

Idealism of the Versailles Settlement Meets political reality



Treaty obligations for Germany:

1. Army limited to 100,000
2. Air Force & Naval disarmament (no U-boats or armed aircraft, only 18 warships)
3. Colonies and merchant marine (civilian ships) taken away
4. 13% of territory taken away
5. Reparations—to be determined later
6. Rhineland became a DMZ

- Rejected traditional balance of power approach, in favor of self-determination and collective security
- Breakup of Austrian & Ottoman (Turkish) empires saw many new, small states in eastern Europe. This was the exact opposite approach after fall of Napoleon (when the Congress of Vienna created large states with the power to oppose France)
- Harsh terms drove many in US and Britain to accept their revision (again, the opposite of Congress of Vienna, which was a friendly treaty, with all agreed on enforcing it)
- With Britain unwilling to risk war over eastern Europe, and France unwilling to do so without British support, Germany was given a free hand for too long, until the West finally had enough after Poland in 1939.
- Apart from the League of Nations (which the US refused to join), there was no mechanism guaranteeing compliance. The US was very isolationist and did not want to get caught up in fighting another European war.
- Some would hold that it wasn't that unfair towards Germany, especially given their war aims (September Program), as well as what they inflicted on Russia (Treaty of Brest-Litovsk). But the question isn't if Germany deserved it or not, so much as what was the most effective way to keep the peace.