

# HISTORICAL COUNCIL

Topic A: The Impact of the Cominform vs. the Marshall Plan: A Shift in Global Alliances during the Post-WWII Era

Topic B: The Korean War: A Battle of Ideologies and its Influence on Global Geopolitics



# Introduction to the Committee

## The Korean War

Following the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, tensions had still escalated around the world, specifically focusing on East Asia. Although combat had decreased in Europe and the Pacific, a distinct battle arose in one nation between contrasting ideologies: capitalism and communism. After Japan's surrender, the Korean Peninsula had no central governing body. The United States and the Soviet Union agreed to divide Korea temporarily in hopes of a peaceful transition to independence. However, issues of trust and contrasting ideologies between the two powers made actions of reunification unfeasible. This led to the rise of the U.S and USSR as superpowers, birthing the Cold War.

After World War II, Korea (previously under Japanese rule) was agreed to be temporarily divided at the 38th parallel – an arbitrary line created by the U.S. and USSR. While the USSR supported the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north, the U.S supported the Republic of Korea in the south. While both parties had supporting allies, both claimed to be the sole legitimate government of Korea. The North, which was led by Kim Il-sung, was established as a one-party communist state in 1948, while the South, which was led by Syngman Rhee, right-leaning, anti-communist government. As a result of this, opposing sides in elections were held separately in both regions, increasing difficulties in unification as both were committed to their respective ideologies.

Although this war occurred only in one nation, it reflected a broader issue of ideological war. While the South aligned itself with more Western democracies led by the US, the North gained a closer alliance with the communist party, led by the Soviet Union and later supported by the newly formed People's Republic of China. The Korean War became a baseline for the Truman Doctrine and the U.S. policy of containment, which aimed to prevent the further spread of communism. The USSR viewed Korea as a strategic method to repel Western imperialism, and China feared the possible upcoming U.S. influence approaching its territory.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel in a full-scale invasion of the South. The United Nations Security Council, without a Soviet delegate who boycotted over the China seat dispute, authorised a military intervention. This was led by the US, where a coalition of 16 countries joined South Korea in combating the invasion. This resulted in a devastating three-year war that would spark the Cold War divisions and leave a persistent impact on East Asia geopolitics.

Overall, the Korean War was the first armed conflict of the Cold War era, which involved major powers that used foreign nations to indirectly fight each other. This served as the introduction of proxy wars, strengthened military alliances like NATO and imprinted the permanent division of the Korean Peninsula that still exists today. Even after the armistice in 1953, no peace treaty has been signed, unofficially leaving the Korean War unresolved. To this day, the Korean Demilitarised Zone remains one of the most fortified borders in the world.

# Introduction to Topic A

The Second World War has ended, but at what cost? During the war, the only requirement for alliances to be forged was the will to defeat the Nazis.

With the loss of a common goal and a common enemy two powers have emerged stronger than ever: Communist Soviet Union vs Capitalist United States. While Europe's economy lies in ruins, these powers aim to shape Europe's recovery. Yet their visions for recovery are polar opposites: Truman's USA seeking to grant countries economic aid in order to achieve strong international trade and Stalin's USSR looking to unite Soviet states under the rule of Moscow in order for Communism to expand through Europe. The future of Europe itself has become the battleground for both ideologies. Both are willing to do whatever it takes to make sure their beliefs land on top, all while holding space for the fact that nuclear weapons are a recent creation and hold the potential to destroy the world as we know it.

Throughout this conference, you delegates must debate the impact these new policies will have in shifting global alliances and come to a peaceful solution that determines recovery in the dark period that is Post-WWII. All actions that take place now mark the beginning of a new global conflict; it is in your delegations' best interests to stop the conflict from escalating.

# Topic A: Key Terms

**Containment**= U.S. Policy to prevent the spread of communism

**Truman doctrine**= Set of ideas shared by President Truman in a speech stating the U.S. would help any country willing to oppose the spread of communism

**Marshall Plan**= an American initiative enacted in 1948 to provide foreign (financial) aid to Western Europe

**Cominform**= organisation to promote cooperation among communist parties and coordinate their activities across Europe and beyond

**Molotov Plan**= Soviet initiative established in 1947 to provide economic aid and foster economic cooperation within the Soviet sphere of influence

**Iron Curtain**= the political, military, and ideological barrier erected by the Soviet Union after World War II to seal off itself and its dependent eastern and central European allies from open contact with the West and other noncommunist areas

**Dollar Imperialism**= Soviet term used to describe the United States's use of economic aid, like the Marshall Plan, to establish a sphere of influence and control other nations through financial leverage rather than direct territorial conquest

**Sphere of influence**= foreign policy strategy aimed at preventing the expansion of a hostile power, particularly associated with the United States' efforts to stop the spread of communism

**Satellite states**= countries that are formally independent but are heavily influenced and controlled by a more powerful state

**Deterrence**= military strategy aimed at preventing an adversary from taking unwanted actions, particularly through the threat of retaliatory force

**Cold War**= a state of political hostility between countries characterized by threats, propaganda, and other measures short of open warfare

**'Hot' War**= a war with active military hostilities

# Topic A: Context and Current Issues

After the fall of nazism and Ally occupation of Germany, it was under the USA's impression that Britain would help fight off expansion of communism in Europe and would contribute to the rebuilding of the European economy via financial aid. This had already been portrayed in cases such as the 1946-47 Greek Civil War, where Britain aided the pro-royalist side that went against the communist guerillas. However, after 6 years of war, Britain was bankrupt, and them announcing they would stop intervening in Greece was the turning point for the USA, causing them to form their own anti-communist policy in Europe; the Marshall Plan.

On 12 March 1947, President Truman delivered a speech to the US Congress, announcing an economic aid package to Greece and Turkey. The USA would provide \$400 million in aid to Greece and Turkey, and send American civilian and military personnel to the region. Soon after the USA's anti-communist agenda was established via the 'Truman Doctrine', more west-European countries began to benefit from American financial aid. The European countries helped by the Marshall Plan are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and West Germany. Britain currently remains number one recipient of American financial aid.

The creation of the Marshall plan, regardless of Truman's attempts at disguising it as an initiative meant solely to help rebuild Europe and its economy, has angered Stalin, who views it as a strive for power. He feels threatened by what he calls 'Dollar Imperialism', an idea that the Marshall Plan is a way of using economic might to divide Europe in two and establish an American economic empire here. To counter this, a congregation of Soviet 'satellite states' have recently joined a new association-Cominform-and have rejected any aid from the Marshall Plan in their first meeting (the 22nd of September of 1947). Stalin is also accusing the United States of hypocrisy, stating they are 'no different from Nazi Germany' in their need to establish an 'economic empire' worldwide.

The division of Germany and in particular, Berlin, is proving a difficult task between the two powers and is involving all European nations, indirectly forcing them to pick a side. With Western Europe tied to American aid and Eastern Europe bound by Moscow's directives, Europe's division into two opposing blocs becomes increasingly irreversible, making the threat of an all-out 'hot war' linger.

# Topic A: Timeline of Key Events

## World War II & Its Aftermath

**23 August 1939**– Nazi-Soviet Pact divides Eastern Europe between Hitler and Stalin, shocking Britain and France.

**1 September 1939**– WWII begins with Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland.

**22 June 1941**– Germany invades the Soviet Union; USSR joins Allies.

**7 December 1941**– U.S. enters WWII after Pearl Harbor.

**4–11 February 1945**– Yalta Conference: Allies (Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin) plan post-war Europe, including Germany's division.

**12 April 1945**– Roosevelt dies; Truman becomes U.S. President, taking a harder stance against the USSR.

**8 May 1945**– Germany surrenders; Europe devastated.

**17 July–2 August 1945**– Potsdam Conference: Allied leaders finalize occupation zones in Germany; tensions already rising between U.S. and USSR.

**6 & 9 August 1945**– Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki → Japan surrenders → nuclear weapons enter global politics.

## Seeds of division

**5 March 1946**– Churchill's Iron Curtain speech warns of Soviet expansion.

**1946–1947**– Greek Civil War highlights Britain's financial weakness and the rising communist threat.

## U.S. strategy: Containment and Marshall Plan

**12 March 1947**– Truman Doctrine pledges \$400 million aid to Greece and Turkey against communism.

**5 June 1947**– Marshall Plan proposed to rebuild Europe through U.S. economic aid.

**July 1947**– European states meet in Paris to discuss accepting Marshall Aid.

**April 1948**– Marshall Plan begins, funding Western Europe's recovery.

## Soviet Response: consolidating control

**22 September 1947**– Cominform created in Warsaw to coordinate communist parties and reject Marshall Aid.

**February 1948**– Communist coup in Czechoslovakia brings the country under Soviet control.

# Topic A: Key Points to Debate

*Delegates are encouraged to consider the following questions during debate. They should serve as a guide to the kinds of issues at stake in this historical council...*

- Is the Marshall Plan genuine economic assistance, or a strategy for U.S. dominance in Europe?
- Does accepting Marshall Aid compromise national sovereignty? Could a European-led recovery (without U.S. or Soviet aid) have been possible?
- Should aid be given with political conditions attached, or unconditionally?
- Is Cominform offering real economic alternatives, or just forcing dependence on Moscow?
- Is this primarily a battle of economics, or of ideology (capitalism vs. communism)?
- Does the spread of communism in Eastern Europe represent liberation or Soviet domination?
- Should countries prioritize survival and rebuilding, or loyalty to ideology?
- Is the U.S. practicing “Dollar Imperialism,” or simply defending democracy?
- Are smaller nations being used as pawns in a superpower rivalry?
- Is Europe destined to divide into two opposing blocs, or can neutrality survive?
- Should countries like France and Italy side with the U.S. despite strong domestic communist parties?
- Could Yugoslavia’s independent path (Tito vs. Stalin) become a model for others?
- Should Germany be unified under one system, or remain divided between East and West?
- Does Cominform strengthen unity, or does it suppress independence among communist states?
- How do nuclear weapons influence decisions: do they deter open conflict, or increase fear?
- Is economic influence just as dangerous as military aggression?
- Should the U.S. and USSR be held responsible for militarizing Europe’s recovery?
- Do these European policies set the stage for a worldwide Cold War?

# Topic A: Main Parties

- **The United States of America:** The United States emerges from WWII as a dominant economic and military power. Through the Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine, it seeks to rebuild Western Europe, contain communism, and secure political and economic influence. Its role in shaping post-war recovery makes it a central actor in the emerging Cold War.
- **Soviet Union (USSR):** The USSR, under Stalin, controls Eastern Europe through military occupation and the Cominform, coordinating communist parties and rejecting Western aid. Its goal is to expand socialist ideology and maintain influence over its satellite states, creating a clear ideological and political division in Europe.
- **Great Britain:** Weakened by war, Britain relies on Marshall Plan aid to stabilize its economy while maintaining security in Europe. It aligns with the United States to resist communist expansion, but its reduced global power makes its position delicate.
- **France:** France struggles with post-war reconstruction and internal political divisions, including a strong communist party. Marshall Plan aid supports its recovery, but the country must balance U.S. influence with domestic communist pressures, making it a key battleground between East and West.
- **Germany:** Divided into occupation zones, Germany is a frontline of the East–West split. West Germany receives U.S. support and adopts capitalist policies, while East Germany falls under Soviet control, illustrating Europe’s growing ideological divide.
- **Italy:** Italy faces economic challenges and political polarization, including a strong communist movement. As a major recipient of U.S. aid, it becomes a critical country in the struggle between Western and Soviet influence in Europe.

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# Introduction to Topic B

- The Division of Korea

The end of WWI followed the surrender of Japan in 1945; Korea was left without a central government, with hopes of independence. The power vacuum led to the occupation by foreign powers, with the U.S. leading the South and the USSR controlling the North. During this period, Korea experienced liberation. Nevertheless, this 'liberation' was largely symbolic as neither superpower allowed Koreans to fully form their government. The 38th parallel was chosen arbitrarily by American officials as a division line to accept the Japanese surrender. However, this chosen temporary short-term solution evolved into a hardened border between ideologically opposed territories. From this, tensions had increased when discussions about unification failed in 1947, prompting the United Nations to recommend separate elections, which were held only in the South due to Northern opposition.

- The Rise of Opposing Regimes

By 1948, both North and South Korea had established independent governments, each claiming legitimacy over the entire peninsula. The North resembled a Stalinist model of governance, while the South pursued a strongly anti-communist agenda. During elections, militarisation and ideological propaganda were inevitable. In the North, Kim Il-sung consolidated power through purges and his position of military leadership, while in the South, Syngman Rhee used U.S. support to suppress leftist uprisings, such as the Jeju Uprising (1948), where thousands of civilians were killed.

- The Cold War

The U.S. viewed the North Korean invasion as a part of a global communist offence and responded with its construction of the Truman Doctrine. The Korean War became a test of this doctrine, which aimed to contain communism anywhere it threatened to expand. The war also shifted the U.S foreign policy, encouraging an array of military spending and the permanent militarisation of American Cold War strategy. For the Soviet Union, the conflict offered a pathway to have a larger impact without confrontation, done by the following: supplying arms, advisors and strategies to the North.

# Introduction to Topic B

- North Korea Invasion

June 25th, 1950 marked a turning point in the hopes of reunification of the two regimes, with North Korean forces launching an invasion across the 38th parallel, rapidly capturing Seoul. The UN Security Council passed Resolutions 82, 83 and 84, calling for the immediate cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of North Korean forces. With the USSR boycotting the United Nations forces, led by General Douglas MacArthur. Within weeks, U.S. and allied troops were deployed to Korea to initiate a counteroffensive.

- The Chinese Intervention

A neighbouring country of Korea, China, had entered the war in October 1950, fearing the new Western ideologies approaching. The Chinese People's Volunteer Army launched a surprise attack that drove United Nations forces back below the 38th parallel. Mao Zedong, a Chinese politician who founded the People's Republic of China, sent over 300,000 troops to Korea, largely because U.S. forces had grown closer to the Yalu River, the border between Korea and China. This intervention escalated the war, resulting in United Nations casualties and prolonging the conflict, also marking China's major role in global geopolitics.

- Long-Term Impacts

By 1951, the war had been ongoing for over two years, of armistice negotiations eventually led to a ceasefire in July 1953, yet no formal peace treaty was signed. This left behind a still permanently divided Peninsula and North Korea's isolation and militarisation. This war left over 3 million dead and displaced millions more. Moreover, the U.S maintains a permanent military presence in South Korea, where the Mutual Defense Treaty (1953) was signed by both countries to strengthen the alliance. In the North, the Kim dynasty continues its rule, establishing a totalitarian regime centred around Juche, an ideology set on achieving national autonomy and focusing on self-sufficiency, while pursuing nuclear weapons, posing a new threat to security issues today.

# Topic B: Key Terms

- 38th parallel

The latitude line that divided North and South Korea after Japan's surrender in 1945. This once temporary division soon became permanent due to the opposing ideological conflict.

- Truman Doctrine

A U.S foreign policy established in 1946 stating that the United States would provide political, military and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces. This doctrine hopes to contain any threats of communism and explains the U.S. involvement in Korea and future conflicts like Vietnam.

- Cold War

An ongoing political rivalry between the U.S. and the USSR and their respective allies that developed after WWII. This concerns factors such as ideological, political and military aspects, having relevance in the Korean War, seen as the first 'hot war' of the Cold War.

- Proxy War

A military conflict where one or more third parties directly or indirectly support one or more state or nonstate combatants to influence to conflict's outcome and thereby to advance their strategic interests or undermine those of their opponents. The Korean War involved the U.S, USSR and China fighting indirectly through the support of the two Korean regimes.

- UN Security Council Resolution 82 (1950)

A resolution that was passed by the UN calling for the immediate withdrawal of North Korean troops after the invasion of South Korea. With the UN Security Council lacking a USSR delegate during the vote, the resolution was able to be passed.

- Demilitarised Zone

An agreed-upon area between parties to an armed conflict, which cannot be occupied or used for military purposes by any party to the conflict. These zones can be established by a verbal or written agreement in times of peace or during an armed conflict. The buffer zone created by the 1953 armistice between North and South Korea still remains in place today.

# Topic B: Key Points to Debate

- What were the short-term and long-term implications of the ideological differences between regimes, and how can such ideological conflict be managed diplomatically?
- What role should the United Nations play in conflicts where two major superpowers are on opposing sides?
- How can the international community regulate and limit the influence of proxy warfare?
- What diplomatic and legal measures can be taken to formally resolve armistice conflicts like the Korean War, ensuring they are officially resolved?
- How should the international community address civilian protection and displacement during wars concerning ideologically opposing sides?
- What mechanisms can be created to facilitate peaceful ideological coexistence?
- How can the international community address the long-term consequences of the Cold War period divisions, such as the current hostility between North and South Korea?

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