

### The Peace of Paris and the New International Order

The Paris Peace Conference, which was convened in January 1919, at the French Foreign Ministry (popularly known by its location, the Quai d'Orsay), constituted the largest and most important diplomatic gathering since the Congress of Vienna of 1814–15. Seventy delegates representing the twenty-seven victorious nations, accompanied by hundreds of advisers, clerks, and journalists, descended on the French capital to participate in the process of peacemaking that customarily follows the conclusion of great wars. The enormity of the human and material devastation recently witnessed hung like a cloud over the deliberations: Ten million lives had been lost during the previous four years. Another twenty million people had sustained war-related injuries. The total direct cost of the war was estimated at \$180 billion and the indirect cost at over \$150 billion. The four great empires that had exercised authority over hundreds of millions of people in the old world—Hohenzollern Germany, Habsburg Austria-Hungary, Romanov Russia, and Ottoman Turkey—had either disappeared or, in the case of the latter, were soon to expire. From their ashes arose politically unstable, economically backward states whose viability remained problematical. The agenda of the conference was twofold: to repair the political and economic fabric of half the world, and to prevent a recurrence of the type of organized violence that had recently been brought to an end.

The president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, astonished his compatriots by deciding to attend the peace conference in person, becoming the first American chief executive to visit a foreign country while in office. All the more shocking, and infuriating to his critics at home, was his insistence on remaining in Europe (except for a brief return journey) for six consecutive months while subordinates in Washington were left to contend with the pressing domestic problems of postwar readjustment. Wilson had arrived in Europe in mid-December 1918 armed with more moral authority than any other national leader in history. His periodic exhortations on behalf of a new world order that would forever banish the scourge of war represented an entirely novel approach to the conduct of international relations, or so it seemed to the millions of war-weary European

citizens who greeted him with unrestrained enthusiasm. In those intoxicating weeks before the opening of the conference, it appeared as though an exhausted continent, bled white by the most destructive war yet endured by mankind, had received a savior from across the sea untarnished by the discredited practices of traditional statecraft that had brought Europe to its present plight.

Insofar as one could judge from his public pronouncements on the subject, the American president believed that war in general, and the recent war in particular, was traceable to three principal causes. The first was the practice of secret diplomacy, whereby political leaders surreptitiously concluded military alliances and diplomatic engagements to further their own nation's ambitions. The second was the tendency of politically dominant nationality groups to oppress the ethnic minorities under their control. The third was the political system of autocracy, which enabled a privileged elite to monopolize political power at the expense of the population at large. Remove these impediments to the unfettered expression of the public will, Wilson seemed to be saying, and you will have abolished forever the causes of war. Secret diplomacy would give way to free and open discussion of international issues, a process certain to maximize the beneficent influence of public opinion and minimize the role of secretive intrigues by imperialistically inclined national leaders. The map of Europe was to be redrawn according to the principle of national self-determination so as to liberate the long-suppressed aspirations of nationality groups whose struggle for independence had caused most of the wars of recent memory. And finally, the internal political institutions of Europe would be democratized so as to remove the autocratic constraints on public opinion that had permitted the ruling elites of the Central Powers to wage their war of aggression. Crowning this new achievement of internal and international democratization would be a world organization of free and independent nations empowered to resolve international disputes by negotiation and compromise, just as parliaments in democratic societies adjudicated the conflicting claims of their citizens.

It is easy to appreciate the appeal that this Wilsonian program exercised on the "generation of the trenches" in Europe. It engendered almost limitless hopes and expectations in the minds of a traumatized population craving for assurances that peace would endure. The two slogans most often associated with Wilson's name, "the war to end all wars" and "the war to make the world safe for democracy," both symbolized the widespread anticipation that the recent bloodbath had not been fought entirely in vain: People hoped that eternal peace and universal liberty would become its two unintended legacies.

The disappointment of these optimistic expectations represented one of the most tragic episodes in modern world history. So high were the hopes, so bitter was the disillusionment, that the genuine accomplishments of the Paris Peace Conference (which, as we shall see, were considerable, in view of the complexity of the problems that it confronted) have receded far into the background of historical memory. What is recalled instead is the enormous gap between intention and achievement. Because the American leader chose to express his foreign policy in the moralistic language of humanitarian idealism, he raised expecta-

tions that could not fail to be disappointed. The vague prescriptions for peace and liberty that filled Wilson's speeches crashed on the shoals of political reality in Paris, where fallible human beings assembled to undertake the momentous task of redrawing of the political map of Europe and organizing the economic recovery of the world.

The contrast between Wilsonian theory and practice came to light in the opening sessions of the peace conference, when the heads of government endeavored to establish effective procedures for peacemaking. The principle of equality among sovereign nations, born of the pervasive distrust of great-power diplomacy, dissolved in the decision-making process of these organizational meetings. The two ranking delegates of the five great powers—the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan—preempted for themselves the right to adjudicate the important issues before the conference as the “Council of Ten.” The leaders of the other twenty-two states in attendance were reduced to pleading their case, either in writing or in person, before these ten plenipotentiaries. When even this truncated decision-making apparatus subsequently proved too unwieldy, the leaders of the four great powers (minus Japan) began to meet in Wilson's quarters as the “Council of Four” to decide among themselves the fate of the world.

The preeminent position of the great powers at the Peace Conference was subsequently extended to the Covenant of the League of Nations, Wilson's cherished scheme for a world organization that was unveiled before the delegates on April 28. While each member state was to be represented by one vote in the General Assembly of the new organization, the principal decision-making body, called the Council, included permanent seats for delegates of the five great powers. A requirement of unanimity assured that each permanent member could veto any proposal that threatened to impinge upon its national interests. Other features of the League Covenant effectively preserved the inequality of power among the member nations. The British and French colonial empires were treated as single political units (except for Britain's self-governing Dominions, which obtained separate representation); at the behest of the American delegation, the Monroe Doctrine was specifically excluded from the purview of the League Covenant (thereby preserving the exclusive prerogative of the United States to maintain the peace in its hemisphere). The right to national self-determination, which was to be applied to the successor states of the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires in Europe, went unrecognized insofar as the non-European populations of the colonial world were concerned. Attempts by Latin American delegates to invoke the League's protection against interference by the United States in their internal affairs fell on deaf ears, as did efforts by spokespersons for the oppressed nationalities of the British and French empires in Asia to obtain recognition of their right to self-government. The application of Wilsonian principles was evidently to be restricted to the white nations of the Western world, and among those favored states, the four great powers of the victorious coalition were to preserve their preeminent position.

The much-heralded Wilsonian principle of open diplomacy was likewise an

early casualty of the peacemaking process. It rapidly became evident that the American president's lofty promise of "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at" implied merely that the final texts of diplomatic agreements should be published (unlike those "secret treaties" that had codified the various alliances of the great powers before and during the war). What it definitely did *not* mean, as revealed by Wilson's behavior in Paris, was that diplomacy ought to be subject to the influence of public opinion as expressed by press or parliament. The Council of Four conducted its deliberations in the utmost secrecy, at first even without taking minutes. When the British delegation finally insisted that a written record of the proceedings be preserved, a secretary was admitted on the condition that his notes be withheld from public scrutiny. The press, denied direct access to the decision makers, was compelled to rely on sanitized summaries of the daily deliberations. Most of what we know about the negotiations behind these closed doors comes from the notes taken by the British secretary and the French interpreter, which were published long after the end of the conference.

If the press had minimal access to and influence on the decision-making process in Paris, the elected legislative representatives of the four great powers had even less. Wilson in particular took little account of public opinion in his own country as recorded in the midterm elections of November 1918, which had returned Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. Instead of selecting a peace delegation that reflected this new shift in public sentiment, he chose men who either shared his own views on world affairs or lacked the authority to speak for the new Republican majority in the Senate (whose votes were required for legislative consent to the agreements reached at the conference). In his relations with the other Allied representatives he relied heavily on his hand-picked associate, Colonel Edward House, a behind-the-scenes political operator who reported directly to his old friend in the White House. Public expressions of legislative opposition to Wilson's policies in Paris, such as the famous "round robin" resolution signed by a sufficient number of senators or senators-elect to deny congressional consent to the treaty, had no apparent effect on the president.

The other Allied leaders were similarly insulated from the influence of domestic public opinion. The French premier, Georges Clemenceau, imposed a rigid censorship on the Parisian press and denied the Chamber of Deputies any role in the peacemaking process. Like Wilson, he ignored the advice of his foreign minister (and all other senior members of his government), preferring to consult his loyal personal assistant, André Tardieu, on most crucial matters. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, though more sensitive to political pressures at home, often took positions in the privacy of the conference room that directly contradicted his public utterances. Not only were the covenants not "openly arrived at," they were fashioned amid an atmosphere of secrecy reminiscent of the diplomatic practice of the prewar years that had supposedly been repudiated.

These deviations from the lofty standards of Wilsonianism were prompted not merely by the demands of procedural efficiency: If the complexity and sensitivity of the problems confronting the peace conference required that decision-making authority be centralized in a group of four men meeting in private, then its

membership might have been chosen by lot from among the twenty-seven delegations. That it was these particular four men who successfully arrogated unto themselves the function of drafting the peace treaties with the defeated enemies reflected the political realities of the postwar world. No amount of lip service to the principle of the equality of nations could conceal the glaring inequality of power relationships among the sovereign states whose leaders deliberated in Paris. The United States, Great Britain, France, and, to a lesser extent, Italy and Japan (the latter's representatives participated only when issues relating to East Asia were on the agenda) dominated the peace conference because they dominated the world after the defeat of Germany and the collapse of Russia. It was these nations that had raised armies of millions of men, mobilized their considerable economic resources, and imposed military defeat on the Central Powers. It was these nations that collectively exercised economic and political dominion over most of the land surface of the globe and naval control over its waterways. It was inconceivable to expect them to relinquish their prerogative to preside over the realignment of international power relationships that necessarily follows major wars. It was equally unrealistic to assume that their policies at the peace conference would reflect anything other than their own governments' conception of what their respective national interests required.

This intrusion of national interest into the decision-making procedures became particularly apparent during the deliberations concerning the redistribution of the territory, resources, and populations of the regions previously under the political control of the defeated powers. For reasons presently to be discussed, the victorious Allies held sharply conflicting views regarding the appropriate means of accomplishing the ultimate objective that they all shared, namely, the reestablishment of peace and security in Europe and economic prosperity in the world. This conflict over means eventually shattered the spirit of unity that had cemented the victorious wartime coalition. The Paris Peace Conference, which had opened with such high hopes, ended amid an atmosphere of inter-Allied acrimony that was to hamstring future efforts to enforce the provisions of the peace treaties that it produced.

The two essential goals of the French delegation at the peace conference were the definitive removal of the menace of German military aggression in Europe and the acquisition of financial assistance to defray the costs of restoring the territory in northeastern France that had been devastated by the German army during the war. All of the other French objectives at the conference were negotiable. These two were not.

France's preoccupation with obtaining ironclad guarantees against a revival of German military power derived from its vulnerable geographical and demographic situation at the end of the Great War. The long frontier with Germany, unprotected in its northern sector by natural impediments to military aggression such as wide rivers or high mountains, remained a source of grave concern to French military strategists. This sense of vulnerability was heightened by the loss of Russia as an eastern counterweight to German power. Equally alarming were the comparative statistics of population and natality in the two countries.

There were 39 million Frenchmen facing 63 million Germans, even with the addition of the nearly 2 million citizens of Alsace-Lorraine. The decline of the French birthrate that had begun long before the war was accentuated by the death of 1.4 million potential fathers on the battlefield. Soon the Germans would be increasing in number at twice the rate of the French. The mid-1930s, when Germany could be expected to renew its bid for continental hegemony, would mark the beginning of a drastic reduction in the pool of French manpower available for military service.

How security against a German military revival could best be obtained became a matter of intense debate within the French government as well as in the country at large. Strident spokesmen for the nationalist Right demanded a return to the policies of Richelieu and Mazarin in the seventeenth century, which had kept France strong and secure by keeping Germany weak and divided. Such a policy implied the forcible partition of the German Reich into the pre-Bismarckian hodgepodge of some two dozen independent political units. The spontaneous emergence of separatist sentiment in the predominantly Catholic regions of southern and western Germany, which pressed for liberation from Protestant, Prussian domination, represented sufficient temptation for the French government to tender surreptitious support to these centrifugal forces within the enemy's frontiers. But the traditional French maxim that German unity was incompatible with French security was a relic of the "old diplomacy" and its balance-of-power doctrine. It was altogether inappropriate to the "new diplomacy" associated with the Wilsonian program, which valued the right to national self-determination (even when invoked by a former enemy) higher than the claims of continental security. Correctly anticipating vigorous opposition from the American delegation, French Premier Clemenceau presented a scaled-down version of this punitive scheme at the peace conference.

The focus of Clemenceau's strategy for ensuring French security was the region of western Germany strategically situated between the French frontier and the Rhine River, popularly known as the Rhineland. Geographers and military strategists on all sides agreed that control of this buffer zone separating the two ancient adversaries in Western Europe would determine the future power relationship between them. A German military force ensconced in the Rhineland would find no geographical obstacles between itself and France's major industrial sector in the northeast (including the iron-producing region of Lorraine that had been the prime object of German expansionist ambition during the war) and the center of French administrative authority in Paris. A French military contingent stationed in the Rhineland and on the bridgeheads on the opposite side of the river would be within striking distance of the industrial heartland of Germany located in the adjacent Ruhr Valley. So decisive was the strategic position of the Rhineland that military occupation of it by one of these two powers would almost certainly deter the other from daring to pursue an aggressive foreign policy on the continent.

In recognition of this geopolitical imperative, Clemenceau proposed at the peace conference that the Rhineland be severed from Germany and reconstituted

as an independent sovereign state under French military protection. Fortunately for the French, the separatist group that had sprouted in this region after the armistice was the most ambitious and vocal of the “anti-Prussian” liberation movements in the predominantly Catholic portions of Germany. Unfortunately, it had failed to secure the support of the vast majority of the Rhenish population, which remained loyal to the national state with which it shared a common language and heritage. The forcible separation of the Rhineland from Germany would not only violate the principle of national self-determination (since a plebiscite in the region would certainly have resulted in the rejection of independence); it would also, particularly in the eyes of British Prime Minister Lloyd George, have created another Alsace-Lorraine, that is, a perpetual source of friction between Germany and the victorious powers responsible for depriving her of her “lost province.”

In the face of intense Anglo-American pressure, which at one point included a veiled threat by President Wilson to abandon the peace conference in midsession, the French premier acquiesced in a compromise arrangement on the Rhine. In return for France’s acceptance of German political sovereignty over the Rhineland, the American and British leaders consented to the following set of protective guarantees: the prohibition in perpetuity against the deployment of German military forces or the construction of fortifications on the territory west of the Rhine as well as on a strip fifty kilometers wide on the east bank of the river; the inter-Allied military occupation of the Rhineland for a fifteen-year period (at the end of which, it was presumed, the militaristic spirit of the old Germany would have been snuffed out by the forces of German democracy that had recently come to power); and, just in case, the permanent reduction of the German army to a token force of 100,000 men, prohibition of the manufacture of military aircraft, tanks, and other offensive weapons by Germany, and an unprecedented commitment by the United States and Great Britain to defend France by force of arms in the event of unprovoked German aggression. These measures satisfied Clemenceau as minimally acceptable guarantees against a future German military threat.

No less important than this search for security was France’s economic objective of postwar reconstruction. It was a cruel irony that defeated Germany emerged from the Great War with its national territory virtually untouched by the ravages of combat while the most productive region of victorious France lay in ruins. The ten northeastern *départements* of France that had served as the battleground on the western front had been devasted during the four years of combat. To add insult to injury, the retreating German army had deliberately laid waste to the territory they were forced to evacuate; there is some evidence to suggest that this was done not only to deny its resources to the advancing Allied armies, but also to accord German economic interests a competitive advantage over their French counterparts after the war by crippling France’s capacity for economic recovery. Coal mines flooded, railways and telegraph lines destroyed, farmland pockmarked with shell holes and honeycombed with trenches, livestock slaughtered, homes put to the torch—such was the somber scene that greeted the Allied

armies as they liberated the war zone in the autumn of 1918. This destruction of industrial plant, agricultural acreage, and communication and transportation facilities in the northeastern region, together with the severe labor shortages caused by the wartime casualties, had gravely undermined France's productive capacity. To make matters worse, the liquidation of the major portion of France's foreign investment portfolio to finance the war effort, the incurring of massive foreign indebtedness, and the loss of the extensive prewar investments in Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey had strained the country's financial resources almost to the breaking point. The necessity to reconstruct the devastated regions; to accommodate the needs of the millions of refugees, widows, orphans, and disabled veterans; and to service the enormous foreign debt incurred during the war required an immense effort of national economic recovery that clearly could not be sustained by the nation's depleted financial resources. It was evident that a massive infusion of capital from abroad was needed to defray the costs of France's postwar economic rehabilitation.

Historians of the Paris Peace Conference have almost invariably portrayed French authorities as united in the expectation that the costs of French economic recovery could and should be borne by Germany. But recent research has revealed that key officials in the Clemenceau government entertained the hope that national reconstruction would be financed not by the defeated enemy, but rather by France's two English-speaking associates that had been spared the trauma of military occupation and material destruction. What led France's economic planners to anticipate such assistance from the wartime partners across the Channel and the Atlantic was the development of a remarkable degree of economic cooperation among the Allied nations during the last year of the war. A number of inter-Allied organizations had been established in London to pool and allocate available cargo space on ships, raw materials, and munitions essential for the prosecution of the war. In this way France received from the United States and the British Empire deliveries of coal, oil, wheat, and dozens of other commodities that she was unable to produce domestically in sufficient quantities. The French minister of commerce, Etienne Clémentel, assisted by his enterprising young representative in London, Jean Monnet, mounted a vigorous campaign during the winter of 1918–19 to persuade American and British officials to extend this system of wartime economic cooperation to the postwar period. In Clémentel's scheme, France's economic reconstruction would be treated as an inter-Allied responsibility to be borne jointly by the governments of the victorious coalition on the basis of their financial capacity.

To a certain degree this program of postwar economic cooperation incorporated the spirit of the proposals tentatively adopted by the European Allies at the Paris Economic Conference of 1916. In the course of the intervening two years it had become unmistakably evident that the United States alone possessed sufficient financial resources to underwrite such an ambitious undertaking. At the time of the armistice, therefore, the Clémentel plan revived the idea of a permanent economic bloc of the victorious Allies originally envisioned by the Paris program of 1916, with the critical difference that the United States was to be in-

cluded within rather than excluded from the proposed system. Furthermore, after the economic revitalization of France and Belgium was completed, Germany would be gradually integrated into what might be called a new Atlantic economic order after it had been severed from the Central European economic bloc that had begun to take shape after the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. In this respect the French plan represented a modified version of Germany's wartime scheme for Mitteleuropa, with the roles reversed. There was originally little serious talk in French government circles about compelling Germany to foot the bill for France's economic recovery, for reasons presently to be sketched. Germany would be expected to contribute its share to the rebuilding of the territory that its armies had devastated, but only as part of a global effort of postwar recovery to be financed in large part by the United States.

The expectation that the American government would commit substantial public funds to the reconstruction of war-ravaged Europe was ill founded. Throughout the period of America's participation in the war, President Wilson had scrupulously insisted on his nation's separate and distinct status as an "associate" of the European Allies. The United States government had only reluctantly and belatedly associated itself with the inter-Allied economic machinery in the last year of the war, and then mainly for the purpose of limiting and coordinating the European Allies' requests for American aid. Once the victory over Germany had been assured, the United States government saw the area of economic interest that it had in common with its European partners as having narrowed considerably.

The first overt indication of this transatlantic parting of ways appeared on the eve of the armistice, when the American government formally rejected the French proposals for an inter-Allied pooling of economic resources on the basis of need during the period of postwar reconstruction. Even the shrewd attempt by French officials to identify this scheme of international economic cooperation with Wilson's pet project for international political cooperation, the League of Nations, failed to sway American policymakers. The Wilson administration made it clear that it expected the European nations to rely on their own resources to finance their economic recovery; any additional funds required would have to be sought through private investment channels in the American money market. In December 1918, President Wilson dismantled the War Industries Board, thereby removing government controls on raw materials and industrial production in the United States, and within a month he had begun to reduce American participation in the inter-Allied economic committees. In the spring of 1919 the secretary of the treasury announced his intention to terminate all American government loans to the wartime partners. In the future, the European states would be expected to seek the loans and credits they required on Wall Street instead of in Washington. Thus the French scheme for inter-Allied sharing of economic and financial resources was torpedoed by the American government's insistence on the return to the peacetime conditions of the free market. It was to be American investors and American exporters, not American taxpayers, who would supply Europe with the investment capital, raw materials, and products it required,

and at the going price. There would be no Marshall Plan for European recovery after the First World War, as Clémentel, Monnet, and other French officials had hoped.

In the face of this abrupt return to economic nationalism by the United States, France was driven to seek relief from its economic distress in the form of "reparation" payments from Germany. As expressed in the meetings of the Reparations Commission of the peace conference, France's claims upon German resources were essentially of two types. The first was deliveries in kind of certain vital raw materials that Germany possessed in abundance but France lacked, most notably high-grade coal. The second was a relatively moderate debt of cash payments that could be readily "mobilized" (that is, converted into negotiable securities available for purchase by foreign investors, presumably Americans, in the secondary bond market) so as to turn the long-term German debt to France into immediately usable American credits. A high reparation bill was not an unmixed blessing for France. It could be paid only from the surplus of German exports over German imports, which would require an expansion of Germany's foreign trade at the expense of France's own exporters who were eager to recapture foreign markets lost during the war. Moreover, France was willing to receive as payment in kind on reparation account only those German goods (such as coal and timber) that did not compete with the products of French industry. To receive manufactured articles from Germany would be to grant German industrialists an inroad in the French market to the detriment of their French competitors.

The French government was therefore originally willing to abide by the relatively moderate prescriptions of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, which confined Germany's obligation to the reparation of civilian damages. Such a formula would have resulted in a total German payment of only 19 billion gold marks, of which France would have received 70 percent based on the extent of the damage to its national territory. The fixing of a specific, moderate sum would have greatly increased the chances of German acceptance of the obligation to defray the costs of French reconstruction, which could have been discharged without a drastic reduction in the German standard of living.

But such a moderate settlement of reparation claims was foreclosed by the intransigence of the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. Since the damage to civilian property in Great Britain\* had been minimal, Lloyd George persuaded Wilson to include the cost of veterans' pensions and separation allowances in the total bill to be submitted to Germany in order to maximize Britain's share of reparation payments. Although this modification affected only the distribution of receipts among the various recipient countries and did not increase Germany's total liability, it left a lasting impression of Allied greed and unfairness. To make matters worse, the peacemakers decided to postpone the establishment of a total figure for the German liability until May 1921, with the provision that Germany make a down payment of \$5 billion in the interim. The

\*Caused by bombs dropped by Zeppelin airships and Gotha bombers in cross-Channel raids.



would enable the newly created or enlarged successor states of the Habsburg and Romanov empires to preserve their independence from their two temporarily weakened but potentially powerful neighbors. The group of small and medium-sized states stretching from the Baltic to the Balkans were thought by French officials to hold the key to the future balance of power on the continent. The geographical barrier that they collectively formed between Germany and Russia seemed to represent the most effective means of preventing a rapprochement between those two dissatisfied powers at the expense of the victorious Allies. The new nations of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, together with the newly enlarged state of Romania, proudly asserted their right to national identity. But the mere declaration of national independence proved much simpler than the task of delimiting national frontiers in a region where the intermingling of populations throughout multinational empires during centuries of migration precluded the formation of ethnically homogeneous states. To complicate matters even further, economic and strategic considerations dictated several egregious violations of the principle of national self-determination. Thus, a million German-speaking citizens of Posen and West Prussia were incorporated into the new state of Poland in order to satisfy that fledgling nation's need for access to a seaport on the Baltic. In order to provide Czechoslovakia with defensible frontiers, 3.25 million German inhabitants of the borderlands of Bohemia were included in that new state. The German-speaking citizens of the rump state of Austria were expressly forbidden to join Germany proper, because the unification of those two Germanic states was deemed an intolerable menace to the security of the newly formed nations of Eastern Europe. As in the case of the Rhineland, but this time with no success, Britain opposed many of these violations of German nationality claims on the grounds that they were likely to incite perpetual German dissatisfaction with the peace settlement.

The principal motivation for this conciliatory policy toward Germany in territorial matters may be traced directly to the British government's conception of its nation's vital interests. Lloyd George's strategy at the peace conference was dictated by the overriding objective of assuring that Germany would never again threaten the sea-lanes of the empire and Britain's access to supplies in the western hemisphere. Such a guarantee was obtained through the reduction of the German navy to a token force of six warships and a corresponding number of auxiliary craft, the prohibition of submarines, and the redistribution of the German colonial empire in Africa and the Pacific among the victorious Allies as mandates under the auspices of the League of Nations. This naval and colonial settlement terminated the *Weltpolitik* inaugurated by the ill-fated William II. Thus restored to the continental position that she had occupied under Bismark, Germany ceased to pose a menace to British imperial and maritime interests. Accordingly, Great Britain reverted to its traditional policy of promoting continental equilibrium in order to free her to play a global role. Specifically, this implied a moderate territorial settlement in Europe that would preserve Germany as a counterweight to French power on the continent. The reestablishment of such a balance between the former ally and the former foe became all the more necessary in

British eyes as France began to court the new successor states in Eastern Europe. The prospect of a French-dominated coalition on the continent was hardly less distasteful to British officials than had been that of a Europe under the German yoke.

Because of the divergent national interests of the British and the French, the wartime coalition did not survive the advent of peace. Soon after the signing of the peace treaty with Germany at the royal palace in the Parisian suburb of Versailles on June 28, 1919, the fissures in the Anglo-French Entente became a matter of public record. As successive French governments struggled to enforce strict adherence to the peace treaty, successive British governments chose to interpret its provisions in the broadest and most lenient sense. The most notable cause of Anglo-French friction over the application of the Versailles Treaty concerned the reparations section. While Lloyd George had forcefully advocated the imposition of a heavy indemnity on Germany at the peace conference, British financial officials were apprehensive about the consequences of such a punitive reparation settlement for their country's economic interests. Inspired by the writings of John Maynard Keynes, a treasury official attached to the British delegation in Paris, British public opinion came to believe that a prosperous Germany was essential to the resumption of Britain's prewar trading patterns with Europe. Various arguments were advanced in London to justify drastic reductions in Germany's reparations bill even before a specific sum was fixed in May 1921. The first of these centered on Germany's prewar position as a major market for British manufactured products. Large reparation payments to France would inevitably reduce Germany's capacity to import and thereby deprive British industry of a potentially valuable customer on the continent. The second related issue revolved around the so-called transfer problem that had confounded the financial authorities at the peace conference: Germany could transfer her real wealth to France only by generating a foreign trade surplus at the expense of British and other Allied commerce. Britain's export trade, on which she depended so desperately for her economic well-being, would be severely damaged if Germany were permitted to capture foreign markets in order to earn sufficient foreign exchange to discharge its reparation debt to France. During the first half of the 1920s when the British economy suffered a prolonged crisis of industrial stagnation and high unemployment, this manner of thinking inspired the reparations policy of the British government, to the continual consternation of the financially hard-pressed French. The reparations imbroglio, aggravated by Anglo-French policy differences concerning Eastern Europe, the Rhineland occupation, and the Middle East,\* effectively dissipated the wartime spirit of cooperation.

This Anglo-French wrangling transpired in the absence of the only power that possessed the economic resources and political influence to ease the world's transition to peacetime conditions. The explanation of America's abrupt withdrawal from world affairs after the close of the Paris Peace Conference is beyond

\*France and Britain pursued divergent policies during the Greco-Turkish conflict of 1920–22, Paris supporting the Turks, London backing the Greeks. In addition, France suspected Britain of undermining French authority in Syria, which it acquired in 1920 as a mandate under the League of Nations.

the scope of this book. Suffice it to say that one group of historians emphasizes the shortsightedness and narrow-mindedness of the Republican majority in the Senate, which emasculated President Wilson's program of peace in order to avoid the unprecedented global commitments that it entailed; others blame the president's own unbending intransigence in the face of domestic political realities. Whatever the cause, the refusal of the United States Senate to accord its constitutionally prescribed consent to the three pacts signed by President Wilson at Paris—the peace treaty with Germany, the bilateral security treaty with France, and the Covenant of the League of Nations—resulted in the termination of America's participation in the peacekeeping machinery. (The only exception to this across-the-board American retrenchment was the maintenance of American military forces in the inter-Allied occupation army in the Rhineland, and even that token commitment was prematurely withdrawn in 1923.) America's return to diplomatic isolation left its wartime associates with the entire responsibility for supervising the peace settlement that Wilson had played such a prominent role in fashioning. With the reduction of Britain's commitments on the continent and the temporary disappearance of Russia from the European scene, that responsibility devolved by default upon France, in association with such small states in Eastern Europe as she could enlist in a coalition committed to the preservation of the political status quo.

But American abstention from European peacekeeping operations did not signify the disappearance of American power and influence in the world. It merely marked a change in the way that that power and influence was exercised. The United States had entered the Great War with no war aims and came to the peace conference with no demands. It coveted neither territory nor financial indemnities, and received none. All it had hoped to achieve, beyond the vague philosophical goals propounded by Wilson, was the restoration of peace and stability in the world. It was under just such normal peacetime conditions that the United States had become the strongest economic power on earth by the beginning of the twentieth century. It was widely assumed in American government and business circles that the resumption of normal patterns of international trade and investment would stimulate a resurgence of economic growth in the postwar era. The removal of American support for the new political order in Europe coincided with a spectacular expansion of American economic power in the world that will be treated in subsequent chapters. As will become evident, what policymakers in Washington failed to realize during the 1920s was the extent to which the very conditions of international economic stability from which the United States was bound to profit depended on an effective solution to the simmering national antagonisms on the continent of Europe.

America's withdrawal from the new international order forged at the end of the First World War had been preceded by the disappearance of Russia as an active participant in world affairs. The fledgling Bolshevik regime that seized power in November 1917 had been forced to pay a high price for the separate peace it concluded with Germany four months later: The Baltic states, Finland, Russian Poland, part of White Russia, Ukraine, Bessarabia, and part of Trans-

caucasia were detached from Russia and surrendered to German influence or control. This amounted to a quarter of Russia's territory and over a third of her population. It meant the loss of her most fertile food producing region and her most productive industrial areas. This extraordinary sacrifice was defended by Lenin against the anguished protests of many of his comrades on the grounds that it would provide a breathing spell for the new regime as it consolidated its power. He was also supremely confident that the revolutionary forces that had been unleashed in Russia would spread westward like wildfire across war-torn Europe, inciting the oppressed populations of all countries to overthrow their capitalist masters and establish Soviet republics on the model of the one recently formed in his own country. The free, independent, socialist states that would emerge from the ashes of the old empires of Europe would thereupon establish fraternal relations with the Russian regime from which they had gained their inspiration.

In the meantime, however, Lenin's authority over the shrunken remnant of the tsarist empire was forcefully contested by armed groups of counterrevolutionaries that had spontaneously sprouted all along the periphery of Bolshevik-controlled territory. Tsarist officers raised southern Russia in revolt against the Bolsheviks while simultaneously trying to drive the Germans out of Ukraine. In Siberia several anti-Bolshevik "governments" sprang up under the protection of a 50,000-man legion of Czechoslovak prisoners of war and defectors who had served in the tsarist army against Austria before Russia's withdrawal from the war. In September 1918 a "provisional all-Russian government" uniting the various anti-Bolshevik factions in Siberia was formed and eventually came under the control of Admiral Alexander Kolchak, former commander of the tsar's Black Sea Fleet. Kolchak assumed the title of "Supreme Ruler" of Russia and obtained the allegiance of most of the leaders of the other White armies operating in the region. In the north, an anti-Bolshevik regime was established in the Arctic port of Murmansk. The tsarist General N. N. Yudenich assembled a counterrevolutionary army in Estonia to mount an assault on nearby Petrograd (from which Lenin had prudently withdrawn in March 1918 to set up his capital in Moscow).

The outbreak of the Russian civil war presented the Allied governments with the opportunity to exploit the situation in the interests of prosecuting their war against the Central Powers. The Americans and British feared that the military supplies they had sent to the previous Russian regime, which were stacked up on the wharves of Russian seaports on the Arctic and the Pacific, might find their way into German hands. To prevent this from happening, a small British force was landed at Murmansk in March 1918; British, American, and French troops occupied Archangel in August for the same purpose; Japanese troops that had been landed at Vladivostok in April were eventually joined by a much smaller American contingent. These Allied military forces cooperated closely with the anti-Bolshevik governments that had been formed in the hinterlands of the port cities that they occupied. The Americans and the British confined their activities to protecting the army stores and were reluctant to become embroiled in the civil war between Reds and Whites. But the French government had much more am-

bitious plans. It hoped that the various groups that had taken up arms against Lenin's regime could unite to form a strong, stable Russian government willing and able to overthrow the Bolsheviks, resume the war against Germany, and relieve the pressure against the Allies caused by Ludendorff's spring offensive. As it turned out, the anti-Bolshevik factions were never able to unite on a common program for Russia's future because they spanned the entire political spectrum, from tsarist reactionaries on the right to Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries on the left. Hobbled by internecine ideological conflicts and clashes of personalities, the Whites gradually surrendered all the territory they had gained. By the end of 1920 the Russian civil war had come to an end, with the Red Army having defeated its counterrevolutionary enemies on all fronts.

The purely military rationale for the Allied intervention in the Russian civil war disappeared with Germany's capitulation in November 1918. But Allied troops remained in the northern Arctic ports until the autumn of 1919 and the Japanese did not evacuate Siberia until the end of 1922. By the latter year the Bolsheviks had freed Russia of all foreign troops and recovered the frontiers of the former tsarist empire on all sides except in the west. There they faced the unrelenting hostility not only of the great powers that had defeated Germany, but also of a string of small independent states that had been carved out of former Russian territory lost at Brest-Litovsk: Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia retained their independence under the protection of British warships operating in the Baltic. The greatly enlarged Kingdom of Romania preserved control of the former Russian province of Bessarabia that it had seized during the revolution. And, most ominous of all, a proud, assertive, strongly anti-Communist state of Poland had been reconstituted at Russia's gateway to Europe, with an eastern frontier extending far into former Russian territory.

Lenin's original plans for a Europe-wide Communist revolution that would liberate the masses from their oppressors and remove the threat of aggression against the Soviet state from the west went up in smoke during the first few months after the armistice. The few attempts that had been made by indigenous revolutionary movements in Central Europe to establish Communist regimes on the Russian model were ruthlessly crushed by the forces of counterrevolution with the sympathetic approval of the victorious allies. In January 1919 an insurrection in Berlin sponsored by the Spartacist League, a group of left-wing socialists inspired by the Bolshevik success in Russia, was quelled by the German government with the assistance of the army. A Soviet republic established in Bavaria in April was forcibly overthrown. The Hungarian Communist regime set up in Budapest by Béla Kun (a veteran of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia) succumbed to a bloody counterrevolution supported by the invading army of Romania. In short, the Bolsheviks' triumph in Russia proved to be an isolated event rather than the beginning of the worldwide socialist revolution that its architects had confidently anticipated. The ideological hostility of the victorious Allies, coupled with the energetic opposition of the anti-Communist elites that assumed control of the successor states of the defunct empires of Central and Eastern Europe, succeeded in halting the spread of communism. The Allied statesmen

meeting in Paris to make peace as the revolutions in Central Europe collapsed in the winter and spring of 1919 could take heart from the fact that, though the triumph of Lenin's movement seemed imminent within Russia in spite of counter-revolution and allied intervention, the "bacillus" of Bolshevism was being quarantined at the western border of the new Soviet state.

It is tempting for the historian of today, fortified with the wisdom of hindsight, to render a negative judgment on the Paris Peace Conference and the five treaties with the defeated powers that were signed in various Parisian suburbs in 1919–20.\* The last great diplomatic gathering of comparable importance, the Congress of Vienna, had established a framework for international order that had prevented the outbreak of a Europe-wide war for a century. The Peace of Paris collapsed within a generation, ushering in a terrible cycle of totalitarianism, genocide, and war on a scale previously unimagined. Nonetheless, it must in fairness be recorded that the Treaty of Versailles proved to be a failure less because of the inherent defects it contained than because it was never put into effect. It is impossible to imagine a Germany that had been compelled to fulfill its treaty obligations in their entirety endangering the peace of Europe. Effectively reduced to a token force and excluded in perpetuity from the Rhineland, the German army would have posed no military threat to France or the newly independent successor states to the east. Payment in full and on schedule of the relatively modest reparation sum fixed in May 1921 would doubtless have defused France's anxiety about its precarious economic condition and probably would have considerably reduced Franco-German tension. Recently uncovered evidence of a genuine French desire to cooperate economically with Germany, particularly in the critical metallurgical sector (where French iron ore complemented German coking coal), suggests an opportunity for Franco-German reconciliation that was tragically lost.

It is difficult to conclude from a brief review of the territorial losses suffered by Germany after the Great War that the Versailles Treaty was unduly harsh on that score. The cession of Alsace-Lorraine to France merely restored the status quo ante of 1870 and was never seriously disputed by anyone of consequence in German official circles. The loss of the Baltic port of Danzig and the "corridor" connecting it to Poland was more objectionable because it separated the German province of East Prussia from the main body of the nation and therefore caused considerable inconvenience in regard to overland transportation to the severed province. But such inconvenience was nothing in comparison to the economic disadvantages that would have been suffered by a landlocked Poland. Furthermore, the formation of the corridor was scarcely a blatant violation of German nationality claims since a majority of its inhabitants were Polish. Nor did it entail the loss of valuable natural resources that could not easily be compensated elsewhere. The same may be said for the cession to Poland of Upper Silesia, a coal-

\*The Treaty of Versailles with Germany, the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with Austria, the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary, the Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria, and the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey.



Boundary Changes in Europe After the First World War

mining region of mixed Polish-German nationality. Coal output in the Ruhr and Saar covered Germany's domestic needs as well as its reparation obligations to France. Without the coal mines of Silesia, Poland would have been compelled to import enormous quantities of this expensive but essential fuel at a time when that fragile new state was struggling to put its financial house in order. Together with minor border rectifications to the profit of Denmark and Belgium, this constituted the totality of German territorial amputations after the war. Germany lost less territory at the peace conference than did any of her allies save Bulgaria. If any of the defeated nations deserved to complain of immoderate territorial losses, these were Austria, Hungary, and Turkey. But their complaints were of no consequence because they had ceased to be great powers and had lost all chance of regaining their former stature. Germany's treatment at Paris in 1919 was considerably less severe than the project for postwar European reorganization that had been endorsed by all significant political forces in Germany during the war and had been partially implemented in Eastern Europe after the collapse of Russia through the provisions of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Despite her decisive military defeat, Germany emerged from World War I as potentially the most powerful nation on the continent. Her industrial heartland, in contrast to that of victorious France, survived undamaged and intact because the war had been fought beyond her frontiers. Her territorial losses did not decisively curtail her capacity for recovery, as did those of her hapless allies.

Similarly, the final reparations obligation imposed on Germany hardly constituted the barbaric exploitation that German publicists made it out to be. The London Schedule adopted in May 1921 reduced Germany's total reparation bill so drastically that she could have managed the payments with but a moderate reduction of domestic consumption. That the German government, and the German people, refused to accept the reparations schedule and the economic sacrifices it entailed had little to do with the country's "capacity to pay." Rather, it reflected the German belief that *any* reparations, like *any* diminution of national territory, was by definition unjust. They were judged to be unjust because of the prevalent tendency to deny that Germany had lost the recent war. Its armies in the east had defeated the Russian colossus and thrust it back out of Europe, according to plan. Its armies in the west had marched home in orderly formation after their leaders had negotiated what had been fraudulently advertised as an armistice based on the principle of "no annexations, no indemnities." There had been no destruction or military occupation of German land during the four years of the war. Under such conditions, it comes as no surprise that the German people proved responsive to the allegation, repeated ad nauseum by a succession of national leaders after the war, that their fatherland had been deceived and betrayed by the victorious Allies. When all was said and done, the critical shortcoming of the Versailles Treaty was not that it was unjust and unworkable, but that the Germans thought it was and were able to win widespread support for that view at home and abroad.

Once Anglo-American confidence in and support for the peace settlement of 1919 evaporated, the burden thrust upon France and the other continental benefi-

ciaries of the treaty gradually became unbearable. In time the new political order in Europe took on the appearance of an unstable system. By preserving intact the political and economic structure of the German Reich while surrounding it with a collection of politically immature, militarily vulnerable, economically unstable states, the peacemakers had mandated a potentially explosive imbalance of power on the continent. The presence of substantial German-speaking minorities in the eastern successor states and the German majority in the new Austrian Republic constituted a perpetual temptation to the advocates of German expansionism. Their plaintive pleas for the liberation of their oppressed compatriots and the recovery of this "lost" territory challenged the legitimacy of the political settlement of postwar Europe long before Hitler embarked upon his campaign to revise it. With Russia temporarily absent from Europe, the only effective deterrent to German revisionism would have been the preservation of the wartime coalition of the United States, Great Britain, and France, fortified by the presence of the inter-Allied military force in the Rhineland. As we shall see, the disintegration of the victorious diplomatic coalition at the beginning of the postwar decade and the premature disappearance of the military deterrent force in the Rhineland at the end of it removed the sole practical means of enforcing the treaty that was supposed to keep the peace in Europe for all time.