

Reflection essay on world war ii

War



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The Second World War was one of the most devastating moments in the history of humanity. The conflict claimed the lives of millions of people throughout the world; the number of fatalities actually make it the most fatal in history. The war also proved to be costly; the global damages amount to trillions of dollars. Years prior, the First World War occurred. Those involved in the first conflict tried to take the necessary precautions to avoid another international war from taking place. Unfortunately, it was this attempt that caused the second war to occur.

This research paper aims to discuss how the First World War resulted in the occurrence of the Second World War. The First World War ended on November 11, 1918. The experience of such war required the creation of a peace settlement. In January 1919, the countries which emerged victorious in the war sent their representatives to gather in Paris. The said assembly would make political decisions that would influence international relations. The decisions were mostly influenced by the heads of the Allied states.

These are France Premier Georges Clemenceau, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando and United States President Woodrow Wilson . Prior to the armistice that ended the First World War, President Wilson had already formulated a plan to establish peace. In a speech he delivered to Congress, Wilson announced the “ Fourteen Points,” a set of provisions that would restore world peace. Among the fourteen provisions, three are notable. One of which is the “ peace without victory” clause. Wilson thought that the aftermath of the war should not bring victory, but instead it should bring peace.

He also thought that Germany must not be given cruel punishment or else it would provoke the country to avenge its loss. For Wilson, the appropriate penalty would enable the defeated parties as well as the Allied powers to have peaceful relations. Another provision which Wilson suggested was disarmament. Wilson upheld the belief that only through disarmament can peace be truly achieved. If each country were disarmed there would be no threats of war or invasion. He also thought that issues between nations must be discussed openly.

Moreover, Wilson suggested the establishment of an organization which could serve as the platform in which international disputes can be settled and wars could be prevented. He referred to it as the League of Nations. The provisions that Wilson suggested may have born out of noble intentions, but it was contrary to what the European Allies wanted. European nations involved in the war were bitter over what had occurred. This holds true for France. Most of the battles occurred in France; many soldiers and civilians were killed. The French were still threatened by what Germany was capable of doing.

Therefore, as opposed to what Wilson suggested, France wanted to severely punish Germany and render it incapable of waging yet another war. The aftermath of the First World War included the signing of several peace treaties. However, the most notable was the Treaty of Versailles. It was a peace treaty agreed upon by the Allies and Germany. The creation of the treaty began on January 18, 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference; it was signed on June 28th that same year at the Palace of Versailles. It was this treaty that primarily caused the Second World War to occur.

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This is because aside from punishing Germany through reparations, it made Germany solely responsible for the occurrence of the war. The Germans reacted to the treaty with much disdain; this is why when Adolf Hitler came to power, he sought to abolish the treaty. The provision President Wilson made about the League of Nations was established through the Treaty of Versailles. Those nations who were part of the League had to recognize the boundaries of the other member nations; they also had to bring all contentions to the League for settlement. Over sixty countries were part of the League, excluding the United States.

The absence of the United States in the League proved to be a disadvantage for the organization. On the other hand, Wilson's wish against the severe punishment of Germany was not granted. The Treaty of Versailles had Germany at the losing end of the agreement. It was responsible for the decreasing not only Germany's territory, but its power in general. The penalties given to Germany were so harsh that the treaty was criticized by many. Armstrong wrote, " On the whole, when rights were not in conflict, the Conference tried to base its decisions on high principles; when rights were in conflict it usually favored the victors. This statement held true for the treaty. The treaty prioritized the rights of the Allied nations over the rights of Germany. For instance, France emerged victorious in the war. Most of the demands of the French were considered and granted by the treaty. France was able to regain possession of Alsace-Lorraine as indicated in Section V of Part III of the treaty. As payment for the coal mine destruction, Germany also has to hand over control of the Saar Basin to France, as indicated in Article

45 of Section IV. However, one significant loss of Germany involved the Polish Corridor.

Created after the First World War, the Polish Corridor was an area of land which detached East Prussia from Germany. The city of Danzig near the Baltic Sea was made a free port by the treaty. Both Poland and Germany had no control over this territory. However, it was inappropriate for the treaty to remove the Corridor from Germany; this is because Germany was not to blame for the seizure of this territory. It was Prussia, not Germany, who seized the Corridor from Poland. King of Prussia Frederick the Great was the one responsible for the territorial loss of Poland.

The Corridor was only included in the territory of the German Empire as a province of Prussia. It is crucial to note that the corridor formerly known as West Prussia was never really recognized as a territory of Germany. Hence, to punish Germany by taking away land the nation did not seize in the first place was unjustified. The Treaty of Versailles also demilitarized Germany in very specific terms. As included in the “ Military, Naval and Air Clauses,” the treaty states that the German army must only consist of ten divisions: seven for infantry and three for cavalry.

The entire army must only be composed a hundred thousand individuals. The treaty even forbade Germany from importing weapons or using poisonous gases or liquids. Meanwhile, in Article 42 of “ Political Clauses for Europe,” both banks of the Rhine River were made free from German military occupation. Such rules were resented by the Germans; it was therefore no

surprise that the first thing Hitler did when he came to power was to restore the military forces of Germany, eventually causing the Second World War.

The Treaty of Versailles also seized all of Germany's foreign territories.

Article 119 states that “ Germany renounces in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all her rights and titles over her overseas possessions. ” These include areas in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. Through mandates given by the League, the German colonies in Africa were placed under French and British control. However, the gravest imposition of the Treaty of Versailles on Germany was the War Guilt Clause.

Article 231 states that “ Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies. ” The treaty had singled out Germany as the only country to blame for the occurrence of the First World War. This stand was based on a report by the “ Commission on the Responsibility of the Authors of the War ” headed by Robert Lansing, the U. S. Secretary of State.

During the Committee's deliberations, Lansing made sure that there was no German involved in the process. The claim was considered as false, prompting American historian H. E. Barnes to ask for the clause to be revised. Despite the invalid claim of the War Guilt Clause, Germany still signed the Treaty of Versailles. This is because the German representatives were forced and threatened to sign the treaty. The clause demanded that Germany should pay reparations to the other countries involved for the

damage the war caused. The reparations totaled to \$33 billion, an amount only settled years after Germany agreed to the treaty.

Germans disagreed with such amount because the nation was incapable of paying that great sum. Germany also argued that they are not the only one to blame for the war. German aggression, which contributed to causing the war, was retaliation against the Treaty of Versailles. From the start, Germany disagreed with the harsh penalties stated in the treaty. The treaty made Germany the only party to blame for the First World War. As punishment, the country was stripped off its military capabilities and its foreign territories. In addition, the treaty demanded a significant sum of money for war damages.

When Hitler became powerful, he disobeyed the treaty. Not only did he strengthen the German army, he also sought the return of the Polish Corridor to Germany. The Treaty of Versailles was a crucial contributor to the occurrence of the Second World War for many reasons. The end of the First World War made the international community seek for ways in which to preserve world peace. In addition, they wanted to establish fairness and rapport among the countries after the way. The Allied nations created a treaty in hopes of reaching these objectives.

Unfortunately, the treaty failed to fulfill its goal. The reason why the Treaty of Versailles did not work was because it was flawed from the beginning. From the start, it was not feasible to try to achieve peace immediately after such a brutal war. It is also ridiculous to try to be just in dealing with every country involved. For example, France wanted Germany to be severely punished because France was greatly affected by the war. Because the

affected parties want revenge against Germany, the treaty that was established on good intentions eventually resulted in more damages.

The noble intention of seeking peace and justice was contrary to how the Treaty of Versailles was made. Upon entering the peace negotiations, both Britain and France already sought to seek revenge. Germany and Russia were deliberately left out of the Peace Conference. To make matters worse, reparations were being demanded from people who were already affected by war. All of these contributed to causing the Second World War. Vindictive sentiments played a significant part in the ineffectiveness of the Treaty of Versailles.

The Treaty of Versailles was the initial attempt in attaining peace. There were other ways in which peace was tried to achieve after the war. There was the Washington Conference, in which it was agreed that nations would only have a certain number of ships and have the same opportunities to access China. Then there was the Locarno Pact in 1925; in a conference held in Switzerland, countries agreed that all conflicts would be resolved peacefully. One of the specific areas of concern during that time was French-German border. Lastly, there was the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928.

Fifteen countries participated in an agreement which condemned war as “instrument of national policy.” Both pacts served to establish peaceful settlement as substitute to force. In the long run, these attempts at peace proved futile. The aftermath of the First World War brought much dissatisfaction to both winners and losers. The dissatisfaction of Germany is understood. It lost in the war, and was blamed for it. The Treaty of Versailles

“humiliated” Germany with such severe impositions. Instead of encouraging peaceful relations, the treaty was punitive in nature.

Such punitive effort will never achieve peace. In addition, the losses of Germany in the war were significant. Many people were killed, while damage to property was also notable. The treaty's terms in which Germany would pay a great sum for war damages already added insult in injury. Such harsh punishment prompted strong nationalist sentiments, which contributed to German aggression in the Second World War. The Treaty of Versailles also failed to address the concerns of Italy and Japan. Italy was dissatisfied with what it had gained from the war.

At that time, the country was already experiencing internal conflicts. The “diplomatic frustration” of Italy as result of the First World War added to the problem. The parliamentary system of government was eventually replaced with fascism. Fascism, under Benito Mussolini, made Italy more aggressive in war. Japan was also dissatisfied with its diplomatic status after the war. Though Japan was a victor in the First World War, the country was frustrated because it wanted more than what it gained. Japan believed that they should be the stronger force in Asia.

This sentiment was driven by the influence of the military, as well as nationalism. All three countries were frustrated with the outcome of the First World War. These nations also felt economically deprived after the war. All three criticized the lack of equal access to “raw materials, markets and capital investment areas,” which contributed to the decline of their economic stability. In turn, the nationalist feelings in all countries brought out

vindictive sentiments. Thomas Hobbes once wrote that people would “choose rather to hazard their life, than not to be revenged. These countries felt the injustice; another war seemed to be an ideal venue in which revenge could be taken. The Treaty of Versailles also caused the war through the League of Nations. It is true that the League was created to establish peace after war, but in reality the League was powerless to do so. The absence of the United States made a huge impact on weakening the power of the League. It was not influential enough to enforce necessary penalties on offenders. There are several examples in which the League of Nations proved ineffective.

When Italy attacked Ethiopia, the emperor of the latter reported to the League. Italy only denounced the invasion. The organization asked its members to stop selling weapons and commodities to Italy, but only a few obliged. Ethiopia eventually became a colony of Italy. The Treaty of Versailles also caused Japanese aggression against China. The treaty removed all the foreign possessions of Germany. Japan benefited from this removal, as it gained territories in the Pacific as a result. However, the Shantung Peninsula was left unresolved. The issue was to be settled between Japan and China.

This created conflict, and Japanese aggression toward China soon started with the Manchurian invasion. The takeover was denounced by the League, but that was all it did. Japan left to League, and continued to threaten China. The First World War caused the occurrence of the Second World War. The Treaty of Versailles was the primary cause. The treaty was supposed to establish peace after such grueling conflict, but it only resulted in another,

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more fatal war. To begin with, the process in which the supposed peace settlement was created ran contrary to its intentions.

Victors such as France and Britain was preoccupied with revenging their losses. This meant that their demands included in the treaty were based more on revenge than on the intention of achieving peace. Such vindictive attitude greatly influenced the drafting of the treaty. The vindictive intention in the drafting of the Treaty of Versailles also caused German aggression. In general, the treaty was created to punish Germany. Many people thought the terms were too severe. This included limiting the German military and losing several territories.

The most notable of these territories was the Polish Corridor, a territory that taken from Germany as stipulated in the treaty. In addition, there was the War Guilt Clause, the false claim which stated that Germany was the only one responsible for the war. Such terms caused much resentment from the German people. This prompted Adolf Hitler to be aggressive, and undo the damages caused by the treaty. The Treaty of Versailles also did not address the needs of Italy and Japan, which caused them to also be aggressive. Italy and Japan were disappointed with the outcome of the war.

Along with Germany, both countries were economically frustrated. Another war provided the venue to gain what these countries thought they deserved. Lastly, the League of Nations created through the treaty was ineffective and powerless. It could denounce acts of violence against nations, but it was unable to exert any real influence. The organization had no power to prevent one nation from attacking another. In the end, in an effort to avoid war, the

consequences of the First World War brought about the more massive Second World War. Neither peace nor justice was achieved; there was only more violence.