Standard 2.2: Terms of the Paris Peace Treaties 1919-20: Versailles, St. Germain, Trianon, Neuilly, Sèvres/Lausanne 1923

Guiding Questions

- In what ways was the Treaty of Versailles unfair?
- In what ways was it too lenient?
- Analyze the arguments for and against punishing Germany at Versailles.
- Assess the reasons for the failure of the Paris Peace Conference.

I. Aims of the Big Three
   a. France-Georges Clemenceau: Punish Germany. Everything seen through lens of benefitting France and punishing Germany
   b. Great Britain-Lloyd-George: A political moderate at Versailles who was influenced by British popular sentiments towards punishing Germany. "Make Germany Pay...what they can" but didn't want a harsh peace that would lead to another conflict (Fontainebleau Memorandum)
   c. USA-Woodrow Wilson: Following the provisions of the 14 Points & Creation of the League of Nations. Wilson disregards the US Constitutional provision requiring 2/3 of Senate to approve treaties.

II. Negotiations at Versailles
   a. Begun in January 1919
   b. A slow process with little organization.
      i. Nations were more concerned with their own post-war domestic issues
   c. The "Council of 10" made up of the Foreign and Prime ministers of France, Britain, the US, Italy and Japan was the gateway for nations to have a voice within the conference.
   d. Fears that Germany might succumb to communism eventually forced the Conference to move. The Council of 10 was cut to the Council of Four (Britain, France, US, Italy) which would make the key decisions.

III. Terms of the treaty-Finally signed in June 1919 after a series of compromises between the 'Big 4'
   a. Formation of the League of Nations
      i. Differing views about the structure and purpose of the league.
         1. US: A forum to discuss differences so as to avoid future conflict.
            a. The League should operate like a world parliament where representatives of all nations reached decisions on matters that impacted them.
         2. Britain: A loose organization that would meet when there was an emergency.
         3. France: A military alliance that would enforce peace treaties, secure France, prevent Germany from recovery and intervene in disputes as necessary.
   b. Responsibility for the outbreak of the war
      i. Responsibility for the war was crucial as this would dictate who was to pay for it.
      ii. Article 231 of the Treaty, known as the "War Guilt Clause"
1. Provided the legal argument for Germany to pay the costs of the war.

c. Reparations for the cost of and damage caused by the war
   i. France wanted to use reparations to prevent Germany's economic recovery
   ii. Britain believed that Germany recovery was essential for the economic reconstruction of Europe
      1. This did not mesh with the strong British public sentiment against Germany.
      2. But. Britain also needed reparations to aid the British economy and pay war debts (especially to the US)
   iii. US more supportive of Britain than France.
   iv. A Reparations Commission was formed to develop the plan for payments
      1. Agreed to in 1921-fortunate for Germany as an earlier agreement would have resulted in higher payments.
      2. 6.6 Billion British Pounds was agreed to. (about $400 Billion US Dollars today)
   v. Article 232 stated that Germany must compensate the Allies for "all the damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated powers."

d. The redistribution of territories in Europe and colonies
   i. Germany lost 10% of its land, 12.5% of its population, 16% of coalfields, 50% of iron and steel industry.
   ii. Western Europe
      1. Alsace-Lorraine returned to France
      2. Belgium gained some territory from Germany
      3. Northern Schleswig to Denmark
      4. The Saarland
         a. France hoped for the coal and iron-rich Saarland
         b. Britain and US disagreed, but compromised to place the region under League of Nations control for 15 years, after which a plebiscite would be held.
   5. The Rhineland
      a. France hoped this would be broken off of Germany to become an independent state.
         i. Britain and US disagreed as they thought it would make France too powerful on the continent.
      b. An occupation army would be stationed West of the Rhine with full demilitarization in 15 years.
      c. An Anglo-American treaty was signed to guarantee French protection in case of attack.
         i. US refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles made this meaningless.
   6. Poland
      a. Re-establishment of an independent Poland
         i. France wanted to create a strong nation on Germany's eastern border
ii. US saw this as fulfillment of Self-Determination

b. To be economically viable, it would need access to the sea.

i. German lands annexed to the new Poland granting it the 'Polish Corridor' to the Baltic Sea
   1. The German City of Danzig within the corridor would become a 'free city' under the control of the League of Nations.

c. Curzon Proposal marked Poland's Eastern border with Russia
   i. Later expanded as Poland seized Russian land during the Russian Civil War

7. Former German Colonies
   a. Agreement that all colonies seized during the war should not be returned.
      i. Wilson supported notions of self-determination
         1. Wanted them run as 'mandates' by more politically advanced nations until they could gain independence.
      ii. Japan had received promises of territories during the war in exchange of removal of 'racial equality' provisions in the treaty.
      iii. Compromise was reached and mandates would be created, though their granting to nations would be decided eventually by the League of Nations

e. Disarmament
   i. Again, Britain and US pushed for more lenient terms with France being more punitive.
      1. Germany was allowed an army of 100,000 professional soldiers.
      2. Restrictions on size of guns and Germany was not allowed armored vehicles.
      3. Restrictions against the German navy. Only 6 battleships and no submarines.
      4. No military aircraft.

f. Other aspects of the treaty
   i. No political union with Austria (Anschluß)
   ii. German leaders and 'war criminals' were to be punished for starting the war, though most were never held accountable.
      1. The Dutch refused to hand over former Kaiser Wilhelm II.

IV. Additional Post-War Treaties
   a. The Treaty of St. Germain with Austria 1919
      i. Austria was seen as a successor of Austria-Hungary and, as such, subject to punishment.
      ii. Terms
         1. No political union with other nations
2. Reparations—though they would never be paid as the Austrian economy collapsed.
3. Lost Land and population (15 Million)
4. Demilitarization—A Standing army of only 30,000

b. The Treaty of Trianon with Hungary 1920
   i. Hungary was seen as a successor of Austria—Hungary and, as such, subject to punishment.
   ii. Terms
      1. Reparations—though they would never be paid as the Hungarian economy collapsed.
      2. Lost Land and population (2/3 of territory and 42% of population.
      3. Demilitarization—A Standing army of only 35,000

c. The Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria 1919
   i. Terms
      1. Reparations—lower than other defeated nations.
      2. Some lost territories.
      3. Demilitarization—A Standing army of only 20,000

d. The Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey 1920
   i. Britain and France disagreed with the severity of the punishments towards Turkey and ultimately, a compromise was reached.
   ii. Terms
      1. Reparations
      2. Lost Land and population—Breakup of old Ottoman Empire.
         a. Independence to some North African regions
         b. Mandates in the Middle East, Independence of Arabia
         c. Loss of European land except for small region around Constantinople.
         d. Loss of control of the straits.
      3. Demilitarization—A Standing army of only 20,000
   iii. Harsh terms led to a strong nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal
      1. By 1922, his Kemal's nationalist movement marched on Constantinople, toppled the government and forced a new treaty to be drawn up.
      2. Treaty of Lausanne
         a. Restoring territory
         b. Withdrawal of allied troops
         c. Regained control of the straits
      3. An example that the allied powers would likely not defend the post-war treaties in the face of war.

V. Reactions to the Treaties
   a. Britain
      i. Most satisfied with the terms of the treaties.
      ii. Germany, in fact, would keep France from becoming too powerful on the continent.
iii. Maintaining (and growing) overseas empires

b. France
   i. Unsatisfied with the treaty—that it did not cripple Germany sufficiently and that French security remained threatened.
   ii. Concern that the new, smaller successor states might not be able to withstand a German army in the future.

c. United States
   i. Wilson unhappy as he had to compromise on many of his ideals and Germany was not left with a 'fair and just peace.'
      1. 14 points in shambles.
         a. I. Open Covenants in Play
         b. II. Blockade still in effect.
         c. V. Colonial claims still taking precedence over colonial peoples
         d. VI. Russia not considered.
            i. Russia was embroiled in a violent Civil War and not invited to the conference. In fact, US, Britain and Japan were aiding anti-Bolshevik forces
   ii. US Senate refused to ratify the treaty or join the League of nations.

d. Italy
   i. Very unhappy—gained few of their territorial and colonial desires.
   ii. Vittorio Orlando walked out of the talks in disgust, but this had no bearing on final arrangements.
      1. Ultimately leading to the rise of Benito Mussolini and a promise of making Italy "great, respected and feared."

e. Japan
   i. Unhappy—feared they were treated as a second class power by the allies and that the treaties were created to maintain Western dominance.
   ii. They did gain all the territories they were promised during the war.

f. Germany
   i. Outrage—a betrayal of the 14 points.
      1. Popular dissatisfaction was used by radical groups like Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party
      2. Feeling that blame for the war should have been shared among nations and that the reparations were too harsh—the economy would not survive.
      3. Disarmament left Germany too vulnerable to attack
         a. Army and Navy were formerly a source of pride for the German people.
   ii. No significant changes would result from German protests
   iii. Germany ultimately was forced to sign the treaty—but did so under duress
      1. Seen by some as hypocritical in light of the harsh terms in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia AND that a victorious Germany would have acted in much the same way.