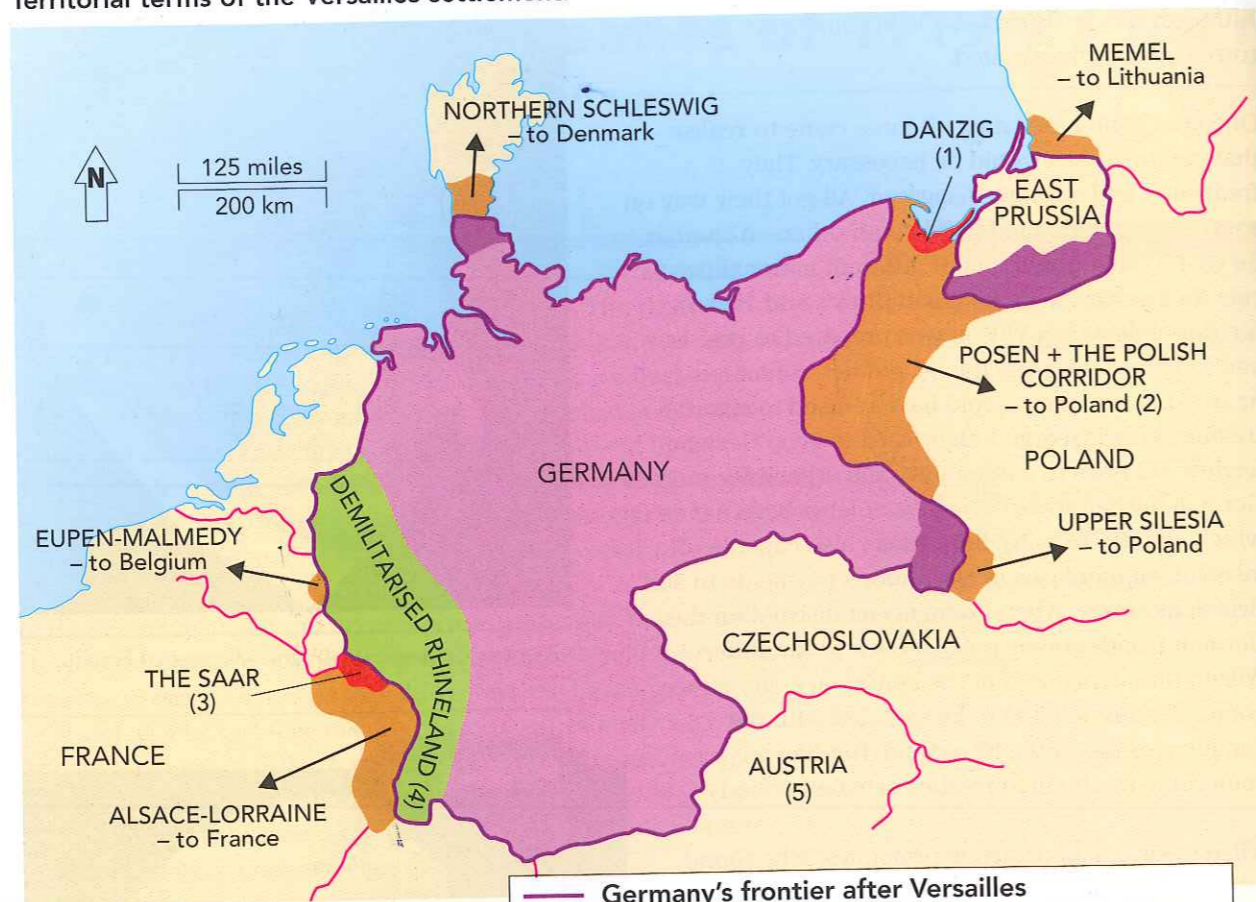


Territorial terms of the Versailles settlement.



- (1) DANZIG was made a free city under League of Nations control. Poland could use the port for its external trade.
- (2) THE POLISH CORRIDOR gave Poland access to the sea. It also split East Prussia from the rest of Germany.
- (3) THE SAAR was put under League of Nations control for fifteen years. France was given the production of the Saar coalfields as part of reparations payments.
- (4) THE RHINELAND was to be permanently demilitarised by Germany. It would be occupied by the Allies for fifteen years.
- (5) ANSCHLUSS (union) between Germany and Austria was forbidden.

Germany's frontier after Versailles

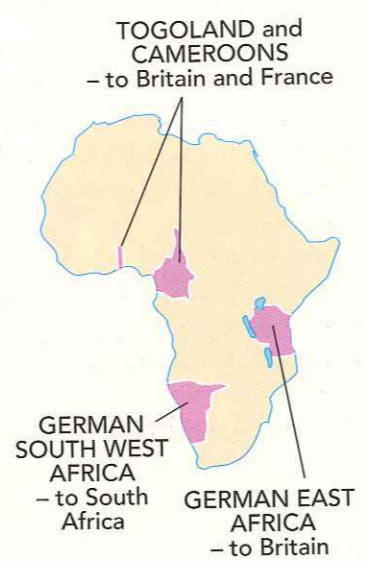
- Areas lost by Germany to other countries
- Areas lost by Germany to the League of Nations
- Areas kept by Germany after plebiscites
- Demilitarised zone

Germany's colonial losses

Germany's colonies in Africa were given to the victorious powers as mandates. This means they were governed by one of the victorious powers until they were ready for independence.

Germany's colonies in the Pacific were also allocated as mandates.

- New Guinea – to Australia
- Samoa – to New Zealand
- Pacific islands north of the Equator – the Marshalls, Marianas and Carolines – to Japan



Clemenceau became French prime minister in 1917 when defeat in the war seemed a real possibility. He rallied the country, and led it to victory. As chairman of the peace conference, he was personally willing to compromise in order to find a settlement acceptable to all the victorious powers, but he knew what his countrymen expected. France had borne the brunt of the fighting on the Western Front. Much of north-east France was devastated. The Germans had systematically looted areas under their occupation, and deliberately destroyed mines, railways, factories and bridges during their retreat. The French expected Germany to pay for this destruction, and wanted to ensure that Germany could never invade France again.

Like the other conference participants, Clemenceau found it hard to achieve his aims. Neither Britain nor the USA shared France's enthusiasm for punishing Germany. Still less did they want to provide guarantees for French security in future. Clemenceau's demand for the German frontier to be pushed back to the Rhine was bluntly rejected. France was not given the Saar, although it did receive its coal production for fifteen years. The reparations issue was referred to a commission, which did not report until 1921. When the terms of the Treaty of Versailles became known, it was condemned throughout France. Within a few months, Clemenceau's government was overthrown and his political career ended.

Lloyd George and the treaty

Lloyd George became leader of Britain's coalition government in 1916. In December 1918 his government won a massive election victory by promising to 'squeeze the German lemon till the pips squeak'. The British blamed the Germans for the war and wanted to make them pay; some even suggested that the Kaiser should be hanged. Lloyd George probably knew early on that a harsh peace would store up trouble, but he was constrained by British public opinion and election promises.

Lloyd George was determined to preserve Britain's interests as the greatest naval power. He disliked Wilson's idea of 'freedom of the seas', which was referred to the League of Nations for discussion. He also wanted the German fleet sunk – a matter that the Germans resolved by sinking all their ships, held captive at Scapa Flow. By the completion of the treaty, however, British public opinion was shifting, and Lloyd George was prepared to make some amendments to the terms. As a trading nation, Britain knew that German recovery was essential to the European economy, and that large reparations payments would make this impossible. The British were not prepared to help France keep Germany weak.

The Fourteen Points

- 1 No secret treaties.
- 2 Freedom of the seas.
- 3 The removal of economic barriers.
- 4 The reduction of armaments.
- 5 Settlement of all colonial claims.
- 6 Germans to leave Russian territory and a settlement of all questions affecting Russia.
- 7 Germans to leave Belgium.
- 8 French territory freed and Alsace-Lorraine returned to France.
- 9 Italian frontiers adjusted to take into account the nationality of the population.
- 10 The peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to be given self-determination.
- 11 Germans to leave Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and international guarantees of their independence to be given.
- 12 The people of the Ottoman Empire to be given self-determination, and the Dardanelles to be permanently opened to international shipping.
- 13 An independent Polish state to be created with access to the sea.
- 14 A general association of nations to be formed to give guarantees of political independence to great and small states alike.

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles, June 1919.

This was the treaty signed by the Allies with Germany.

War Guilt

Germany had to accept the blame for the war.

Article 231 of the treaty:

'Germany accepts responsibility for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied governments have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany.'

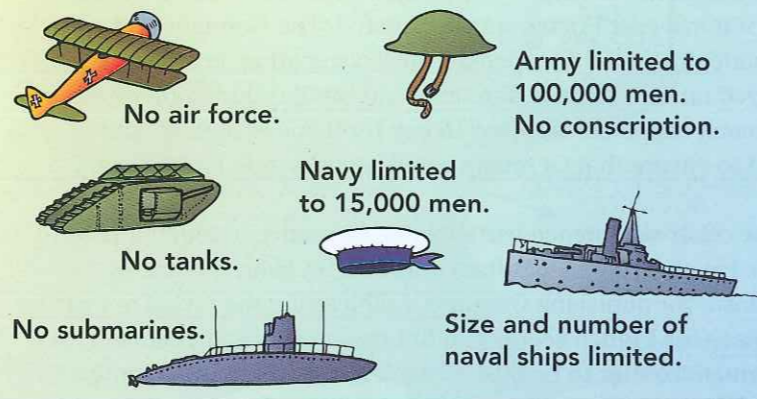
Reparations

As Germany accepted the blame for the war, the Allies could demand payment for all the damage caused. Germany was required to pay compensation – reparations – to the Allies.

A Reparations Commission was set up to fix the amount. It reported in 1921. Germany was presented with a demand for £6600 million.

Military restrictions

Tight restrictions were placed on Germany's armed forces.



The League of Nations

The first item in all the peace treaties with the defeated nations was the 'Covenant' (the rules) setting up the League of Nations.



Why did all of the victors not get everything they wanted?

According to the British historian R. Henig, 'The Treaty represented an uneasy compromise between Wilson's idealism, French security requirements, and British pragmatism [common sense].' The British and French would not accept Wilson's vision of a new international order based on the Fourteen Points, and the British and the Americans would not back up France in making a peace that would keep Germany weak. To make matters worse, the British very quickly came to see the Treaty of Versailles as a mistake. Quite clearly, none of the victors got the peace they wanted, not

least because they all wanted a different kind of peace. However, even when the nations first assembled in Paris, they were not free to shape the peace as they wished. Four important factors limited their freedom of action.

1 Wartime commitments and secret treaties

While the war was going on, a number of promises of territory were made to certain countries to encourage them to fight. Now that the war was over, these nations would expect the promises to be kept. Italy had joined the war on the Allies' side after the secret Treaty of London (1915) was signed, promising it a share in any partition of the Ottoman Empire or of German colonies, as well as

significant areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Japan's claims on China and parts of the German Pacific Empire had also been supported by the British in 1917. Wilson was horrified to hear of the extent of these commitments, most of which went against his principle of self-determination. Britain and France were much less enthusiastic about keeping their side of these bargains once the fighting stopped, but sometimes they could not avoid it.

Although the more extreme of the Italian demands for territory were resisted by the Allies at the peace conference, Italy still made substantial gains from Austria in South Tyrol, Trentino and Istria (but not the port of Fiume, which was given to Yugoslavia). However, Italian dissatisfaction at not receiving what had been promised led directly to the first crisis of the post-war period. Italian nationalists under the poet D'Annunzio seized Fiume in September 1919 and held it for a year. They were eventually driven out by Italian forces on the understanding that Fiume would become a free city under the League of Nations. This solution did not last long. In 1924 Fiume was retaken by the Italian dictator, Mussolini.

Despite Chinese protests and refusal to sign the Treaty of Versailles, British commitments to Japan made it impossible for Wilson to resist Japanese claims to Shantung and the harbour of Kiaochow, which had been leased by Germany from China since 1890.

2 The collapse of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires

In early 1917 the Russian monarchy had collapsed under the pressures of fighting a losing war against Germany and Austria-Hungary. By the end of the year, Russia was defeated. In March 1918 Russia's new Bolshevik government signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans. Under the harsh terms of this treaty, Russia gave up huge areas on its western borders: Finland, the Baltic States, its Polish provinces and the Ukraine. Although the treaty was annulled by Germany's defeat, most of the lost territory (the exception was the Ukraine) was not recovered by Russia, which was embroiled in civil war until 1920. The populations of these areas were quite distinct national groups. As

neither Germany nor Russia would rule them, they would rule themselves. The peacemakers might discuss or adjust the frontiers of these states, but Germany's defeat and Russia's collapse brought them into existence.

Similarly, in Austria-Hungary the war brought the end of the monarchy. This sprawling central European empire contained dozens of different national groups. Some, such as the Czechs and Slovaks, declared their independence while the war still continued. As the empire fell apart, new countries emerged in its place. When the peace conference met, the new states of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia already existed. True, their boundaries had not been finally decided, but the peacemakers did not make extensive changes to them.

3 The terms of the armistice

When nations make peace at the end of a war, they first agree the terms on which they will stop fighting (the armistice), before they meet to discuss and agree the terms of the peace treaty that formally ends the war. The First World War was exceptionally damaging and bitterly fought. As it came to an end, the defeated powers sought an armistice, but the victors were determined that its terms should be so severe that there would be no chance of hostilities breaking out again. The armistice terms came to have an important effect on the terms of the peace treaties themselves. For example, in the armistice agreed with Germany, the principle of reparations was accepted. Germany also agreed to leave Alsace-Lorraine, and that its armies would evacuate all areas on the left bank of the Rhine. Each of these found its way into the final peace treaty, as did other military restrictions

QUESTIONS

- 1 What were the Germans' main territorial losses in the Treaty of Versailles?
- 2 How else did the treaty limit Germany's power?
- 3 Why were the victors not free to make the peace they wanted?