

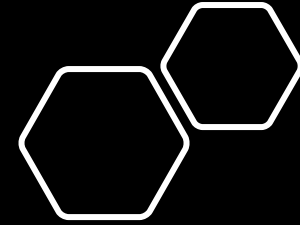
America First Movement: Then and Now

**Living Grace Alliance Church's
Seminar
2024.10.24**



Chong Ho Alex Yu

Trump says he can end the Russia-Ukraine war in one day. Russia's UN ambassador says he can't



Trump says he would impose tariffs on China if China went into Taiwan

By Kanishka Singh

October 18, 2024 4:23 PM PDT · Updated 6 days ago





Section 1

Historical Context of the America First Movement

Origins of the America First Movement



- The America First Movement was deeply influenced by the isolationist sentiments stemming from the aftermath of World War I and the economic hardships of the Great Depression.
- Woodrow Wilson's vision for World War I was rooted in a moral ideal: he wanted to make it "**a war to end all wars.**" He believed that by reshaping the international order, the war could prevent future conflicts. Central to this vision was the **League of Nations**, an international organization aimed at fostering cooperation, peace, and mutual security among nations.
- In the end, the U.S. did not join the League of Nations, reflecting a gap between Wilson's internationalist ideals and the public's isolationist sentiments.

The America First Committee and Its Influence

Formation as a response to World War

The America First Committee was founded in September 1940 by Yale law students and quickly became a powerful organization.

Membership Growth

The AFC's membership surged to over 800,000, showcasing widespread public support for isolationist policies during a critical period in American history

01

02

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04

Domestic Focus Advocacy

The AFC effectively argued for prioritizing national resources on domestic issues, resonating with citizens concerned about economic stability and social welfare.

Impact of Pearl Harbor

The attack on Pearl Harbor drastically undermined the AFC's influence, leading to a rapid decline in its support and a shift towards a unified national war effort.

Key Figures and Their Contributions

Charles Lindbergh, already a national hero for his transatlantic flight in 1927, became the face of the isolationist movement. As a leading spokesperson for the America First Committee, Lindbergh delivered speeches across the country, arguing that America should not get involved in what he saw as a European problem.



Key Figures

Joseph P. Kennedy: The father of future President John F. Kennedy, Joseph P. Kennedy served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom in the late 1930s. He was an outspoken advocate for appeasement and believed that Britain would lose to Nazi Germany. He also argued against U.S. involvement in the war, believing it would be disastrous for the country. His views caused friction with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he was eventually removed from his post in 1940.





Key Figures

William Randolph Hearst, the powerful media tycoon behind Hearst Newspapers, was a vocal and direct supporter of isolationism. Through his extensive media empire, Hearst advocated for the U.S. to avoid involvement in European conflicts, using his newspapers to promote the idea that American interests were best served by staying out of World War II.



Decline of the Movement Post-Pearl Harbor

Shift in National Sentiment

The attack on Pearl Harbor catalyzed a dramatic transformation in American public opinion, leading to a near-universal support for military engagement and effectively nullifying the America First movement's isolationist arguments, as citizens rallied around the need for national unity and defense against external threats.



Section 2

Charles Lindbergh and Isolationism



UK

FDR

Jews

Lindbergh's Rise as a Spokesperson

- Lindbergh's speeches often blamed "**warmongers**" in **Britain, Roosevelt's administration, and American Jews** for pushing the country toward war.
- In a particularly infamous **speech in Des Moines, Iowa, on September 11, 1941**, Lindbergh suggested that Jewish groups were agitating for war because they feared Nazi persecution in Europe. This rhetoric sparked widespread controversy and accusations of anti-Semitism.
- Lindbergh's views, which reflected the broader isolationist sentiment, were also rooted in his admiration for certain aspects of Nazi Germany, particularly their military prowess and technological advancements. He had visited Germany and met with Nazi officials in the 1930s, further complicating his image.

Controversial Rhetoric and Anti-Semitism



Impact on Public Discourse

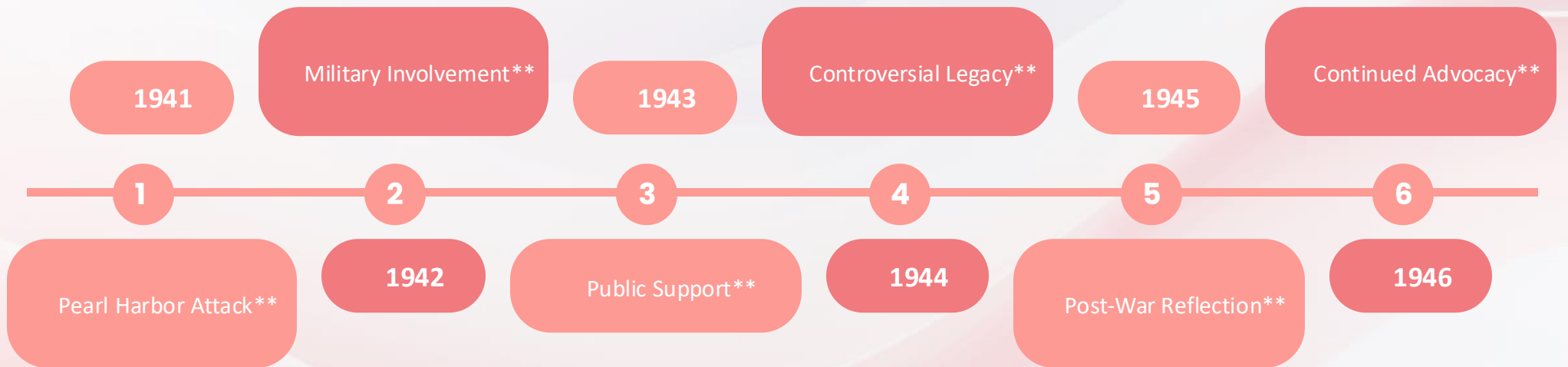
The rhetoric employed by Lindbergh and the America First Committee contributed to the normalization of anti-Semitic sentiments, influencing public opinion and creating a legacy of exclusionary ideologies that persist in contemporary political discussions.



Legacy of Division

The America First movement's anti-Semitic undertones not only polarized public sentiment during its time but also left a lasting impact on American political culture, raising ongoing concerns about the resurgence of similar exclusionary narratives in modern discourse.

Lindbergh's Shift During WWII

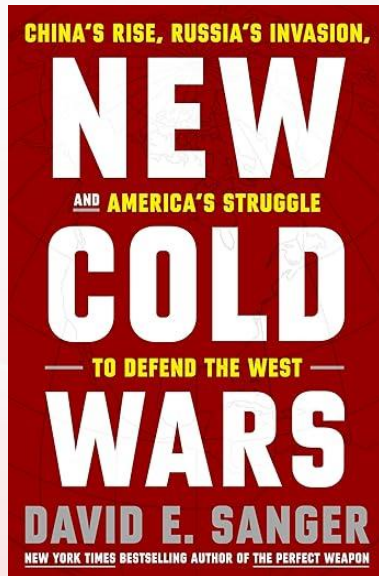




Section 3

The Modern "America First" Movement

Donald Trump's Adoption of the Phrase



Trump's use of "America First" signifies a shift from historical isolationism to a modern form of **economic nationalism**, appealing to voters disillusioned by **globalization** and advocating for policies that prioritize American jobs and industries. Trump was not aware of AFC. Trump told Sanger, “Which leader does not care for the country first?”

Economic protectionism: Trump pushed for policies that promoted American businesses and workers, such as renegotiating trade deals (e.g., replacing NAFTA with the USMCA) and imposing tariffs on China and other countries.

Opposition to globalism: Trump criticized international institutions like the United Nations, NATO, and various trade agreements that he believed undermined American sovereignty and economic interests.

Donald Trump's Adoption of the Phrase



Peace through strength: While Trump criticized U.S. involvement in "endless wars," such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, he did not advocate for complete non-interventionism. He often emphasized military strength and was willing to use force, as seen with targeted strikes in the Middle East. However, he wanted to avoid large-scale military engagements abroad unless absolutely necessary.

Immigration restriction: A focus on securing U.S. borders and reducing immigration, with an emphasis on national security and job protection for American citizens.





Shift from Isolationism to Nationalism

The contemporary "America First" movement emphasizes aggressive economic nationalism and protectionist policies, contrasting sharply with the original movement's focus on **isolationism** and **non-interventionism**,



Foreign Policy Implications

Unilateral Foreign Relations

This philosophy encourages a shift towards unilateralism in foreign policy, favoring bilateral agreements that align closely with U.S. interests, potentially undermining multilateral cooperation.

Impact on Global Alliances

As the U.S. adopts a more isolationist stance, traditional alliances may weaken, prompting other nations to reassess their security strategies and diplomatic relationships with America.

Thank You

Contact: chonghoyu@gmail.com