

establish a dictatorship. In turn this, and the peace of Brest-Litovsk that took Russia out of the war, helped to cause a civil war that lasted until the end of 1920.

The Habsburg Empire

With the defeat of Austria-Hungary, the Habsburg Empire disintegrated and the monarchy collapsed. The last Emperor, Karl I, was forced to abdicate in November 1918 and a republic was declared. Austria and Hungary split into two separate states and the various other nationalities in the empire declared themselves independent.

Turkey

The collapse of the Sultanate finally came in 1922, and it was replaced by the rule of Mustapha Kemal, who established an authoritarian regime.

The collapse of these empires left a huge area of Central and Eastern Europe in turmoil. In addition, the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia encouraged growth of socialist politics in post-war Europe. Many of the ruling classes were afraid that revolution would spread across the continent, particularly given the weak economic state of all countries.

Impact of the war outside of Europe: the situation in 1919

America

In stark comparison to the economic situation in Europe, the USA emerged from the war as the world's leading economy. Throughout the war, American industry and trade had prospered as US food, raw materials and munitions were sent to Europe to help with the war effort. In addition, the USA had taken over European overseas markets during the war, and many American industries had become more successful than their European competitors. The USA had, for example, replaced Germany as the world's leading producer of fertilizers, dyes and chemical products. The war also led to US advances in technology – the USA was now world leader in areas such as mechanization and the development of plastics.

Wilson hoped that America would now play a larger role in international affairs and worked hard at the peace conference to create an alternative world order in which international problems would be solved through collective security (see next chapter). However, the majority of Americans had never wanted to be involved in World War I, and once it ended they were keen to return to concerns nearer to home: the Spanish flu epidemic, the fear of communism (exacerbated by a series of industrial strikes) and racial tension, which exploded into riots in 25 cities across the USA. There was also a concern that America might be dragged into other European disputes.

Japan and China

Japan also did well economically out of the war. As in the case of America, new markets and new demands for Japanese goods brought economic growth and prosperity, with exports nearly tripling during the war years. World War I also presented Japan with opportunities for territorial expansion; under the guise of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, it was able to seize German holdings in Shandong and German-held islands in the Pacific, as well as presenting the Chinese with a list of 21 demands that aimed for political and economic domination of China. At the end of the war, Japan hoped to be able to hold on to these gains.

China, which had finally entered the war on the Allied side in 1917, was also entitled to send delegates to the Versailles Conference. Their hopes were entirely opposed to those of the

Japanese: they wanted to resume political and economic control over Shandong and they wanted a release from the Japanese demands.

Problems facing the peacemakers in 1919

The Versailles peace conference was dominated by the political leaders of three of the five victorious powers: David Lloyd George (Prime Minister of the UK), Georges Clemenceau (Prime Minister of France) and Woodrow Wilson (President of the USA). Japan was only interested in what was decided about the Pacific, and played little part. Vittorio Orlando, Prime Minister of Italy, played only a minor role in discussions and in fact walked out of the conference when he failed to get the territorial gains that Italy had hoped for.

The first problem faced by the peacemakers at Versailles was the political and social instability in Europe, which necessitated that they act speedily to reach a peace settlement. One Allied observer noted that 'there was a veritable race between peace and anarchy'. Other political issues, however, combined to make a satisfactory treaty difficult to achieve:

- The different aims of the peacemakers
- The nature of the Armistice settlement and the mood of the German population
- The popular sentiment in the Allied countries.

The aims of the peacemakers

In a speech to Congress on 8 January 1918, Woodrow Wilson stated US war aims in his Fourteen Points, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Abolition of secret diplomacy
2. Free navigation at sea for all nations in war and peace
3. Free trade between countries
4. Disarmament by all countries
5. Colonies to have a say in their own future
6. German troops to leave Russia
7. Restoration of independence for Belgium
8. France to regain Alsace and Lorraine
9. Frontier between Austria and Italy to be adjusted along the lines of nationality
10. Self-determination for the peoples of Austria-Hungary
11. Serbia to have access to the sea
12. Self-determination for the people in the Turkish Empire and permanent opening of the Dardanelles
13. Poland to become an independent state with access to the sea
14. A League of Nations to be set up in order to preserve the peace.



▲ A photo of the 'Big 3': Georges Clemenceau (Prime Minister of France), David Lloyd George (Prime Minister of the UK) and Woodrow Wilson (President of the USA).

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Discussion questions

Look at Wilson's points. What would you consider to be his overall aims for the post-war world?

Which of these points would you consider as:

- ones that could be easily achieved?
- ones that would be difficult to achieve in Europe?

Are there issues not covered by Wilson's Fourteen Points which other countries might want to see addressed? Give reasons for your decisions.

As you can see from his points above, Wilson was an **idealist** whose aim was to build a better and more peaceful world. Although he believed that Germany should be punished,

The Covenant of the League of Nations

The first 26 articles of the Treaty of Versailles, and of the other treaties concluded with Germany's allies, formed the Covenant of the League of Nations. The League of Nations was an organization with the broad aim of keeping international peace and preventing a war happening again. Germany, however, along with Russia, was not allowed to join.

The racial equality clause

Japan had wanted a racial equality clause to be included within the Covenant of the League of Nations, to gain recognition that all races should be treated equally. This was because the Japanese faced discrimination in the West, particularly in America, where many Japanese had emigrated. The clause was opposed by Australia because Prime Minister William Hughes feared it might prevent him being able to limit Japanese immigration into Australia. Japan suggested a compromise in which the word 'racial' was dropped. This modification still did not meet with unanimous support. Wilson insisted that such a point of principle had to have unanimous, rather than majority, support. Thus no such commitment was included in the League's founding document, though Japan still joined the League and was a permanent member of the Council.

he hoped that these points would allow for a new political and international world order. Self-determination – giving the different ethnic groups within the old empires of Europe the chance to set up their own countries – would, in Wilson's mind, end the frustrations that had contributed to the outbreak of World War I. In addition, open diplomacy, world disarmament, economic integration and a League of Nations would stop secret alliances, and force countries to work together to prevent a tragedy such as World War I happening again.

Wilson also believed that the USA should take the lead in this new world order. In 1916, he had proclaimed that the object of the war should be 'to make the world safe for democracy'; unlike the ostensibly more selfish aims of the Allied powers, the USA would take the lead in promoting the ideas of democracy and self-determination.

Wilson's idealist views were not shared by Clemenceau and Lloyd George. Clemenceau (who commented that even God had only needed Ten Points) wanted a harsh settlement to ensure that Germany could not threaten France again. The way to achieve this would be to combine heavy economic and territorial **sanctions** with disarmament policies. Reparations for France were necessary not only to pay for the terrible losses inflicted upon their country, but also to keep Germany weak. Clemenceau was also keen to retain wartime links with Britain and America, and was ready to make concessions in order to achieve this aim.

Lloyd George was in favour of a less severe settlement. He wanted Germany to lose its navy and colonies so that it could not threaten the British Empire. Yet he also wanted Germany to be able to recover quickly, so that it could start trading again with Britain and so that it could be a bulwark against the spread of communism from the new Bolshevik Russia. He was also aware that 'injustice and arrogance displayed in the hour of triumph will never be forgotten or forgiven.' He was under pressure from public opinion at home, however, to make Germany accountable for the death and suffering that had taken place (see below).

The aims of Japan and Italy were to maximize their wartime gains. The Italian Prime Minister, Vittorio Orlando, wanted the Allies to keep their promises in the Treaty of London (see p.47) and also demanded the port of Fiume in the Adriatic. Japan, which had already seized the German islands in the Pacific, wanted recognition of these gains. Japan also wanted the inclusion of a racial equality clause in the Covenant of the League of Nations in the hope that this would protect Japanese immigrants in America.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Discussion question

How might the demands of France, Britain, Italy and Japan go against the spirit of Wilson's Fourteen Points?

The Armistice settlement and the mood of the German population

When the German government sued for an end to fighting, they did so in the belief that the Armistice would be based on Wilson's Fourteen Points. It offered an alternative to having to face the 'total' defeat that the nature of this war had indicated would happen. In reality, the Armistice terms were very tough, and were designed not only to remove Germany's ability to continue fighting, but also to serve as the basis for a more permanent weakening of Germany. The terms of the Armistice ordered Germany to evacuate all occupied territory including Alsace-Lorraine, and to withdraw beyond a 10km-wide neutral zone to the east

of the Rhine. Allied troops would occupy the west bank of the Rhine. The Germans also lost all their submarines and much of their surface fleet and air force.

When the German Army returned home after the new government had signed the Armistice, they were still greeted as heroes. For the German population, however, the defeat came as a shock. The German Army had occupied parts of France and Belgium and had defeated Russia. The German people had been told that their army was on the verge of victory; the defeat did not seem to have been caused by any overwhelming Allied military victory, and certainly not by an invasion of Germany.

Several days after the Armistice had been signed, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, a respected German commander, made the following comment: 'In spite of the superiority of the enemy in men and materials, we could have brought the struggle to a favourable conclusion if there had been proper cooperation between the politicians and the army. The German Army was stabbed in the back.'

Although the German Army was in disarray by November 1918, the idea that Germany had been 'stabbed in the back' soon took hold. The months before the Armistice was signed had seen Germany facing mutinies and strikes and attempts by some groups to set up a socialist government. Therefore the blame for defeat was put on 'internal' enemies – Jews, socialists, communists. Hitler would later refer to those who had agreed to an armistice in November 1918 as the 'November Criminals'.

Thus, at the start of the Versailles Conference, the German population believed that they had not been truly defeated; even their leaders still believed that Germany would play a part in the peace conference and that the final treaty, based on Wilson's principles, would not be too harsh. There was, therefore, a huge difference between the expectations of the Germans and the expectations of the Allies, who believed that Germany would accept the terms of the treaty as the defeated nation.

The popular mood in Britain, France, Italy and the USA

Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Orlando also faced pressure from the popular mood in their own countries, where the feeling was that revenge must be exacted from the Germans for the trauma of the last four years. Encouraged by the popular press, the populations of Britain and France in particular looked to the peacemakers at Versailles to 'hang the Kaiser' and 'squeeze the German lemon until the pips squeak'. The French having borne the brunt of the fighting, would be satisfied with nothing less than a punitive peace.

The press closely reported all the details of the Versailles Conference and helped put pressure on the delegates to create a settlement that would satisfy popular demands. Clemenceau and Lloyd George also knew that their political success depended on keeping their electorates happy, which meant obtaining a harsh settlement. Similarly, Orlando was under pressure from opinion at home to get a settlement that gave Italy the territorial and economic gains it desired and which would at last make Italy into a great power.

In America, however, the electorate had lost interest in the Versailles settlement and Wilson's aims for Europe. Mid-term elections held on 5 November 1918 saw Americans reject Wilson's appeal to voters to support him in his work in Europe. There were sweeping gains for his Republican opponents, who had been very critical of his foreign policy and his Fourteen Points. When he sailed for Europe in December 1918, he left behind a Republican dominated **House of Representatives** and **Senate** and a hostile Foreign Relations Committee. He thus could not be sure that any agreements reached at Versailles would be honoured by his own government.

To access worksheet 4.1 on the Paris Peace Conference, please visit www.pearsonbacconline.com and follow the on-screen instructions.