

Chapter 8: Enforcement of the Provisions of the Treaties

8.1 OVERVIEW

- The Versailles Treaty was signed on 28 June 1919
- The defeated states were given no say in the negotiations of the terms of the treaty
- Ratified by all the victors except for the United States of America
- All real decisions were taken by the Entente Conference of Ambassadors who met between 1920 to 1924

8.2 REASONS FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM AND **FRANCE'S** INABILITY TO ENFORCE THE VERSAILLES TREATY

Fundamental disagreements between the United Kingdom and France

- France was determined to enforce the Versailles Treaty vigorously
- The United Kingdom felt that the Versailles Treaty was too harsh on Germany and favoured a reduction in terms – Britain wanted an economically strong Germany
- The United Kingdom was anti-war and demilitarised voluntarily
- The Anglo-American Guarantee collapsed when the United States of America refused to sign the Versailles Treaty
- The United Kingdom and the United States of America feared being dragged into another war due to France
- There was no other power that could check a resurgent Germany after Russia became communist
- France had to continue an aggressive effort to enforce the Versailles Treaty to keep Germany in check

Withdrawal of the United States of America into isolationism

- Only the United States of America had the resources to support the Versailles Treaty clauses
- The United States of America had become the world's most powerful economy
- The Republican Party defeated President Woodrow Wilson's Democratic Party in the 1920 Senate Elections
- The Republican-dominated Senate rejected the League of Nations as it threatened American sovereignty
- The United States of America adopted an isolationist policy and disengaged from European diplomacy
- The United States of America was convinced that it had been tricked into World War I and had paid an unfair price – it did not want to be committed to defending Europe

8.3 **GERMANY'S** EFFORTS TO UNDERMINE THE VERSAILLES TREATY

Overview

- A common theme that united all Germans was the rejection of the Versailles Treaty
- The Treaty caused maximum offence to Germany but inflicted only minimal long-term damage to it
- The Germans did not expect to be excluded from the negotiations regarding the terms of the Versailles Treaty
- The German public had failed to recognise that it had been defeated – its territory had not been invaded in 1918
- The democratic Weimar Republic which was formed after World War I bore the burden of the blame
- Germany also lost most of Prussia to Poland

Reparations

- The Versailles Treaty set a figure of 132 000 000 000 gold marks to be paid over 42 years
- Germany only offered 30 000 000 000 marks
- In December 1921 the German government declared it needed a temporary moratorium – a temporary stop in payments
- The United States of America refused to cancel their war debts to the United Kingdom and France – thus the United Kingdom and France had to press Germany for repayment
- The German industrial base was not seriously damaged by the war
- The German government possibly engineered the inflation crisis – this would allow them to deliberately avoid paying by claiming that the German economy was collapsing
- The Germans also purposely sabotaged their own industries
- The Germans exploited the Allied disagreement over the reparation issue – the French were determined to receive full payment while the British were willing to compromise

Disarmament

- The German industries could easily be converted to military production
- Key military strategists such as General Has von Seeckt still remained in office
- Germany signed the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 with the Soviet Union
 - Promised special economic cooperation with each other
 - Germany was allowed to establish secret military bases in the Soviet Union for training
 - The Germans developed many new military technologies in the Soviet Union
 - The German Navy was secretly revived
 - The core of the Luftwaffe was developed in the Soviet Union