

WISMUNC I

The First Iteration Of Washington
International School's Model United Nations
Conference



The July Crisis (1914)

Crisis Committee

Background Guide

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Letters from the Dais

Esteemed Delegates,

As your chair, I am excited to welcome you all to this year's WISMUNC July Crisis of 1914 Committee!

My name is Lena Schwartzman, and I am an IB senior at Washington International School. I joined WIS in my sophomore year, and previously have lived in Thailand, Türkiye, Poland, and South Africa (the latter two which I am from). I have been involved in MUN for seven years: three here at WIS, and four at NIST, my previous school in Bangkok, Thailand. In addition to MUN, I am a part of the WIS varsity tennis team, and am involved in clubs such as Youth for Innocence (YFI), a student organization that aids in the exoneration of wrongfully convicted individuals in partnership with the Innocence Project. I am also heading YFI's international task force! Next year, I hope to study History and English (on a pre-law track) in either the United States or England. Outside of school, I enjoy reading, playing the violin — both as a soloist and as a part of the MCYO Philharmonic Orchestras — and work as a researcher for the South African Supreme Court of Appeals.

This weekend, I am looking forward to seeing delegates take on the roles of their characters as we engage in meaningful debate. Crisis committees are always very fast paced and exciting; I am truly looking forward to seeing the interesting directives and solutions that this committee comes up with as we move through the July Crisis together. However, most importantly, Model United Nations should provide a safe space for all delegates to engage in debate and express their character's views. I hope that you all find the July Crisis as interesting and engaging as I do, and hope that WISMUNC provides everyone with a space to grow as delegates and make new connections!

Sincerely,

Lena Schwartzman

Chair, The July Crisis, 1914

Hello Delegates!

My name is Jack Beardow, and I am a sophomore at Washington International School. I am excited to serve as your vice chair for the July Crisis of 1914 committee. I have been involved in Model UN at WIS for almost two years and have enjoyed attending multiple conferences with the programme. I am what we call a WIS 'lifer', as I have been attending here since kindergarten. In addition to MUN, I participate in a variety of clubs such as our rocketry club, investing club, and mechanical and aerospace engineering club. Fueled by my passion for motorsports, I aspire to study mechanical engineering in the UK, where part of my family heritage comes from. Outside of school, I enjoy running, playing the occasional match of tennis, and listening to club-disco music.

This weekend, I am looking for delegates who move outside of the traditional areas of debate and truly embody their character whilst putting first well researched creative solutions to the issues discussed. Above all, Model UN should provide a safe space to enjoy debate and banter whilst exploring interesting topics. I can't wait to see how the committee plays out and hope that WISMUNC will provide opportunities to meet new friends and allow for a weekend of intellectually stimulating debate.

Cheers,

Jack Beardow

Vice Chair, The July Crisis, 1914

Introduction

On June 28, 1914, a Bosnian-Serb nationalist's bullet strikes and kills Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary. Exactly one month later, Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia. In the month between, ultimatums are drafted and rejected, and alliances are tested, as Europe uncontrollably inches closer to the outbreak of war.

Timeline of Events:

On June 28, 1914, Bosnian-Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip shoots and kills Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian throne, alongside his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, while the pair were on an official visit to the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. This assassination becomes the catalyst for the series of political, diplomatic, and military escalations, later known as the July Crisis, among the European powers – Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Serbia, Belgium, and Luxembourg – that leads to the outbreak of the First World War.

Following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Austro-Hungarians seek to inflict a major military blow on the Serbs, in order to assert their own strength, and dampen Serbian support for Yugoslav nationalism. However, before doing so, Vienna, wary of Russian support for the Serbs, requires a guarantee from the Germans (Austria-Hungary's greatest ally), that Berlin will offer their support to Austria in any conflict. On July 5, 1914, Germany responds with a "blank cheque", guaranteeing full support for the Austro-Hungarians, but urging them to attack Serbia quickly, and localise the war before Russia can intervene. However, Austro-Hungarian officials deliberate for some time before deciding not to attack without a full mobilisation of their army, and send Serbia a harsh ten-point ultimatum on July 23 which they are certain to reject. Simultaneously, Great Britain proposes a mediation conference, which is ignored by both Berlin and Vienna. Although being semi-formally allied with France and Russia, the British do not see a reason to get involved militarily.

Joining the Great Powers of Europe, Delegates will attempt to subdue domestic outrage, draft plans for mobilisation, and set them into action. Delegates will be responsible for upholding treaty obligations, while managing the drafting and

rejection of ultimatums. Whether Europe marches straight towards, or pulls itself back from the brink of war, is completely in your hands.

Topic One: Military Mobilisation and Planning for War

This committee is assembled between July 24th and 25th, 1914. By 1914, Europe's Great Powers had spent years preparing for a possible continental war. These preparations have created dangerous assumptions about the speed, timing, and inevitability for such a war. For Europe's leaders, these assumptions become a military trap; they felt as though if one state began mobilising, the logical response would be to respond immediately, otherwise risking the defeat of their nation. With this logic, military mobilisation is no longer seen as a precaution, instead being regarded as an open threat to the sovereignty of other nations, escalating the conflict further. This is especially true because of the calibre and approaches of European armies. They are enormous, heavily dependent on railways, and governed by rigid timetables. Mobilisation requires moving men, horses, weapons, food, and ammunition at once, which made any delays costly. Planners assume that total war will be decided by the nation that can act first. In this sense, timetables and military planning matter as much as diplomacy.

The July Crisis has the potential to become so dangerous because each power believes it is acting defensively, while interpreting the other powers' actions as aggressive. Once one of the powers begins to act, the others see their own "inaction" as a sign of weakness, and begin to mobilise as well. In this light, the July Crisis and descent into war is a failure of diplomacy, but not without the failure of control over military systems. While political leaders form alliances, strategise, and speak of peace, mediation, and a war's limited objectives, mobilisation makes these goals nearly impossible.

The Schlieffen Plan

German war plans are laid out in the Schlieffen Plan, a strategy developed to solve the problem of a two-front war against France and Russia. Germany inhabits a very central location on the map of Europe, surrounded by France to the west, and France's ally, Russia, to the east. Thus, German leaders fear that if war came, they would be attacked on both fronts, a difficult situation for them to manage. Military planners devise a solution; a rapid offensive through Belgium and Luxembourg to knock France out of the war, before turning German forces eastward against the Russian army. Theoretically, the Schlieffen Plan uses speed and surprise to their advantage in order to avoid the strategic encirclement that Germany is threatened with.

This is laid out in 1905 by Count Alfred von Schlieffen, who had long seen the German position on the map as a military issue. Von Schlieffen knew that France would be expecting the Germans to invade along their shared border, as they had during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. As a result, France had built up the defences in that region. Thus, involving the elements of speed and surprise into his plan, von Schlieffen proposes the invasion of France through the neutral countries of Belgium and Luxembourg (grand Duchy of the Netherlands). Instead of attacking Paris head on, German troops would encircle the French army, and "annihilate" them in six weeks. Additionally, it is taken into account that the French would attempt to reclaim the Alsace-Lorraine region, which had been lost to the Germans during the Franco-Prussian War. Von Schlieffen believed that, should war break out between the two, France would send troops to the Alsace-Lorraine region, in turn leaving them vulnerable to the German encircling maneuver detailed in the Schlieffen Plan.

The Schlieffen Plan depends on precise mobilisation and deployment, strict sequencing, and an immediate offensive action, leaving almost no room for any political hesitation. German army planners believe that if Russia is allowed time to complete their mobilisation (as by this time, Russia had only partially mobilised), the situation that Germany would face would be far more dangerous; thus, as the July Crisis intensified, German leaders increasingly view delay as more dangerous than war itself. The Schlieffen Plan also has major international consequences, as it

required the violation of Belgian neutrality which had been guaranteed by the European powers; Germany's decision to violate this neutrality could make the western war unavoidable.

Russia's Timetables for Mobilisation

Russian mobilisation is far more complex and slower than Germany's is; it is, however, equally as dangerous, as it affects German perceptions of time and international threat. The Russian military system relies heavily on rail mobilisation plans, and once they are ordered, these systems are difficult to reverse. Early on in the July Crisis, Russian leaders were hesitant to mobilise, only partially doing so, but this proved difficult to manage, and did not fully reassure Serbia or deter Austria-Hungary. As the crisis worsens, Tsar Nicholas II holds the power to authorize the general mobilisation.

Before 1914, Russian military planning was built around the size of the empire, its weak transport network, and the need to simultaneously concentrate troops around several possible fronts. Russian General Staff planners had to consider the North-Western front against Germany, the South-Western front against Austria-Hungary, and the Caucasus. This made mobilisation far more complex than in smaller states. Because for Russians, railways were the backbone of mobilisation, the timing of trains, assembly points, and troop concentration all carried equal weight when planning for battle. This also meant that once mobilisation had begun, it was extremely difficult for the Russians to alter their course of action, or retreat without creating chaos. During the July Crisis, one of the key issues with Russian mobilisation was that the distinction between partial and general mobilisation was not clear. After the Balkan Wars, Russian planners had become more aware that partial mobilisation could leave the army more exposed and unbalanced; however, in July 1914, this uncertainty was critical, as Russia is aiming to deter Austria-Hungary while avoiding immediate conflict with Germany.

From a Russian perspective, mobilisation serves both deterrent and political purposes; the Russians want to express support for Serbia, protect their Slavic interests in the Balkans, and avoid appearing weak in front of Austro-Hungarian pressure. However, German leaders would interpret Russian mobilisation as proof that war has already **9** begun, rather than a defensive measure. Since German war planning depends on acting

Russia is fully prepared, a Russian mobilisation would directly trigger German escalation. This German escalation is precisely why Russian mobilisation timetables are so dangerous; even if Russian leaders hope to preserve peace, the act of mobilising itself could not be separated from the German “war” interpretation. The Germans read mobilisation as a threat, and Russia doing so would only push the crisis further. Their dual purpose – to deter Austria-Hungary in the Balkans and protect Serbia while simultaneously preparing for an advance into East Prussia and Galicia if war broke out – makes Russia especially threatening. Even when Russia claims to be acting defensively, their plans and movement may look like offensive preparations.

Austro-Hungarian Mobilisation against Serbia

Austria-Hungary was a multi-ethnic empire, under severe internal strain even before 1914. It contains many ethnic groups, including Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, Romanians, and Poles; this makes governing the empire difficult. In the Balkans, the empire fears the spread of Southern Slavic nationalism – especially as Serbia presents itself as a protector of Slavic unity. This fact makes Serbia a political and ideological threat to Austro-Hungarian imperial cohesion. The annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 intensified these tensions, deepening Austro-Hungarian hostility towards Serbian ambition. By 1914, many leaders in Vienna believe that the empire’s prestige is dependent on punishing Serbia after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. They see an aggressive response necessary in order to preserve imperial credibility, deter nationalism, and importantly, demonstrate that the monarchy will not tolerate challenges to its authority.

Austro-Hungarian mobilisation against Serbia would begin the crisis’s military escalation, even before the other Great Powers are drawn in. After Franz Ferdinand’s assassination in Sarajevo, Austro-Hungarian leaders see Serbia as a political threat to their imperial stability in the Balkans. Vienna aims to punish Serbia – decisively enough – to suppress Serbian nationalism and restore imperial authority. However, the Austro-Hungarians also fear Russian interference, which would make their military response politically risky. Austria-Hungary wants a limited war against Serbia, but their own military action risks provoking Russia, and therefore Germany’s broader strategic commitments. The Austro-Hungarian empire’s structural weaknesses is that it is

administratively complex, and can not coordinate as quickly as Germany can. Thus, its military and political leaders face far more dangerous difficulties in managing the fast pace of the July Crisis.

Austria-Hungary's military planning is shaped by the problem of fighting a war – on numerous fronts – with limited resources. Vienna has to consider both Serbia and Russia on the Balkan front, making any conflict in that region strategically dangerous. On paper, the Austro-Hungarian army is larger than Germany's, but it faces serious issues with coordination, logistics, and ethnic fragmentation. The key planning issue is that Austria-Hungary hopes to isolate Serbia before Russia was able to intervene: one reason that Vienna is so quick to rely on German support. Leaders in the empire believe that if they were able to act quickly, they would be able to localise conflict in the Balkans. However, this assumption proves unrealistic. Russian mobilisation logic and German alliance commitments quickly widen the war, making a large-scale conflict unavoidable.

Great Britain's Strategy

In 1904 Great Britain agreed to the Entente Cordiale with France, which, along with the adjustments to colonial arrangements, clarified British control of Egypt and France's freedom of action in Morocco. Additionally, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 between Great Britain and Russia settled disputes between the nations in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. These two formal agreements, whilst not as binding as mutual-defence treaties, combined with the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 (alternately known as the Dual Entente treaty between France and Russia in 1894), demonstrate a willingness to cooperate between the three nations that proves crucial in the First World War. Moving into July 1914, it is clear that the countries' alignment, better known as the Triple Entente, will hold in a serious European crisis. Three-quarters of a century earlier, in 1839, the Treaty of London, affirmed by guarantor Great Britain, and signed by other European powers, guaranteed Belgian independence and neutrality and made invasion politically and legally significant. This implied that the guarantors had a responsibility to come to the defence of Belgium in the scenario of a border breach. The treaty is significant because the easiest route of invasion from Germany to France is through Belgium, as the French-German border had been fortified earlier¹¹ after the Franco-Prussian War. Great Britain recognizes early that the, then localised,

Austro-Hungarian-Serbian dispute will end up as more than a regional discord, and the state is all too aware of its obligations to Belgium in case of a German invasion. In light of these obligations, Great Britain takes on the role of mediator between Germany, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Beginning on July 24 1914, the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey attempts to convene international peace conferences between the involved major powers. France accepts, Russia replies that it would prefer direct talks with Austria-Hungary but if those are not an option that they would join the conference, Austria-Hungary strongly declines, asserting that the conflict is strictly between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Germany also declines, arguing that the forum would only become an arbitrator between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Grey believes that major Serbian concessions are required to maintain peace.

Importantly, an invasion of Belgium of France would almost certainly cause Britain to enter the conflict, because of Britain's treaty obligations to Belgian neutrality and strategic concern for France.

French Mobilisation Plans and Strategy

The French nation finds itself in a particularly precarious position in the months leading up to the First World War. First, the nation has a longstanding political and military alliance with Russia, in the form of the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 (alternatively known as the Dual Entente). The Franco-Russian relationship begun in 1891 with secretive communications discussing their joint concern and desire to counter increasing German power. The two nations shared a mutual fear of British-German collaboration after the enactment of the 1890 Heligoland–Zanzibar Treaty which involved colonial restructuring and, much like the Franco-British Entente Cordiale (see Great Britain's Strategy), increased favour of national cooperation. Then, in 1894, a secret treaty was ratified between France and Russia. It stated that in the event of an attack on France by Germany or Germany and Italy, Russia would assist France with up to 800,000 troops, and if Germany were to attack Russia, France would assist with 1.3 million troops. This so-called Franco-Russian alliance was then strengthened in 1899 and 1912. Later, coupled with the Entente Cordiale of 1904 between Great Britain and France, and the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907, the

Triple Entente is formed between the three countries to oppose Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy in their Triple Alliance.

Amidst political tensions, beginning on July 16, the French president carries out a diplomatic state visit to Russia. Importantly, this leaves the French government without the ability to mobilise troops as they didn't want to seem aggressive whilst diplomatic efforts are active.

As France doesn't want to appear responsible for initiating war, they will likely wait as long as possible before mobilization. The actual process of mobilisation itself is no small feat either.]The French military would be tasked with assembling close to 3 million men using 4,278 trains. Much earlier, through the reservist military training system, the men were split into four armies. Two southern armies would then concentrate on the French-German border near Alsace-Lorraine, land that France had ceded to Germany after the Franco-Prussian War. Alsace-Lorraine would likely be chosen as an attack point into Germany because France aims to regain control of its territory after conflicts end. The southern armies would capture Alsace-Lorraine and gauge German military movement. Simultaneously, the northern army would proceed into the Ardennes forests, providing cover whilst marching into Germany or, transit through Belgium and Luxembourg if alternate routes are not possible. The aforementioned strategies make up the French Plan XVII, a plan for war with Germany developed in 1912 by Ferdinand Foch and Commander-in-chief Joseph Joffre.

Serbian Mobilisation and Entry into Conflict

In the early 20th century, Serbia had become a centre for South Slavic nationalism after the Balkan Wars and the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908). As many Slavic peoples live under Austro-Hungarian rule, Slavic nationalism is directed at the Dual Monarchy. This nationalistic behaviour alarms Austria-Hungary as it threatens imperial control in nearby Slavic lands and is seen as a possibly wider nationalist challenge. Concurrently, there are two radical underground nationalist organisations acting in Serbia. The first, Narodna Odbrana, is a group established in 1908 in reaction to the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and

Herzegovina. The group's goal is to agitate for an anti-Habsburg revolution in Bosnia. It is later dissolved into the more well known Black Hand organisation. The Black Hand, which maintains a membership of high ranking army officers and government officials, using terrorist methods to promote the liberation of ethnic Serbs in other regions. The group's influence in the Serbian state rivals that of the Serbian government through its numerous propaganda campaigns and the threatening of officials. Importantly, the head of the Black Hand, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijevic, is the man who organised the assassination of heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand (June 28, 1914).

After the Balkan Wars, Serbia is in dire need to regrow its army. The wars left Serbia with around 50,000 injured or killed soldiers, 120,000 rifles, ammunition, other armaments and a reasonable means to transport or deploy its forces when necessary. Initially, the state's prime minister, Prime Minister Pašić, attempts to obtain equipment from Russia, who refuses as to not create a motive for conflict for Austria-Hungary. He then turned to France, where he was able to obtain a 130 million Franc loan in May 1914. Only a small amount of the purchased armaments make it to Serbia before July. And the rifles and howitzers which are in desperate need don't arrive in time. The process of mobilization for Serbia would likely be completed in around three days. The five main armies: the First, Second, Third, Užice and Braničevo are all planned to be situated in different strategic points on the Austro-Hungarian-Serbian border (the Morava Valley, Central Serbia, Drina and Sava rivers, Upper Drina and the Danube banks as seen below).

The act of mobilisation by the Serbian government would be intended as a defensive strategy. Serbia's goal is to protect their border in the imminent event of invasion by taking key strategic positions early. This posture would aid Serbia at the start of the conflict as they would be able to force the Austro-Hungarian forces into heavy terrain, which would make offensive pushes harder. But, even if Serbia maintains a tactically strong positioning, their low amount of resources would make their position difficult to maintain in prolonged trench warfare.

Key Questions to Consider:

What alliances, treaties or agreements does your nation have with other nations? How might such obligations impact the decision making of your nation?

What interpersonal relationships have an impact on the opinions and decisions of people in power? How do these relationships impact your nation's actions during the crisis?

What previous conflicts was your nation involved in that are directly connected to the initiation of the July Crisis?

How does your nation's past experience with war or diplomacy affect their response to the July Crisis?

Does your nation believe their actions are purely defensive, or are they prepared to escalate the crisis for the sake of their nation's sovereignty?

Character List

Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria-Hungary:

Count Leopold Berchtold, Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister:

Count Szapary, Austro-Hungarian diplomat

Rade Malobabić, Serbian military intelligence agent

Miroslav Spalajković, Serbian Minister to Russia

Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, Austro-Hungarian Army Chief

Baron Wladimir Giesl von Gieslingen, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Serbia

Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijevic, Serbian military official and leader of the Black Hand

Nikola Pašić, Serbian Prime Minister

Crown Prince Alexander, Regent of Serbia

Tsar Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia

Sergei Sazonov, Russian Foreign Minister

Vladimir Sukhomlinov, Russian War Minister

Kaiser Wilhelm II, German Emperor

Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, German Chancellor:

Helmuth von Moltke the Younger, German Army Chief:

Raymond Poincaré, President of France:

René Viviani, French Prime Minister:

George V, King of Great Britain:

Sir Edward Gray (1st Viscount Grey of Fallodon), British Foreign Secretary

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