

Name:

Date:

Problem Solution

Directions: Diagram the choices that the U.S. government had after the British intercepted, decoded, and shared the Zimmermann Telegram. Choose the solution you would have sought as president of the United States and explain your reasoning.

PROBLEM:

The Zimmermann Telegram appears to be the evidence the British need to bring the United States into the war and save the beleaguered Allies. They share the information with President Wilson. He then has a choice to make about what to do with the information.

CHOICE #1:

CHOICE #2:

CHOICE #3:

Pros

Cons

Pros

Cons

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CHOICE #1:

Privately contact the Mexican president to negotiate peace and keep the telegram and its contents confidential.

CHOICE #2:

Condemn the British for intercepting a message sent over cables to a recipient in the United States and question the authenticity of the message.

CHOICE #3:

Release the telegram to the press and thus the American public.

Pros

If successful the United States may be able to re-establish peaceful relations with its border neighbor by offering terms of mutual benefit and thus avoiding either country needing to enter the European war.

Cons

Tensions with Mexico linger after the Spanish-American war and the country has strong ties to Germany which would require great concessions on the part of the U.S. to overcome the hostility and establish peace. This would likely include negotiating land and territory disputes between the two countries.

Pros

The message can be labeled as propaganda on behalf of the British who were using the message to draw the U.S. into the war as allies, thus the U.S. could remain cautiously neutral in the war.

Cons

Condemning the British could backfire and sever an otherwise beneficial alliance leaving the U.S. open to the threat of German and Mexican invasion if the contents of the telegram are authentic.

Pros

Releasing the telegram will likely garner public support for the war which is becoming increasingly unlikely to avoid entering. Congress will then likely back the war effort.

Cons

Releasing the telegram will likely lead to the U.S. entering the war on the side of the Allies, drawing the ire of Germany and the Central Powers.

SOLUTION:

As President Wilson I would consider easing tensions along the U.S./Mexico border by attempting to negotiate peace terms regarding disputed territories. My reasoning for this is that the United States shares a large contiguous border with Mexico where as Europe is an entire ocean away. Fostering peaceful relations with a domestic neighbor through compromise seems like a better alternative than engaging in what is sure to be a long and taxing foreign conflict that the United States is presently ill equipped for.