

# PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE, 1919

*DELEGATE BACKGROUND GUIDE*



# *Staff*

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# ***A Letter From Your Director...***

**Dear delegates,**

Welcome aboard the Paris Peace Conference! My name is Amna Zulfiqar and I will be your director for what I hope to be is a captivating, insightful, and fun committee! Presently, I stand as a molecular genetics specialist and philosophy minor at the University of Toronto. Having witnessed UTMUN in all its glory just last year, I can only imagine the stimulating discussions to come!

The most exciting and perhaps challenging factor involved in this committee is that you must transport yourselves back to the bittersweet year of 1919 and maintain true to your role in light of the events that precede the conference, all the while adding in your own original twist. On that note, although the party that you represent may have their own assigned political agendas, feel free to adopt a persona—within reason—that best allows you to adapt into your character. There is no script that you have to follow, but the course of discussion should naturally lead up to some of the major highlights of the conference in an effort to maintain historical accuracy. Furthermore, do not prey on any hindsight after the conference when offering arguments. This is imperative in maintaining the integrity of your role as well as the entire committee. Finally, the roles that you encompass need not be particularly flashy in order for you to be a successful delegate. So long as you are able to articulate and accomplish the needs of your nation, you are just as integral to the sessions as are any other leaders.

Of course, in order to assume your character appropriately, you have to be able to grasp the history, atmosphere, and highlights pertaining to the conference. As such, I have created for you a background guide that should set the framework for a baseline understanding of the committee and should serve as a stepping stone for further research as you prepare for the conference in February.

I am very excited to meet you all, and I hope you enjoy your experiences both in preparation and attendance of the UTMUN conference. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me at [amna.zulfiqar@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:amna.zulfiqar@mail.utoronto.ca).

Best Regards,

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Photo: HISTORY

## **THE GREAT WAR: A BRIEF SUMMARY**

World War I, synonymous with the Great War, was instigated by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, soon to be King of Austria-Hungary. What began as a conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary soon emerged as an international diplomatic crisis; nationalism and miscommunication spread like wildfire, creating a war that lasted four years and devastated millions. The world was split into two, the allies and the central powers. The allies, who eventually landed the role of the victors, mainly centered on the Triple Entente i.e. France, Great Britain and Russia; Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey emerged as the major opponents on the other side of the war.

It was the allies and their supporting governments that congregated at the conference, and who ultimately decided the extent of their retributions from the war. Most notably, Russia was not invited to attend.

### **Atmosphere**

World War I has recently come to a close, and in the process, has taken nearly twenty million lives. There remains an aura of revenge and anxiety even amongst the victors, who are simultaneously celebrating and in mourning. In the January of 1919, nearly 30 nations amalgamated at the palace of Versailles to deliberate with the aftermath of the war, an event which will be known as the Paris Peace Conference. The "Big Three" i.e. France, Britain, and the U.S. are at the forefront of the discussions and often lead the agreements. The session lasts for an entire year, and as it proceeds, it serves as an international governmental body.

# **THE CONFERENCE: HIGHLIGHTS**

## ***Establishment of the League of Nations***

The League of Nations was proposed initially by Woodrow Wilson in the June of 1919, and the idea was to create a community of countries that functioned to prevent wars and resolve any conflicts should, and when, they happen. The headquarters were planned to be centered in Switzerland, since it maintained neutrality throughout the war. Should an offender be clearly identified, the League would express verbal, economic, and physical sanctions, in that order, if any of the consensual recommendations given by the committee are disputed. However, the extent of the League's authority over the rest of the world remained a point of interest, since no members expressed interest to either finance or provide military support behind the effort. In large part, this was because many nations simply could not afford to offer resources given their expenditure in the Great War. Ironically, despite the fact that Wilson proposed the idea, he ended up not joining the league and Russia was not offered to be a member. Nonetheless, The League of Nations was made official on Jan. 19, 1920.

## ***Recognition of Independence***

The conference was particularly important in recognizing and allowing for the independence of many states. Canada, for instance, was invited separately to the conference and began to emerge as being distinct from Britain. Although the country was signed under the U.K. in the Treaty of Versailles, it was signed independently under the League of Nations.

Furthermore, as the Zionist representatives interacted with Emir Feisal, who represented the Arab Kingdom, discussions lead to signing the Feisal-Weizmann agreement near the beginning of the conference, which essentially allowed a specific portion of Palestine to be deemed a Jewish state, foreshadowing the creation of Israel. Many more countries including Poland, Yugoslavia, Austria, and the like successfully gained independence.

# **TIMELINE OF PREPARED TREATIES**

## ***Treaty of Versailles: June 28, 1919***

Perhaps the most infamous, the Treaty of Versailles consisted of 440 clauses outlining Germany's territorial, military and financial punishment. Germany's economic repercussions alone were 132 billion gold marks. Most of their original and conquered land, such as the Saar and Alsace-Lorraine, was given to France; Poland gathered much of the eastern lands near Prussia; and the League of Nations declared both the independence and control over the city of Danzig. German military was to be reduced to 100 000 men, a non-existent air-force, 6 battleships, and 0 submarines. The country was not allowed to reunite with Austria or join the League of Nations. The most controversial clause in the document was that "Germany was responsible for causing all the loss and damage caused by the war." Essentially, all the blame was placed on Germany.

## ***Treaty of Saint-Germain: Sept. 10, 1919***

The contract served as a means to demolish the Habsburg empire, allowing for the

independence of many regions such as Austria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, etc. Austria was particularly reprimanded, being forced to completely sever any of its ties with Germany, rendering their own military nearly powerless and their economy, disastrous. Most of Austria's armed services were distributed amongst the Allies.

### ***Treaty of Neuilly: Nov. 27, 1919***

The Neuilly agreement was directed towards Bulgaria. Parallel to Germany and Austria, Bulgaria was required to reduce its army and pay 100 million pounds in reparations. Furthermore, its land was divided amongst Britain, France, America and Yugoslavia.

### ***Treaty of Trianon: June 4, 1920***

Hungary bore the brunt of the charge signed in the Treaty of Trianon. Its army was restricted to 35 000 men who were only allowed to preserve order and defend the borders. In terms of land, its borders were split such that 2/3 of its original territory was distributed amongst Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, and Italy. The economic sanctions were yet to be determined, but more importantly, some of the divisions introduced in Hungarian's regions were met with resistance via plebiscites. Despite this, the treaty was signed.

### ***Treaty of Sèvres: Aug. 10, 1920***

This treaty was set to target the Ottoman Empire. With the land of the middle east and part of north Africa at their disposal, Britain and France decided to split it amongst themselves as well as share some with Greece and Italy. In so doing, the Treaty also deemed Armenia a sovereign nation. Furthermore, the Empire's military was limited to 50 000 men, a forbidden air force, and 13 navy boats. Most brutally, all financial control and power for electoral reform was given to France, Italy and Great Britain.

## **PARTICIPATING PARTIES**

### **Woodrow Wilson: America**

Part of the "Big Three" at the Paris Peace Conference, Woodrow served in office from 1913 to 1921. He was responsible for the conception of the League of Nations and was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize, despite having withdrawn from the committee. In the negotiations, he strongly opposed Italy's commands on the Adriatic and stood to gain an equal share of Britain and France's territorial claims on the central powers. He was also most adamant about the war guilt clause that isolated Germany alone, but eventually he relented.

### **David Lloyd George: Britain**

Integral to the stability of the conference, Lloyd George was responsible for urging France to join the League of Nations and for Woodrow to finally relent on the War Guilt Clause. In most ways, he was the balance between America and France, where he aimed for justice,



just short of revenge, from Germany. In addition, because of the severe losses his country suffered financially and in numbers of men, he went into the conference with the mindset of expanding his empire, increasing trade and maintaining the rights to its neighbouring seas.

## **Georges Clemenceau: France**

Georges Clemenceau ruled the second time from 1917-1920. Among the "Big Three," France was most hostile towards Germany, having suffered from the brunt of their invasion. He strategized to weaken Germany and retaliate to the greatest degree. In addition to this, he was most power-hungry for land and wealth, as achieved by Austria, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire. Due to Britain's concern over the unequal proportion of France's wants versus needs, as well as justice versus range, the conference came to a close.

## **Robert Borden: Canada**

Borden served as Prime Minister from 1911 to 1920, and was key to presenting Canada as an autonomous unit amongst Britain. Quite notably, Canada was signed in the Treaty of Versailles, albeit under Britain, but also gained a position in the League of Nations. Although for the most part Borden complied with David Lloyd George, Borden struggled to also be appropriately compensated given Canada's major contributions to the war effort.

## **Vittorio Orlando: Italy**

Orlando served office from 1916 to 1919. Owing to his lack of English abilities, his foreign minister, Sidney Sonnino, was quite tactical in the conference. Although Orlando was willing to reconsider annexing Rijeka, his foreign minister was not. The conflicting sentiments did not gain much for Italy. Since he felt rather undignified throughout the conference, he left for a brief period only to return and find that it did not take part in the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Owing to his lack of successful negotiations, Italy did not gain much throughout the conference.

## **Chaim Weizmann: Zionist Organisation**

Weizmann was president of the Zionist organisation and one of the more successful candidates in his delegation with the Arab Empire. He provided the gateway for introducing Israel, an independent Jewish State, through the Weizmann-Faisal agreement and tried to strengthen relations with The Big Three.

## **Ignacy Jan Paderewski: Poland**

Paderewski was the first prime minister of Poland, which had just established its independence thanks to Wilson. Paderewski looked to expand Poland, and much of the conference was about outlining the borders of Poland and the extent of its power. Paderewski made a great ally with the leader of France at the conference, who shared his love of an expanded Poland since France wanted to substitute Russia with a combination of Poland and Czechoslovakia as powerful associates.

## **Billy Hughes: Australia**

This Australian Prime Minister was born in London in 1862, and left to Australia in 1884. He led Australia during World War I when he became Prime Minister in 1915, a strong advocate of military conscription. He played a key role in affirming Australia as an independent nation through attaining membership to the League of Nations at the conference.

## **Eleftherios Venizelos: Greece**

Venizelos served as Prime Minister of Greece from 1910 to 1920 and from 1928 to 1933. Under his leadership Greece doubled in area and population during the Balkan Wars and also expanded territorially and diplomatically after World War I negotiations. He is remembered for his liberal and democratic reforms, and reputation as a peaceful statesman. He pushed for Greek expansion into Asia Minor at the conference.

## **Saionji Kinmochi: Japan**

Kinmochi served as Prime Minister of Japan from 1906–08 and from 1911–12. He aimed to decrease military spending, and pushed for party control of the cabinet. He supported liberal and democratic institutions. Kinmochi headed Japan at the Paris Peace Conference, where the country laid claim to Germany's former Chinese colonies.

## **Lou Tseng-Tiang: China**

Tiang was a Chinese diplomat and Roman Catholic monk. The country aimed to take their colonies back from Germany, and domestic protests erupted when they were given to Japan.

## **Nikola Pasic: Kingdom of Yugoslavia**

Pasic was one of the founders of Yugoslavia. The kingdom faced the challenge of uniting the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian ethnicities. The country secured international recognition of the country and most territories it originally claimed during the Peace Conference. However, Pašić's views were still very much those of a Serbian leader, instead of the collective Yugoslavian kingdom.

## **Emir Faisal: Arab delegation**

An Arab statesman and King of Iraq, Emir Faisal led the Arab delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. The delegation brought up the issue of the creation of an Arab state at the conference in response to the Sykes-Picot Agreement created by the French and British earlier.



## **Daniel Edward Howard: Liberia**

President of Liberia from 1912 to 1920. He attempted to maintain neutrality during the war, with a tendency to support the Allies as their colonial territories surrounded his country in Africa. Germany attacked the country after they allowed the French to set up a wireless station in their capital, effectively bringing Liberia into war. Liberia became a founding member of the League of Nations.

## **Vajiravudh: Thailand**

Vajiravudh was the King of Thailand from 1910 to 1925, noted for his progressive reforms. He joined the League of Nations and fought alongside the Allies. By sending Siamese troops to fight abroad, the kingdom signalled its existence to the West as a partner willing to share the burden of war and demanding equal treatment and respect. Siam regained sovereignty over its trade and public finances. By the 1930s, the last remnants of extraterritorial jurisdiction had been abandoned.

## **Alfonso Costa: Portugal**

Costa ruled thrice as prime minister in 1913, 1915-16 and 1917. He wanted a seat on the League of Nations, and preferential treatment when it came to reparations because he believed it was the Great Powers' duty to ensure that small nations would survive damage inflicted by the war. He also demanded the town of Olivença, seized by Spain in 1801 and never returned. Lastly, he asked that the German fleet be secured. Yet, at the end of the conference, little was gained for Portugal.

# **KEY TOPICS**

## **Demilitarization of Germany**

Germany faced the brunt of the punishment from the allies since it was one of the only countries left with an intact economy. The Treaty of Versailles and St. Germaine not only forced Germany to completely forego its land, army and equipment, but also that it never be able to expand its empire. The harshness with which Germany was treated could be considered one of the leading causes of World War II.

## **Reparations to the victors**

Alongside wealth and empire expansion for the allies as outlined in the treaties above, many countries also established independence. France, Britain, and America gained the most out of the negotiations, particularly in terms of land. Although needlessly large sums of money were contracted to the axis powers and its supporters, most countries were left in a state of near bankruptcy to make good on that promise.

# **Territorial concessions and the future of German colonial mandates**

The specifics of colonization by the allies are discussed in the treaties above. One key aspect for notice is that Germany was forced to be very much ostracized since it was never again allowed to unite with Austria-Hungary or any other territory.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The Paris Peace Conference was the aftermath of an international crisis that the world had never suffered before. The devastation that resulted from it drew fear and power-lust among many leaders. Individual wants among the victors were determined largely by the Big Three, but the struggle for autonomy among the remaining countries remained a common theme. Public expectations, including revenge, had to be kept balanced with possible punishments. Despite all this, the victors also wanted to ensure that such a war never broke out again and that the world would face a brighter future. This whirlwind of emotions, from fear to revenge to hope fueled the discussions and governed the plight of the nations for years to come.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

Hopefully this guide proved as comprehensive as intended! Remember that the background provided here should be supplemented with your own individual research. Explore, engage, and don't be afraid to think outside the box!

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