

The Treaty of Versailles

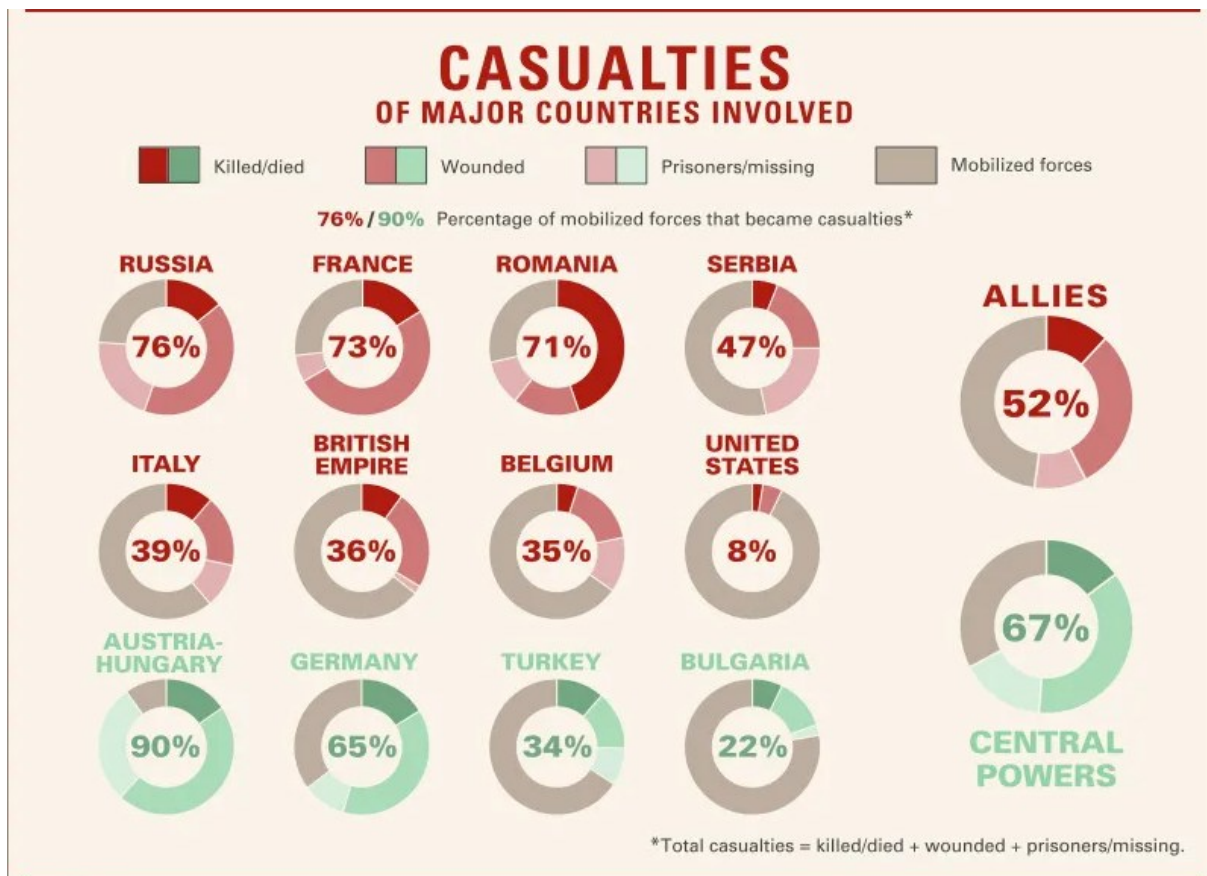
The First World War left Europe devastated. For the countries involved, their losses were unlike anything they had experienced before:

Armed forces mobilized and casualties in World War I*						
country	total mobilized forces	killed and died	wounded	prisoners and missing	total casualties	percentage of mobilized forces in casualties
Allied and Associated Powers						
Russia	12,000,000	1,700,000	4,950,000	2,500,000	9,150,000	76.3
British Empire	8,904,467	908,371	2,090,212	191,652	3,190,235	35.8
France	8,410,000	1,357,800	4,266,000	537,000	6,160,800	73.3
Italy	5,615,000	650,000	947,000	600,000	2,197,000	39.1
United States	4,355,000	116,516	204,002	4,500	323,018	8.1
Japan	800,000	300	907	3	1,210	0.2
Romania	750,000	335,706	120,000	80,000	535,706	71.4
Serbia	707,343	45,000	133,148	152,958	331,106	46.8
Belgium	267,000	13,716	44,686	34,659	93,061	34.9
Greece	230,000	5,000	21,000	1,000	27,000	11.7
Portugal	100,000	7,222	13,751	12,318	33,291	33.3
Montenegro	50,000	3,000	10,000	7,000	20,000	40.0
total	42,188,810	5,142,631	12,800,706	4,121,090	22,064,427	52.3



Central Powers						
country	total mobilized forces	killed and died	wounded	prisoners and missing	total casualties	percentage of mobilized forces in casualties
Germany	11,000,000	1,773,700	4,216,058	1,152,800	7,142,558	64.9
Austria-Hungary	7,800,000	1,200,000	3,620,000	2,200,000	7,020,000	90.0
Turkey	2,850,000	325,000	400,000	250,000	975,000	34.2
Bulgaria	1,200,000	87,500	152,390	27,029	266,919	22.2
total	22,850,000	3,386,200	8,388,448	3,629,829	15,404,477	67.4
Grand total	65,038,810	8,528,831	21,189,154	7,750,919	37,468,904	57.5

Source: Showalter, D. E. and Royde-Smith, . John Graham. "World War I." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 18, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I>.





Alongside these statistics was the fact that vast areas of north-eastern Europe had been reduced to rubble. Flanders in Belgium had been all but destroyed with the ancient city of Ypres being devastated. The homes of 750,000 French people were destroyed, and the infrastructure of this region had also been severely damaged. Roads, coal mines, telegraph poles had all been destroyed and such a loss greatly hindered the area's ability to function normally. It should be pointed out that **no allied soldiers stepped foot in Germany during the First World War, nor was there any substantial damage done to German territory – the German population did not experience the devastation that many others outside their borders had.**

As well, during mid-1918, the world was hit by **Spanish Flu** and an estimated 500 million people were infected (1/3 of the global population) – over 50 million people died. This added to the feeling of bitterness that ran through Europe - anger that was primarily directed at Germany.



Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated on November 9, 1918, amid the German Revolution and impending defeat in World War I. Faced with lost military support and domestic instability, he fled to exile in the Netherlands, effectively ending the 500-year Hohenzollern rule and paving the way for the establishment of the Weimar Republic.

The First World War was ended by a series of treaties, and the victors from the First World War were in no mood to be charitable to the defeated nations. Through the **Treaty of Versailles**, Germany was held responsible for the war and its consequences.

The treaties which brought the First World War to a close:

- **Treaty of Versailles**, 28 June 1919 (Germany)
- **Treaty of Saint-Germain**, 10 September 1919 (Austria)
- **Treaty of Neuilly**, 27 November 1919 (Bulgaria)
- **Treaty of Trianon**, 4 June 1920 (Hungary)
- **Treaty of Sèvres**, 10 August 1920; subsequently revised by the **Treaty of Lausanne**, 24 July 1923 (Ottoman Empire/Republic of Turkey)



German Losses in the Treaty of Versailles

The following was what Germany was forced to agree to, or risk invasion:

Territorial

The following land was taken away from Germany:

- Alsace-Lorraine (*given to France*)
- Eupen and Malmedy (*given to Belgium*)
- Northern Schleswig (*given to Denmark*)
- Hultschin (*given to Czechoslovakia*)
- West Prussia, Posen and Upper Silesia (*given to Poland*)
- Germany lost all its overseas colonies.

Military

- Germany's army was reduced to 100,000 men; the army was not allowed tanks
- Germany was not allowed an air force. The German Navy was allowed only six capital naval ships and no submarines (explore the scuttling of the fleet at Scapa Flow).
- The west of the Rhineland and 50 kms east of the River Rhine was made into a demilitarised zone (DMZ). No German soldier or weapon was allowed into this zone. The Allies were to keep an army of occupation on the west bank of the Rhine for 15 years.

Financial

The loss of vital industrial territory would be a severe blow to any attempts by Germany to rebuild her economy. Coal from the Saar and Upper Silesia was a vital economic loss. Combined with the financial penalties linked to reparations, it seemed clear to Germany that the Allies wanted nothing else but to bankrupt her.

Germany was also forbidden to unite with Austria to form one superstate, to keep its economic potential to a minimum.

General

There are three vital clauses here:

1. Germany had to admit full responsibility for starting the war. This was Clause 231 – the infamous “**War Guilt Clause**”.



2. Germany was responsible for all the war damage caused by the First World War. Therefore, the country had to pay reparations, the bulk of which would go to France and Belgium to pay for the damage done to the infrastructure of both countries by the war. Quite literally, reparations would be used to pay for the damage to be repaired. Payment could be in kind or cash. The figure was not set at Versailles – it was to be determined later. The Germans were told to write a blank cheque which the Allies would cash when it suited them. The figure was eventually put at £6,600 million – a huge sum of money well beyond Germany’s ability to pay – **The German Government finally finished paying the debt for the First World War in 2010.**

3. A League of Nations was set up to keep world peace. While the league was an idea of US President Woodrow Wilson, the United States Congress voted not to join the international organization.



Some Key Maps

Sykes-Picot and the breakup of the Ottoman empire

World War I also transformed the Middle East. In 1916, French diplomat Francois Georges-Picot and his British counterpart, Sir Mark Sykes, drew up a map dividing the Ottoman Empire's Middle Eastern territory between British and French zones of control. The agreement permitted British and French authorities to divide up their respective territories however they pleased. This led to the creation of a series of Arab countries — Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and so on — whose borders and political institutions only dimly reflected the Arab world's ethno-sectarian makeup. Many scholars believe the Sykes-Picot borders were a major factor in the chaotic state of the Middle East in the decades since then.

