BHOC
Historical British House of Commons of 1921

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Dear delegates,

Prepare for a blast to the past: welcome to the 1921 British House of Commons. We are delighted to be your chairs for this committee and we have been working diligently to make sure this conference will be enjoyable and engaging for you. At this session, will be discussing the mandate system and Irish Independence. How you decide to resolve these conflicts will shape the future course of history. So, no pressure. In order that you know us beyond the perfunctory term "dais," allow us to introduce ourselves.

Born in China but bred in New Jersey, Melody is a junior at Maggie Walker and started her Model UN experience as a delegate at GSMUN. She has attended five conferences and served as vice-chair of the Pakistan Joint Crisis Committee at GSMUN XIII. In addition to Model UN, Melody participates in Public Forum Debate, Future Problem Solving, outdoor track, and is the features editor for the school newspaper – all while keeping up a rollicking social life. When not dispensing witty comebacks or devouring all food in the vicinity, Melody enjoys playing piano and watching quality television.

Now a senior, Sarah has been taking part in Model UN since eighth grade and is excited to be a co-chair of the British House of Commons. When she manages to dig herself out of a pile of schoolwork, Sarah enjoys taking long walks on the beach while singing "Bohemian Rhapsody," and eating pizza by candlelight. Well, at least some of that was true. During the week, she maintains her sanity, through small connections with the outside world. This includes dance class and the occasional television break to watch "Gilmore Girls" and "Glee."

Justin is a junior at Maggie Walker and is excited to serve as vice-chair for this committee. When he is not studying for the next Russian test or reading for AP Comparative Government, Justin runs cross country and sails on Virginia's rivers. He enjoys reading, watching the "West Wing," and following international politics.

As a representative of your constituency, you have the obligation to read up on relevant policy and to conduct extensive research in order to determine what would best further the interests of our great nation. If you have questions or are feeling overwhelmed, please do not hesitate to shoot us an email. We will be more than happy to help you in any way. Best of luck, lads and lasses, and we look forward to seeing you in March.

Until then,

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Committee Information

Committee Background

The British House of Commons is the lower house of the British Parliament. When the Magna Carta was written in 1215, the barons demanded that the king consider the wishes of his nobles and not rule solely of his own accord. Under the reign of King Edward I, Parliament continued to grow as the King called for regular meetings of the body. During the first meeting of Parliament, Edward asked for knights and burgesses to be elected from districts; this ultimately became the custom, and the knights and burgesses were the precursor to today's House of Commons. By 1332, it was standard practice to elect a group of men, known as the Commons, to Parliament. They would not become separate from the House of Lords until 1342. As the Commons increased in power, it began to evaluate and check the power of the monarch and the nobles. In 1407, the Commons gained the right to initiate all grants of money for the government. By the middle of the 15th century, the Commons had become a full partner in the creation of law in England.

Initially, only white male landowners had the right to vote, but the right was extended to urban working men with the Representation of the People Act of 1867. Secret ballots were introduced for use in elections in 1872, and the 1885 Redistribution Act redrew the boundaries for the Commons to produce equal electoral districts with single-member seats.

British Politics in 1921

Following the 1919 elections, Conservatives have a majority in the Commons with 332 votes. The coalition is led by Prime Minister David Lloyd George and usually votes for less government involvement and a more restrained foreign policy. The second-largest party in the Commons is the Liberals, whose leader is Donald Maclean. Recently, the predominant focus of the coalition Liberals has been on more government reform and regulation. The Sinn Fein party holds 73 votes in the Commons. Sinn Fein is the Irish Republican Party, known for its openly anti-English, Irish nationalist propaganda. Irish nationalists hold seven votes in the Commons.

Mandate System

Introduction

In 1918, the Central Powers surrendered to the Allied Powers, ending the Great War. Subsequently, the world underwent a massive shift of geopolitical power as empires dissolved and conquered lands changed hands. After months of negotiation, the terms of German surrender were finalized in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which was followed by separate peace treaties for the other Central Powers.

The Treaty of Versailles established the League of Nations as the first international governing body. After the Great War, the League became responsible for the territories relinquished by the Central Powers. Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant established the Mandate System. By Article 22, nations that were once under the control of the Central Powers and were unable to exist independently were put under the guidance and direction of more stable nations, known as Mandatories. Following its creation, the League drafted legal Mandates for each territory under its new supervision, explaining the terms under which the Mandate would be administered. The League

assigned the Mandates to member countries to manage on its behalf.

Middle East Mandates

Among the territories given to Britain under the League of Nations' Mandate system are the areas of Palestine and Mesopotamia, which, in the Covenant of the League of Nations, were deemed to "have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone." France received the Mandate for Syria. Prior to victory in the Great War, Britain and France anticipated the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and engaged in secret negotiations to determine spheres of influence in the Middle East. These talks culminated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which was a trade arrangement in which Britain and France would indirectly control Middle Eastern economic affairs through Arab states or confederations. Although the Sykes-Picot Agreement did not foresee the Mandate system, it did allow Britain and France to more easily attain their preferred Mandates in the Middle East region; the two countries were part of Council of Four making decisions at the San Remo Conference, during which the original peace treaty was renegotiated.

It was initially decided that Britain would be the Mandatory power of the Palestine Mandate at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. However, promises were made both to Arabs seeking self-determination and to the World Zionist movement, a Jewish organization seeking a homeland in Palestine. These promises were made through the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence and the Balfour Declaration, respectively. Conflicting agreements with both Arabs and Jews will serve to complicate the administration of the Palestine Mandate and must be dealt with accordingly by the Commons.

The area of Mesopotamia was of great interest to Britain in negotiations of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Britain wished to gain control over the region in order to integrate Mesopotamia's oil reserves into the British economy. As a result of its agreement with France, as well as the fact that British forces already occupied the city of Baghdad in the aftermath of the Great War, Britain was chosen as the Mandatory Power at the San Remo Conference. The Sykes-Picot Agreement, the League of Nations Mandate System, and inconsistencies between the Balfour Declaration and the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence all contribute to complicated relations between the former Ottoman territories and Britain. The British government must now find a way to appease the Jews and Arabs in Palestine, as well as the people of Mesopotamia, over conflicting promises of protection and independence.

Palestine

The land constituting the British mandate in Palestine includes many ancient sites that are important to the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As such, many different groups are interested in this territory. The Zionists advocates for a Jewish national home located in Palestine. Prior to the end of the Great War in 1917, the Zionist movement was growing in strength. In response, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration to support the cause. Additionally, the League of Nations crafted the Palestine Mandate to be a homeland for the Jewish people. The main condition outlined in the articles of the Palestine Mandate is that Great Britain must supervise the creation of a national home for the Jews and streamline the immigration and settlement of Jews in Palestine.

Although Article 3 of the Palestine Mandate encourages local autonomy, the majority of administrative functions and decisions regarding the governance of the territory are designated to the British government as the Mandatory power. Military

defense, public works, levying of taxes, and protection of culture have been left up to the supervision of the British administration until the Palestinian government is able to function. Britain is also in charge of protecting important religious and historic sites and preventing discrimination against non-Jewish residents of Palestine. The latter is particularly important in maintaining a stable balance between the Jews and the large population of native Palestinians.

Because it is not specified in the articles of the Mandate, the Commons must establish the structure of the new Palestinian government and decide how much autonomy it should have. Furthermore, the articles do not clarify the time frame for when the transition of power between the British administration and the Palestinian government will occur. Issues of how to finance the Mandate, as well as the services provided by the government, must also be addressed. Finally, in light of the conflicting natures of promises made by Britain to the Arab and Jewish peoples in the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence and Balfour Declaration, the Commons must come up with a solution that is acceptable for all parties, with regards to the territory of Palestine.

Mesopotamia

With a provisional British administration already in place, decisions on how to move forward in the development of Mesopotamia must be made. In order to work towards independence, the articles of the Mesopotamia Mandate require that an Organ Law for Mesopotamia be established within three years of the Mandate's ratification. Article 1 of the Mandate states, "this Organ Law shall be framed in consultation with the native authorities, and shall take account of the rights, interests, and wishes of all the populations inhabiting the Mandatory territory. It shall contain provisions designed to facilitate the progressive development of Mesopotamia as an independent State."

Until the completion of this Organ Law, the Mandate explains that Britain is responsible for the functions of government, including defense, public works, taxes, customs, protection of rights, and protection of religious and historic sites. The Commons should decide how Britain will support these functions financially and how it should integrate the native people into government positions. Furthermore, the Commons must decide whether to view Mesopotamia and Palestine as internal or foreign affairs; in accordance with this decision, it must place the Mandates under the supervision of either the Colonial Office or the Foreign Office.

Britain must also resolve the growing unrest of the native people in Mesopotamia. During the Great War, the people in Mesopotamia thought they would be granted independence after the war under the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, but with the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Mandate System in place, immediate independence is no longer a possibility. As a result, nationalist sentiment is rising, and political strife is imminent.

Under Article 9 of the Mesopotamia Mandate, Britain is charged with the duty of taking "such steps as it may think best to promote the development of the natural resources of the country." The main natural resource of concern in Mesopotamia is oil. Prior to the Great War, Britain had a strategic interest in the region because it offered a location for commercial routes to the British colony of India. After the Royal Navy converted from coal to oil as its main fuel source, the oil reserves in Mesopotamia became particularly important to British national interests. In 1912, the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) was formed by several rival oil companies in order to edge out competition for oil concessions in Mosul, Mesopotamia. By 1914, the British-controlled Anglo-Persian Oil Company owned 50 percent of shares in the TPC and effectively

controlled the oil concession. Although Mesopotamia and its natural resources are under British supervision due to the Mandate, there is no assurance of exclusive British access to oil reserves. In order to protect its national interest, the British government must secure oil resources by negotiating with the local Mesopotamian authorities for a fair compromise.

Conclusion

The origins of the Mandate system are centered on conflicting motivations and ideologies. While allying with the Arab nationalists, the British government was simultaneously pledging its support for the Zionist cause. When it came time to define the terms of the Mandates for Palestine and Mesopotamia, these ideas of self-determination, Zionism, and imperialism, though in direct conflict with each other, all managed to be incorporated.

Britain has been given these two territories to administer as Mandates under terms set out by the League of Nations. However, these guidelines are not a true framework for government, and they allow for a wide range of possible outcomes and strategies. There are a number of questions that still need to be answered about what the new governments will look like and how they will fit into the British Empire. Palestine and Mesopotamia each have their own unique issues. In Palestine, tension between the establishment of a Jewish National Homeland and the political and cultural desires of the Arab majority is at the forefront. In Mesopotamia, historic agreements with the existing local government make it necessary to determine how much local autonomy will be allowed. Additionally, the Mesopotamian oil reserves add economic concerns to the debate. If Britain is to establish governments capable of achieving long-term stability and of successfully carrying out the terms of the Mandates, all of these issues will have to be considered and a balance will have to be found between the interests of the numerous parties involved.

Questions to Consider

- What are the long-term goals of the Mandates? How long are they expected to be held by Britain?
- How much local autonomy should be given to Palestine and Mesopotamia?
- Should the Mandates fall under internal operations, or should they be part of Britain's foreign affairs?
- Will recognition be given to local leaders currently in power?
- What can be done to settle unrest from the native people in both regions?
- How does the creation of a Jewish National Homeland agree or conflict with other policy goals?
- Is it permissible to use the Mandates for British imperial interests?
- What is the role of the League of Nations in the governance of the Mandates?
- Should native citizens have positions in the Mandate governments immediately, or should they be slowly integrated as the British administration begins to transition out?

Irish Independence

Introduction

The Act of Union of 1801 united Britain and Ireland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. It eliminated the Irish Parliament and instead sent 100 Irishmen into the British Parliament. Gradually, Ireland's economy was incorporated into Britain's through an integrated tax system, complementary customs and tariffs, and a free trade area.

With these economic policies also came the infusion of British culture, including customs, games, sports, and the English language. Great Britain viewed the Irish people as inferior, which justified their moral crusade to bring civilization to Ireland.

Almost immediately, Britain faced challenges in ruling Ireland. The early 1800s saw agricultural violence in reaction to inconsiderate landlords, rising food prices, and egregious tithes. Britain struggled to maintain law and order, but an even greater problem came when an Irish movement to end discrimination against Catholics rose to prominence. King George III vetoed the proposal and thereby alienated Catholics in favor of the union of Great Britain. Daniel O'Connell first employed Catholic resentment to encourage a movement for independence. Later, the Young Ireland movement promoted a brand of nationalism that centered on a common heritage and shied away from religious and social differences. The founders of the movement, Thomas Davies and John Mitchel, used their newspaper *The Nation* to unite the Irish under a theme of English exploitation and the idea that the creation of a republic was of the utmost importance. In response, the British government under Sir Robert Peel increased the state grant to the Maynoonth Catholic seminary to £20,000, but also banned O'Connell's meetings and strengthened the law courts. The Irish Potato Famine, lasting from 1845 to 1852, added fuel to the nationalists' protests, generating criticism that blamed the Famine on the British. In 1858, James Stephens founded the Irish Republican Brotherhood to challenge British rule of Ireland. After continual setbacks, Stephens and other members captured a police station in Cork and ambushed a prison van, rescuing some of their comrades. These attacks, however disruptive, did not destabilize British rule.

Different visions of the path for Irish independence began to emerge. Arthur Griffith, founder of the political party Sinn Fein, advocated for a dual monarchy, while the Irish Parliamentary Party supported Home Rule, under which the Act of Union would be repealed. The Irish Republican Brotherhood called for a true independent republic. Nonetheless, these factions all agreed that Britain should no longer directly control Irish affairs.

During the election of 1918, Sinn Fein won 73 seats in Parliament but chose not to attend. On January 21, 1919, the Sinn Fein members of Parliament formed the Dail Eireann, the Parliament for Ireland, independent from Britain. The body ratified a new Constitution and a Declaration of Independence. Americans soon rallied in support, providing funds, human capital, and publicity. However, the British public expressed outrage at the declaration of an independent Irish Republic. Prime Minister Lloyd George declared the Dail Eireann illegal and enlarged the British force in Ireland. British soldiers searched houses looking for members of the illegal government and found the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) opposition.

By 1918, the IRA, which was composed of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and the Citizen Army, gained significantly more members in response to resentment against the British. It was led by Michael Collins, who trained the organization in guerilla tactics, understanding that conventional military strategy stood no chance against superior military might. Also known as the Irish War of Independence, the Anglo-Irish War commenced in 1919 as an urban guerilla war. Despite Britain's military dominance, the IRA's knowledge of the land and the support it received from the Irish population gave it an advantage.

By 1920, British morale was deteriorating, and reports cited the hopelessness of many officers. Secretary of State Winston Churchill decided to send auxiliary forces to Ireland to bolster the army and police. These auxiliaries, known as Black and Tans, consisted of war veterans and

criminals and gained a reputation among the Irish for their ruthless methods and brutality. With orders to restrain the rebellion, the Black and Tans razed cities, shot civilians, and killed indiscriminately. Such tactics undermined Britain's claim that it sought a peaceful end to the conflict. On November 21, 1920, the auxiliaries marched into a football match in sports stadium in Dublin and opened fire upon the players and spectators, killing 14 people and injuring 100. This day has become known as "Bloody Sunday." The exact circumstances remain unclear about who first fired shots.

As support mounts from Ireland, Irish-Americans are sending aid. In response to campaigns by Irish leaders, such as Eamon de Valera, Irish-Americans have sent money and Thompson machine guns to Dublin. De Valera himself conducted fundraising efforts, and the IRA has also purchased numerous shipments of weapons from Germany. Michael Collins shut down British intelligence operations in Ireland saying, "How did these people ever get an empire?" Eventually, Britain called for a truce in July 1921, unaware of the IRA's dwindling resources. The date for treaty negotiations was set in October 1921.

Constitutional Status of Ireland

Charles Steward Parnell campaigned for Home Rule, finally receiving the support of the Liberal Party in 1886. However, Home Rule was not incorporated into the law until 30 years later, and even then, it was suspended due to the Anglo-Irish War.

In the past, British governments under Salisbury and Balfour stifled requests for Home Rule by putting forth a series of reforms known as "Killing Home Rule with Kindness." These measures aimed to satisfy Irish social and economic grievances, and therefore eliminate their demands for self-government. Currently, some Irish citizens do not view Home Rule as a viable option because previous promises of Home Rule disappeared as negotiations between England and Ireland broke down. Britain instituted military rule, along with house searches, raids, control of the press, arrests without trial, and intelligence-gathering that further alienated the Irish. Meanwhile, Sinn Fein gained clout as it merged with the Liberty League and absorbed 66,000 members into its ranks. When Britain imposed conscription on Ireland, Sinn Fein took advantage of the backlash to commence a campaign of resistance. Britain reacted by arresting party leadership and banning the party, effectively forcing the organization to move underground, where it was more effective and powerful.

The Irish Republican Party supports the establishment of a republic completely independent from British control. To them, any institution of Home Rule is only a stepping stone to an Irish Republic. Another option similar to Home Rule is to grant Dominion status to Ireland, which would give independence to Ireland and create a symbolic relationship between the two governments. Ireland would still remain within the British Empire and swear loyalty to the British monarch. There would be limitations on Irish finances, tariffs, and capacity for defense, and Britain would be allowed to keep naval and air bases in Ireland, recruit Irishmen for the British armed forces, maintain a free trade zone between the United Kingdom and Ireland, and collect from Ireland a proportional share of the British debt. Though this option would appease Sinn Fein, which has always supported the monarchy, more radical groups will only accept the creation of an Irish Republic.

External association is an arrangement put forth by Ireland's de Valera. This loose association would recognize the Crown as the head of the British Commonwealth of Nations, but the Crown would have no control over Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish Assembly would not swear an oath of loyalty to the Crown. Rather, Ireland would be responsible for its internal affairs, but would choose to voluntarily associate itself with the

empire to address common concerns, including defense and diplomacy.

In addition to these suggestions, there is also disagreement over whether there should be a governor-general for Ireland and whether the British monarch should remain the head of state. These questions of the extent to which Ireland should be involved in the British Empire must be resolved.

Partition

Many Irish citizens living in Ulster share a separate identity from their neighbors in the South. When their southern counterparts campaigned for Home Rule in 1886, the Protestants of Ulster were worried that such an arrangement would strip away their regional dominance and force them to rely upon the national government. Therefore, many preferred to continue living united under England. To protect their interests, they formed the Ulster Unionist Council and its military branch, the Ulster Volunteers, in 1905. With the current talks of Irish independence, the state of Ulster in Northern Ireland is once again called into question.

Under a dominion status, Ulster could have its own parliament, and it, along with its southern counterpart, would remain within the British Empire. The two parliaments, however, would be separate, and Ulster would keep the parliament created by the Home Rule Act of 1920. Many Ulstermen seek to partition Ireland, but such a proposal is unpopular in Southern Ireland, and a great number of Irish nationalists believe that tearing Ireland apart is not an option. Essentially, the proposal would create an independent state in the South and leave a quarter of the island under British rule. The number of counties that would be in the North is still in question. The entire province of Ulster has nine counties, and the Ulster Unionists want all nine counties to be excluded from the Dublin government, fearing that making the area too small would prohibit the economic and political viability of the region. However, Protestants hold a majority in only four of those counties.

Conclusion

Today, Ireland and Britain are at a standstill. To avoid further violence in the region, the Commons must come up with a plan that will appease Conservatives and Liberals, as well as the Irish Republicans and the Irish Unionists.

When coming up with solutions, it is vital to consider the longstanding resentments of the Irish towards the British and other divides within the country, such as the religious conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland. Solutions that were attempted in the past, such as Irish Home Rule, may not be possibilities now. The conflict between Ireland and Britain has lasted since the earliest British invasion of Ireland, and it will take serious debate, discussion, and compromise to come up with a solution that ends the violence in the region.

Questions to Consider

- What economic and cultural connections exist between England and Ireland that could affect how the Commons deals with the Irish Independence movement?
- Which factions will be the most concerned about what happens in Ireland?
- What, based on the history of the conflict, are the biggest obstacles to finding a peaceful solution to the issue?
- What past legislation can be drawn from as possible strategy for coming to an agreement?
- What kind of logistical support is needed to communicate with the Irish and achieve an effective solution for both England and Ireland?

- How has this kind of conflict with a colony been handled in the past by the Commons?
- What support for Parliament's efforts can be drawn from factions in Ireland's political culture?
- How does the present political ideology of the House of Commons affect what can most likely be done in committee?
- How does the Irish Independence Movement affect Britain's relationships with outside countries?

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