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# The Paris Peace Treaties

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The centenary of the Paris Peace Treaties has produced a plethora of publications. However, the best overview of the course of the negotiations and their results in the Treaties of Versailles, St Germain, Neuilly, Trianon and Sèvres is still provided by Margaret MacMilan's book *The Peacemaker*, published in English in 2001.<sup>1</sup> In the run-up to the centenary in 2015, it was translated into German as "Die Friedensmacher". However, the subtitle of the German translation, which was apparently added by the publisher (Ullstein) to appeal to a wider audience, is downright annoying: "Wie der Versailler Vertrag die Welt veränderte." (How the Treaty of Versailles changed the world). As if the Treaty of Versailles had reduced the Kingdom of Hungary to a third of its size, as if it had placed Palestine under British control, as if it had divided Tyrol along the Brenner Pass!

This concentrated interest was of course primarily due to the fact that Germany was by far the strongest military power among the defeated states both before and after the war. However, this also had a direct impact on the peace negotiations: The Treaty of Versailles

was, so to speak, the prototype of the Paris Peace Treaties and served as the starting point for the other treaty negotiations, which only had to be adapted to the respective national circumstances. As a result, all five Peace Treaties corresponded to each other verbatim or almost verbatim over long stretches.

This finding applies first of all, of course, to Part I on the Statute of the League of Nations and Part XIII on the International Labour Organization (ILO). These two international organisations, founded at the Peace Conference, have their legal basis directly in the five Paris Peace Treaties, which necessarily had to coincide in this respect. However, the similarities between the five treaties go much further. For example, the Treaty of St Germain contains provisions on the international position of Belgium, on the German-Danish border or on French interests in Morocco. In none of these cases can this be justified by a pronounced political interest of the Habsburg Monarchy in one of these states, but solely by the fact that this was already regulated in Treaty of Versailles and was probably only repeated in the Treaty of St. Germain "for safety's sake".

<sup>1</sup> Margaret MacMilan, *The Peacemaker*, John Murray 2001. Translated into German: *Die Friedensmacher. Wie der Versailler Vertrag die Welt veränderte*, Ullmann 2015.



An analysis of the five Peace Treaties – the peace treaties with Germany (Versailles, 28 June 1919<sup>2</sup>), Austria (Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 10 September 1919<sup>3</sup>), Bulgaria (Neuilly-sur-Seine, 27 November 1919<sup>4</sup>), Hungary (Trianon, 4 June 1920<sup>5</sup>) and Turkey (Sèvres, 10 August 1920<sup>6</sup>) – must always take into account the fact that they are only part of an even more complex set of treaties which includes not less than sixteen other treaties and agreements.

In addition to the peace treaty with Germany, a treaty with Poland in favour of the minorities living there was also concluded in Versailles on 28 June.<sup>7</sup> It served as a template for corresponding treaties that were concluded with Czechoslovakia<sup>8</sup> and the SHS state<sup>9</sup> on 10 September in St. Germain, with Romania on 9 December in Paris, with Denmark on 4 June 1920, also in Paris, and with Greece and Armenia on 10 August in Sèvres in favour of the minorities living there. These minority treaties were practically the counterpart to the demarcation of borders, which rarely followed clearly recognisable linguistic or religious boundaries; unfortunately, the protection of minorities was very schematic and had little relevance in practice.

A special problem was the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy, which was regulated in several other agreements in addition to the two peace treaties with Austria and Hungary: In two agreements of 10 September 1919, for example, all states that had “inherited” part of the territory and population of the Habsburg Monarchy were obliged to also make a “contribution to the costs

of liberation” (which meant that Austria and Hungary were not to bear the enormous reparations burden alone).<sup>10</sup> The borders between the successor states and certain other matters, such as the division of archives, were regulated in two treaties signed at Sèvres on 10 August 1920.

The signing of the peace treaty with Turkey at Sèvres then led to three more treaties - in addition to the five already mentioned - concerning the fate of Thrace and the rights of the victorious powers, in particular Greece and Italy, with regard to the Mediterranean islands and Anatolia.

Finally, it should be noted that the Paris Conference was also used to finalise matters that were very loosely connected to the war: On 10 September 1919 at St Germain, for example, two treaties were concluded that placed very strict limits on liquor traffic and on trade in arms and ammunition in Africa.

A research project recently carried out at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, together with the Universities of Vienna, Linz and Graz, focussed on examining the peace treaty with Austria in its entirety. The aim was to analyse in detail not only the “famous” provisions on the demarcation of borders, reparations, etc., but also all 380 articles of the treaty and their legal significance. The parallels and differences to the other treaties were also documented in detail. An overall presentation of the treaty beyond MacMillan’s overview is still a research desideratum.

<sup>2</sup> German Reichsgesetzblatt 1919, page 687.

<sup>3</sup> *Staatsgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich* No. 303 (1920).

<sup>4</sup> *Sammlung der Gesetze und Verordnungen des tschechoslovakischen Staates* No. 274 (1922).

<sup>5</sup> *Sammlung der Gesetze und Verordnungen des tschechoslovakischen Staates* No. 102 (1922).

<sup>6</sup> All treaties concluded at Sèvres are published partly in French, partly in German in: Deutsches Auswärtiges Amt (ed.), *Die acht Verträge von Sèvres*, Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte 1921. The peace treaty with Turkey has only recently been translated into German: Miriam Gassner, *Der Vertrag von Sèvres*, Nomos 2023. Online: <https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/10.5771/9783748934110-1>

<sup>7</sup> *British Treaty Series* No. 8 (1919).

<sup>8</sup> *British Treaty Series* No. 20 (1919).

<sup>9</sup> *British Treaty Series* No. 17 (1919).