The **Treaty of Versailles** (1919) was the peace treaty which officially ended World War I between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany. Although the armistice signed on November 11, 1918 put an end to the actual fighting, it took six months of negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference to conclude a peace treaty. Of the many provisions in the treaty, one of the most important and controversial provisions required Germany and its allies to accept full responsibility for causing the war and, under the terms of articles 231-248, disarm, make substantial territorial concessions and pay [reparations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_reparations) to certain countries that had formed the Allies. The Treaty was undermined by subsequent events starting as early as 1922 and was widely flouted by the mid thirties.

**Georges Clemenceau's (France) aims can be summarized as follows:**

To gain control of most of Germany's factories,

To humiliate the German people,

To permanently cripple Germany's armed forces so France would never be threatened again,

And to create a "buffer zone" by de-militarizing the Rhineland.

**Lloyd George's (Britain) aims can be summarized as follows:**

To defend British interests by preserving Britain’s naval supremacy that had been threatened by Germany in the run up to the war, maintaining Britain’s empire and possibly increased colonial expansion;

To reduce Germany’s future military power and to obtain reparations,

Not to create an embittered Germany that would seek revenge and threaten peace in the long term future; and lastly,

To help Germany economically to become a strong trading partner with Britain.

**Woodrow Wilson's (U.S.) aims can be summarized as follows:**

To prevent another war at all costs,

To establish a "League of Nations" to help settle international conflicts peacefully,

To capitalise on European debt and maintain strong trade agreements

And to end the writing of secret treaties which expanded the war.

**Treaty terms**

**Overview**

The terms of the Treaty, which Germany had no choice but to accept, were announced on May 7, 1919.

**Germany lost:**

* 10% of its national territory
* All of its overseas colonies (including [Kamerun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamerun), [German East Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_East_Africa), German Southwest Africa, [Togoland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Togoland) and [German New Guinea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_New_Guinea))
* 12.5% of its population
* 16% of its coalfields, and half its iron and steel industry.

**Territorial Restrictions on Germany**

* Alsace-Lorraine returned to France.
* Saar coal fields placed under French control for 15 years.
* Annexation of Austria prohibited.
* Annexation of [Czechoslovakia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czechoslovakia) prohibited.
* Annexation of [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland) and [Danzig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danzig) prohibited.
* Loss of all overseas colonies including [Togo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Togo), [Cameroons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cameroons), [Namibia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Namibia), and [Tanzania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanzania).
* Upper Silesia returned to Poland.
* Northern Schleswig returned to Denmark.
* Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia became independent states. (Taken at Brest-Litovsk by Germany)

**Military Restrictions on Germany**

* The Rhineland to be a demilitarized zone.
* The German armed forces cannot number more than 100,000 troops and no conscription
* Manufacturing of weapons is prohibited.
* Import and export of weapons is prohibited.
* Manufacture or stockpiling of poison gas is prohibited.
* Tanks are prohibited.
* Naval forces limited to 15,000 men, 12 destroyers, 6 battleships, and 6 cruisers.
* Submarines are prohibited.
* Military aircraft are prohibited.

**Legal Restrictions on Germany**

* Article 231: forced to accept sole responsibility of war . had to promise make good all the damage done to civilian population of the allies. Also known as the "Guilt Clause".
* Article 237: former German emperor, Willam II was charged with supreme offence against international morality. he was tried as a war criminal.
* Article 228-230: many were tried as war criminals . some could not be tried as they were hiding.

**Territorial losses**

* On its eastern frontier Germany was forced to cede to the newly independent Poland the province of [West Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Prussia), thereby granting [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Polish_Republic) access to the [Baltic Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltic_Sea), while Germany lost land access to the province of [East Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Prussia). Danzig was declared a free city under the permanent governance of the League of Nations. Much of the province of Posen, which, like West Prussia, had been acquired by Prussia in the late 18th-century partitions of Poland, was likewise granted to the restored Polish state. Also transferred from Germany to Poland, as the result of a later plebiscite, was a significant portion of coal-rich and industrially developed Upper Silesia.
* Germany was also compelled to yield control of its colonies. Although these colonies had proven to be economic liabilities, they had also been symbols of the world-power status that Germany had gained in the 1880s and '90s. Article 156 of the treaty transferred German concessions in Shandong, [China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China) to Japan rather than returning sovereign authority to China. Chinese outrage over this provision led to demonstrations and a cultural movement known as the [May Fourth Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Fourth_Movement) and influenced China not to sign the treaty. China declared the end of its war against Germany in September 1919 and signed a separate treaty with Germany in 1921.

Besides the loss of the [German colonial empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_colonial_empire) the territories Germany lost were:

* Alsace-Lorraine, the territories which were ceded to Germany in accordance with the Preliminaries of Peace signed at [Versailles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Versailles) on February 26, [1871](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1871), and the Treaty of Frankfurt of [May 10](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_10), [1871](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1871), were restored to French sovereignty without a [plebiscite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plebiscite) as from the date of the Armistice of [November 11](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/November_11), [1918](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1918). (area 14 522 km², 1,815,000 inhabitants (1905)),
* Northern Schleswig including the German-dominated towns of [Tondern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%B8nder) ([Tønder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%B8nder)), Apenrade ([Aabenraa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aabenraa)), [Sonderburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonderburg) ([Sønderborg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%B8nderborg)), [Hadersleben](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadersleben) ([Haderslev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haderslev)) and Lügum in Schleswig-Holstein, after the Schleswig Plebiscite, to [Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denmark) (area 3 984 km², 163,600 inhabitants (1920)),
* Most of the Prussian provinces of [Posen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Province_of_Posen) and of [West Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Prussia), which [Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Prussia) had annexed in Partitions of Poland (1772-1795), were returned to Poland. This territory had already been liberated by local Polish population during the [Great Poland Uprising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Poland_Uprising_%281918%E2%80%931919%29) of 1918-1919 (area 53 800 km², 4,224,000 inhabitants (1931), including 510 km² and 26,000 inhabitants from Upper Silesia) (This includes parts of West Prussia were ceded to Poland to provide free access to the sea, along with a sizeable German minority, creating so called the [Polish corridor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_corridor).
* The Hlučínsko [Hulczyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hultschin) area of [Upper Silesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Silesia) to Czechoslovakia (area 316 or 333 km², 49,000 inhabitants),
* The east part of [Upper Silesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Silesia) after the plebiscite, to Poland (area 3 214 km², 965,000 inhabitants).
* The area of German cities [Eupen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eupen) and [Malmedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malmedy) to [Belgium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgium). The trackbed of the Vennbahn railway also transferred to Belgium.
* The area of Soldau in [East Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Prussia) (railway station on the [Warsaw](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw)-[Gdańsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gda%C5%84sk) route) to Poland (area 492 km²),
* The northern part of East Prussia known as [Memel Territory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memel_Territory) under control of [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), later transferred to [Lithuania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuania) without plebiscite.
* From the eastern part of West Prussia and the southern part of East Prussia [Warmia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warmia) and Masuria, a small area to Poland,
* The province of [Saarland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saarland) to be under the control of the League of Nations for 15 years, after that a plebiscite between France and Germany, to decide to which country it would belong. During this time the coal to be sent to France.
* The port of [Danzig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gda%C5%84sk) (now [Gdańsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gda%C5%84sk), Poland) with the delta of Vistula river at the Baltic Sea was made the *Freie Stadt Danzig* (Free City of Danzig) under the League of Nations. (area 1 893 km², 408,000 inhabitants (1929)).
* Germany acknowledges and will respect strictly the independence of [Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austria).

**Reparations**

***Main article: World War I reparations***

* Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles assigned blame for the war to Germany; much of the rest of the Treaty set out the reparations that Germany would pay to the Allies.
  + The total sum due was decided by an Inter-Allied Reparations Commission. The war reparations that Entente demanded from Germany was 226 billion Reichsmark in gold (around £11.3 billion), then reduced to 132 billion Reichsmark. In 1921, this number was officially put at £4,990,000,000, or 132 Billion marks.
  + In many ways, the Versailles reparations was a reply to the reparations placed upon France by Germany through the [1871](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1871) [Treaty of Frankfurt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Frankfurt). Signed after the Franco-Prussian War, France took huge loans in order to pay the reparations by 1873, because the Treaty conditions allowed the [German Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Army) to occupy France until the war reparations were paid. The Versailles Reparations came in a variety of forms, including coal, steel and agricultural products.
  + The standard view is that the reparations were the cause of Germany's economic woes and the concomitant rise of Nazism to power. However, this is a topic which is still the subject of debate among historians.

**League of Nations**

The treaty provided for the creation of the [League of Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Nations), a major goal of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. The League of Nations was intended to arbitrate international disputes and thereby avoid future wars. Only three of Wilson's [Fourteen Points](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourteen_Points) were realized, since Wilson was compelled to compromise with Clemenceau, Lloyd George and [Orlando](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vittorio_Orlando) on some points in exchange for retaining approval of Wilson's "fourteenth point," the League of Nations.

**Reaction to the treaty**

**Reaction of the Allies**

* The French felt that they had been slighted, and subsequently voted out Clemenceau at the next election. Britain as a whole was at first content, because it succeeded in securing more favourable German eastern frontiers, e.g. plebiscites on areas previously assigned to Poland ([Masuria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masuria), southern [Warmia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warmia), [Upper Silesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Silesia)) and creation of the Free City of Danzig). Even then Britain felt that the Treaty was too harsh to Germany, which dissatisfaction might have been potential trouble for the future. For the United States, it was seen as Europe’s problem, but there also it was widely believed the Treaty was too harsh
* United States U.S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge who opposed ratification of the Treaty of Versailles

The United States Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, making it invalid in the United States and effectively hamstringing the nascent [League of Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Nations) envisioned by Wilson. The largest obstacle faced in the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles was the opposition of Henry Cabot Lodge. It has also been said that Wilson himself was the second-largest obstacle, primarily because he refused to support the treaty with any of the alterations proposed by the United States Senate.

**Reaction in Germany**

* The treaty evoked an angry and hostile reception in Germany from the moment its contents were made known. The Germans were outraged and horrified at the result - since Wilson's idealistic fourteen points had painted the picture of a different outcome. They did not feel that they were responsible for [starting the war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Causes_of_World_War_I) nor did they feel as though they had lost. The German people had understood the negotiations at Versailles to be a peace conference and not a surrender. At first, the new government refused to ratify the agreement, and the German navy sank its own ships in protest of the treaty.
* Upon learning of the full terms of the treaty, the German provisional government in Weimar was thrown into upheaval. “What hand would not wither that binds itself and us in these fetters?” asked Chancellor [Philipp Scheidemann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Scheidemann) who then resigned rather than agree to the Treaty. Army chief [Paul von Hindenburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_von_Hindenburg) did the same, after declaring the army unable to resume the war under any circumstances. Only an ultimatum from the Allies finally brought a German delegation to Paris to sign the treaty on [June 28](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_28), 1919, exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. As President of the newly-formed Weimar Republic, [Friedrich Ebert](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Ebert) finally agreed to the agreement on June 28, 1919.
* Conservatives, nationalists and ex-military leaders began to speak critically about the peace and Weimar politicians, socialists, [communists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communists), and [Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews) were viewed with suspicion due to their supposed extra-national loyalties. It was rumored that they had not supported the war and had played a role in selling out Germany to its enemies. These *November Criminals*, or those who seemed to benefit from the newly formed Weimar Republic, were seen to have "stabbed them in the back" on the [home front](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_front), by either criticizing German [nationalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationalism), instigating unrest and strikes in the critical military industries or profiteering. In essence the accusation was that the accused committed treason against the "benevolent and righteous" common cause.

These theories were given credence by the fact that when Germany surrendered in November 1918, its armies were still in French and Belgian territory. Not only had the German Army been in enemy territory the entire time on the [Western Front](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Front_%28WWI%29), but on the [Eastern Front](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_%28WWI%29), Germany had already won the war against Russia, concluded with the [Treaty of Brest-Litovsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Brest-Litovsk). In the West, Germany had come close to winning the war with the [Spring Offensive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spring_Offensive). Contributing to the *Dolchstoßlegende*, its failure was blamed on strikes in the arms industry at a critical moment of the offensive, leaving soldiers without an adequate supply of [materiel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Materiel). The strikes were seen to be instigated by treasonous elements, with the Jews taking most of the blame. This overlooked Germany's strategic position and ignored how the efforts of individuals were somewhat marginalized on the front, since the belligerents were engaged in a new kind of war. The industrialization of war had dehumanized the process, and made possible a new kind of defeat which the Germans suffered as a [total war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_war) emerged.

Nevertheless, this social mythos of domestic betrayal resonated among its audience, and its claims would codify the basis for public support for the emerging [Nazi Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Party), under a racialist-based form of nationalism. The [anti-Semitism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Semitism) was intensified by the Bavarian Soviet Republic, a [Communist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist) government which ruled the city of [Munich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munich) for two weeks before being crushed by the [Freikorps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freikorps) [militia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militia). Many of the Bavarian Soviet Republic leaders were Jewish, a fact that allowed anti-Semitic propagandists to make the connection with "[Communist treason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Bolshevism)".