



Committee: Geneva Council

Chairs: David Verspui and Jelle van der Ham

Issue: The First World War, October 1st, 1914

Introduction

The committee

The Geneva Council is one of the most special and interesting FAMUN committees. Unlike the other committees, it is (alongside the RSC) a fictional committee. No UN Geneva Council has ever existed in real life history. The name and concept of the committee are based on the Geneva Conventions, a series of 4 international treaties that cover humanitarian treatment during wartime.

The Geneva Council of FAMUN 2018 is set on October the 1st, 1914, barely a few months after the outbreak of the First World War. The committee answers the question “What if the UN had existed in October 1914, and what effect would it have had on the course of the First World War?”

Delegates are expected to represent their country in the state it was on the 1st of October 1914, and to do research on their country’s stance before the First World War and in the events leading up to it, as well as their role in the War itself. Take special note to the fact that in October 1914, the war was not yet expected to last as long as it did.

List of represented countries

- Austro-Hungarian Empire
- Kingdom of Belgium
- British Empire
- Kingdom of Bulgaria
- French third Republic
- German Empire
- Kingdom of Italy
- Empire of Japan
- Kingdom of Montenegro
- Ottoman Empire
- First Portuguese Republic
- Kingdom of Romania
- Russian Empire
- Kingdom of Serbia
- United States of America

Presidents and deputies

David Verspui

Dear delegates,

My name is David Verspui, I'm 16 years old and I will be your president in the Geneva Council for this edition of FAMUN. This will be my 17th conference and 7th time chairing. I look forward to meeting you all and having a fruitful debate!

Good luck preparing!

David Verspui



Jelle van der Ham

Dear, distinguished delegates,

Hello and welcome to FAMUN 2018. I'm Jelle van der Ham, and I'll be your deputy president of the Geneva Council of this year's FAMUN. I'm 18 years old, and I currently study Landscape Architecture and Spatial Planning at the university of Wageningen in the Netherlands. Although I am originally Dutch, I've lived, among other places, in Johannesburg, South Africa. I'm very internationally orientated and have always been interested in politics, international relations, and especially meeting people from other countries and cultures.



I started my MUN career some 3 years ago, and have since participated in some 10 conferences, both as delegate, chair, and in the executive team. As one of the founding members of the first FAMUN conference some years ago, this will be my third FAMUN conference, and the first time not in the executive team organising the conference. However, I am very pleased to be at FAMUN once again, chairing one of the most interesting committees I have ever come across in my whole MUN career, together with our great president David Verspui.

I hope you are all looking forward to the conference as much as I am. I can't wait to meet you all and debate in this year's Geneva Council!

Yours sincerely,
Jelle van der Ham

Table of contents

Introduction	1
The committee	1
List of represented countries	1
Presidents and deputies	2
Table of contents	3
Explanation and description of key terms	4
Timeline	6
Issue explanation	9
Majorly involved parties	11
Previous attempts to resolve conflict	14
The role of the UN	15
Bibliography	16

Explanation and description of key terms

Ultimatum

A final demand or statement of terms, the rejection of which will result in retaliation or a breakdown in relations. Denying an ultimatum was usually the reason for declaring war.

Armistice

An agreement made by opposing sides in a war to stop fighting for a certain time; a truce.

Militarism

The belief that a country should maintain a strong military capability and be prepared to use it aggressively to defend or promote national interests. Militarism was present in all nations of both alliances.

Imperialism

A policy of extending a country's power and influence through colonisation, use of military force, or other means.

Trench Warfare

A type of combat in which opposing troops fight from trenches facing each other. This type of combat was prominently used on the western front.

Mechanised Warfare

Employment of modern mobile attack and defense tactics that depend upon machines, more particularly upon vehicles powered by gasoline and diesel engines.

U-boats

A warship with a streamlined hull designed to operate completely submerged in the sea for long periods, equipped with a periscope and typically armed with torpedoes or missiles.

U-boats played an important role in the German 'unrestricted submarine warfare', an operation to starve the UK of food and resources.

Chemical warfare

Warfare with asphyxiating, poisonous, or corrosive gases, oil flames, etc. It was outlawed by the 'the Hague treaties of 1899 and 1907' and ratified by all nations, except for the United States.

Selective Service Act / conscription

Compulsory enlistment for state service, typically into the armed forces. All nations that were actively participating in the war had some form of conscription.

Treaty

A formally concluded and ratified agreement between states.

Reparations

The action of making amends for a wrong one has done, by providing payment or other assistance to those who have been wronged.

Desertion / mutiny

The action of illegally leaving the armed forces. This is quite common when morale among troops is low, and further lowers the morale. This was common when battle was difficult and treacherous.

Dreadnought

A type of battleship introduced in the early 20th century, larger and faster than its predecessors and equipped entirely with large-calibre guns. The British and Germans had an arms race for who could have the most dreadnoughts, as both sides anticipated that the upcoming war would be fought on the seas.

Arms race

A competition between nations for superiority in the development and accumulation of weapons.

Mobilisation

To assemble or marshal (armed forces, military reserves, or civilian persons of military age) into readiness for active service.

Timeline

A brief timeline of the events leading up to October 1914. All nations represented in the Geneva Council are marked in red.

1839: The Guarantee of **Belgium** Neutrality states that Belgium is to remain neutral in any future wars.

1870: The Franco-Prussian war; **France** is beaten, Paris is besieged. **Germany** is convinced they can win wars quickly and easily.

1871: Creation of the **German Empire** under Bismarck.

1879: **Germany** and **Austria-Hungary** are tied together under the Austro-German treaty.

1882: Triple Alliance binds **Germany**, **Austria-Hungary** and **Italy** together in an alliance.

1883: The secret Austro-Romanian Alliance binds **Romania** to **Austria-Hungary** only in the event the latter is ever attacked.

1888: Wilhelm II becomes emperor of **Germany**.

1889-1913: The Anglo-German naval arms race creates a military tension between **Germany** and the **UK**.

1894: The **Franco-Russian** alliance is created, which encircles the German Empire, much as emperor Bismarck had previously feared before Wilhelm II took power.

1902: The secret **Franco-Italian** agreement is signed has France agree to support Italy's claim to Tripoli (modern day Libya).

1902: **Japan** signs an alliance with the **UK**.

1904: The Entente Cordiale, a series of agreements mostly about colonial issues between **France** and the **UK**, are signed, marking an end to hundreds of years of conflict between the two countries.

1904-1905: **Russo-Japanese** war; Russia loses.

1905-1906: First Moroccan crisis over control of the country between **France** and the Sultanate, supported by Wilhelm II of **Germany**.

1907: The **Anglo-Russian** convention, during which a pact is signed encircling **Germany**.

1908: **Austria-Hungary** annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina, which leads to a rise in tensions in the Balkan area.

1909: The **Russo-Italian** agreement is signed, effectively giving control of the Bosphorus (the waterway linking the Black sea with the sea of Marmara through Istanbul, known in 1914 as Constantinople) to **Russia**, and control of Tripoli and Cyrenaica (areas of modern-day Libya) to **Italy**.

1911-1912: **Ottomani-Italian** war; **Italy** takes control over the Vilayet province of Tripoli.

1912: **Anglo-French** naval agreement, last of the agreements of the Entente Cordiale.

October 1912- May 1913: The first Balkan war between the **Ottoman Empire** on one side and **Bulgaria**, **Serbia**, **Montenegro** and Greece on the other.

April- May 1913: First Albanian crisis between the **Ottoman Empire**, and **Montenegro** and **Serbia**, mainly about the province of Scutari.

June - July 1913: Second Balkan war, between **Bulgaria** against **Serbia**, **Romania**, the **Ottoman Empire**, **Montenegro**, and Greece.

September - October 1913: Second Albanian Crisis; **Serbia** and **Russia** continue to battle over the province of Scutari.

November 1913 - January 1914: The Liman von Sanders affair, in which **Germany** effectively takes control over the **Ottoman Empire**.

June 1914: Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria is assassinated in Bosnia by a group of **Serbian** and Croatian nationalists, after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by **Austria-Hungary**.

July 1914: **Austria-Hungary** declares war on **Serbia**. **Russia**, allied with **Serbia**, mobilises, and calls on their ally **France** to do so as well. Meanwhile **Germany** offers to help **Austria-Hungary**.

1st of August 1914: **Germany** declares war on **Russia**.

3rd of August 1914: **Germany** declares war on **France**, and marches towards them through **Belgium**. The **UK** sends an ultimatum to **Germany**, demanding their withdrawal from neutral **Belgium**.

4th of August 1914: **Germany** does not withdraw from **Belgium**. The **UK** declares war on **Germany**.

August 1914: Battle of Tannenberg. **Russia** marches into the **German** province of Prussia; however the **Russians** have difficulty supplying their troops because of differences in railway gauges. **Germany** defeats the **Russian** second army at Tannenberg.

13th of August 1914: **Japan** declares war on **Germany**, because of their alliance with the **UK**.

September 1914: **Germany** battles with **Russia** at the Masurian Lakes, but is unable to defeat the Russian first Army completely.

Issue explanation

Before any actual conflict occurred, there were two major alliances in Europe. The Triple Alliance was a response by Germany, because it felt vulnerable being surrounded by two large nations (Russia and France), containing Austria Hungary and Italy. The Triple Entente was formed in mind to counter the Triple Alliance, and consisted of the United Kingdom, France and Russia. Within each nation, militarism and nationalism took hold as an arms race commenced in each of the alliances.

The conflict commenced when Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, the heir to the Austrian Hungarian throne was assassinated by Bosnian Serb nationalist, Gavrilo Princip. The Austrian-Hungarians believed that Princip worked in conjunction with the Serbian government. In secret, the Austrian-Hungarians and Germans met, and Germany agreed to support their ally if they attacked Serbia. Because of this, Austria-Hungary sent an ultimatum to Serbia. Wanting to swiftly end Serbian rule with an Austrian victory, the ultimatum was made to be unfair, so that the Serbs would reject it, sending Austria-Hungary to war with Serbia.

The first official attack came on the 28th of July, when Austria-Hungary invaded Serbia. Russia, seeing Serbia as an ally, mobilised its troops. Because Germany saw a war with Russia as inevitable, and better sooner than later, Germany declared war on Russia, and also mobilised.

Because of war being declared on its ally, France mobilised as well, a move which was long predicted by the Germans, and Germany declares war on France. Using the Von Schlieffen plan the Germans wanted to go through Belgium to outflank the French army. By doing this, they broke Belgian neutrality, a move widely condemned by the UK, causing them to declare war on Germany. Along with drawing the UK into the war, Germany never seemed to accomplish its goal of capturing Paris. This is due to the swift mobilisation of the French army.

At this point, many nations either declare war and join a side of the conflict, or state their neutrality:

Positions of nations on 1st October 1914		
Declared neutrality	Triple entente and allies	Triple alliance and allies
The Netherlands	Austria-Hungary	France and colonies
Italy	Germany and colonies	United Kingdom and colonies
Denmark		Russia
Norway		Montenegro
Sweden		Serbia
Switzerland		Japan
Spain		Belgium

On the western front, the Germans began to dig in against the French and British, using their artillery to hit enemy positions. Seeing an opportunity to outflank their opponent, both sides began, what is now known as the *race to the sea*. A mass mobilisation of troops, and consequent small battles, from each side trying to outflank each other. In the end, no side was clearly victorious, but the alliance did stop Germany from capturing the port towns of Dunkirk and Calais, which would have been a key tactical achievements for the entente. The race to the sea ended at the first battle of the Ypres.

Majorly involved parties

United Kingdom

King George V took the country into war officially on the 4th of August, 1914, with the official reason being that the UK wanted Germany to withdraw from the neutral Belgium, which they did not do. However, unofficially, the real reasons were different. Strategically, the UK would not allow Germany to have control over the Belgian and/or French coasts. Equally important, the kingdom valued their relationships with France and Russia, and were afraid of the scenario in which Germany won over France and Russia, and the UK would be left without any allies.

Compared to other European powers, the UK had a relatively small army. Hence, starting in 1914, the UK began massive recruitment campaigns, leading to hundreds of thousands of men voluntarily signing up to join the army, which would become known as Kitchener's army. However, the British Royal Navy was, at the start of the war, the largest navy in the world, due to the so-called "two-power standard", which dictated that the navy's strength would have to be at least equal to the second and third largest navies combined, at that point the French and Russian navies. The air force was only used for aerial spotting from September 1914 and therefore not a threat yet.

France

At the start of the war, France had been a major power in Europe for several centuries. However when emperor Bismarck tried to expand Prussia's territories, resulting in the 1870's Franco-Prussian war, France was defeated, with loss of important territories which France had wanted to conquer back ever since. After the unification of Germany, it tried to politically isolate France by befriending Austria-Hungary, Russia, Britain and Italy. However, after Bismarck was replaced by Wilhelm II, this plan failed; France created pacts with Russia and the UK, thus encircling Germany, just like Bismarck had feared. At the start of the war, France became the 'Triple Entente', together with Russia and the UK.

Over 2.9 million men were recruited in the summer of 1914. However from the start of the war, it became clear the French Army was not as organised and prepared as they should have been, and during the war many changes in tactics, standard procedures, and organisational structures were made.

Germany

Germany only began participation in the war after their ally Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, but, like most other European powers, had begun militarizing years before the war started. Although it fought the Triple Entente forces on both Eastern and Western fronts, with the exception of the invasion of Prussia by Russia it remained mostly free of conflict.

While having been building up military supplies for years, it became clear within the first year of the war that Germany was not prepared for a war on this scale for more than a few months. Despite this, its military equipment was by far superior to their enemies; they had

thousands of machine guns, where the UK and France only had a few hundred. In most technologies that were either new or in development, it was far ahead of their enemies. Although it too had agreed to retain Belgium's neutrality, Germany started their war efforts by marching through Belgium in order to attack France. The Belgians, despite their limited resources, did their best to sabotage the Germans and subsequently they were delayed. At the end of August and beginning of September, several (still mobile) battles were fought in France. Up until Paris the Germans were very successful, after which all battles in western Europe would be fought in trench warfare.

Austria-Hungary

For many years the diplomatic relations in Europe were complicated and constantly changed, and with no country was this more the case than with Austria-Hungary. The country had the shared interest of wanting to defend Western and central Europe from Russia together with the UK, France and Germany, among others. Tensions between Russia and Austria-Hungary remained high towards the end of the 19th century, and the first real order of defence they took was forming an alliance with Germany. Over the years the two countries would become ever closer, and Austria-Hungary ultimately fell almost completely under Germany's control.

The country feared instability in the Balkan area, and saw this (and of course their will to spread out their country's borders) as a reason to take over the states of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is what effectively triggered the first world war, with Austria-Hungary blaming Serbia for the assassination of their archduke Franz Ferdinand, Russia coming to Serbia's aid and Germany declaring war together with Austria-Hungary.

Austria-Hungary was one of the most industrially active, wealthy, and advanced nations in Western Europe. However just like the other countries, it soon became clear that in terms of military equipment, food, fuel, and other basic needs, the country was not prepared for a war on this scale for this long. At the start of the war, the army was split into two; a smaller army attacked Serbia, an attack which right from the start in 1914 went horrible, with no land being captured but hundreds of thousands of men lost; while the much larger part of the army fought against the, much more powerful, Russian army. Historians argue that much of the failure of Austria-Hungary in the war could be attributed to the fact that the country became more of a military satellite of Germany than a country on its own, and the pure incompetence of the Austria-Hungarian high command.

Russia

When Serbia was attacked, Russia enthusiastically entered the war on feelings of patriotism and the protection of Serbia, also an orthodox and slavic population. In reality, Russia had sensed Germany's aggressive military intentions, and had been watching with jealousy as the UK's and Germany's sphere of influence had grown over the recent years. While their initial first attack on Prussia was successful, they were quickly and massively defeated at the battle of Tannenberg and retreated to what would become the Eastern Front.

Knowing the burdens of military investments could lead to an economic downfall of Russia, they had to make sure there was investment in the war from other countries, in this case

France. Russia's agreement with France in the form of the Franco-Russian alliance essentially traded aid in the war for industrial aid from Russia.

Russia had the largest army in the world at the time, consisting of 1.4 million people before the war and the ability to mobilize over 5 million, but they only had 4.6 million rifles to hand out and leadership and organisation was very poor compared to other countries' armies.

Japan

Japan provided valuable support to the Triple Entente during the war. Before but especially during and after the first Sino-Japanese war in the 19th century, Japan sought more control over the Chinese mainland. The war posed a brilliant solution to this; Germany had several colonial territories, including in China, and by allying with the UK against Germany, Japan had a good excuse to take control over these German territories and thus expand their power in China. Japan signed an alliance with the UK in 1902, and when the war began in 1914, in the first week Japan offered to join the war if it could take the aforementioned territories in China. After sending an unanswered ultimatum to Germany on the 23rd of August, they officially declared war on Germany, and on Austria-Hungary two days later. In september 1914 Japan quickly annexed Germany's territories in China.

Previous attempts to resolve conflict

At the beginning of the conflict, when Entente victories were common, Germany pushed France for a peace treaty, but did not make any actual motions to move for peace. France, would not ask for peace, as Germany was currently in their borders.

A factor that did shape the war where the multiple treaties that were in place. The most important being: the Hague treaties of 1899 and 1907. It is important to note that all major parties signed and ratified these treaties.

One of the more important treaties implemented in the first world war was the 'The Hague treaty' of 1899.

This stated that a permanent Court of Arbitration was to be formed to solve conflicts and disputes. The court was, and still remains quite effective, but for it to operate, both sides need to accept it. This made it almost impossible to be enabled, because at any time, one side did not want to end the conflict, as it was 'winning'.

Section two discussed rules regarding: prisoners of war, (including the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1864) treatment of the wounded, and forbids the use of poisons, the killing of enemy combatants who have surrendered, looting of a town or place, and the attack of undefended towns. Inhabitants of occupied territories may not be forced into military service against their own country and collective punishment is forbidden. This section was ratified by all powers that took part in the first world war.

Section three outlined the protection of marked hospital ships and requires them to treat the wounded and shipwrecked sailors of all belligerent parties. It too was ratified by all WW1 powers.

More notably, section four included clauses regarding the prohibition of the usage of poisonous gases. Ratified by all participating nations, except for the USA.

The second Hague treaty of 1907 was implemented to support the first and implement minor changes to certain articles. The treaty mainly focused on the protection of neutral countries, and the further drafting of laws regarding naval warfare.

Further on, the Treaty of London (1839) was a peace treaty initiated by the European theatre to protect the neutrality of the kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands and eventually dragging the United Kingdom into the first world war.

The role of the UN

As the UN did not exist in 1914, nor did any sort of platform for international talks or relations exist (the Triple Entente powers and their allies only met to talk for the first time about the war halfway through 1915), the role of the UN in this conflict is entirely fictional. It is this committee's job to imagine what role the UN could have had; this of course is entirely up to the delegates and their country's positions. It is unlikely that in 1914 the nations on both sides of the conflict would have ever agreed to have peaceful discussions about the war; nonetheless this is the aim of the Geneva Council. As in 1914 none of the countries involved were prepared for the war the way it slowly turned out, and none of the countries were expecting it to last much longer than only through 1914, it should be in all of the delegates best interest to have peaceful talks and see whether this could have solved any problems.

Of course, it is important for delegates to carefully research their individual country and what it wants to achieve, and has available in terms of wartime spending, manpower, and military equipment, and the general economic, social and demographic situation in the country, all in October 1914. It is important to remember that no delegates, during debate, should pretend not to have any knowledge of how the war turned out, or any events after the 1st of October as such.

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