

How successful was wilson in achieving his aims in foreign policy in the years 1...

[History](#)



Although Wilson had primarily been elected to reform national politics and initiate new progressive policies in Washington, he spent the majority of his time as President dealing with foreign policy rather than domestic. Wilson's predecessors, including McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft, had viewed the United States as an emerging power that needed to extend its influence throughout the world in order to serve national interests.

The aims of Wilson in tackling foreign affairs were to maintain isolationism by peaceful and ethical approaches, which were achieved almost successfully until the American intervention into the World War One in 1917. This imperialist policy was justified by the commonly held belief that it was America's duty as a Christian republic to spread democracy throughout the world. These three Presidents significantly expanded America's influence abroad with the annexation of colonies throughout the world, such as the Philippines and Cuba.

Clements firmly believes that Wilson foreign policy is mostly successful until 1917. This was because one of Wilson's success in keeping isolationism in his early years of presidency was to repudiate his predecessors' Dollar Diplomacy, which called for American investments in Latin America and the Caribbean. Instead, Wilson promoted democracy as the priority in private investments. As for China, Wilson gave diplomatic recognition to the new regime.

Moreover, in April of 1914, Mexican officials in Tampico arrested a few American sailors who blundered into a prohibited area, and Wilson used the incident to justify ordering the U. S. Navy to occupy the port city of Veracruz.

Therefore, Bragg believes that Wilson did not fully achieve his isolationist aims because of the adoption of interventionist policy in Mexico. The Mexican Revolution threatened America's interests due to the instability and violence, thus Wilson decided to send American marines in

1914 and military force in 1916 to Mexico but the American people on the border, as a consequence, were afflicted. However, he avoided taking over Mexico. Rowe believes this was because he was alarmed by the danger of war, Wilson reaffirmed his commitment to Mexican self-determination and agreed to discuss methods of securing the border area with the Mexican government. Early in 1917, when it began to appear that the United States could not avoid being dragged into the European war, Wilson withdrew all U.

S. forces from Mexico. The decision coincided with the publication of an intercepted message from Arthur Zimmermann in the German foreign office to the German minister in Mexico, instructing him to propose an alliance with Mexico against the United States if Germany and the United States went to war. With the outbreak of fighting in the "Great War" in Europe in August 1914, President Wilson appealed to Americans to remain strictly neutral.

He believed that the underlying cause of the war, which would leave 14 million Europeans dead by 1917, was the militant nationalism of the major European powers, as well as the ethnic hatreds that existed in much of Central and Eastern Europe. In addition to this, Wilson kept the USA out of the war until 1917 through diplomacy and his moral stance. This attitude was supported by the majority of Americans particularly the Mid-West as the American people did not want war anymore. The emerging of anti-imperialist

ideas referred wars were morally unacceptable, and anti-colonial ideas against British colonial rule contributed to the neutrality.

Furthermore, in May 1915, a German submarine—called a "U-boat," which was a relatively fragile vessels that depended on surprise attacks from below the surface for its success—torpedoed the British liner Lusitania off the coast of Ireland. Wilson urged patience. Wilson was successful in stopping U-boat activities and the sinking of ships. Therefore, Wilson tried to keep the public and the political opinion against entering the war as long as possible. However, it was impossible to stay out of the ongoing war for Wilson.

Therefore, Murphy believes that Wilson's foreign policy became more of a failure in 1917. This was because the USA entered the first world war. The America's interests in Britain and France were threatened as huge businesses banded many immigrants in the US. The sinking of Lusitania and the interception of Zimmermann telegram proved that the intervention was inevitable. The American intervention completely changed the war and established the world's leading role of America. However, Murphy may believe that Wilson's foreign policy became more of a failure in 1917, Wilson did go to war with a mission.

The main goal of the war was to end militarism and make the world "safe for Democracy," not merely to defend American ships. He promised that the United States would fight to ensure democracy, self-government, the rights and liberties of small nations, and an international peace organization that would end war forever. He achieved this goal and he spread his ideologies into the world. The age of empire or the creation of colonies, meanwhile,

came to an end. After the Germany surrendered, Murphy believes that Wilson's failures began.

Wilson hoped to revolutionize the conduct of international affairs at the peace table. He first outlined his vision in the "Fourteen Points" speech delivered to Congress. No more secret treaties, and all territories occupied during the war must be evacuated. Wilson wanted to dismantle the imperial order by opening up colonial holdings to eventual self-rule and all European sections of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires to immediate independence. Other points included freedom of the seas at all times and free trade all over the world.

But Murphy believes that Wilson's most important proposal was the prevention of future wars by means of a new international organization, a league of nations, open to membership by all democratic states. This new world body would be in charge of disarmament and the dismantling of colonial possessions. Most importantly, the League would hold power over all disputes among its members. Wilson believed that this League would transform international relations and usher in a new era of world peace. When Wilson sailed for France in December of 1918 to head the American peace delegation.

He wanted to persuade the Europeans to a fair peace for Germany in order to prevent wars in the future. However, in the end, Wilson faced with the determined insistence of Allied leaders to punish Germany with heavy reparations, territorial occupation, and total disarmament, Wilson was forced to compromise on most of his points. He took the leading role in 'Peace Talks' and he established his League of Nations, but instead of a "peace  
<https://assignbuster.com/how-successful-was-wilson-in-achieving-his-aims-in-foreign-policy-in-the-years-1912-tot-1920/>

without victory," the "Big Four" leaders—held secret negotiations and produced the Treaty of Versailles.

This treaty imposed harsh terms on Germany, and Wilson was forced to present to the Senate a treaty that bore little resemblance to the ideal peace most Americans expected. The opposition at home equaled the opposition abroad. Most Senate Democrats supported Wilson and the treaty. Embittered over Republican opposition. In one of the most controversial episodes in presidential history, Wilson refused to consider any compromises to the League. When the Senate Republicans amended the treaty—to ensure that the President could not use U.

S. forces on League business without securing congressional assent—Wilson told his supporters to vote against the amended treaty. America never joined the international organization that Wilson had envisioned as the foundation of his new world order. This failure of the League was a devastating conclusion to Wilson's almost superhuman efforts for world peace based upon international cooperation and the peaceful solution of international disputes.

Woodrow Wilson was successful in keeping isolationism from 1912 to 1917, especially in staying neutrality in the WWI, the creation of League of Nations which ensured the peace, and leading the Peace Talks and Versailles Peace Treaty. By contrast, after 1917, the success he made turned out to be a disadvantage for the US, and ended in disillusionment. The League of Nations and Treaty of Versailles were rejected by the Congress successively, that was partially why Wilson was not re-elected as president in 1920 as well.

<https://assignbuster.com/how-successful-was-wilson-in-achieving-his-aims-in-foreign-policy-in-the-years-1912-to-1920/>