



Anne Arundel County Public Schools Model UN Conference 2025-2026

Historical Crisis Committee The Yalta Conference, 1945 Background Guide*

This guide may include sensitive topics such as genocide, anti-Semitism, gun violence, racism, ethnic cleansing, and death. These topics, especially those related to World War II, may be upsetting to some. You may choose to skip this material or speak to the chairs or advisors at any time—we are here to support you. All delegates are expected to approach these topics with respect and seriousness. Additionally, please take care when participating in committee discussions. It may not be appropriate for you to be “historically accurate” in today’s climate, so please consider your words and actions during committee session. Our school district prioritizes inclusivity and does not tolerate biased behavior. If you have questions, please reach out to your advisor or the chairs for additional support.

Background

The War

By early 1945, Nazi Germany was in full retreat, with Allied forces advancing on both the Western and Eastern fronts. The Western Allies had successfully liberated France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, but the most decisive blow came from the Soviet Union. The Red Army had driven German forces back from deep within Soviet territory all the way to the outskirts of Berlin in a matter of months. Along the way, the Soviets had also liberated much of Eastern Europe, including Poland and parts of the Balkans, and had supported the rise of pro-communist governments in countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. These developments gave the Soviet Union a dominant military and political position heading into the Yalta Conference.

The location of the conference—Yalta, in Soviet Crimea—was itself symbolic of the changing balance of power. While Roosevelt had preferred to meet in a location more favorable to Western logistics, like Malta or Cyprus, Stalin insisted on holding the meeting on Soviet soil. Officially, this was due to his health and fear of flying, but in reality, it also demonstrated his confidence in the USSR’s superior bargaining position. Roosevelt and Churchill agreed, prioritizing diplomatic unity over confrontation, with Roosevelt especially hopeful that his personal relationship with Stalin could ensure cooperation.

Each leader entered the conference with different priorities. Roosevelt was focused on creating a new international peacekeeping organization—the United Nations—that could prevent future global conflicts and reduce the need for U.S. military involvement abroad. He also needed

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Stalin's military help against Japan, as a direct invasion of the Japanese mainland was expected to result in massive American casualties. Roosevelt believed that Soviet participation in the Pacific war could shorten the conflict and save lives. He saw cooperation with Stalin as essential, even if that meant making difficult compromises.

Churchill, on the other hand, was deeply concerned about the postwar balance of power in Europe. Britain was economically and militarily exhausted after years of war, and Churchill feared Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. He was particularly worried about what might happen if the United States withdrew from Europe after the war ended. To guard against this, Churchill hoped to strengthen France's role as a European power and insisted on free elections and self-determination for countries like Poland. He was wary of Stalin's ambitions and wanted to prevent Eastern Europe from falling entirely under Soviet control.

Stalin arrived at Yalta with the most leverage. The Soviet Union had borne the brunt of the fighting and had suffered enormous losses, giving Stalin strong justification for demanding both reparations and security guarantees. He wanted to ensure that Germany would never again be a threat to the USSR. This meant demanding the dismantling of German military power, heavy reparations, and the establishment of a buffer zone of friendly, Soviet-aligned governments in Eastern Europe. Stalin also wanted official Allied recognition of Soviet influence in countries like Poland, Hungary, and Romania to solidify control over the region.

In summary, while all three leaders appeared to agree on broad goals—defeating Germany, establishing peace, and creating a postwar order—their underlying agendas and suspicions made true consensus difficult. Roosevelt hoped to preserve cooperation, Churchill aimed to contain Soviet power, and Stalin pushed to secure Soviet interests in Eastern Europe. These tensions would eventually lay the groundwork for the Cold War.

Previous Conferences

Moscow Conference

From October to November 1943, this conference brought together representatives from the U.S., U.K., U.S.S.R., and China to plan for the war's end and postwar order. It produced the Moscow Declarations, which addressed war crimes, denounced fascism, and called for the creation of an international organization to maintain peace after the war.

Cairo Conference

In November 1943, this conference focused on the Pacific front and included Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang Kai-Shek. It resulted in the Cairo Declaration, which committed the Allies to continue fighting Japan until its unconditional surrender and laid out U.S. goals in Asia.

Tehran Conference

From November to December 1943, this conference was the first full meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin. They agreed to launch a second front in Western Europe (which became D-Day), affirmed Iran's independence, and coordinated further military planning, setting the tone for future cooperation among the Big Three.

Bretton Woods Conference

In July 1944, this conference was an economic meeting among Allied nations aimed at rebuilding the global financial system. It led to the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and a fixed exchange rate system to stabilize postwar economies.

Dumbarton Oaks Conference

From August to October 1944, this conference brought together the U.S., U.K., U.S.S.R., and China to design the United Nations. Key debates included the structure of the Security Council and the veto power for permanent members—issues that would be finalized at Yalta.

Setting

Unlike other Crisis Committees which can sometimes be individualistic, the Yalta Conference will be very focused on cooperation among the delegations. The American, British, and Soviet delegations should work together to establish their goals and negotiate their issues, deciding amongst themselves what they are willing to sacrifice and what they cannot do without. However, this is not to say that individualism is entirely sacrificed at this committee. Delegates will not only have to manage what their delegation wants to achieve, but also convince other members of their respective sides that their approach is the best one to take. Some groups may take a more democratic approach; others may take a more authoritarian approach. The key to success in this committee is not only how well you manage diplomacy with opponents on the other side of the room, but also how well you manage diplomacy with those sitting right next to you.

Topics

Germany

One of the most important issues at Yalta was deciding what to do with Germany after the war. The Allies had different visions for its future. The U.S.S.R. wanted to completely cripple Germany's military and economy to ensure it could never threaten them again, especially after suffering immense losses during the war. Britain supported weakening Germany as well, but mainly to help restore France as a major power and create a stronger Western Europe. Roosevelt, on the other hand, was more focused on the Pacific and defeating Japan. While he didn't oppose punishing Germany, he was cautious about letting Soviet influence grow unchecked in Europe and wanted Germany to remain strong enough to serve as a potential barrier to communist expansion. These differing goals made it difficult to reach a clear agreement and helped lay the groundwork for future Cold War tensions.

Guiding Questions

1. What should happen to Germany—stay unified, be split, or disbanded?
2. How should Hitler's supporters in government, the military, and the economy be handled?
3. What is each side willing to trade to shape postwar Germany to their liking?

Poland

Poland, much like Germany, was a larger concern for the U.S.S.R. and Britain than it was for America. The U.S.S.R. wanted to create a buffer zone across the continent. Poland was key to this, being the first line of attack for any future German invasions and offering the most direct route to Moscow. Also, the U.S.S.R. was interested in establishing communism across Europe to aid in its political support and saw Poland as integral to this cause. For this same reason, Britain was opposed to the U.S.S.R. exerting too much influence over Poland. They wanted self-determination and free elections in the country to hopefully prevent communism from taking root in the country and giving the U.S.S.R. even more power on the continent than it already had. Besides, with the planned dismantlement of Germany Britain was hoping for, it would have left even less between Britain and the Soviets in the event of an invasion into Western Europe. On this issue, Roosevelt sided with Churchill, hoping for more democracies and western-style democracies in Eastern Europe to prevent communism from advancing too far west; however, this was not a major concern of his.

Guiding Questions:

1. What should happen to Poland—free elections or continued Soviet control?
2. Should former German-held Polish territories be returned to Poland?
3. What political system should Poland have—communist, capitalist, or self-determined?

Eastern Europe

Eastern Europe is currently occupied by Soviet forces that liberated it from Nazi control. This includes Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Balkans. The main players in the area are the Soviets: not only do they see the area as a crucial buffer zone to prevent any future invasions by western powers but they also see it as within their sphere of influence and an important area for communism to spread to. The Soviets are looking for acknowledgement of Soviet influence over the area, meaning it would be free of interference from the western Allies where they could use their influence as they see fit. An informal agreement of western recognition over the area came in the form of the Percentages Agreement between Churchill and Stalin, giving at least 50% Soviet influence in all Eastern European states except Greece where the British would control 90%. Churchill is looking for a formalization of these terms and assurances that they would get their promised influence, especially in Greece. America, on the other hand, is opposed to the idea of the Soviets spreading their ideology and are looking for free elections in many of the countries to possibly swing the countries in a more western-styled democratic and capitalist manner.

Guiding Questions:

1. How should influence in Eastern Europe be divided—mainly Soviet, or shared with the West?
2. What political systems should Eastern European countries adopt—communism, capitalism, or self-determination?

The United Nations

The basic framework for the United Nations was established at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944, following the 1943 Four Nations Declaration, which called for a global organization to promote peace and cooperation. The main goals included maintaining peace, fostering friendly relations, encouraging international cooperation, and providing a platform for resolving conflicts. However, key issues—like the structure of the Security Council, the role of Great Power politics, and the use of veto power—remained unresolved. The U.S. supported the UN as a means to extend its global influence, favoring a limited veto and the inclusion of allies like Britain and China. Britain pushed for France to have a seat on the Council to avoid isolation in Europe. The Soviets, meanwhile, wanted a stronger veto to counterbalance the West's numerical advantage and ensure their interests couldn't be overruled. Membership criteria and the UN's authority over sovereign nations were also still under discussion.

Guiding Questions:

1. Who should be allowed to join the United Nations, and what should the membership requirements be?
2. Who should sit on the Security Council, and what powers should they hold?
3. How powerful should the veto be? Should it block motions entirely or be limited?
4. How much authority should the UN have over national sovereignty?
5. What system should exist to allow the UN to change and evolve over time?

Points to Remember

Allies and Loyalty

The Yalta Conference, like much of WWII diplomacy, was not simply a story of firm alliances. Each of the three powers—Britain, the U.S., and the U.S.S.R.—prioritized national interest over loyalty, often making secret deals and pursuing different goals. Delegates should avoid assuming fixed alliances and instead evaluate each situation based on their nation's strategic needs.

War and Diplomacy

While the war provided the context, the conference itself was a diplomatic exercise. Military power served as leverage in negotiations, but the primary focus was reaching agreements without direct conflict. Diplomacy, not warfare, is the main tool in this committee.

Leaders and Subordinates

Leadership structures varied: the U.S. and U.K. operated more democratically, giving their delegates more autonomy, while the Soviet side was more hierarchical under Stalin. Still, collaboration and shared decision-making—even in the Soviet bloc—will likely lead to more successful outcomes and richer diplomacy across blocs.

Characters

This list includes real individuals who were present at the Yalta conference, as well as those who were not invited. It also includes fictional characters. Based on registration, not all characters may be present during the conference. No characters will be added.

Franklin D. Roosevelt – President of the United States

As President of the United States and a principal Allied leader, Franklin D. Roosevelt arrives at Yalta intent on shaping a stable postwar world order grounded in collective security and American democratic values. Despite declining health, Roosevelt remains focused on securing Soviet participation in the war against Japan and laying the foundation for the United Nations. Balancing idealism with pragmatism, Roosevelt must navigate the divergent priorities of the USSR and the UK while ensuring American geopolitical and economic interests are preserved in both Europe and Asia.

Winston Churchill – Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

A seasoned statesman and a staunch anti-communist, Winston Churchill seeks to preserve British influence in postwar Europe and the Mediterranean. Having previously negotiated spheres of influence with Stalin in the “Percentages Agreement,” Churchill enters Yalta concerned about Soviet expansionism in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland and the Balkans. He is determined to secure democratic governance in liberated nations and uphold Britain’s imperial and strategic interests, all while maintaining the strength of the Anglo-American alliance.

Joseph Stalin – General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

Emerging as one of the most powerful figures of the 20th century, Stalin arrives at Yalta from a position of military strength. With the Red Army occupying much of Eastern Europe, Stalin is poised to shape the region’s future according to Soviet security needs and ideological preferences. He is committed to establishing friendly governments on the USSR’s western border, asserting influence over Eastern Europe, and securing recognition of the USSR’s postwar territorial gains.

Anthony Eden – British Foreign Secretary

As Churchill’s chief diplomat, Anthony Eden brings extensive experience in European affairs and wartime diplomacy. Eden’s role at Yalta is to operationalize British policy objectives and serve as a balancing force between Churchill’s assertiveness and Roosevelt’s idealism. He is particularly focused on the specifics of postwar governance, border adjustments, and the treatment of smaller European states.

Edward R. Stettinius Jr. – U.S. Secretary of State

Relatively new to high-level diplomacy, Stettinius represents the State Department’s institutional interests at Yalta, particularly in the formation of the United Nations and the reconstruction of international diplomacy. He often acts as a conduit between Roosevelt and Allied diplomats and plays a crucial role in drafting official agreements. His views align with Roosevelt’s vision of a liberal international order.

Vyacheslav Molotov – Soviet Foreign Minister

A skilled negotiator and loyal Stalinist, Molotov is instrumental in advancing Soviet objectives through diplomacy. Having played a central role in earlier wartime conferences and the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Molotov approaches Yalta with a focus on securing formal recognition of Soviet territorial gains and ensuring political control over Eastern Europe through diplomatic means.

Charles de Gaulle – President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic

Though France was not invited to Yalta, including de Gaulle as a crisis character introduces a dynamic challenge to the established power structure. De Gaulle demands recognition of France as a major Allied power and seeks to reassert French sovereignty and influence in postwar Europe, particularly in Germany and former French colonies. His relationship with Roosevelt is strained, but he enjoys some support from Churchill.

General George C. Marshall – Chief of Staff, U.S. Army

General Marshall is the architect of American military strategy and logistics in the European theater. At Yalta, he advises Roosevelt on military realities, including timelines for the Pacific campaign and occupation strategies for Germany. Marshall is pragmatic, disciplined, and influential in shaping how military commitments are integrated into political agreements.

Field Marshal Alan Brooke – Chief of the Imperial General Staff, UK

A trusted military advisor to Churchill, Brooke brings extensive knowledge of the European battlefield and postwar military logistics. Though often frustrated by Churchill's grand visions, he remains committed to British security and operational effectiveness in managing the defeated Axis powers.

Marshal Georgy Zhukov – Commander of the Red Army

Zhukov is a Soviet war hero and the commanding general responsible for many major victories against Nazi Germany. He arrives at Yalta with unparalleled battlefield credibility. His presence bolsters Stalin's bargaining power, particularly on questions of occupation zones, reparations, and military security in Eastern Europe.

William J. Donovan – Director of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS)

Donovan heads American wartime intelligence and plays a pivotal behind-the-scenes role at Yalta. He gathers intelligence on Soviet intentions and pushes for greater U.S. postwar readiness in the face of potential ideological rivalry. He's also deeply interested in the future of intelligence collaboration and the shape of Europe's security landscape.

Stewart Menzies – Chief of the British Secret Intelligence Service (M16)

Menzies serves as a behind-the-scenes advisor to Winston Churchill providing critical insights on Soviet intentions and covert operations. Suspicious of Stalin and the NKVD, Menzies works to protect British interests by monitoring intelligence threats and shaping Allied strategy through secret channels. His role is to use intelligence, espionage, and diplomacy to influence the postwar balance of power without exposing his full hand.

Lavrentiy Beria – Head of the Soviet secret police (NKVD)

Beria is Stalin's most trusted and feared intelligence chief, operating from the shadows during the Yalta Conference. Ruthless and cunning, Beria manages Soviet espionage, oversees occupied territories, and ensures Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe through force, surveillance, and manipulation. His role in the committee is to protect Soviet interests by using intelligence operations, suppressing dissent, and influencing negotiations through covert pressure and strategic deception.

Stanisław Mikołajczyk – Prime Minister of the Polish Government-in-Exile

As a representative of the Polish government-in-exile in London, Mikołajczyk is fighting for the survival of an independent and democratic Poland. He is deeply concerned by Soviet occupation and the potential legitimization of the Soviet-backed Lublin Committee. Poland is central to the tensions between the West and the USSR, making his presence highly contentious.

Josip Broz Tito – Marshal of Yugoslavia

Tito leads the Yugoslav Partisan movement and has emerged as a powerful anti-fascist leader. Though nominally communist, Tito maintains a fiercely independent stance from Stalin. His presence reflects the shifting power structures in the Balkans. He is focused on postwar reconstruction, territorial integrity, and international recognition of his leadership.

Edvard Beneš – President of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile

A respected democratic leader, Beneš is returning from exile to reclaim Czechoslovakia's sovereignty. He must navigate Soviet military presence while maintaining Western support. His goals include restoring prewar borders, securing democratic institutions, and resisting communist domination.

Isabella Moretti – War Correspondent, The New York Sentinel

Isabella Moretti is an ambitious American journalist granted rare behind-the-scenes access to the Yalta Conference as a representative of the international press corps. Known for her daring frontline reporting and sharp political insight, she is eager to uncover the real motives behind the diplomacy. Though officially neutral, Moretti may be sympathetic to certain ideological currents and has been known to exchange information with intelligence officials in return for access.

Father Matthias Ricci – Envoy of the Holy See

Father Ricci is a Jesuit priest and unofficial diplomatic observer sent by the Vatican. Though the Holy See is not a formal participant in the conference, Ricci's mission is to advocate for religious freedom in postwar Europe, protect Catholic institutions in Eastern Europe, and quietly monitor the treatment of the Church under Soviet occupation.

“Agent Adler” – Unidentified Operative (Codename Only Known)

Known only by a codename intercepted by British intelligence, “Agent Adler” is believed to be operating in Yalta under deep cover—possibly as a staffer, secretary, or aide to a major delegation. Little is known about Adler's true identity, nationality, or mission, but reports suggest they may be feeding information to a foreign power (or perhaps several). Their presence introduces a layer of paranoia and espionage to the proceedings.

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