traditional peace process with his want to create an environment of permanent peace rather than create a winner’s treaty.

- There were some background factors which influenced the participants. These were events or ideas that the countries could not control but which they had to be aware of in their decision making.

- Bolshevism/Communism: Communism was seen as potential threat to liberalism. It was believed that it would spread into Europe (& the US). The countries would have to try to stop its spreading and try to address some of the grievances that might attract populations to the communist ideology.

- Idealism v. Realpolitik: The war itself was different from others, not only in size and devastation, but also in its introduction to grandiose ideas. Wilson brought an idealism that was an entirely new concept at peace conferences. Peace conferences had always dealt with concrete issues. Delegates were used to changing boundaries, setting indemnities, and adjusting balance of power through realpolitik. Wilson brought an assumption that war could be prevented entirely if people would just make an effort. This idealistic tone that many European citizens had embraced raised expectations that would be hard to satisfy.

- Liberalism/Democracy: The states making the decisions were all liberal nations (something not seen at peace conferences is before). That meant that the representatives at the conference would be influenced by popular opinion in their countries. During the war, the leaders of these countries had promised great things to their people to maintain support for the war. The yellow journalism in these countries had run rampant in their portrayal of the enemy. Propaganda, speeches, media, etc…were created to excite, enrage, and encourage people during the war. When it was time for peace the emotions of the people would have to be satisfied in some way (can we say, “revenge”?). This played a role in the demands/positions that leaders took during the conference.

- Geopolitical (the influence of demographics and/or geography on politics): Empires had collapsed during the war. In the Middle East there was a complete power vacuum because the Ottoman Empire had collapsed. The boundaries would have to change, new countries would need to be created, country sizes would change dramatically…all of these will have a profound effect on the geopolitical situation in Europe.

- Wilson was not the only one who was idealistic. Many of the representatives wanted to insure that this would not happen again. Idealism and revenge were somehow to be combines into the same documents. Ultimately, the treaties were an awkward compromise between these conflicting ideas.

IV. US Aims: Fourteen Points

- Wilson announced his war aims in front of a joint session of Congress in January of 1918.