

Versailles Settlement and International Politics between the World Wars

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The Great War Consequences

Collapse of the Concert of Powers

Fall of four empires + new nation states

Different views of the victory states on the new international order

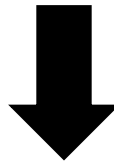
Paris Peace Conference 1919

USA, UK, France, Italy (Japan)

War guilt solely German

(= reparations, territorial and population loss, disarmament)

League of Nations



Versailles Settlement

Versailles Settlement satisfied no-one

Germany – humiliated, punished

France - frustrated – settlement not hard enough to Germany

Britain - upset – settlement too hard to Germany

USA - uncomfortable – settlement too demanding to the US

Italy - angry – the war was not worth it

Japan - disappointed – settlement not supporting its interests in China

Russia – out of the world map

+ very different views on the role of the LN



Revisionistic tendencies, vengeful moods

IR in the 1920s Europe - The Versailles System

France

- Major threats: strong Germany
- Interests: filling the power vacuum + building a *cordon sanitaire* in the East-Central Europe – Poland, Little Entente
- Collective security

Great Britain

- Major threats: bolshevism, instability
- Interests: Hungary, Italy
- Pragmatic cooperation

Small nation states

- Major threats: Empires restoration, later revisionism; territorial requests of the new states
- Interests: survival (alliances, LN)

Germany and Russia in the 1920s Europe

Different perception of threats

- **France** – hard line towards Germany, full reparation payment, weak Germany = good Germany
 - further relations with Russia determined by payment of pre-war and war debts
- **Great Britain** – seeks for reasonable reparations cost for Germany, overall aim is stability in Europe
 - attempts to establish relations with Russia – trade agreement 1921
- **Russia** – uses ambivalent approach of the Powers to its advantage
 - acts as a trustworthy partner, minimizes ideological burden in its behaviour, implies possibility to pay its debts under certain conditions
- **Genoa Conference**, April 1922 to negotiate a relationship between West and Russia
 - London Memorandum – sets conditions for Russia to obtain foreign capital

Rapprochement of Germany and Russia

Germany and the Soviet Russia in a similar situation – outsiders pushed out to the outskirts of IR

Meeting in Rapallo, April 1922 - simultaneous to Genoa talks

- Rapallo Agreement – establishes diplomatic relations between Germany and Russia, renounces mutual debts

Germany + Soviet Russia - Rich military cooperation between 1922 and 1929

1925 economic agreement

1926 agreement of reassurance

The Soviet Russia and Germany slowly return to the world politics (silent approval of Powers)

- 1924 British recognition of the USSR; France establishes diplomatic relations

- 1926 Germany enters the League of Nations

- 1934 USSR enters the League of Nations

Hardliners vs softliners - Germany

The Ruhr Crisis (January 1923)

- French accuse Germans of avoiding reparations payment intentionally, occupy the Ruhr District
- Germany loses 88 % of coal production and 48 % of iron ore production, population of the District applies passive resistance
- Inflation, devaluation of currency, dissolve of economics in Germany

The Dawes Plan (August 1924)

- USA and UK criticise French hard-line policy, wish to avoid German bankrupt
- the Dawes Plan – fusion of reparation and economic restoration; flow of foreign capital to help rebuild German economy

The Young Plan (1929)

- even looser payment calendar – for 59 years

Diplomatic cornerstones of 1920s

Locarno Conference, October 1925

Representatives of Germany, France, Belgium, UK, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland

Final element of the Versailles Settlement

Results: so called Rhine Guarantee Pact

- Great Britain and Italy bind to guarantee inviolability of Western border of Germany (with France and Belgium)
- States on the East German border attempt to reach similar guarantee

Different perception of results

- Great Britain – stabilisation of the Versailles Settlement
- Little Entente and Poland – disenchanted
- France – withdrawal from the position of German keeper

Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928

- Renounces war (with an exception of self-defense)
- Declaratory, no real sanctions

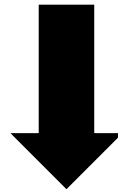
The Great Depression

Adolf Hitler enters the international scene

January 1933 – A. Hitler becomes German Chancellor (in democratic elections)

Hitler's Germany:

- cancels reparation payments
- withdraws from the Disarmament Conference and leaves the League of Nations
- starts expanding economically to the Central Europe and Balkans
- gains time by signing non-aggression pacts with neighbors (Poland 1934, Austria 1936)
- Starts constructing the Wehrmacht in 1935



Continuous, escalating breaching of the Versailles Treaty

In six years, Germany changed from one of the weakest European states to one of the strongest.

Soviet rapprochement to Europe

1932 non-aggression pact between France and the USSR (after cooling relations with Germany)

1934 USSR enters the LN

1935 joint alliance treaties between the USSR and France, and USSR and Czechoslovakia

- Soviet military intervention in case of attack to Czechoslovakia determined by French action
- Different perceptions
 - France uses the USSR as a leverage for normalisation of relations with Germany and Italy
 - The USSR sees collective security as a tool to prevent the West to unite against it

Dissolution of the Versailles System

1933 Germany leaves the League of Nations

1935 Italian aggression in Ethiopia

1935 Germany reintroduces conscription

1936 reoccupation and remilitarisation of the Rhineland

1936-1939 Civil war in Spain

March 1938 annexation of Austria (Anschluss)

September 1938 Munich Conference (annexation of border areas of Czechoslovakia)

March 1939 annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia

September 1939 Germany attacks Poland



WWII