

# TREATY OF VERSAILLES

## SOWS SEEDS OF FUTURE WAR

Treaty obligations for Germany (said by one German delegate to be “an injustice without equal”):

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—in 1921, 132 billion goldmarks, but lowered by Young Plan in 1929 to 121 billion
6. Rhineland became a DMZ

- Reparations were in terms of the value of the gold that the currencies could purchase, **thirty times the French indemnity in 1871**; the 1921 figure was 65% more than Germany’s 1929 GDP (after its economy had recovered from the war). To use the Congress of Vienna as a counterexample, France in 1815 lost none of the territory that it possessed in 1789; Germany lost 13% of its pre-World War I territory. **Germany had little reason to stay faithful to the terms of the peace treaty.**
- Breakup of Russian and Austrian empires saw **new small states in eastern Europe that were too weak to defend themselves against Germany**. This was the exact opposite of the Congress of Vienna, which was supported by powerful states (Prussia, Russia, Austria, and Britain) united in their opposition to revolutionary France.
- **Harsh terms drove many in US and Britain to accept their revision.**
- Apart from the League of Nations (which the US refused to join), there was **no mechanism guaranteeing compliance with the Versailles provisions**. Britain was unwilling to risk war over eastern Europe, and France was unwilling to do so without British support. The US was very isolationist—it took its troops home from Europe after the war--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.**
- It is true that Germany’s economy grew in the 1920s. But this was only while it was shielded from the harsh terms of Versailles. In 1929, when reparations payments increased dramatically, and when the US stopped loaning Germany so much money, the German economy tanked.