

## Background Briefing—Great Britain

The British Empire suffered terrible losses in the war. Even though our country was spared physical destruction, we suffered one million casualties which consumed an entire generation of our youth. Had it not been for our strong navy, the German submarines would have won the war for the Central Powers by strangling any trade with the United States. Because of this, we think it folly for any treaty to require “freedom of the seas” as a main provision. The war demonstrated how important a strong naval presence is in preserving our nation’s vital interests. “The sun never sets on the British Empire,” is more than just a common saying; it is a reality. Because of our vast colonies in Asia, Africa, and newly acquired territories in the Middle East, we need to maintain our naval advantage. This point is not negotiable.

British troops from around the Empire died defending France on the Western Front. Australian, New Zealander, South African, Canadian, and Indian subjects died fighting under the British flag. With a million casualties, our country has been placed under severe hardship as we must now look out for the widows and orphans left behind. They deserve some type of financial compensation as a means of social security, and we believe that the German government—the aggressor—should be made to pay for it. This is especially true due to the large war debts that we incurred to fight the war. This is not an act of financial vengeance but a stark reality.

Unlike France, however, we do not want to destroy Germany entirely. We do not want France to become the most powerful nation in Europe, which it might if all its demands are met. If France gained such power then the

balance required to maintain peace in Central Europe could be thrown off. We want an economically viable Germany—not an aggressive one—to counter French power in the region.

A rebuilt Germany would benefit Europe as a trading partner and act as a buffer against the spread of the new virus that plagues Europe: Russian Bolshevism. It is in all of the victors’ interests to keep the contagion of communism from spreading past Russia’s borders.

The financial losses we endured can only be offset by maintaining our colonial holdings and adding new territories from the defeated Central Powers. We will keep our Egyptian colony and its vital Suez Canal that connects the Mediterranean to our colony in India. Any discussion of allowing self-rule for colonial peoples is a dead issue, and we will oppose it. Our Indian colony is vital for our textile industry with its plentiful cotton crop. If other Allied countries choose to give independence to their colonial subjects, that is their business. In addition, former German colonies in Africa, Asia and elsewhere should be divided up between the victors as compensation for the monetary and human costs of the war.

Finally, we would be willing to discuss the establishment of “mandates” through the new League of Nations where we would temporarily govern colonial areas that were under Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, or German control before the war. As British troops fought most of the battles against the Ottoman Turks in the Middle Eastern theater during the war, we feel it only right that we receive the newly liberated areas of Mesopotamia and spheres of influence in Persia.