read the side note and corresponding text, then paraphrase the idea in your own words.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

domestic, p. 736

impose, p. 738

Key Terms and People

Warren Harding, p. 737

Calvin Coolidge, p. 737

disarmament, p. 738

communism, p. 738

anarchist, p. 739

★ **Background Knowledge** During World War I, the United States emerged as a world power. Yet, at the end of the war, Americans rejected any major role in world affairs and instead turned to dealing with problems at home.

Main Idea

After World War I, voters rejected the Democrats and elected Republicans to the presidency.

Vocabulary Builder

domestic (doh MEHS tihk) *adj.*
having to do with a country's internal affairs

Return to Normalcy

President Woodrow Wilson might have expected to return from the Paris Peace Conference as a popular hero. Instead, he and his party were rejected by the voters at the next election. By 1920, the mishandling of the peace treaty at Versailles and a failing economy combined to make Wilson and the Democrats very unpopular.

The end of the Great War was followed by an economic recession. During the war, the domestic economy had expanded rapidly to produce all the extra goods needed by the military. With war's end, munitions factories shut down and workers lost their jobs. Soldiers returning from the war found it difficult to find work.

Labor unions had made a no-strike pledge as a patriotic gesture in wartime. But labor disputes led to many strikes after the war. In 1919, four million workers—one fifth of the labor force—took part in strikes. Accounts of strike-related violence filled the newspapers.

Many Americans feared other types of violence as well. Some feared that Communists would overthrow the government, as they had recently done in Russia. Racial violence also frightened some. Many Americans hoped that a change of leadership would restore peace and prosperity.

The Harding Administration In 1920, the Republican nominee for President, Warren Harding of Ohio, promised a return to "normalcy." It was what the public wanted. He won by a landslide.

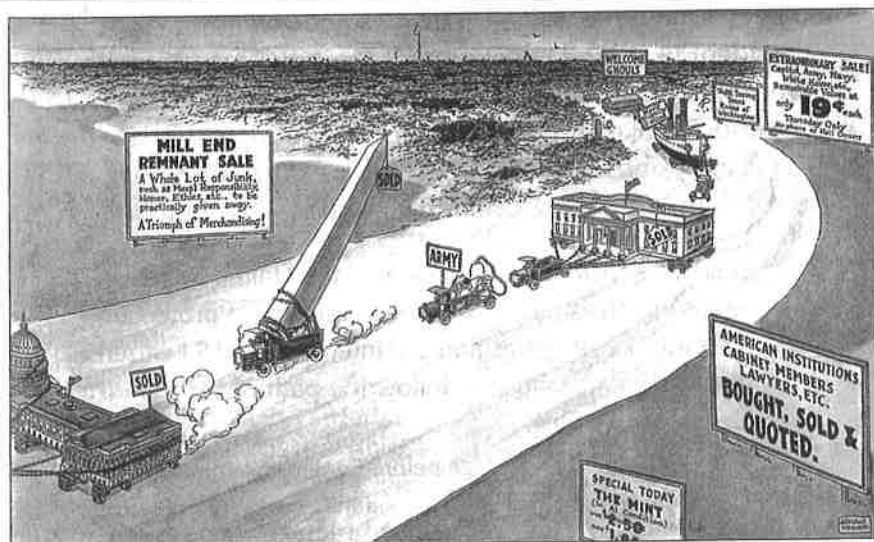
Harding was a firm supporter of business. He filled his administration with like-minded men. For secretary of the treasury, he chose Andrew Mellon, a banker and industrialist. Mellon was one of the nation's richest men. He got Congress to lower taxes on businesses and the wealthy. He also helped slash the federal budget.

Some of Harding's other appointees were personal friends. Some saw their government jobs as opportunities to make personal fortunes, legally or illegally. Harding's presidency was marred by several major scandals involving these men. In one case, Charles Forbes, the head of the Veterans Bureau, was convicted of taking bribes totaling about \$200 million.

The biggest scandal centered on Teapot Dome, Wyoming, a government-owned oil reserve. The secretary of the Department of the Interior, Albert B. Fall, secretly leased the land and its reserves to an oil man. Fall received a bribe of \$400,000. After the scandal broke, Fall was tried and convicted. He was the first Cabinet member ever sent to prison.

Harding himself was never linked to any of the crimes and did not live to see the worst of the scandals unfold. In 1923, he suffered a heart attack and died, leaving his Vice President, Calvin Coolidge, to deal with the Teapot Dome and other scandals.

The Harding Scandals



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Reading Political Cartoons

Skills Activity

What part of the federal government was *not* for sale, cartoonists asked, as the Harding administration's many scandals came to light.

- Apply Information** What symbols of the nation's government are used?
- Detect Points of View** Does the cartoonist seem to think the scandals are a serious problem? Explain.



Calvin Coolidge

Main Idea

Isolationist sentiment kept the United States from taking a leading role in world affairs.

Vocabulary Builder

impose (ihm POHZ) v. to place a burden on something or someone



Paraphrase Text for Understanding

Paraphrase this paragraph. Be sure to use your own words to restate the main ideas and details.

The Coolidge Administration Coolidge was very different from Harding. He was a soft-spoken, serious New Englander who was known for his honesty and integrity. By cooperating with the investigations into the Harding White House, Coolidge helped to restore the public's trust in government. When Coolidge ran for President in 1924, he won by a large margin.

Coolidge's prospects were helped by the prosperity of the mid-1920s. The postwar recession was over, and the economy had rebounded. The 1920s had begun to "roar," and the voters wanted to keep the Republicans in power.

✓Checkpoint Why did voters reject Wilson's Democrats?

Foreign Policy

World War I had made the United States an international power. Still, most Americans did not want their nation to play a leading role in world affairs. As you have read, this sentiment is known as isolationism.

Isolationism did not mean cutting off contact with the rest of the world. Throughout the 1920s, the United States participated in international conferences intended to promote world peace and to encourage disarmament. **Disarmament** means the reduction or limitation of military armaments. The United States joined the Washington Naval Arms Conference of 1921. The conference resulted in a treaty limiting the navies of the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. In 1928, the United States joined France in sponsoring the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The pact condemned military aggression and outlawed war. However, it imposed no punishment on a country that acted aggressively, so it was ineffective at preventing war.

President Coolidge believed that the government had a right to intervene in foreign matters that affected American business. In 1926, a revolution broke out in Nicaragua. Coolidge sent in troops to protect American business interests there. Defending his actions to send troops to Nicaragua, Coolidge stated:

"It has always been . . . the policy of the United States . . . to take steps that may be necessary for the . . . protection of the lives, the property, and the interests of [U.S.] citizens. In this respect, I propose to follow the path of my predecessors."

—Calvin Coolidge, message before Congress, January 10, 1927

The following year, Mexico announced plans to take over all foreign-owned oil lands, including those owned by U.S. companies. Although many Americans wanted to send troops, Coolidge managed to resolve this dispute by diplomacy.

In the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Communists had taken power in Russia. They created the Soviet Union, the world's first Communist state. **Communism** is an economic and political system in which the state owns the means of production and a single party rules. In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party crushed all opposition.

In an effort to weaken the Soviet government, the United States refused to grant it diplomatic recognition. In 1918, President Wilson sent troops to aid the opponents of communism. Yet, when a devastating famine hit Russia in 1921, the United States sent aid. That aid may have saved 10 million people from starvation.

✓Checkpoint How did President Coolidge solve disputes in Latin America?

The Red Scare

Alarm about communism affected not only American foreign policy but also events at home. The postwar strikes that rocked the United States made some Americans afraid that a revolution was beginning.

The fears reached a fever pitch in the spring and summer of 1919, when a series of bombings occurred. The bombings were the work of **anarchists**, people who oppose all organized government. Many anarchists were foreign-born, and the bombings led to an outcry against all foreigners. During this Red Scare, thousands of anarchists and Communists, or “Reds,” were hunted down and arrested. Many were deported, or expelled from the country.

Sacco and Vanzetti In May 1920, at the height of the Red Scare, two Italian immigrants, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were arrested. They were charged with robbing and murdering two payroll employees in Massachusetts.

At the trial, little evidence was presented that Sacco and Vanzetti, were guilty of the charges. Rather, the prosecution focused on the fact that both defendants were foreigners and anarchists. Sacco and Vanzetti were convicted in 1921 and executed in 1927.

Main Idea

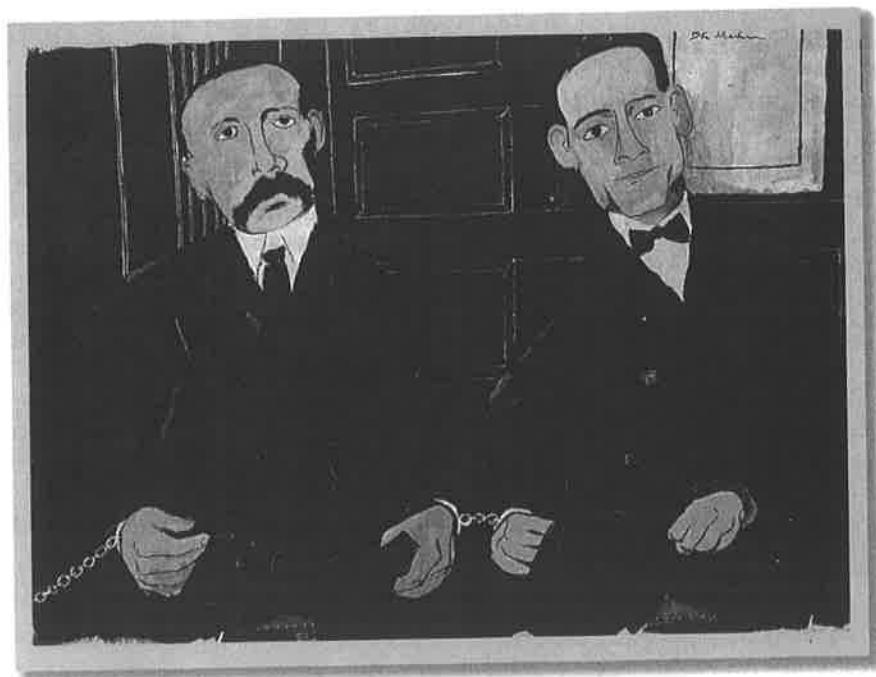
Labor unrest and anarchist bombings caused a Red Scare, during which the government expelled many foreigners.

Links to Art

Sacco and Vanzetti by Ben Shahn

The artist Ben Shahn viewed the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti as an outrage against justice. This portrait of the two men is one in a series of 23 paintings by Shahn about their trial, conviction, and execution. **Critical Thinking:**

Apply Information Why did the Sacco-Vanzetti case stir such strong feelings among Americans of the 1920s?





Mexican workers pick cotton

The case was controversial at the time and remains so today. Were innocent people put to death because of public hysteria? Or did two murderers receive the punishment they deserved?

Limiting Immigration Fears about radicals led to new limits on immigration into the United States. There were other reasons, as well. Many Americans had long worried that the mainstream culture of the United States was being overwhelmed by immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. In addition, American workers were often concerned that newcomers would compete for their jobs.

An emergency immigration law was passed by Congress in 1921. It limited the number of people admitted from eastern and southern Europe. In 1924 and 1929, Congress imposed even more restrictions on immigrants. In addition, the United States completely prohibited immigration from Asia.

The new immigration limits, however, did not apply to people from the Americas. In the 1920s, nearly 500,000 people migrated from Mexico and 950,000 from Canada. Most Mexicans migrated to the Southwest, where their labors played a vital role in the growth of farmlands, railroads, and mines. Canadians, mainly from Quebec, took jobs in factories in New York and New England.

Checkpoint What caused the Red Scare after World War I?

★ Looking Back and Ahead After World War I, Americans elected Republicans, who promised a return to “normalcy” and prosperity. Next we will see how, during the 1920s, the nation experienced an era of social and economic change.

Section 1

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. **(a) Recall** How had World War I been good for the economy?
(b) Analyze Cause and Effect Why might a country face economic problems even after a victorious war?
2. **(a) Recall** Why was secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall sent to prison?
(b) Draw Conclusions Why do most historians consider Warren Harding to have been a poor President?



Reading Skill

3. **Paraphrase Text for Understanding** Reread the first paragraph under the heading “The Red Scare.” Paraphrase the text, using your own words.

Vocabulary Builder

Answer the following questions in complete sentences that show your understanding of the key terms:

4. What is the goal of supporters of disarmament?
5. Who owns the means of production under communism?
6. What are anarchists against?

Writing

7. Based on what you have read in this section, write a thesis statement and one supporting paragraph for an essay about the mood in the country the first few years after World War I.

Dumping Whiskey

Prohibition was intended to solve such social problems as drunkenness and family violence. Yet, the amendment was repealed in 1933. **Critical Thinking:**

Identify Costs What were the unintended consequences of the Prohibition Amendment that led to its repeal?



The Growth of Organized Crime The money to be made through bootlegging encouraged the growth of organized crime. A series of gang wars broke out in some parts of the country.

By the end of the decade, it was clear that Prohibition had failed. Many people called for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. In February 1933, Congress approved the Twenty-first Amendment, repealing Prohibition. Before the year was out, the states had ratified the amendment and Prohibition was over. The federal government returned the control of alcoholic beverages to the states.

☒ **Checkpoint** Why did many people want to end Prohibition?

Main Idea

Women, now able to vote, sought more freedom in the 1920s.

Vocabulary Builder

restrict (ree STRIHKT) v. to confine; to keep within a certain boundary or limit; to place limitations on something or somebody

Changing Lives of Women

Due to the Nineteenth Amendment, American women voted in their first presidential election in 1920. They also joined political parties and were elected to offices previously closed to them. In 1924, the first women governors were elected: Nellie Tayloe Ross in Wyoming and Miriam "Ma" Ferguson in Texas.

Other areas of life remained more restricted. Many universities and professional schools, such as medical schools, still barred women from admission. In some states, women still could not serve on juries or keep their own earnings if they were married. But more women were holding jobs.

A New Attitude Many younger women during the 1920s did not seem interested in women's rights. Called "flappers," these young women shocked the older generation. Even though their numbers were small, the flappers became the symbol of women in the 1920s.

☒ **Checkpoint** How did flappers represent the spirit of the 1920s?