



5. Arming Democracy: *Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Lead-up to War*

An antiwar protest outside the Japanese consulate in Portland, Oregon, 1932. The Japanese had invaded Chinese Manchuria and made their first incursions into China proper. City of Portland Archives

In the late 1930s, as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan began to wreak havoc in the Eastern Hemisphere, American president Franklin D. Roosevelt faced a leadership challenge of bedeviling complexity.

Most Americans, recalling the country's apparently fruitless sacrifice in World War I, adamantly opposed entry into another foreign war. As late as the summer of 1940—just a few months before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor—fully 61 percent said staying out of war should be America's most important objective. Congress had served this aim with neutrality laws that cut off the flow of American money and arms to warring nations.

For years the president, engaged in domestic issues and two hard-fought reelection campaigns, was loath to confront isolationists. His own oft-repeated hope for humanity was widespread disarmament and commitment to nonaggression. But as events unspooled on the other side of the world, FDR became convinced that the United States must, in the interest of its own security, prevent the collapse of its allies abroad.

At first he advanced this cause with a rhetorical and legal finesse that left some doubting his sincerity. Ultimately, FDR

made a forceful case to the American people, asking them to embrace the country's role as "the arsenal of democracy"—funneling aid to desperate combatants.

In the election year of 1936, when Congress voted to extend a ban on arms sales to nations at war, FDR accepted the bill without protest. He feared that a loud debate on neutrality would only encourage Congress to place tighter constraints on his discretion, hurt his chances in the election—and possibly spur Italy to even bolder depredations in Ethiopia than those launched the previous year. "These are without a doubt the most hair-trigger times the world has gone through in your lifetime or mine," FDR lamented to his ambassador in Italy.

Tensions mounted with every passing month. In June 1940, with the Nazis bearing down on Paris and hatching designs on the final European prize—England—British prime minister Winston Churchill sent word to FDR: "If we go down," he warned, "Hitler has a very good chance of conquering the world."

But at home FDR faced indignant accusations that he was leading his countrymen into a war they wanted no part of. On the campaign trail that autumn, he insisted, "There is no secret treaty, no secret obligation, no secret commitment, no secret understanding in any shape or form, direct or indirect, with another Government, to involve this nation in any war."

Near the end of '41, the Japanese would bomb Pearl Harbor and put an end to debate over whether America would fight. In the meantime, that was the question on Americans' minds. Was the country on a path to war? Could it stay clear of the conflagration? "To that," Eleanor Roosevelt told one audience in 1939, "my answer is always the same and the only answer I can make: Nobody knows. We hope so with all our hearts."



Students at the University of California, Berkeley, take part in a peace strike, April 1940. Franklin D. Roosevelt faced a major political challenge in urging Americans to prepare for war. In the summer of 1940, six in ten said staying out of the conflict overseas should be the country's most important aim. National Archives



March of the Aggressors: A Timeline

September 1931

Japan invades Manchuria for its land and resources, defying the League of Nations.

October 1935

Benito Mussolini's Italy invades Ethiopia, annexing it by the spring of 1936.

October 1936

Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy sign a treaty pledging mutual cooperation.

November 1936

Germany and Imperial Japan pledge mutual defense against "Communist subversive activities."

January 1937

Adolf Hitler officially withdraws from the Treaty of Versailles, which requires Germany to disarm and make reparations after World War I—an agreement "extracted by force," the führer insists, "from a weak Government."

July 1937

Japan invades China.

March 1938

Under the motto "One People, One Reich, One Führer," Germany declares Austria a German province and renames it Ostmark.

September 1938

In the Munich Pact, Britain, France, Italy, and Germany agree Czechoslovakia will cede a third of its territory to Nazi Germany. British prime minister Neville Chamberlain calls it "peace with honor."

November 1938

Japan declares a "New Order" governing East Asia.

March 1939

Violating its agreement with Britain and other nations made in September 1938, Germany invades Czechoslovakia.

August 1939

Joseph Stalin signs a pact with Hitler, communism's fiercest foe, in which both leaders promise not to invade each other's nation for ten years.

September 1939

Hitler invades Poland, provoking a declaration of war from Britain and France, pledged to Poland's defense. "Well, it has come at last," FDR says on hearing the news. "God help us all." A few weeks later, the Soviet Union invades Poland in cooperation with Germany. "The attack on Poland by Russia has depressed F.D.R.," Eleanor Roosevelt writes to her aunt. "He feels we are drawing nearer to that old decision, 'Can we afford to let Germany win?'" Hitler begins a submarine (U-boat) campaign that will last throughout the war, targeting Allied ships in the Atlantic.

April–May 1940

Germany invades Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Belgium; all fall, except Norway, which resists until early June. Germany invades France. Chamberlain resigns and Winston Churchill takes over as British prime minister. Churchill says Britain's policy will be "to wage war, by sea, land, and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us."

June 1940

Mussolini invades France. "The hand that held the dagger," says FDR, "has struck it into the back of its neighbor." France surrenders to Germany, ceding its northern half and Atlantic coastline to the Nazis; the south will be ruled by a collaborationist government based in Vichy.

July 1940

Hitler issues Directive No. 15: "I have decided to prepare for, and if necessary to carry out, an invasion of England."

August 1940

The German Luftwaffe launches an air war against Britain to soften its defenses in preparation for a landing. At first bombers target airfields and other military assets; ultimately they terrorize cities, including London. Royal Air Force fighters repel the attacks effectively enough that in September, Hitler officially postpones his planned land invasion, dubbed Operation Sea Lion.

September 1940

Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the Axis Pact, pledging mutual cooperation and defense. Japan invades French Indochina.

October 1940

Italy invades Greece.

November 1940

Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania join the Axis. Within a few months, so does Bulgaria.

April 1941

Axis countries invade Yugoslavia.

June 1941

Axis countries launch an invasion of the Soviet Union, which the Soviets repel several months later.

December 1941

Japan bombs Pearl Harbor. The United States declares war on Japan, entering World War II. A few days later, Germany and Italy declare war on the United States.

B

The Isolationists

After World War I, many Americans came to see their country's sacrifice of more than fifty-three thousand lives on far-off battlefields as a terrible mistake. The rekindling of hostilities in Europe during the 1930s left some believing these deaths in the supposed "war to end all wars" had been in vain.

And then there was the matter of wealth. The United States had made billions of dollars of loans to European countries during the war. When Germany found itself unable to pay postwar reparations to Britain and France, those allies (among others) were unable to repay their American debts. This state of affairs had contributed to both global depression and the rise of fascism.

Moreover, in 1936, an eighteen-month investigation led by Senator Gerald Nye of North Dakota concluded that America had been tricked into the war by profiteering munitions dealers and bankers—the nefarious "merchants of death." "When Americans went into the fray," Nye said, "they little thought that they were there and fighting to save the skins of American bankers who had bet too boldly on the outcome of the war and had two billions of dollars of loans to the Allies in jeopardy."

Congress had passed laws to enforce a stalwart American neutrality, but the public's fear of slipping into a European slaughter persisted as calamity struck again and again in the Eastern Hemisphere. Some Americans held deep skepticism about the motives of those who would intervene in the conflict.

FDR was a chief target of these suspicions. "I challenge his truthfulness," said the president's Republican opponent in the 1940 election campaign, Wendell Willkie. "If his promise to keep our boys out of foreign wars is no better than his promise to balance the budget, they're already almost on the transports."

Leading isolationists in Congress included Senators Hiram Johnson of



California, William Borah of Idaho, and Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan. But perhaps the most celebrated isolationist was popular hero Charles Lindbergh, the aviator whose baby son had been kidnapped and murdered in 1932.

In an address just after the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland, carried on all the major radio networks, Lindbergh spoke out against repealing the American ban on selling arms to warring nations. He predicted the United States would lose several million men in the war and "be staggering under this burden of recovery for the rest of our lives." In May 1941, after the fall of France and the London Blitz, Lindbergh told an antiwar rally, "Mr.

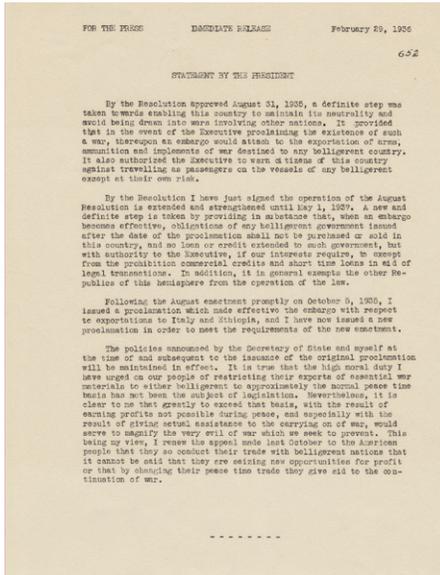
Charles Lindbergh, the celebrated aviator, was the most influential spokesperson of the America First Committee formed in September 1940. The committee favored strengthening American defenses at home but opposed any involvement in the war in Europe, including the provision of aid to allies. LOC

Roosevelt claims that Hitler desires to dominate the world. But it is Mr. Roosevelt himself who advocates world domination when he says that it is our business to control the wars of Europe and Asia."

By that time, however, two-thirds of Americans said they'd choose war over defeat to Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini.



Legislating Neutrality



A presidential press release announcing the extension of the United States embargo on the sale of arms to warring nations, February 29, 1936. FDRL

In the 1930s, Congress passed a series of laws aimed at preventing the president or business interests from drawing a reluctant nation, inch by inch, into war.

1. With European countries announcing they could not repay their debts from World War I, Senator Hiram Johnson of California, a progressive Republican and leading isolationist, introduced the Foreign Securities Act (or Johnson Debt Default Act) banning loans to foreign governments currently in default to the U.S. government or American citizens. This included Britain and France. Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the act on April 13, 1934.
2. Opposed to participating in international organizations they thought might threaten U.S. independence, in January 1935, despite the entreaties of FDR, isolationists in Congress blocked American membership in the World Court, an international tribunal attached to the League of Nations.
3. In August 1935, FDR signed the first Neutrality Act, though its "inflexible provisions," he thought, "might yet drag us into war instead of keeping us out." The law banned the sale of arms to any warring nation, barred U.S. ships from carrying implements of war to any combatant nation, and prevented Americans from traveling on ships owned by warring nations.
4. In February 1936, Congress voted overwhelmingly to extend the Neutrality Act through May 1, 1937, also extending provisions of the Johnson Debt Default Act to forbid loans to any warring nation.
5. In May 1937, Congress once again extended provisions of the Neutrality Act. In a concession to those who argued that a total embargo would cripple the American economy, the law permitted the sale to warring nations of raw materials not wholly used for munitions—but only if those nations paid cash and carried the material away in their own ships, a condition known as the "cash-and-carry" provision.
6. In September 1939, after the Nazi invasion of Poland and the French and British declaration of war on Germany, FDR urged Congress to repeal parts of the Neutrality Act. After heated debate, the legislature approved the sale of arms to combatant nations on a "cash-and-carry" basis only.
7. In June 1940, Congress passed a law requiring the military to certify war material useless to the United States before it could be sold abroad. "I do not want our forces deprived of one gun or one bomb or one ship which can aid that American boy whom you and I may some day have to draft," said Senator David Walsh of Massachusetts.
8. In March 1941, Congress passed FDR's "Lend-Lease" program, allowing the United States to provision cash-poor allies with war supplies on an almost unlimited basis, with the expectation that such would be returned or provided in kind at a later date.

D

1940: Neutrality amid the Gathering Storm

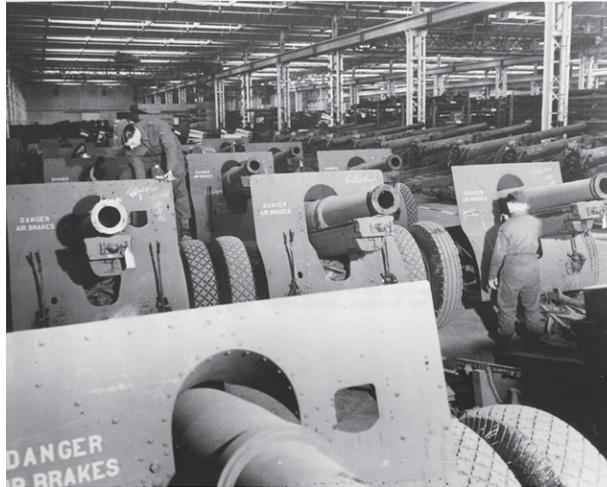
After the declaration of war in Europe in September 1939, Franklin D. Roosevelt and his cabinet, still charged with maintaining official U.S. neutrality, strained to ready the country for war—and to aid its friends in their hour of extremity.

In May 1940, appalled by the Nazi blitzkrieg advancing into France, FDR asked Congress for a supplemental military appropriation of \$1.2 billion. American plants, he said, should turn out fifty thousand planes a year—an extraordinary buildup for an Air Corps that included only 1,200 bombers and fighters in 1939. “These are ominous days—days whose swift and shocking developments force every neutral nation to look to its defense in the light of new factors,” FDR told the nation.

After France’s defeat in June, Congress passed the Two-Ocean Navy Act, beefing up the navy by 70 percent with additional aircraft, destroyers, submarines, and other equipment. Japan had been quick to seize France’s naval base in Indochina, placing the aggressor within range of the U.S.—controlled Philippines; FDR retaliated by seizing Japanese assets in the United States and embargoing the sale to Japan of oil, steel, or iron—materials it badly needed to wage war.

Meanwhile, even before France’s surrender, British prime minister Winston Churchill had cabled FDR: “The scene has darkened swiftly. . . . If necessary, we shall continue the war alone and we are not afraid of that. But I trust you realize, Mr. President, that the voice and force of the United States may count for nothing if they are withheld too long.” He asked FDR for “forty or fifty of your old destroyers,” “several hundred of the latest type of aircraft,” and “anti-aircraft equipment and ammunition.”

By early September, FDR had managed to get Britain the destroyers it desperately



American-built howitzers, shipped under the country’s Lend-Lease program, at an ordnance depot in Britain, around 1941. Toward the end of 1940, Franklin D. Roosevelt had come to believe the United States could no longer simply invoice cash-strapped Britain for war supplies it desperately needed to defend democracy in Europe. FDR saw Britain’s survival as vital to American security. He devised the Lend-Lease program to rush aid to the British without concern for payment. National Archives



Above: M3 tanks under construction at the newly built Detroit Arsenal Tank Plant. The U.S. government established the tank factory, to be operated by the automobile maker Chrysler, in 1940, after observing the Nazis’ use of tanks in their recent invasions of Poland and France. Ramp-up was speedy and in 1942 the plant set a nationwide record, producing nearly nine hundred tanks in a single month. Detroit Public Library

Left: Assembly line workers build diesel tank engines at a General Motors plant in Detroit, 1940s. Detroit Public Library

needed to defend shipping in the Atlantic, by means of a creative and apparently tough bargain. In exchange for the ships, the United States would get eight naval bases on strategically important British islands in the Western Hemisphere. This circumvented the law requiring cash for military equipment, as well as the stipulation that all such equipment be certified as inessential before sale; the bases were deemed more useful than the outdated destroyers. Nonetheless, the day FDR announced the deal, isolationists took out full-page ads declaring, "Mr. Roosevelt today committed an act of war."

Later, in the fall, FDR and his advisors found themselves puzzling over how they might fill a new British request for twelve thousand warplanes without running afoul of neutrality laws. They considered making a gift. They pondered sending the planes to Britain under the pretense that they would be tested there. Finally they supplied the planes, in part by declaring them an exchange for secret technology shared by the British.

In November yet another major British request for arms lay before the U.S. government. Britain lacked the dollar reserves to cover the order. On November 23, the British ambassador to the United States landed at New York's LaGuardia Airport, where he told the press, "Well, boys, Britain's broke; it's your money we want."

FDR was angered by the impolitic remark. But he was also less than satisfied with a plan to invoice Britain for its supplies on delivery. "We have just got to decide what we are going to do for England," FDR told Secretary of War Henry Stimson. "Doing it this way is not doing anything."

Two days later, the president left Washington, DC, for the working vacation that would produce his Lend-Lease policy.



Top: Crewmen service an A-20 bomber at Langley Field, Virginia, July 1942. In May 1940, appalled by the Nazi advance into France, Franklin D. Roosevelt had asked Congress for a supplemental military appropriation of \$1.2 billion and said American plants should turn out fifty thousand planes a year—an extraordinary buildup for an Air Corps that included only 1,200 bombers and fighters in 1939. LOC

Above: The U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown*, built in Newport News, Virginia, and commissioned in 1937. In 1940, with its Two-Ocean Navy Act, the U.S. would begin a massive buildup of naval power. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the *Yorktown* would be sent to augment the damaged Pacific Fleet and would finally be sunk in the Battle of Midway, a confrontation that dealt Japan's navy a crippling setback. National Archives

E

Peacetime Draft

Adolf Hitler held France in his thrall and German bombers were setting London afire in September 1940, when Congress authorized the first-ever American draft during official peacetime, calling on men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five to register for military service. The Selective Service and Registration Act would lead to the registration of fifty million men and the call-up of some ten million by 1945.

Franklin D. Roosevelt pitched the draft as an opportunity for “Americans from all walks of life” to “learn to live side by side”—a “universal service” that would “bring not only greater preparedness to meet the threat of war, but a wider distribution of tolerance and understanding to enjoy the blessings of peace.”

Most Americans supported this buildup of a military that was clearly unprepared to defend the country in a major war. By mid-1941, more than nine in ten said the draft had been handled fairly in their communities. But a slim majority still did not think the army should be authorized to send drafted soldiers outside the Western Hemisphere.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)

SERIAL NUMBER 237	1. NAME (Print) George Augustus Harrison <small>(First) (Middle) (Last)</small>		ORDER NUMBER 12160
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 10 Brown Alley New Bern Craven N.C. <small>(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)</small>			
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]			
3. MAILING ADDRESS Same as above <small>(Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)</small>			
4. TELEPHONE	5. AGE IN YEARS 19	6. PLACE OF BIRTH New Bern N.C. <small>(Town or county) (State or country)</small>	
	DATE OF BIRTH Nov 28 1922 <small>(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)</small>		
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS John Harrison, 10 Brown Alley, New Bern, N.C.			
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS C.A. Ballenger, 30 George St, New Bern, N.C.			
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Middle St New Bern Craven N.C. <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
D. S. S. FORM 1 (Revised 6-1-42)	(over)	e16-21630-3	<i>George Harrison</i> <small>(Registrant's signature)</small>

A World War II draft registration card for George Augustus Harrison of North Carolina. The draft was initiated in September 1940—official peacetime—but would lead to the call-up of some ten million men by 1945. The National Archives Southeast Region



Franklin D. Roosevelt on War

Franklin D. Roosevelt was an internationalist through and through. He believed that given the twentieth-century trend toward global communications, transportation, and trade, two oceans, however vast, would never be enough to insulate the United States from affairs of the world; engagement was the wiser path. But in the months and years before the United States finally entered World War II, he took pains to insist that he was as much against *war* as anyone.

"We are not isolationists except in so far as we seek to isolate ourselves completely from war," he said in an address during the 1936 presidential campaign. "I have seen war. I have seen war on land and sea. I have seen blood running from the wounded. I have seen men coughing out their gassed lungs. I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed. . . . I hate war."

Even as he forcefully repudiated war, FDR edged the American people toward preparedness, warning them again and again of the nature of the totalitarian threat as he

saw it. "Innocent peoples, innocent nations are being cruelly sacrificed to a greed for power and supremacy which is devoid of all sense of justice and humane consideration," he said in Chicago, an isolationist stronghold, in the autumn of 1937. "If those things come to pass in other parts of the world, let no one imagine that America will escape, that America may expect mercy. . . . War is a contagion."

After the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland sparked full-scale war in Europe, FDR again cautioned against the seductive idea that the United States need only "ignore [the conflict] and go about its business." "I hope the United States will keep out of this war," he added. "I believe it will."

It was only after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that FDR's rhetoric, in keeping with the mood of the people, took a sharp turn. "No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion," he thundered, "the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory."

"We are not isolationists except in so far as we seek to isolate ourselves completely from war. I have seen war. I have seen war on land and sea. I have seen blood running from the wounded. I have seen men coughing out their gassed lungs. I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed. . . . I hate war."

FDR in an address during the 1936 presidential campaign.



Lend-Lease

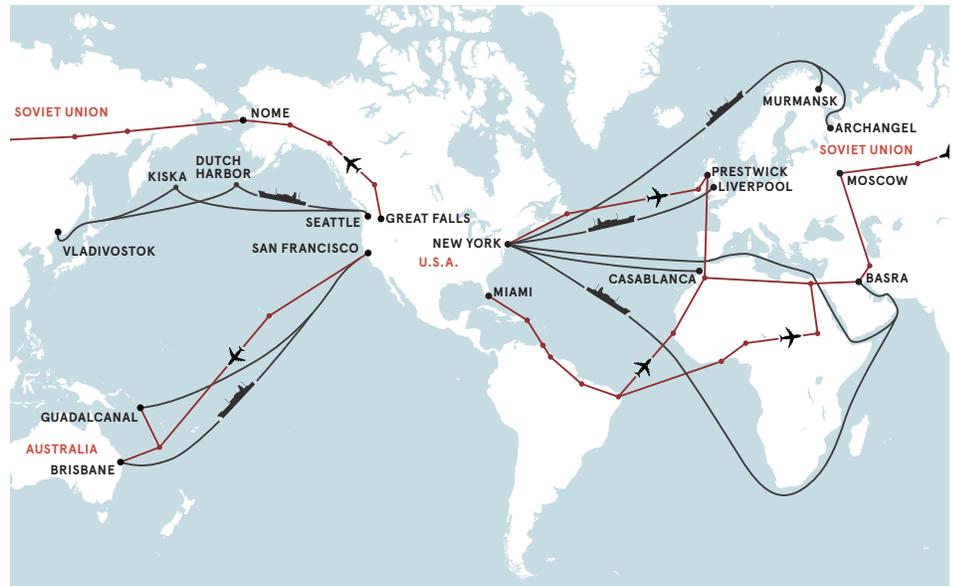
In early December 1940, weary after his election to a third term, Franklin D. Roosevelt took a Caribbean vacation aboard the navy cruiser USS *Tuscaloosa*. On September 9, a seaplane delivered a letter from British prime minister Winston Churchill. Thanks to an amendment to neutrality laws the previous year, the United States was now able to sell munitions to Britain on a cash-and-carry basis. But Britain needed a great deal more material, and it was nearly out of cash.

Unless Britain could feed its island nation, import munitions, and carry armies to meet the enemy, Churchill's missive warned, "We may fall by the way, and the time needed by the United States to complete her defensive preparations may not be forthcoming." He asked for destroyers, combat planes, and other supplies to help Britain ply the Atlantic in safety. The letter then acknowledged Britain's inability to pay cash but challenged FDR to see the request "not as an appeal for aid, but as a statement of the minimum action necessary to achieve our common purpose." It would be "wrong in principle" and "mutually disadvantageous" to force Britain to sell every asset and leave it "stripped to the bone" for its defense of democracy.

FDR read the long letter several times. He spent his vacation fishing, napping, playing cards with close advisors. But mostly he kept to himself and gazed out to sea from a deck chair. "I began to get the idea that he was refueling, the way he so often does when he seems to be resting and carefree," recalled Harry Hopkins, a very close advisor on both domestic and diplomatic policy. "So I didn't ask him any questions."

At some point in his musings, FDR seized upon a metaphor used a few months before by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes: the United States, Ickes had written, was like a homeowner who refuses to lend his neighbor a garden hose "although that house is all ablaze and the wind is blowing from that direction."

FDR "suddenly came out with it—the whole program," Hopkins recalled. The United States



would jack up war production and make available to the British whatever supplies it required, to be returned in kind after the war. Back in Washington, DC, FDR presented his idea, along with the garden-hose analogy, to the press. Very soon began the export of billions of dollars worth of war supplies to allies abroad.

Churchill would call Lend-Lease a "majestic policy" and "the most unsordid act in the whole of recorded history." "Never again let us hear the taunt that money is the ruling power in the hearts and thoughts of the American democracy," he said.

Top: Major air and sea shipping routes of the Lend-Lease program. Congress passed the program to provide war aid to nations besieged by the Axis powers in March 1941, while the U.S. remained officially neutral. The program continued throughout World War II, supplying some \$50 billion in mostly American-made military hardware to Allies around the globe.

Above, left: In addition to shipping war equipment, the American Lend-Lease program supplied food, medicine, and other goods to help Allied nations survive the war. Here, children in Staffordshire, England, eat eggs provided by the program, 1941. © IWM (HU 63768)

Above, right: A British corporal at an ordnance depot in central England uncrates several Thompson submachine guns or "Tommy guns" shipped from America under its Lend-Lease program, March 23, 1942. © IWM (H 18068)



Fireside Chat: “Arsenal of Democracy”

Freed from the pressures of the campaign, revived after his postelection vacation aboard the USS *Tuscaloosa*, and emboldened by the urgency of the times, on the evening of December 29, 1940, Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered a fireside chat on national security.

The speech got down to brass tacks, referring to the Nazis by name, attacking the champions of appeasement, and walking listeners across the map of a troubled globe, from the Azores in the North Atlantic to the American fleet patrolling the Pacific. He made his argument for a Lend-Lease program that would supply allies with arms much the way a homeowner would lend a garden hose to a neighbor whose house was on fire.

“The plain facts,” said FDR, “are that the Nazis have proclaimed, time and again, that all other races are their inferiors and therefore subject to their orders. And most important of all, the vast resources and wealth of this American Hemisphere constitute the most tempting loot in all the round world. . . . The history of recent years proves that shootings and chains and concentration camps are not simply the transient tools but the very altars of modern dictatorships.”

He frankly called upon the American people to support a large-scale military buildup and aid to allies. “We must have more ships, more guns, more planes,” he said. “We must be the great arsenal of democracy.”

More people listened to FDR’s “chat” than had ever listened to a presidential address before. The next day, telegrams poured into the White House, running one-hundred-to-one in favor of FDR’s remarks. Arthur Krock of the *New York Times* welcomed the “candor emerging at long last from the camouflage of the campaign.” The fireside chat had, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*, “clarified and crystallized America’s choice, a choice really made long ago.”



Top: Poster by the War Production Board, a federal agency that supervised war-related industrial production, 1942. The American effort to manufacture weapons accelerated after the U.S. entered the war in December 1941. The U.S. would out-build the Axis powers by a wide margin, a key factor in the Allied victory. War Production Board

Above: A window display at the J.L. Hudson Company Department Store in downtown Detroit, 1943. Though Americans had been reluctant to enter World War II, once the country was committed government and industry collaborated in a major effort to convert American production capacity to manufacture war supplies instead of consumer goods. Factories operated day and night. Detroit Historical Society