

JCC

THE END OF THE GREAT WAR

STUDY GUIDE

#LETSBEEUNITED

EGE KAVAL
HEAD OF CRISIS

AZRA ECE ÖZTÜRK
DEPUTY HEAD OF CRISIS



Table of Contents:

1. Letter from the Secretary General
2. Letter from the Head of Crisis
3. Introduction to the Committee
 - 3.1. Agenda Item
 - 3.2. Joint Crisis Committee Format and Changes
4. Historical Background
 - 4.1. The Great War
 - 4.1.1. Buildup and Timeline of Major Events (1915-1916)
 - 4.1.2. The Final Phase of the War (1917-1918)
 - 4.2. Strategic Context of the Great War
 - 4.2.1. Military Exhaustion
 - 4.2.2. Economic Collapse
 - 4.2.3. Civilian Hardship and Morale
 - 4.3. Political and Strategic Situation in 1918
 - 4.3.1. Germany
 - 4.3.2. France
 - 4.3.3. United Kingdom
5. The Western Front in Early 1918
 - 5.1. Die Kaiserschlacht
 - 5.2. The Second Battle of Marne
6. The Armistice of Compiègne
 - 6.1. The Path to Negotiations
 - 6.2. The Committee Setting
 - 6.3. Armistice Clauses
7. Negotiating Parties
 - 7.1. The German Delegation
 - 7.1.1. Political Fragility and Domestic Pressure
 - 7.1.2. Military Situation
 - 7.1.3. Negotiation Grounds and Key Objectives
 - 7.2. The Allied Delegation
 - 7.2.1. French Strategic Priorities
 - 7.2.2. British Priorities
 - 7.2.3. Allied Unity/Internal Tensions
 - 7.3. Forced Peace or Negotiated Middle Ground
8. Expectations and Closing Remarks
9. Bibliography and Further Readings

1. Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to ITUMUN 2026.

By choosing to take part in this conference, you have already done something meaningful: you have chosen dialogue over indifference, understanding over assumption, and engagement over silence. In a world increasingly shaped by division, conflict, and uncertainty, such choices matter.

Today's international landscape is marked by ongoing conflicts, humanitarian crises, and profound global challenges that demand more than rhetoric. They demand informed, open-minded, and principled individuals, particularly from the younger generation, who are willing to listen, to question, and to act responsibly. MUNs offers precisely this space: one where ideas are tested, diplomacy is practised, and perspectives are broadened.

As delegates, you are not merely representing states or institutions; you are actually engaging in the art of negotiation, the discipline of research, and the responsibility of decision-making. Approach this experience with curiosity, respect, and intellectual courage. Learn not only from debate, but from one another.

On behalf of the Secretariat, I sincerely hope that ITUMUN 2026 will challenge you, inspire you, and leave you better equipped to contribute to a more peaceful and cooperative world.

I wish you a rewarding conference and every success in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Abdullah Kikati

Secretary-General

2. Letter from the Head of Crisis

Esteemed Delegates,

It is with deepest pride and greatest pleasure that I welcome you to the 2026 edition of the Istanbul Technical University Model United Nations (ITUMUN) Conference, where we will be hosting you with two crisis committees of HCC: The Unification of Germany and H-JCC: The End of the Great War. I am Ege Kaval, your Head of Crisis, and alongside my Deputy,



Azra Ece Öztürk, and our crisis team, we aim to ensure both committees entertain and educate you. With this year's edition of ITUMUN hosting an incredible 14 committees in total, we will also be attempting to entertain the remaining committees if their respective Under Secretaries General see it fit.

Over the course of four days, I look forward to witnessing your intense debates, spanning from attempting to make the fractions of a future powerhouse of a nation whole, all the way to one cabinet attempting to free Western Europe from the tyranny of the Germans, while the other believes they are the rightful rulers of Europe. My primary objective when it comes to both of these committees is to make you feel immersed and ensure that you have fun while being educated over the days to come.

Attached to this letter is a study guide to support your initial research and preparation for your respective committee. I would highly suggest you go beyond the guide to both ensure your readiness for the proceedings and to broaden your horizons. I would like to thank the board members: Umut Işık Usluyer, Anıl Sancaklı and Eylül Pazarözyurt for their efforts in creating this academic document for the conference.

Before concluding my letter, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to every member of our Executive and Organizational Team for their tireless efforts in preparing the framework for these committees to become a reality.

If you have any questions or need assistance regarding the committees, please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the crisis team. I am excited to see your diplomatic skills in action during the conference.

As a reminder and help for the conference, in case you need a bit of inspiration, consider the following quote:

"In the darkest times, hope is what you give yourself. That is the meaning of true inner strength."

Best regards,
Head of Crisis, Ege Kaval

3. Introduction to the Committee

Those of you who joined last year's edition of the Istanbul Technical University Model United Nations (ITUMUN) conference might remember that the Historical Crisis Committee (HCC) that took place was the HCC: Manhattan Project. The reasoning behind this was twofold: to uphold the technical aspect of Türkiye's first-ever technical university, and the Co-Under Secretaries General's profound amazement of Christopher Nolan's 2023 blockbuster "Oppenheimer" manifesting itself into a committee idea. This year the latter applies, as we welcome you to the Historical Joint Crisis Committee (H-JCC): The End of the Great War, or in its unofficial name, H-JCC: The Compiegne Wagon. The movie that inspired the idea was the 2023 Best International Feature Film Oscar winner, "All Quiet on the

Western Front". A scene in the second act of the movie portrays German and French officers in separate train carts convening to sign the Armistice of 1918¹.

"Graf von Oberndorff: On their way home, men will die of hunger, instead of dying with honour on the battlefield.

Matthias Erzberger: Honour? My son was killed in the war. He doesn't feel any honour."

These were the lines traded as the German delegation was practically forced to sign the agreement with the French delegation led by General Ferdinand Foch, which ended up saving the lives of countless people but at a significant cost to Germany. The demands from the Allied Nations included labelling Germany solely responsible for the Great War and, as such, the country's assets at multiple levels. This committee will be tackling an alternate scenario, one where the meeting takes place earlier than November 1918, at a time when the war could have gone either way and Germany could have had grounds for actually negotiating.



Figure 1: Daniel Brühl (centre) as Matthias Erzberger in All Quiet on the Western Front. Photograph: Reiner Bajo/Netflix

3.1. Agenda Item

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on the 28th of June, 1914, is perhaps history's most well-known catalyst event, as it triggered the start of the Great War, later renamed World War I. The rise of nationalism was brewing all across Europe, and with Serbia rejecting the ultimatum posed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it led to the war, spanning all over the world and taking over an estimated 37 million lives in total in just 4 years' time². This committee will convene at the start of August, 1918, when the war appeared to be reaching both its end and its climax simultaneously. Within this alternate timeline, Matthias Erzberger, an up-and-coming political figure in Germany, would have lost

¹ <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1016150/>

² <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/June-28/archduke-ferdinand-assassinated>

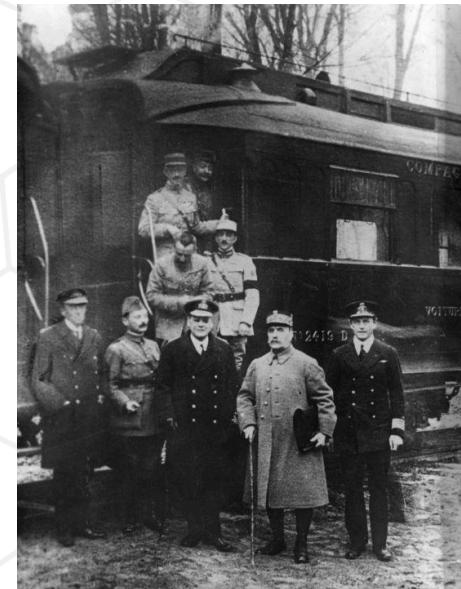
his son to the Spanish Flu while he was serving his country on the Western Front. Overcome with grief, Erzberger would warn German officials of the potential involvement of the United States in the war, convincing them to sit down with Allied officials to form a document for a potential ceasefire.

The location for these negotiations would be selected as the Rethondes Clearing in the Forest of Compiègne, just a few kilometres away from the Western Front line within French territory³. Historically this location was selected due to the French having the upper hand when negotiations were to take place; however, in our alternate scenario it is an act of showing positive intent, where the French delegation will have promised complete security and secrecy to the Germans. Since this Armistice is focused on closing the Western Front, the German side will stand alone, while the French delegation will be accompanied by British delegates.

The sole purpose of these negotiations is to end the war that has already claimed millions of lives, with both sides now having leverage. As previously mentioned, the German delegation signed the Armistice of 1918 out of almost pure desperation. With the earlier date of our committee, both sides will be able to make demands, causing the exchanges between both sides to get heated.

3.2. Joint Crisis Committee Format and Changes

A crisis committee is a simulation-based, dynamic event recreation where delegates are expected to tackle the crises that are presented by the Crisis Team in rapid and direct fashion. This committee will be an H-JCC, which will be composed of two separate cabinets: the German Cabinet and the Allied Cabinet⁴. Delegates with experience in these sorts of committees will understand when JCCs can also be named VCCs: Versus Crisis Committees. Two or more cabinets try to one-up each other militarily or politically, basically fighting each other to win.



³ <https://armistice-museum.com/the-armistice-carriage/>

⁴ The Allied Cabinet can also refer to themselves as the “Supreme War Council”

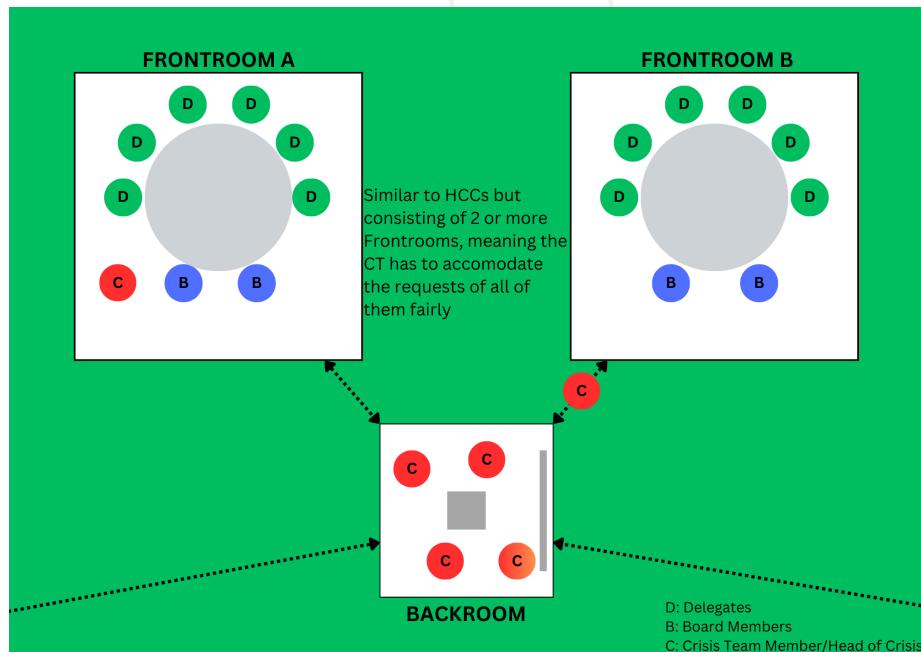


Figure 3.2.1: Explanatory imagery for how a Joint Crisis Committee functions

Delegates will be provided the opportunity to write a large variety of directives, which are written documents sent by members of the cabinets to the Crisis Team for evaluation and response. These can be used to obtain information, deploy troops, send spies, and for many other purposes. This committee will still have these aspects in mind, rest assured; however, the primary focus of this committee will be on **drafting an armistice**, meaning both sides will have to work both against each other and together at the same time. For the sake of immersion, the committee setting will be imagined as if on a train with multiple carts, two to house the separate cabinets, and one specifically for both sides to get together and discuss the demands for the armistice each side will propose, thus giving the joint crisis committee its namesake.

This joint event will be led by an unbiased individual, one that will rule proceedings for the joint sessions, while the board members of both sides will become acting chairs, helping delegates portray their demands more effectively and efficiently. This event will take place every 3-4 sessions, depending on the momentum of proceedings, so delegates will have plenty of time to send all kinds of directives to enforce their demands through whatever means they can think of. More details on the setting and how the committee will proceed will be explained in parts “6. Armistice of Compiègne” and “8. Expectations and Closing Remarks” of this study guide, as well as in the first session of the conference. A pre-conference online meeting with the delegates will also be conducted, attempting to explain the proceedings for this committee and answer any questions that may arise.

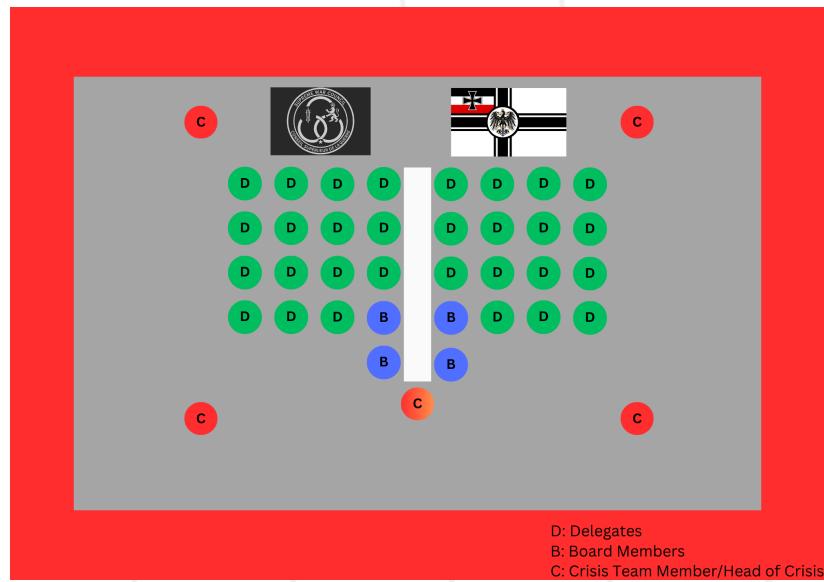


Figure 3.2.2: Committee layout for the Joint sessions during the conference

4. Historical Background

4.1. The Great War

4.1.1. Buildup and Timeline of Major Events (1915–1916)

The start of the 20th century had made Europe become a nesting point for nationalism and complex alliances. After the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the power struggles brewing within Europe finally started to surface, and what was seemingly a regional crisis became the largest war the world had faced. Germany wanted to rival Great Britain's dominance overseas, with them actively attempting to implement their "Weltpolitik" policy, challenging the country in which the sun never sets in naval and colonial dominance. The nation had feared France's imminent attempt at revenge after their victories back in 1870, so the German Empire enacted their "Schlieffen Plan". This was a plan they had prepared over 10 years ago, aiming to swiftly take over France and bring down Paris immediately if war were to break out between the two nations once again. Instead of a swift victory, the Germans instead created a line of combat stretching all the way from Switzerland to the North Sea, which would be known as the Western Front. The first two years saw both sides attempting desperately to break the deadlock through new technologies and attrition warfare. It was a period of testing what tactics would work, no matter how tactically unviable, resulting in the loss of millions of lives for merely a few metres of land. The most significant events during this period are as follows:

The Second Battle of Ypres, April 22 - May 25, 1915: This battle saw a major change in modern warfare, as the German forces demonstrated the first ever large-scale usage of chemical weapons in history⁵. Chlorine gas was used, and with great effect, creating massive

⁵ France in August 1914 launched the first ever attack featuring chemical weapons, but the Germans at this time used the weapons at such a large quantity, that this is regarded as the first large-scale usage.

holes in the Allied lines; however, the Germans were unable to capitalise on these breaches fully due to a lack of reserves.

The Gallipoli Campaign, April 25, 1915 - January 9, 1916: The Dardanelles, then the Bosphorus opened up would mean the supply lines to Russia would be opened, and the Ottoman Empire, a major player in the war, would be rendered defeated. To break the deadlock, the Allied forces gathered a large number of troops from the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs) and started an assault on the Ottomans. This resulted in a gigantic failure for the Allies, resulting in over 300,000 dead and retreat, while the Central



Powers gained a much-needed morale boost.

Figure 4.1.1.1: Australian troops charging uphill with fixed bayonets in Lemnos.

The Sinking of the RMS Lusitania, May 7, 1915: German U-boats were used to great effect at the start of the Great War, but this success also brought down one of the greatest difficulties they had to face during the war: the Americans. The ocean liner Lusitania was torpedoed and brought down, killing 1198 passengers, of which 128 were American. This caused the States to become aggressively against the Germans and highlighted the dangers of unrestricted submarine warfare. In an attempt to minimise American retaliation, the Germans suspended the tactic but later resumed, which resulted in even more diplomatic consequences.

The Battle of Verdun, February 21-December 18, 1916: The longest battle of the war, Verdun was a design of German General Erich von Falkenhayn, planned with his goal of, in his own

words, “bleed France white⁶”. The French retaliated with their own rallying cry, “Ils ne passeront pas”, meaning “They shall not pass”. The prolonged battle resulted in an estimated 700,000 casualties in total from both sides combined, resulting with the French army being able to once again hold the Germans back but leaving the troops in intense fatigue.



Figure 4.1.1.2: The French troops in the trenches during the Battle of Verdun

The Battle of Jutland. June 1, 1916: The only major naval engagement between the British and the Germans, this battle resulted with German victory but only in terms of numbers. The British suffered more casualties but managed to keep the Germans blockaded, stopping them from messing with Atlantic supply lines.

The Battle of the Somme July 1 - November 18, 1916: Teaching a lesson on the futility of war, this battle was launched by British officers to relieve pressure off of the French in Verdun. The British army suffered over 60,000 deaths on the first day, making this their bloodiest day in their history. The most important aspect to note in this battle is that it was the first ever tactical use of tanks in warfare. It was ultimately futile, as the Allies, after causing the deaths of nearly a million troops, only managed to gain a few miles of advancement.



Figures 4.1.1.2-3-4: British heavy tanks used in the Great War

4.1.2. The Final Phase of the War (1917-1918)

The enthusiasm and excitement that came with the start of the war had long evaporated going into 1917. Where nations were beside themselves and wanting to gain lands and beat their enemies in glorious combat, there was now the determination solely to survive. These years of the war were marked by two major events: the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the inclusion of the United States in the Great War.

In February, the Germans resumed their submarine warfare, purely to evaporate the British blockade that was starving the German populace. They tried making Great Britain have a taste of their own medicine and targeting their supply lines before the Americans

⁶ A play on bleed them dry, France's tricolor flag contained white, which symbolised peace, so the wording here was meant as bleeding them of resources and morale enough that the French would accept peace terms that weren't favorable to them.

could mobilise. This risky gamble failed, as the sinking of numerous American ships, combined with the interception of the Zimmermann Telegram, left the States with no other option but to go to war, which they officially announced on April 6, 1917. Bringing in large numbers all across the Atlantic was a difficult task, so their involvement wasn't that intense to begin with, but by the middle of 1918, their impact was sizable, especially in terms of industrial and financial resources for the Allies.

While the far West was getting involved, the East was doing the opposite. As the war gradually depleted the Russian Empire's resources and manpower due to internal corruption, the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, took control of the nation by October 1917. Their aim was to swiftly exit the war and rebuild the nation, so the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed in early 1918, officially ending the war on the Eastern Front for Germany. This meant that the Germans had a singular front to maintain and swiftly allocated their resources to the Western Front and used them in the Spring Offensive, better known as the Kaiserschlacht⁷. The major events of this period are as follows:

The U.S. Declares War on Germany, April 6, 1917: President Woodrow Wilson, stating the violation of the freedom of the seas to Congress, called to declare war. The insertion of fresh blood and industrial support for the Allies were going to be a huge turning point in the war.

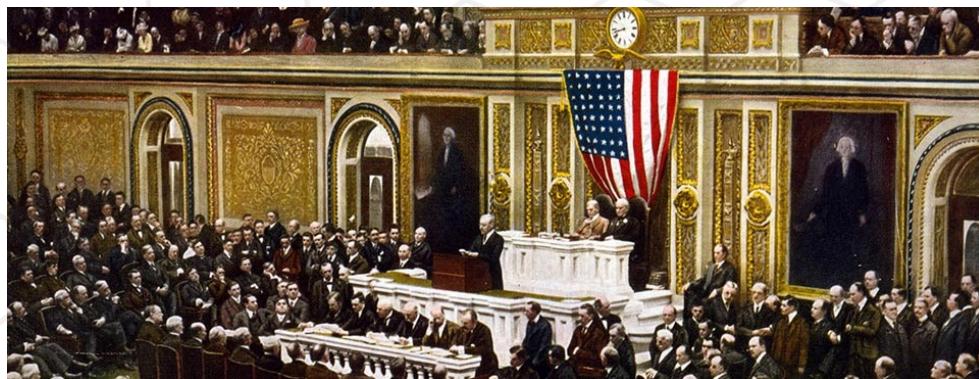


Figure 4.1.2.1: Woodrow Wilson delivering his speech to Congress on April 6, 1917

The Nivelle Offensive, April 16 - May 9, 1917: A French offensive that ended in utter disaster. The failure that was done in this offensive shook the core of the French troops, causing nearly half of all infantrymen to mutiny against the French Army. It was only through the efforts of Philippe Pétain, reminding the troops of incoming American troops, that order was restored within the units.

The October Revolution, November 7, 1917: Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks topple the Russian Provisional Government. The Soviets prioritised exiting the war and did so by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918. This gave the Central Powers control over territories like Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic States. More importantly, it reduced the number of fronts the Germans had to focus on from two to one.

⁷ More information regarding the Offensive can be found on section 5.1.1 of this document

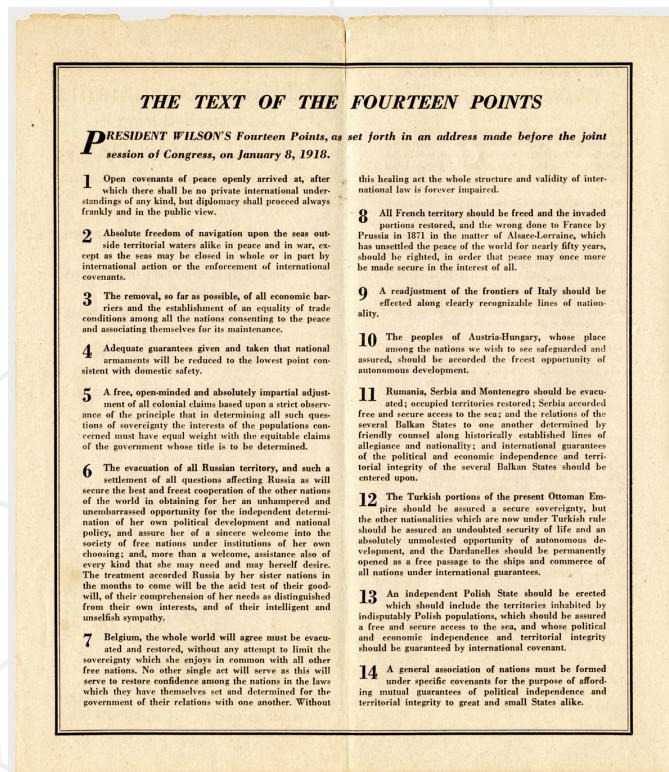


Figure 4.1.2.2: President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which he presented to Congress on January 8, 1918

-----AFTER COMMITTEE START DATE-----

The Battle of Amiens, August 8, 1918: Also referred to as the Hundred Days Offensive, the Allied Forces, now backed by the gargantuan amount of help from the U.S., started moving in towards the depleted-looking and scattered German lines. By utilising the Supreme War Council to incredible effect, they combined all aspects of their military strength and managed to break through the German lines. This day would later be named as “Schwarzer Tag des Deutschen Heeres” (“Black Day of the German Army”) by General Ludendorff.

The Signing of the Armistice, November 11, 1918: After the delegation, led by Matthias Erzberger, arrived in France, they were given 72 hours to sign the document handed to them by Supreme Allied Commander Ferdinand Foch. The document was signed, as the Germans, with their defensive lines collapsing day after day and the people being fed up with the war, didn't have any room for negotiations. The fighting on the front ceased on exactly the 11th hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, closing the Western Front.

4.2. Strategic Context of the War

All belligerents of the Great War were drained dry of nearly all resources by 1918. Four years of battling had left the nations in a state of utter psychological defeat, with the only thing keeping them going was the potentially sweet taste of victory. Becoming the victors of the largest war in human history to date would have been a title worth these

difficulties. Within this section of the guide the general situation of the world will be explained in a broad spectrum. To gain further insight on your representative's nation's situation, either read sections 4.3 and 7 of this guide, and if you are the sole American representative of the committee, more will be explained in the following pages.

4.2.1. Military Exhaustion

At the start of the war the young generation of men were promised a swift and easy win against their enemies. They were told that they were the best at what they do and that no individual and no force could stop them from achieving what they wanted to achieve. Particularly on the Western Front, German teenagers dreamed of going to the front and defending their country. Some future reports even suggested that fourteen year-olds would forge documents to seem eighteen, bypassing the requirement. The war did not end swiftly. It took a gruesome and exhausting 4 years, and there was still no end in sight, with both the Allies and the Central Powers low on men.



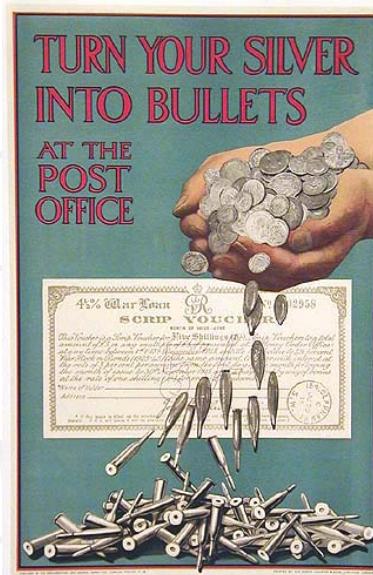
Figure 4.2.1.1: Two shots from the movie "All Quiet on the Western Front", to the left is main character Paul Baumer as he is enlisted to fight for the Empire, and to the right is him being carried on a vehicle to the fronts for the last time

By 1918 the Germans were being forced to call upon untrained infantrymen purely to maintain fighting strength. Their neighboring Allies Austria-Hungary was off even worse, with the multi-ethnic army being divided into nationalist groups, creating fronts within the nation itself. France and Great Britain were having the same issues but with somewhat of silver linings. The French Army had elderly reservists and colonial troops as boosts whenever numbers started to dwindle. These filled in the gaps when needed but were not as efficient as homegrown, younger infantrymen. Great Britain on the other hand, even with its colonial troops being used, was lacking at this time. Having used almost all resources for manpower, the Army made the decision to call up men who were previously deemed as medically unfit to serve. The only saving grace for the Allies were the incoming American troops, who by August 1918 were large in quantity but lacking quality, being inexperienced and slow to adapt to wartime.

Beyond the men, the machinery was beginning to fail as well. Britain and France were starting to mobilise tanks effectively but were using high-value resources to do so. These supplies were being used as efficiently as possible; however, logistical difficulties were also being faced continuously, as the populace began weary of wartime hunger becoming the

norm. Meanwhile, Germany was facing severe shortages of supplies for the Army. They were running out of rubber for trucks, oil as fuel for the planes and captured tanks and horses for transporting larger supplies to the front.

4.2.2. Economic Collapse



As this war encompassed the entire world, global economic order was left in ruins. The era of the industrial revolution had led major economies to become richer, but to finance the war, every major power except for the USA had suspended the Gold Standard⁸. This forced them to print more money to pay for armaments and resources, while triggering hyperinflation and effectively destroying the middle class. Britain and France were forced to borrow billions of dollars from the United States to keep fighting, while Germany tried to solve this matter in state. The German Empire, cut off from the global market, had to rely on war bonds for its financial survival. This would only become a feasible idea if they were to win the war and were able to break even with the economic gains. Industrialised regions in France and Belgium were being destroyed by the French themselves, so the Germans couldn't make use of these resources they had taken over.

A particular sidenote to the effects of the economic hole the world had dug itself into: the borrowed money from the U.S. had shifted the world financial center from London to the streets of New York, on Wall Street. Once the war was over, there was a fragile economic ecosystem remaining, one that relied on the Germans to pay off their debts and not complain about such a situation. Germany could not bear the weight of the entire world's debt on its shoulders, which led to the Wall Street Market Crash of 1929 later on. This serves as a reminder to all of you about the butterfly effect, which we will consider when providing your final update at the end of this conference.

⁸The Gold Standard is a system in which nearly every country in the world fixes the value of their currency to a specific amount of gold.

4.2.3. Civilian Hardship

War isn't simply fought with wielded weapons; it is also fought with the morale and hope of the civilian population. By the end of the summer in 1918, people were simply fed up and unfed at the same time. The Germans were absolutely distraught, nearly at a point where the people were only surviving. Although the situation was not as dire for the Allies, people still did not want to rely on rations and face constant coal shortages during the winter. The situation regarding the nations is covered in more depth in their respective parts of the guide. This section is here to specifically emphasise a looming threat to everyone, since it was a silent killer with no sides: the H1N1 influenza virus, more commonly known by its given name, the Spanish Flu.



Figure 4.2.3.1: A ward in Kansas where people suffering from the Spanish Flu were treated in July, 1918

The pandemic that emerged in early 1918 came at the worst time possible. With no restrictions like quarantine being a possibility and the hunger-ridden, immune system-weakened populace, the virus went rampant all across Europe. Reported cases were being censored in belligerent countries in an attempt to leave morale unaffected, while in Spain, which was neutral throughout the war, newspapers reported outbreaks freely, leading to the virus being named after the country. Blinded by the desire to win the war, little to no precautions were taken, eventually letting the virus infect 500 million people, which meant one-third of the global population.

People were done with war, and with patriotic unity being inedible, riots and strikes began appearing everywhere. The working class, realising that the arms manufacturers were living prosperously while they were having trouble making ends meet, grew more radical by the day. There was also a prime example of what would happen if a population was pushed too far in the shape of the Bolshevik Revolution. Keeping the people content is a difficult yet necessary task when trying to win a war.

4.3. Political and Strategic Situation in 1918

4.3.1. Germany

By the end of July 1918, the German Empire was a paradox. While having gained massive amounts of land to the East after the withdrawal of the Soviets and still maintaining control of Belgium and other occupied areas to the West, its people were fed up. Behind the mask of military success lied political uncertainty, a starving populace, and fading trust in the government. Since 1916, the Oberste Heeresleitung⁹ (OHL), led by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and his right-hand man, General Erich Ludendorff, had practically established a military dictatorship. Head of State Kaiser Wilhelm II had become somewhat of a figurehead,



Figure 4.3.1.1: Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff

being sidelined by the military officials who were controlling both him and every decision he made. The Reichstag¹⁰ was no different, being marginalised; however, opposition voices were starting to voice discontent, which was getting louder the longer the war dragged on.

The OHL believed strongly in the ideology of Siegfrieden¹¹ and believed that the only way to end this war was through annihilating the enemy militarily. With the voices being raised as early as July 1917, a year after the stranglehold the OHL had on the country was slowly being loosened. The unsuccessful attempts of the Spring Offensives had cost the German army more than just reputation. Their best stormtroopers dead, the immense amount of utilities lost, and showing signs of weakness to the enemy were all the negative takeaways of these efforts.

Germans had been facing the biggest problem for their people for the past 3 years, which was the naval blockade the British had placed back when the war had begun. It was described as the Hungerblockade, as it managed to cut out the potential supplies from their fellow Central Powers. Britain had the upper hand regarding resources, since they had their colonial empire as backup, something the Germans yearned for over the years but could never achieve. This blockade also caused what the German Empire called the

⁹The Supreme Army Command of the German Empire

¹⁰ The Parliament of the German Empire

¹¹ More details can be found on this term in section 7.3 of the guide

Steckrübenwinter¹². The drastic change from importing one-third of their groceries before the start of the war, to only relying on the produce coming out of their own lands created a harsh adaptation period. When the potato crops failed to yield anything, the people were forced to survive eating animal fodder during the winter of 1916-1917, and the situation didn't get any better by 1918. Official rations started to become unavailable, leaving people reliant on the black market, where coffee would be made from roasted acorns, bread from potato peels and sawdust, and many other substitutions. With the Spanish Flu cases rising at a dangerous rate, the malnutrition of the people left them too weak to resist the pandemic.



Figure 4.3.1.2: A turnip slip (to the left) and a notice on the stagnation of potatoes (to the right)

As war went on, food shortages and casualties were simply getting too much for the people to bear. Although propaganda was being relayed daily, mentioning that France was worse off and that the line was going to break soon, a lie that was told for over 4 years and never came true. With massive strikes within the nation paralysing the munitions industry, it was apparent that the OHL wasn't simply losing its grip on the lines but also on the people. Where the Germans believed they had to battle on two fronts, namely the West and the East, the reality was there was a third front, the home front, which they were clearly losing. By August 1st, this problem was still lingering, and the promise of victory on the Western Front didn't seem all that appetising to the people.

4.3.2. France

As calendars showed, in 1918, France found itself in a rather unique position. French political leaders and many high-ranking generals regarded 1918 as the "final and most dangerous". This "phase" of the war consumed and tested the nation's strength and endurance

¹² Turnip Winter

to their absolute limits. Four years of relentless and brutal fighting with grinding offensives and costly reversals had turned large parts of the motherland into devastated wastelands. Entire regions carried scars of this first-of-its-kind modern industrial war, leaving millions of people displaced, forced to abandon their homes due to continued German offensives and aerial bombardments.

The cost of defence and survival was staggering. Approximately 1.4 million Frenchmen had been killed in action, with millions more wounded, disabled or shell-shocked after facing the brutality of war. The losses could be seen in every aspect of society. In countless villages, an entire generation of men was wiped away. In many rural communities, nearly the whole adult male population had vanished. From many households rose voices of relatives who mourned their bravely fallen.



Figure 4.3.2.1: The state in which the city of Lens was in on April 11, 1918

All of these national traumas manifested themselves in French society as deep exhaustion, despair and a growing sense that the nation stood at the edge of collapse or salvation. While at the frontlines, war weariness showed itself in mutinies against the commanding officers; at homes and in streets, it was shortages, inflation and grief that rose continuously. The home front, although spared from the brutal fighting in much of the country, was consumed by anxiety, mourning and a constant fear – especially after the German Spring Offensive of 1918 – that frontlines could once again move towards the west, threatening the very existence of the Republic.

France was putting everything in its ability to endure. The government knew the country could not survive another year of heavy losses, so victory had to come in 1918. This sense of urgency ended most political infighting and replaced it with a single, desperate goal: to hold the front lines until American troops arrived in large numbers. French leaders knew they were running out of time and needed to win before French society began to collapse.



Figure 4.3.3.1: Crowds that gathered at the Buckingham Palace on the outbreak of war in 1914

4.3.3. United Kingdom

As 1918 dawned, Britain stood on the brink of victory yet far from secure. Four years of brutal total war had turned the empire into a vast military and industrial machine, stretching its resources across the globe. Although its soil was spared from direct invasion, unlike France, the cost of sustaining war had been immense on the empire. A lost generation of men, endless spending on the military and a shaken political confidence in her ability. Britain entered its final year of war not as an unshaken world power, but as a country aware of its limits, which it learnt from the harsh reality of war.

This growing awareness of limitations deeply changed British society by 1918. It penetrated every aspect of life. Once unthinkable, conscription became a reality. Thousands of men were pulled out from factories, farms, and families. Entire communities bore scars of absence and loss, as every casualty represented a son, a brother, a father or a lover. The sense of national unity and excitement that was forged during the early years of the war was long gone. Replaced with exhaustion and grief.

As if the losses were not enough, the financial burden of the war further exacerbated the public hardship. Wartime production had stretched Britain's economic capacity to its

absolute limits. Government borrowings reached unprecedented levels. Inflation on a constant rise, eroding wages. Food shortages were common all over the empire, and rationing turned every day into an absolute test of endurance. These hardships affected the working class deeply and fuelled their anger, which resulted in unrest and widespread strikes across key industries.



Figure 4.3.3.2: Children in Buckinghamshire participating in a salvage drive, 1917

Accordingly, the confidence in Britain's traditional leadership was shaken. Parliament, the press, and the public increasingly questioned not whether the war should be won, but how much the nation could afford to sacrifice. The sufferings and prolonged stalemate in the Western Front undermined the trust for the Asquith government, which collapsed under these harsh realities. Soon, Lloyd George rose to power and created a government reflecting broader demand for decisive leadership capable of managing a war that outgrew currently existing institutions.

Although still able to mobilise vast amounts of resources and project power across continents, it was clear that it couldn't be sustained indefinitely. Shortages in manpower, economic exhaustion and strained social tension exposed the limits on Britain's endurance, underscoring her increasing dependency on her Allies. The situation, in this case, could be described as a ticking bomb for Britain. Victory was still within reach; however, it had to come soon.

5. The Western Front in 1918

5.1.1. Die Kaiserschlacht

Die Kaiserschlacht (The Kaiser Offensive)¹³ was a series of German attacks between March and July of 1918. Germany's aim was to split and demoralise the Allied forces by breaking through their lines. This offensive was also Germany's last attempt to win the war

¹³Most commonly referred to as the Spring Offensive

or, alternatively, to create and solidify a favourable position for future peace talks before an American intervention. The Offensive consisted of four offensive operations: Operation Michael on March 21st, followed by Operation Georgette on April 9th, Operation Blücher-Yorck against the French on April 20th and Operation Gneisenau on June 9th. These operations were initially effective, with each operation breaking through front lines. By mid-July, the Germans had recaptured most of the ground they had lost over the last three years.

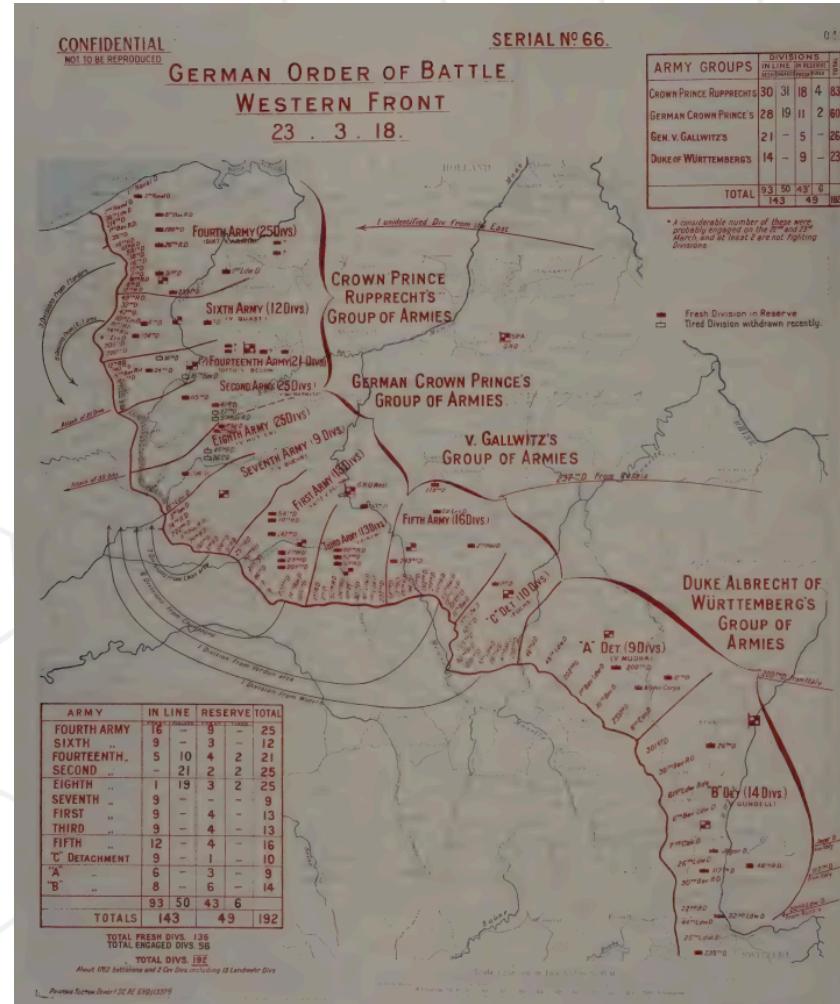


Figure 5.1.1.1: Map showing the movements of German troops on 23.3.1918 on the Western Front

The Spring Offensive was a four-stage plan, which started on March 21st, with Operation Michael aimed at disrupting and destroying British supply lines and communication on the Somme to the south. This operation also marks the beginning of the use of German storm troops: a new class of elite soldiers trained in infiltration and breakthrough tactics. Using the chaos and confusion created by storm troops, the Germans were able to reach almost as far as Amiens in the south and Arras in the north. Operation Georgette was the second phase of the offensive. This operation shifted the attack's focus from the Somme to the north, to Armentières and the River Lys. By the end of the month the Germans had recaptured nearly all the ground they had fought for over the previous 2 years. After the third and fourth phases of the Kaiser Offensive (Blücher-Yorck and Gneisenau), the

Germans managed to cripple the British forces and force them to fall back, also advancing as far as River Marne and threatening Paris. However, the German army lost the momentum because it had lost a lot of men, was short on ammunition, and the remaining soldiers were exhausted and under-supplied because of intense and constant operations.

5.1.2. The Second Battle of Marne

After the success of the Kaiser Offensive, German supreme command's chief, General Erich Ludendorff, planned an attack on Reims in order to divert French troops away from the Flanders front. However, the French general Ferdinand Foch had predicted this offensive, and the Germans consequently encountered French resistance and counterattacks. Another countermeasure the French had used was a line of false trenches in order to deceive and surround the enemy with a fierce barrage from the real trenches. Just after three days, on July 18th, the offensive was called off and an Allied counteroffensive began simultaneously. In another three days, the Allies crossed the Marne, and the Germans retreated to their former Aisne-Vesle lines. This counteroffensive shifted the balance of power towards the Allies from an exhausted and under-supplied German army.



Figure 5.2.1.1.: Map depicting the troops of both the Allied movements to take back the area

6. Armistice of Compiègne

This section of the guide will focus primarily on the alternate tangent of the timeline we will be moving on from. The narrative that is written here will be given purely to explain how and why this meeting of both sides takes place. All the historical background provided to you up till the 1st of August 1918 remains active; however, all events that happened after this date in actual history will not have happened. So you may take inspiration from the happenings of the Great War from our starting date onwards, but the events of history can be rewritten by the actions taken by the delegates.

6.1.1. The Path to Negotiations

After the offensives of the German side, the Western Front was keeping its form of being the immovable object of the Great War, with both the Allies and the Germans trying their best to be an unstoppable force. Both sides were exhausted after four years of fighting, and it appeared that the hostilities would never end. With the Spring Offensives not yielding many results, the Germans were planning on the next step to take, and so were the Allied Forces, who were slowly being backed by the landing U.S. troops helping with the war effort. The rising number of cases of the Spanish Flu was growing even more rampant, and with the living conditions caused by the war, both sides were suffering losses from the incurable disease. Oskar Erzberger, only son of Matthias Erzberger, had fallen ill at the start of July, and his worsening condition led to his death on July 23rd, 1918.

Erzberger, struck with grief, called Georg von Hertling, the Imperial Chancellor, and Paul von Hindenburg, Chief of the Supreme Army Command, and urged the most influential individuals of the nation to try for a ceasefire deal with the Allied Nations. Reluctant to make this kind of attempt after the offensives, the German leaders, realising the increasing scarcity of materials and food supplies, sent a telegraph to Ferdinand Foch, the Supreme Allied



Commander, stating their willingness to draft an armistice to put a stop to the loss of life. Foch, with the increasing number of cases of Spanish flu among the populace, specifically the army, responded to this call positively, asking the German delegation to form a group of 15 individuals with high standing to join them in the region of Compiègne. The Allied delegation guaranteed the safety of those coming to the area and invited them to do so with protection. The Allied Nations, comprised of 10 French, 6 British and 1 sole American in the form of John J. Pershing, would welcome the German delegation aboard the Compiègne Wagon. On the 31st of July, 1918, the German delegation would arrive at the scene, and this is how our committee is set to begin.

6.1.2. The Committee Setting

As mentioned previously, our start date will be set precisely on the 1st of August 1918, 100 days before the actual date the armistice was presented to the German delegation historically, on the 9th of November 1918. If this were a historically accurate version of the armistice talks, this would be set on the actual date; however, this particular point in history is chosen specifically, as the offensives being planned by both sides are still in effect and possible. This means that both sides, as the committee is ongoing, will be able to order troops to attack, make use of the material they have, order nighttime operations, and much more.



Figure 6.1.2.1: State of the Western Front at the start date of the committee and the location of the meeting taking place.

For immersion purposes, delegates can imagine their respective cabinet rooms as the individual wagons of a train, in which no wiretaps can be placed by either side. The specific location of the meeting can be seen on the figure above, as well as the current situation regarding the Western Front. The delegates will be receiving their respective numbers at the second session of the conference (troop count, artillery, utilities etc.) This meeting is not created to draw the highest-standing German government officials into a trap; it is not created to get them aboard the train and blow it up, or to purposefully put one side into a rusted train wagon and make them catch tetanus, or any kind of sick and twisted idea the delegates may have. It is created by the goodwill of both sides wishing to put an end to the war at hand, but with the difficulty of attempting to not allow the opposition to walk away with the better ending.

6.1.3. Armistice Clauses

This section will go back to actual historical aspects, meaning this part will explain what the actual Armistice of November 11, 1918, meant for both the Allies and the Germans. The document itself was drafted by a delegation of French, British, and American individuals and given to the Germans, who were demanded to sign the armistice within a time period of 72 hours, or the deal would not be presented once again. It contained a total of 34 clauses, covering topics like the Eastern Front relating to Germany, East Africa, General Clauses, Financial Clauses, and Naval Conditions; however, the most important part of the document was the Western Front. It will also be the base requirement from the cabinets to reach an agreement regarding this side of your written document. The most significant clauses of the Armistice were:

TERMS OF THE ARMISTICE AGREEMENTS CONCLUDED BETWEEN THE ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS AND THE GOVERNMENTS OF GERMANY, AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND BULGARIA.

TERMS OF ARMISTICE WITH GERMANY, NOVEMBER 11, 1918.

Between Marshal Foch, commander in chief of the allied armies, acting in the name of the allied and associated powers, with Admiral Wemyss, first sea lord, on the one hand, and Herr Erzberger, secretary of state, president of the German delegation, Count von Oberndorff, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, Maj. Gen. von Winterfeldt, Capt. Vanselow (German navy), duly empowered and acting with the concurrence of the German chancellor, on the other hand.

An armistice has been concluded on the following conditions:

Figure 6.1.3.1: The opening statements of the Armistice before the clauses are written.

No. 1: The Armistice takes effect 6 hours after its signing.

- The Armistice was signed at exactly five in the morning¹⁴, meaning it would be effective at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year.

No. 2: The evacuation of Belgium, France and Alsace-Lorraine within 14 days.

- These areas were taken in the early days of the Great War, and Germany would lose all the ground it had gained over the years regarding the Western Front.

No. 3: The abandonment of much heavy military equipment (cannons, aircraft, etc.).

¹⁴It was actually signed at 5:30, but the half an hour of discussions changed nothing about the document so the reported time was 5:00.

- A necessary clause that was added by the Allies to ensure full cooperation from the Germans and to weaken them in case Germany remained weakened after the 30-day effective period of the Armistice.

No. 4: Allied occupation of the cities of Mainz, Koblenz and Cologne.

- Yet another clause added by the Allies to keep the Germans under control, not allowing a potential mobilisation attempt.

No. 7: Abandonment of railway equipment (5,000 locomotives and carriages).

- A clause that was added to weaken the Germans yet again; however, some historians have argued this was added specifically to make the evacuation of German troops harder for the Germans. This resulted in some German soldiers going back to their hometowns to perish during their long trip on foot.

No. 10-13: Return of all war prisoners, with no reciprocity.

- While regaining their imprisoned compatriots, the added detail of no reciprocity meant the Germans would be losing even further power rather than the Allied Nations.

No. 18: The armistice is effective for 30 days.

These terms were agreed upon by the German delegation out of desperation, as the delegates will have been informed on the conditions of late 1918, the situation on all fronts were impossible to go back from. In an attempt to stop further loss of life and to avoid complete eradication, the German representatives reluctantly signed the document, which paved the way to the Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919, formally ending the Great War.

Delegates are encouraged to research the other clauses of the document solely to gather information that will help create a more complete potential armistice by the end of proceedings. They should also remember that the start date of this committee will be a little over 3 months before this Armistice was actually signed, meaning the conditions of the war were not as dire.

7. Negotiating Parties

7.1. The German Delegation

The Germans, going into the peace negotiations after their most peace-requesting representative, Erzberger, practically forced this meeting, are going to be facing many difficulties, with the top one being balancing the needs of their people and military ideals of the OHL. As the pride of the German Army will simply not allow for accepting defeat, they will only accept the armistice if the French offer their unconditional surrender. For this committee, delegates will be expected to truly get into character, being unruly if you are a military representative; however, this meeting was arranged through great difficulty, and

perhaps the German people have sacrificed enough to merit some form of deterrence from your military ideals¹⁵.

7.1.1. Political Fragility and Domestic Pressure

The aforementioned home front that the Germans are facing is practically a ticking time bomb. Burgfrieden¹⁶ was left shattered after years of unkept promises. Opposition leaders and the streets were voicing their concerns on the prolonged war any chance they got, but the OHL would not listen. Shattered on the inside, while attempting to look stronger than ever with the resources being deployed from the East, the Germans would focus on keeping this facade up. With the turnip winter leaving scars on the psyche of the people and with no end in sight, the people were starting strikes from Berlin to Düsseldorf, with almost all of these strikes happening in munitions factories.



Figure 7.1.1.1: A butcher's shop in Berlin, looted after a food riot

Within this section of the guide, a special mention to the delegates is in order: stay true to your character without fear. The military personnel hold influence and power, enough to brand you traitors to the cause; however, their force will be minimised by your debate skills. We're not advising you to go completely against your higher-ups and get yourself killed somehow, but there is an apparent reason why this piece of advice is in this section of the guide. Your characters were selected to showcase the fractured state of the country you will be representing. As it is in the nature of crisis committees, even if you are a representative of a country, you are, most importantly, an individual in history. Research your characters' stance on the policies the German Empire is employing and act accordingly. Of course, if every single one of you stays true to your characters, history will only repeat itself. So try and find that delicate balance between your own character's ideals and what is best for the German Empire in the long run.

¹⁵This is written to the delegates of the German side as well as the Allies and will be delved deeper into in the expectations section of the guide.

¹⁶Political truce: this was a policy accepted by all members of the parliament as the war started, which meant that unity would be kept as long as the war went on

7.1.2. Military Situation

The general unrest among the population also resides similarly within the German Army. Struggling to gather the manpower necessary to break through the lines, the Empire called upon the 1920 class of conscripts, purely to put bodies on the line. The failure of the Spring Offensives exacted a heavy toll on the military might of Germany, as the nation ended up losing its best stormtroopers during the attacks. The limited resources stacked on top of this hardship effectively cripples the German troops' capabilities. Most importantly, the blockade that the British have set up doesn't just hinder the supply lines, it also blocks out any supporting troops that could have been sent from the Central Powers. As the Doughboys¹⁷ are piling into Europe, Germany seems to be getting further outnumbered.

Some reports are suggesting mutineers among the army, because of the dissatisfaction towards the Spring Offensives, and the enemy's superior firepower. Most of the reserve materials belonging to the German Army were used up during Operations Michael and Georgette, leaving the army short on essential resources like oil and horses. With the only available tanks being the ones who were captured from the Allies, retaliation against the Allied armor is too difficult, leaving the Germans no choice but to retreat in most cases. All of these combined leave even the infantryman hopeless and without morale their output becomes inefficient. The delegates must understand: without a fully cohesive and proper plan, if the Allies deal a devastating blow, it might cause the Empire to implode.

7.1.3. Negotiation Grounds and Key Objectives

As it was mentioned almost too many times in the document by now, the start date of August 1st gives the German Empire the option to bargain. This is not a meeting for them to surrender unconditionally, rather an opportunity to trade. The primary objective for the Empire in this case will be to structure an honorable peace, where they remain a Great Power in Europe, avoiding the humiliation of the dictated armistice they were forced to sign in reality.

¹⁷Nickname used for the American infantrymen of the time



Figure 7.1.3.1: Map depicting Germany's and other Central Powers' demands in 1915

The Latin phrase “Status Quo Ante Bellum”, which means “the situation as it existed before the war”, is what the delegation can aim for in terms of territorial integrity in the West. Letting go of the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France could be a powerful bargaining chip, as the region of Alsace-Lorraine already belonged to the German Empire when it was taken nearly 50 years ago. That particular region is a matter of honor and belonging for the French, so they most likely will not allow for the region to stay under German control, so in order to ensure the safety of the Rhineland¹⁸, so Alsace-Lorraine will be a pivotal talking point.

To the East is where Germany will have the strongest leverage. The signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk has given the nation vast territories in the East, namely most of Ukraine and the entirety of the Baltics. This is where withdrawal from the West could be useful, as by giving lands belonging to France back to them, they may be asked to recognise the lands gained to the East. An argument can be made here by stating Germany could be the protector of Europe against the Bolsheviks and their new ideologies.

A major diplomatic leverage the German delegates are advised to use actually comes from the Allies' new and powerful member: the United States. President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points mentions “freedom of the seas” on the second point, meaning this could be mentioned to force the British into removing the blockade and opening supply lines into the

¹⁸Industrial heart of Germany, where alongside the river line of the Rhine a multitude of factories have been built over time.

mainland. Be wary of these points, as mentioning them could have dire consequences, as almost all other points contain negative outcomes for the German Empire.

The absolute non-negotiables for a potential armistice are:

1- The British fleet must cease the naval blockade in the North Sea.

The blockade has caused incredibly high amounts of civil unrest within Germany, and the people are suffering from starvation as the discussions are ongoing. So long as the blockade remains, a ceasefire is impossible.

2- The German Empire will not be held accountable for all the damages caused to the nations during the war.

No economical responsibility should be burdened on the Empire. If this is demanded, express the civilian hardship that was forced upon the nation with the blockade of the British. With a potential debt of millions, the nation will simply weaken to a point where it barely exists. No such capitulations should be accepted at this stage.

3- In the case of a ceasefire and territorial withdrawal, the troops will be allowed to return to their homes using the resources the German Empire possesses.

The Allies, in an attempt at completely crippling Germany's military power, might request all vehicles, weaponry, resources and other materials be given over to the French during retreat from the taken lands. Concerned for security reasons, the Empire will not hand over any resources under any circumstances.

7.2. The Allied Delegation

During the historical armistice, the Allied Nations had the Central Powers, particularly Germany, at a metaphorical and almost quite literal gunpoint. The demands presented by Marshal Foch were simply handed over to the German delegation that came to the Compiègne Waggon, and they were told to sign within 72 hours or let the war continue. Capitulations on Germany that were painstakingly listed off in the armistice were already covering almost every aspect of what the Allied Nations wanted from the German Empire. So for this section of the guide, French and British strategic priorities will be mentioned in historical accuracy, compared to the German theoretical aspects.

7.2.1. French Strategic Priorities



The French would enter the negotiations with security as its overriding objective. For the French, the war had confirmed a brutal historic lesson; Germany's industrial strength, demographic power and geographic proximity made it a constant threat for France. The country was invaded twice in less than fifty years¹⁹, and both times devastated the French soil. Therefore, in the negotiations, France's strategy was not merely to punish Germany, but ensure that France would never face an invasion from the east again. In this context, every French demand (territorial, military or economic) was according to this very existential concern.

The central plan to ensure that the nation would never face anything like this ever was to permanently weaken Germany's military power. French leaders believed that Germany's capacity for rapid mobilisation, mass conscription and industrialised warfare had been a decisive factor behind two invasions. Therefore, high-ranks came to the conclusion that heavy restrictions were the way to go. So, France supported strict limitations on the size of the German army, the abolition of conscription and the prohibition of heavy weaponry (Machine Guns, Tanks, Planes etc.).

However, it was soon realised that military restrictions alone would prove insufficient and futile without geographic security. To aid this cause, the French had their eyes on the Rhine. The French policymakers regarded the Rhine as the most critical strategic barrier between France and Germany. As a result, France demanded demilitarisation and Allied occupation of the Rhineland. The French, in some cases, even supported Rhineland's political separation from Germany. For the French, control of this region acted as a buffer zone against Germany in which it bought time for France to mobilise in case of renewed aggression from Germany.

¹⁹ The Unification of Germany was achieved after the French Empire was brought down at the start of 1871. Some insight can be gained on the proceedings of this event in our other crisis committee, HCC: The Unification of Germany.

At the Peace Table



Figure 7.2.1.2: A cartoon depicting how the French were seemingly welcoming, but were laying down traps for the Germans

Of course, French demand for territory wouldn't stop with Rhineland. France also demanded the return of Alsace-Lorraine, the historically contested provinces that were lost to Germany in 1871, which had been symbolised as national humiliation and unfinished revenge against Germans. In this context, their recovery was not merely territorial gain but restoration of national honor and historical justice.

Also, one aspect of the French strategy was economical. As war raged on the French soil, vast areas in Northern and Eastern France were systematically destroyed by the advancing German forces. The systematical destruction left infrastructure shattered and industry crippled. Reparations were therefore framed as compensation for the losses rather than out of revenge. French leaders argued that without German financial responsibility, reconstruction efforts would put an unbearable pressure on a population that was already exhausted by years of war. In this sense, it wouldn't be wrong to say that for the French, economic security was inseparable from national security.

7.2.2. British Priorities

Britain's foremost strategy in the negotiations was to re-establish a stable European balance of power. The British believed and argued that a long-term peace heavily depended on preventing any single continental power from dominating Europe, just as the situation was

before 1914. In the eyes of the British, Germany was to be defeated and restrained; however, not destroyed or permanently crippled. British leaders argued that a Germany reduced to chaos and humiliation would do nothing but harm to the peace that was to be established and might even further destabilise Europe, invite radicalism and ultimately bring Britain back into continental commitments it wished to avoid. In this sense, stability, not vengeance, was the ultimate guiding principle for the British.



Figure 7.2.2.1: Cartoon depicting the “Big Three” (George, Wilson and Clemenceau) where George is still seemingly attempting to negotiate

Closely linked to this was Britain's desire to avoid a permanently hostile or revolutionary Germany. The British government was especially deeply alarmed by the Bolshevik Revolution in the east and feared that excessive punishment of Germany could result in similar outcomes in Central Europe. A Bolshevik or radically nationalist Germany was seen as a far greater threat to peace than a weakened but functional German state. Therefore, British leaders favored a settlement in which Germany would remain economically capable and politically coherent even if militarily constrained.

Accordingly, the British put an emphasis on the economic recovery and resumption of international trade. As a global trading and financial power, Britain relied on a functioning European economy. For a European economy that was to be recovered, German industry and markets were an integral part. For this exact reason, although the British agreed that Germans should be held accountable for the damages caused throughout the war, Britain argued that reparations should be limited and realistic, not that Germany deserved leniency, but that Europe needed recovery.

From another point, as a huge trade empire, Britain heavily depended on her dominance on high seas and wanted to maintain control over them. The war had confirmed this necessity for the British. As a result, British leaders wanted Germany to be stripped of its large navy in order to prevent any further challenge to British maritime dominance. However, Britain was also wary of becoming permanently entangled in continental military commitments that could drain resources needed to police and defend its empire.



Figure 7.2.2.2: The German High Seas Fleet's surrender

As mentioned briefly in the beginning and the previous paragraph, Britain sought to minimise its long-term military obligations on the continent. Unlike France, Britain didn't want permanent occupation zones or extensive land commitments in Europe. The British would prefer flexible diplomacy, limited guarantees and the ability to disengage if necessary. Accordingly, the British would resist the French demands to control the Rhineland permanently. From the British perspective, such arrangements risked locking Britain into enforcement roles and future wars.

Finally, Britain was actually concerned with managing France itself. British leaders quietly feared that a powerful and embittered France could destabilise Europe as much as a resurgent Germany. Ensuring that France felt secure without becoming dominant could be considered a delicate act of balance. This forced Britain to take the role of mediator for most of the time.

7.2.3. Allied Unity/Internal Tensions

Although on paper the nations looked like a unity, the Allies, during the final stages of the war, lacked cohesion, and the subsequent negotiations were often fragile and shaped by underlying tensions. From the public's eyes, the Allies presented themselves as a coherent front bonded by shared sacrifices and common victory. Beneath this, however, deep differences in national experiences and strategic priorities strained cooperation.

Despite fighting alongside one another, France and Britain had very different perspectives on the postwar order. After experiencing invasion, occupation, and massive physical devastation, France considered security to be an existential necessity. Britain was

more focused on maintaining balance and maintaining continental stability because it was shielded from direct destruction by geography. Disagreements over the extent of Germany's weakening and the duration of the postwar constraints resulted from these divergent viewpoints.

Military coordination efforts during the war also revealed tensions between the allies. Until 1918, Allied operations were plagued with internal tensions or national rivalries. British reluctance to place its forces under one command and France's demands to centralize the control clashed almost every day. Although the Supreme War Council was created in November 1917, it wasn't until the devastating German Spring Offensive of 1918 that the British truly, yet still reluctantly, agreed on a centralized command under Marshall Ferdinand Foch. The British reluctance proved that it was an act of necessity rather than a result of harmony.



Figure 7.2.3.1: British Supreme War Council members in front of the Trianon Palace in Versailles

Another level of complexity was introduced by the United States' involvement in the conflict. While American involvement strengthened the Allied position, it also altered the balance of the coalition. Disagreements arose regarding the postwar security arrangements, the use of American forces in which Americans demanded their own control over their forces, and the degree to which European power politics should influence the peace. Although genuine, allied unity was becoming more and more a product of negotiation rather than natural cohesion.

7.3. Forced Peace or Negotiated Middle-Ground

On July 19, 1917, the concept of "Verständigungsfrieden" was offered at the Reichstag as a resolution. This idea focused on mutual understanding and permanent reconciliation. The resolution led by Erzberger and the SPD had 216 votes in favour and 126

against and was adopted. This part of history is forgotten and very often overlooked due to the fact that the resolution faced a short-term problem immediately in the form of Georg Michaelis. He was elected as the German prime minister five days prior to the resolution, and because of his personal stance on the matter he directly opposed the document, declaring it to be completely out of the question. He instead supported the idea of “Siegfrieden” (peace through victory), which was supported by the military and conservative groups. This movement failed to gain more supporters at the time; however, it is available for Germany to consider and implement once again for the Armistice. Even though multiple clauses in the Armistice are forced, a significant portion of them are still debatable for both sides to find a middle ground.

By the armistice of 11 November 1918, Germany almost had no other choice but to sign the document that was handed to them, a narrative that has been mentioned numerous times throughout this academic document. With both sides almost completely worn out, and with the individuals in the room being some of, if not, the most influential people of their respective nations, perhaps there is the option of achieving that negotiated middle ground.

8. Expectations and Closing Remarks

“The wise warrior avoids the battle.”

This simulation of the Great War will be testing delegates’ skills in both planning for battle and their diplomacy skills in a situation where neither side will want to give in. The Supreme War Council (SWC) might think they have the upper hand when it comes to the Western Front, as German resources are drained by each passing day, whereas the German Cabinet might think the Spring Offensive showed the vulnerabilities of the Allies, specifically their inner tensions.

Crisis committees are always centered on the question of “What if..?”. Their potential for constant change and their chaotic nature is a chance for delegates to ask variations of the aforementioned question. “What if the SWC were to try and force their way through using their superior numbers and firepower?” “What if the Germans were to give up their gained ground and retreat, while setting up traps in the trenches they evacuated?” The H-JCC: The End of the Great War will be answering these sorts of questions but will also be focused on the quote from Sun Tzu given at the start of this section. There are many aspects of the “Art of War” that hold their importance and relevance 2500 years after they had been written. This particular quote can be interpreted as “avoiding confrontation could lead to success” or as “the cunning warrior knows exactly when to strike so that there is no ‘battle’.” In the case of this committee, it could potentially mean both.

Delegates are advised to read the guide thoroughly, leaving no nook and cranny unchecked. There will be a delicate balance between gaining the upper hand with brute force and yielding when you know you are beaten. Keep your mind open to change, and let this be the last reminder to you: the main purpose of this committee is for you to draft an armistice. To put a stop to one of the deadliest events in world history. There will be points where both sides will remain adamant against each other, never open to compromise or admit defeat, and

that is the trajectory we are expecting this to go in. The committee will feel stagnant at times, and it will seem like there is no end to the events taking place. Rest assured, we will be prepared for any outcome your actions may lead us towards. Just remember to have a clear mind and an iron fist ready, but know which of the two you will have to use and when you will have to use it.



9. Bibliography and Further Readings

Men on the Gates. (n.d.). *1918: Kaiser Offensive*.

https://menonthegates.org.uk/men_front/bo-1918-kaiser-offensive/

Worcestershire and Mercian Regiment Museum. (n.d.). *The Kaiserschlacht (German Spring Offensive) 1918*.

<https://www.worcestershireandmercianregimentmuseum.org/brief-history-of-the-worcestershire-regiment/world-war-1/the-kaiserschlacht-german-spring-offensive-1918/>

National Army Museum. (n.d.). *1918: Victory*. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/1918-victory>

Men on the Gates. (n.d.). *Second Battle of the Marne: 2/8 Bn West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own) July 1918*.

https://menonthegates.org.uk/men_front/second-battle-of-the-marne-28-bn-west-yorkshire-regiment-prince-of-wales-own-july-1918/

History.com Editors. (2009, November 13). *Second Battle of the Marne begins with final German offensive*. History.

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/july-15/second-battle-of-the-marne-begins-with-final-german-offensive>

Showalter, D. E. (2024, July 8). *Second Battle of the Marne*. Encyclopedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Battle-of-the-Marne>

National WWI Museum and Memorial. (n.d.). *The Armistice*.

<https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/about-wwi/armistice>

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. (2024, August 27). *The end of the German war*. Encyclopedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I/The-end-of-the-German-war>

France. Encyclopedia of World War I.

<https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/france/>

France in the First World War, 1914–1918. The Postil.

<https://thepostil.com/france-in-the-first-world-war-1914-1918/>

Fighting the Last War. American Historical Association.

<https://www.historians.org/resource/fighting-the-last-war/>

Voices of the First World War: Life on the Home Front. Imperial War Museums.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-life-on-the-home-front>

The Great War: The Home Front (Section G5). The National Archives (UK) Web Archive.

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20220201211513/https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/greatwar/g5/>

The Great War: General Resources. The National Archives (UK) Web Archive.

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20220201203822/https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/greatwar/>

Britain from 1914 to the Present. Encyclopædia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/Britain-from-1914-to-the-present#ref274521>

Paris Peace Conference and Treaty of Versailles (1919). U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian.

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

Victory through Coalition: Britain and France during the First World War, Elizabeth Greenhalgh

https://assets.cambridge.org/97805218/53842/excerpt/9780521853842_excerpt.pdf

American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). Encyclopedia of World War I.

<https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/american-expeditionary-forces-1-1/>

Liddell Hart, B. H. *A History of the World War, 1914–1918*

Barry, J. M. (2004). *The Great Influenza: The story of the deadliest pandemic in history*. Viking.

Ferguson, N. (1998). *The pity of war: Explaining World War I*. Basic Books.

Strachan, H. (2004). *The financing of the First World War*. Oxford University Press.

Chickering, R. (1998). *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918*. Cambridge University Press.

History.com Editors. (2009, October 29). *World War I*. History.

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/world-war-i-history>

Keegan, J. (1998). *The First World War*. Hutchinson.

Kitchen, M. (1976). *The silent dictatorship: The politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916–1918*. Croom Helm.

Stevenson, D. (2011). *With our backs to the wall: Victory and defeat in 1918*. Penguin.

Imperial War Museums. (n.d.). *Timeline of the First World War*.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/timeline-of-the-first-world-war>

Davis, B. J. (2000). *Home fires burning: Food, politics, and everyday life in World War I*. Berlin. University of North Carolina Press.

Original document provided to the U.S. government of the 11 November 1918 Armistice

https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/SERIALSET-07610_00_00-035-0147-0000/pdf/SERIALSET-07610_00_00-035-0147-0000.pdf

Images from:

<https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/archiv/526729/friedensbestrebungen-und-revolutionierungsversuche-im-ersten-weltkrieg/>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/20-incredible-photos-from-the-first-world-war-home-front>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/20-remarkable-photos-from-gallipoli>

https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/supreme-war-council/?image_=1105087

<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/04/world-war-i-in-photos-the-western-front-part-i/507197/>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-british-naval-blockade-of-the-first-world-war>

<https://sourcenews.scot/analysis-from-glasgow-to-berlin-how-strikes-mutinies-and-revolution-ended-ww1/>