

"Cite the major provisions of the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and compare it to Wilson's original plan for 'peace without victory' following World War I. Assess the battle waged between Wilson and Congress over ratification of the Treaty of Versailles."

⇒ **Consequences of World War I: An Overview**

- Wilson's idealistic plan of "peace without victory" -- known as the **Fourteen Points** -- was not welcome at the peace conference by those wishing to punish Germany and gain post-war advantages. Wilson compromised on most points in order to guarantee the formation of the **League of Nations**.

⇒ **Highlights of Wilson's Fourteen Points**

- ***Self-Determination**-each nationality or ethnic group would have a say in how it was governed or ruled.
- ***Freedom of Seas**-nations would travel the seas unobstructed in peacetime and during war.
- ***Open Diplomacy**-secret treaties would no longer be allowed.
- ***Reduction of Armaments**-to prevent future "arms races".
- ***League of Nations**-"a general association of nations...for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike."

The Versailles Treaty

- To defend his Fourteen Points, **Wilson personally participated in the peace conference**.
- Other heads of state at Versailles made it clear that they wanted revenge against Germany and compensation in the form of reparations and territory. They did not share Wilson's idea of peace without victory. David Lloyd George (Britain), Georges Clemenceau (France), and Vittorio Orlando (Italy) met with Wilson almost daily as the **"Big Four"**.
- After months of argument, the president reluctantly agreed to compromise on most of his Fourteen Points. He insisted, however, that the other delegations accept his plan for a League of Nations. **The Treaty of Versailles** included the following terms:
 - ***War Guilt Clause and Reparations**-Germany was disarmed and stripped of its colonies in Asia and Africa. It was also forced to admit guilt for the war (the **"war guilt clause"**) and pay **war reparations** to Britain and France, which was eventually calculated at \$ 33 billion.
 - ***Self-Determination**-applying the principle of self-determination, territories once controlled by Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia were taken by the Allies. Independence was granted to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, and Poland, and the new nations of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were established.
 - ***League of Nations**-signers of the treaty would join an international peacekeeping organization, the League of Nations. Article X (10) of the covenant (charter) of the League called on each member nation to stand ready to protect the independence and territorial integrity of other nations and/or prevent future aggressions.
- German delegates were allowed to come to Versailles *after* the completion of the treaty document. They were told to sign "or else," probably meaning an economic boycott of Germany. They protested, but signed in June 1919

The Battle for Ratification

Returning to the US, **Wilson had to win approval of two-thirds of the Senate for all parts of the Treaty of Versailles, including the League of Nations covenant. Republican senators raised objections to the League**, arguing that US membership in such a body might **interfere with US sovereignty** and might also cause European nations to interfere in the Western Hemisphere (a **violation of the Monroe Doctrine**).

⇒ **The Senate and the Treaty**

Senators opposed to the Treaty of Versailles were divided into two groups:

- The **irreconcilable faction**, (about one dozen Republicans) who could not accept US membership in the League of Nations no matter how the covenant was worded.
- The **reservationist faction**, a larger group led by Foreign Relations Committee Chairman **Henry Cabot Lodge**, said they could accept the League if certain **reservations** were added to the covenant. Specifically they added the following modifications (called "**Lodge Reservations**") to the Treaty: 1) The US would not go to war to defend a League member without the approval of Congress (**preservation of Congress' power to declare war**); 2) Guarantees **safeguarding the Monroe Doctrine** would have to be made.

⇒ **Wilson and the Senate**

- Wilson had the option of either accepting Lodge's reservations or fighting for the treaty as it stood. He chose to fight.
- Believing his policy could prevail if he could personally rally public support, **Wilson** went on an arduous **speaking tour** to the West to make **speeches for the League of Nations**. On September 25, 1919, he **collapsed** after delivering a speech in Pueblo, Colorado. He returned to Washington and a few days later **suffered a massive stroke** from which he never fully recovered.

⇒ **Rejection of the Treaty**

- The Senate voted twice on the Treaty question in **November 1919**. **The treaty was defeated** both times, **with and without the reservations**.
- Wilson had directed Senate Democrats to oppose the treaty with the Lodge reservations. In **1920**, responding to public outcry to pass the Treaty, a number of Democrats joined the reservationist Republicans in voting for the treaty with reservations. Again, the ailing Wilson directed loyal supporters to reject any reservations, and they joined with the irreconcilables in **defeating the Treaty**.
- (Ironically, failing to sign the Treaty meant the US was technically still at war with Germany!! A congressional joint resolution in 1921 "officially" declared the war over!)

What Doomed the Treaty?

A number of reasons are cited as factors that led to the **failure of the Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles** and thereby become a member of the League of Nations.

- **Wilson's Health**-some historians believe that Wilson's ill health impaired his judgment, and that he would have worked out a compromise had he not been debilitated.
- **Lodge-Wilson Feud**-Henry Cabot Lodge and Woodrow Wilson despised each other. In fact, Lodge was originally for the concept of an international peacekeeping entity until Wilson began to champion one! Sometime personalities do affect history!!
- **Tradition of Isolation**-many Americans still believed in the "dead men" foreign policy of Washington, Jefferson, and Monroe. Also, many Americans were more concerned with the post-war conversion at home.
- **Disillusionment**-many Americans were disillusioned by the reality of the victors' "grab for spoils" after sincerely believing that the "war to end all wars" was being waged for idealistic reasons.
- **Partisanship**-angered by six years of Democratic control of the executive branch, Republicans looked at the Treaty fight as a way to wrest control of the presidency from the Democrats in the election of 1920. The Republicans had won a solid majority in Congress in the election of 1918 campaigning, in part, against further US involvement in European affairs.