

SISMUN 2026

Official Committee Guide



Committee:

Historical Security Council

Topic:

The Fall of the Berlin Wall

SISMUN 2026

Peacekeeping Without Borders



Contents

Contents	1
1. Introduction	2
Key terms	2
2. Historical Background	4
3. Current status and challenges	5
3.1. Current status (As of Conference freeze Date)	5
3.2. Barriers to resolution	5
3.3. Past international action	5
3.4. Major sub-topics for discussion	5
4. Bloc analysis	6
5. Committee mission	7
5.1. Aim of the committee	7
5.2. Goal of the conference	8
6. Moderated Caucus possible topics to debate	9
References	10

Please note that this research guide is created for the purpose for delegates to get a basic understanding of the topic. For a successful committee, all delegates are encouraged and expected to compile their own research extensively with respect to the topic and their own country.

Additionally, research or information from after the freeze date (November 10th 1989) will not be accepted as valid research, since this is a historical committee and events after this date have not happened yet.



1. Introduction

On November 10, 1989, the world stood witness to an extraordinary moment in history: the fall of the Berlin Wall. Just one day after the East German authorities opened the border, people from both sides poured through the checkpoints, signaling the collapse of one of the most visible symbols of the Cold War. For the international community, this event represented not only the physical dismantling of a barrier but the unraveling of the decades-long division between East and West. The United Nations Security Council now faces the challenge of navigating the uncertain political future of Germany, maintaining stability in Europe, and redefining global alliances as the bipolar order begins to shift.

The fall of the Berlin Wall has thrown into question the security architecture that has defined Europe since 1945. As East and West Germany move closer toward potential reunification, concerns emerge over the balance of power, the fate of the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and the political independence of Eastern European states breaking free from Soviet influence. The Council must consider how to uphold peace, support self-determination, and prevent instability during this volatile transition period.

Note that since this is a Security Council committee, the P5 (Permanent 5) delegations have Veto powers: USSR, China, USA, France, UK. The UN Security Council (UNSC) veto power allows P5 to block any substantive resolution, even with majority support.

Key terms

-
- **Iron Curtain:** A metaphor describing the political, military and ideological barrier dividing Eastern and Western Europe after World War II.



- **German Democratic Republic (GDR):** The socialist state established in East Germany under Soviet influence in 1949
- **Federal Republic of Germany (FRG):** the democratic state formed in West Germany in 1949, aligned with Western Europe and the United States
- **Détente:** A period of eased tensions and improved relations between the Soviet Union and the West during the 1970s
- **Sovereignty:** The principle that each state has authority over its own territory and domestic affairs without external interference
- **Collective Security:** The concept that the peace and security of each nation are the shared responsibility of the international community
- **Cold War:** The geopolitical and ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, marked by competition for global influence without direct large-scale warfare
- **Warsaw Pact:** A military alliance formed in 1955 between the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellite states as a counterbalance to NATO
- **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO):** A Western military alliance established in 1949 to promote collective defense against potential Soviet aggression
- **Bloc Politics:** The division of international politics into opposing ideological groups, specifically the capitalist West and communist East
- **Self-determination:** The right of peoples to freely determine their political status and pursue their own development
- **Reunification:** The process or movement toward the political unification of the GDR and FRG into a single German state
- **Superpower:** A state with dominant global influence and military capability, primarily referring to the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War



2. Historical Background

The Berlin Wall was erected overnight on August 13, 1961, by the Communist government of East Germany, officially called the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Its primary purpose was to halt the mass migration of East Germans into West Berlin and ultimately into West Germany, which was governed by the Federal Republic of Germany. Over twenty-eight years, the Wall symbolised both physical division and an ideological standoff between Western democracies, led mainly by the United States and its NATO allies, and the Eastern Bloc dominated by the Soviet Union.

The division marked the epicenter of Cold War tensions, resulting in families being separated and countless lives lost during attempts to escape to the West. The Wall evolved into a fortified barrier, including two parallel walls separated by a harsh, monitored zone known as the “death strip”

By 1989, the political climate in Eastern Europe was rapidly changing. A wave of reform, influenced by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s ideas of perestroika and glasnost, was weakening Communist governments throughout the Eastern Bloc. In East Germany, mounting protests against economic hardship and government repression brought hundreds of thousands to the streets. On November 9, 1989, a miscommunicated press conference by East German spokesman Günter Schabowski implied immediate freedom of movement. Crowds surged to the Wall, overwhelming border guards who, lacking clear command, allowed passage into West Berlin.

Celebrations erupted as people from both sides crossed the border freely for the first time in decades, spontaneously taking down segments of the Wall with pickaxes and hammers. The collapse of the Berlin Wall marked a turning point (the symbolic end of the Cold War), although the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc in Eastern Europe still existed as of November 10, 1989.



3. Current status and challenges

3.1. Current status (As of Conference Freeze Date)

On November 10th, 1989, the Berlin Wall had fallen just a day prior. Crowds of East and West Germans freely crossed previously guarded checkpoints, marking the collapse of a decades-old barrier. The ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) lost authority while other Communist governments across Eastern Europe appeared increasingly unstable. Borders within Berlin and between the two German states were open for the first time since 1961, but state institutions and alliances—including the Warsaw Pact and NATO—remained formally intact.

3.2. Barriers to resolution

Barriers included political uncertainty regarding reunification, international anxiety over the power balance in Europe, and divergent interests among superpowers. There was hesitancy among France, the UK, and the USSR about a unified, economically powerful Germany. East Germany faced economic collapse, with urgent needs driving risky political moves. Civil unrest, potential violence, and humanitarian concerns persisted as thousands attempted to reconnect families and claim property or rights.

3.3. Past international action

The post-WWII division of Germany resulted from Allied agreements (Potsdam/Tehran/Yalta conferences). The US, UK, France, and USSR retained sovereign rights in Berlin, actively managing security and access in the city. Throughout the Cold War, NATO and Warsaw Pact troop deployments, economic sanctions, and embargoes served as instruments of policy. Past interventions focused on maintaining balance rather than promoting reunification.



4. Bloc analysis

The Fall of the Berlin Wall brought several major international blocs and key actors to the forefront. On one side were the Western democracies, led by the United States and its NATO allies (including the United Kingdom and France), against the Communist Eastern Bloc, dominated by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact partners. The German Democratic Republic (East Germany) maintained staunch Communist rule and was bolstered by the Soviet Union. The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), led by Chancellor Helmut Kohl, represented Western capitalist interests and began shaping reunification policy as events unfolded. French and British leaders, although NATO allies, were wary of German reunification due to fears over a potentially dominant unified Germany.

The collapse of the GDR's authority was accelerated by civil society actors which include pro-democracy protesters in East Germany, activists, and reform-oriented members of the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany). The Allied powers retained sovereign rights in Berlin and had to negotiate new security arrangements and troop deployments as the wall fell. The confluence of grassroots activism, international diplomacy, and hard economic realities drove events towards a sudden and peaceful revolution.



5. Committee mission

5.1. Aim of the committee

The committee's primary aim is to address the international security concerns, immediate social changes, and diplomatic responses following the sudden dismantling of the Berlin Wall. Delegates should discuss:

- The future status and security of Berlin in light of the breached borders.
- Preventing violence and civil unrest amidst the sudden influx of people and changes in border control.
- Potential humanitarian concerns, including reuniting families and supporting civilians affected by decades of division.
- Mechanisms for maintaining stability in both East and West Germany, and across Europe, during this period of uncertainty.
- The implications for existing international treaties and relationships between superpowers (e.g., the United States, Soviet Union, and other key actors).
- Assessing and responding to any threats to peace and security that may arise during this historic transition.

Delegates are tasked with proposing constructive resolutions and frameworks that can guide the peaceful transformation of Berlin, uphold human rights, and safeguard global security, all within the historical context of November 10, 1989. **This means that any events after this date have not yet occurred.**



5.2. Goal of the conference

The goal of this conference is to address the global political and security implications following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Delegates will work to evaluate the prospects for German reunification, ensure stability in Central and Eastern Europe, and redefine the role of international alliances in a rapidly changing world. The committee aims to produce resolutions that balance national sovereignty, self-determination, and collective peacekeeping efforts during this critical historical moment.



6. Moderated Caucus possible topics to debate

- Managing the risks of mass migration and border instability following the opening of the Berlin Wall
- The impact of the Berlin Wall's fall on Cold War bloc politics and superpower relations
- Implications of German reunification for European security and stability.
- The role and future relevance of NATO and the Warsaw Pact
- Challenges to sovereignty and self-determination for Central and Eastern European states in the post-wall context
- Strategies for collective security and peacekeeping in a rapidly shifting Europe
- The influence of civil society and popular movements on international security policy
- The future security status and governance of Berlin and Germany
- Mechanisms to prevent violence or instability during the political transition of power



References

- Ammon, Herbert. "The Fall of the Berlin Wall: Its Causes and Consequences." *Brolly*, vol. 2, no. 3, Dec. 2019, pp. 13–41, journals.lapub.co.uk/index.php/brolly/article/view/1308/1146.
- Brewin, C. J. "Europe's Future in the Arab View: Dimensions of a New Political Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region." *International Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 1, Oxford University Press, Jan. 1982, pp. 114–14, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2620193>. Accessed 13 Jan. 2026.
- Britannica Editors. "Iron Curtain | Definition & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 July 1998, www.britannica.com/topic/Iron-Curtain.
- Croft, Pauline. "Trading with the Enemy 1585-1604." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1989, pp. 281–302, www.jstor.org/stable/2639602.
- History.com Editors. "Berlin Wall." *History*, A&E Television Networks, 15 Dec. 2009, www.history.com/topics/cold-war/berlin-wall.
- "Remembering 1989: Berlin Wall Stories." *Afsa.org*, afsa.org/remembering-1989-berlin-wall-stories.
- The. "Berlin Wall | Definition, Length, & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 July 1998, www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-Wall.
- "The Berlin Wall: Wilson Center Publications & Archival Resources | Wilson Center." www.wilsoncenter.org, www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/berlin-wall-wilson-center-publications-archival-resources.
- The National Museum of American Diplomacy. "The Rise and Fall of the Berlin Wall - the National Museum of American Diplomacy." *The National Museum of American Diplomacy*, 8 Nov. 2024, diplomacy.state.gov/berlin-wall/.