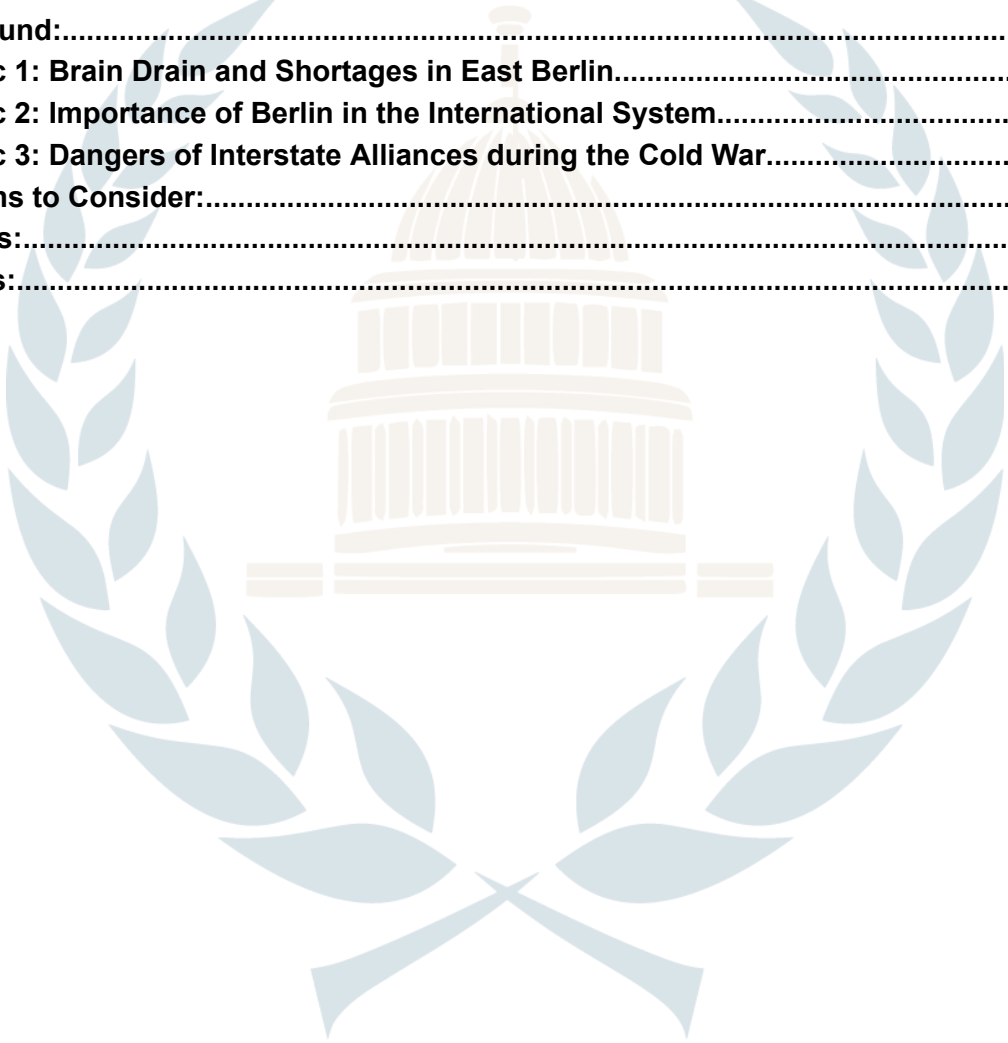


United Nations Security Council: Crisis in Berlin Background Guide

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Procedure:

This committee will operate as a double delegate hybrid committee, with Thursday and Friday being operated as a traditional crisis and Saturday operating as a general assembly style committee. Due to the format of this committee, crisis arcs should be accelerated, with delegates planning to have them finished by the last session on Friday. On Saturday morning, after the crisis section has concluded, delegates will receive the general assembly topic which will be debated for the remainder of the committee. As always, writing and working outside of committee is prohibited. If you have any procedural questions, please email me at faith_farley17@gwu.edu.

Background:

The Berlin Crisis of 1961 occurred due to the lasting impacts of dividing Germany and the broader geopolitical conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States. After World War II and Germany's defeat, the nation was divided into four occupation zones, which were controlled by the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and France. From this division, two states were formed the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).¹ The crisis started when East Germany, with aid

¹ "Berlin Crisis of 1961." Encyclopædia Britannica. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-crisis-of-1961>.

from the Soviet Union, built a wall partitioning themselves from West Germany and cutting West Germany off from allies aid.

Before the crisis began US President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Leader Nikita Khrushchev met in Vienna, Austria in June 1961 with the hopes of minimizing tensions between the great powers and discussing the steps for eventual German reunification. However, this summit was unsuccessful and increased distrust between the nations, with Khrushchev threatening to cut off allied access to West Berlin.² Two months later, the Berlin Wall was constructed by the East German, Soviet Union-backed government to physically divide East and West Berlin through the use of a concrete barrier. The goal of this extreme action was to stop the migration crisis and establish communist rule in East Germany. Western fury over the Wall's construction resulted in a confrontation between Khrushchev and U.S. President John F. Kennedy as they each defended their positions on Berlin's future.³ This Wall intensified already-existing ideological conflicts between the Cold War's capitalist and communist factions. The wall would eventually come to represent the struggle between the two ideologies throughout the Cold War.

This committee takes place in August 1961, right after the Wall was constructed by East Germany. Delegates in this committee are tasked with addressing the ongoing humanitarian crisis between East and West Germany, the importance of Berlin in the context of the Cold War, and the threat of escalation due to countries' alliances. This committee does not have to follow the events that played out in the real world, and as such, Delegates are encouraged to come up with unique and creative solutions to prevent the Cold War from getting hot.

² "The Cold War in Berlin." John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/the-cold-war-in-berlin>.

³ "Berlin Crisis of 1961." Encyclopædia Britannica.

Subtopic 1: Brain Drain and Shortages in East Berlin

Brain drain and shortages in East Berlin revealed the sharp differences between the two parts of a divided city and played a major role in the 1961 Berlin Crisis. Following World War II West Berlin, backed by the United States and its allies was a stronghold of Western democracy and capitalism while East Berlin served as the capital of East Germany a Soviet satellite state. Brain drain was exacerbated by the mass migration of highly qualified professionals from East Berlin to the West as a result of the political and economic divide between the two regions.⁴

East Germany's harsh political environment where people had to deal with a repressive government with limited freedoms and a lack of economic opportunities, was the main cause of this migration. There was a severe talent shortage in East Berlin by the late 1950s as a result of the increased migration of people looking for better opportunities in the West. As educated professionals, engineers, and doctors departed the East German economy found it difficult to sustain productivity, which made shortages of basic goods and services worse.⁵ The East German government, which was keen to show off the superiority of its socialist system, the brain drain presented a significant challenge. Individuals fleeing to the West reflected poorly on the state, and access to superior Western goods peeled back the veil on the Greatness of Soviet-style communism.

In retaliation, the Soviet Union pushed East Germany to act swiftly to stop the exodus. The result of this was the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, which was intended to stop East Germans from escaping to the West. The US, with President John F. Kennedy, saw the crisis as a test of his determination to stop Soviet expansionism. The US also viewed this as a violation

⁴ Clark, Nimmy. "From Berlin with Love." FCDO Services, January 3, 2024. <https://www.fcdo.services.gov.uk/from-berlin-with-love/>.

⁵ Clark, Nimmy. "From Berlin with Love."

of individuals' freedoms, which they claimed to protect on the international stage, and as such, became more deeply involved in the conflict due to their ideological commitment to freedom. Tensions increased as a result since the U. S. was dedicated to defending West Berlin and stopping additional Soviet incursions into Europe.⁶ This Brain Drain from East to West directly influenced the Crisis by encouraging East Berlin to build the wall.

Subtopic 2: Importance of Berlin in the International System

During the Cold War Berlin was highly significant as a center of the ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and the Western powers. West Berlin remained a free enclave encircled by communist territory East Berlin became the capital of East Germany under Soviet rule. This division represented the wider geopolitical tensions that defined the Cold War. The symbolic contrast between oppression and freedom highlighted Berlin's significance.⁷

Despite its isolation, West Berlin flourished and served as a symbol of capitalism and democratic governance for the West. On the other hand East Berlin was characterized by political repression and economic hardship, which personified the shortcomings of communism with West Berlin acting as a ray of hope for Eastern Europeans living under communist rule.⁸ The sharp contrasts between the side of divided Berlin exemplified the ongoing conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States and, more broadly, communism and capitalism.

These tensions led directly to the Berlin Crisis of 1961, during which the Berlin Wall was built. The East German government was having trouble keeping its citizens under control as thousands of them fled to the West, posing a legitimacy crisis. In addition to endangering its

⁶ "Berlin Crisis of 1961." Encyclopædia Britannica.

⁷ "What Was the Berlin Wall and How Did It Fall?" Imperial War Museums. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-berlin-wall-and-how-did-it-fall>.

⁸ "What Was the Berlin Wall and How Did It Fall?" Imperial War Museums.

economy, the exodus of skilled workers from the East revealed the flaws in the socialist system. In response, the Soviet Union backed East Germany's decision to build the Berlin Wall, which was intended to maintain the city's division and stop the flow of emigration.⁹

The crisis marked a turning point in the Cold War for the US, which led to a resolute commitment to protect West Berlin from alleged Soviet aggression. President John F. Kennedy's administration elevated military readiness and reaffirmed support for the city because they saw the crisis as a test of resolve. Therefore, the Berlin Crisis demonstrated how the city turned into a battlefield for ideological disputes, influencing international relations for many years to come and forming the parameters of the Cold War.

Subtopic 3: Dangers of Interstate Alliances during the Cold War

International alliances were crucial to the Cold War and the 1961 Berlin Crisis. With support from their respective allies the Warsaw Pact and NATO the Soviet Union and the United States were engaged in an ideological struggle that lasted for a long time and contributed to the crisis. Including allies in this calculation raised the possibility of the crisis escalating into a world war. These alliances significantly influenced the decisions and actions of both superpowers during this turbulent period.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established in 1949 as a collective defense alliance to stop Soviet expansion in Europe following World War II. Among the members were the United States, Canada, and a number of Western European nations, all of whom were committed to protecting one another from attack. However, Europe split into two camps and was solidified by the 1955 Warsaw Pact, which included countries from the Eastern

⁹ "Building the Berlin Wall." NATO. Accessed December 10, 2024. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_136183.htm.

Bloc that were influenced by the Soviet Union.¹⁰ This division in geopolitics led to the Berlin Crisis. West Berlin, which came to symbolize Western resolve and NATO members' commitment to preserving democratic values, was surrounded by East Germany. Kennedy considered the city to be an important military base in the fight against communism. NATO troops stationed in West Berlin showed that the Western bloc was determined to resist pressure from the East. Concerned about upholding unity and the possibility of reprisals, NATO leaders engaged in contentious discussions and debates following the crisis of 1961. To maintain control of Eastern Europe and support its ally East Germany the Soviet Union, on the other hand, used the Warsaw Pact. In response to the mass migration of East Germans to the West and the perceived threat of NATO's influence, the Kremlin constructed the Berlin Wall in August 1961. The Soviet Union utilized the wall to control the population, preventing them from leaving the Eastern bloc. This was accompanied by military and diplomatic posturing using the Soviet alliances and the Warsaw Pact, which exacerbated the crisis. In response, NATO troops strengthened their military presence in West Berlin and increased readiness, proving that they would present a united front against any aggression.¹¹ These actions demonstrated how international alliances influenced the actions of both superpowers leading to a wider ideological gap and an increased risk of escalation.

¹⁰ "History of Western Civilization II." NATO and the Warsaw Pact | History of Western Civilization II. Accessed December 10, 2024.

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hecc-worldhistory2/chapter/nato-and-the-warsaw-pact/>.

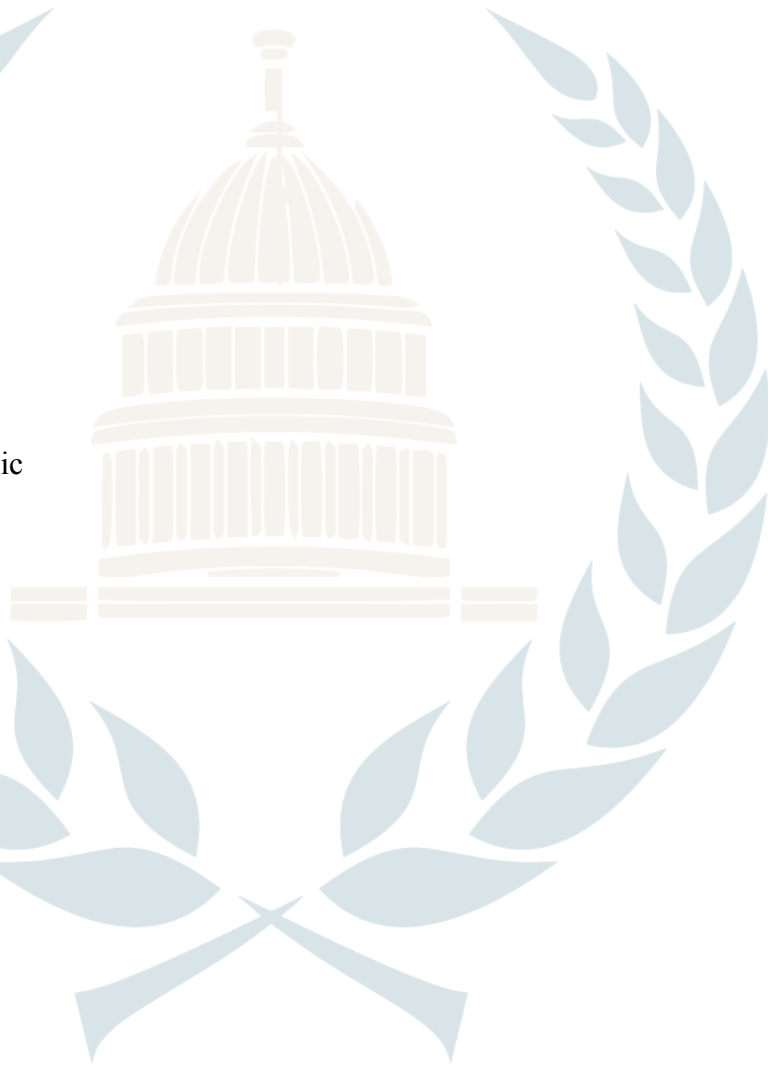
¹¹ "History of Western Civilization II." NATO and the Warsaw Pact | History of Western Civilization II.

Questions to Consider:

- How do the Eastern and Western Blocs Proceed now that the wall has been built?
- Does the risk of retaliation from the great nuclear powers, the United States and Soviet Union, restrain or encourage states actions?
- What should the UNSC do to promote peace and stability within the region and to minimize the ongoing humanitarian crisis?
- Do other proxy conflicts in Asia and Africa influence states' actions regarding the ongoing conflict?
- How will the Western bloc react to the wishes of East German Civilians to migrate into West Germany and Western Europe?
- How will the Eastern Bloc maintain communism's superiority in light on the crisis in East Germany?
- At a time when espionage is at an all-time high, what measures will countries take to protect their national security interests?

Positions:

- Soviet Union
- United States
- People's Republic of China
- France
- United Kingdom
- Ecuador
- Chile
- Ceylon
- Turkey
- United Arab Republic
- Liberia
- Benin
- Romania
- Ghana
- Ireland



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