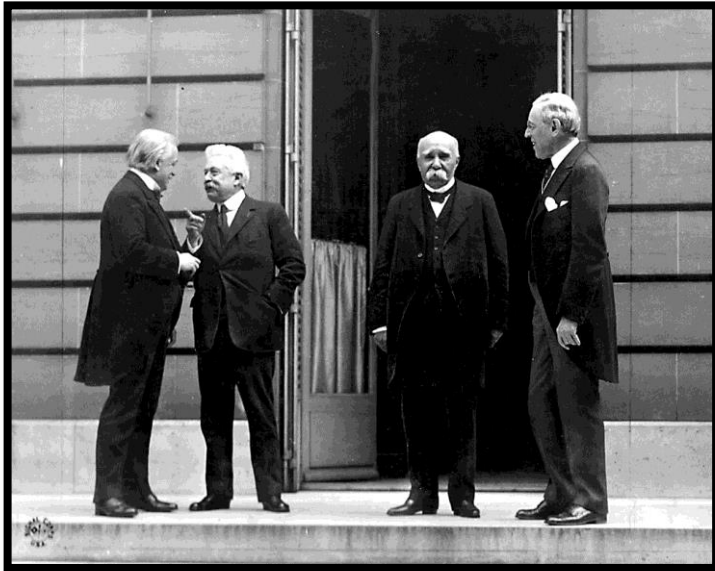


# In Depth Analysis – The Treaty of Versailles



## The Big Four

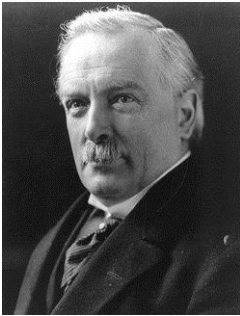
The Big Four, also known as the Council of Four, consisted of leaders from Italy, the United States, Britain and France who dominated decision making at the Paris Peace Conference. Other delegates from these countries, and emissaries from nations affiliated with the Allies, held peripheral roles, while representatives from the Central Powers had little say in the shaping of the peace.

**David Lloyd George – Great Britain**

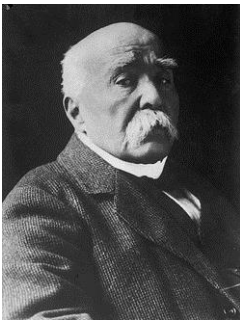
**Vittorio Orlando – Italy**

**Georges Clemenceau – France**

**Woodrow Wilson – U.S.**



David Lloyd George: Britain played a major role. Lloyd George supported imperialism with strong, local government. Britain went into the conference having already achieved several of its major goals. The German fleet was under British control and many German colonies had been absorbed into the British Empire. Lloyd George's main objective at the conference was to protect British interests and build strong relationships with other world powers, especially the United States. Lloyd George did not want to destroy Germany with the treaty; he believed a healthy, united Germany would balance French and Russian power and help Europe heal after WWI. However, out of the big four, Lloyd George fought for the toughest economic reparations in order to combat Britain's financial difficulties.



Georges Clemenceau: France had suffered more than any other country during the war: one quarter of Frenchmen between 18 and 30 died; coal mines and factories were destroyed; 20% of crops, 90% of iron ore and 65% of steel were ruined. The economy was in shambles and France wanted compensation from Germany. Even more than compensation or revenge, France needed security. Although Germany had been defeated, they would always share a border. The French desired to neutralize the threat of further German violence through disarmament, economic reparations, and French control of the Rhineland. Clemenceau didn't form close social relationships with the other leaders. He thought Wilson arrogant and ignorant of European politics and didn't trust Lloyd George.



Woodrow Wilson: Wilson saw the war as a fight against militarism. Wilson was stubborn and intolerant of others' viewpoints. The United States gained power during the war. By the time of the armistice, the American army and navy rivaled some of the strongest European nations. The European Allies collectively owed over 7 billion dollars to the U.S. government. Wilson's focus during the conference was to form a lasting peace. Wilson believed war could be eliminated from the world with democracy, self-determination of rule for all nations, open diplomacy, international disarmament, free trade, an international legal system and collective security. Collective security is a system of global alliances in which allies would defend each other against aggressors, theoretically dissuading conflict. The League of Nations was intended to be a form of collective security. Wilson's theories are outlined in his **Fourteen Points**. Germany had accepted Wilson's Fourteen Points and were extremely dissatisfied with how much harsher the Treaty of Versailles was than Wilson's original proposal.

What about Italy?!?! Italy had never fought alone against Germany and did not share a border so they played only a minor role as part of the Big Four. How do you think they felt about that?

# In Depth Analysis – The Treaty of Versailles

## Summary of the Provisions of the Treaty of Versailles

### A) German Territorial Losses

1. **Alsace-Lorraine** was returned to France.
2. **The Polish Corridor.** Poland was restored as an independent nation. Germany was DIVIDED.
3. **Mandates.** Germany surrendered all of its colonies, which were distributed among the Allies as “mandates.”
4. **“Anschluss”**, or the unification between Austria and Germany, was forbidden.
5. The **Saar Basin** area of Germany (coal producing region in Germany) was given to the League of Nations for 15 years, with the goal of producing coal for France.
6. **Danzig** was a city in the Polish Corridor. It too was to be administered by the League of Nations, and would act as a “free” city; meaning any nation could unload goods there into the European market.

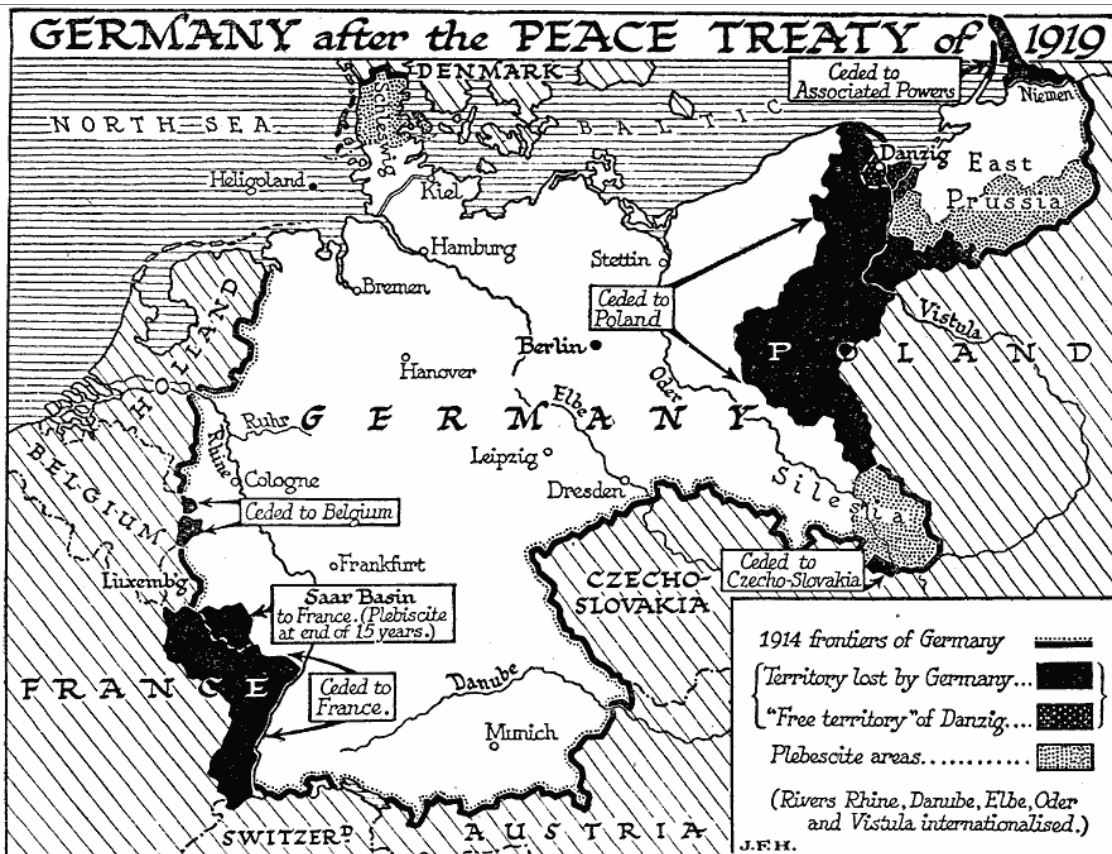
### B) Military Clauses

1. **The Rhineland was demilitarized.** The area on the French border was to be a permanently demilitarized zone (no Germany army). Allied armies were to occupy the west bank of the Rhine for a period of 15 years. This was set up to act as a buffer between France and Germany.
2. **Military Restrictions.** Conscription was forbidden in Germany and the German army was limited to 100,000 men who had to serve for 12 years (this way, no one would volunteer!). Its navy and air force were also severely restricted in size. The production of submarines, planes and tanks was forbidden.
3. **The German Fleet.** Surrendered to Great Britain.
4. **Merchant shipping.** Germany gave up all of its merchant ships to the Allies in compensation for allied shipping losses during the war.

### C) REPARATIONS

- i. **Article 231: The War-Guilt Clause.** This clause stated that Germany alone must accept responsibility for the start of the war. The Germans were furious over this article.
- ii. **Reparations.** Because the Germans were responsible for the war (Article 231), it meant that they would be forced to pay the allies huge sums of money to pay for the damage caused by the war. Germany must pay the allies 6.6 Billion Pounds in gold, or 33 billion American dollars (ouch!). Also, all coal in the Saar would go to France for five years.

**D) THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS:** A general association of nations was created with the goal of maintaining global peace through diplomacy instead of war. All who signed the Treaty were included, except GERMANY (bad guys) and the US (never ratified the Treaty).



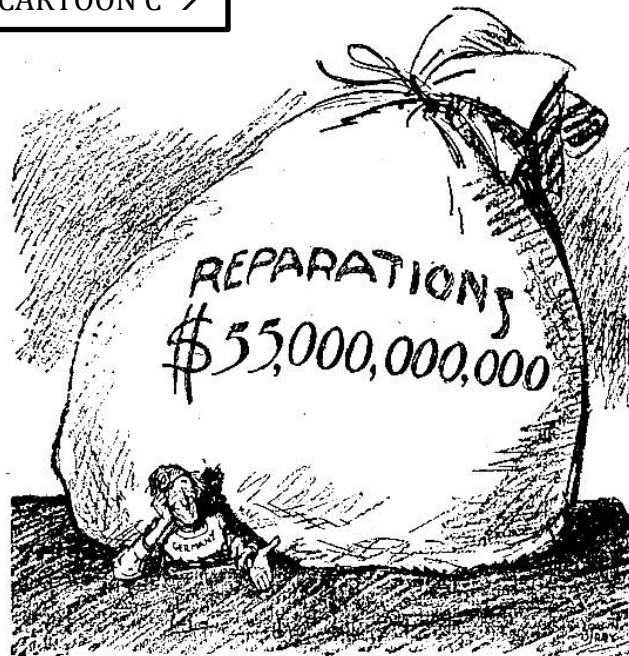
# In Depth Analysis – The Treaty of Versailles

**Document A:** May 7, 1919 - Leader of German Delegation at Versailles Peace Conference

It is demanded of us that we shall confess ourselves to be alone guilty of the war. Such a confession from my lips would be a lie. We are far from declining all responsibility for the fact that this great World War took place or that it was fought in the way that it was... But we energetically deny that Germany and its people, who were convinced that they fought a war of defense, were alone guilty. No one would want to assert that the disaster began only at that disastrous moment when the successor of Austria-Hungary fell victim to murderous hands. ... In the last 50 years the imperialism of all European states has chronically poisoned international relations. Policies of retaliation, policies of expansion, and disregard for the right of peoples to determine their own destiny have contributed to the European malady which came to a crisis in the World War."



← CARTOON B  
CARTOON C →



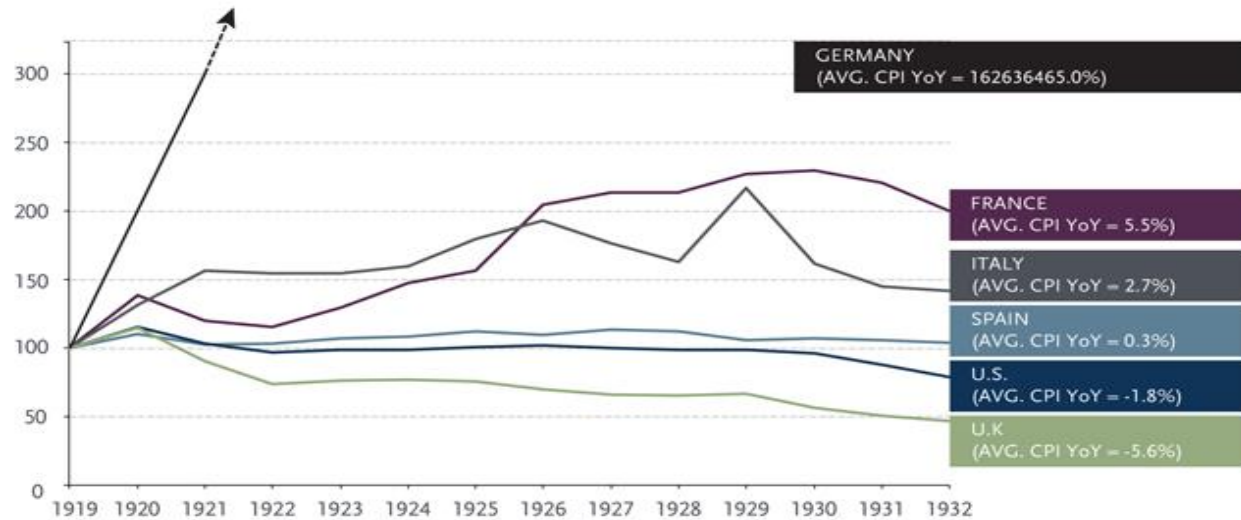
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# In Depth Analysis – The Treaty of Versailles

## INFLATION IN THE POST-WWI PERIOD\*

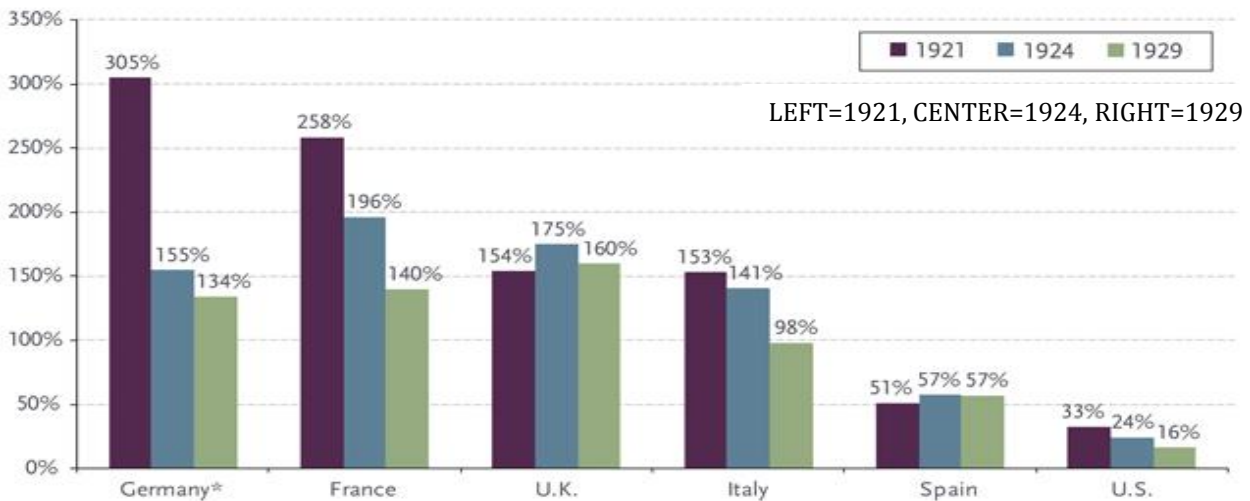
Unsustainable debt and frantic printing of money lead to a period of severe hyperinflation in Germany. At the height of the crisis in 1923, one U.S. dollar was worth 4 trillion German marks.



Source: Reinhart and Rogoff, Guggenheim Investments. \*Note: Inflation for the above countries is the respective Consumer Price Indices normalized at 1919 levels.

## EUROPEAN DEBT AFTER THE GREAT WAR

In the years following World War I, European nations were buried in debt. Germany, slapped with punitive war reparations, routinely defaulted on its payments even after several restructuring efforts were attempted in 1920s.



Source: Reinhart and Rogoff, Guggenheim Investments. \*Note: German debt to GDP ratio includes reparation obligations.

*The Treaty includes no provision for the economic rehabilitation of Europe - nothing to make the defeated Central Powers into good neighbors, nothing to stabilize the new States of Europe, nothing to reclaim Russia; nor does it promote in any way a compact of economic solidarity amongst the Allies themselves; no arrangement was reached at Paris for restoring the disordered finances of France and Italy, or to adjust the systems of the Old World and the New.*

**Source: John Maynard Keynes, The Economic Consequences of Peace, 1920**

# **In Depth Analysis – The Treaty of Versailles**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Per: \_\_\_\_\_

## **PART 1 – The Big Four**

1. Summarize and identify at least 3 main objectives of David Lloyd George (Britain):
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Summarize and identify at least 3 main objectives of Georges Clemenceau (France):
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Summarize and identify at least 5 main objectives of Woodrow Wilson (U.S.):
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What were the primary challenges faced by the BIG FOUR as they negotiated peace at Versailles?

## **PART 2 – Summary of the Provisions of the Treaty of Versailles**

5. Which territorial provisions were most damaging to Germany? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Which military provisions were most damaging to Germany? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. In which ways did the major provisions of the Treaty of Versailles help to achieve peace in Europe?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Overall, did the major provisions of the treaty bring Europe closer to peace? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Do you think a “general association of nations” like the League of Nations is a good idea? What would it need to be effective?

# **In Depth Analysis – The Treaty of Versailles**

## **PART 3 – Primary Source and Political Cartoon Analysis**

10. Document A: How does the German delegation leader feel about Germany taking full blame for the war?

11. Document A: Who deserves blame for the war according to the German delegation leader? What caused the war in his opinion?

12. Cartoon B: Who is pictured? What is taking place in the cartoon? What is implied by the child crying?

13. Cartoon C: What is taking place? What is being implied by the cartoon?

14. Cartoon D: Who is being forced to swallow the pill? Who is doing the forcing? What is being implied by the cartoon?

## **PART 4 – Graphs and Document Analysis**

15. Graphs: Which countries emerge from WWI in the best economic shape? Which country is in the worst economic shape?

16. According to Keynes, what economic problems persisted after the Treaty of Versailles?

***Closing Question: Why was the Treaty of Versailles described as “A Peace Built on Quicksand?”***