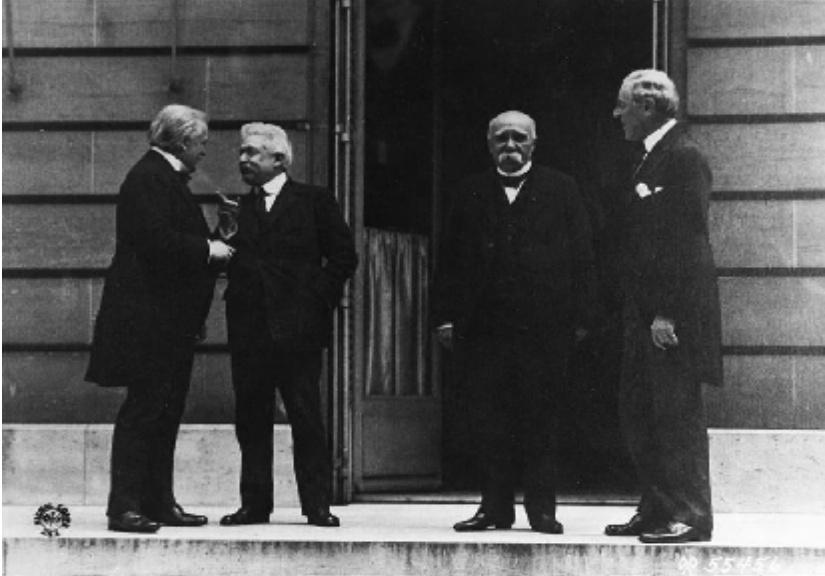


Negotiation Bases of Powers (*Versailles System*):

Key words: Paris Peace Conference, 14 points, Wilson, League of Nations, dissolution of Austria-Hungary,

Picture: from left to right: The "Big Four" *David Lloyd George*, Prime Minister of Great Britain, *Vittorio Emanuele Orlando*, Prime Minister of Italy, *Georges Clemenceau*, Prime Minister of France, *Woodrow Wilson*, President of the USA in Paris 1919.



The Paris Peace Conference

was the meeting of the Allied victors following the end of *World War I* to set the peace terms for **Germany and other defeated nations**, and to deal with the empires of the defeated powers following the Armistice of 1918. It took place in Paris in 1919 and 1920 and involved diplomats from more than 29 countries. They met, discussed and came up with a series of treaties that **reshaped the map of Europe and the world**, and imposed guilt and stiff financial penalties on Germany. At its center were the leaders of the

three "Great Powers": *President Woodrow Wilson* of the USA, and Prime Ministers *David Lloyd George* of Great Britain and *Georges Clemenceau* of France.



When and Who: The conference took place in Paris from **18 January 1919¹** to **21 January 1920**. Having been defeated, **Germany, Austria, and Hungary** were excluded from the negotiations. **Russia** was also excluded because it had negotiated a separate peace with Germany in 1918, in which Germany gained a large fraction of Russia's land and resources.

Until March 1919, the most important role for negotiating the extremely complex and difficult terms of the peace fell to the regular meetings of the "**Council of Ten**," which comprised the heads of government and foreign ministers of the five major victors (the **United States, France, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan**). As this unusual body proved too unwieldy and formal for effective decision-making, Japan and—for most of the remaining conference—the foreign ministers left the main meetings, so that only the "**Big Four**" remained.

After his territorial claims to Fiume (today Rijeka) were rejected, Italian Prime Minister, Vittorio Orlando left the negotiations (only to return to sign in June), and the final conditions were determined by the leaders of the "**Big Three**" nations: **British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, and American President Woodrow Wilson.**

¹ Symbolic date: On January 18, 1871 Wilhelm I was proclaimed the first German Emperor in the *Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles* (picture above) towards the end of the Franco-Prussian War.

Difficulties and different approaches of the Powers: At Versailles, it was **difficult to decide on a common position** because their aims conflicted with one another. The result has been called the "**unhappy compromise**".

Britain began to look on a restored Germany as an important trading partner and worried about the effect of reparations on the British economy. Lloyd George was also worried by **Woodrow Wilson's** proposal for "**self-determination**", because Britain wanted to keep her empire alive. **France** not only wanted to decimate Germany (**economically, politically, militarily**), but also to keep its big empire and colonies. Britain also asked for reparations, but lower than those France asked for. Britain was also afraid, that in case Germany is decimated, there would be imbalance of the powers in Europe.

French approach:

France wanted to weaken Germany, to prevent it starting another war. This could be done by taking away the areas of land that were rich in mineral resources. France also wanted to disband the German navy.

The French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau's chief goal was to **weaken Germany military, strategically and economically**. Having personally witnessed **two German attacks on French soil in the last forty years (1. Franco-Prussian War 1817-1871 – loss of Alsace and Lorraine and 2. WWI)**, he was adamant that Germany should not be permitted to attack France again. Clemenceau explained his right to have a greater say than President Wilson: "*America did not experience the first three years of war. In that time we lost three and half million men. Our experiences have created in this country a strong demand for compensation.*"

British approach:

Few people spoke up for Germany in 1919. Lloyd George tried hard to persuade his fellow Mps **against seeking revenge**, and to **make a fair settlement**, but the task was impossible². His words at the Versailles meeting were: "*It will be ... difficult for me ... to disperse the illusions of the public ... Four hundred Mps of the British Parliament have sworn to extract the last farthing from Germany that is owing to us. I will have to face up to them. But our duty is to act in the best interests of our countries ... I am convinced Germany will not sign the sort of thing people are suggesting ... Europe will remain mobilised (ready for war), our industries stopped, our treasuries bankrupt.*"

British delegates entered the conference with the more specific goals of:

- Balance of the Powers in Europe, therefore not so strict reparations on Germany
- Removing the threat of the German High Seas Fleet
- Settling territorial contentions
- Supporting the Wilsonian League of Nations
- Protecting the British Empire

Italian approach

Italy has assisted the war, and promises of territory had been made by the **Allies in 1915 (Treaty of London)**. The territory included Dalmatia, which Yugoslavia claimed. There was no doubt that Dalmatia had

² Sir Edward Geddes, MP, made clear the idea of many people being angry with the Germans and the idea that people wanted Germany to pay: "*Germany is going to pay. I personally have no doubt that we are going to get everything out of her that you can squeeze out of a lemon and a bit more. Not only all the gold Germany has got all her silver and jewels shall be handed over. All her pictures and libraries shall be sold to the allies and the proceeds used to pay the indemnity (the debt for the war). I would strip Germany as she stripped Belgium.*"

been promised to Italy, and the Allies were faced with dilemma: **should they honour the promise?** In the light of experience, it was felt that it might be best no to do so.

By the end of the war the allies had made contradictory agreements with other nations, especially in Central Europe and the Middle-East. In the meetings of the "Big Four", in which Orlando's powers of diplomacy were inhibited by his lack of English, the Great powers were only willing to offer Trentino to the Brenner, the Dalmatian port of Zara, the Island of Lagosta and a couple of small German colonies. All other territories were promised to other nations and the great powers were worried about Italy's imperial ambitions. As a result of this, **Orlando left the conference in a rage.**

American approach:

The **Fourteen Points** was a speech delivered by the **United States President Woodrow Wilson** to a joint session of Congress on **January 8, 1918**. The address was intended to assure the country that the Great War was being fought for a moral cause and for postwar peace in Europe.

The speech was delivered 10 months before the Armistice with Germany and became the basis for the terms of the German surrender, as negotiated at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Wilson's diplomacy and his Fourteen Points had essentially established the conditions for the armistices that had brought an end to World War I.

Wilson's attempts to gain acceptance of his Fourteen Points ultimately failed, after France and Britain refused to adopt some specific points and its core principles. The Treaty of Versailles (Treaty with Germany) had little to do with the Fourteen Points and so was never ratified by the U.S. Senate.

The United States hoped to establish a more liberal and diplomatic world, as stated in the **Fourteen Points**, where **democracy, sovereignty, liberty, free trade, open agreements and self-determination** would be respected. France and Britain, on the other hand, already controlled empires, held power over their subjects around the world, and still aspired to be dominant colonial powers.

Summary of 14 points:

1. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, 2. Freedom of the seas, 3. The removal of all economic barriers, and establishment of equality of trade, 4. Guarantees that national armaments will be reduced, 5. Adjustment of colonial claims, that in determining all such questions of sovereignty, the interests of the people concerned must have equal weight with the claims of the government whose title is to be determined, 6. Russian territory should be evacuated, and Russia welcomed into the society of free nations, 7. Belgium should be evacuated and restored, 8. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, 9. The frontiers of Italy should be readjusted along clearly recognizable lines of nationality, **10. The peoples of Austria-Hungary should have the freest opportunity to independent development**, 11. Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated and restored, Serbia should have free and secure access to the sea, and the relations of the several Balkan states to each other should be determined by friendly counsel, and political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be internationally guaranteed, 12. The Turkish portion of the Ottoman Empire should have a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are under Turkish rule should have an undoubted security of life and an opportunity of independent development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as passage to the ships and commerce of all nations, 13. An independent Polish state should be erected including the territories inhabited by Polish populations, which should have free access to the sea, **14. The League of Nations should be formed.** ... Wilson believed that his League could stop future wars: *"To promote international peace and achieve international peace and security; to accept the obligation not to resort wars. Members agree that when a dispute arises between them they shall submit the whole matter to arbitration. Should any member resort to war, it shall be deemed to have committed an act of war against all members of the League."*

During the Peace Conference: President Wilson considered that language was important. He was right up to a point, but did not allow for the fact that several languages might be spoken in one country, or that one language might be spoken in several countries. The best frontier may not be the one laid down by language -

a country needs good defences, industrial opportunities and transport lines. All these influence where a frontier should be run. For example, the Sudetenland contained three million Germans – should it be given back to Germany, or to Czechoslovakia, by Wilson’s rule? Czechoslovakia itself was worried. Germany was closed to the west, and might at some future seek outlets through the sought and east, in other words through Czechoslovakia. The Czech negotiator at Versailles said: „*The German mass, now 80 millions, could not push west; its way was blocked by the developed nations. It would seek outlets south and east. The Czech frontiers are especially important. They must be drawn through the Bohemian mountain chain.*“

Japanese approach:

The delegation focused on two demands: (a) the inclusion of their racial equality proposal³ and (b) territorial claims for the former German colonies; Shandong (including Jiaozhou Bay) and the Pacific islands north of the Equator i.e., the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, the Mariana Islands, and the Carolines. The Japanese delegation became unhappy after receiving only one-half of the rights of Germany, and walked out of the conference.

Fill out the table:

Country	Representative:	Different approaches of the powers. Aims to be achieved:
France	Georges	
.....	David Lloyd George	
USA	Woodrow	
.....	Vittorio Emanuele Orlando	
Japan	Makino Nobuaki	

³ Japan proposed a "racial equality clause" in the Covenant of the League of Nations on 13 February 1920 as an amendment to Article 21:

The equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agree to accord as soon as possible to all alien nationals of states, members of the League, equal and just treatment in every respect making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race or nationality.

In April 1919, the commission held a final session and the proposal received a majority vote, with British Australia opposing. **This strong opposition came from the British delegation because it contradicted Australia's White Australia policy. The Australians had lobbied successfully for Britain to block the proposal. The defeat helped turn Japan away from cooperation with West and toward nationalistic policies.**

