

abroad, Japan finally withdrew, having spent a huge amount of money and suffered huge casualties.*

GREAT BRITAIN

In 1918 small expeditions composed of British, French and American troops seized Murmansk and occupied Archangel, in order to aid the White Russian forces against the Bolsheviks. Sporadic operations were conducted for over a year until the final evacuation of allied troops in Sept. 1919.†

* *Japan in Modern History*. Tokyo: International Society for Educational Information, 1994, 280-81.

† Cook, Chris, and John Stevenson. *The Longman Handbook of Modern British History: 1714-2001*. London: Longman, 2001, 279.

The Treaty of Versailles

The victorious nations met in the Palace of Versailles, just outside of Paris, to draw the war to a close and to lay the groundwork for a society or system capable of preventing another similar war. Unfortunately for the victor and the vanquished, this treaty would not accomplish its loftiest goal, a stable peace. The Treaty of Versailles is a key political moment in many history textbooks, not only for its own significance, but also as a catalyst for the events that would follow. Some countries are quick to assign blame to various leaders for unforgiving positions, or to isolationist legislators; others blame the idealists for not being firm enough with the defeated countries.

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GERMANY

Instead of focusing on the politics of the treaty and the central characters, Germany focuses on the consequences for its already decimated infrastructure, and the reaction to it from the German populace are virtually unique in German textbooks pointing out the "disregard for Wilsonian principles" that caused public indignation in Germany.

Effects of the Treaty of Versailles on Germany

PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

While in Germany the national assembly began work on a constitution of a parliamentary-democratic state order, the peace conference of the victorious powers met in Paris to create an international post-war order.

Unlike earlier peace conferences such as the Congress of Vienna 1814/15, the conquered states were excluded from the negotiations in Paris and could only state a position on the treaty drafts in writing. The plenary meeting of 32 represented states at the conference had little importance. The decisions fell to the **Upper Council of the great powers**, consisting of the government heads and foreign ministers from the USA, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Japan left soon after the beginning of the conference and Italy participated only intermittently out of protest against the regulations that it judged as insufficient. Therefore the determinations of the post-war order were shaped by the interests of the three main powers: USA, Great Britain, and France.

INTEREST POSITIONS OF THE MAIN VICTORIOUS POWERS

Although Wilson's "14 points" had led to a cease-fire, the American perspective of a global peace order could not avail itself in Paris or, if at all, only partially. Under **President Clemenceau**, France pursued a policy that aimed at the greatest possible security against Germany, which involved ceding territory, economic sanctions, and a weakening of the military. The British **Prime Minister Lloyd George** supported the French security policy, but tended not to favor French continental hegemony. It was in agreement with the USA in wishing to shield the continent against the Russian Revolution. For this Germany was indispensable as a central power bulwark. Therefore, Lloyd George warned against a peace unacceptable to Germany. In the British perspective, the question of security was in relation to Russia first and Germany second. In the end, the French interest in a significant weakening of Germany took precedence over German integration in a new European order.

MAIN POINTS OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

The territorial determinations of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28th, 1919 were partially tied to plebiscites in the affected areas, which could only be carried out after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Including in the territorial balance sheet the decisions of the Allies according to the plebiscites, Germany lost 13 percent of its state territory. In addition to Alsace-Lorraine, which had to be returned to France, the cession of territory to Poland composed the main portion. The loss of industrial areas and raw material stocks meant a considerable impairment of economic strength: 15 percent of the arable land, 17 percent of the potato and wheat harvest, 75 percent of the iron ore, 68 percent of the zinc deposits, 26 percent of the hard coal output, and the potash monopoly were lost.

In **Article 231**, the so-called war guilt article, Germany was made responsible as the instigator for all war losses and damages of the Allies. Article 231 therefore formed the basis for the economic compensation payments (**Reparations**), whose final extent—in addition to sums immediately payable—was to be determined by a reparations commission.

Germany had to cede its heavy armaments, air force, submarines and battle cruisers, and 90 percent of its merchant fleet as well. The Army was limited to a voluntary force of 100,000 men and the western side of the Rhine in Germany was demilitarized and occupied.

German Criticism of the Treaty of Versailles

The creation of a lasting order that would have established internal and external stability for Germany was not achieved in the Treaty of Versailles. The circumstances of the treaty negotiations, from which Germany was excluded, and the signing under pressure of a threat of the continuation of war led to **unanimous rejection of the Treaty** as a "dictated peace" or—in the language of the right—as a "disgrace dictate" of Versailles.

The content of the treaty itself provoked a discussion that would not end. It was not actually compensation payments and territorial losses that excited the public; Germany had already committed itself to that at the cease-fire. Especially scandalous was the **disregard of the right of self determination** of the Germans in Memelland, in upper Silesia, in the Sudetenland, and in German-Austria despite the fact that all new national

states created by the Paris treaty were supposedly formed in the name of the right of self determination of peoples.

Question of War Guilt

"Which hand would not have to wither, which would put itself and us in such chains?" This formulation in the Speech of Imperial Chancellor Scheidemann in the national assembly on May 12th, 1919 reflected the mood in the Empire at the announcement of the Treaty of Versailles draft. There was a coalition among practically all parties against the Treaty of Versailles, though the commitment to actively work for revision of the Treaty was variable in the party ranks. Critical voices in the SPD [Social Democratic Party of Germany] could not gain general acceptance. Even the Communists, for whom capitalism and imperialism respectively bore the responsibility for the World War, spoke of a "rapacious peace treaty" when it came to reparations. The enmity against "Versailles" became the most effective means of negative integration of the Weimar Republic.

Reparations

For the material damage payments the Treaty of Versailles had only created a framework, which was to be filled in by later agreements. At the determination of the reparations, inter-Allied interest conflicts came to the fore again, but without putting the reparations in general in question. A thorough consideration of the economic consequences, as it was critically discussed by the American academic Keynes, did not materialize.

To France the reparations appeared as an effective instrument to prevent a long-term reinvigoration of Germany. In addition the reparations payments were a welcome source for **repayment of the war loans to the USA** by the Allies. For Germany's economic problems, however, each enactment of higher mandatory payments intensified the domestic crisis. As the amount of reparations was made dependent on the productivity of the German economy only with the Dawes-Plan 1924, the economic and social problems of the Weimar period could easily be blamed solely on the reparations obligations.*

* Jager, Dr. Wolfgang, et al. *Kursbuch Geschichte*. Berlin: Cornelsen, 2000, 380-82.

JAPAN

Usually a forgotten member of the Allies in World War I, Japan did gain some of the German-held territories in the Pacific as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. What seemed in 1919 to be a relatively minor decision would have a significant impact on how World War II would be fought in the 1940s.

Troops were still being dispatched to the war in Siberia when, in 1919, the victorious powers held a peace conference with Germany in Paris. U.S. President Wilson advocated for the sake of world peace that there should be no annexation, no compensation claims, and that the right to national self-determination should be given to all peoples. But the victorious powers, demanding that their own interests be honored, refused to concede. In the resulting **Treaty of Versailles**, Germany lost all of its colonies and part of its own national territory and was ordered to pay heavy indemnities.

The world after the war—At the peace conference, independence was recognized for the Eastern European peoples that had been under the control of Russia, Austria, and Turkey. This was also for the purpose of preventing the spread of socialism from Russia to other parts of Europe.

However, the Arab people who had been under Turkey's control and the colonies of Germany in Asia and Africa were either placed under the mandatory rule of the victorious nations or made colonies and were not given their independence. Japan was given the rights Germany had held in Shandong Province in China, and the League of Nations appointed Japan to rule Germany's former South Sea Islands territory.*

GREAT BRITAIN

This British perspective on Versailles lays out the direct, causal relationship between the treaty and the resulting instability in Europe.

* *Japan in Modern History, Junior High School Textbooks*. Tokyo: International Society for Educational Information, 1994, 281.

A Dictated Peace

The peace conferences which ended the War were held in and around Paris in 1919–20. A separate peace treaty was drawn up for each of the five Central powers. The peace settlement with Germany, which followed the Armistice, was signed six months later, on 28 June 1919, at Versailles. It was drawn up by the great powers, chiefly Britain, France, Italy, and the United States. But many other countries were also represented at Versailles, notably Japan, China, and the Commonwealth countries.

Germany was not consulted, so it was not a negotiated treaty. It was forced on the Germans, as were the other treaties on Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. This imposition of the Treaty by threat of force, infuriated many Germans, such as Adolf Hitler. It lit a fuse which later led to the crises which exploded in the years immediately before the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. A final straw was the Allied insistence that the Germans acknowledge that they alone were guilty of starting the War. They did not even let Germany keep the gains she took from Russia at Brest Litovsk. On the other hand, the Allies did not invite Russia, either, to take part in the peace talks.

A Revengeful Peace

For much of the time, the conference delegates argued among themselves. Much of the fighting during the War had been on the Western Front in northern France. By contrast British and American soldiers fought on foreign soil, as did the Italians for most of the War. Many French towns and villages had been reduced to rubble during four years of heavy fighting. Fields and woods were pitted with craters and shell-holes. Hundreds of thousands of French people were homeless. One and a half million French soldiers had been killed in action. Clemenceau spoke for the French people as a whole when he demanded peace terms which would use German money to help restore and rebuild France. The French wanted revenge. They wanted to punish Germany and weaken the country so much, that the German people would never again be strong enough to wage war against France. They even argued strongly that the River Rhine should be made the new frontier between the two countries. This would have given France a large portion of Germany.

A Just and Lasting Peace

The Americans were more concerned about getting a just and lasting peace. President Wilson did not want the European powers enlarging their own frontiers and empires at the expense of the Central powers. On the other hand, he had no intention of letting the Germans escape without paying some form of penalty. Lloyd George also sought a satisfactory peace settlement which would hold. He wanted a peace treaty that would exact fair compensation from the Central powers without reducing them to poverty and anarchy. The British had no desire to see Germany, or the countries of the former Austro-Hungarian empire, succumb to a new Bolshevik Revolution. By then danger signals were already being sounded in different parts of Europe. They threatened the fragile peace. There had been left-wing uprisings in several countries following the earlier Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in November 1917. The Spartacist uprising had taken place in Berlin in January 1919. Communists led by Bela Kun had already taken over in Hungary in March 1919.

In the end the peace settlement was something of a compromise. It was neither as tough as that demanded by the French, nor as fair as that for which the British and Americans had argued. Only one Allied delegate, from China, refused to sign. Some delegates, such as Orlando from Italy, walked out of the Conference in disgust. Others, like Japan, expressed dissatisfaction with the terms of the agreement. To Wilson's disappointment, the US Senate later refused to ratify the Treaty because it would have meant joining the League of Nations.*

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FRANCE

In only a few paragraphs this French text sets the stage for the conflicts in Europe and the Middle East that would dominate the 20th century.

* Sauvain, Philip. *The Modern World: 1914–1980*. Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes, 1989, 37–38.

A Difficult Peace

THE TREATIES OPEN A PERIOD OF INCERTITUDE

1. Victors, all-powerful but divided

The Peace Conference brought together only the victors. It reunited 32 countries in Paris beginning on January 18, 1919. The principle negotiations, however, were conducted by the representatives of the five main powers (United States, France, Great Britain, Japan, Italy), and later amongst the "Council of Four" between Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Orlando.

The victors' interests diverge. Sticking to his message from January 8, 1918, Wilson wanted to impose a peace founded on rights and justice: respect among nations, free trade and navigation, disarmament, and creation of a League of Nations employing a transparent diplomacy. The Europeans were more concerned about their particular interests. In order to guarantee the security of France, Clemenceau wanted to take from Germany the Rhineland. In order to maintain balance in Europe and to contain the Bolshevik threat, Lloyd George preferred not to weaken Germany. Italy, Romania and Greece wanted to increase their territories according to the promises made to them upon their entry into war.

2. Deep rumblings

The Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919 weakened Germany. Held responsible for the war, Germany suffered harsh punishment territorially, militarily and economically. It lost its colonies and 15% of its territory, most notably Alsace-Lorraine (given back to France) and Posnania (handed over to Poland). Eastern Prussia was thereafter cut off from the rest of Germany by the Dantzig corridor. Its military might was destroyed: mandatory armed service was abolished and the army reduced to 100,000 men. The left bank of the Rhine was to be occupied by the Allies for 15 years and then demilitarized. Germany lost its foreign assets, foreign rights, part of its merchant marine and the coal mines of the Sarre, conceded to France. Finally, it was forced to pay war reparations for the damages suffered by the Allies.

The Map of Europe and the Middle East was profoundly modified

by the treaties of Saint-Germain, Neuilly and Trianon (1919–1920). The dismemberment of Austro-Hungary and the territorial redistribution gave birth to several new States: Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Kingdom of Serbia, Croats and Slovaks (future Yugoslavia). Poland was reconstituted and obtained access to the sea. The Treaty of Sèvres stripped the Ottoman Empire of her Arab territories, declared Armenia independent and gave autonomy to Kurdistan. The new Turkey was reduced to Constantinople and upper Anatolia.

The League of Nations, created in 1920 had to oversee the fragile peace: resolving problems by mediation, working for disarmament, managing the international territories, organizing plebiscites in order to determine the outcome of disputed regions, and overseeing the mandates of the former German and Ottoman colonies whose administration had fallen to the victors.

3. Discontent and delayed problems

The treaties carried the germ of deep dissatisfaction and left several questions unanswered. Imposed on the defeated, they were rapidly rejected: the Germans talked of a "Diktat". In the victors' camp, Italy protested its "mutilated victory" which was not worth the territories gained. The United States, returning to their traditional isolationism, did not ratify the treaties and chose not to enter into the League of Nations. Their absence, along with that of the defeated and Russia, transformed the organization into a group of European victors without any real means.

The right of a people to decide for themselves was only partially recognized, even though plebiscites were organized in the disputed territories. Significant minorities were swallowed up within certain States. Czechoslovakia, for example, included six million Czechs, three million Germans, three million Slovaks and groups of Ruthenians, Magyars and Polish. Fearing the reconstitution of a powerful Germany, the victors forbade the eventual reunion of Austria with Germany (*Anschluss*). In the Middle East, the British failed to keep their promises made during the war to create an Arab kingdom and to establish a Jewish haven in Palestine.*

* Baylac, M.-H., et al. *Histoire—I^{re}*. Paris: Bordas, 1997, 220.



RUSSIA

This excerpt comes from a Russian text about world history. Russia had pulled out of WWI intending to take care of its own business, namely the Bolshevik Revolution. The outcome of the Treaty of Versailles was affected in no small way by the events transpiring in Russia at the time.

The conference of World War I victors opened in Paris on January 18, 1919. The choice of date had historical significance: on that very day in 1871, the existence of the German Empire was declared in the Palace at Versailles. Opening the Peace Conference, French President A. Poincaré said: "Born in illegitimacy, Germany ended its existence in dishonor."

Representatives from twenty-seven nations that had declared war against Germany arrived in the capital of France for the negotiations. Among the countries not invited were Germany and her allies, as well as Soviet Russia. The "Russian question" worried the leaders of the conference primarily as part of their plans to continue military intervention in Russia and to divide its territory. An uprising of French sailors on military ships in Odessa, however, cooled off the warlike spirits of European leaders.

The peace conference was led by the Big Three: French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, British Premier David Lloyd George, and Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States. Among them, the most vocal was Clemenceau, who became known as the Tiger for his temperamental attacks against his opponents.

Decisions arose out of heated discussions, as the participants' goals were varied and often opposite to one another. The French delegation called for the greatest weakening of its traditional enemy—Germany, which would have allowed France to dominate continental Europe. British Premier Lloyd George, on the other hand, wanted to preserve a strong Germany, hoping to use it to balance a potential French hegemony on the continent, as well as the "Bolshevik threat." Wilson held a more moderate position towards Germany, as he wanted to avoid British and French dominance in post-war Europe. A lot was decided at the conference behind closed doors.

At Woodrow Wilson's insistence, a decision was made at the Paris Peace Conference to create the League of Nations—an international or-

ganization, whose goals included the preservation of international peace. Wilson also insisted on the inclusion of the League's by-laws in the preamble to the peace treaty. The League's highest body was the Assembly, where each member nation was represented. The League Council was a smaller body, which was endowed with great powers. The five Superpowers became the Council's permanent members: USA, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. By-laws of the League of Nations recommended political and economic sanctions against aggressor nations as a measure of preserving international security. In addition, the by-laws established a new system of international rule—the mandate system—which gave the League the power to give a nation a "mandate" over a certain colony, allowing it to rule that colony and prepare it for independence. In reality, this cleverly conceived formula only served as a cover for the redistribution of colonies. Nonetheless, the creation of the League of Nations gave birth to a period of pacifism following the conclusion of World War I.

The Versailles Peace Treaty turned out to be a far cry from the "fair and democratic peace", promised by the leaders of the conference. According to the Treaty, named after the Great Palace at Versailles where the document was signed, Germany was named responsible for initiating the war and was thus required to be punished. Germany was deprived of all its colonies, was forced to cede some of its territory to neighboring nations, and to pay enormous reparations for the damages done against the victorious countries.

[the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles]

The question of war reparations was postponed until further agreements, but a total sum of 132 billion gold marks was determined. In addition, a part of Germany on the left bank of the Rhine was to be occupied by an international army for 15 years, with Germany footing the bill for its maintenance.

The Versailles Peace Treaty was very harsh on the German people and deeply wounded the country's national pride. In the subsequent decades, these feelings among the Germans fed nationalistic ideas and the promises for revenge, which were used successfully in the 1930s by the Nazis in their rise to power.*

* *The World in the XXth Century*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1999, 67–71.

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ITALY

This collection of brief selections represents an Italian account of the treaty.

This text describes the views of three of the four deciding powers:

... while France's right wing, with President Poincaré and Marshal Foch, pushed for a total annihilation [of any German power], England's prime minister Lloyd George, fearing an excessive growth of French power, was against the full attainment of this objective. Clemenceau's wish to maintain England and the United States' support of France moved the Treaty to a resolution, a compromise between the two inclinations.*

Italy left the Treaty discussions without having gained the promises made to it prior to its engagement in war, for that was, as this text notes, what the chief powers were seeking.

Each one of the winning powers, who during the war had born immeasurable sacrifices and run severe risks, had no intention of turning down the profits of their victory, in terms of a conquest of territory, economic benefits, and political positions.†

Wilson's demand that Germany return the territories it had invaded...

... was understood as the Allies' right to obtain reparations for the damages caused to their people by the German troops, and the colonial question was resolved with the legal pretense of 'mandates.'‡

The text makes it clear that these "mandates" did not in any way benefit postwar Italy:

The German colonies were divided, under the form of 'mandates' (in other words as protectorates that in practice were the same as colonies),

* Villari, Rosario. *Storia Contemporanea*. Bari: Laterza, 1990, 412.

† Villari, Rosario. *Storia Contemporanea*. Bari: Laterza, 1990, 413.

‡ Villari, Rosario. *Storia Contemporanea*. Bari: Laterza, 1990, 413.

among England, France, Belgium, Japan, and Australia. Italy, who had been vaguely promised a part of the colonial booty, was excluded from the distribution.*

Another reason for Italy's dissatisfaction with the outcome of Versailles was the Treaty's reassessment of European borders. The divisions of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania are described by the text as acceptable. Ample space, however, is devoted to the problems that arose from the division of bordering Yugoslavia, again citing disillusionment with the outcome of the London Pact:

The creation of the new Yugoslav state, which Italian diplomacy had not foreseen when it signed the London Pact, caused objections and complications when it came time to work it out with Italy.†

Italy promptly invaded Fiume in protest.

... it was unavoidable that such a vast political and territorial reordering would provoke protests and negative reactions that were felt not only short-term but also, more gravely, more long-term. Right away there were attempts to modify the treaties' decisions by putting force up against what had already been decided.‡

* Villari, Rosario. *Storia Contemporanea*. Bari: Laterza, 1990, 414.

† Villari, Rosario. *Storia Contemporanea*. Bari: Laterza, 1990, 415.

‡ Villari, Rosario. *Storia Contemporanea*. Bari: Laterza, 1990, 416.