

What if? League of Nations

Focusing on the Treaty of Versailles and how it shaped events throughout time.

Introduction

A “What If?” committee is based on a hypothetical situation that diverges from the main historical line that is generally known. This opens the discussion to a debate of critical thinking, historical knowledge, and awareness. All delegates will have to adhere to the events following the end of World War I (November 11, 1918) until the beginning of the possible World War II, (September 1, 1939). This committee will focus on this 21-year interval, the main goal to which delegated will be subjected is stopping World War II from happening. Specifically, how did the Treaty of Versailles act as a detonator for the war? Although this debate will focus on the hypothetical outcomes of the conflict, every event/treaty signed before 1918 will stand and be in full effect within the entirety of the debate (unless it is dissolved within the session). Delegates must adhere to their respective delegation's thoughts and actions before setting a timeline, abstinence or denial of this will cause inconsistency within the committee and will be punished if need be.

Within this specialized committee all delegates will be exhorted to participate in creating “note cycles”, these will not only be used as an evaluation of their level of engagement but also as a way to shape the decisions to be made. Every 2-3 sessions of debate, the committee, as a whole, will vote on how to proceed with the current situation being handled at that moment. These “cycles” will represent time which will be established by the chairs at the beginning of the session. These decisions will have to make sense within the political situation and the country’s connections and intentions, disregarding said point will result in a warning for inaccuracy. We desire a committee that will allow open discussion of different outcomes, however, that does not equal doing whatever in a careless manner.

It is of utmost importance that the goal of the committee remains intact while making all decisions. These criteria specifically will be evaluated by the Chairs of the committee and CADMUN’s Directors of Chairs, after said deliberation the committee will be informed of the decision taken. The current director will explain how the actions the delegations took affected the situation and will inform of each delegation’s reaction as a result. Once that is done the debate will resume until the next cycle.

Due to the special nature of this committee, there will be an extra kind of warning from which we are used, this will be the “inaccuracy” warning and it will be issued to the delegate who makes a decision or statement that does not align with its countries ideals and does not back this desition with an explanation or data. Even i f

We have high hopes for this comment and wish nothing but the best to all delegates, we hope this experience will truly show how all actions small or big make a difference in history and how avoiding such mistakes can help us nowadays in modern problems. We are at all dispositions to answer any and all questions.

Key terms

War guilt: The blame placed on Germany after WWI.

Nationalism: Special interest and identification with the success of one's country, even at the expense of others.

Fascism: Political ideology characterized by a dictatorial leader, militarism, and forcible suppression of opposition.

Appeasement: Fulfilling the demands of another country to avoid conflict.

League of Nations: The first worldwide intergovernmental organization with the purpose of keeping world peace.

Economic strain: Related to war guilt, the economic pressure placed on Germany.

Allyship: The bonds between nations to uplift each other during and after war.

Treaty: A formally concluded and ratified agreement between countries.

Background

The Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919, marked the formal end of World War I but had lasting effects on global geopolitics, particularly in Europe. By imposing severe reparations and territorial losses on Germany and establishing a framework for peace through the League of Nations, the Treaty intended to prevent future conflicts. However, its punitive nature and the League's structural weaknesses led to deep-seated resentment, economic hardship, and political instability—factors that directly contributed to World War II and shaped events throughout the 20th century. This paper examines the Treaty of Versailles, its consequences, and the League of Nations' role in global diplomacy, exploring how these elements influenced subsequent historical developments.

The Treaty of Versailles: Context and Provisions

Negotiated primarily by the Allied Powers—Britain, France, and the United States—the Treaty of Versailles aimed to impose accountability and compensation on Germany, whom the Allies held primarily responsible for the war. The key provisions of the Treaty included:

1. War Guilt Clause (Article 231): The infamous clause that placed full responsibility for the war on Germany, justifying the reparations imposed on it.
2. Reparations and Economic Strain: Germany was obligated to pay reparations totaling 132 billion gold marks, a debt that crippled its economy, led to hyperinflation, and contributed to political instability.
3. Territorial Losses: Germany lost territories to France, Belgium, Denmark, and Poland, including Alsace-Lorraine and the Polish Corridor, which split German territory and fueled nationalist sentiments.
4. Military Restrictions: The Treaty imposed severe restrictions on the German military, including a limit of 100,000 troops and a prohibition on conscription, tanks, and air force capabilities.
5. The League of Nations: The Treaty established the League of Nations as an international peacekeeping body, tasked with resolving disputes and preventing conflicts.

These provisions were intended to prevent future wars, but many historians argue that the harsh treatment of Germany sowed the seeds of resentment that eventually led to World War II.

Lasting Consequences of the Treaty of Versailles

1. Rise of Extremism in Germany

The Treaty's terms created economic hardships, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and loss of faith in the Weimar government. The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, capitalized on this anger, promoting a vision of German resurgence and vowing to undo the Treaty's humiliations. Hitler's rise to power in 1933 marked the beginning of a rearmament program that openly defied the Treaty's military restrictions, setting the stage for World War II.

2. Impact on Nationalism and Borders

The Treaty redrew national boundaries, often without considering ethnic or cultural factors, fueling nationalism and secessionist movements. German territories lost to Poland and other countries became flashpoints, as seen in the Sudetenland crisis of 1938 and the invasion of Poland in 1939. These border issues remained sources of conflict, with repercussions continuing even beyond World War II.

3. Undermining of the League of Nations

The League's failure to manage tensions and its perceived impotence in the face of aggression disillusioned member nations. The League's inability to enforce disarmament or maintain collective security directly influenced the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, which sought to improve upon the League's weaknesses by granting more authority and responsibilities to the Security Council.

4. Influence on Post-War Diplomacy and International Relations

The Treaty of Versailles exposed the flaws in punitive peace settlements and became a cautionary example in shaping future diplomacy. Post-World War II treaties, such as those of the United Nations and NATO, sought to avoid the mistakes of Versailles by focusing on reconstruction and inclusive diplomacy.

Conclusion

By understanding the events that occurred due to the mistakes in the Treaty of Versailles and the lack of effort from countries, this committee aims to solve the core problem of reforming the world in a hypothetical way. Focusing on the future consequences that could be triggered by the choices of the present is the main objective of What If: League of Nations. This committee will take place in the beginning of the discussions of the Treaty of Versailles; thus, **no events after January 1919 shall be referred to during the negotiations.**

Major factions

Central Powers:

Austria-Hungary

Germany

Turkey

Bulgaria

Allies:

Russia

France

Romania

Servia

Italy

British empire

Belgium

Bulgaria

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