

The League of Nations System of Mandates

The League of Nations that emerged from the Paris Peace Conference was not entirely to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's liking. Moreover, because of disputes in Congress, the United States never joined the League. The United States cooperated with the League in many ways, but not as a member.

At Wilson's insistence, the Paris Peace Conference imposed limits on the right of the war's victors to claim control of colonies and other territories taken from Germany and the Ottoman Empire. The territories went to the victors, who had to agree to a system of supervision by the new League of Nations. In addition, they had to agree to govern the territories according to certain principles.

In effect, the defeated powers turned the territories over to the League of Nations, which granted nations like Britain, France, and Belgium the authority to rule them. This grant of authority is called a mandate. In theory, the mandates were to last for a limited time, with the subject peoples eventually gaining the right to rule themselves. In practice, however, the powers that took over the mandates sometimes ruled them in much the same manner as they ruled their other colonies.

This document is part of the covenant of the League of Nations-the formal treaty that created the League.

Article 22. Mandatory System

1. To those colonies and territories... which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves (in) the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization, and that (guarantees) for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.
2. The best method of (carrying out) this principle is that the (guardianship) of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience, or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage (education) should be exercised by them as Mandatories (those who have been granted governing authority) on behalf of the League.
3. The character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.
4. Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be... recognized subject to the ...administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.

5. Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals; the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic, and the liquor traffic; and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defense of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League.
6. There are territories, such as Southwest Africa and certain of the South Pacific Islands, which, owing to their (small) population, their small size, or their remoteness from civilization, or their geographical (closeness) to the territory of the Mandatory...can be best administered under the laws of the mandatory as integral portions of its territory...
7. In every case of mandate, the mandatory shall (give) to the council an annual report (about) the territory committed to its charge...

The mandates fell into three categories, labeled A (most advanced), B, and C (least advanced). The following table lists the mandates in each category.

Mandates of the League of Nations

	Country or Region	Mandatory Power
Class A	Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq	Britain
	Syria/Lebanon	France
Class B	Tanganyika; part of Togoland; part of Cameroons	Britain
	Part of Togoland, part of Cameroons	France
	Ruanda-Burundi	Belgium
Class C	South-West Africa	Union of South Africa
	Nauru	Britain/New Zealand/ Australia
	New Guinea	Australia
	North Pacific islands	Japan

Review Questions

1. What happened to the colonies of the defeated nations after World War I?
2. How was a mandate supposed to differ from a colony?
3. How did the theory of governing a mandate differ from the actual practice?
4. Why was the word “tutelage” used in Section 2?
5. Why were three different classes of mandates created?