



HIS MUN 2025
BACKGROUND GUIDE
HCC



Letter from the Executive Board

It is with great honor and immense pleasure that we welcome you to the Historical Crisis Committee (HCC) at Harvest Model United Nations 2025. As your Executive Board, we are committed to delivering an intellectually stimulating and immersive experience over the course of the conference.

The Council will convene under the agenda:

“The Siege of Petrograd: Britain, Estonia, and the Fate of the Revolution (1919)”

Freeze Date: 10th October 1919

The year is 1919. Russia lies fractured by civil war. As White Russian forces, aided by Britain and Estonia, advance upon the Bolshevik stronghold of Petrograd, the future of the revolution — and of Europe — hangs in the balance. Diplomats, generals, revolutionaries, and foreign envoys each hold a stake in determining the outcome of this siege, which may reshape the global order in the wake of the Great War.

The HCC is unlike any conventional committee. It is not bound by linear debate but by the fluidity of crisis. Delegates must think and act as historical figures or national representatives, navigating the uncertainty of wartime diplomacy, intelligence, and ideology. Every directive issued, alliance forged, and crisis response will alter the course of history within the committee.

As delegates, you are expected to represent your assigned characters or nations based strictly on information available **up to the freeze date**. There is no hindsight — only the circumstances and perceptions of October 1919. This committee demands both historical understanding and strategic foresight.

We urge every participant to study the political, social, and military conditions of the Russian Civil War. Comprehend not only your country or character’s position but also the motivations, fears, and ambitions driving them. The background guide before you is a foundation — true diplomacy will depend upon your adaptability, initiative, and depth of preparation.

This conference is not merely about winning or recognition; it is about developing the ability to lead under pressure, to negotiate amid uncertainty, and to think critically in the face of unfolding crises. A crisis committee thrives on energy, intellect, and imagination — qualities we are certain each of you will bring to the table.

We look forward to three days of historical reimagination, political intrigue, and vigorous debate. May the decisions you make echo through the annals of history.

Ishaanvi, Chairperson

Arjun Narang, Vice-Chairperson

Sahil Agrawal, Moderator

Origin and Overview of the Historical Crisis Committee (HCC)

The **Historical Crisis Committee (HCC)** is one of the most dynamic and intellectually demanding committees in the Model United Nations framework. Unlike conventional UN simulations, an HCC places delegates directly in the midst of rapidly evolving historical events, where every decision has immediate and often unpredictable consequences.

An HCC does not adhere to the formal structure of standard UN bodies. Instead, it replicates the inner workings of small councils, war cabinets, or revolutionary assemblies — where diplomacy, intelligence, and realpolitik intersect. Delegates are tasked with making critical decisions in real-time, issuing **directives**, responding to **crisis updates**, and negotiating alliances to shape the trajectory of history.

What sets the HCC apart is its focus on **historical plausibility** rather than hindsight. Delegates must operate using only the knowledge and circumstances available up to the designated **freeze date**. Actions must align with the political realities, ideologies, and limitations of the era. Through this, participants experience the true weight of leadership — making decisions without the clarity of modern perspective.

While creativity and innovation are encouraged, historical authenticity remains paramount. The committee's aim is not to rewrite history arbitrarily, but to explore **how history might have unfolded differently** if key figures had acted otherwise — a concept known as *counterfactual diplomacy*.

Above all, the HCC challenges delegates to think as statesmen, soldiers, or revolutionaries of their time — balancing ambition with caution, ideology with pragmatism, and power with responsibility.

HCC Specifications (How the HCC is Different from Conventional Committees)

The **Historical Crisis Committee (HCC)** at Harvest Model United Nations 2025 functions differently from a conventional UN committee. While traditional bodies such as the General Assembly or Security Council follow structured debate and resolution-building, the HCC is a **dynamic, continuous, and evolving simulation** of historical decision-making.

In this simulation, delegates are placed in the midst of an unfolding historical conflict — the **Russian Civil War**, specifically during the **Siege of Petrograd in 1919**. The actions of this

committee have direct consequences within the simulated timeline. The Crisis Team will introduce updates that alter the situation, compelling delegates to adapt, respond, and strategize in real time.

Delegates must understand that **this is a decision-making body, not a debating forum**. Every message, directive, and negotiation can shift the course of history.

Nature of the Committee

1. Historical Simulation:

The committee is set in a historically accurate environment — Russia, October 1919. Delegates are to act and speak in accordance with the **political realities and knowledge available at that time**.

- There is no hindsight; references to events after the freeze date (such as the Bolshevik victory in 1921 or the founding of the USSR in 1922) will not be entertained.
- Delegates must base decisions only on contemporary intelligence, alliances, and objectives as they stood in 1919.

2. Dynamic Crisis Structure:

The committee will receive periodic **crisis updates** through communiqués, telegrams, or battlefield reports. These updates will alter the military, political, or diplomatic situation on the ground. Delegates are expected to **respond through written or verbal directives** addressing these developments.

3. Committee Composition:

The HCC will comprise a mixture of **national representatives, political leaders, military figures, and foreign envoys** active in or influencing the events surrounding Petrograd. Each delegate's role and authority will be defined in the **portfolio allocation document** released prior to the conference.

Nature of Evidence

In any historical or factual dispute, the following sources will be considered valid and authoritative in the committee:

1. Government and Military Documents (1917–1919):

Official reports, communiqués, telegrams, or statements issued by recognized

governments or military commands of the period.

2. Contemporary News Outlets:

Articles, correspondences, or dispatches from newspapers or agencies that were active during or immediately after 1919 (e.g., *The Times of London*, *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *The New York Times*).

3. Academic or Archival Records:

References from well-documented historical accounts and archives may be accepted at the discretion of the Executive Board if consistent with the freeze date.

4. Invalid Sources:

Modern encyclopedias, Wikipedia, fictionalized retellings, or post-1919 analyses will not be accepted as evidence. These may be used for personal understanding but not cited in committee proceedings.

Flow of Committee

1. Directives:

Directives are the core decision-making instruments of an HCC. They may be **personal** (issued by an individual delegate within their power) or **joint** (collaboratively authored and signed by multiple delegates).

- **Personal Directives** represent actions that your character or nation can independently carry out, such as mobilizing troops, issuing statements, or dispatching envoys.
- **Joint Directives** represent coordinated actions between two or more entities — for instance, an Anglo-Estonian military operation or a truce proposal.

2. Crisis Updates:

The Crisis Team will periodically introduce developments such as battles, defections, diplomatic shifts, or public uprisings. Each update demands a timely and strategic response. Inaction may carry consequences.

3. Press Releases and Propaganda:

Delegates may issue public statements, propaganda campaigns, or radio broadcasts to influence morale or international perception. These must align with the political stance and communication style of the delegate's government or faction.

4. **Backroom Communication:**

Delegates may send **private notes or communiqués** to the Executive Board to simulate intelligence operations, covert diplomacy, or espionage. Such actions will have real effects within the crisis, subject to the Crisis Team's discretion.

5. **Character Arc:**

Delegates are encouraged to develop a consistent character or national strategy. Your decisions should reflect the goals, fears, and limitations of your assigned role — whether it be the British War Cabinet, the Bolshevik Revolutionary Committee, the Estonian Provisional Government, or the remnants of the White Army.

6. **Communiques:**

Communiques are the primary way delegates will use to communicate with relevant individuals outside the committee in order to convey or receive any information. They must be addressed to the Executive Board and will have impacts which affect the flow of the committee. They are most often used alongside directive in order to facilitate their success.

Part IV: Rules of Procedure (HCC)

The **Rules of Procedure** (RoP) in the Historical Crisis Committee differ significantly from those of a conventional UN committee. While traditional MUNs emphasize formal debate and draft resolutions, an HCC thrives on **spontaneity, realism, and rapid decision-making**. Delegates must navigate diplomatic pressure, military exigencies, and political intrigue — all within the historical confines of **October 1919**.

The following procedures shall govern all committee proceedings unless explicitly amended by the Executive Board.

1. Nature of Debate

The committee functions under a **semi-moderated format**, alternating between formal debate and crisis interaction. The two primary types of debate are:

a) Moderated Caucus

A structured session where delegates address the committee on a specific topic, such as “*Military Strategy around Petrograd*” or “*The British Naval Blockade*.”

- **Motions:** Must specify the total time, individual speaker time, and topic.
- **Recognition:** At the Chair’s discretion.
- **Purpose:** To discuss immediate priorities or coordinate responses before drafting directives.

b) Unmoderated Caucus

An informal session where delegates may leave their seats and collaborate freely to discuss strategy, draft directives, or negotiate alliances.

- **Motions:** Must specify total duration.
- **Purpose:** To facilitate drafting of joint directives or backroom communication.

2. Points and Motions

Delegates may raise the following points or motions:

Point / Motion	Purpose	When to Raise
Point of Personal Privilege	To address personal discomfort affecting participation (e.g., audibility, temperature).	Whenever necessary.
Point of Parliamentary Inquiry	To seek clarification on Rules of Procedure.	When the floor is open.
Point of Information	To question a delegate after their speech, if permitted by the Chair.	After a speech.
Point of Order	To challenge procedural/factual/logical errors.	Immediately after the alleged error.

Motion for a Moderated/Unmoderated Caucus	To alter the format of debate.	When the floor is open.
Motion to Introduce a Directive	To present a written directive for consideration.	When the floor is open.
Motion to Adjourn / Suspend the Committee	To pause or end a session.	When no other motion is pending.

3. Directives

The **directive** is the central decision-making tool in the HCC. Unlike resolutions in conventional committees, directives are **immediate and actionable**.

a) Types of Directives

- **Personal Directive:**
Submitted by an individual delegate to represent an action they can realistically undertake (e.g., *Estonia dispatches reconnaissance units north of Narva*).
 - Must be realistic within the delegate's authority.
 - Must be addressed to the Executive Board (Crisis Team).
 - May be accepted, modified, or rejected depending on feasibility.
- **Joint Directive:**
Authored by two or more delegates collaborating on a coordinated plan (e.g., *Joint Anglo-Estonian Offensive on Petrograd*).
 - Must include the signatures of all sponsors.
 - Once submitted, it will be reviewed by the Executive Board and, if approved, announced to the committee.

b) Directive Format

Each directive must clearly state:

1. Title

2. **Sponsors**
3. **Objective**
4. **Actions to be Taken**
5. **Intended Consequence or Outcome**

4. Crisis Updates

At intervals, the Crisis Team will introduce **updates** through telegrams, radio transmissions, or dispatches. These updates represent real-time developments — such as:

- The fall of Petrograd defenses,
- British naval intervention,
- Estonian troop movements, or
- Bolshevik counteroffensives.

Each update changes the historical situation. Delegates must **respond immediately** by proposing directives, negotiating alliances, or issuing propaganda. Failure to act may result in political or military setbacks.

5. Backroom Communication

Delegates may send **private notes** to the Executive Board to simulate covert diplomacy, espionage, or military planning. These are known as *backroom communications* and must:

- Be **concise and realistic** to the delegate's authority.
- Be marked **CONFIDENTIAL** if not intended for public knowledge.
- Carry potential consequences; all secret actions can be exposed through counterintelligence.

6. Press Releases and Propaganda

Delegates may issue **press releases** representing statements made to the public or the press of 1919. Examples include:

- Official communiqués by the British War Office,
- Bolshevik propaganda leaflets, or
- Estonian government bulletins.

All press releases must be submitted to the Executive Board and may influence public opinion, morale, or foreign involvement.

7. Voting Procedure

- Each delegate holds **one vote**.
- **Simple majority** is required for most motions and directives.
- **Abstentions** are permitted.
- In the event of a tie, the **Chair's discretion** will determine the outcome.

8. Suspension and Adjournment

- **Suspension of Session:** Temporarily halts committee proceedings (for breaks or lunch).
- **Adjournment of Committee:** Marks the formal conclusion of proceedings at the end of the conference.

Both require a **simple majority vote**.

9. Discretion of the Executive Board

The Executive Board retains **supreme authority** over the flow of debate, acceptance of directives, and crisis progression.

- All actions are subject to **historical feasibility**.
- The Board may reject unrealistic proposals (e.g., “The British deploy tanks from 1940” or “The USA joins the war overnight”).
- The Board may merge or reinterpret directives for narrative coherence.

Delegates are expected to respect these rulings at all times.

Conclusion

The **HCC Rules of Procedure** are designed not merely to simulate diplomacy, but to **recreate the tension, urgency, and uncertainty** of historical crises.

Your actions shape the fate of nations — and in this case, may determine whether **Petrograd stands or falls**.

Each decision taken within this room carries weight, consequence, and the potential to rewrite history.

Part V: Introduction to the Agenda

The Siege of Petrograd: Britain, Estonia, and the Fate of the Revolution (1919)

Freeze Date: October 10th, 1919

I. Introduction

In the autumn of 1919, the city of **Petrograd** (modern-day Saint Petersburg) stood as the beating heart of the Russian Revolution — and its survival hung by a thread. Encircled by hostile forces and beset by hunger, disease, and internal dissent, the city symbolized both the promise and peril of Bolshevik rule.

As the **Russian Civil War** reached its height, the **White Armies**, supported by **foreign interventionists** including **Britain** and **Estonia**, mounted a concerted offensive aimed at toppling the Bolshevik government. The ensuing confrontation — the **Siege of Petrograd** —

would determine not only the future of Russia but the ideological balance of post-war Europe.

II. Historical Context: The Russian Civil War

Following the **October Revolution of 1917**, the Bolsheviks, under **Vladimir Lenin**, seized power in Petrograd and established a socialist government. This radical shift fractured Russian society:

- The **Red Army** (Bolsheviks) sought to consolidate revolutionary control.
- The **White Armies** (anti-Bolshevik forces) represented monarchists, liberals, nationalists, and socialists opposed to Lenin's regime.
- **Foreign powers** intervened to contain Bolshevism and protect their strategic and economic interests.

By mid-1919, the civil war had become a multi-front struggle stretching from Siberia to the Baltic. The **Northwestern Front**, led by **General Nikolai Yudenich**, emerged as one of the most decisive theatres — with **Petrograd** as its ultimate prize.

III. The Strategic Importance of Petrograd

Petrograd, the imperial capital founded by **Peter the Great**, was far more than a city; it was a **symbol of revolution** and a **strategic command centre**.

- It housed key **industrial facilities**, **arsenals**, and **transportation hubs** linking Russia to the Baltic.
- Politically, it was the **cradle of Bolshevik legitimacy** — the city where the October Revolution had triumphed.
- Militarily, it guarded access to the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Sea — crucial for trade and defense.

To capture Petrograd meant to strike at the revolution's heart. To defend it meant to preserve the world's first socialist government.

IV. The Role of Britain and Estonia

1. Britain

By 1919, **His Majesty's Government**, led by **Prime Minister David Lloyd George**, had committed limited military and logistical support to anti-Bolshevik forces.

- The **Royal Navy's Baltic Fleet**, under **Rear Admiral Walter Cowan**, maintained operations in the Gulf of Finland, providing arms, ammunition, and training to the Whites and the Estonian Army.
- British policy toward Russia was conflicted — balancing a desire to curb Bolshevism with post-war fatigue and domestic opposition to further intervention.
- Britain's presence in the region was both **strategic and symbolic**, reflecting fears that revolutionary ideology could spread westward.

2. Estonia

Emerging from the chaos of World War I, **Estonia** declared independence in 1918 but found itself at war with both Bolshevik and German forces.

- Under **Commander Johan Laidoner**, the Estonian Army became a key regional actor, aligning with Yudenich's Northwestern Army to secure its borders and consolidate sovereignty.
- Estonia provided **territorial bases, logistical support, and troops** for the campaign toward Petrograd, but pursued its own nationalist interests — not necessarily the restoration of the Russian Empire.

This uneasy cooperation between **Britain, Estonia, and Yudenich's White Army** formed the backbone of the assault on Petrograd in October 1919.

V. The Siege Itself (October 1919)

By **early October 1919**, Yudenich's forces, numbering roughly **18,000 men**, launched a bold offensive from Estonian territory toward Petrograd.

- The **Bolshevik 7th Army**, under **Sergei Kharlamov**, was initially caught off guard as White and Estonian troops advanced rapidly along the Narva–Gatchina line.

- Within weeks, Yudenich's vanguard reached the outskirts of Petrograd, prompting **Lenin and Trotsky** to declare a state of emergency.
- **Trotsky personally took command**, mobilizing Red reinforcements and appealing to the workers and sailors of Petrograd to defend the city.

Meanwhile, Britain's naval forces maintained pressure offshore, but **refrained from full-scale engagement**. Political uncertainty in London and disagreements among White leaders slowed coordination.

By the freeze date — **October 10th, 1919** — Yudenich's forces stood **less than 50 kilometers from Petrograd**, preparing for the decisive push. The Red defenses were fragile, morale was divided, and winter was closing in.

The fate of the Revolution itself hung in balance.

VI. Political Dilemmas and Conflicting Interests

The campaign was marred by **fragmentation and mistrust** among allies:

- **Yudenich** sought to restore pre-revolutionary Russia under centralized authority.
- **Estonia** demanded recognition of its independence — a condition Yudenich hesitated to guarantee.
- **Britain** wished to avoid deep military entanglement while ensuring Bolshevism did not spread into Eastern Europe.

These divisions weakened the coordination essential for a successful siege, creating a complex diplomatic web of **mutual suspicion and strategic compromise** — precisely the challenge facing delegates in this committee.

VII. The Committee's Mandate

Delegates in this Historical Crisis Committee step into a world on the brink.

- The Red Army's defenses around Petrograd are faltering.

- Yudenich's Northwestern Army, with Estonian and British support, prepares for a final assault.
- The future of Russia — and by extension, of Europe — is uncertain.

Your task is to navigate this moment as statesmen, commanders, and diplomats of 1919. Each decision you take — to attack, negotiate, withdraw, or betray — may alter history itself.

Part VII: Legal and Political Frameworks

I. Overview

In 1919, the international system was undergoing a profound transformation. The **First World War** had ended only months earlier, and the **Treaty of Versailles** had redrawn the map of Europe. The **League of Nations** was being conceived, but not yet fully operational.

Thus, while modern instruments such as the **UN Charter** or **Geneva Conventions (1949)** did not exist, a body of **customary international law** and **treaty-based norms** — primarily the **Hague Conventions** and the **Versailles Settlement** — defined the legal and moral boundaries of war and diplomacy.

Delegates in this committee must therefore ground their arguments in **early 20th-century legal principles**: state sovereignty, non-intervention, wartime conduct, and the emerging idea of collective security through the League of Nations.

II. The Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907)

The **Hague Conventions** were the foremost codifications of the laws of war prior to the United Nations era. Signed by most major powers, including **Britain, Russia, France, and the United States**, they established fundamental rules for the conduct of hostilities and the protection of civilians.

Key relevant provisions include:

- **Convention II (1899) and Convention IV (1907) – *Laws and Customs of War on Land***
 - Prohibit the targeting of civilian populations.
 - Mandate humane treatment of prisoners of war.

- Require occupying forces to respect local property and institutions.
- **Convention V (1907) – *Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in War on Land***
 - Forbids the use of neutral territories (e.g., Estonia, Finland) as bases for belligerent operations without consent.
 - Neutral powers must not supply troops or war material directly to combatants.
- **Convention XIII (1907) – *Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in Naval War***
 - Regulates naval blockades and restricts belligerents from using neutral ports for refueling or military advantage.

In the context of Petrograd, these conventions raise critical questions:

Is Britain's naval presence in the Baltic a legitimate intervention or a breach of neutrality?

Are Estonia's actions defensive, or do they constitute unlawful participation in a foreign civil conflict?

III. The Versailles Settlement and Post-War Diplomacy (1919)

The **Treaty of Versailles** (June 1919) and its associated agreements sought to reshape Europe after the Great War. Although Russia was excluded from the negotiations due to the Bolshevik withdrawal from the war (Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, 1918), the Versailles framework still profoundly affected its fate.

- The **Allied Powers**, particularly Britain and France, were vested with the authority to stabilize post-war Europe and manage the disintegration of empires.
- The **Bolshevik regime**, being non-recognized, existed in a **legal vacuum** — neither bound by Versailles nor protected by its norms.
- The **Allied Supreme Council** (Paris) oversaw intervention policy in Russia, granting partial legitimacy to limited foreign assistance for anti-Bolshevik forces under the banner of restoring “order and democracy.”

Thus, delegates may invoke the Versailles framework both **to justify intervention** (as a measure of stability) or **to condemn it** (as interference in a sovereign nation's internal conflict).

IV. The Doctrine of Sovereignty and Non-Intervention

At the heart of 1919 diplomacy lay the **Westphalian principle** of **state sovereignty** — that each nation has supreme authority within its borders, free from external interference. Yet, the Russian Civil War blurred this line:

- The **Bolsheviks** claimed to represent the lawful successor to the Russian state.
- The **White Armies** sought recognition as the legitimate government-in-exile.
- **Foreign powers**, meanwhile, justified intervention as humanitarian aid or anti-terrorist action.

Without a universally recognized Russian government, sovereignty became **contested**. This ambiguity allowed Britain and Estonia to operate under the pretext of restoring lawful governance, even as the Bolsheviks denounced such acts as violations of international law.

Delegates must therefore balance **legal legitimacy** against **political necessity** — a dilemma central to the Petrograd question.

V. The Principle of Self-Determination

Proclaimed by **U.S. President Woodrow Wilson** in his **Fourteen Points (1918)**, the principle of **national self-determination** emerged as a cornerstone of post-war order. It held that peoples should have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and form of government.

In this context:

- **Estonia, Latvia, and Finland** invoked self-determination to justify their independence from Russia.
- The **White movement** sought to preserve Russian unity, rejecting the disintegration of the former empire.
- The **Bolsheviks** endorsed self-determination rhetorically but only for states aligned with revolutionary ideology.

This clash between **ideological self-determination** and **territorial integrity** forms a key debate for delegates: Should nations like Estonia be treated as independent actors or as former Russian provinces aiding foreign intervention?

VI. Recognition of Governments and Belligerents

In 1919, the recognition of a government — or of a warring faction as a “belligerent” — carried significant legal implications. Recognition conferred legitimacy, access to diplomacy, and eligibility for international aid.

- The **Bolshevik government** had limited recognition, with most Western powers still recognizing pre-revolutionary Russian diplomatic missions.
- The **White forces**, while militarily active, lacked full recognition as a sovereign entity.
- **Estonia and Finland**, though newly independent, sought formal recognition from the Entente to secure their status.

Delegates may invoke **de jure** (legal) versus **de facto** (practical) recognition when debating legitimacy, intervention rights, and negotiation authority during the Siege of Petrograd.

VII. The League of Nations and the Emerging Idea of Collective Security

Although the **League of Nations** was formally established only in **January 1920**, its founding principles — derived from Wilson’s diplomacy and the Versailles peace — were already influencing international conduct in 1919.

Key emerging norms included:

- Peaceful settlement of disputes through international arbitration.
- Collective responsibility for maintaining stability.
- Moral condemnation of aggressive warfare.

In this transitional moment, the world was shifting from **imperial diplomacy** toward **collective security**. The Siege of Petrograd thus represents one of the last major conflicts of the old order — and a test case for whether international intervention could be justified under new global ideals.

VIII. Moral and Humanitarian Considerations

Even without codified human rights instruments, **humanitarian law** had begun to take root. Reports of atrocities, forced conscriptions, and famine in the Russian Civil War provoked widespread debate in European capitals.

Organizations such as the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** and various religious missions emphasized:

- The duty to protect non-combatants and medical personnel.
- The moral obligation to deliver relief irrespective of political alignment.
- The prohibition of collective punishment or reprisal killings.

Delegates may therefore raise humanitarian justifications both **for intervention** (to prevent suffering) and **against intervention** (to avoid worsening the crisis).