



# PMUNC 2014

## Paris Peace Conference

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Director:



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## Introduction

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### Historical Context

The First World War concluded with the signing of an armistice between Germany and the Allied forces on November 11, 1918. The Armistice, however, only marked a cessation of hostilities between the two sides. It was not until January 18, 1919 that formal discussions began at Versailles outside of Paris to determine the terms of the peace. The Paris Peace Conference, as it came to be known, brought together representatives from representatives of 30 nations to draft the peace treaties between the Allies and the members of the Central Powers and define the face of post-war Europe and the other regions that had witnessed major fighting during the conflict. The negotiations, dominated by the “Big Four” of Great Britain,

France, the United States, and Italy – David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, Woodrow Wilson, and Vittorio Orlando – yielded several major decisions.<sup>1</sup> The treaties of Versailles, Saint-Germain, Neuilly, Trianon, and Sèvres were agreed with Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire, respectively. New borders were drawn in Europe leading to the establishment of new states. Territories in the Middle East and the former colonial possessions became mandates under the protection of specific Allied powers. The Paris Peace Conference had a major impact on the world after World War I.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/paris-peace>

### **Goal of Committee**

The goal of this committee will be to re-imagine the major decisions made during the Paris Peace Conference. Discussion will focus on two areas – the terms of the peace treaty agreed with Germany and the post-war division of territory.

### **Committee Rules and Guidelines**

The committees will be run under standard parliamentary procedure. There will be no crisis notes or portfolio powers in this simulation. We are assembled for a negotiation, not a continuation of hostilities.

Debate is expected to be intelligent, productive, and at times lively, but always appropriate. Delegates are

expected to display a high level of maturity and professionalism in dealing with sensitive issues that may have personal overtones for some. Such decisions have real consequences for real people, and it is critical not to become so engrossed in the simulation of this event that one forgets the gravity of what is being contemplated, debated, or executed. That being said, this committee is meant to be enjoyable and educational, and we encourage an appropriate sense of humor from each of you – the chairs and directors intend to do the same.

### **Awards and Judgment**

On the subject of committee awards and judging: Our assessment will be based on how well you performed within the scope of your position, and how much you constructively and plausibly



contributed to the committee's operations. Judging is not necessarily a test of who comes in with the most background knowledge nor who speaks the loudest and longest nor who agrees obsequiously with the chairs.

You will also be judged on your ability to cooperate with the others for the benefit of the committee and as well as promote your own interests for the benefit of your individual state. Given the importance of the mission of the committee and what is at stake, taking a hard-line stance is neither necessarily appropriate nor helpful. There are exceptions; certain positions require ideological or doctrinal purity more than

others. For the most part, however, representatives understand the value of compromise and settling for a lesser of evils in order to achieve higher goals. The business of negotiation requires pragmatism and operators must be accustomed to disappointment and failure without losing sight of the greater goal. When deciding which actions to pursue, the chairs will give stronger consideration to consensus recommendations. As such, it is helpful if you try not only to persuade the chairs, but also your fellow delegates. Finally, we will also consider the level to which each delegate contributes to an amicable and fun atmosphere in the committee.

## Content:

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### **Peace Treaty**

The Treaty of Versailles agreed upon between Germany and the Allies was a comprehensive document encompassing many subjects. In order to focus discussion, the committee will focus on the following points:

#### *War Guilt*

The Treaty of Versailles placed the blame for World War I squarely on Germany. In Article 231 of the Treaty, Germany and the Allies agreed that “Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon

them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.”<sup>2</sup> This article would come be known as the “War Guilt Clause”. It angered Germans who believed that they had not lost the war at the signing of the Armistice. Many later targeted the War Guilt clause in their efforts to undermine the entire treaty and attract international sympathy for what they felt was unfair blame. Delegates must debate whether or not Germany guilty in causing the war and to what extent. Were there other countries more responsible for causing the outbreak of war? Who is the guilty party (or parties)?

#### *Reparations*

Accompanying the war guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles is the

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<sup>2</sup>

<http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/versa7.html>

imposition of reparations upon Germany. Representatives at the Conference such as Georges Clemenceau sought to cripple Germany and prevent them engaging in future conflicts between European states. Because the Central Powers were very weak and unable to pay after the war, most of the reparations fell to Germany. The payment plan caused many significant problems over the next decade, including a French occupation of German territory to enforce payments and multiple new payment plans as the situation such as the Dawes Plan and the Young Plan. The reparations were seen as a national humiliation in Germany, and indirectly led the nationalist attitudes that contributed to the Second World War. Delegates must consider whether reparations are an adequate punishment for Germany if it is indeed found culpable in causing the war. Is it

safer to cripple your enemy in the short-term and risk a violent response in the future? Can you convince your own constituency to accept a more lenient alternative?

### **Territorial Realignment**

Territorial realignment after World War I was significant and especially punitive to the Central Powers. It also attempted to create states based on ethnic and cultural boundaries. Some of the states created include:

- Austria
- Hungary
- Czechoslovakia
- Yugoslavia
- Finland
- Estonia
- Latvia

- Lithuania

The Middle East was similarly divided following the war. It was divided not into emerging states, however, but mandates governed by European powers. Despite the efforts of Arab leaders and their European supporters to secure an independent Arab state, the Sykes-Picot agreement – a secret treaty made during the war between France and Britain dividing the Middle East between the two – was ultimately respected. The ramifications of these significant changes in borders can be seen in both the Middle East and Europe today. The boundaries established by Western diplomats have led to interstate conflict over the specific demarcation of said borders and intrastate conflict between different ethnic and religious groups living in the same states. Delegates will discuss if and how borders will change following the First World War. They

should bear in mind the repercussions of changing the boundaries from not only a political standpoint, but also from nationalist, ethnic, and religious standpoints. It is up to you to determine the face of the post-war world.

### **Some major players and their opinions**

US: President Woodrow Wilson and his Fourteen Points of 1918 are popular but in opposition to some European positions. The United States is somewhat opposed to unilateral declarations of blame for the war. The United State also has interests in the Middle East and the continuation of liberal nationalism to that end.

UK: Prime Minister David Lloyd George concerns himself with the national well being of the United



Kingdom, dedicating time to ensuring French safety, and gaining support for the League of Nations. In addition, Lloyd George fights for the British dominions and their right to benefit from the peace conference process. The result was the assignment of provinces to close-by responsible supervisors, effectively giving them rights of British dominions.

France: Prime Minister George Clemenceau set out to cripple German power across the board, preventing future war power. There is also evidence that some in the French government felt otherwise. Plan accordingly.

Japan: Former Prime Minister Marquess Saionji Kinmochi and his delegation were initially included in the “big five” but did not keep the position, focusing instead on racial equality and the Japanese right to certain territory,

particularly spaces contested by China.

The delegation walked out the conference dissatisfied.

China: Lou Tseng-Tsiang and his delegation demanded Japanese-claimed territory. When rejected, the May Fourth movement sprung up and the Chinese delegation did not sign the Treaty of Versailles.

Italy: Originally a member of the Triple Alliance, Italy only joined the Allied Forces in 1915 following the Treaty of London. Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando is widely seen as having expansionist plans to increase the power of his Mediterranean nation. Italy would later be limited by other powers in the negotiations.

