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League of Nations: *Conference of Hope*
STUDY GUIDE

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

A very warm welcome to the meeting of the League of Nations at BITS, Pilani – Hyderabad Model United Nations 2014. The League of Nations, as you all know, was the forerunner to the United Nations Organization – an international organization formed to promote peace and safeguard security in the post World War I period, whose failure to prevent World War II caused its ultimate demise. But then again, this is your chance to alter history, take up the mantle of diplomacy and save the world from the horrors of the Second World War.

The world has reached a watershed moment. We face, once again, a problem that first reared its ugly head 25 years ago. The world is balanced precariously on the verge of another catastrophic war. Any and all decisions taken in the League will not only have immediate repercussions, but also determine the dynamics of generations to come.

The delegates are required to understand that the politics of 1930s Europe is a class apart. Besides dissidence among the countries, there is widespread suspicion even amongst the allies in this world. Detailed research and in-depth knowledge about the intricacies of international politics are not only mandatory but requisite precursors to any form of deliberation in the council. However, being quick on your feet when it comes to tactful negotiation will be imperative, as always.

As the Committee represents a historic council which had its own Rules of Procedure and charter, standard MUN rules and procedures will not apply. The same would be communicated to the delegates on the day of the council. However, as a crisis committee, emphasis will be on finding a solution to the problem and not authoritarian adherence to rules and procedure.

Although the executive board has been appointed to facilitate the debate, it will occasionally provide insights and ideas which it deems necessary for proper functioning of the council. In case of any queries feel free to contact any member of the Executive Board.

Expectations are high, delegates. The die has been cast. The world is watching. What will you do now?

Thanks and regards,

Swarnim Saxena
Chairperson

Abijit Hariharan
Vice-Chairperson

Reeti Sarkar
Director

International Relations in Early 20th Century

CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING UP TO WORLD WAR I (1890 - 1914)

CHANGES IN THE BALANCE OF POWER. In 1890, Kaiser William II brought about a revolution in German policies. He established the view of the *Weltpolitik* (world policy) – a bid to expand German territories overseas and establish Germany as an industrial might alongside other great European powers. The Kaiser of Germany also decided that Germany's imperialist ambitions could not be realized without a great High Seas Fleet, fuelling its Dreadnought race with Britain. The South African (or Boer) War (1899–1902) against the independent Boer republics, the conquest of the Philippines by the United States, the annexation of the Turkish railroads by Germany – a continuous onslaught of events was seeing Britain's position in the world erode steadily. In addition, this prospect of a large German navy — next to the growing fleets of France, Russia, Japan, and the United States — meant that Britain would no longer rule the waves alone.

Elsewhere, Japan's triumph in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 – following which Russia stumbled into the Revolution of 1905 – announced a change in the balance of power in the east. The example of an Oriental nation rising up to defeat a European giant also emboldened the Chinese, the Indians, and the Arabs to look forward to a day when they might expel the imperialists from their midst; tsarist Russia looked once again to the Balkans as a field for expansion.

FORMATION OF POWER BLOCS. The Triple Alliance (1882) and the Triple Entente (1907) saw the world divided into two major power blocs. The former primarily arose out of anti-French tendencies, uniting Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy in a binding military contract. The latter had France, Britain and Russia laying their longstanding disputes to rest – although without any military commitments – and secured amicable relations between the nations.

In addition, The Treaty of London (1839) was a commitment by Europe's great powers – including Great Britain and Prussia – to acknowledge, respect and defend the neutrality of Belgium. When German troops invaded Belgium in August 1914 they did so in defiance of this treaty, which was still in effect.

THE BALKAN WARS. The two Balkan wars in 1912–13 stemmed from the steady decline of the Ottoman empire. The First Balkan War broke out when the League attacked the Ottoman Empire on 8 October 1912 and ended seven months later with the Treaty of London. After five centuries, the Ottoman Empire lost virtually all of its possessions in the Balkans. The Treaty had been imposed by the Great Powers, and the victorious Balkan states were dissatisfied with it. Bulgaria was dissatisfied over the division of the spoils in Macedonia, made in secret by its former allies, Serbia and Greece, and attacked them in order to force them out of Macedonia .

The Serbian and Greek armies repulsed the Bulgarian offensive and counter-attacked into Bulgaria, while Romania and the Ottoman Empire also attacked Bulgaria and gained (or regained) territory. In the resulting Treaty of Bucharest, Bulgaria lost most of the territories it had gained in the First Balkan War.

This heightened tension in the Balkans. Relations between Austria and Serbia became increasingly bitter. Russia felt humiliated after Austria and Germany prevented it from helping Serbia. Bulgaria and Turkey were also dissatisfied, and eventually joined Austria and Germany in the First World War.

THE WORLD IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FIRST GREAT WAR

The immense destruction done to the political and economic landmarks of the prewar world would have made the task of peacemaking daunting even if the victors had shared a united vision, which they did not. Central and eastern Europe were in a turmoil in the wake of the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman collapses. Revolution sputtered in Berlin and elsewhere, and civil war in Russia. Trench warfare had left large swaths of northern France, Belgium, and Poland in ruin. The war had cost millions of dead and wounded and more than \$236,000,000,000 in direct costs and property losses. Ethnic hatreds and rivalries could not be expunged at a stroke, and their persistence hindered the effort to draw or redraw dozens of boundaries, including those of the successor states emerging from the Habsburg empire.

In the colonial world the war among the imperial powers gave a strong impetus to nationalist movements. India alone provided 943,000 soldiers and workers to the British war effort, and the French empire provided the home country with 928,000. These men brought home a familiarity with European life and the new anti-imperialist ideas of Wilson or Lenin. The war also weakened the European powers vis-à-vis the United States and Japan, destroyed the prewar monetary stability, and disrupted trade and manufactures. In sum, a return to 1914 “normalcy” was impossible. But what could, or should, replace it? As the French foreign minister Stéphane Pichon observed, the war’s end meant only that “the era of difficulties begins.”

The Paris Peace Conference ultimately produced five treaties, each named after the suburban locale in which it was signed:

- **The Treaty of Versailles** with Germany (June 28, 1919)
- **The Treaty of Saint-Germain** with Austria (Sept. 10, 1919)
- **The Treaty of Neuilly** with Bulgaria (Nov. 27, 1919)
- **The Treaty of Trianon** with Hungary (June 4, 1920)
- **The Treaty of Sèvres** with Ottoman Turkey (Aug. 10, 1920)

In addition, the Washington Conference treaties on naval armaments, China, and the Pacific (1921–22) established a postwar regime in those areas.

RESURGENCE OF INTERNATIONAL CRISES (1930s)

The 1930s were a decade of unmitigated crisis, culminating in the outbreak of a second total war. The treaties and settlements of the first postwar era collapsed with shocking suddenness under the impact of the Great Depression and the aggressive revisionism of Japan, Italy, and Germany. By 1933, the economic structures of the 1920s had collapsed. By 1935 Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime had torn up the Treaty of Versailles and by 1936 the Locarno treaties as well. Armed conflict began in Manchuria in 1931 and spread to Abyssinia in 1935, Spain in 1936, China in 1937, and finally, Europe in 1939.

The context in which this collapse occurred was an "economic blizzard" that enervated the democracies and energized the dictatorial regimes. Western intellectuals and many common citizens lost faith in democracy and free-market economics, while widespread pacifism, isolationism, and the earnest desire to avoid the mistakes of 1914 left Western leaders without the will or the means to defend the 1919 order. This combination of the demoralized public, stricken institutions, and uninspired leadership led historian Pierre Renouvin to describe the 1930s simply as "la décadence."

The militant authoritarian states on the other hand—Italy, Japan, and (after 1933) Germany—seemed only to wax stronger and more dynamic. The Depression did not cause the rise of the Third Reich or the bellicose ideologies of the German, Italian, and Japanese governments (all of which pre-dated the 1930s), but it did create the conditions for the Nazis' seizure of power and provide the opportunity and excuse for Fascist empire-building. Hitler and Mussolini aspired to total control of their domestic societies, in part for the purpose of girding their nations for wars of conquest which they saw, in turn, as necessary for revolutionary transformation at home. This ideological meshing of foreign and domestic policy rendered the Fascist leaders wholly enigmatic to the democratic statesmen of Britain and France, whose attempts to accommodate rather than resist the Fascist states only made inevitable the war they longed to avoid.

The League of Nations

THE BIRTH OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

American President Woodrow Wilson intended the League of Nations to be the primary body of a new style of international relations based on the cooperation of all of the nations of the world. The League was to be centered in Geneva, Switzerland, a neutral location. Small nations as well as large nations were asked to join, dependent on their acceptance of the Covenant of the League. The League of Nations first met in November 1920. Forty-two nations were represented at this first meeting. Notably absent were Germany, Russia, and the United States. Germany, identified as the aggressor in World War I, was barred from admission at first, and

admitted in 1926. Russia, now the Soviet Union, was not invited to join the League due to the radical policies of the new communist government. The Soviet Union finally became a member of the League in 1935. In November 1919, the US Senate voted against accepting membership to the League, and the nation never joined.

The League of Nations operated through three agencies: the Assembly, the Council, and the Secretariat. The Assembly met annually, and consisted of a delegation from each member nation. Each member had one vote. The Council was composed of four permanent members and four non-permanent members, serving as a sort of cabinet, with some executive powers. The Secretariat was the League's civil service, preparing the agenda for the Assembly and the Council, serving a clerical purpose, and preparing documents for publication.

THE SUCCESSES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The Aaland Islands (1921). These islands are located at an equal distance from Finland and Sweden. They had traditionally belonged to Finland but most of the islanders wanted to be governed by Sweden. Neither Sweden nor Finland could come to a decision as to who owned the islands and in 1921 they asked the League to adjudicate. The League's decision was that they should remain with Finland but that no weapons should ever be kept there. Both countries accepted the decision and it remains in force to this day.

Upper Silesia (1921). The Treaty of Versailles had given the people of Upper Silesia the right to have a referendum on whether they wanted to be part of Germany or part of Poland. In this referendum, 700,000 voted for Germany and 500,000 for Poland. This close result resulted in rioting between those who expected Silesia to be made part of Germany and those who wanted to be part of Poland. The League was asked to settle this dispute. After a six-week inquiry, the League decided to split Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland. The League's decision was accepted by both countries and by the people in Upper Silesia.

Memel (1923). Memel was/is a port in Lithuania. Most people who lived in Memel were Lithuanians and, therefore, the government of Lithuania believed that the port should be governed by it. However, the Treaty of Versailles had put Memel and the land surrounding the port under the control of the League. For three years, a French general acted as a governor of the port but in 1923 the Lithuanians invaded the port. The League intervened and gave the area surrounding Memel to Lithuania but they made the port an "international zone". Lithuania agreed to this decision. Though this can be seen as a League success – as the issue was settled – a counter argument is that what happened was the result of the use of force and that the League responded in a positive manner to those (the Lithuanians) who had used force.

Turkey (1923). The League failed to stop a bloody war in Turkey (see League failures) but it did respond to the humanitarian crisis caused by this war.

1,400,000 refugees had been created by this war with 80% of them being women and children. Typhoid and cholera were rampant. The League sent doctors from the Health Organisation to check the spread of disease and it spent £10 million on building farms, homes etc for the refugees. Money was also invested in seeds, wells and digging tools and by 1926, work was found for 600,000 people.

Greece and Bulgaria (1925). Both these nations have a common border. In 1925, sentries patrolling this border fired on one another and a Greek soldier was killed. The Greek army invaded Bulgaria as a result. The Bulgarians asked the League for help and the League ordered both armies to stop fighting and that the Greeks should pull out of Bulgaria. The League then sent experts to the area and decided that Greece was to blame and fined her £45,000. Both nations accepted the decision.

THE FAILURES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Italy (1919). In 1919, Italian nationalists, angered that the "Big Three" had, in their opinion, broken promises to Italy at the Treaty of Versailles, captured the small port of Fiume. This port had been given to Yugoslavia by the Treaty of Versailles. For 15 months, Fiume was governed by an Italian nationalist called d'Annunzio. The newly created League did nothing. The situation was solved by the Italian government who could not accept that d'Annunzio was seemingly more popular than they were – so they bombarded the port of Fiume and enforced a surrender. In all this the League played no part despite the fact that it had just been set up with the specific task of maintaining peace.

Teschen (1919). Teschen was a small town between Poland and Czechoslovakia. Its main importance was that it had valuable coal mines there which both the Poles and the Czechs wanted. As both were newly created nations, both wanted to make their respective economies as strong as possible and the acquisition of rich coal mines would certainly help in this respect.

In January 1919, Polish and Czech troops fought in the streets of Teschen. Many died. The League was called on to help and decided that the bulk of the town should go to Poland while Czechoslovakia should have one of Teschen's suburbs. This suburb contained the most valuable coal mines and the Poles refused to accept this decision. Though no more wholesale violence took place, the two countries continued to argue over the issue for the next twenty years.

Vilna (1920). Many years before 1920, Vilna had been taken over by Russia. Historically, Vilna had been the capital of Lithuania when the state had existed in the Middle Ages. After World War One, Lithuania had been re-established and Vilna seemed the natural choice for its capital.

However, by 1920, 30% of the population was from Poland with Lithuanians only making up 2% of the city's population. In 1920, the Poles seized Vilna. Lithuania asked for League help but the

Poles could not be persuaded to leave the city. Vilna stayed in Polish hands until the outbreak of World War Two. The use of force by the Poles had won.

War between Russia and Poland (1920 to 1921). In 1920, Poland invaded land held by the Russians. The Poles quickly overwhelmed the Russian army and made a swift advance into Russia. By 1921, the Russians had no choice but to sign the Treaty of Riga which handed over to Poland nearly 80,000 square kilometres of Russian land. This one treaty all but doubled the size of Poland.

The League did nothing about this situation. Russia by 1919 was communist and this "plague from the East" was greatly feared by the West. In fact, Britain, France and America sent troops to attack Russia after the League had been set up. Winston Churchill, the British War Minister, stated openly that the plan was to strangle Communist Russia at birth. Once again, to outsiders, it seemed as if League members were selecting which countries were acceptable and ones which were not. The Allied invasion of Russia was a failure and it only served to make Communist Russia even more antagonistic to the West.

The invasion of the Ruhr (1923). The Treaty of Versailles had ordered Weimar Germany to pay reparations for war damages. These could either be paid in money or in kind (goods to the value of a set amount) In 1922, the Germans failed to pay an installment. They claimed that they simply could not, rather than did not want to. The Allies refused to accept this and the anti-German feeling at this time was still strong. Both the French and the Belgium's believed that some form of strong action was needed to 'teach Germany a lesson'.

In 1923, contrary to League rules, the French and the Belgium's invaded the Ruhr – Germany's most important industrial zone. Within Europe, France was seen as a senior League member – like Britain – and the anti-German feeling that was felt throughout Europe allowed both France and Belgium to break their own rules as were introduced by the League. Here were two League members clearly breaking League rules and nothing was done about it.

For the League to enforce its will, it needed the support of its major backers in Europe, Britain and France. Yet France was one of the invaders and Britain was a major supporter of her. To other nations, it seemed that if you wanted to break League rules, you could. Few countries criticised what France and Belgium did. But the example they set for others in future years was obvious. The League clearly failed on this occasion, primarily because it was seen to be involved in breaking its own rules.

Italy and Albania (1923). The border between Italy and Albania was far from clear and the Treaty of Versailles had never really addressed this issue. It was a constant source of irritation between both nations.

In 1923, a mixed nationality survey team was sent to settle the issue. Whilst travelling to the disputed area, the Italian section separated and was shot by gunmen who had been in hiding.

Italy accused Greece of planning the whole incident and demanded payment of a large fine. Greece refused. In response, the Italians sent its navy to the Greek island of Corfu and bombarded the coastline. Greece appealed to the League for help but Italy, lead by Benito Mussolini, persuaded the League to fine Greece 50 million lire instead.

To follow up this success, Mussolini invited the Yugoslavian government to discuss ownership of Fiume. The Treaty of Versailles had given Fiume to Yugoslavia but with the evidence of a bombarded Corfu, the Yugoslavs handed over the port to Italy with little argument.

The Final Timeline: September, 1939

31st August: Polish troops attempt to sabotage a German radio station, customs post and forestry department at Gleiwitz. The German government is appalled by the Polish aggression.

1st September: A million men, of the Waffen SS, invaded Poland from three directions. Poland was caught unawares and haplessly unprepared. Panzers supported by Ju87 Stuka divebombers were ripping through Polish ranks, with ease and efficiency.

1st September: The Republic of China and the Empire of Japan are involved in the early stages of the third year of armed conflict between them during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

1st September: The British government declares general mobilization of the British Armed Forces and begins evacuation plans in preparation of German air attacks.

2nd September: The United Kingdom and France issue a joint ultimatum to Germany, requiring German troops to evacuate Polish territory; Italian dictator Benito Mussolini declares the neutrality of his nation; President Douglas Hyde of the Republic of Ireland declares the neutrality of his nation; the Swiss government orders a general mobilization of its forces.

2nd September: The National Service (Armed Forces) Act 1939 is enacted immediately and enforces full conscription on all males between 18 and 41 resident in the UK.

2nd September: The Free City of Danzig is annexed by Germany.

3rd September: At 11:15 a.m. British Standard Time (BST), British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announces on BBC Radio that the deadline of the final British ultimatum for the withdrawal of German troops from Poland expired at 11:00am and that "consequently this nation is at war with Germany". Australia, India, and New Zealand also declare war on Germany within hours of Britain's declaration.

3rd September: At 12:30pm BST the French Government delivers a similar final ultimatum; which expires at 3:00pm BST.

3rd September: Within hours of the British declaration of War, SS Athenia, a British cruise ship en route from Glasgow, Scotland to Montreal, Canada is torpedoed by the German submarine U-30 250 miles Northwest of Ireland. 112 passengers and crew members are killed.

4th September: At 8:00 a.m. Newfoundland Standard Time (NST), Dominion of Newfoundland declares war on Germany.

4th September: In the first British offensive action of the War, the Royal Air Force launch a raid on the German fleet in the Heligoland Bight. They target the German pocket-battleship Admiral Scheer anchored off Wilhelmshaven at the western end of the Kiel Canal. Several aircraft are lost in the attack and, although the German vessel is hit three times, all of the bombs fail to explode.

4th September: Japan announces its neutrality in the European situation. The British Admiralty announces the beginning of a naval blockade on Germany.

4th September: The United States launches the Neutrality Patrol.

5th September: South African Prime Minister Barry Hertzog fails to gain support for a declaration of South African neutrality and is deposed by a party caucus for Deputy Prime Minister Jan Smuts.

5th September: The United States publicly declares neutrality.

6th September: South Africa, now under Prime Minister Jan Smuts, declares war on Germany.

6th September: Battle of Barking Creek, a friendly fire incident, results in the first RAF fighter pilot fatalities of the War).

6th September: One of Germany's land forces (Wehrmacht Heer) captures Kraków in the south of Poland; Polish army is in general retreat.

7th September: France begins a token offensive, moving into German territory near Saarbrücken.

7th September: The National Registration Act 1939 is passed in Britain introducing identity cards and allowing the government to control labour.

8th September: 20 Member Nations of the League of Nations met, and decided that Formal diplomacy had failed. If there was a diplomatic solution left, it would have to be one last ad hoc forum to discuss and hope to understand the need to prevent warfare at a world-wide scale. All members agreed to a conference with no pre conditions, if Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan agreed to come to the table.

8th September: The British Government announces the re-introduction of the convoy system for merchant ships and a full-scale blockade on German shipping.

9th September: The French Saar Offensive stalls at the heavily mined Warndt Forest having advanced approximately 8 miles into lightly defended German territory.

10th September: After passing both Houses of the Canadian parliament by unanimous consent and receiving Royal Assent by the Governor General of Canada, Lord Tweedsmuir, Canada declares war on Germany.

11th September: Viceroy of India Lord Linlithgow announces to the two houses of the Indian Legislature (the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly) that due to India's participation in the war, the plans for the Federation of India under the Government of India Act 1935 will be indefinitely postponed.

12th September: General Gamelin orders a halt to the French advance into Germany.

12th September: Ribbentrop: "The Fatherland, will not tolerate any those who seek to destroy us. We have shown the world, how we deal with aggressor nations. We do not forget nor forgive. But we are merciful, so we will see what our enemies have to say, lest they say we are warmongers."

15th September: The Polish Army is ordered to hold out at the Romanian border until the Allies arrive.

16th September: The German Army complete the encirclement of Warsaw.

16th September: The French complete their retreat from Germany, ending the Saar Offensive.

And thus, on the 17th September, The Conference of Hope is convened at the seat of the League of Nations, in a final attempt to, essentially, save the world.

Q.A.R.M.A.: Questions A Resolution Must Answer

1. Is the militarization of Germany in line with the Treaty of Versailles?
2. Has the Treaty of Versailles been violated by any of the members to that Treaty? If so how?
3. Can/Should the LON take punitive action for the violation of this Treaty?
4. Is Germany merely exercising its right to self-defence?
5. Does the Molotov Ribbentrop pact violate other treaties in the region?
6. Will these events lead to another Great War?
7. Can a domino effect of spread of warfare be prevented?

Covenant of the League of Nations, as applicable to the Conference:

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp