LMUN 2026

A Background Guide for:

Historical United Nations Security Council

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Historical UNSC | Checkpoint Crisis: The Berlin Wall Committee

Chair: Elena Sáenz

Co-Chair: Alexa Kofoed

Letter From Chairs:

Elena: Hello delegates, my name is Elena Sáenz, and I will be chairing this Historical Security Council on the Berlin Wall construction. I have participated in several MUNs in the past, both as delegate and chair. Model United Nations has helped me gain a global perspective and new ideas on world solutions. The establishment of the Iron Curtain caused a European Crisis and marked a strong turning point in the Cold War. It is a great opportunity to decide on a different path for this problem, and it is exactly what this committee offers! I hope this experience helps you grow as a delegate and global citizen.

Alexa: Hello delegates, my name is Alexa Kofoed, and I will be your co-chair in this Historical Security Council on the construction of the Berlin Wall. Throughout high school, I've participated in several MUN conferences, which have helped me gain strong insights and global views. Also, all my life I've had a passion for the history of our world and appreciate the values it brings for those who study it. This committee will address a crisis that was crucial to the origins of the Cold War, a war that continues to shape the world today. I am excited to see the solutions you'll propose for this important issue, and I hope this committee will help you grow as a delegate and gain fascinating knowledge.

Warm regards,

Elena Saénz (esaenz@lincoln.ed.cr) & Alexa Kofoed (akofoed@lincoln.ed.cr)

Your Historical United Nations Security Council Committee Chairs

Topic Introduction

On August 13th, 1961, East Germany, along with the Soviets, began building the Berlin Wall, which separated West Berlin. This caused a turning point in the Cold War as it clearly indicated a division between the capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union. The United States and the Soviet Union had had many disagreements in the past, but the Iron Curtain caused political, social, and economic problems all over the world. Public awareness and opinion were directly affected by the construction of the Berlin Wall, both in Germany and internationally. This event occurred after World War II ended and the country was split into the Federal Republic of Germany (West) and the German Democratic Republic (East). Organizations were created, such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), that allied with the United States, while the Warsaw Pact was created to ally with the Soviet Union, causing political turmoil and separation. Going back in time, this problem could have been approached differently to lessen the effects of the war and the Iron Curtain.

Committee Background

The United Nations Security Council was founded in 1945, right after the Second World War. Its main purpose was to establish peace and security around the world and took great measures to stop conflicts. In 1968, the only permanent members were the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and China. Because of the heavy Cold War tensions, during 1945-1960s, the Security Council's main activity was regarding the Cold War tensions. Some of their earliest actions were the authorized military action from 1950 to 1953 against North Korea in the Korean War and a minimal influence on the Hungarian Revolution. Overall, the Security Council had low relevance up until this point because the Berlin Wall was one of the first big activities that involved the permanent members of the Security Council.

History/Context

The construction of the Berlin Wall started with the end of World War II. By the end of the war in 1945, Germany, the main enemy of the Allies, had been defeated and was divided into four occupation zones, controlled by the USSR, the US, the UK, and France. Berlin, located in Soviet territory, was also divided into the four powers, which created a clear division between

capitalist democracy and communism. With time, France and the UK withdrew their control over West Germany because of West Germany's integration into alliances like NATO and the desire to build a stable and self-sufficient democratic state. As a result, East Germany (German Democratic Republic) was taken by the Soviet Union and controlled by a communist element, while West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) was dominated by the United States with a capitalist government. The city of Berlin was later divided into East Berlin (Soviet controlled) and West Berlin (Allied-controlled). Because of this, the Berlin Blockade occurred in 1948 and ended in 1949, in which the Soviet Union completely isolated West Berlin to force the United States out. As a response, the United States planned the Berlin Airlift, where they flew food and supplies into West Berlin until the Soviets stopped the blockade. Because of the long-lasting ideological conflict between the Soviet Union, which promoted communism, and the United States, which promoted capitalism and democracy, tensions started to rise when around 3 million East Germans started fleeing to West Berlin between 1949 and 1961. East German skilled workers, professionals, and students left for the West in search of freedom and an improved living situation, in comparison with the impoverished living situations of East Germany and its communist economy. This threatened the economic survival of East Germany. In the light of the event, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev pressured East German leader Walter Ulbricht to stop the mass migration, viewing it as a political embarrassment to communism. As a consequence, on August 13th, 1961, the East German government began building a barbed wire and concrete barrier overnight, dividing East and West Berlin.

Key Terms

- **Berlin Wall:** The barrier constructed by East Germany in 1961 to stop migration to West Berlin.
- **Iron Curtain:** A term created by Winston Churchill referring to the ideological, physical, and political division between the communists and the democracies.
- **Cold War:** A period of political tension between 1947 and 1991 between the United States and the Soviet Union, with their Eastern allies.
- **East Germany (GDR):** The German Democratic Republic, a Soviet state created in the eastern part of Germany.

- **West Germany (FRG):** The Federal Republic of Germany, the democratic state created by the US, UK, and France in the western occupied zone of Germany.
- **Occupation zones:** Areas of Germany and Berlin controlled separately after WWII.
- **Berlin Blockade (1948-1949):** The attempt by the Soviets to cut off all land routes to West Berlin.
- **Berlin Airlift:** The Western Allies' supply by air during the Berlin Blockade.
- **Mass Emigration:** Millions of East Germans moved to the West before the Berlin Wall was built.
- **Warsaw Pact:** The military alliance of Eastern countries led by the Soviet Union, formed in 1955 as a response to the formation of NATO.
- **NATO:** A defensive military alliance of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other Western European states.
- **Khrushchev's Berlin Ultimatum:** Nikita Khrushchev's demand that Western powers withdraw from Berlin within only six months' time.
- **Buffer Zone:** The area created to reduce the chance of direct conflict.
- Stasi: The secret police of East Germany, that were known for extreme surveillance and suppression.
- **Demilitarized Sector Border:** A boundary between East and West Berlin that was crossable before the construction of the Berlin Wall.
- **Four-Power Agreement:** The United States', France's, the United Kingdom's, and the USSR's agreement to manage Berlin after WWII.
- **Propaganda War:** The competition to influence public opinion and ideology during the Cold War between the East and the West.

Timeline

- 1945: Germany and Berlin were divided
- Following the end of WWII, there were four occupation zones in Germany. Berlin was also divided into two zones, one for the Soviets and one for the United States.
- June 1948: Start of the Berlin Blockade
- All land access to West Berlin is blocked by the Soviet Union in an attempt to force the United States out of the city.

- June 1948-May 1949: The Berlin Airlift
- The Allies responded by sending supplies to West Berlin by air.
- October 1949: Formation of East and West Germany
- Two separate states are officially formed: the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.
- 1952: Inner German Border Seal
- The border with West Germany is closed by the East German Government. The Berlin border is still relatively open.
- 1953: East German Uprising
- The communist rule in East Germany is revolted against by the workers, but the control by the government is violent and increases tensions.
- Late 1950s: Mass migration through Berlin
- People living in East Germany try to leave for the West, passing through Berlin. This causes big political and economic problems in East Germany.
- November 1958: Khrushchev's Berlin Ultimatum
- The soviet director, Khrushchev, demands that all Western powers leave Berlin in only six months, creating greater pressure in the Cold War.
- June 1961: Vienna Summit
- Kennedy and Khrushchev have tense talks but come to no resolution.
- August 13, 1961: Construction of the Berlin Wall begins
- East German authorities finished the border with barbed wire and troops, creating the Berlin Wall.

Current Situation

The date is August 10th, 1961. There is a mass emigration crisis occurring in East Germany, with professionals and the working class looking for a better living situation in West Germany. Around 1000 citizens per day are crossing through West Berlin in their journey to West Germany. Around 2.7 million East Germans since 1949 have escaped the East, thus straining the economy and conditions of East Germany by stripping it of doctors, engineers, and teachers. Walter Ulbricht, the East German leader, declares that the German Democratic Republic will not survive with this mass migration continuing. Additionally, Nikita Khrushchev

was under a lot of pressure to stabilize the situation in East Germany without causing a full war. On one hand, the Soviet Union feels that the West is encouraging the escapees. Moscow declared that they are considering a form of violent control to manage the movement, but nothing has been announced. Western intelligence from the United States has discovered that the Soviet forces are becoming very active near the German border. On the other hand, John F. Kennedy declared the protection of West Berlin as a critical commitment for the United States. All allies, the US, the UK, and France, refuse to abandon West Berlin despite strong pressure from the USSR. It is well known that the USSR is strategically planning something, but Western powers are unsure of how to act or respond if anything occurs. The citizens of Berlin are scared and unsure of what will occur because of the tension in the environment, and plans for the building of the Berlin Wall are underway in secret.

Bloc Positions

Western Bloc

This bloc will prioritize protecting access to West Berlin and maintaining the existence of democratic states within the city. Nations in this bloc will advocate for diplomatic pressure against any unilateral Soviet action and highlight their loyalty to the Four-Power Agreement. Additionally, these countries will seek strong human-rights protections and oppose any measures that limit freedom for Berlin residents. While some members may favor solid responses to Soviet aggression, others will prioritize negotiation to prevent the expansion of the conflict. Examples of potential members include but are not limited to: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and other NATO-aligned Western European states.

Eastern Bloc

Countries aligned with the USSR will focus on stabilizing and supporting East Germany, preventing mass migration, and guarding the integrity of the socialist sphere of influence. This bloc will justify stricter border controls as necessary to preserve national security and will oppose Western involvement in what they define as internal affairs. Members of this bloc will argue that the demographic crisis in East Germany requires decisive action and will support stronger security measures along Berlin's dividing line. Negotiations with Western powers may

be tolerated only if East German sovereignty is respected. Examples include but are not limited to: the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other Warsaw Pact states.

Neutral & Non-Aligned Bloc

This bloc will seek to reduce Cold War tensions and prevent the Berlin issue from escalating into a global conflict. Nations aligned with this bloc will emphasize diplomatic mediation, humanitarian principles, and peaceful settlement mechanisms. These countries will neither fully side with the Western nor Eastern powers, instead advocating for balanced solutions involving negotiation, respect for sovereignty, and international oversight. They may also advocate for humanitarian access, protection of civilians, and conflict-prevention mechanisms. Examples include but are not limited to: India, Egypt, Yugoslavia, Ghana, and other members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Developing & Post-Colonial Bloc

These nations, many of which recently gained independence, will aim to avoid confusion in Cold War power politics and instead promote stability through diplomatic solutions. The bloc will emphasize the broader implications of superpower conflict on global development and will call for peaceful negotiation rather than militarization. Nations in this bloc may support UN involvement, humanitarian protocols, and protection of international law, while avoiding taking firm sides. Countries might also advocate for compromises that prevent Cold War escalation from affecting their own political or economic growth. Examples include but are not limited to: states in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia.

Questions That Must Be Answered

1. How can the international community prevent the Berlin crisis from escalating into a direct military confrontation between the Western powers and the Soviet Union?
2. What role should the United Nations play in supervising or monitoring activities within Berlin to ensure transparency and prevent violations of existing agreements?

3. How can the Security Council address the mass emigration from East Germany while respecting national sovereignty and avoiding direct interference in domestic affairs?

4. What diplomatic or negotiation mechanisms can be established or strengthened to manage tensions between the Four Powers responsible for Berlin?

5. How can the Council ensure the protection of civilians—particularly regarding family separation, freedom of movement, and humanitarian needs—without intensifying ideological tensions?

6. What long-term strategies should be implemented to promote stability in Berlin and prevent future crises related to mobility, military presence, or political influence?

Case Studies

Berlin Blockade (1948-1949)

As previously stated in the history and context, the Soviets completely isolated West Berlin and blocked land access to get the United States to surrender. However, the United States responded with an airlift that aided civilians with food, medicine, and supplies needed for survival. Which was needed because the Soviets cut off all supplies and resources to threaten. The airlift avoided direct military violent confrontation from both sides, which shows their fear of a possible war. This specific case highlights the difficulty that the Security Council had in acting against such a powerful country, like the Soviet Union, and presented a high risk of war escalation in the situation. In general, the Security Council had very limited influence in the Berlin Blockade because the Soviet Union blocked any resolution from happening.

Korean War (1950-1953)

During the Korean War, when North Korea invaded South Korea, there was authorized military action from the Security Council. The UN's role in this war was surprisingly strong, as the Soviet Union was absent and could not veto. This allowed the Security Council to authorize the use of force and a strong presence. This made the Korean War one of the only conflicts in the Cold War in which the UN acted directly using force. Most of the UN forces were from the

United States, which shows how the Security Council depended on the power of individual states.

Hungarian Revolution (1956)

When Hungary finally wanted to free itself from the Soviet Union's control because of extreme human rights violations, the Security Council could not take action as the Soviet Union vetoed. The Soviet military entered Budapest to intervene in the protests and enforce violence. The Western powers disagreed with the action but decided to avoid military involvement. The Security Council was very limited in taking action because of veto power and the fear of a war starting. Further demonstrating how the veto system did not permit action from the Security Council.

Suez Crisis (1956)

Egypt attempted to nationalize the Suez Canal, and as a response, France, Britain, and Israel invaded. The UNSC was having difficulties coming to a conclusion in conflicts that involved several permanent members, and because of this, they were unable to act despite the great security crisis occurring. The permanent members of the Security Council could not act against international law when they were being invaded. The involvement of France and the United Kingdom weakened the credibility of the Security Council since they were a part of the conflict instead of maintaining international peace. Because several permanent members were involved, the Security Council was unable to take action. The UN Emergency Force was then founded to address problems like this because of the Security Council's inefficiency before the construction of the Berlin Wall.

Topics to Discuss

Geopolitical and Security Concerns:

The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 helped harden the geopolitical division of Europe and increased Cold War tensions between the Soviet Union and the Western allies. For East Germany and the USSR, the barrier represented a defensive measure that essentially aimed to preserve socialist stability and prevent the infiltration of capitalist ideologies. On the contrary, Western nations thought of the wall as a violation of international agreements and a calculated

move to establish Soviet influence in the region. Its creation emphasized the fragility of post-war diplomacy and the constant tensions between maintaining national security and upholding international cooperation. The Berlin Wall thus became not only a physical barrier but also a powerful symbol of ideological confrontation and the limits of negotiation during one of the most polarized periods of modern history.

Humanitarian and Human Rights Implications:

The human impact of the Berlin Wall's construction was profound and enduring. Within just hours of its establishment, families were separated, and thousands of people found themselves trapped under an increasingly repressive regime. The East German government's strict border policies and the use of aggressive force against those who tried to escape reflected the extent of state control over people's individual freedom. Despite widespread condemnation from the international community, geopolitical restrictions prevented effective intervention. The wall became a symbol of the human suffering caused by political division, standing as a reminder of the consequences that arise when ideological security takes priority over basic and essential human rights.

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