

Paris Peace Conference (1919) and Peace Treaties

1. Introduction :

The Paris Peace Conference was held after the end of the First World War (1914–1918).

The war caused massive destruction, loss of life and collapse of old empires.

The main aim of the conference was to establish lasting peace and decide the fate of defeated powers.

2. Background of the Paris Peace Conference

Venue: Paris, France

Duration: January 1919 – January 1920

Participating countries: About 27 Allied nations

Excluded nations: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria

Objectives :

To fix responsibility for the war

To punish defeated nations

To redraw the map of Europe

To prevent future wars

To establish an international peace organization

The Big Four :

The real power at the conference was in the hands of the Big Four:

(1) Woodrow Wilson (USA)

Proposed the Fourteen Points

Supported national self-determination

Advocated the League of Nations

(2) Georges Clemenceau (France)

Wanted strict punishment of Germany

Focused on French security

Favored weakening Germany permanently

(3) David Lloyd George (Britain)

Favored a moderate approach

Wanted balance of power in Europe

Protected British imperial interests

(4) Vittorio Orlando (Italy)

Wanted territorial gains

Felt dissatisfied with the final settlement

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points (Brief)

Open diplomacy

Freedom of seas

Reduction of armaments

National self-determination

Independence of Poland

Formation of League of Nations

Most of these points were not fully implemented.

Major Peace Treaties of the Paris Peace Conference

Treaty of Versailles (1919) – Germany

(a) Territorial Terms

Alsace-Lorraine returned to France

Polish Corridor created

Saar region under League of Nations

German colonies taken away

(b) Military Terms

Army limited to 100,000 soldiers

No air force

Navy restricted

Rhineland demilitarized

(c) Economic Terms

Heavy war reparations (6.6 billion pounds)

Loss of coal and industrial resources

(d) War Guilt Clause

Article 231 blamed Germany for the war

(e) Effects

German humiliation and resentment

Economic crisis.

Rise of Hitler and Nazism

One of the causes of the Second World War

Treaty of Saint-Germain (1919) – Austria

Breakup of Austro-Hungarian Empire

Creation of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia

Austria forbidden to unite with Germany

Army reduced

Treaty of Trianon (1920) – Hungary

Hungary lost nearly two-thirds of its territory

Large Hungarian minorities in other states

Growth of nationalism and dissatisfaction

Treaty of Neuilly (1919) – Bulgaria

Loss of territory

Payment of war indemnity

Military restrictions imposed

Treaty of Sèvres (1920) – Turkey

Dismemberment of Ottoman Empire

Arab lands placed under Allied control

Harsh terms imposed on Turkey

Later replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923).

League of Nations:

Objectives:

Maintain world peace

Collective security
Peaceful settlement of disputes
Reasons for Failure
Absence of the USA
No military power
Weak enforcement of decisions

Criticism of the Paris Peace Conference
Victors' peace imposed on defeated nations
Ignored true spirit of self-determination
Harsh treatment of Germany
Failed to ensure permanent peace

Historical Significance
Redrew political map of Europe
End of old empires
Beginning of new nation-states
Foundation for international cooperation
Indirect cause of the Second World War

Conclusion
The Paris Peace Conference aimed to create lasting peace but failed.
The peace treaties were harsh and unfair.
Instead of peace, they created bitterness and instability.
Ultimately, they led the world towards Second World War (1939).