

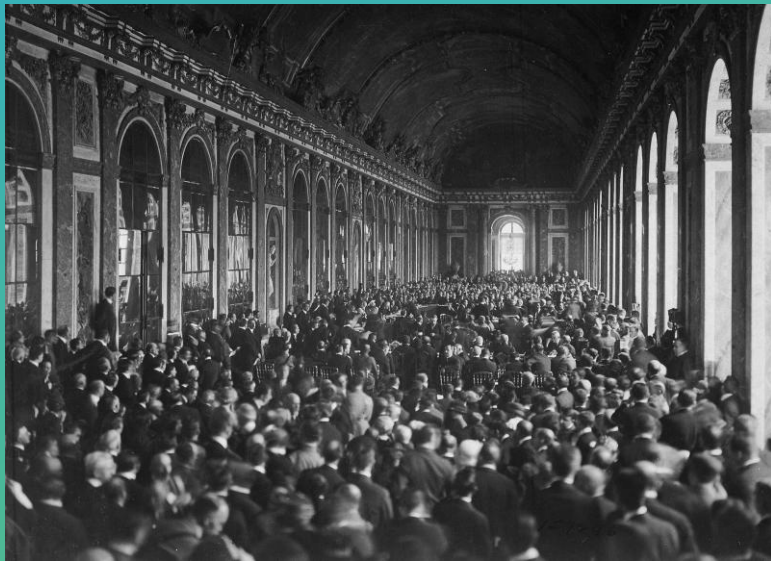
# THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES(1919)

END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

NEW MAP OF EUROPE



# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Signing of the treaty in the Hall of Mirrors,  
Palace of Versailles.

Helen Johns Kirtland (1890-1979) and Lucian  
Swift Kirtland (died 1965) — US National Archives

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## When?

**28 June 1919**, five years after the assassination in Sarajevo (28 June 1914).

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## Where?

Hall of Mirrors, Palace of Versailles.

*Symbol:* To erase the humiliation suffered by France in 1871 (proclamation of the German Empire in the same room).

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## Who is signing?

The Allies (France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Italy, etc.) **without Germany.**

# KEY PLAYERS: THE "BIG FOUR"



Signing of the treaty.

Country	Representative	Key objectives
France	<b>Georges Clemenceau</b>	Weaken Germany, reclaim Alsace-Lorraine, economic reparations
United Kingdom	<b>David Lloyd George</b>	Balance of power in Europe: avoiding a Germany that is too weakened
United States	<b>Woodrow Wilson</b>	Lasting peace, the establishment of the League of Nations, the right of peoples to self-determination
Italy	<b>Vittorio Orlando</b>	Reclaim territories (Trento, Trieste, Dalmatia)

KEY  
PROVISIONS  
OF THE TREATY  
—  
TERRITORIAL  
CHANGES

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**Alsace-Lorraine:** Return to France.

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**German colonies:** Divided among the Allies  
(e.g. Cameroon to France, Togo to the United Kingdom).

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**The creation of new states:** Poland, Czechoslovakia,  
Yugoslavia.

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**Danzig :** A free city under international control.

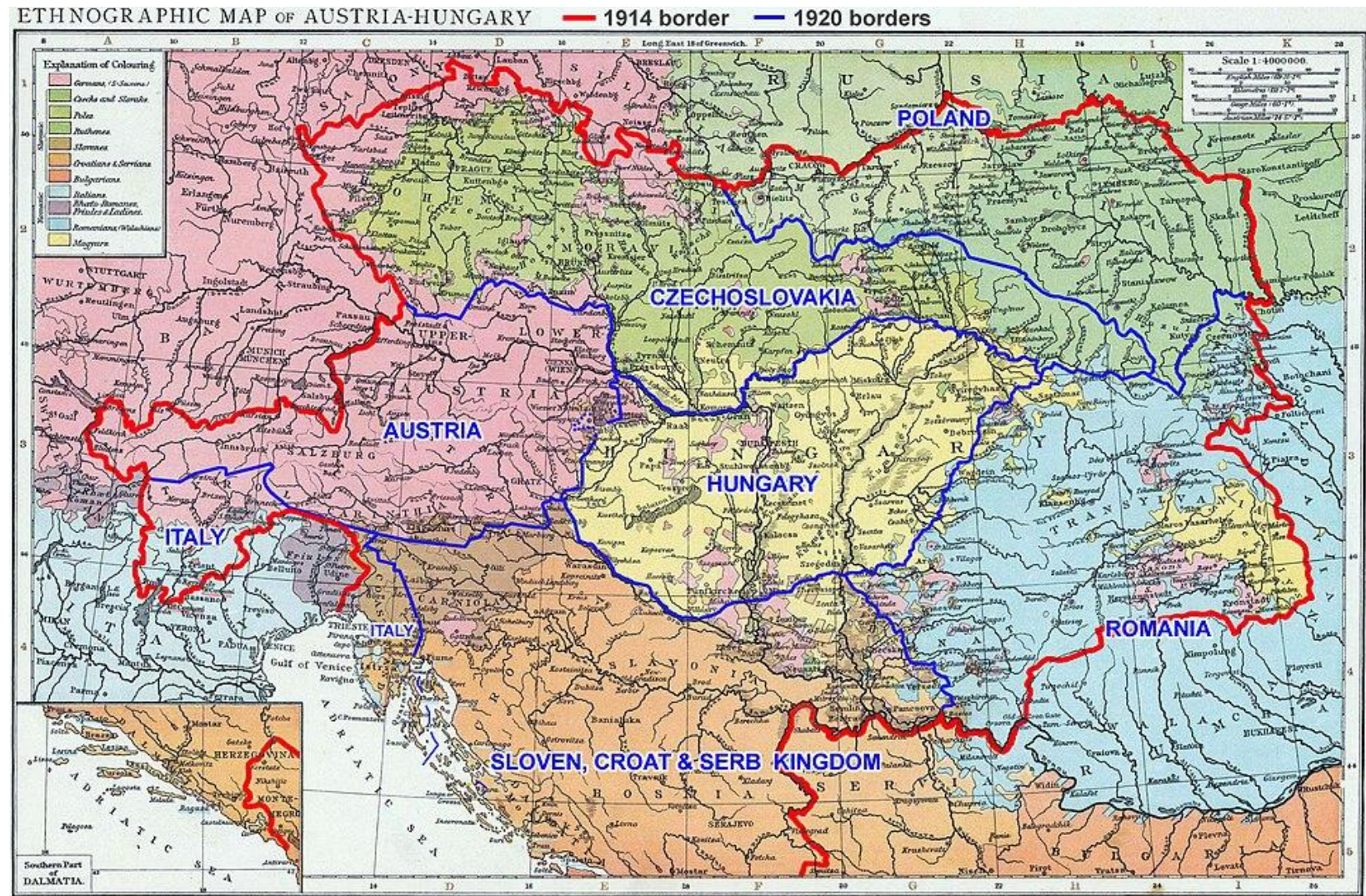
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**The Danzig Corridor:** providing Poland with access to the sea,  
it separates East Prussia from Germany.

# KEY PROVISIONS OF THE TREATY

## — TERRITORIAL CHANGES

Map of Austria-Hungary in 1914 showing the linguistic areas according to the 1890 census, the borders of 1914 (red) and those of 1919 (blue) drawn up by the Lord Commission in accordance with President Wilson's Fourteen Points, and which, for the most part, were still in place at the start of the 21st century.



KEY  
PROVISIONS  
OF THE TREATY  
—  
MILITARY  
RESTRICTIONS

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The German army is limited to **100,000 men** (conscription abolished).

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Prohibition of **tanks, aircraft, submarines and heavy artillery.**

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**Demilitarisation of the Rhineland**  
(left bank of the Rhine + the cities of Koblenz, Mainz and Cologne).

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**German fleet handed over to the Allies**  
(scuttled at Scapa Flow).

KEY

PROVISIONS

OF THE TREATY

–

ECONOMIC

REPARATIONS

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**132 billion gold marks**

( $\approx$  5,422 billion euros in 2025).

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Deliveries of equipment:

5,000 guns, 25,000 aircraft, ships.

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Loss of **industrial patents**

(e.g. Bayer's aspirin enters the public domain).

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**Internationalisation of rivers:**

Rhine, Oder, Elbe.

KEY

PROVISIONS OF  
THE TREATY

—

ESTABLISHMENT  
OF THE LEAGUE  
OF NATIONS



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**Objective:**

To maintain peace and resolve conflicts through diplomacy.

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**Principle:**

The right of peoples to self-determination.

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**Note:**

**The United States is not a signatory**  
(the US Senate refused to ratify the treaty).

# REACTIONS IN FRANCE

## Highlights:

- Recovery of Alsace-Lorraine.
- Demilitarisation of the Rhineland.

## Disillusionments:

- No buffer state was established in the Rhineland.
- The amount of reparations was deemed insufficient.
- Clemenceau was criticised: his opponents nicknamed him "Perd-la-Victoire" (Lose-the-Victory).

# REACTIONS IN GERMANY

Humiliation: Imposed treaty (Diktat).

Article 231: Germany bears sole responsibility for the war.

Reactions:

- Resignation of the government (Scheidemann).
- Acceptance under duress (ultimatum: French invasion in the event of refusal).
- **Consequences:** Rise in resentment and nationalism (exploited by Hitler).

# REACTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN ITALY

## In the United States:

- Refusal to ratify the treaty: The US Senate feared that this would entail too strong a commitment to Europe.
- Consequence: **The United States did not join the League of Nations**, thereby undermining its effectiveness.

## In Italy:

- "*A hollow victory*": Italy did not secure all the territories it had been promised (e.g. Dalmatia).
- Consequence: **The rise of fascism** (Mussolini exploited this discontent).

THE LONG-  
TERM  
CONSEQUENCES  
—  
HIGHLIGHTS



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## Establishment of the League of Nations (LN)

(a first step towards an international organisation).

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Europe is being reshaped in accordance with **the right of peoples to self-determination** (ex. : Poland, Czechoslovakia).

# THE LONG- TERM CONSEQUENCES

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## DOWNSIDES



### The situation is too tough for Germany:

- Economic crisis (hyperinflation in 1923).
- Rise of Nazism (Hitler promised to "*break the chains of Versailles*").

The failure of the League of Nations:  
without the United States, it cannot prevent  
conflicts.

### The run-up to the Second World War:

- Germany sought **to annul the treaty** (covert rearmament, annexations).
- Reparations **were halted in 1933** (when Hitler came to power).

# CONCLUSION: A CONTROVERSIAL TREATY

## Why is this treaty important?

- It brought the First World War to an end.
- It reshaped Europe and created new states.

## Why is he being criticised?

- **Too much** for Germany → the seeds of a new conflict.
- **Not effective enough** to guarantee peace (a weakened League of Nations).

**Book :** Margaret MacMillan *Peacemakers: The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* ([ISBN 0-7195-5939-1](#)), 2001; [Télécharger livre en pdf \[archive\]](#).

**Website :** [Wikipédia - Traité de Versailles](#).

Further reading:

