



PacificMUN 2017

League of Nations (LoN)

Backgrounder Guide

Topic A: The Rise of Fascism in Europe



PacificMUN 2017

Dare to Speak | February 24–26 2017

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Adam Dobrer and it is my absolute pleasure to welcome you all to PacificMUN 2017 and the League of Nations! Over the course of one single weekend my chair Manraj, and my trusty camera Charlie will help you navigate the fascinating period of international relations between the two most brutal wars in human history. Over the course of one weekend you will immerse yourselves into the thick of a continent and a world in transition- on track as you all know from the pages of history for a Second World War.

Before we dive head first into our two topics let me tell you a little bit about me!

So if you don't already know, I am a huge history nerd! When I'm not nose deep in a novel or frantically tying my tie you can find me pretending to do school work, out and about in the city with my trusty camera or arguing with people on the internet with a cup of tea in hand! I am currently a "rising senior" at Hugh McRoberts Secondary, and have been involved in Model UN for three years now.

Are you ready? Are there any points or motions on the floor at this time?

No? Well that's alright! If any of you have any questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to shoot me an email. It's my job to make sure each and every one of you has a fabulous, fun and most importantly educational experience! See you all – February 24th, 2017!

Kindest Regards,
Adam Dobrer
League of Nations Director
PacificMUN 2017



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Committee Overview

The League of Nations was created in the immediate aftermath of one of history's most tragic wars. A war so horrible that at its end, with the surrender of the Triple Alliance on November 11th, 1918, observers coined it the "war to end all wars." So distraught was the continent of Europe and indeed the world at the scope of the Great War's brutality; that the leaders of the world vowed to make the continent and the rest of the planet "safe for democracy." This rhetoric pushed so passionately by United States President Woodrow Wilson gave fruit to his famous fourteen points speech- the cornerstone of which was an international forum where conflicts could be resolved not with war and bloodshed, but by peace and diplomacy.

Being the first attempt of its kind; the League of Nations had many flaws. It had no way to consistent way to enforce its resolutions, no independent standing army and was deeply reliant on The Great Powers (France, The United Kingdom and the United States) for arms, funding and soldiers. It had the mandate of ensuring international peace; any violence or declaration of war was viewed as failure. If a dispute arose, the League could take actions under its Covenant- known as its sanctions.

1. **Calls to Discussion-** The states in dispute would sit and discuss the problem in the League's Assembly, to determine how they would proceed.
2. **Verbal Sanctions-** If in the opinion of the League one party in a dispute was an aggressor, the League could introduce verbal sanctions- warning a nation to cease and desist or face further consequences.
3. **Economic Sanctions-** If parties in dispute failed to comply with the Assembly's decision, the League could introduce economic sanctions arranged by the League Council. These sanctions when placed on the aggressor were supposed to drive them into bankruptcy.
4. **Physical Sanctions-** Military force was to be used to implement the decision of the League; however the League did not have its own standing army and no state was obligated to provide armed forces to the League.

The results of the League of Nations were mixed and the organization today is largely recognized as failure. As delegates you have the power to change that.

The year is 1932. The global economy is in a deep and dark depression. The continent of Europe is fractured and divided. The specter of communism and fascism haunts the whole planet.

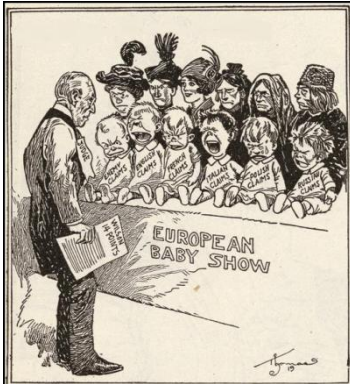


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Establishment of the League of Nations

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points

In January of 1918; Woodrow Wilson was in an embattled and politically difficult position at home. The cornerstone promise of his election campaign, to keep the United States out of the war, had been broken- angering the isolationists within his own party and the Republicans- who controlled the House of Representatives. Thus, President Wilson stood before Congress to outline his vision for Progressive vision for the post-war political reality in Europe. The content of the speech was very much due to political wrangling and back channel negotiations between the Department of Defense and the Allied Powers¹ in an attempt to create a unified framework for the transition period after World War I.



The Fourteen Points speech' garnered much international press attention and lay the groundwork for the establishment of the League of Nations as well as key concepts of international relations today.

"XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike." - Point Fourteen, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Point Speech, January 18th, 1918²

The Paris Peace Conference

In January of 1919, global dignitaries gathered at Versailles to formulate and ratify the terms of peace which would ensure a stable and prosperous European continent; to end all wars. While officially all states were welcome- the actual terms of the treaty were decided by the Big Four; Britain, France, The United States and Italy³ with input from Poland, Korea and Japan. The terms were then imposed upon the delegations of Germany and Austro-Hungary who were impugned under penalty of law to sign.

The Paris Peace Conference established signed treaties between each of the five "axis" powers; most famous of which is the *Treaty of Versailles*, dispossessed defeated states of their colonial holdings which were subsequently transferred to Britain and France, blamed Germany and Austro-Hungary for the war and demanded reparations. It also formally established into force of law the existence of "A Covenant of Nations" which immediately prompted great dispute over the scope of the mandate.

American Rejection of the League of Nations

Wilson won a majority in both the Senate and the House in 1916. By 1918, with mid-term elections closing in and an infuriated Republican opposition after Wilson declared that a Republican victory would "give comfort to the Germans."⁴ The Republicans won control of both the Senate and the House. After Wilson suffered a debilitating stroke in the fall of 1919, a new election was held bringing Republican Warren Harding to power- who vowed to oppose the League of Nations at all costs.

¹ Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand: The Life of Colonel Edward M. House* (Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 160-63.

² "President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points". www.ourdocuments.gov. Retrieved 2016-08-20.

³ Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (2002)

⁴ Wertzman, Bernard. "Why Did the United States Fail to Join the League of Nations?" *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 2013. Web. 24 Aug. 2016.



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Significant League of Nations Events (1920 – 1932)

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| 1920 | January 10 | Entry into force of the Versailles Peace Treaty and of the Covenant of the League of Nations. |
| | November 1 | The seat of the League of Nations is transferred from London to Geneva. |
| | December 15 | Admission of Austria to the League. |
| 1921 | September 2 | The Permanent Court of International Justice comes into force. |
| | | Resolution of the Aland Island dispute between Finland and Sweden. |
| 1922 | January 22 | First meeting of the Permanent Court of International Justice. |
| | May 15 | Signature of German-Polish Convention relating to Upper Silesia. |
| | September 18 | Admission of Hungary to the League. |
| 1923 | | Italian Invasion of Corfu. |
| 1924 | October 1 | Resolution of the Assembly opening the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes for signature by the Members. |
| 1925 | December 14 | Transfer of the Locarno Agreements to the Archives of the League. |
| 1926 | January 16 | Inauguration of the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation. |
| | May 18 | First meeting of the Preparatory Disarmament Commission, Geneva. |
| | June 14 | Brazil gives notice of withdrawal from the League of Nations. |
| | September 8 | Admission of Germany to the League; Germany made a permanent Member of the Council. |
| 1927 | January 1 | Costa Rica ceases to be a Member of the League. |
| | June 13 | Brazil ceases to be a Member of the League. |



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Significant League of Nations Events (1920 – 1932)

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| 1928 | | General Treaty for Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy. |
| 1929 | August 16 | The General Act for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes comes into force. |
| 1931 | January 24 | The Council decides to convene the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments. |
| | September 26 | The Assembly adopts a General Convention to improve the Means of Preventing War. |
| 1932 | September 14 | Germany notifies the President of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments of its decision to withdraw. |
| | October 3 | Admission of Iraq to the League. |



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Topic Introduction

In 1919, the great powers of the world: Britain, France and the United States imposed harsh and punitive treaties upon the defeated Triple Alliance to make it impossible for another war. The stipulations of these treaties were humiliating- stripping Germany and Austro-Hungary of their colonial possessions, diminishing the size of their armies, and placing the blame and guilt for the war entirely at their feet.

The monarchies which had ruled over Germany and Austro-Hungary were forcibly removed, further stoking the flames of anger, and fueling a belief that it was the political class that had betrayed and sacrificed the regular people, and doomed them to perpetual debt (reparation) slavery. Movements to reclaim the national honor, to address this betrayal and to rebuild their countries sprouted up, along with burgeoning communist movements exploiting the anger of the working class.

By 1922, Benito Mussolini, a veteran of the great war and fiery orator had grown a small movement of hard-line nationalists and anti-socialists into a force of 30,000 Black Shirts to march on Rome; to demand resignation of the current government and for the King to appoint a new Fascist government. At first it was a loose coalition of all sorts of political affiliations, unified by their belief in the Italian nation and its rightful return to glory their belief that Italy required *spazio vitale* (vital space) to flourish.

After three years of political squabbling and acts of political violence by *Squadristi*, the militant arm of Mussolini's *Partito Nazionale Fascista*, (PNF), he dropped all pretenses of democracy, taking responsibility for the violence and declaring himself *Il Duce* (The Duke) of the new Italian Nation.

In Bavaria, a small group of disgruntled veterans lead by a man with unmatched charisma and ambition fumed at the humiliation their country had suffered at Versailles. Inspired by Mussolini, he too tried a march- which failed and led to him being put on trial for high treason. He was sentenced to five years in prison but pardoned after just one, during which he wrote *Mein Kampf*.

In 1924, Adolf Hitler's party, by way of proxy won 6.5% of the vote in Bavarian Parliament and 3% of the vote in the Reichstag. It was in prison that Hitler decided he would gain control not by means of election, but by force of law, exploiting the Weimar Republic's constitution to do so. The next election was just as bad, in 1928 the NSDAP got 2.6% of the vote.

The Great Depression changed everything. The German economy already weakened by reparations and lackluster growth was crushed; inflation skyrocketed people needed wheelbarrows of money to buy bread. By the next election in 1930, the Nazi's won 18.5% of the vote, alongside the Communist Party (Rotfront) to become one of the largest parties in the Parliament. After the 1932 Elections, they became the largest party in the Reichstag. The vehement anti-Semitism in Germany was influential in that election; the cultural backdrop led to an inability for Chancellor Von Papen to use legal means to stop the Nazi's, and Hitler was made Vice Chancellor.



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Timeline – Rise of Benito Mussolini

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| 1883 | Birth of Benito Mussolini. |
| 1902 | Benito Mussolini immigrates to Switzerland to avoid military service and joins several Socialist groups. |
| 1904 | Mussolini becomes editor of the Socialist Party newspaper “AVANTE!” |
| 1905 | Mussolini returns to Italy after being deported from Switzerland and volunteers for military service. |
| 1906 | Mussolini leaves the Army and moves to Northern Italy to become a schoolmaster. |
| 1908 | Mussolini takes up a position as a Secretary of the Labor Party in Trento where he also begins publishing Socialist newspaper articles. |
| 1911 | Mussolini is convicted in the aftermath of Socialist Riots in the Libyan capital of Tripoli. He is sentenced to five months in prison. |
| 1914 | Mussolini resigns from the Socialist Party. Believing World War I to be an opportunity for Italy to liberate itself entirely from the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire he volunteers for military service. He publicly denounces Socialism in a newspaper. |
| 1919 | A Fasci (Fascist) group founded by Mussolini and fellow Italian war veterans, proclaiming opposition to all forms of class discrimination and support for Italian nationalism. The group also criticizes the government's weakness at the Paris Peace Conference for not pursuing Italian colonialism. |
| 1920-1921 | Organization of the “Black Shirts” (Squadristis) the paramilitary wing of the Fascist Party and expansion of party membership- especially in rural and impoverished provinces. |
| 1922 | Close of the First Fascist Party Congress in Milan and Mussolini's march on Rome where he is appointed Prime Minister by the Italian monarch Emmanuel II. |
| 1923 | Italian Invasion of the island of Corfu. |
| 1925 | Mussolini assumes Dictatorial powers in Italy. |
| 1929 | Pope Pius XI Signs Agreement With Mussolini to Discriminate Against Jews and Protestants. |



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Timeline – Rise of Adolf Hitler

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| 1889 | Birth of Adolf Hitler. |
| 1903 | Death of Adolf Hitler's father, Alois, in the midst of a snowstorm in his hometown. |
| 1905 | Adolf is rejected twice from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. He later claimed it was during this time that he acquired his anti-Semitism. It was fashionable and common amongst the middle and upper classes in Germany to be anti-Semitic. |
| 1905 | Mussolini returns to Italy after being deported from Switzerland and volunteers for military service. |
| 1907 | Death of Hitler's mother, Clara from cancer. This had a profound emotional impact on Adolf. |
| 1909 | Hitler moves from Linz to Vienna. He is rejected once again from the Academy of Fine Arts and is known to have had several psychotic episodes. |
| 1914 | Hitler enlists in the Austro-Hungarian Army as a dispatch messenger (trench runner). He frequently volunteers for dangerous missions and serves right until the end of the fighting. |
| 1916 | Hitler is wounded at the battle of the Somme. Given reprieve he is sent to Munich where he grows enraged by the anti-war sentiment in the city; for which he blames the Jews. |
| 1918 | Hitler receives the Iron Cross First Class- a prestigious and rare honor for a foot soldier. His discontent grows: "There followed terrible days and even worse nights - I knew that all was lost...in these nights hatred grew in me, hatred for those responsible for this deed." |
| 1919 | Hitler joins the German Workers Party after being sent to investigate it in Munich. The term "worker" aroused suspicion from the German government because it was frequently associated with Marxists. |
| 1921 | The post war financial crisis reaches its worst days as inflation reaches astronomical heights in the Weimar Republic, Austria and Hungary. Nazi membership swells to 55,000 as it allies itself with other anti-government, nationalist groups. |
| 1923 | Hitler, inspired by Benito Mussolini's March on Rome attempts a coup d'état from Munich known as the Beer Hall Putsch. |
| 1924 | Hitler is sentenced to five years in prison, where he publishes Mein Kampf. He is released a year later. |
| 1929-1932 | The Great Depression brings about a new election where the Nazi Party gets the most seats. Hitler is then appointed Vice-Chancellor by Chancellor Von Papen; a war hero. Von Papen is in ill health. |



The Age of Nationalism

The renaissance era brought about an entire re-examination of the political, cultural, and social orthodoxy of the western world. Enlightenment era thinkers reinterpreted the importance and role of religion, debated and quarreled over the nature of humanity and the purpose of government in relation to the individual. A critical transformation - brought by the American and French revolutions - was the official separation of church and state. For the first time in human history, religion was not the determining factor in allegiance or political affiliation. This vacuum gave impetus to a new kind of political identity- the identification of the state or nation with the people- or at least the desirability to determine the extent of the state [in terms of territory] according to ethnographic principles.⁵ This today is known as nationalism.

"In the age of nationalism, but only in the age of nationalism, the principle was generally recognized that each nationality should form a state—its state—and that the state should include all members of that nationality."⁶

Europe was still in the midst of the throes of nationalist transformation at the onset of World War I. Increasingly the concept of nationhood was becoming linked to the concept of race, it was Serbian nationalists in Belgrade that assassinated the Archduke Ferdinand.

Eugenics and 20th Century Views on Race

In 1859, British botanist and biologist Charles Darwin published his crowning achievement "On The Origin of Species" wherein he outlined the fundamental principles of evolutionary biology. Early interpretations of the book gave pseudo-scientific backing to the idea of genetic racial superiority; the most famous of which is attributed to Herbert Spencer who in an 1864 essay on evolution said the following:

"The law is the survival of the fittest... The law is not the survival of the "better" or the "stronger," if we give to those words anything like their normal meaning. It is the survival of those which are constitutionally fittest to thrive under the conditions in which they are placed; and very often that which, humanly speaking causes inferiority, causes the survival."

This interpretation of Darwinism when combined with longstanding societal prejudices against groups like Jews, homosexuals, the disabled, the infirm, the Romas and other Semitic peoples formed the basis of Nazi theory. This view was reinforced and wholeheartedly embraced by eugenicist societies all across Europe and the United States. The most famous eugenicist was a cousin of Charles Darwin named Francis Galton- whose views on eugenics informed and provided justification for discriminatory and hateful policies later enacted by Hitler. Mussolini too exploited this pseudo-scientific justification to exploit longstanding Italian prejudices against Jews and Protestants to further his political agenda and solidify his power.

"Raise the average quality of our nation to that of its better moiety at the present day . . . The general tone of domestic, social, and political life would be higher. The race as a whole would be less foolish, less frivolous, less excitable, and politically more provident..." - Francis Galton

⁵ "nationalism". Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2016. Web. 27 Aug. 2016

⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, Idib.



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Current Situation

With one Fascist regime firmly entrenched in Italy, and the rise of a second right wing Nationalist party in Germany there are little tangible resources available from the Big Three: Britain, France and America. The entire world economy is in the grips of the Great Depression and is struggling to contain covert actions by the Comintern which is becoming ever more organized under the totalitarian boot of Joseph Stalin.

The worries over anti-Semitism are not of great concern- some of the leaders of Western democracies harbour deep anti-Semitic sentiments themselves- famously Lyon Mackenzie King of Canada forcibly segregated his neighborhood away from any Jews or dislikeable minorities. Strong support for eugenics movements in the States and in Britain- bolstered by hawkish ministers on colonialism and Jim Crow supporting Dixiecrats in the South. The general weariness of the Great War make the populaces of the Big Three seldom willing or able to enforce physical sanctions against either Mussolini or Hitler.

Failure of the League of Nations in protecting the sovereignty of Greece in the Corfu Incident dispute in 1923 has further emboldened the Mussolini regime to seek territorial ambitions both in Africa and in the Balkan states- with support from the angry and frustrated populace.

States not under the orbit of the Big Three are reeling too and have not the capacity to intervene. Indeed to conserve financial resources; all states in the League of Nations with the exception of Germany and Italy acquiesced to a *Treaty for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*. In spite of a weariness and aversion to fighting there are members of government in many member states that see a second war in Europe as inevitable.

There is little appetite in any state to uphold or support Communist groups in Germany or Italy; though they pose the only significant and capable political and potentially paramilitary opposition to the NSDAP or the Fascisti, though it is rumored that British intelligence and French operatives are creating ties to Communist groups in an attempt to undermine the NSDAP in Germany. The German government currently in power under Van Papen is incredibly weak and Van Papen is known publically to be in ill health; there is an international understanding that Hitler may imminently seize control of Germany.

It is also readily apparent that if Hitler takes control of Germany that anti-Semitic policies will be put into place and that there will be an attempt to subvert the terms imposed by the Treaty of Versailles; which the League of Nations is duty bound as part of its Mandate to enforce. A confrontation that no major power wants is on the way; and its actions are being closely observed by another power far to the East.

Japan, another state hungry for resources to sustain its own growing population has proven itself a worthy military power ever since it's victory of the Russians in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905. Unconcerned by the weakened Russia to its West and with an ever increasing degree of nationalist and imperialist sentiment it already occupied The Kingdom of Korea and is known to be posturing troops in preparation for a potential invasion of the Republic of China. The mandate system is also proving to be difficult for The Great Powers as nationalist sentiments spread far and wide; posing risks to the global hegemony of Britain and France. It's getting messy.



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Bloc Positions

Western European Bloc + America

Weary and well aware of the carnage brought about in World War I and with a disparate set of colonial holdings and trade relations, European states want absolutely no part in any further aggression on the continent. Delicate economic conditions and frustrations with national governments are building on the Hispaniola Peninsula as Falangist movements gather strength in Portugal and Spain. Providing most of the economic and military backing for the League of Nations- and clinging to global hegemony, Britain and France are in no position to enforce any sanctions brought about by the League. The risk of Communist revolt is a much more imminent and dangerous concern throughout the continent as workers movements and Socialist parties gather steam in cities and rural towns, feeding off of the anger brought about by the financial crash.

Balkan States Bloc

Vulnerable to internal squabbling and assembled piecemeal from the remains of the Austro Hungarian Empire, these states witnessed firsthand the failure of the League of Nations to prevent military aggression in the aftermath of the Tellini murder in Corfu, Greece. Surrounded by belligerent parties in Italy, Hungary and Turkey these states were incredibly reluctant to accept Assembly limitations on armaments and armies. Their proximity to the USSR also makes them incredibly susceptible to communist revolution; making the governments more anxious and more demanding for either reform of the Mandate or more stringent action.

Latin America

Latin America- already rife with anti-American sentiment after increasingly apparent interventionism and exploitation of natural resources, was even harder hit by the Great Depression. Export reliant states for the most part their governments had squandered away money on self enrichment and corruption and with the collapse of the global economy set the entire continent for many years of political volatility- featuring coup d'états which brought about extremist governments on both the Fascist and Socialist ends of the political spectrum.

Fascist Bloc

Countries dependent or sympathetic to the Fascist systems of government or the nations themselves obviously have an interest in discounting the threats their system of government poses and wish to reassure the world that everything's alright. These countries will insist that Communism is the greater threat and that the League of Nations needs to assist their states in combating Marxist movements in order to preserve the stability of Europe.

Asia-Pacific Bloc

Largely concerned with Japanese belligerency, specifically regards to increasingly aggressive military posturing against the Republic of China, these states in general wish to shift the conversation about the dangers of Fascism from a Eurocentric to global perspective.



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Discussion Questions/Works Cited

1. Can the League of Nations Covenant be reformed or amended to better address Fascist parties?
2. Are the Great Powers willing and able to mount a military campaign to stop Fascism?
3. How could other radical political elements (anarchists, Marxists, Trotskyites) be implemented or affected by the current climate in Europe?
4. Do Fascist organizations or Communist organizations pose a greater threat to the political stability of Europe, if at all?
5. Why are radical political ideologies gaining traction and how can the League of Nations address the problems these parties are exploiting?
6. Are Fascists by definition belligerent and imperialistic? Can they be negotiated with or appeased?

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