



ArcMUN

Aristotelio College Model United Nations

## HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

### “Cold War and the political division of Europe” Study Guide

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## 1. Welcoming Letter

Dear delegates,

We would like to welcome you to Arc MUN 2024 and especially to the Historical Committee. Being your board, we will try to direct you through a fascinating exploration of a challenging historical era.

This year's committee is dedicated to shedding light to a turbulent and dark period of modern history, that has not been explicitly discussed, compared to events, such as WW1 and WW2. You, as delegates, are invited to assume the role of the protagonists of the remarkable events and unfold your perspective; thus, revealing your country's different options to avoid the continuous conflict around the globe. This experience will allow you to examine the mistakes made by each side and discover that communication and national cooperation is the key to world prosperity.

We hope that this Study Guide will be helpful and capable of conducting you through your preparation for the conference. It is obvious that you have to make deep research to understand the European status quo of this amount of time (during the 20<sup>th</sup> century), but, still, we believe that it will be a wonderful journey through our recent history.

We look forward to meeting you and we wish you all the best for your preparation!

Best regards,

The Chairs, Konstantinos Stathis, Ouzounidou Alice

## 2. Introduction to the Committee

By the term Cold War, we refer to a long period of tension and confrontation, in a geopolitical basis, which affected the whole world. Historians do not agree concerning the exact period of the events, but it is widely accepted that the main body of the conflicts was observed between the years 1945-1991.

The term “Cold War” (first used by George Orwell in his essay “You and the Atomic Bomb”) was invented to describe the nature of this situation. Specifically, the two superpowers of the era, the USA and the Soviet Union, used to confront each other without fighting face to face; on the contrary, they supported vividly opposing sides during major regional wars, known as “proxy wars”.

The main cause, responsible for the maintenance of the confrontation for such a long period, was the ideological distance between the two sides and the mutual attempt to gain more and more influence on nations around the world. The two fronts were formed after the result of the WW2, which saw the opponents taking leading role in the struggle to resist against the expansive policy of both Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

The rivalry between the sides was so decisive and tough, that led the countries to upgrade fatally their military equipment. Nuclear weapons played a major role, for the first time in history; transportation was also improved, as new means were invented to serve the two gladiators.

Beyond the military rivalry, the confrontation spread to multiple domains, mainly those of ideology, policy, economy and science. Propaganda appeared as an essential asset and its techniques were perfected to the utmost point. The competition, concerning the scientific fields, triggered the evolution of astronautics and the space age in general. Notably, it was the Soviet Union, during this period, who manufactured and launched the first artificial satellite, named Sputnik.

### 3. Introduction to the Topic

The Cold War is not a simple situation to be analyzed. In order to be able to understand the causes that generated the crisis, we have to examine major events during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Amongst them, we have to pay more attention to three components: the Russian Revolution, the World War II and the post-war conferences.

#### *1. The Russian Revolution*

Its generation lies at the end of the World War I, when two crucial incidents took place; the fall of the Romanovs dynasty and the formation of the USSR, in order to replace the devastated Russian Empire.

The most significant consequence of the, otherwise called, October Revolution and the rise of the Bolsheviks to power in 1917 was the international isolation of the newly-formed state. The first notable Soviet Leader, Vladimir Lenin, attempted to establish a fundamentally different status quo in his country and tried to make clear his opposition to the capitalist policies, which surrounded the Union.

Josef Stalin, the country's leader for almost three decades, not only did he remain hostile to western states, but he, also, went on to create a circle of socialist countries, influenced by soviet policies, around Europe. Consequently, he is considered the most neuralgic figure, concerning the establishment of the bipolarism; he, even, stated that the world should be separated between the socialist countries, under the umbrella of the Soviets, and the capitalist-western states, affected by the American strategies.

Even before the outbreak of the World War II, the suspicion between the USSR and the Western powers had made its appearance in various ways. We should notice that the western states were some of the most active allies of counter-revolutionaries and fought against the rise of the Bolsheviks. Indeed, it is worth saying to note that the USA did not diplomatically recognize the USSR until 1933.

## *2. The World War II (Involvement of the Big Powers)*

The rise of the National Socialists in Germany's political stage during the decade of 1930 dramatically alternated the leadership's mosaic across Europe and it was a decisive step towards another great war, just two decades after the first.

Having predicted the unavoidable future, the Soviets hurried to sign a non-aggression agreement with the Nazis, called "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact" (1939), which served the interests of both sides.

Nevertheless, the agreement proved to be short-lived, since German Army invaded the USSR (Operation Barbarossa), during June 1941. However, the USSR found an unpredictable supporter in the face of Great Britain; a country that had already declared war to Germany, since 1939, even after the quick fall of the French opposition (1940).

The USA remained neutral for the first part of the war, until December 1941, when the Japanese decided to attack surprisingly the US Pacific main naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This is considered the turning point; after that the conflict became global.

The USA, Great Britain and the USSR formed the most unexpected alliance, aiming to the total defeat of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, Japan). The agreement with them was sealed by the Lend-Lease program, through which the USA started to supply the other two allies with huge quantities of war equipment.

Despite the cooperation, it cannot be denied that suspicion remained at high levels – especially at the Soviet side. Notably, they claimed that the Western powers attempted to let the USSR shoulder the most brutal part of the war against the Nazis. They felt that the rest of allies would enter the business when Germany would close up to defeat, in order to form a situation convenient for their claims. Soviet attitude was, to an extended degree, the reason for the turbulent relations between the allies.

### *3. Conferences on the future of post-war Europe*

Even before the end of the War, disagreements rose among the allies, regarding the format of post-war Europe. The two sides, respectively, attempted to impose their policy across European territory, in order to serve their expansive pursuit.

The Western Allies aimed to the establishment of a democratic system of countries, that would resolve their differences through international organizations (such as the subsequent UN).

On the other hand, the Soviet Union, having suffered immense human losses (estimated around 27 million victims) and several damaged cities, wanted to maintain an intense and powerful control over the countries around their borders. As a result, Eastern Europe, a region controlled by the Red Army, was, soon after, characterized by lack of free speech and rival political parties. However, Stalin believed that keeping good relationship with the allies was the only way to the quick and effective reconstruction of his country.

In the same time, the Western Allies also had completely different ambitions to fulfill. American president Roosevelt had long ago set the goal of creating an American hegemony over the territory of the British Empire. On the contrary, Churchill aimed to gain control of the Mediterranean (a vital target for the prosperity of the Empire) and declare the independence of the countries between UK and USSR (central and eastern Europe), in order to create a neutral zone between the giants.

The control of the eastern European regions had given Stalin an advantage during the negotiations; for that reason, both UK and the USA rushed to reach an agreement with him. Consequently, the who major Western powers independently came in terms with the Soviets.

In October 1944, Churchill arrived at Moscow to discuss around the division of the Balkan peninsula into spheres of influence. Some months later, at Yalta, Roosevelt signed agreement with Stalin, concerning Asian matters and promised not to aid Churchill's visions on Poland.

The discussions at Yalta concerned the balance of power in the world after the defeat of the Axis; nevertheless, the distance between the negotiators resulted in disagreement. American mistrust towards Stalin gained ground during the presidency of Harry Truman, who was Roosevelt's successor, after the latter's death (April 1945); which led to a policy compatible with Churchill's one.

In May 1945, the war in Europe ended with a total victory for the Allies. Europe was divided in regions occupied by each of the big powers. Specifically, central and eastern Europe went under the possession of the Soviets, while in the western continent there was an Anglo-American occupation. Germany itself - whose post-war administration later became another point of conflict between the winners - was divided into four zones of occupation (French, American, British and Soviet).

## 4. Key Terms

### *i. Socialism-Communism*

Communism (coming from the Latin word communism) is a political, philosophical and economic ideology, whose main points concern the formation of a society, organized around common ownership of the means of production and exchange, so as to allocate products to everyone in equal quantities. A communist society is characterized by the absence of private property and social classes/separations. The USSR was the most recognizable example of a communist country throughout its existence.

### *ii. Capitalism*

Capitalism is an economic system, whose major characteristic is the private ownership of the means of production and their use for generating profit. In order to achieve its goals, this system favors the development of



competitive markets, price systems and the accumulation of capitals. The USA consist a prominent example of a capitalistic, free-market policy.

### *iii. Yalta Conference*

The Yalta Conference (4–11 February 1945), was a meeting between the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, after the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, in order to discuss the division of Germany and, generally, Europe. The three sides were represented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and General Secretary Joseph Stalin. The conference was held near Yalta, Crimea; this is the origin of its name.

The aim of the conference was to achieve postwar peace, so as to rebuild Europe. It is considered the essential starting point of the Cold War, which went on to divide European territory.

### *iv. Truman Doctrine*

The Truman Doctrine is the term used to describe the American foreign policy, which aimed to "support democratic states against threats." The doctrine's essential goal was the restriction of Soviet geopolitical expansion. It was announced by President Harry S. Truman, during March 1947. In general lines, the Truman Doctrine addressed nations threatened by Soviet (communist) influence, such as Greece. It became a fundamental part of American strategy during the era, and led, to the formation of NATO (1949). Historians often use Truman's speech to Congress on March 12, 1947 to mark the official start of the Cold War.

### *v. Marshall Plan*

The Marshall Plan (officially known as the European Recovery Program, ERP) was an American initiative enacted in 1948 to provide financial aid to

Western Europe, which was harshly affected by the War. The USA offered \$13.3 billion in the context of economic recovery programs. It operated for a span of four years beginning on April 1948.

The lurking intentions of the United States were to rebuild seriously damaged regions, modernize and boost industry (by adopting modern business procedures), ensure European future and prevent the threatening spread of communism.

#### *vi. Potsdam Conference*

The Potsdam Conference was held at Potsdam, Germany, in the Soviet zone, from July 17 to August 2, 1945. Being the second great conference, after Yalta, it was decided in order to help the leading Allies plan Europe's long-term conditions, so as to avoid future tensions. The main point of the conference concerned the administrative division of Germany, after the latter's complete surrender two months earlier.

The USSR, the UK and the USA stood as the protagonists once again. They were represented, respectively, via General Secretary Joseph Stalin, Prime Ministers Winston Churchill and Clement Attlee and President Harry S. Truman.

#### *vii. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), also known as the North Atlantic Alliance, is an intergovernmental alliance between European and North American countries. Up to this point, it numbers an amount of 31 members, including 29 European and 2 American countries. Created after the end of the WWII, its goals consist of developing cooperation between participants. The basic aspects examined by the alliance include international policy, social situations, educational purposes, as well as the attempt to prevent attacks against members of the union.

The treaty was signed in April 1949 in Washington by 12 European and North American countries (Belgium, France, Denmark, United Kingdom, USA, Iceland, Italy, Canada, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal).

During the next years, other European countries joined the alliance. Most notably, we have to mention Greece and Turkey, who entered in 1952 and West Germany in 1955.

Talking about its administration, the North Atlantic Council stands as the highest body of the Alliance and it is based in Brussels, Belgium. It consists of the ministers of foreign affairs and defense of the member states. It meets twice a year, while its executive body meets on a weekly basis.

### *viii. The Warsaw Pact*

The Warsaw Pact (officially the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance) was a military alliance of defensive nature, signed by the communist states of Central and Eastern Europe.

It was formed on June 14, 1955, in Warsaw, Poland. The main reason for this pact, as declared by the Soviet Union, was the fact that West Germany had entered, a few days earlier the NATO alliance; a condition that was considered a threat by the eastern powers.

### *ix. German Division*

In 1945, the Third Reich was defeated and Germany was divided into four occupation zones, under the respective control of the powerful Allies; the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and France. Even German capital, Berlin, was shared between them. Between 1947 and 1949, the three zones of the Western allies merged, forming the Federal Republic of Germany, with Bonn as its capital city, aligned with their policies. As a response, the Soviet zone was transformed to the German Democratic Republic, having East Berlin as its capital, and it was affiliated by the communist bloc.

During the following period, the two states followed completely opposite paths. Specifically, the West Germany entered the NATO alliance, while the Democratic Republic became a member of the Warsaw Pact. Germans lived under these imposed division throughout the whole period, until the 1980s. During this decade, western powers took advantage of the internal crisis of the USSR, caused by the refreshing policies of soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in order to create a unique German nation.

The two parts were unified in one country, the Federal Republic of Germany, in October the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1990, with the demolition of the Berlin Wall, which stood as the main symbol of the dark period.

#### *x. Iron Curtain*

The term Iron Curtain was used to describe the dividing line between the socialist countries of the Eastern Europe and the states of the NATO and their allies. The term was first used by Winston Churchill in his famous lecture at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, during his visit to the USA in March 1946.

#### *xi. Eastern Bloc*

The Eastern Bloc, also known as the Communist Bloc, Socialist Bloc and Soviet Bloc, was a term, used to describe the group of socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe, East and Southeast Asia, under the sphere of soviet influence, during of the Cold War (1947–1991).

The Eastern Bloc was often called the “Second World”, while the term "First World" referred to the Western Bloc and the "Third World" included countries mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In Western Europe the term Eastern Bloc referred to the USSR and its communist satellite states. The main European members of this “group” were: East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia. However, there were also countries included in the

communist bloc, such as Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, North Korea and China in Asia, while in the Americas the list included Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada.

### *xii. Western Bloc*

The Western Bloc is a term utilized to introduce a set of states, which consisted of the countries of Western Europe and all the states that made up NATO. Those countries were in the direct sphere of influence of the USA; being automatically the rival side of the Eastern Bloc.

The main characteristic of these countries was the capitalist liberal economy, which was the noticeable difference from the Eastern Bloc, which consisted of states with a socialist economy.

The main countries of this Bloc, in Europe, were Iceland, Norway, Denmark, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Spain (from 1982), the United Kingdom, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Turkey. In the same time, significant members outside of Europe were Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries aligned with the interests of either the USA or the UK.

## **5. Points to be Addressed**

This list consists of some issues of the [highest importance](#) and questions, which are possible to be analyzed and discussed during the conference's meetings:

- What are the ways to succeed in creating a world, characterized by [peace and collaboration](#), in order to avoid post-war conflicts and rebuild damaged Europe?
- Which is the indicated attitude of the big powers towards the wounded countries, so as to assist their [reconstruction](#)?

- How can the Powerful Allies **cooperate** and bring a stable political system in countries, which face turbulent situations, such as the Greek Civil War?
- How should the Allies treat the defeated Germany and how can they act to prevent this country from generating **future conflicts**; while establishing conditions of prosperity for German people?
- What measures should be taken to ensure Europe's **political stability** and catholic respect towards the international law?
- Is it possible for the two opposite powers (the USA and the USSR) to avoid their **catastrophic disputes**, by limiting their imperialistic interests?
- Are there ways to resolve **diplomatically** international problems and not turn to war as the convenient solutions?
- Is it possible for the two sides not to implicate third states in their visions (referring to Vietnam, Korea and Afghanistan) and try to **negotiate** face to face over their differences?
- How can we set a **moral limit**, concerning the use of certain methods of pressure towards rivals?

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