

Wilson's fourteen points: after ww1 essay

[Economics](#), [Trade](#)



President Wilson's Fourteen Points were a decent attempt at peace and repayment after World War I. Although it was clear that there were many obvious problems with his plan. Many things, including Allied bias, American ambition, and Western European dominance, caused these problems. While trying to fix many problems in Europe, the Fourteen Points mainly concentrated on the things that were important to the Allied powers.

France was bent on revenge, Great Britain was looking to further its power over the seas, and America was focused on becoming an even more powerful trade nation. The Allied Powers had made it very hard for Germany and Austria and the newly formed countries in Eastern Europe to carry out many of the things set down in the Fourteen points. In particular, the idea of self-determination is mentioned in over half of the points. Reading the Fourteen Points might lead a person to believe that the Allies were in favor of all forms of self-determination unconditionally. In fact, just the opposite was true. They used self-determination as a "formula" for rearranging the balance of power in their own interests.

Point Five of his plan was a testament to this. It was called the "free, open-minded adjustment of all colonial claims." This allowed countries to practice limited forms of self-determination, mainly by switching European rule from the more obvious direct control method, to indirect European control. Some countries were allowed independence, but those countries that were denied it became mandates. The main thing Point Five accomplished was that it allowed the Allies to get more foreign land, especially those of Great Britain. The fact that the Allies used self-determination for their own interests is also the reason the people of Austria were not allowed to become a part of

Germany. Allowing the union of Austria and Germany would only make Germany stronger, something France didn't want. Self-determination was also used against Germany in other ways.

By allowing Poland to become a country with access to the sea, Germany would be split in half, and former German territory would now be known as the Polish Corridor. Territory was also taken away from Germany to create the nation of Lithuania. The war had other consequences for Germany besides loss of territory.

France used the Fourteen Points to try and "undo, what, since 1870 the progress of Germany had accomplished". This meant taking apart the country; which included the dismantling of railroads, taking away all colonial holdings as well as the new territories Germany had gotten from Russia during the war. These territories either become countries, as in Eastern Europe, or fell under the control of Allied powers. The Allies were not only biased when it came to the principle of self-determination, they were also very selfish. Both the second the third points do not seem to benefit any country in the world besides the two major Allied powers, Great Britain and the United States. The second point calls for the freedom of navigation on the seas. The idea seemed beneficial to every nation in the world, but looking at the post World War I circumstance of the world, this freedom would mainly benefit Great Britain. Great Britain as well as the United States was a trading power, but Britain was the largest naval power in the world, and freedom of the seas at this point in time meant essentially, British

control of the seas, especially now that Germany was no longer allowed to have a large or sufficient navy.

The Third Point of the Agenda calls for the removal of all economic barriers and seemed beneficial for everyone, but it wasn't. This would only be favorable to the larger more industrialized nations, principally the United States who was the largest trading power in the world at the time. This would be detrimental to smaller less industrialized states because it would allow the larger countries to flood their markets free of charge, making them even poorer in the process. The idea was called "open door". I thought this point of Wilson's plan was very selfish, as it only directly benefits the Allies, yet in Wilson's own speech he calls for an end to "selfish aggression. This is one of the many points of Wilson's plan that he is very hypocritical. When President Wilson arrived at the Paris Peace conference it was believed that the President and his advisers had "thought out a comprehensive scheme for the league of nations and for the embodiment of the Fourteen Points in an actual Treaty of Peace" The points were considered to not have enough detail and were "nebulous and incomplete".

Unluckily, this is just the thing Wilson had set out not to do. In the speech he delivered before he read out the Fourteen Points, Wilson said that there was "no confusion between the Allied powers, no uncertainty of principle and no vagueness of detail." Wilson also said that "the only failure to make a definite statement of the objects of the war lies within Germany and her allies," but he fails to make his speech convincing.

Most councilmen disagreed with him at the Peace Conference. The Fourteen Points did accomplish something in that they set out terms for a treaty, but unfortunately the Points failed because they severely lacked in detail and was said to not be concise.