

## Background Briefing—France

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Our country has been invaded twice by Germany within the last forty years. Each time Germany has caused terrible destruction and severely crippled us financially. As a result of the 1871 Franco-Prussian War, we suffered the loss of the Alsace-Lorraine region. French speaking peoples were forced to live in the new boundaries drawn to create the new unified state of Germany, and we demand that they be allowed to return to France. The most recent attack by Germany has resulted in our northern region's horrific destruction. Rich farmland has been ruined, and it will take years before it is suitable for cultivation of crops. Many of our ancient cities lie in absolute ruin and are in need of reconstruction. Twenty-three thousand factories have been destroyed, and 750,000 homes are in tatters. We demand that Germany, responsible for this destruction, pay us reparations so that we may rebuild our cities and repair damage to our farmlands.

Following the Napoleonic Wars and the Franco-Prussian War, we were forced to give up French territory to the victors. As we are the victors in this instance, we demand a return of confiscated territory from these earlier wars and in addition we desire a buffer zone between us and Germany to protect us from future attack. We propose a new state along our border with Germany in the Rhineland where a pro-French government will be put in place to safeguard our security.

Although the German army surrendered, its population is much greater than ours, and it can rebuild in a short time. We insist that the German army be reduced to under one hundred-thousand troops and its armaments

industry no longer be allowed to produce artillery, planes, and tanks which could be used against us in the future. As we have suffered more than any other Allied country at the conference with over two million deaths, we feel we deserve this security guarantee.

In addition to our military security, we feel strongly that our economic vitality will only be preserved if we are allowed to maintain our overseas colonies. The idea of self-rule found in President Wilson's Fourteen Points has caused many of our colonial subjects to demand independence. This is not a possibility as we are dependent on them for raw materials vital to our industries. French Indochina has been a steady supplier of rubber and tungsten while our colonial holdings in Africa have supplied us with precious metals that we cannot do without. Additionally, these groups are not ready for independence.

Our agreement with the British government concerning areas in the former Ottoman Empire, the 1916 Sykes-Picot Treaty, should be maintained and the conquered lands should be made French protectorates. The states of Syria and Lebanon are rightfully ours and the oil-rich Mosul region in Mesopotamia should also be handed over to us. The British may have Basra and Baghdad in Mesopotamia, but we demand Mosul as a future oil source. The natives in these areas are not developed enough for self-rule, and they will benefit from having structured French rule. Colonial competition among Europeans was one cause of the war, and we would hate for it to occur again. If our reasonable demands are met in this regard, there should be stability and peace.