

It is very inaccurate to describe America's foreign policy as isolationist in the period 1919-1941, rather US foreign policy underwent three significant phases. Having come out of war-torn Europe relatively unscathed, but wary of the horrors of war, Wilson's progressives were replaced by Harding's Republican Party. With him he brought the policy of normalcy, a isolationism, however all throughout the 20's the Republican party continued to preach isolationism, but remain economically & politically involved in the world. With the depths of the depression & the induction of FDR as president in 1932, US foreign policy underwent a phase of neutrality. ~~Then~~ Keen on complying with public sentiment FDR slowly progressed through the 30's morphing his policy from neutral to interventionist with his not-so 'neutrality' acts. By the entry of US in WWII the bombing of Pearl Harbour had done enough to swing public opinion to correspond with FDR's interventionist policies, ~~so~~ it ~~was really~~ ~~is~~ thus it is incorrect to associate US foreign policy from 1919-1941 as isolationist.

however
It is very accurate to say that US foreign policy ~~was~~ from 1919-1932 appeared to be isolationist. The 'Merchant of Death' interpretation of WWI resulted in the USA turning its back on the world by coinciding with Harding's Normalcy, & did not join the League of Nations. This coupled with various liberal republican economic policies such as the ~~no~~ various tariffs implemented were really the only fully isolationist actions of the USA. The rejection of the League to which they had devised, & then the subsequent high tariffs furthered the USA's involvement with any European nation & destroyed the possibility of any serious trade. Thus this can be seen as the height of US isolationism.

Notwithstanding this, Harvard historian Braumiller defined isolationism as "the complete withdrawal of a state's actions from world affairs". The US foreign policy did not completely withdraw & therefore it can be seen that they thus did not employ a policy of isolationism. Interventions such as the Washington Naval Conference,

to which the USA regulated the expansion of states' navies, in particular Japan, in order to destroy any chance of international tensions is a prime example of the Republican Party at the height of its 'Isolationist' policy, clearly involving itself in world affairs.

Furthermore the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, was another prime example of the US making its presence felt in the world. The pact outlawed aggression between nations, but was really just to silence the French concerns of Germany. Thus it is another example of the USA intervening in European issues.

The impact of the Depression further stimulated the public sentiment of isolationism, and it can be reflected in FDR's immediate reaction to the world issue. Rather than joining the International Economic Conference of 1933, he stated it was each country's own problem to dig themselves out of the Depression. This was the USA's last decisive act of isolation

The Good Neighbour Policy is another example of the USA's intervening nature as they delved into international affairs, it was a significant indication of the second phase of their foreign policy, that of intervention. Rather than commit more troops to the Americas, in keeping with the Monroe Doctrine FDR removed troops, but connected the USA to economic relations & trade as the main factor in keeping harmony between the countries. Thus, although appearing isolationist to the public, the USA was only beginning to evolve into its longer ~~role~~ international role.

The first of the Neutrality Acts forbade trade to any country that USA saw as a belligerent nation, ensuring that they would not get caught up in another world conflict. This Act was further extended through the Second Neutrality Act of 1937. In order to keep with its Open Door Policy & enable trade continued, the USA did not recognise China was in a 'war' with Japan as the conflict in Manchuria took place.

The fascist movements in Europe & Japan concerned FDR, & it was reflected in his foreign policy. The 1937 Neutrality Act encompassed the not-so-neutral part of the Lash & Carry out. Rather than trade with no belligerents, the USA began to trade with only a select few (Britain & France) but rather than risk their own ships in foreign waters, Britain undertook the journey, instead. This clear allegiance to its old ally indicated the change & redirection of FDR's policy, & the beginning of the USA's interventionist nature, despite still appearing neutral through the sheer name of the Act.

The 4th Neutrality Act in 1939, included the Destroyer for Bases deal. Britain, pleading for more resources, traded Pacific Bases for US destroyers to help combat the UBOAT dominance in the Atlantic. Once again, without actually entering a conflict, the USA still ~~was~~ clearly backing an ally.

As the Japanese continued to invade China, the USA,

with other powers, implemented various economic embargos on Japan. Firstly banning raw materials such as steel, then to the harsh embargo on oil as a whole was a huge move against the raw materials deprived Japan. This ignited further tensions among the two countries and by 1940 it was obvious whose side the USA was on, that their foreign policy was of a clear interventionist nature.

The lend lease act was another piece of political brilliance by FDR to convince the US public of their moral rights to Britain. Promising that the USA would get all weapons & machinery back in return, much of the R.A.F's aeroplanes & the army's tanks were courtesy of this new agreement. This clear alliance to Britain, & the ongoing embargos on Japan ensured it would only be a matter of time before the USA would enter another world conflict.

This of is meant to state the USA's foreign policy

was isolationist throughout all of 1919-1941. It was going to be impossible from the beginning of the Republican party's era for the world's leading power to be uninvolved in world affairs, & FDR's clear defiance against fascism was ~~indefinitely~~ indefinitely reflected through the USA's interventionist foreign policy.