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Title: It is easy to judge the Versailles Treaty a failure

It is easy to judge the Versailles Treaty a failure

At the conclusion of the World War1, the rapprochement between Germany and the Allied Powers in trying upon to end the war like situation was stressed upon by the Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28. The treaty named after the place at which it was signed was attended by the most prominent political leaders of the time such as David Lloyd from United Kingdom, Clemenceau from France, and Woodrow Wilson from United States. Contempt, the intention of the treaty of establishing peace between Germany and the Allied Powers, the treaty was a failure (Feldman & Glaser 2001). This essay will identify and delve factors that contributed to the failure of the Treaty of Versailles from its very onset.

The main reason for the failure of the treaty is the raw deal offered to Germany, by insisting Germany to take full responsibility of initiating the Word War 1. The incumbent US President Wilson drafted a fourteen point plan included with a number of steps to be considered in building a League of Nations to ensure peace and territorial integrity of the states. However, staunch opposition from Wilson's political opponent back home, supported by the British public, ensured the fourteen point plan failing to catch the brightness of the day (Bennett 2011). The absence of United States from the League of Nations was a major setback for the peacekeeping efforts, and marking the isolationist approach United States followed in the interwar period.

The Treaty of Versailles required Germany to take over responsibility of the causes behind the war. The article 231 of the treaty states the ground behind the war was Germany. Hence, it was made liable for Germany to compensate the damages made to various countries during the war.

Germany was required to yield a significant amount to France and Belgium for the considerable damages in their setup it supposedly made during the warfare. A preparation in Germany to give a blank check to the Allied forces cost the beleaguered nation £6,600 million, an amount it couldn't afford that time.

Apart from compensatory costs, further economic losses from coal deposits in the Saar and Upper Silesia area of the nation put a great fiscal burden on Germany. The financial liabilities put by the Allied Powers on Germany reduced the nation to the brink of bankruptcy.

The pact was also featured with putting curbs on Germany's arms and armed forces. The prohibition on keeping up an army or naval ships and even military equipments such as tanks, submarines and air force caused the nation powerless. Additionally, the treaty compelled Germany to draw back its army from the Rhineland area (Brezina 2005).

The Allied Forces perpetrated further loss to Germany in terms of a substantial part of its land given away to its neighbors. The treaty enforced the Alsace and Lorraine given away to France, Northern Schleswig to Denmark, Malmedy to Belgium, West Prussia, Posen and Upper Silesia to Poland, and Hultschin to Czechoslovakia.

An overall magnitude of penalties and curbs imposed on Germany by the Allied Forces resulted in widespread public discontent across the country. The high cost of financial penalties imposed on Germany resulted in a weakened economic and financial scenario in the decade of 1920s. The scarcity of food and other household goods along with high rates of unemployment created a large-scale dissatisfaction among common Germans with a strong need to get rid of the Treaty of Versailles. The domestic public backlash in Germany was the underlying cause for the failure of the Treaty of Versailles from its very inception (Chambers 1999).

The factors shaping the doom of the Treaty of Versailles are identified and analyzed henceforth.

Despite, US President Woodrow Wilson's sincere attempt to get in peace between Germany and European and American nations, his proposed Treaty of Versailles for the case, gave out to reach the Congress due oppositions from the Republican party. The bone of contention was the characteristic of the treaty in relation to holding Germany responsible for the World War 1 and fixing the nation liable to compensate off the debts because of the war (Epley & Rush 2012).

The discrepancy between the opposition and President Wilson is one of the embedded reasons for the failure of the Treaty of Versailles.

The discontentment of the senate foreign relations committee also directed to the treaty's failure. President Wilson tried to drive through the fourteen point agenda by working almost alone to Versailles to discuss the passage of the treaty, bypassing the senate foreign committee intentionally. The move shocked American public for including only one member belonging to the Republican Party, a career diplomat and a member of the senate, in the mission.

However, President Wilson failed to turn over the fourteen point agenda as he couldn't sign the treaty in the US Congress. The partial representation of the fourteen points was finally passed as apart from Congressional approval, some major foreign powers also approved it in its changed format. The disapproval of the Congress was further reinvigorated because President Wilson ignored them in the negotiation, making them infuriated towards Wilson (Egerton, 1998).

Since, it was perceived by the Allied forces that German army had the principal role of starting the World War 1; it was provisioned in the pact that Germany must take over responsibility of the war. Nevertheless, the treaty didn't spare any of the other European powers as well with allegations of provoking a diplomatic crisis to fix off the full fledged war. There were controversial elements in the treaty with some countries opposing the great humiliation the treaty

caused to the Germans. Another restriction of the treaty was non-inclusion of Russian interest from the treaty. The Russians were not invited to the committee in drafting the treaty, causing substantial Russian dissatisfaction (McDonald, 2004).

Germany surrendered on November 11, 1918, and on November 18, President Wilson decided to travel to France to organize the League of Nations. The Treaty of Versailles, was challenged in the Senate by the Republicans (holding a majority in the Senate) led by Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, who was chairing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. On March 4, 1919, 39 senators formally challenged the Treaty of Versailles with a majority to sign a round robin declaring the need for a new peace treaty rather than a League of Nations, and the League of Nations can only be considered after signing the peace pact (Duff 1968).

The failure of the treaty was not only because of Republican's opposition, but arguably the treaty would have failed even if it was ratified by the US Senate. The treaty, judging empirically, was never contrived to bring peace in Europe, but rather the polar. The treaty created a pervading fear not just in Germany, but as well to the entire Eastern Europe. The myopia of the clauses in the treaty made it a representative of the interests of the Allied Powers, and not telling of a larger image (Bailey 1945). The German leadership came to Versailles on May 7, 1919 to be a party to a 200 page newly composed treaty. Despite many of their reservations and protests ignored, the Germans finally signed the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. The other defeated nations followed suit to the sign the treaty. Nevertheless, the treaty to be enacted, require the ratification in the US Congress, a battle still to be won by President Wilson to enact the treaty successfully. Despite, initial public opinion in favor of the treaty, Sen. Lodge remained firmly grounded to his earlier stand of opposing the Treaty of Versailles. To advance his case, Lodge packed the Senate

committee on Foreign Relations with “irreconcilable” Republicans with a ploy to delay the case. The move paid off to his intention of offsetting the popular support for the Treaty of Versailles by buying time for a turnaround. Despite President Wilson’s counter move to hold the public support by running across the United States, the popularity of the treaty started to decline. The position started out worse for Wilson, as in the middle toes, he suffered a heart attack, while running in Colorado and brought back to Washington D.C. for treatment. Sensing the public documentation for the treaty was dilly dallying both ways, Lodge entered into a compromise with Wilson, with 15 reservations voted on May 15, 1920. In the balloting, the Republicans were defeated by 35-49 and the Congress officially declared the World War 1 was over on July 2, 1921. In August, same year, the new American President Warren Harding negotiated a new peace pact with Germany, Austria and Hungary (Sharp 1991).

A plethora of shortcomings in the treaty draft reflects upon a revenge scheme rather than a peace pact. The treaty didn’t include any compromises from the Allied Powers and hence, in a literal sense, it was not a treaty. The depressed degree of engagement by the USA in World War1 makes the fourteen point scheme all the more inappropriate for the USA to pursue it. This is the moot point of contention by the Republicans, ending up in substantial modification and finally cancellation of the treaty (Kelly & Lacey 2001). The concept of the League of Nations was not approved in the Senate by the opponent. The opposition Republicans was further incensed by the ignoring act of the Senate Foreign Committee by Wilson in the negotiation that hardened the Republican base on the pact. The British, French and the Italians highly approved the pact as they desired to teach Germany a lesson, being involved as adversaries to Germany in the

warfare. Nevertheless, the treaty was not sanctioned in the United States, arriving at the Treaty of Versailles as one of the most controversial event in the period 1917-1921 (Zeidy, 2006).

After analyzing the Treaty of Versailles from all angles, it can be reasoned that the chief motive behind the pact was punishing the Germans as an act avenging of what was perceived by the British, French and the Italians as German's aggression that set off the war. The very objective of the treaty to punish Germans, instead of reconciliation and compromise by all parties makes the treaty doomed to die. The fourteen points proposed by President Wilson, was rejected in the domestic circuit of the United States as easily as by the European powers like Britain, France and Italy. The disapproval from all sides as easily as by the American public triggered its modification in the pact. The Republican's opposition largely stemmed from the negative public opinions in the United States against the treaty. Along the other side of the spectrum, the common Germans had widespread discontent because of the financial, territorial and military curbs, put on their nation by the pact. The Russians and the other East European nations that were required in the war were dismissed in the commission which drafted the treaty, making them resentful and a belief of being betrayed by the three main European powers. So, all round disapproval and discontent makes an easy judgment to why the Treaty of Versailles was destined to go bad and failed in reality.

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