

# Why germany and her allies were defeated in wwi

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There were many factors that played a part in Germany's defeat in World War One, and none of them can be singularly attributed to its loss. Despite this, some factors did play a more important part than others. Some of the major factors were America's entry into the war, low morale in Germany, and Germany's Ludendorff Offensive.

The American entry into the war was a major factor contributing to Germany's defeat. When the Americans declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, they provided a huge injection of funds, soldiers and productive capacity to the Allies' war effort. The millions of American soldiers that were sent overseas in 1917 and 1918 were fit, young, and most importantly, fresh with relatively high morale compared to the other Allied soldiers.

World War One was a war of attrition. The side that could wear down the enemy side first would be victorious. The contribution of the American soldiers, funds and resources to the Allied side allowed them to survive for longer than the Central Powers. Therefore, the entry of America into World War One was a major factor causing Germany's defeat.

The Ludendorff Offensive, which was launched on March 21, 1918, was a series of three offensives undertaken by the Germans to try to force an Allied surrender after the Russian withdrew from the war. With the Eastern front free, the Germans concentrated all their resources on the Western front to try to break the stalemate there.

At first the Ludendorff Offensive was successful, but the German troops advanced so fast that their supply lines could not keep up. This allowed the Allied forces to surround and defeat the stranded German troops. The

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Ludendorff Offensive was a gamble by Germany. It required an input of high levels of resources, and as it was not successful, these resources were ultimately wasted. As World War One was a war of attrition, the Ludendorff Offensive accelerated, if not caused, Germany's defeat.

By 1917 and 1918, morale amongst the German people was very low. They had begun to lose faith in the war. An outbreak of Spanish Influenza in Europe had hit Germany, and had created unrest amongst the population. Shortages of consumer essentials spread widely throughout Germany. The Germany public began to resent the war, calling for "peace at any cost". The production of munitions fell, and the weapons supply to the German soldiers fell to levels much lower than the Allies'. The low morale amongst the civilians and soldiers worsened the German position. Therefore, low morale amongst the troops and civilians on the German side was a major factor leading to Germany's defeat in World War One.

There is no obvious single factor for Germany's defeat in World War One, but among the main reasons were the American's entry into the war, the Ludendorff Offensive, and the low morale among soldiers and civilians at the home front.

The Treaty of Versailles was the culmination of the 1918/1919 peace settlement process that was imposed on Germany by the Allied powers in 1919. The treaty imposed a number of harsh conditions on Germany. As a result of the treaty, Germany had to reduce its army to 100 000 men, and give up its air force altogether. Germany had to give away thirteen percent of its land, and hand over control of its overseas colonies. Germany was

forced to pay over 6,600,000,000 in war reparations. Also, and significantly, the Treaty of Versailles demanded Germany accept full responsibility for starting the First World War.

To assess Germany's treatment in the 1918/1919 settlement, it is useful to examine the motives behind the key negotiators, Germany's aims, and Germany's guilt

The British public were very angry and were out for revenge. "Hang the Kaiser" and "Make Germany Pay" were both very common calls in the time just after the war and the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George could not afford politically to be easy on Germany. This shows that Britain's intentions when contributing to the Treaty of Versailles would have been to harshly punish Germany

The then president of France, Georges Clemenceau, was determined to see that Germany was punished so harshly that it would never be able to start a war again, as he believed they had done. As was the case with the British, there was also widespread public anger towards Germany.

The American President, Woodrow Wilson, was the third major participant in the treaty negotiations. He too wanted to punish Germany, but also had an interest in a stable Europe, which would depend on a stable Germany.

Given the attitudes of the Allies who met in Paris for the peace negotiations, Germany's treatment in the Treaty of Versailles would definitely have been harsh, as all three entered the negotiations with a view to punishing Germany.

When judged by its previous actions, it can be argued that Germany was not justified to expect a settlement any more favourable than what they received. They had already proven that in victory they could be as harsh as the Allies with the treaty they presented Russia upon their withdrawal from the war, the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. In this treaty, the Germans demanded that Russia hand over large areas of its territory and pay substantial reparations.

Given the harsh treatment the Germans imposed on Russia after its defeat, the treatment of Germany in the Treaty of Versailles can be justified. There is an argument that if Germany had won, they would have imposed penalties as harsh or harsher on the Allies. This supports the argument that the Treaty of Versailles was not too harsh on Germany.

But perhaps the best way to determine whether or not the Treaty of Versailles was really harsh on Germany is to see the effect on Germany of the treaty, and the length of time it took for Germany to recover.