

Model United Nations Background Guide

Historical Simulation

Topic: The Paris Peace Conference (1919) – The Treaty of Versailles

Committee Overview

The world stands at a crossroads. The Great War—"the war to end all wars"—has finally ceased with the signing of the armistice on November 11, 1918. But peace is far from secured. Europe lies in ruins, millions are dead, empires have collapsed, and new political ideologies threaten to reshape the global order.

This committee simulates the **Paris Peace Conference** in 1919, with delegates from victorious and newly formed nations gathered to negotiate the terms of peace with Germany and redraw the world map. The central outcome of this conference is the **Treaty of Versailles**, but other regional treaties, reparations, mandates, and principles are also on the table.

Delegates must reconcile national interests with the need for a stable international system—balancing punishment and prevention, justice and diplomacy.

Major Issues to Address

1. Punishment vs. Reconciliation with Germany

- Should Germany face harsh reparations and territorial losses, or be reintegrated to avoid future hostility?
- Who is responsible for the war?

2. Redrawing National Borders in Europe

- Collapse of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires has left a power vacuum.
- Should borders be based on self-determination, ethnicity, strategic interest, or historical claims?

3. Reparations and Economic Consequences

- Should Germany pay for the war, and if so, how much?

- How can economic stability be restored without fostering resentment?

4. Colonial Mandates and the Fate of the Ottoman Empire

- How should former German and Ottoman colonies be distributed?
- Should colonies become mandates under the League of Nations, or be annexed outright?

5. Establishing the League of Nations

- Should an international organization be created to preserve peace and mediate disputes?
- What authority would it hold, and which countries would be allowed to join?

6. Rise of New States and National Self-Determination

- How should the conference address claims from emerging nations (e.g., Czechoslovakia, Poland, Armenia)?
 - How should conflicting national aspirations be resolved?
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Key Delegations and National Positions

1. France – Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau

Wants harsh reparations, security guarantees, and the weakening of Germany.

- Pushes for demilitarization of the Rhineland.
- Seeks control over Saar coal fields.
- Favors a punitive peace to prevent future German aggression.

2. United Kingdom – Prime Minister David Lloyd George

Seeks balance between punishment and long-term stability.

- Supports reparations but is wary of economic collapse in Germany.
- Wants to preserve British Empire and gain German colonies as mandates.
- Supports creation of the League of Nations, with caution.

3. United States – President Woodrow Wilson

Champions the “Fourteen Points” and a liberal, idealist peace.

- Advocates for self-determination, open diplomacy, and the League of Nations.

- Opposes harsh reparations or territorial annexations.
- Promotes free trade and democratic principles globally.

4. Italy – Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando

Seeks territorial gains promised in the 1915 Treaty of London.

- Demands South Tyrol, Dalmatian Coast, and parts of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- Feels snubbed by the "Big Three" and may walk out if not satisfied.

5. Japan – Ambassador Makino Nobuaki

Seeks recognition of its status as a global power and territorial gains in East Asia.

- Wants control over German possessions in Shandong and the Pacific.
- Advocates for a racial equality clause.
- Interests lie primarily in imperial expansion.

6. Belgium – Prime Minister Léon Delacroix

Demands compensation and guarantees after German invasion.

- Seeks reparations and security along the German border.
- Advocates for international accountability.

7. Poland – Ignacy Jan Paderewski

Newly re-established nation seeking secure borders and international recognition.

- Wants territory from Germany (Poznań, Danzig) and protection from Russia.
- Emphasizes national self-determination and security.

8. Czechoslovakia – Edvard Beneš

New state seeking recognition and support.

- Claims Sudetenland and Slovak territories.
- Opposes ethnic German autonomy within Czechoslovakia.
- Wants Western guarantees against Hungarian or German aggression.

9. Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia) – Nikola Pašić

Seeks recognition of new unified South Slavic state.

- Disputes borders with Italy over Dalmatian Coast.

- Wants access to the Adriatic Sea and security against Austria and Hungary.

10. **Romania – Ion I. C. Brătianu**

Wants recognition of territorial expansion and protection against Hungary.

- Seeks control of Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia.
- Pushes for ethnic Romanian interests across new borders.

11. **China – Lu Zhengxiang**

Seeks return of Shandong territory occupied by Japan.

- Opposes Japanese claims to former German concessions.
- Seeks recognition as a sovereign and equal power.

12. **Greece – Eleftherios Venizelos**

Pursues territorial expansion in Anatolia and Thrace.

- Claims parts of the collapsing Ottoman Empire (Smyrna, Eastern Thrace).
- Seeks international support for the “Megali Idea” of Greek unification.

13. **Portugal – Afonso Costa**

Minor Allied power, seeks reparations and colonial recognition.

- Wants recognition of African colonies and compensation for war contributions.
- Supports League of Nations as a security guarantee.

14. **Brazil – Epitácio Pessoa (Ambassador)**

Only Latin American nation to send troops to Europe.

- Seeks a larger international role and economic access.
- Supports League of Nations, wants recognition for war effort.

15. **India (British delegation observer role)**

Colonial status under British Empire but raises early calls for recognition.

- Indian soldiers played a major role in the war.
- Seeks increased autonomy and a role in League of Nations.
- Delegates will raise questions about colonial self-determination.

Committee Objectives

- Draft a peace treaty with Germany that ensures lasting stability.
 - Redraw Europe's borders while minimizing future conflict.
 - Determine the fate of colonies and mandates.
 - Create the League of Nations and define its structure and powers.
 - Consider principles of justice, sovereignty, and international order.
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Guiding Questions for Delegates

1. How should Germany be treated—punished or rehabilitated?
2. How can borders be redrawn to reflect national identities without creating future conflict?
3. Should colonies be granted independence, mandates, or continue under imperial rule?
4. What should be the powers and structure of the League of Nations?
5. Can national interests be balanced with the goal of global peace?