The Treaty of Versailles, 3 September 1783, with France

(George Chalmers, *A Collection of Treaties between Great Britain and other Powers*, 1 (1790), pp. 495-510.)

Similar treaties were concluded on the same date with Spain (at Versailles) and the United Provinces (at Paris), all these states having taken part in the War of American Independence.

The *Definitive Treaty of Peace and Friendship, between his Britannic Majesty, and the most Christian King; signed at Versailles, the 3d of September, 1783.*

In the name of the most Holy and Undivided Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

So be it.

Be it known to all those whom it shall or may in any manner concern. The most Serene and most Potent Prince, George the Third, by the grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Duke of Brunswic and Lunenburg, Arch-treasurer and Elector of the Holy Roman Empire, &c. and the most Serene and most Potent Prince, Lewis the Sixteenth, by the grace of God, most Christian King, being equally desirous to put an end to the war which for several years past afflicted their respective
dominions, accepted the offer which their Majesties the Emperor of the Romans, and the Empress of all the Russias, made to them of their interposition, and of their mediation: but their Britannic and most Christian Majesties, animated with a mutual desire of accelerating the re-establishment of peace, communicated to each other their laudable intention; which Heaven so far blessed, that they proceeded to lay the foundations of peace, by signing preliminary articles at Versailles, the 20th of January, in the present year. Their said Majesties the King of Great Britain, and the most Christian King, thinking it incumbent upon them to give their Imperial Majesties a signal proof of their gratitude for the generous offer of their mediation, invited them, in concert, to concur in the completion of the great and salutary work of peace, by taking part, as mediators, in the definitive treaty to be concluded between their Britannic and most Christian Majesties. Their said Imperial Majesties having readily accepted that invitation, they have named as their representatives, . . . In consequence, their said Majesties the King of Great Britain, and the most Christian King, have named and constituted for their Plenipotentiaries, charged with the concluding and signing of the definitive treaty of peace, viz. the King of Great Britain, the most illustrious and most excellent Lord, George Duke and Earl of Manchester, . . .; and the most Christian King, the most illustrious and most excellent Lord, Charles Gravier, Count de Vergennes, . . .: who, after having exchanged their respective full powers, have agreed upon the following articles:

I. There shall be a Christian, universal, and perpetual peace, as well by sea as by land, and a sincere and constant friendship shall be re-established between their Britannic and most Christian Majesties, and between their heirs and successors, kingdoms, dominions, provinces, countries, subjects, and vassals, of what quality or condition soever they be, without exception either of places or persons; so that the high contracting parties shall give the greatest attention to the maintaining between themselves, and their said dominions and subjects, this reciprocal friendship and intercourse, without permitting hereafter, on either part, any kind of hostilities to be committed, either by sea or by land, for any cause, or under any pretence whatsoever; and they shall carefully avoid, for the future, every thing which might prejudice the union happily re-established, endeavouring, on the contrary, to procure reciprocally for each other, on every occasion, whatever may contribute to their mutual glory, interests, and advantage, without giving any assistance or protection, directly or indirectly, to those who would do any injury to either of the high contracting parties. There shall be a general oblivion and amnesty of every thing which may have been done or committed before or since the commencement of the war which is just ended.

II. [Confirmation of previous treaties.]

III. All the prisoners taken on either side, as well by land as by sea, and the hostages carried away or given during the war, and to this day, shall be restored, without ransom, in six weeks at latest, to be computed from the day of the exchange of the ratifications of the present treaty; each crown respectively discharging the advances which shall have been made for the subsistence and maintenance of their prisoners by the Sovereign of the country where they shall have been detained, according to the receipts and attested accounts, and other authentic vouchers, which shall be furnished
on each side: and sureties shall be reciprocally given for the payment of the debts which the prisoners may have contracted in the countries where they may have been detained, until their entire release. And all ships, as well men of war as merchant-ships, which may have been taken since the expiration of the terms agreed upon for the cessation of hostilities by sea, shall likewise be restored, boné fide, with all their crews and cargoes. And the execution of this article shall be proceeded upon immediately after the exchange of the ratifications of this treaty.

IV. His Majesty the King of Great Britain is maintained in his right to the island of Newfoundland, and to the adjacent islands, as the whole were assured to him by the thirteenth article of the treaty of Utrecht; excepting the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, which are ceded in full right, by the present treaty, to his most Christian Majesty.

V. His Majesty the most Christian King, in order to prevent the quarrels which have hitherto arisen between the two nations of England and France, consents to renounce the right of fishing, which belongs to him in virtue of the aforesaid article of the treaty of Utrecht, from Cape Bonavista to Cape St. John, situated on the eastern coast of Newfoundland, in fifty degrees north latitude; and his Majesty the King of Great Britain consents on his part, that the fishery assigned to the subjects of his most Christian Majesty, beginning at the said Cape St. John, passing to the north, and descending by the western coast of the island of Newfoundland, shall extend to the place called Cape Raye, situated in forty-seven degrees fifty minutes latitude. The French fishermen shall enjoy the fishery which is assigned to them by the present article, as they had the right to enjoy that which was assigned to them by the treaty of Utrecht.

VI. With regard to the fishery in the gulf of St. Laurence, the French shall continue to exercise it conformably to the fifth article of the treaty of Paris.

VII. The King of Great Britain restores to France the island of St. Lucia, in the condition it was in when it was conquered by the British arms: and his Britannic Majesty cedes and guaranties to his most Christian Majesty the island of Tobago. The Protestant inhabitants of the said island, as well as those of the same religion who shall have settled in St. Lucia, whilst that island was occupied by the British arms, shall not be molested in the exercise of their worship: and the British inhabitants, or others who may have been subjects of the King of Great Britain in the aforesaid islands, shall retain their possessions upon the same titles and conditions by which they have acquired them; or else they may retire in full security and liberty, where they shall think fit, and shall have the power of selling their estates, provided it be to subjects of his most Christian Majesty, and of removing their effects, as well as their persons, without being restrained in their emigration under any pretence whatsoever, except on account of debts, or of criminal prosecutions. The term limited for this emigration is fixed to the space of eighteen months, to be computed from the day of the exchange of the ratifications of the present treaty. And for the better securing the possessions of the inhabitants of the aforesaid island of Tobago, the most Christian King shall issue letters patent, containing an abolition of the droit d'aubaine, in the said island.

VIII. The most Christian King restores to Great Britain the islands of Grenada,
and the Grenadines, St. Vincent’s, Dominica, St. Christopher’s, Nevis, and Montserrat; and the fortresses of these islands shall be delivered up in the condition they were in when the conquest of them was made. The same stipulations inserted in the preceding article shall take place in favour of the French subjects, with respect to the islands enumerated in the present article.

IX. The King of Great Britain cedes, in full right, and guaranties to his most Christian Majesty, the river Senegal, and its dependencies, with the forts of St. Louis, Podor, Galam, Arguin, and Portendic; and his Britannic Majesty restores to France the island of Gorée, which shall be delivered up in the condition it was in when the conquest of it was made.

X. The most Christian King, on his part, guaranties to the King of Great Britain the possession of fort James, and of the river Gambia.

XI. For preventing all discussion in that part of the world, the two high contracting parties shall, within three months after the exchange of the ratifications of the present treaty, name commissaries, who shall be charged with the settling and fixing of the boundaries of the respective possessions. As to the gum trade, the English shall have the liberty of carrying it on, from the mouth of the river St. John, to the bay and fort of Portendic inclusively. Provided that they shall not form any permanent settlement, of what nature soever, in the said river St. John, upon the coast, or in the bay of Portendic.

XII. As to the residue of the coast of Africa, the English and French subjects shall continue to resort thereto, according to the usage which has hitherto prevailed.

XIII. The King of Great Britain restores to his most Christian Majesty all the settlements which belonged to him at the beginning of the present war, upon the coast of Orissa, and in Bengal, with liberty to surround Chandernagore with a ditch for carrying off the waters: and his Britannic Majesty engages to take such measures as shall be in his power for securing to the subjects of France in that part of India, as well as on the coasts of Orissa, Coromandel, and Malabar, a safe, free, and independent trade, such as was carried on by the French East India Company, whether they exercise it individually, or united in a company.

XIV. Pondicherry shall be in like manner delivered up and guarantied to France, as also Karikal; and his Britannic Majesty shall procure, for an additional dependency to Pondicherry, the two districts of Valanour and Bahour; and to Karikal, the four Magans bordering thereupon.

XV. France shall re-enter into the possession of Mahé, as well as of its factory at Surat; and the French shall carry on their trade in this part of India conformably to the principles established in the thirteenth article of this treaty.

XVI. Orders having been sent to India by the high contracting parties, in pursuance of the sixteenth article of the preliminaries, it is further agreed, that if, within the term of four months, the respective allies of their Britannic and most Christian Majesties shall not have acceded to the present pacification, or concluded a separate accommodation, their said Majesties shall not give them any assistance, directly or indirectly, against the British or French possessions, or against the ancient possessions of their respective allies, such as they were in the year 1776.
XVII. The King of Great Britain, being desirous to give to his most Christian Majesty a sincere proof of reconciliation and friendship, and to contribute to render solid the peace re-established between their said Majesties, consents to the abrogation and suppression of all the articles relative to Dunkirk, from the treaty of peace concluded at Utrecht in 1713, inclusive, to this day.

XVIII. Immediately after the exchange of the ratifications, the two high contracting parties shall name commissaries to treat concerning new arrangements of commerce between the two nations, on the basis of reciprocity and mutual convenience; which arrangements shall be settled and concluded within the space of two years, to be computed from the first of January, in the year 1784.

XIX. All the countries and territories which may have been, or which may be conquered, in any part of the world whatsoever, by the arms of his Britannic Majesty, as well as by those of his most Christian Majesty, which are not included in the present treaty, neither under the head of Cessions, nor under the head of Restitutions, shall be restored without difficulty, and without requiring any compensation.

XX. [Fixes time limit for restitutions and evacuations.]

XXI. The decision of the prizes and seizures made prior to the hostilities shall be referred to the respective courts of justice; so that the legality of the said prizes and seizures shall be decided according to the law of nations, and to treaties, in the courts of justice of the nation which shall have made the capture, or ordered the seizures.

XXII. For preventing the revival of the law-suits which have been ended in the islands conquered by either of the high contracting parties, it is agreed, that the judgments pronounced in the last resort, and which have acquired the force of matters determined, shall be confirmed and executed according to their form and tenor.

XXIII. Their Britannic and most Christian Majesties promise to observe sincerely, and bona fide, all the articles contained and established in the present treaty; and they will not suffer the same to be infringed, directly or indirectly, by their respective subjects: and the said high contracting parties guaranty to each other, generally and reciprocally, all the stipulations of the present treaty.

XXIV. The solemn ratifications of the present treaty, prepared in good and due form, shall be exchanged in this city of Versailles, between the high contracting parties, in the space of a month, or sooner if possible, to be computed from the day of the signature of the present treaty.

In witness whereof, we the under-written Ambassador Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary have signed with our hands, in their names, and in virtue of our respective full powers, the present definitive treaty, and have caused the seals of our arms to be affixed thereto.

Done at Versailles, the third day of September, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three.

Manchester. (L.S.)
Gravier de Vergennes. (L.S.)

Separate Articles.

I. some of the titles made use of by the contracting parties, whether in the full powers, and other instruments, during the course of the negotiation, or in the
preamble of the present treaty, not being generally acknowledged, it has been agreed, that no prejudice should ever result therefrom to either of the said contracting parties; and that the titles taken or omitted on either side, upon occasion of the said negotiation, and of the present treaty, shall not be cited, or quoted as a precedent.

II. It has been agreed and determined, that the French language, made use of in all the copies of the present treaty, shall not form an example which may be allledged or quoted as a precedent, or in any manner prejudice either of the contracting Powers; and that they shall conform for the future to what has been observed, and ought to be observed, with regard to, and on the part of Powers, who are in the practice and possession of giving and receiving copies of like treaties in a different language from the French; the present treaty having, nevertheless, the same force and virtue as if the aforesaid practice had been therein observed.

In witness whereof, we the under-written Ambassador Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary of their Britannic and most Christian Majesties, have signed the present separate articles, and have caused the seals of our arms to be affixed thereto.

Done at Versailles, the third of September, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three.

Manchester. (L.S.) Gravier de Vergennes. (L.S.)

Declaration.

The King having entirely agreed with his most Christian Majesty upon the articles of the definitive treaty, will seek every means which shall not only insure the execution thereof, with his accustomed good faith and punctuality, but will besides give, on his part, all possible efficacy to the principles which shall prevent even the least foundation of dispute for the future.

To this end, and in order that the fishermen of the two nations may not give cause for daily quarrels, his Britannic Majesty will take the most positive measures for preventing his subjects from interrupting, in any manner, by their competition, the fishery of the French, during the temporary exercise of it which is granted to them upon the coasts of the island of Newfoundland; and he will, for this purpose, cause the fixed settlements, which shall be formed there, to be removed. His Britannic Majesty will give orders that the French fishermen be not incommode, in cutting the wood necessary for the repair of their scaffolds, huts, and fishing-vessels.

The thirteenth article of the treaty of Utrecht, and the method of carrying on the fishery, which has at all times been acknowledged, shall be the plan upon which the fishery shall be carried on there; it shall not be deviated from by either party; the French fishermen building only their scaffolds, confining themselves to the repair of their fishing-vessels, and not wintering there; the subjects of his Britannic Majesty, on their part, not molesting in any manner the French fishermen during their fishing, nor injuring their scaffolds during their absence.

The King of Great Britain, in ceding the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon to France, regards them as ceded for the purpose of serving as a real shelter to the French fishermen, and in full confidence that these possessions will not become an
object of jealousy between the two nations; and that the fishery between the said islands and that of Newfoundland shall be limited to the middle of the channel.

With regard to India, Great Britain having granted to France every thing that can ascertain and confirm the trade which the latter requires to carry on there, his Majesty relies with confidence on the repeated assurances of the court of Versailles, that the power of surrounding Chandernagore with a ditch for carrying off the waters, shall not be exercised in such a manner as to make it become an object of umbrage.

The new state in which commerce may perhaps be found in all parts of the world, will demand revisions and explanations of the subsisting treaties; but an entire abrogation of those treaties, in whatever period it might be, would throw commerce into such confusion as would be of infinite prejudice to it.

In some of the treaties of this sort, there are not only articles which relate merely to commerce, but many others which insure reciprocally to the respective subjects, privileges, facilities for conducting their affairs, personal protections, and other advantages, which are not, and which ought not to be of a changeable nature, such as the regulations relating merely to the value of goods and merchandise, variable from circumstances of every kind.

When therefore the state of the trade between the two nations shall be treated upon, it is requisite to be understood, that the alterations which may be made in the subsisting treaties are to extend only to arrangements merely commercial; and that the privileges and advantages, mutual and particular, be not only preserved on each side, but even augmented, if it can be done.

In this view, his Majesty has consented to the appointment of commissaries on each side, who shall treat solely upon this object.

In witness whereof, we his Britannic Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, being thereto duly authorized, have signed the present declaration, and caused the seal of our arms to be set thereto.

Given at Versailles, the third of September, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three.

(L.S.) Manchester.

Counter-Declaration

The principles which have guided the King in the whole course of the negotiations which preceded the re-establishment of peace, must have convinced the King of Great Britain, that his Majesty has had no other design than to render it solid and lasting, by preventing, as much as possible, in the four quarters of the world, every subject of discussion and quarrel. The King of Great Britain undoubtedly places too much confidence in the uprightness of his Majesty's intentions, not to rely upon his constant attention to prevent the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon from becoming an object of jealousy between the two nations.

As to the fishery on the coasts of Newfoundland, which has been the object of the new arrangements settled by the two Sovereigns upon this matter it is sufficiently ascertained by the fifth article of the treaty of peace signed this day, and by the declaration likewise delivered to-day, by his Britannic Majesty's Ambassador
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary; and his Majesty declares that he is fully satisfied on this head.

In regard to the fishery between the island of Newfoundland, and those of St. Pierre and Miquelon, it is not to be carried on, by either party, but to the middle of the channel; and his Majesty will give the most positive orders, that the French fishermens shall not go beyond this line. His Majesty is firmly persuaded that the King of Great Britain will give like orders to the English fishermen.

The King's desire to maintain the peace comprehends India as well as the other parts of the world; his Britannic Majesty may therefore be assured, that his Majesty will never permit that an object so inoffensive and so harmless as the ditch with which Chandernagore is to be surrounded, should give any umbrage to the court of London.

The King, in proposing new arrangements of commerce, had no other design than to remedy, by the rules of reciprocity and mutual convenience, whatever may be defective in the treaty of commerce signed at Utrecht, in one thousand seven hundred and thirteen. The King of Great Britain may judge from thence, that his Majesty's intention is not in any wise to cancel all the stipulations in the above-mentioned treaty; he declares, on the contrary, from henceforth, that he is disposed to maintain all the privileges, facilities, and advantages expressed in that treaty, as far as they shall be reciprocal, or compensated by equivalent advantages. It is to attain this end, desired on each side, that commissaries are to be appointed to treat upon the state of the trade between the two nations, and that a considerable space of time is to be allowed for compleating their work. His Majesty hopes that this object will be pursued with the same good faith, and the same spirit of conciliation, which presided over the discussion of all the other points comprized in the definitive treaty; and his said Majesty is firmly persuaded that the respective commissaries will employ the utmost diligence for the completion of this important work.

In witness whereof, we the under-written Minister Plenipotentiary of his most Christian Majesty, being thereto duly authorized, have signed the present counter-declaration, and have caused the seal of our arms to be affixed thereto.

Given at Versailles, the third of September, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three.

(L.S.) Gravier de Vergennes.

we, Ambassador Plenipotentiary of his Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty, having acted as mediator in the work of pacification, declare that the treaty of peace signed this day at Versailles, between his Britannic Majesty and his most Christian Majesty, with the two separate articles thereto annexed, and of which they form a part, as also with all the clauses, conditions, and stipulations, which are therein contained, was concluded by the mediation of his Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty. In witness whereof, we have signed these presents with our hand, and have caused the seal of our arms to be affixed thereto. Done at Versailles, the third of September, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three.

(L.S.) Le Comte de Mercy Argenteau.

[A similar declaration by the Russian mediators follows.]