

The Thirtieth Annual

Virginia Model United Nations Conference

Presents...

# 1919 Paris Peace Conference

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Dear Delegates,

Bonjour et bienvenue! My name is Alie Wilensky and I am a second year at the University of Virginia. I have been involved in Model United Nations since middle school and have continued my involvement at the collegiate level through the International Relations Organization at UVa. I have been a vice chair at both VAMUN and VICS (our conference for college students) and look forward to chairing this committee.

In high school I realized that I could study the Paris Peace Conference as both the conclusion of the First World War and, arguably, the beginning of the Second World War. While my fascination with the conference and the resulting Treaty of Versailles began as a mere convenience, I still believe that it had a profound effect on the twentieth century that shaped world politics in a way that nothing else did. You are tasked to spend a weekend shaping what implications the Paris Peace Conference could have had if all players of the War were allowed to participate.

As we are at Mister Jefferson's University, it is only fitting that I leave you with a piece of wisdom from the man himself: "War is an instrument entirely inefficient toward redressing wrong; and multiplies, instead of indemnifying losses." When you come to VAMUN XXX in November, it is my hope that you will find success in redressing the wrongs that both led to and came as a result of the Great War.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at [abw3sc@virginia.edu](mailto:abw3sc@virginia.edu). Good luck with your research and I look forward to seeing you in November!

Alison Wilensky

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## Introduction:

A number of the twentieth century's most influential diplomats will convene in Paris to resolve the issues that resulted from the Great War<sup>1</sup>. Millions of their young have perished or been injured and their economies are in shambles. They must attempt to avoid the political and financial instability that surely awaits if they do not take decisive and effective action. The diplomats must determine which values they want to impart on the new, modern world as their decisions will undoubtedly have an indelible mark on the international political scene. How should the territory of the defeated Central Powers be distributed? How should the military of the defeated powers be treated? How should an international body operate, if one should even be implemented at all? How will these measures prevent another war of global proportions from ever occurring again?

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<sup>1</sup> Although we commonly refer to the War as the 'First World War' it did not gain this title until of course there had been a Second World War. As this simulation occurs in 1919 prior to the Second World War, we will refer to the War as the 'Great War'.

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This simulation will differ from the actual proceedings of the Paris Peace Conference in a very noticeable way. At the Paris Peace Conference the defeated Central Powers did not join the thirty-two victorious nations that participated in the negotiations. However, in this simulation the Central Powers will be included and allowed to raise their concerns, ideas, and general sentiment in the debate. How will this affect the outcome of the treaty that emerges?

Representatives of the Allied Powers met in Paris to write the treaties to end the Great War. While they spent a year hammering out the details, we will consolidate the conference to a weekend. Because of the brevity of the negotiations our result will be one general treaty instead of a separate treaty for each of the Central Powers. Another departure from reality will be that the Central Powers will be allowed representation in the debate. Although they will not have the same voting abilities as the Allied Powers (voting procedures will be explained at the opening of the conference) this will allow their position to be represented.

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## Causes of the Great War:

Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated on June 28, 1914 by Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip. This was the impetus that catapulted Europe into war as many other factors such as mutual defense alliances, imperialism, militarism, and nationalism that had reached a boiling point. A widespread theory was that if there was a balance of power between two alliances the threat of war from multiple nations would deter an aggressor, however, this resulted in a tangle of alliances that pulled nearly all of Europe into war. The increase in competition for territories that would provide raw materials for the industrializing European nations provided an atmosphere where confrontation was more likely. As nations became more industrialized, an arms race was sparked that resulted in an increase of military technology and quantity of equipment. Finally, the strong nationalistic feelings in many countries encouraged them to assert their dominance and power, making them more likely to engage in combat.

Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia after Princip assassinated Ferdinand. Russia mobilized because it was allied with Serbia and Germany subsequently declared war on Russia. The alliance system that was theorized to prevent war continued to cause a domino effect until most of Europe obligatorily found itself at war. The United States officially maintained a neutral position in the war, but loaned the Allied Powers billions of dollars that they realized would not be recuperated if the Allied Powers were defeated. Understanding the financial implications, the U.S. entered the war in 1917, citing American casualties caused by German submarines and the Zimmerman Telegram (a message meant to persuade Mexico to ally with the Central Powers and distract the U.S. from the war in Europe that was intercepted by U.S. intelligence)

## Results of the Great War:

At the beginning of the war, many estimated that the War would conclude in time for the soldiers to be home for Christmas in 1914. However, it was not until November 11, 1918 that an

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armistice was signed acknowledging German defeat. Among other conditions, it was agreed that hostilities would cease and German troops were ordered to retreat immediately and surrender their cannons, machine guns, minenwerfers (short range mortars), airplanes, locomotive engines, and railcars. The terms set the tone for the Paris Peace Conference that we have gathered for.

The Paris Peace Conference opened on January 18, 1919 with the intention of setting the terms of peace between the victorious Allied and the defeated Central Powers. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded that the War cost, directly and indirectly, a total of \$337,980, 579,560. Much of this number accounts for the vast amount of human life that was lost in the fighting. Of the 42 million Allied Powers mobilized, 22 million were recorded as casualties. The Central Powers mobilized 23 million and counted 15 million as casualties. The delegates at the PPC realize that no concessions or reparations can make up for the immense human toll of the War. Beyond the lives lost was much of the way of life that Europe had become accustomed to.

A generation of young men had been obliterated and empires were crumbling. It is the responsibility of the delegates at the Paris Peace Conference to create a treaty that respects the loss that resulted from the war and strives to prevent future conflict of similar proportions.

### **Topic 1: Ending the State of War**

The treaty must include both short and long term provisions that will immediately end the state of war and prevent future war. The terms of the treaty should be sufficiently tough so that the defeated Central Powers will be discouraged from engaging in war but not so detrimental that they harbor hatred and resentment that will lead to another war. The implications of the treaty must be considered, particularly if the treaty assigns, either implicitly or explicitly, guilt to the Central Powers.

#### **Military Limitations:**

One of the factors that allowed for the War was increased militarism

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that far exceeded national security needs. Will the Central Powers' military be restricted, both in terms of numbers and divisions? Will all nations be encouraged to decrease their military? Will any innovations be disallowed? Will the number of troops be capped?

### **French Security:**

A majority of the fighting on the Western Front occurred on French territory, leaving France physically devastated more so than any other nation. How will France be ensured that it will be protected from future conflict? Will France be assisted in its effort to rebuild?

### **Reparations:**

The losing powers traditionally are required to pay indemnities to the victorious powers at the conclusion of a war. How high will reparations be? Will payments be intended to aid the victors in rebuilding? Will payments be punitive and serve to damage the defeated economies so that they will not be capable of future war? Will payments be distributed as pensions to widows and

orphans? What repercussions will severe reparations have on the Central Powers' economies and what ramifications may the depressed economies have?

### **League of Nations:**

An International Organization that would be created to preserve peace had been discussed in many liberal circles and officially introduced as a League of Nations in Wilson's Fourteen Points. While Wilson advocated a league that would be able to take action and deter potentially aggressive nations, the British Phillimore Committee endorsed a less powerful league with limited powers. If it is agreed that an organization should be established, there are many issues that would need to be explored. What would be the structure of the organization? Which disputes would fall under the auspice of the organization? How much national sovereignty would have to be relinquished by individual nations? What responsibilities would the organization have? Would an international army be established? Would economic sanctions be allowed? Who will be a member? How will votes be distributed?

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## **Topic 2: Redistribution of Territories:**

Competition for territories was fierce prior to the War and claims of ownership continue to be hotly contested. It is important to remember that while land can be formally granted to nations a declaration does not change the situation on the ground. The culture and identity of the inhabitants must be considered and respected. Who are the inhabitants of the territories and where does their allegiance lay? How can it be guaranteed that uprisings do not occur (or how will they be handled) as inhabitants demonstrate which nation they wish to live in and resist change? Will land redistribution be permanent or only for a specified number of years?

### **Danzig and Upper Silesia:**

Danzig is a port city with an overwhelmingly German population located at the head of the Vistula River that flows to the Polish capital, Warsaw. Will the promise of free, Polish access to

the sea trump the issue of the German population in the city?

Upper Silesia is home to both Germans and Poles and is heavy in natural resources such as coal, lead, and zinc. Should this region be granted to Poland to ensure its economic vitality? What will happen to the Germans that find they are now living in Poland and will they be aided in relocating? Would it be more appropriate to divide the region based on cultural, rather than geographic, lines?

### **Saar Valley and Rhineland:**

The Saar Valley is controlled by the Germans and is home primarily to Germans. It is rich in coal, therefore making it an important economic asset for any nation that controls it. The Rhineland is a prosperous and industrialized German region between the Rhine river and the French and Belgian borders noted for its production capabilities that contributed to the length of the War. Will the French be granted this land to regain the vitality that was ruined in the War?

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**Alsace and Lorraine:**

Germany only acquired this territory in 1871 following the Franco-Prussian War and therefore the majority of the population still considers itself to be French. German control of the land has been a contentious issue since France lost control of the region. Will this land be returned to France?

**Sudetenland:**

This territory belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and has a population that includes 1.5 million Germans and 650 thousand Hungarians. It contains important economic assets and a mountainous border. Should the land be granted to the Germans so as to be in line with Wilson's idea of national self-determination?

**Closing Remarks and Position Papers:**

I recognize that while resources illuminating the objectives, objections, and motivations for the Big Four powers abound the same cannot be said for

states that had lesser roles in the actual conference. Nevertheless, I urge delegates representing these states to make a strong effort to determine where their country stood at the Paris Peace Conference so that in committee their views can be properly disseminated. While concrete discussions may be in some cases difficult to come across, I encourage delegates to evaluate the condition that your country was left in when the war ended and infer the stance that would have been adopted in relation to those outlined by the Big Four so that delegates may begin to see where partnerships in negotiations may emerge. I further expect that the delegates representing the Big Four powers will familiarize themselves with the positions that they had and will consider what concessions that they would make (and what they would remain firm on) to ensure peace.

It is requested that you submit a brief position paper (no longer than two pages double spaced in a standard font) at the first session of VAMUN that demonstrates where the delegate's state was left at the conclusion of the war and where it hoped to be left because of the provisions in the Treaty.

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**Suggested Readings:**

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points,  
January 8, 1919:  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson14.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp)

The Treaty of Versailles:  
<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/parti.asp>

(The actual text of the Treaty of Versailles may be useful in getting a sense of the issues that are to be addressed and how they were, in reality, resolved. Delegates must play a delicate balancing act in committee as, technically, this treaty does not exist and therefore it should not be implied that it does.)

**Further Research:**

Andelman, David. *A Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Price We Pay Today*. Hoboken, N.J.: J. Wiley, 2008. Print.

"Causes of World War One." *History on the Net Main Page*. 30 Apr. 2010. Web. 01 June 2010.

<<http://www.historyonthenet.com/WW1/causes.htm>>.

Fromkin, David. *Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?* New York: Knopf, 2004. Print.

MacMillan, Margaret. *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 2002. Print.

Philpott, William James., and Matthew Hughes. *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the First World War*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.

Stokesbury, James L. *A Short History of World War I*. New York: Morrow, 1981. Print.

Walworth, Arthur. *Wilson and His Peacemakers: American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919*. New York: Norton, 1986. Print.

**Appendix:**

This map shows the political boundaries in 1919:

