

KELLOGG-BRIAND PACT (PACT OF PARIS)

TREATY AT A GLANCE

Completed

August 27, 1928, at Paris

Signatories

Initially, 15 countries, including the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Japan, and Poland; ultimately, virtually every nation in the world

Overview

Drafted by France and the United States on the initiative of French foreign minister Aristide Briand, the Kellogg-Briand Pact (also called the Pact of Paris) was an agreement to renounce war as an instrument of national policy and marked the high point of the post-World War I Wilsonian faith in paper treaties and stylish promises, all of which came to an end with the outbreak of the most destructive war in history, World War II.

Historical Background

In the wake of the TREATY OF VERSAILLES (1919), not only did the spoils but the anxieties of World War I fall to the victors. Because of war debts, the United States—whose bankers held paper on much of the world—enjoyed much leverage with the League of Nations, despite the refusal of the Senate to ratify the treaty. Because France had suffered so disproportionately, it enjoyed a kind of moral largesse, behind which it could hide its somewhat greedy vindictiveness toward—but greatest of all, its fear of—the defeated but mostly undamaged Germany. The British, who also had suffered immensely in the war, mainly wished to withdraw safely by maintaining something like the old balance of power in Europe.

These three had a difficult time with the question of reparations, that is, the question of who was to pay for all the damage in the war. Neither the Americans (who in many ways simply wanted their money) nor the British (who wanted to repay their war debts but could not see how to do so without collecting reparations from a postwar Germany economically strong enough to make them) could accept the French position, which was to collect from Germany sufficient reparations to repay their debts and rebuild their country but at the same time punish the Germans by destroying not just their military but their economy.

This—or so the Americans and British would argue—made the paying of reparations unlikely if not impossible for Germany. At the same time, the British and Americans did not see why France had to keep such a large, expensive army on hand if Germany was basically disarmed and broke. The French responded that they were worried about the future, not the present.

The French had already felt the effect of the British disenchantment when they sought London's support in a joint security pact that would guarantee the demilitarization of the Rhineland when France ceased to occupy the region. Instead, the British demanded French concessions on reparations in return. The French were alarmed when the Americans, who did not like the French vindictiveness and had some sympathy for defeated Germany, wanted to invite the Weimar Republic, and when the British, under pressure from its working classes, wanted to invite Bolshevik Russia to a grand economic conference in Genoa. This especially was worrisome to the French since a conference of international bankers in Paris had just recommended loans to stabilize the German mark, but only if Germany were granted a long moratorium on reparations. They were even more alarmed when, as a result, an unholy alliance between the two European outcasts produced the rather innocuous TREATY OF RAPALLO, providing for an annulment of past claims

between Germany and Russia and the restoration of diplomatic relations. To top it all off, Germany's postwar hyperinflation threatened to wipe out the value of what ever reparations she might pay.

Seeing a German plot to ruin France, the French, with help from Belgium, occupied Germany's industrial Ruhr Valley. They began to negotiate directly with the industrial giants of Thyssen, Stinnes, and Krupp the Rhine-Ruhr accords called the Inter-Allied Control Commission for Factories and Mines, which placed the Ruhr under a mandate of an international committee of experts. And France still made it clear that it would not proceed with the evacuation of the Rhineland called for at Versailles unless its government could show its people something in the way of security beyond the restrictions of the peace treaty on German armaments and the size of its military.

The exhaustion of France and Germany from the struggle in the Ruhr and the growing desire of American bankers and British diplomats to reconcile the two countries created the conditions for agreements on reparations, industrial cooperation, and security. The Dawes Plan, which cleared the way for a vast influx of capital in exchange for the French evacuation of the Ruhr, the ending of sanctions on the Rhine, and a pledge from France never to impose new sanctions on Germany without the unanimous consent of the Reparations Committee, addressed the major issue. By the time the London Conference of July and August 1924, which produced the plan, had ended, however, the French had still achieved nothing new in the realm of security.

Indeed, the League of Nations, led by Edvard Beneš of the Czech delegation, had pushed disarmament and collective security at French expense—or so the French believed. France did, however, enthusiastically support the improved Geneva Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, which called for all states to submit disputes to a world court and dubbed any state refusing to do so an aggressor, ipso facto, subject to League sanctions by a two-thirds majority. With the French, at least nominally committed to collective security, their security worries were finally addressed in the LOCARNO TREATIES. Although the Herriot government had fallen in April, French foreign minister Aristide Briand stayed on to carry through the negotiations at Locarno, Switzerland, that fall. At the conference, Briand met and embraced the German foreign minister, and the two swore to put the war behind them once and for all. In October they signed the series of five treaties, designed to pacify postwar Europe.

The Locarno Pact promised a new era of reconciliation. Germany entered the League of Nations and came to Geneva pledging to work for freedom, peace,

and unity. Briand basked in the glory of being the statesman most associated with "the spirit of Geneva." Soon, in January 1927, the League removed the Inter-allied Military Control Commission from Germany. Suddenly, the foreign offices in London and Washington asked why the French, despite all their pleas of poverty when war debts came up, still kept the largest army in Europe. Behind the mask of goodwill, it seemed, the French clung to their faith in a military deterrent to Germany, even when this isolated them within the League's Disarmament Commission. Germany, now that she was in the League, began demanding equal treatment, and the British and Americans were listening.

That was when Briand came up with the idea for a treaty under which all nations could "renounce the resort to war as an instrument of national policy." Hoping to divert the attention of their old Allies from the thorny problem of the relative size of the French and German armies, or at least to allay U.S. suspicions about French defense spending, Briand enlisted the American secretary of state, Frank Kellogg, in drawing up his treaty to end all treaties.

Terms

The Kellogg-Briand Pact, signed on August 27, 1928, and eventually subscribed to by virtually every nation in the world, was hailed as an epoch-making step toward universal peace. However, the pact made no provisions for enforcement and was completely useless in stopping undeclared wars, as the Japanese invasion of Manchuria demonstrated in 1931. Moreover, it was subject to four major reservations: the pact was not to be effective unless it secured universal adherence or until some other further agreement had been concluded; each country retained the right to defend itself; if a single nation violated the pledge, all other nations were thereby released from it as well; the pact would not interfere with French treaty obligations under the League of Nations or the Locarno Treaties.



[The Heads of State of the United States, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Britain, Germany, Italy, Japan and Poland . . .]

Deeply sensible of their solemn duty to promote the welfare of mankind; persuaded that the time has come when a frank renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy should be made, to the end that the peaceful and friendly relations now existing between their peoples may be perpetuated;

Convinced that all changes in their relations with one another should be sought only by pacific means and be the result of a peaceful and orderly process, and that any signatory Power which shall hereafter seek to promote its national inter-

ests by resort to war should be denied the benefits furnished by this Treaty;

Hopeful that, encouraged by their example, all the other nations of the world will join in this humane endeavor and, by adhering to the present Treaty as soon as it comes into force, bring their peoples within the scope of its beneficent provisions, thus uniting the civilized nations of the world in a common renunciation of war as an instrument of their national policy;

Have decided to conclude a treaty, and . . . have agreed upon the following Articles:

Article i

The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare, in the names of their respective peoples, that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.

Article ii

The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts, of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.

Article iii

[Ratification] . . .

This Treaty shall, when it has come into effect as prescribed in the preceding paragraph, remain open as long as may be necessary for adherence by all the other Powers of the world. . . .



Consequences

The agreement marked the high-water mark of the postwar faith in good intentions as long as they were written down somewhere. The problem was that none of the postwar agreements—not the reparation promises, not the industrial accords, not the weapons limitations, not the arbitration agreements—had any sticking power in a world falling apart economically and rife with fear and suspicion from previous times. Noble in aspiration, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was self-defeating and self-denying, an expression more of hope than an instrument of policy. How little account the world afforded such hope became abundantly clear with the outbreak not only of another war but of perhaps the most destructive war in history. As with many of the interwar agreements, World War II made Kellogg-Briand a moot collection of paper.