

The Fourteen Points: Changes in American Diplomatic Policy

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Abstract

After the WW1, the world order changed sharply, sparing room for America to intervene in. With the Fourteen Points by President Wilson, the US managed to control this new international order. The American diplomatic policy also converted from conservative to aggressive. The former Monroe Doctrines as well as the conflicts in Europe gave this country enough time and space to accumulate its power. After the meetings, America went on its expansion. With the excuses of freedom, fighting against an enemy of the liberal world and the American superiority and exceptionalism, the normal methods and styles are clear to us now.

Keywords

Paris Peace Conference, American Diplomacy, the Fourteen Points, Woodrow Wilson.

1. Introduction

After the World War I, the former international principles were corrupted. At such a time of starting from scratch, an unexpected guest came with a brand-new resolution: the Americans. It really surprised the Europeans: what would the Americans who were restricted within the New Continent do? Apparently, this was a conversion for the American policy makers and even for the world: a grand power was going to lay hands in the international relationships.

2. Earlier Policies

To understand the convert, we must first get to know how the occasions were like.

2.1. Earliest Times

America kept away from international affairs in the very beginning. After independence, the new country was faced with internal rebellions, trading problems with the former suzerain and a large land to explore, leaving no spare power for intervening in international affairs. Then, the fathers of America had ideas about it, one classical was led by Hamilton, arguing that America should keep neutral and dependent on the UK for the sake of self-protection. At the same time, Hamilton also believed that the US should strengthen itself to get prepared for its future enlargement. As is commented, such policies are “considerably realistic[1]”. Under such principles, the US kept neutral during the revolutions of Latin America, weakening both the suzerains and the local powers.

2.2. Monroe Doctrines

Then, the USA started to spread its influence. It has been around half a century before America gathered its power and decided to take action. After South America Revolution, the local powers were badly hurt, sliding for the protection of the US. In year 1823, the current President James Monroe expressed his ideas that the European countries should no more colonize the American countries or interfere in the revolution. Also, America promised not to do the same. Rejecting all colonies, the Americans showed their independence and neutralism. Just as Sir. Keasbey commented: “On the one hand, our Monroe Doctrine impels us to keep the hand of Europe-or of late, more specifically, the paw of the British lion-off the entire American Continent; while at

the same time, our inherited dread of entangling foreign alliances often makes us hesitate to act when the crucial moment has arrived.”[2]

America accelerated its expansion. After the Doctrine was put out, because of conflicts on the European continent, the colonists had no energy to care about the ongoing revolutions. At this chance, America started to trade with and support the new countries. With the final completion of the revolutions and the treaties with European powers, with the desire for a market and raw material origin, the sphere of influence was set.[3] At the same time, with wars or purchases, America enlarged greatly its territorial area. While the Continent was busy with revolutions or labor movements, the faraway country started to accumulate its strength and wait for the day to lead the whole globe.

3. The Fourteen Points

3.1. Background

The change of powers accelerated the progress of America standing on stage. There must be clear backgrounds for such a sharp change in America’s attitudes. Of course there was: the World War 1. After the catastrophe, the former strong powers exhausted energy of each other, breaking the international orders. On the contract, America has reached most of its lands and achieved capitalistic prosperity.

3.2. The Fourteen Points and the Implement

The Fourteen Points aimed at setting new international principles. The core concept was public, make treaties, commerce and military forces known to each other. And to overthrow the old orders, points like supporting the independent national countries and the concept of national self-determination were put out. And most importantly, to establish a supranational organization to supervise and even to make compulsive instructions. In the field of international management, it opened many eyes, “moving beyond traditional areas of concern such as international relations and the ‘problem of “security”’, to ‘humanitarian and educational initiatives’, the role of ‘experts, officials, lobbies and publics’, ‘the construction of rights and identities’ and the ‘redrawing of empires, nations and regions’.”[4]

Though trying to change, some principles still remained the same for the US. For instance, neutralism played a much important role in the new orders. America listed the withdrawal of armies from foreign lands and national self-determination. It seemed fair, but for a country long staying on the fringe, an order without influence from the former powers is much better to control. Also, terms like disarmament and freedom of sailing made America a world discipline keeper, or to say, the world police.

4. Influence on Latter Policies

From then on, America has made its diplomatic policies clear. Firstly, it emphasized on freedom. The freedom of sailing on public seas and the freedom of nations were two of the initials. As an excuse even for today, America was able to intervene in many countries standing on the moral high ground. Secondly, the imperialism spread style of America was confirmed. Though joining late, America was able to invade the Philippines and the Hawaii Islands, and even developing in East Asia with the open-door policy. Thirdly, America didn’t hide its intention to reject its possible enemies, the Communism. Strategies taken against Russia clearly showed such intentions. The foundations for the Cold War were set.

Nowadays, the influence of the Fourteen Points can still be seen from American diplomacy. The Americans guarded their so-called freedom and wished to keep the orders of the world. The Americans always make up an imaginary enemy and tried to find the clues of such enemy in the world range, like the Soviet Union, like China.[5] As the Americans see themselves special, a

new concept, American exceptionalism, appeared, which “was deeply rooted in national identity and designed to appeal to and unify the American public, would seem to be a natural fit within a domestic setting”[6]. Though unpleasant to some extent, that’s how America deals with its diplomacy.

5. Conclusion

We can clearly see that Woodrow Wilson and his Fourteen Points were a turning point for American diplomacy. Earlier, the US took neutral methods and tried not to get involved. After, America gathered strength to start its conquering, though taking more time than expected. It was a process never reversed, for the routine has never changed: from the beginning, the fathers of the States knew that the only way out for this young country was expansion and invasion. In short, we can say: the Fourteen Points started the expansive diplomacy of America.

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