

Versailles Treaty: The German Colonies (June 28, 1919)

Abstract

The articles of the Treaty of Versailles reproduced here stipulate the cession of the German overseas colonies. The colonial territories that the German Empire had claimed since the 1880s were placed under the mandate of the victorious Allied powers as League of Nations territories: France received East Togo and most of Cameroon, Great Britain a small part of Cameroon and West Togo, as well as most of German East Africa (today's Tanzania), Belgium received another part (today's Burundi and Rwanda) and Portugal the Kionga Triangle (today part of Mozambique). German Southwest Africa (today's Namibia) was assigned to South Africa. The Kiautschou Bay Leased Territory in China, the Marianas, Caroline Islands, Marshall Islands and Palau in the Pacific were placed under Japanese administration. Samoa was administered by New Zealand, while Australia took over the majority of German New Guinea.

Source

Section I.

German Colonies.

Article 119.

Germany renounces in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all her rights and titles over her oversea possessions.

Article 120.

All movable and immovable property in such territories belonging to the German Empire or to any German State shall pass to the Government exercising authority over such territories, on the terms laid down in Article 257 of Part IX (Financial Clauses) of the present Treaty. The decision of the local courts in any dispute as to the nature of such property shall be final.

Article 121.

The provisions of Sections I and IV of Part X (Economic Clauses) of the present Treaty shall apply in the case of these territories whatever be the form of Government adopted for them.

Article 122.

The Government exercising authority over such territories may make such provisions as it thinks fit with reference to the repatriation from them of German nationals and to the conditions upon which German subjects of European origin shall, or shall not, be allowed to reside, hold property, trade or exercise a profession in them.

Article 123.

The provisions of Article 260 of Part IX (Financial Clauses) of the present Treaty shall apply in the case of all agreements concluded with German nationals for the construction or exploitation of public works in the German oversea possessions, as well as any sub-concessions or contracts resulting therefrom which may have been made to or with such nationals.

Article 124.

Germany hereby undertakes to pay, in accordance with the estimate to be presented by the French Government and approved by the Reparation Commission, reparation for damage suffered by French nationals in the Cameroons or the frontier zone by reason of the acts of the German civil and military authorities and of German private individuals during the period from January 1, 1900, to August 1, 1914.

Article 125.

Germany renounces all rights under the Conventions and Agreements with France of November 4, 1911, and September 28, 1912, relating to Equatorial Africa. She undertakes to pay to the French Government, in accordance with the estimate to be presented by that Government and approved by the Reparation Commission, all the deposits, credits, advances, etc., effected by virtue of these instruments in favour of Germany.

Article 126.

Germany undertakes to accept and observe the agreements made or to be made by the Allied and Associated Powers or some of them with any other Power with regard to the trade in arms and spirits, and to the matters dealt with in the General Act of Berlin of February 26, 1885, the General Act of Brussels of July 2, 1890, and the conventions completing or modifying the same.

Article 127.

The native inhabitants of the former German oversea possessions shall be entitled to the diplomatic protection of the Governments exercising authority over those territories.

Source: The Treaty of Peace with Germany, June 28, 1919, *International Law Documents*. Naval War College, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920, pp. 18–21.

Recommended Citation: Versailles Treaty: The German Colonies (June 28, 1919), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:document-3934>> [March 16, 2026].