

Treaty of Versailles, 1919

Background Guide

GWCIA XXXI

Table of Contents

Conference Policies 2-3
Letter from the Chair 4
Overview of Crisis / Specialized Procedure 5
Introduction to the Committee 6-7
Background 8-13
Current Situation 14-15
Questions to Consider 16
Character List 17-19
Works Cited 20-21

Conference Policies

Misconduct Policy

GWCIA acknowledges that collegiate Model UN spaces often echo or perpetuate real-world discrimination towards various historically marginalized communities. As such, GWCIA enforces a zero tolerance policy for harassment or discrimination based on race, color, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual identity, national origin, religion, age, disability, or any other identity-based designation. Additionally, GWCIA practices a zero tolerance policy for sexual misconduct of any kind, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. This includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate 1) content in notes passed or documents created during committee sessions; 2) conversations throughout GWCIA; and 3) conduct at The George Washington University campus or at any GWCIA-sponsored programming. If a delegate experiences any kind of discrimination, social discomfort, or sexual misconduct, they are urged to bring it to the attention of any GWCIA Secretariat member or report the instance via our anonymous misconduct form, which can be found on our Conduct Policies website page and in each committee room. Any potential cases of discrimination or sexual misconduct will warrant immediate investigation and may result in disqualification from awards and/or dismissal from the conference at the sole discretion of the secretary-general.

Technology Policy — Crisis & Historical/Specialized

Using technology is prohibited in GWCIA historical/specialized and crisis committees, unless a delegate has an approved accommodation. GWCIA will provide delegates with one white legal pad and a pen that they may use to write notes if they wish. Delegates are free to bring their own additional notepads, staplers, pens, Post-Its, or other supplies, as these will not be provided.

Plagiarism, Pre-Writing & AI Policy

All pre-written, plagiarized, or AI-generated content, which can include working papers, draft resolutions, directives, or crisis notes, is strictly prohibited at GWCIA. Pre-writing constitutes any language or content that was written outside of unmoderated caucuses in general assemblies and outside of when debate is formally opened in crisis committees. This means that creating content before or after committee sessions or during moderated caucuses in assemblies & specialized committees is pre-writing. Writing during USG feedback or announcements or during guest speakers equally constitutes pre-writing. All dais members and undersecretaries general are specifically instructed to monitor for pre-writing by checking typed and written materials that delegates may have prepared before the conference if potential pre-writing is suspected.
By participating in GWCIA, your delegation acknowledges that they understand this policy and the consequences if it is broken. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, verbatim or near-verbatim copying and pasting from academic sources or other websites. Any delegate found guilty of pre-writing, plagiarism, or flagrant AI usage will be immediately disqualified from any award in their committee. The GWCIA Secretariat reserves the right to search computers and laptops, notebooks and binders, USBs, and any form of electronics for Model UN specific documents in response to allegations. They additionally reserve the discretion to run any content through an AI detector. In order to report a case of substantive misconduct, please see the anonymous misconduct form on our Conduct Policies page or contact a member of the Secretariat.

Awards Policy

While GWCIA recognizes that the core value of participating in any Model UN committee is education in international affairs and the development of related skills such as productive collaboration, public speaking, and critical thinking, we also recognize the value of rewarding delegates who are exceptionally prepared and proficient in these skills. At GWCIA, we value delegates who can leverage creativity, diplomacy, substantive knowledge, and critical thinking skills to debate effectively, lead negotiations and blocs, and write comprehensive clauses. We especially look favorably towards delegates who individually develop meaningful solutions to the committee's main issues while keeping in mind the realistic diplomatic dynamics of our world, as well as those delegates who are able to advocate for their solutions and ideas to be adopted. The dais encourages delegates to lead in a manner that uplifts and respects their competitors while also introducing strong, unique solutions that consistently anchor their group's directive or working paper. On the other hand, attempts to undermine the goals of the committee without reason or acting without detailed thought of consequences are discouraged. Any rude, disrespectful, or demeaning conduct towards other delegates' ideas will not be tolerated.

Letter from the Chair & Crisis Director

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Versailles! My name is Souheil Mouhajir and I'll be your chair.

A bit about me first. I'm a sophomore at GW studying International Affairs and Data Science with a minor in Political Science, which is a long way of saying I like asking how decisions get made and then arguing about whether they were any good. Outside of class I work with the Africa Program at the Onero Institute and do research on refugee and migration policy, so I spend most of my reading time on people who get moved around by decisions they had no say in.

That is most of the reason I wanted to run this committee. The thing that stuck with me about the Paris Peace Conference is how many of the people whose futures were on the table never got into the room. Delegations crossed oceans to sit in hallways while a few men next door redrew their borders. I think about that a lot, and I would love for you to sit with it while you prepare.

Here is the good news! You do not need to have memorized the treaty to do well here. What matters is that you grasp your character's interests and are willing to bargain for them. The most effective delegates are rarely the loudest; they are the ones who know precisely what they need and can identify who else in the room is positioned to help them secure it.

This is a historical committee, but I am not asking you to reenact anything. I would much rather watch you try to beat the negotiators of 1919, and find out for yourselves why that is harder than it looks.

Please email me! Seriously, about anything: about your character, about something in this guide that does not make sense, or about being nervous for your first committee. No question is too small, and I would rather hear from you in November than have you walk in on December 5 unsure. I was new to all of this not long ago, and someone answered my emails too.

I cannot wait to see what you do with it!

All the Best,
Souheil Mouhajir
souheil.mouhajir@gwu.edu

Reminder: Delegates must CC their advisor on any email sent to the Chair or Crisis Director.

Overview of Committee Procedure

Specialized Procedure

GWCIA XXXI Specialized committees will bring together components of both GA and Crisis procedure to create a dynamic, fast-paced debate environment for delegates. Instead of writing a long-form resolution throughout the conference, delegates will write multiple shorter directives. These directives will be submitted to the dais and, if passed, alter the committee in real time, resulting in crisis updates that will drive the direction of debate. Debate will use a combination of moderated caucuses, unmoderated caucuses, and round robins to discuss crisis updates and directives, functioning similarly to a Crisis front room. Please note that Specialized committees will not utilize backroom, so delegates should not expect to send crisis notes.

Introduction to the Committee

This committee seats you at the Paris Peace Conference, opened at the Quai d'Orsay on January 18, 1919. The date was chosen by the French. It is the anniversary of the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors in 1871, and nobody at the table needed to explain it to them. Debate opens in the conference's first weeks and runs to the signature on June 28.

The historical conference did not deliberate as one body, and the machinery matters because it decided who was heard. More than thirty delegations were accredited. Plenary sessions numbered fewer than ten across six months and were largely ceremonial. Real authority sat with the Supreme Council, called the Council of Ten, made up of two representatives each from the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. On March 24, 1919, worn down by leaks and by the pace of business, Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Orlando withdrew into the Council of Four and settled the hardest questions among themselves, with Japan present only for items that touched Japan. Beneath both councils sat more than fifty commissions on territory, reparations, war responsibility, and the League covenant, which drafted the technical text the councils approved or overruled. This committee compresses all of that into one room. Some of you will find the compression flattering. Others will find it is the only reason they are audible at all.

What this committee decides on its own authority: the text of the treaty and its annexes, the covenant of the League, the allocation of mandates, the terms on which the armistice is renewed or allowed to lapse, and whether the blockade of Germany continues. What it can only recommend: anything requiring ratification. A signature in Paris binds no state until its capital says so. Wilson cannot deliver a Senate that Henry Cabot Lodge controls. Lloyd George answers to a Commons elected in December 1918 on a promise to make Germany pay. Orlando's government falls if he goes home without Fiume. A directive that passes here and dies in a capital has still cost you the session you spent on it.

Understand what is legally in force. The armistice of November 11, 1918 is a suspension of arms, renewable and revocable at three days notice. The state of war continues, Allied armies hold the left bank of the Rhine, and the naval blockade of Germany has never been lifted. Peace is not the condition you are preserving. It is the thing you have been asked to manufacture.

Background

The World in 1919

By the close of 1918 the war was over. Four years of attritional, industrialized conflict had killed roughly nine million soldiers and millions of civilians, exhausted the treasuries of every belligerent, and brought down four empires.[1] The German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian imperial orders all disintegrated within a few years of one another. In their place lay a vacuum into which rushed nascent states seeking to constitute themselves, long-suppressed national grievances, and a revolutionary movement that alarmed nearly every government still standing.

Hostilities ceased with the armistice of November 1918, but an armistice is merely a suspension of arms. The substantive peace, the questions of who would pay, who would acquire which territories, and which polities would survive at all, remained to be settled. In January 1919, delegations from more than thirty nations convened in Paris to determine precisely that.[2] They did not assemble as equals. A narrow circle of victorious powers would make the consequential decisions, while the remainder petitioned, argued, and waited.

The defeated were excluded from negotiation. Germany would be presented with the completed treaty and required to sign it. Bolshevik Russia, absorbed in its own civil war and regarded as a contagion to be quarantined rather than a party to be accommodated, was shut out entirely. The peace therefore belonged to the victors, and in practice to only a few of them.

That is the chamber you are entering: triumphant yet depleted, apprehensive about the westward spread of revolution, and burdened with the formidable task of converting a military victory into a settlement that endures. Whether it endures is now your responsibility.

The armistice, and what it left standing

The guns stopped at eleven o'clock on November 11, 1918 under terms signed six hours earlier in Marshal Foch's railway carriage at Rethondes. Those terms are not a peace and they are not permanent. Germany agreed to evacuate Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and Alsace-Lorraine within fifteen days and to clear the entire left bank of the Rhine, conceding Allied bridgeheads at Cologne, Koblenz, and Mainz with a neutral zone beyond them. It surrendered 5,000 guns, 25,000 machine guns, 3,000 trench mortars, and 1,700 aircraft, along with 5,000 locomotives and

---

[1]Alan Sharp, "The Paris Peace Conference and its Consequences," *1914-1918-Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/the-paris-peace-conference-and-its-consequences-1-1/.

[2]"Paris Peace Conference," Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/event/Paris-Peace-Conference.

150,000 railway wagons. Its submarines were handed over and its capital ships interned at Scapa Flow. It renounced the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest. The convention ran thirty six days and has been renewed three times, at Trier in December and January and again in February, the last renewal indefinite and terminable at three days notice.[3] Allied armies stand on the Rhine and can restart the war inside seventy two hours. That is the opening balance of power in this room.

The clause that matters most is the one nobody put in a speech. The naval blockade of Germany remains in force. It was imposed in 1914, tightened through the war, and it did not lift when the shooting stopped. Through the winter of 1918 and 1919 German civilians went hungry while the Allies and Berlin argued over whether Germany would surrender its merchant fleet in exchange for food. Germany refused from January to March; the Brussels agreement of March 13 and 14, 1919 finally traded the merchant marine for permitted imports of grain and pork.[4] The blockade was not lifted until July 1919, after Germany had signed and ratified.[5] German official figures put the civilian death toll at 763,000, a number Sally Marks and others have disputed as wartime propaganda and C. Paul Vincent has largely defended.[6] Delegates do not need to settle that argument. They need to understand what it means at the table. The Allies can starve Germany into signature, everyone in the room knows it, and it is the reason a treaty nobody in Berlin accepts will be signed anyway.

The Fourteen Points and the pre-armistice agreement

Germany did not surrender unconditionally, and the distinction is the legal foundation of everything Hermann Müller will say.

In early October 1918, with the front collapsing, the government of Prince Max von Baden appealed directly to Wilson for an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points and Wilson's later addresses. Three weeks of notes followed, with the United States acting as intermediary between Berlin and its own allies, neither of whom wanted the Fourteen Points at all. On November 5, Secretary of State Robert Lansing transmitted the Allied answer. The Allies accepted the Fourteen Points as the basis of the peace, with two reservations: Britain reserved freedom of the seas, and the Allies specified that compensation would be due for damage done to the civilian

---

[3]"Terms of the Armistice with Germany, Signed November 11, 1918," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. 2, doc. 1, U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv02/d1.

[4]Alan Kramer, "Naval Blockade (of Germany)," *1914-1918-Online*, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/naval-blockade-of-germany/.

[5]Kramer, "Naval Blockade (of Germany)."

[6]Sally Marks, "Mistakes and Myths: The Allies, Germany, and the Versailles Treaty, 1918-1921," *Journal of Modern History* 85, no. 3 (2013): 632-59; Kramer, "Naval Blockade (of Germany)."

population of the Allies and their property by German aggression by land, by sea, and from the air.[7]

That exchange is the pre-armistice agreement. Germany laid down its arms believing it had bought a Wilsonian peace subject to two named exceptions. When the finished text arrives in May with an article assigning responsibility for the war, a reparations bill with no stated total, unilateral disarmament, and territories transferred without plebiscite, the German objection will not be that the terms are harsh. It will be that they are a breach of contract, and the German delegation made exactly that argument on May 13, invoking the Lansing note by name.[8] Whether you accept the argument shapes almost everything else this committee produces.

Four empires, gone

Germany. The republic Müller represents is weeks old and fighting for its life. A naval mutiny at Kiel in late October 1918 spread into workers' and soldiers' councils across the country. Wilhelm II abdicated on November 9 and Scheidemann proclaimed a republic from a Reichstag window the same afternoon. The Spartacist uprising in Berlin in January 1919 was crushed by Freikorps units acting for a Social Democratic government; Luxemburg and Liebknecht were murdered on January 15. Elections on January 19 produced a National Assembly that met at Weimar on February 6 because Berlin was not safe. A soviet republic held Munich in May.[9] Any delegate who assumes Germany is a stable entity being punished has misread the map. It is a state that may not survive the terms you write for it.

Austria-Hungary. It dissolved before the armistice. Czechoslovakia declared independence on October 28, 1918, the South Slav state on October 29, Hungary on October 31, German Austria on November 12, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was proclaimed on December 1. None of these states has agreed borders, and Czechs, Poles, Romanians, Serbs, and Hungarians are already fighting over them while the conference talks. Béla Kun proclaimed a Hungarian soviet republic on March 21, 1919, which is when the danger stopped being theoretical for Clemenceau.[10]

---

[7]"Wilson's Fourteen Points, 1918," U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/fourteen-points; "President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points," The Avalon Project, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp.
[8]"The President of the Peace Conference (Clemenceau) to the President of the German Delegation (Brockdorff-Rantzau), June 16, 1919," in *FRUS: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. 6, doc. 93, U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv06/d93.
[9]"Treaty of Versailles," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles.
[10]Sharp, "Paris Peace Conference and its Consequences."

The Ottomans. The armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918 opened the Straits and put an Allied fleet at Constantinople. The Arab provinces are under British military administration. Anatolia itself is open, and Venizelos wants a piece of it.[11]

Russia. Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 took Russia out of the war and a third of its population with it. A civil war is running, Allied troops are at Archangel, Murmansk, Vladivostok, and Odessa, and no Russian delegation sits in Paris because the Allies cannot agree which Russia they recognize.[12]

The promises already made

Wilson's first point demanded open covenants. The Allies had spent four years doing the opposite, and the Bolsheviks published the files in November 1917.

The Treaty of London of April 26, 1915 bought Italy's entry with the Trentino, South Tyrol to the Brenner, Trieste, Istria, northern Dalmatia, the Dodecanese, a zone in Anatolia, and colonial compensation. It did not promise Fiume, which was assigned to Croatia. Orlando now demands London in full plus Fiume, which is why his position looks maximalist even to sympathetic delegates.[13]

The Hussein-McMahon correspondence of 1915 and 1916 promised British support for Arab independence, with exclusions whose meaning the two sides have never agreed on. The Sykes-Picot agreement of May 16, 1916 divided the same territory between Britain and France. The Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 committed Britain to a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. The Anglo-French declaration of November 7, 1918 promised indigenous governments in Syria and Mesopotamia. Faisal arrives holding all four and asks which one Britain intends to honor.[14]

On Shandong, Japan seized the German concession at Kiaochow in 1914, extracted the Twenty One Demands from China in 1915, obtained secret assurances from Britain, France, Russia, and Italy in early 1917 in exchange for naval assistance in the Mediterranean, and secured Chinese notes of September 24, 1918 that appeared to bless the arrangement. Wellington Koo's problem in this room is not that his case is weak. It is that his own government signed something in Peking that he was not told about.[15]

---

[11]"Sykes-Picot Agreement," Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement.
[12]"The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles," U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/paris-peace.
[13]"Paris Peace Conference," Encyclopaedia Britannica.
[14]"The Sykes-Picot Agreement, 1916," The Avalon Project, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/sykes.asp; "The Balfour Declaration, November 2, 1917," The Avalon Project, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp.
[15]"Treaty of Versailles," Wikipedia.

The machinery of the conference

Between January and March, business ran through the Council of Ten. From March 24 it ran through the Council of Four, meeting in Wilson's or Lloyd George's rooms with no secretary present except Paul Mantoux, whose interpreter's notes are the only record of how the treaty was actually decided.[16] A Council of Five of foreign ministers took second order questions. More than fifty commissions produced the drafts. Petitioners appeared by invitation and were heard once: Koo argued for the return of Shandong to China before the Council of Ten on January 28, Faisal appeared on February 6. The League of Nations Commission, chaired by Wilson, delivered a draft covenant to plenary on February 14 and a revised text on April 28. On April 11 it took a majority vote in favor of the Japanese racial equality amendment, and Wilson, in the chair, ruled that the matter required unanimity and the amendment therefore failed.[17] Wilson himself fell seriously ill in Paris on April 3, at the exact point the Saar and Rhineland questions came to a head, and several historians read his subsequent concessions in that light.[18]

What each capital is demanding

Lloyd George fought the khaki election of December 14, 1918 on trying the Kaiser and making Germany pay, and in April 1919 nearly 400 government backbenchers telegraphed him in Paris to say they had meant it.[19] Wilson lost the Senate in the midterms of November 1918, which handed Lodge the Foreign Relations Committee; on March 4, 1919 thirty nine senators and senators elect signed a round robin declaring the covenant unacceptable as drafted, which is more than the third needed to sink a treaty requiring two thirds.[20] Clemenceau is squeezed between Foch and Poincaré, who want the Rhine frontier outright, and an Anglo-American guarantee that exists only if two foreign legislatures ratify it. Orlando has a parliament that will not accept less than the Adriatic; he walked out of the conference on April 24 after Wilson appealed over his head to the Italian public, returned on May 7, and fell on June 19 anyway.[21] Every delegate in this room is negotiating against two opponents, and one of them is at home.

The Russian question

The conference could not decide whether to talk to the Bolsheviks or destroy them, so it did neither. Wilson and Lloyd George proposed on January 22 that all Russian factions meet on the

---

[16]"Paris Peace Conference," Encyclopaedia Britannica.
[17]Sharp, "Paris Peace Conference and its Consequences."
[18]"Treaty of Versailles," Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Versailles.
[19]"The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles," Office of the Historian.
[20]"The League of Nations, 1920," U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/league; "League of Nations," Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/League-of-Nations.
[21]Sharp, "Paris Peace Conference and its Consequences"; "Paris Peace Conference," Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Princes' Islands at Prinkipo; the Bolsheviks answered with conditions and the Whites refused outright, with French encouragement.[22] William Bullitt went to Moscow in March with informal backing and returned with terms, which Lloyd George publicly disowned in the Commons on April 16 and Wilson declined to read.[23] Meanwhile Allied troops remained in northern Russia and Siberia, Churchill pressed for open intervention, and Clemenceau began describing a belt of client states from the Baltic to the Black Sea whose function was to keep Bolshevism east of it. That is the cordon sanitaire, and it explains why Poland's borders are not only Poland's business.[24]

Timeline

A brief chronology of how Europe arrived at the negotiating table. The committee opens in early 1919, with the following already behind it.

- June 1914. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo activates the alliance system and draws the major powers into war.
- 1915 to 1917. Britain and France conclude a series of secret agreements dividing Ottoman territory, promising Arab independence, buying Italy's entry with the Treaty of London, and conceding Japanese succession to Germany's rights in Shandong.
- April 1917. The United States enters the war, decisively shifting the balance of resources toward the Allies.
- November 1917. The Bolsheviks seize power in Russia, publish the secret treaties, and soon conclude a separate peace.
- January 1918. Wilson promulgates his Fourteen Points, advancing self-determination and a League of Nations as the basis for peace.
- October 1918. Germany appeals to Wilson for an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points. Mudros ends Ottoman resistance. Austria-Hungary dissolves. Naval mutiny at Kiel spreads across Germany.
- November 1918. On November 5 the Allies accept the Fourteen Points as the basis of peace, reserving freedom of the seas and reparations for civilian damage. Wilhelm II abdicates on November 9 and a republic is proclaimed. Germany signs the armistice on November 11. The fighting ends. The naval blockade does not.
- January 1919. The Spartacist rising is crushed in Berlin. The delegations assemble in Paris and the conference convenes on January 18. This is our point of departure.

---

[22]"The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles," Office of the Historian.
[23]"The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles," Office of the Historian.
[24]"Paris Peace Conference," Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Current Situation

The Central Questions

Six questions structure nearly every debate you will have in this room.

1. *Reparations and war guilt.* How much should Germany pay, and on what justification? A clause assigning Germany responsibility for the war furnishes the legal and moral basis for substantial demands. Yet the economist John Maynard Keynes warned that a punitive indemnity would cripple the German economy and cultivate precisely the resentment from which future conflict is made.[25] The committee must weigh retribution against economic viability.
2. *Borders and self-determination.* Wilson's principle that peoples should govern themselves is compelling in the abstract and exceedingly difficult to apply. Populations are intermingled, and ethnographic boundaries seldom coincide with defensible strategic ones. Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar, the Polish Corridor, and Danzig each represent a collision between principle and security, with no settlement satisfying both.
3. *French security and the Rhine.* Having been invaded by Germany twice within living memory, France seeks a durable guarantee against a third occurrence, whether through a demilitarized Rhineland, an interposed buffer state, or a binding pledge of Anglo-American protection. Critics contend that such guarantees merely sow the grievances that animate the next conflict.
4. *Colonies and the mandate system.* The colonial possessions of the defeated empires are available for redistribution, now framed in the more palatable vocabulary of trusteeship. The committee must decide whether the mandate system represents a genuine step toward eventual self-government or a continuation of empire under a reformed name.[26]
5. *The League of Nations.* Wilson has staked his program on a League capable of preventing future wars. The open question is whether it will possess meaningful enforcement powers or function as a deliberative body without sanction, and whether the major powers, including Wilson's own United States, will consent to be bound by it.
6. *The specter of revolution.* Bolshevism is advancing westward into a Europe that is impoverished and hungry. Every decision regarding Germany is shadowed by a further consideration: pressed too severely, Germany itself may collapse into the very revolution the conference is determined to contain.

---

[25]Marks, "Mistakes and Myths"; "Versailles Treaty: Reparations (June 28, 1919)," German History in Documents and Images, https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/versailles-treaty-reparations-june-28-1919.

[26]"Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations," United Nations Digital Library, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/829695; "The Covenant of the League of Nations," The Avalon Project, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp.

\Questions to Consider

Please consider the following questions as you prepare for this committee, allow the following to guide your research:

- Should Germany be broken or rebuilt, can France's security requirement be reconciled with Anglo-American caution, and will whatever you agree to survive ratification in your own capital?
- When self-determination and strategic security point in opposite directions, which one gives way, and who is entitled to make that call?
- What is the distance between what Germany owes and what it can pay before it collapses, and what fills that gap if you get the number wrong?
- Should the League hold real enforcement power, and what sovereignty must member states surrender for it to work?
- How far do the wartime promises made to smaller nations and colonial subjects actually bind the victors now, and does the mandate system honor them or bury them?

Character List

The roster is ordered by leverage. Alliance membership does not determine where a delegate sits in that order. Read your own dossier first, then read everyone else's, because most of what you can extract in this committee depends on knowing what another delegate cannot afford to leave Paris without.

Who Is in the Room

The powers who decide. Wilson arrives with fourteen points, a Congress he does not control, and a theory that a settlement only holds if Germany can be brought to accept it. Clemenceau wants the opposite settlement. France fought the war on French soil and lost a generation doing it, and his mandate is to make German recovery slow enough that German intentions stop mattering. Lloyd George holds the middle and pays for it twice over: a British electorate that voted in December 1918 to squeeze Germany until the pips squeak, and a Treasury that needs a German economy solvent enough to buy British exports. Orlando came for the Adriatic coast London promised Italy in 1915 and will walk out of the conference to prove he means it. Saionji speaks least of the five and holds the claim the others would rather not adjudicate: Shandong, held by Japanese troops since 1914 and secured by wartime understandings with Britain and France.

The powers who petition. Outside that circle sit the states that need the conference more than the conference needs them. Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Yugoslav kingdom want defensible frontiers rather than ethnographic ones, and they want them recognized before local fighting settles the question without them. The Baltic and Caucasus republics arrive out of a Russia that has stopped functioning as a state, asking for recognition no great power has yet decided to grant. The Dominions arrive with casualty lists and a demand that those lists convert into separate signatures and separate seats. China arrives to lose Shandong. Faisal arrives holding British undertakings from 1915 and 1916 that the Sykes-Picot text contradicts. Aharonian asks for less than anyone else in the room, which is a state that survives the year.

The characters represented in this list may have been altered or modified from their real life counterparts, as well as entirely made up. This is to ensure that all delegates have a fun, engaging and enjoyable experience no matter their position. If you find outside information related to your character that contradicts that of your character description, please use the provided description as the final authority on the character's portfolio.

The powers who decide

- Woodrow Wilson, United States. President and author of the Fourteen Points, and the conference's principal idealist, though constrained by a Senate that may repudiate whatever he signs. Seeks a League of Nations and a peace not predicated on revenge.
- Georges Clemenceau, France. The premier known as the Tiger, hardened by two German invasions within his lifetime, for whom security is paramount. Seeks a Germany rendered permanently incapable of recovery.
- David Lloyd George, United Kingdom. Prime Minister caught between a public demanding Germany's punishment and his own conviction that a ruined Europe benefits no one. Seeks to penalize Germany without destroying it.
- Vittorio Orlando, Italy. Prime Minister focused above all on the territory promised to Italy in 1915. Seeks Fiume and the Adriatic, and will withdraw if refused.
- Saionji Kinmochi, Japan. Elder statesman of an ascendant power that expects adequate standing. Seeks Shandong and a racial equality clause within the League covenant.

The new and reconstituted states

- Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Poland. A celebrated pianist turned prime minister of a Poland newly restored to existence. Seeks recognized borders and access to the sea.
- Edvard Beneš, Czechoslovakia. Foreign minister of a state still defining its frontiers. Seeks defensible borders and full standing among the recognized nations.
- Nikola Pašić, Serbia. Veteran statesman directing the formation of a unified South Slav kingdom. Seeks a Yugoslav state under Serbian leadership.

- Eleftherios Venizelos, Greece. Ambitious prime minister surveying the fragments of the collapsing Ottoman Empire. Seeks Greek expansion into Thrace and Anatolia.
- Ion Brătianu, Romania. Prime minister intent on collecting the reward for Romania's wartime entry. Seeks the promised territories, foremost Transylvania.
- Paul Hymans, Belgium. Foreign minister of a nation devastated by German occupation. Seeks reparations and priority of consideration for Belgium.
- Afonso Costa, Portugal. Statesman of a smaller Allied power seeking its due. Seeks recognition, reparations, and protection of Portugal's colonial holdings.
- João Pandiá Calógeras, Brazil. Representing the foremost Latin American power at the table. Seeks the seized German vessels and a voice in the emerging order.

The Dominions and the empire

- Robert Borden, Canada. Prime minister of a Dominion that sustained heavy losses on the empire's behalf. Seeks recognition of the Dominions as nations in their own right.
- Billy Hughes, Australia. A combative prime minister with pronounced demands. Seeks control of Germany's Pacific territories and the defeat of the racial equality clause.
- Jan Smuts, South Africa. Statesman and one of the principal architects of the postwar settlement. Seeks to shape both the League and the mandate system.
- Edwin Samuel Montagu, India. Secretary of State for India, representing a colony whose wartime service was substantial. Seeks formal recognition of India's contribution.

The defeated and the petitioners

- Hermann Müller, Germany. A Social Democrat representing a nation handed terms rather than granted a seat. Seeks to moderate the treaty and must determine whether Germany can sign it at all.
- Wellington Koo, China. An accomplished young diplomat refusing to permit Shandong to be bargained away. Seeks its return to China rather than its transfer to Japan.
- Faisal bin Hussein bin Ali al-Hashimi, Hejaz. Leader of the Arab delegation and the Arab Revolt, and later king of Iraq. Seeks to hold the Allies to their wartime commitments regarding Arab independence.
- Avetis Aharonian, Armenia. Heading a delegation petitioning for survival in the aftermath of genocide. Seeks recognition, security, and territory for an independent Armenia.
- Alimardan bey Topchubashov, Azerbaijan. Representing a republic recently self-declared and in need of legitimacy. Seeks international recognition.
- Jaan Poska, Estonia. Statesman of a small Baltic nation detaching itself from a disintegrating Russia. Seeks recognition of Estonian independence.

- Augustinas Voldemaras, Lithuania. First prime minister of an independent Lithuania, beset by competing claims. Seeks recognition and secure borders.

Works Cited

"Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations" (the mandate system). United Nations Digital Library. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/829695.

"The Balfour Declaration, November 2, 1917." The Avalon Project, Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp.

Brandt, Susanne. "Versailles, Treaty of." 1914-1918-Online. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/versailles-treaty-of/.

"The Covenant of the League of Nations." The Avalon Project, Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp.

"Fourteen Points." Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Fourteen-Points.

"Fourteen Points." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourteen_Points.

"The Fourteen Points." National WWI Museum and Memorial. https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/peace/fourteen-points.

Kramer, Alan. "Naval Blockade (of Germany)." 1914-1918-Online. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/naval-blockade-of-germany/.

"League of Nations." Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/League-of-Nations.

"The League of Nations, 1920." U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/league.

"League of Nations Instituted, January 10, 1920." History.com. https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/january-10/league-of-nations-instituted.

Marks, Sally. "Mistakes and Myths: The Allies, Germany, and the Versailles Treaty, 1918-1921." Journal of Modern History 85, no. 3 (2013): 632-59. https://doi.org/10.1086/670825.

"Paris Peace Conference." Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Paris-Peace-Conference.

"The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles." U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/paris-peace.

"President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points." The Avalon Project, Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp.

Sharp, Alan. "The Paris Peace Conference and its Consequences." 1914-1918-Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/the-paris-peace-conference-and-its-consequences-1-1/.

"Sykes-Picot Agreement." Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement.

"The Sykes-Picot Agreement, 1916." The Avalon Project, Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/sykes.asp.

"Treaty of Versailles." Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Versailles.

"Treaty of Versailles." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles.

"Treaty of Versailles." World History Encyclopedia. https://www.worldhistory.org/Treaty_of_Versailles/.

United States Department of State, Office of the Historian. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919 (FRUS, full text). https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments.

"The Versailles Treaty, June 28, 1919" (full text). The Avalon Project, Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/versailles_menu.asp.

"Versailles Treaty: Reparations (June 28, 1919)" (Article 231, annotated). German History in Documents and Images. https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/versailles-treaty-reparations-june-28-1919.

"What Was the Treaty of Versailles?" Imperial War Museums. https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-treaty-of-versailles.

"Wilson's Fourteen Points, 1918." U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/fourteen-points.