

future wars of aggression, it did form an important foundation for international law that has carried through to the present, and it happened outside the realm of the League of Nations.

The Direct Consequences

The Treaty of Versailles is one of the most controversial treaties in modern history. In retrospect, many historians claim that it was too tough on Germany and created the conditions that led directly to the rise of Adolf Hitler. Others believe that it was too easy on Germany because the treaty didn't prevent Germany from rebuilding into a powerful state. Still others say the treaty was fine; it just was never enforced well, and that is why World War II (WWII) developed.

ANALYSIS

Was the Treaty of Versailles too harsh on Germany? Based on Document 3.2 and your understanding of the treaty, which elements do you think impacted Germany the most? Why?

One thing is clear—the Treaty of Versailles was unsatisfactory in several important ways. The Treaty of Versailles did not end imperialism; in fact, instead of decolonization, the Allies gained more territory as they divvied up Germany's colonies and the former Ottoman lands. The postwar world certainly was not “peace without victors” as Wilson imagined, because the resulting peace treaties made it painfully clear who the losers were. And, although new countries were indeed created, the process by which this happened totally violated the principles of self-determination, reigniting nationalist movements rather than stopping them.

That nationalism spilled over into China, Turkey and other countries around the world—these countries thought they would gain freedom and self-determination from the Treaty of Versailles, but they did not. One of the most glaring problems was the refusal to let Russia or Germany participate in the postwar negotiations. Like it or not, these two countries did play, and would continue to play, a major role in European politics, so they really should have been allowed to participate in the postwar restructuring. The effects on Germany were devastating and absolutely led to what came next for them: the Weimar government was unstable, the German people were completely stripped of their nationalist pride, and the reparations and provisions of the treaty left Germany basically unable to defend or even feed itself.

Even the victors were dissatisfied with the outcome of the Treaty of Versailles. Wilson's *Fourteen Points* were largely ignored, some even ridiculed, and he could not participate in his own League of Nations. Clemenceau was concerned that Germany was left with more territory and, therefore, potential power than it should have been. And Lloyd George remarked, “We shall have to fight another war again in twenty-five years time.”

Imperial Demise and Restructuring

At the end of the Great War, territorial empires were all but gone physically, and the concept itself had really been discredited. The Great War had just proven that technological advancements dramatically changed the way countries could gain (or lose) territory. Traditional ground troops spent almost the entire war stalemated. U-boats played an enormous role in the outcome of naval battles,



The Unnamed Cop, 1930.

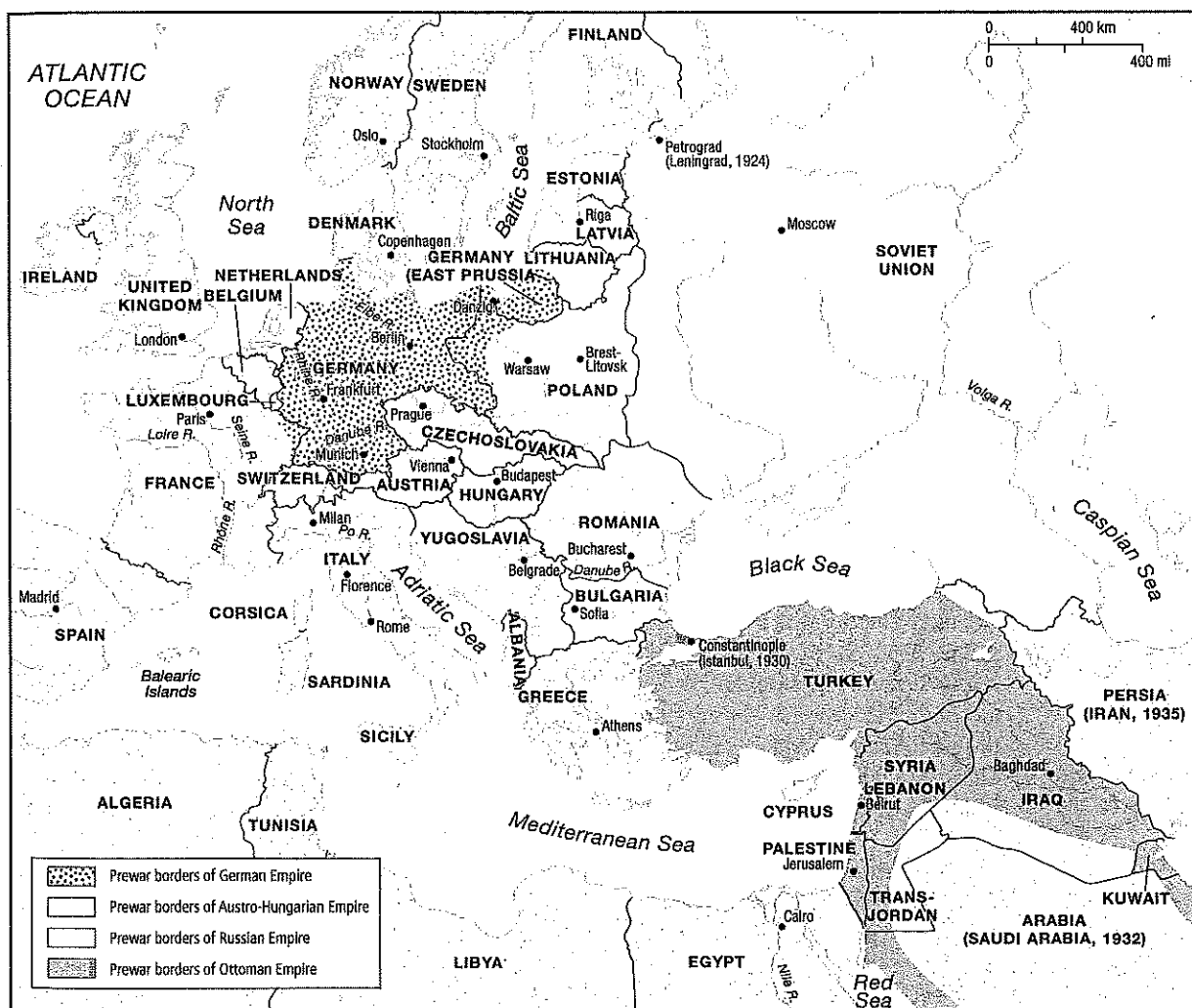
and, for the first time ever, the only real movement during the war happened in the air. So, while the territorial empires disappeared altogether or shifted to a different form of governance, the sea-based empires (the victors of the war) actually expanded their reach around the globe.

The Successor States and Mandates

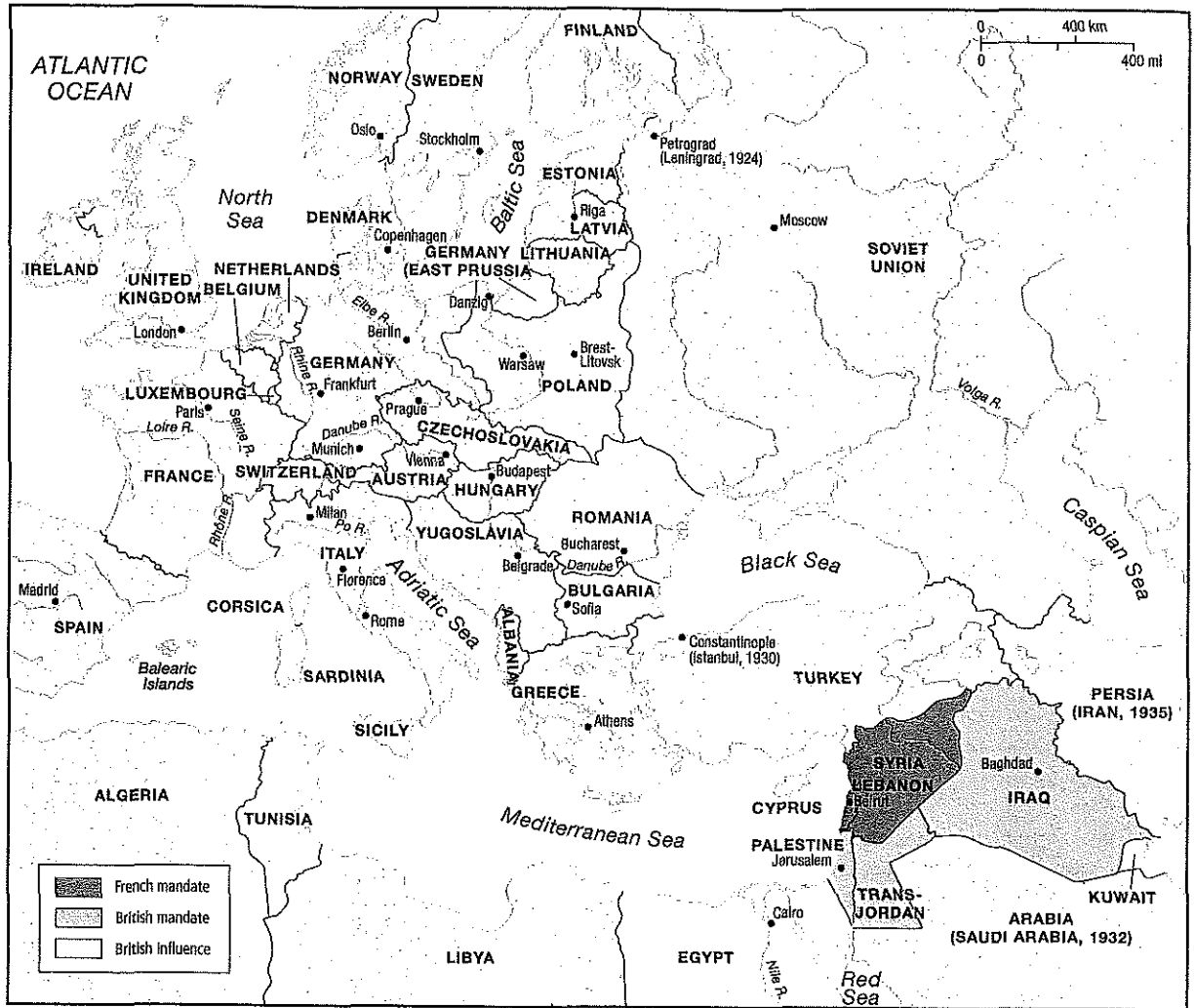
With the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires defeated, the map of Europe had to be redrawn to meet the goals of the victors. But the victors had different goals: the European victors intended to gain territory, while the United States, which promoted self-determination as a means to create stable democracies, hoped to form a strong buffer zone across Eastern Europe to isolate communist Russia. Agreeing on where territorial lines would be drawn was an impossible task given the disparate views of the Allies, each of which made many secret and contradictory agreements during the war to secure support from other countries. In the end, the former empires were carved up and new countries created with little regard for ethnic populations, despite all the rhetoric about self-determination.

As punishment for their parts in the war, the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires were completely dismantled. Austria-Hungary was carved into four successor states—Austria, Hungary,

successor state
a country created out of territory taken from a previously well-established state




MAP 3.1 Successor States in Eastern Europe



MAP 3.2 Mandates in the Middle East

mandate

a territory granted to a League member for the purpose of establishing a government

 Watch the Video *The Continuing Legacy of World War I in the Middle East* on mysearchlab.com

Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia—each of which was comprised of multiethnic populations. The Ottoman Empire, which had been suffering from internal challenges for years, completely disintegrated. In its place, only the Republic of Turkey stood as a recognized, independent country. The rest of the territory, weakened by nationalist and religious differences, fell victim to the ambitions of the European powers. The former Ottoman Empire was divided into separate territories, called League of Nations mandates, which were then given to Great Britain and France as protectorates. This essentially expanded the imperial power of Great Britain and France into the oil-rich Middle East. The new countries of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland were created out of the territory the Russian Empire was forced to cede to Germany in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

The successor states faced several problems: (1) they were new and had no tradition of ruling themselves; (2) they were established by the United States, Great Britain and France and were therefore expected to follow democratic and capitalist principles; (3) they were financially devastated from the beginning, and no one had the money to help them develop healthy economies; (4) they were multiethnic states, which made it difficult to form internal political alliances or consistent foreign policy; and (5) they had large groups of nationalists within their borders fighting for self-determination. Poland's problem was that it was comprised of significant pieces of

Germany, Austria and Russia, and it just couldn't get those different experiences and outlooks coordinated into one government. Hungary's economy was totally reliant on agriculture, so the postwar economic depression destroyed Hungary. In southern Europe (particularly Yugoslavia), ongoing nationalist disagreements between the Serbs, Croats and Albanians prevented any internal or external peaceful political relationships from developing. Czechoslovakia came closer than any of them to actually becoming a stable country but was ultimately taken over by extreme German nationalism in the Sudetenland, a region that was carved out of the former German Empire. None of these successor states was able to establish a stable democratic regime, which left Eastern Europe just as volatile after the Great War as it was before the war began.

The USSR

The Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917 and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk led directly to the Russian Civil War from 1918 to 1921, which pitted the Reds (Bolsheviks) against the Whites (anticommunists). During the civil war, the Russian Empire ceased to exist and broke into several independent republics (Russia being the largest). Each of these republics was eventually controlled by a Bolshevik-led Soviet as the Red Army advanced and defeated the Whites. In December 1922, these independent Soviet republics were rejoined together to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

When Tsar Nicholas II and his family were executed in July 1918, Russia was no longer an empire. The USSR established a one-party political system under the Communist Party led by Vladimir Lenin. He began the process of completely restructuring the political, economic and social systems according to communist ideology, which was a direct affront to Wilson and the principles of democracy he held to be sacred. For the United States and, to a lesser extent, Great Britain, the establishment of stable, capitalist democracies in Eastern Europe was essential to create a buffer zone between them and Lenin's communist USSR.

The Demand for Self-Determination

Wilson's *Fourteen Points* promised decolonization—by definition, colonies were breeding grounds of poverty, injustice and violence, all of which could lead to communism. But after the devastating war, the European victors (Great Britain, France and Belgium) still needed the financial support the colonies provided and were not about to let them go. In fact, during the Paris Peace Conference and subsequent negotiations, they gained even more territory through the seizure of Germany's former colonies in Africa and the former Ottoman territory, all of which were declared to be League of Nations mandates but put under the direct control of either Great Britain or France.

But in the colonies and dominions, the colonists heard Wilson's promise of self-determination loud and clear. When they did not receive political independence from the Paris Peace Conference, many tried to achieve it on their own. The result was often violence and bloodshed because most colonies lacked the internal nationalist leadership to put together a successful independence movement. France and Belgium in particular were adamant about holding onto these colonies for economic gain, exploiting the land and labor of Africa and Asia in an effort to rebuild Europe. They utilized all the technology developed prior to the Great War to keep control through fear and military domination.

Clearly the most successful imperial power in terms of territory and wealth, Great Britain had invested a lot of money into making its colonies operate efficiently. Great Britain built railroads, schools and local court systems, and in many cases relied on local elites to maintain a political and social hierarchy for stability. Many of Britain's colonies participated willingly in the Great War, sending supplies, laborers and troops. So after the war, they felt like they earned respect, which to them meant being treated as equals rather than subordinates. But the British government did not offer equality, sparking protests, labor strikes and boycotts on the part of

MAKE THE CONNECTION

- Why were independent countries created in Eastern Europe but mandates created in the Middle East?
- Does the creation of the successor states solve the problems that led to the Great War?
- What might be the long-term effects of creating mandates in the Middle East?



The Flag of the Soviet Union.

dominions

autonomous communities under the authority of the British Empire (monarch)

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