



MUN Sonoran Desert Conference 2025

Historical Crisis Committee - Cold War Politics

Mesa Community College, Arizona

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Who is to quarrel with a people's interpretation of its past? It is its only means of facing the future, and what 'really' happened is often less important than what is thought to have happened.

Henry A. Kissinger

All wars are fought twice: the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory.

Viet Thanh Nguyen

Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.

Chinua Achebe



Learning Objectives

- To recognize the implications of great power politics during the height of the Cold War from the UN Security Council's perspective
- To lay the foundation for U.S-China diplomatic relationship, developing various feasible future pathways
- To be aware of P-5 veto power and adapt negotiation strategies as non-voting members
- To explore different possibilities of the African Independence Movement
- To understand the intersection between political and cultural self-determination and the impact of historical crises on modern-day situations
- To understand the genesis of the USSR and how this leads to the creation and eventually tension within the Warsaw pact.
- To comprehend how the Space Race added additional complications to the issues focused on by the UN Security Council.
- To address the arms race and its implications for international peace

Issues to Consider

- Resisting Colonial Occupation by Foreign Forces
- Triangulation of U.S - China - USSR relation



VOTING MEMBERS:

P-5: United States, United Kingdom, France, Soviet Union and China*.

* On day 1 the Republic of China gets voting status and on day 2 this is transferred to the People's Republic of China.

India
Poland
Japan
Hungary
Italy

Algeria
Nigeria
Botswana
Ethiopia
Senegal

OBSERVER STATE: South Viet Nam, North Viet Nam , PRC/ROC, South Korea, Thailand, Australia, Spain, Kenya, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Philippines, Cambodia.

Total number of delegates: 27



This committee starts in the midst of what later will be known as the Cold War. As the presiding Security Council starting from 1954, this committee has been tasked with overseeing the wide-ranging effects of what could be the beginning of a re-shuffled world-order. As a delegate in the SDC Historical Crisis Committee, your main goal will be balancing oversight of a tumultuous competition between several great political powers: U.S, U.SSR, China while plotting a path for future cooperation and protecting national sovereignty across the African and Asian continents. During the conference, delegates will have to continuously ask themselves how they can best balance their own national interest with others while utilizing the UN Security Council's legitimate power to achieve world peace. These crucial decisions of how to navigate peace, progress, and protection will be yours to make throughout the UNSC at SDC 2025.

This background guide serves as a starting document detailing necessary information for delegates to grasp the international political scene and assist them as the first point of research to develop their own plan of actions. Additional research is recommended to increase the delegate's awareness of the actions statesmen in this period have made. However, given the vast amount of relevant recorded documents, delegates are reminded that they are encouraged to creatively solve the challenges posed in this document, unburdened by what has happened.

As a member of the Historical Crisis Committee, delegates have the added benefit of being able to interact with the Crisis Director prior to the conference who will be responsive to inquiries about this background guide as well as provide assistance to delegates in developing their policy statement.

Given the wealth of issues, fast pace and restricted amount of time, it is required that each delegate prepares two policy statements: one addresses the country's stance with situations in the China-Viet Nam region and one with situations in Africa. Delegates also need to submit one resolution detailing the aspirations and actions that the delegate is convinced the Security Council should take. The format for the policy statements and resolution are similar to other committees. More focus should be placed in paragraph two and three of the policy statement.



Topic 1: Harmony in the Eastern Shore

There were multiple events that started and altered the stability of the SouthEast region. First, the ideological landscape between the U.S and Soviet Union is examined. Then, we will take a close look at the situation in Viet Nam and how this captures the ultimate struggle of the Cold War: a battle to win the “hearts and minds” of millions in the Third World. Lastly, how the rising of China complicates the bi-polar world order is detailed.

The ideological landscape

America, with its core ideas around nationhood, allowed its citizens to transform the vastness of the country under one flag and transformed it in their image. Liberty for its citizens is what the country prides itself in compared to others. After World War 2, the U.S became the sole protector of a capitalist world system. In their mind, other nations (especially those that are newly formed after WW2) are suffering from the non-liberty wave of control by existing colonial powers (Europeans) and the new rising Soviet Union. Hence, it has become a mission for America to “modernize” other parts of the world by emulating the American example. The only way to do this is in education and the pursuit of scientific thinking. One prominent theme is the market, a free-flow exchange of products and services based only on their value in money and unhinged by patronage or by need (1). The American market is a large part of American foreign policy, assisting other nations to be free from control of colonial powers and become free nations (or in president Wilson’s word: self-determination). As John Quincy Adams put it:

She (freedom and independence) goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. (2)

The Soviet State set out with ideas and plans for the betterment of humanity, with a heavy focus on improving the economic life of the working class instead of concepts of self-determination and freedom. The Bolsheviks (later known as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) represented the proletariat and wholeheartedly believed that communism is the higher state of modernity. Similar to the American elites, the Bolsheviks had a strong conviction that the Russian empire would become the center of a new world order. The difference is, modernity in the eye of Moscow is through the union with the Russian working class. To prepare for other revolutions, the Bolsheviks set up the Communist International (or Comintern) to help other socialist parties (3). The Comintern, envisioned to become a world-wide organization with its headquarter in Moscow advocating for global communism, would then be the main vehicle through which the Communists help rebellious groups across the world to rise against colonialism. This is Stalin’s response to the growing threat of a unified front led by the United States. Instead of competing for powers, European states one-by-one sought the protection from the U.S (most evidently with receiving aid from the Marshall plan). Hence, Moscow helped plot strategies for Communist parties in Poland, Hungary, eastern Germany and Spain. However, not all of these were successful, as evident in the 1920 Spanish Civil War that left a bitter atmosphere behind.



The Forming of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam

One unique aspect of the conflict in Viet Nam is its characteristic as the first televised war (4). Looking back, this has had multiple effects on the outcome of the war (5). There are two schools of thoughts explaining how this conflict came to be (6). The first situates the Viet Nam conflict as a consequence of great power competitions as part of the Cold War, with exogenous factors such as France, U.S, USSR and China. The other (held by many Vietnamese scholars) see the situation as a nationalist struggle for national independence from colonial rule. Not commonly taught, it is critical to explore how Viet Nam became the focal point of the Cold War.

Like other countries in Asia, Viet Nam went through a turbulent period of modernization in the XIX century (7). With increase in trades and the disintegration of traditional economies, Asian nations such as Japan and Thailand adopted Western development models and were viewed as exemplar for others. In Viet Nam, the situation is quite different. When Viet Nam was part of French Indochina in 1900, multiple generations of Vietnamese Confucian reformers (such as Phan Boi Chau or Phan Chau Trinh) urged the Emperor and Vietnamese people to accept the Western development model ultimately to modernize the country and escape French colonization. Fighting for Viet Nam's independence, these reformists waged the anti-French movements also as a nationalist struggle, believing that only a modernized country could resist future colonization. Although defeated, the nationalist struggle paved the path for the rise of a population of intelligentsia as products of Western-type education who later provided leadership for the country. One prominent example would be the founding of the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) by Ho Chi Minh in 1930. When Ho was studying in France, he actively participated in the social protest movements in Paris and later helped found the Communist Party of France (CPF) (6). It should be noted that Ho and many generations of Vietnamese nationalist fighters of the Communist Party were led to Lenin and Communism because of Vietnamese patriotism, not proletarian internationalism. In 1923, Ho was sent by the CPF to Russia for further training in the Comintern's school and later to south China. It is in south China that Ho held a series of training for young Vietnamese to become revolutionaries with the help of high-ranking cadres of the Communist Party of China (CPC) such as Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi (8). Later, Ho unified multiple political parties and founded the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) in 1930 with a strategy for the Vietnamese revolution as a combination of Leninism and nationalism (9). However, Ho was later removed from the party's leadership and several other cadres were sent by the Comintern to "rectify" his mistakes (6). These cadres then changed the CPV's name to Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) with its chief principles to follow the guidelines and instructions of the Comintern exactly.



After France was defeated by Germany in June 1940, Jean Decoux as the governor-general of French Indochina agreed to let Japanese troops station in all major Vietnamese airports (10). This effectively opened up a new era in Viet Nam's history. At the same time, Ho Chi Minh left the USSR and returned to Viet Nam in 1940 after 30 years of living abroad and held a plenum in May 1941. Incorporating situations in Indochina and of the world, the plenum changed the CPV's political strategy. The party decided: "For the time being, the interests of classes and of groups must be placed below the survival of the nation and the people " (11). The ICP also agreed to work on solving the "national question" and avoid the mentions of communist terms in all its propaganda. The ICP also helped found the Viet Minh party (League for Independence of Viet Nam) as a new form of Fatherland Front led by the party. With this new pro-nationalist strategy, the ICP slowly developed its forces. In fact, the Viet Minh with American support became a powerful indigenous force in Viet Nam (12). At the same time, the Japanese force took power from the French authorities in March 1945. It was not long until Tokyo declared its unconditional capitulation in August 1945 and with the uprising called by the Viet Minh, Ho Chi Minh declared the nation's independence in September 1945. A nationalist government with Ho Chi Minh as its first president established the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRV) in the north side of Viet Nam.

The Birth of the Republic of Viet Nam

With the new-founded country exhausted after the war and having clear disadvantages in a confrontation with the French, Ho Chi Minh sought to gain international recognition for the nation. President Truman, however, was advised to support the French as the U.S needed France's support against the expansion of Soviet power (13). Starting from South Viet Nam, the French started their re-conquest in late September 1945 with the backing of Britain and the U.S. However, Chinese troops were present in North Viet Nam and opened fire on French ships entering Haiphong (14). To avoid confrontation with China, in March 1946 France recognized the DRV as a free state (although belonging to the Indochinese Federation and to the French union) and the DRV in turn will allow French forces to relieve Chinese forces above the 16th parallel line and occupy North Viet Nam, with conditions of rapid troop withdrawal (14).

At this point, both the DRV and French received limited support from other states (15, 16). Ho Chi Minh was pro-actively seeking support from Beijing, Prague and Warsaw but diplomatic efforts remained unsuccessful (17). It was not until 1949 with the victory of CPC over the Kuomintang (which later formed the Republic of China) that president Mao Zedong started to offer assistance to Viet Minh, stating: "Whatever China has and Viet Nam needs, we will provide" (17). At the lower side of the 16th parallel, the US became more and more involved in the war and politics of Viet Nam. Initially, president Truman only sent financial assistance to the French (15). After the signing of the 1949 Mutual Defense Assistance Act (committing the U.S to defend all its allies against USSR or PRC), the arrival of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) and services of the CIA starting in 1950 escalated the nature of the situation (16). However, the French military forces were unable to defeat the Viet Minh Army at Dien Bien Phu and this led to the Geneva Accords in 1954. The Agreements essentially divided Viet Nam into two halves: North Viet Nam above the 17th parallel and a French-set-up government in South



Viet Nam (18). Terms Agreements shall be supervised by a commission of delegates from India, Canada and Poland (19). The U.S government, believed in the Truman doctrine of containing communism, helped establish an anti-communist government in South Viet Nam and began providing it with financial and military assistance (18).

These shifts turned the nationalist struggle of Viet Nam into part of the ideological Cold War, inspiring hope among those who dreamed of liberation and independence in the Americas, Africa, and Asia (20). As Che Guevara put it: "How close and bright would the future appear if two, three, many Vietnams flowered on the face of the globe" (21).

The China Complexity

At this point in time, there existed two parties competing for the ultimate control of China: the nationalist Republic of China (led by Chiang Kai-shek) and the communist People's Republic of China (led by Mao Zedong). The struggle between these two parties are amplified by foreign interventions coming from the U.S, Soviet Union, European countries and India.

Internally, China went through a period of change that seemed quite unpredictable for others. Despite assurances from Khrushchev about the Soviet's new policy of *detente* with the U.S, Mao Zedong was determined to terminate alliance with the Soviet Union to continue the fight for international class struggle (22). Mao's focal focus was on China's domestic development rather than on foreign policy, preparing the way for what later will be known as the Great Leap Forward to launch China into a socialist modernity. Globally, China also made efforts to start asserting themselves in other Third World countries with PRC's presidential visits to Indonesia, Ghana, Algeria etc. One interesting fact is how the Chinese propaganda portrayed the two major powers by depicting the U.S as a neo-imperialist power and the Russians as Europeans (that people of the Third World should be wary of European influence and avoid cooperating with the USSR) (23). This Sinocentric attitude soon implied all other Third World countries should follow Maoism to be successful.

After the unsuccessful unification of the Korean peninsula, Mao Zedong began a series of confrontations. First, a border conflict with India took place. This Sino-Indian conflict on the border of the Kingdom of Sikkim led to a political stalemate, awaiting further diplomatic initiatives. This has soured the Sino-Indian relationship, pushing the Indian government away from cooperating with the PRC. However, with the U.S agreeing to make Pakistan its Central Treaty Organization ally in 1954, the PRC government still has hope to reconcile with India. Even more complicated is the conflict that Mao waged in the Taiwan Strait. In the Nationalist view, Taiwan is a temporary home for the Republic of China's government while they wait for the right moment to take back their rightful place. Although regularly pressed for military support to retake mainland China, multiple American presidents can only reply with silence. In Beijing's view, Taiwan is a renegade province waiting for their brother in mainland China to overcome foreign influences and unite all China under one family (24-26). With Beijing and Taipei holding two competing beliefs over the same national Chinese identity, the U.S and Soviet needed to balance a myriad of factors to maintain peace in this region.



Committee's Vision for Topic 1

The Crisis Directors for the Historical Committee envision the delegates to view the discussion surrounding the Cold War differently. Instead of a continuous power competition between the U.S and USSR until exhaustion, this time period can also be seen as an attempt by the international community to socialize the U.S and USSR into cooperating and co-existing together. This would also apply to how delegates solve the issue of between competing parties in China and Viet Nam. Several questions you as a representative of your country could consider are:

- How can I work with other nations to ensure the U.S and USSR can co-exist peacefully?
- Does my country have a prominent communist or nationalist movement in the 1950s?
- From the ideologies presented in this issue book, which one aligns most closely to my country's needs?
- If there is a national identity conflict, how should I approach other international powers to help my case? Which trade-offs are acceptable for a reconciliation?
- Which resources or support does my country need most? Is it financial, political validation or military support?
- If my neighbor(s) changes sides, does this negatively affect my country's stability? Can I prevent this by forming a bloc with them?
- How can I avoid the M.A.D concept using the binding nature of the Security Council's resolutions?
- What future of reconciliation do you see in the North Viet Nam - South Viet Nam and China-Taiwan situations?



Topic 2: Affairs in Africa

The struggle for independence is largely over, and most of Africa is now ruled not by European empires or mandates, but by a hodgepodge of countries with European-made borders, encompassing various different ethnicities, religions, and geography. The socioeconomic standard, however, remains largely the same; with their resources having been excavated by European powers, the newly independent African nations must get their affairs in order to build a functioning state and economy, work to end poverty, and keep their nations together in the face of tumultuous times and a divided world.

Questions now arise over which model of development and security the various African states will embrace, and which side they will take in the wider tug-of-war between west and east, if any.

A Socialized Future

For some nations, an economic model that promised equality had become favored, a stark contrast to their mostly capitalist former colonizers. Having become popular throughout the post-war world, the ideas of a command economy and tendencies towards socialism had rippled through Africa as not only a potential model for development, but a way to rectify the colonial history of inequality.

In the north of Africa, a wave of support for pan-Arab socialism (Ba'athism) has swept through the newly decolonized states, with the objective of forming a united, secular, and socialist Arab state throughout the Middle East and North Africa (1). This was in response both to European colonialism, to which they believed that Arab unity would counter this influence, and the creation of the State of Israel.

In the sub-Saharan regions, socialism takes a more complicated approach, and with varying degrees of success. Like the pan-Arab socialists in North Africa, the idea of socialism coincided with a renewed interest in pan-Africanism, in order to establish regional unity against the power of the West. The spread was particularly of interest in West Africa, with Ghana, Mali, and Guinea having formed a brief but symbolizing relationship in the interests of socialism (2).

The founding philosophy of pan-Africanism can be summarized by the Fifth Pan-African Congress' 1945 Declaration of the Colonial Workers, Farmers, and Intellectuals, which called for the unity of post-colonial peoples and for change in both a Marxist and democratic framework and an end to imperialist exploitation (3).

The democratic framework has faltered in governments planning or heavily intervening in their economies, however. The Ba'athist example generally led to dictatorships across the Arab world, and were generally hostile to allowing an indigenous private sector to develop. By the



1950s, Ba'athists by and large obtained the support of the Soviet Union (4) despite some having been later participants of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Wallowed In Disunity

United Pan-African aspirations that held its own ground in some nations had never taken any foothold in others. Tribes, ethnicities, and political groups plagued some newly independent states with an interest in keeping hold of their own power, reliving an age-old fear of the “other” that played into the hands of colonialists in the first half of the twentieth century.

In countries where an ethnic group had developed a state before the colonial period, these ethnic tensions were exacerbated yet again with exclusionary government policies against other ethnic groups, inflaming armed rebellions and exposing potential weak points for western powers to interact with. (4)

Much of this blame can be attributed to the new borders of the newly independent African states, carved out by Europeans more out of their convenience than out of concern for the lines that divided Africa before their arrival. Geographic, ethnic, and political boundaries that were disregarded by the Europeans would now take on a new significance, overlapped by a hodgepodge of different nations lacking a clear sense of identity afforded to other continents.

Not only does improper national border design hamper the security of new African member states. National development and the fight against the inequality left over from European colonialism becomes more complicated when ethnic divisions are stoked within national borders, and induce a loss of freedom of movement and opportunity for these groups (6).

New African nations are therefore tasked with handling uncooperative or historically oppressed tribes and ethnic groups in the fringes of their boundaries, especially as a wave of nationalism continues to sweep the continent. The possibility of inflaming tensions and starting rebellions is high as these nascent countries find their footing, and their identity.

Everything Changes, Yet Nothing Changes

Despite the new independence of African states, Europeans maintain a keen interest in keeping Africa dependent on them. The concept of neocolonialism emerges, with prominent examples including the Francophonie and the Belgian Congo, where economic and political pressure was used in order to control a country whilst not taking it over in full (7). Prominent examples of neocolonialist attitudes in newly independent states included the Congo, in which a hurried independence gave way to the western-sponsored assassination of its first Prime Minister over his unfavorable attitude towards Congo's former colonizers.



Elements of neocolonialism have developed from good intentions, too. The inception of the IMF, where nations are able to borrow money to pay down debts from conflict or to increase development, as well as loans directly from developed countries, has now tied developing nations to more crippling debt (8). Now, developing countries are at the mercy of the west, increasingly dependent on them for economic stability and tied to them on economic policy in order to pay down those loans. A harsh cycle is introduced for Africa; paying down debt requires economic growth, yet economic growth requires acquiring more debt.

A New African Market

Statism has taken a prominent role in the development politics of post-colonial Africa. The bad reputation that capitalism harbors in the continent has led to centralized, command economies being favored over an overarching motive for profit; the perception being that profit was the key driver for colonialism.

Even so, market-oriented policies and restraint of government power over the private sector become staples of development in some African countries. Some nations interpret colonialism not as a capitalist power grab, but as a restraint of “indigenous” capital over favors to colonial powers (9). In the quest to gain more development and a stronger economy for themselves, some nations decided instead to foster their private sectors rather than look to it as an oppressive force. This is especially true for nations with natural resources, and whose interests lie in developing their own capital.

It also creates a unique challenge for leaders seeking to consolidate power. State interventionism’s roots in a newly independent Africa have generally been the symptom of their nation’s new leaders expressing authoritarian interests. Additionally, the need for African markets to engage in an extremely competitive world economy pushed African governments into the protectionist corner (9). Removing barriers for private sector growth and development will be a challenge, at least for countries that are willing to consider this option.

A Continent of Indecision

The Non-Aligned Movement, established to represent Member States who do not wish to be involved in the Cold War, came to prominence in much of the newly independent Africa even as its most prominent leaders reside elsewhere, particularly Yugoslavia and Indonesia. Africa’s desire not to be anybody’s satellites, especially as they recount their colonial history (10), reigns strong even if internal policies seemed to signal a move towards socialism or capitalism.

The emerging Global South has begun its path towards a politics of nonalignment, and a conference was planned between Asian and African states at Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 to discuss the future of developing states in the context of the Cold War. In the face of increasing competition on both sides and the desire to remain independent, the emerging non-aligned movement focused its interests around economic cooperation and peaceful coexistence, allowing themselves relations to and criticism of both sides of the Cold War conflict (11).



The Soviets are attempting to break the ice with non-aligned African states, particularly through economic assistance and aiding in development projects. The Soviet Union funded power plants, dams, and factories across both their North African Ba'athist partners as well as sub-Saharan African countries. Arms supplies and taking sides in African conflicts was also common practice amongst the Soviet government (12). From their point of view, the Soviets providing the structure and supplies needed for African states, especially those aligned closer with them, would provide diplomatic victory for the Soviets in this continent in exchange for facilitating development.

The West, having been a former colonizing power, is now at a deficiency in reputation across the continent. Having also taken sides in African disputes, their interpretation as being exploitative powers. Nevertheless, since the administration of President Harry Truman, the United States has taken on an endeavor into providing technical assistance to newly independent African nations, in the hopes that these states will develop into capitalist, democratic countries aligned with the West in their struggle against the Soviets. Having felt as if merely providing supplies and leaving them to do their work would be insufficient, the United States shared technical knowledge with newly independent African states in an attempt at a hearts and minds campaign to anyone willing to listen (13).



Committee's Vision for Topic 2

The Crisis Directors for the Historical Committee would like the delegates to consider their own nation's developments, now that all assigned Member States in Africa are independent and have newfound control over their political futures. Delegates should think about their independence movements, its alignment with (or non-alignment from) large powers, and their unique circumstances surrounding independence. Delegates should also consider historical developments after independence, why they happened the way they did, and how their country moved forward with the policies they implemented and possible entanglements in foreign issues they found themselves in.

Consider the following questions when thinking of your nation's stance in this committee:

- How did my country gain independence, and who aided my country's independence movement, if any?
- How can I convince the Security Council to issue a resolution towards peace in my region?
- Who should I trust to obtain international assistance for development or conflict, if any?
- What are my prospects for development in the private sector and/or through state intervention?
- What natural resources and/or industry do I already have, and how does this affect my standing in the global market?
- How did my country handle the Cold War, and what can I do to keep my country's stance on the conflict in committee?
- Which international conflicts, within and outside of the African continent, did my country find common cause with? How does this affect my country's international relations?



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Topic 2: Affairs in Africa

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