

# AFTain '25

Yusuf Ziya Öner Science High School Model United Nations Conference

## CC: The Berlin Blockade

Agenda Item:  
Open Agenda

Under Secretary General:

Yasemin Raithel

Academic Assistant:

Mare Tanem Yavuz

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## **1. Letter from the Secretary General**

Distinguished delegates,

It is with profound honor and an enduring sense of purpose that we extend our warmest welcome to you all for AFTRAIN'25. As the Secretaries General, we are genuinely honored to see this conference once again gather bright young minds who share a belief in dialogue, diplomacy, and cooperation.

First and foremost, gratitude must be extended to our dedicated academic and organization teams. Without their unwavering efforts, the vision we aim to share with our generation would have never come to life.

We live in a time when global knots grow more complex every day, yet it is also a time filled with opportunities. The work you will do here represents what diplomacy truly means, the ability to seek solutions, wind up those complications and connect them across tough conditions.

On behalf of the Secretariat, we wish you an inspiring and memorable experience. Let us bow our heads, the king is back!

Kind regards,

Kaan Muştu & Ömer T. Demirel  
Co-Secretaries-General

## **2. Letter from the Under Secretary General**

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me extend a huge welcome to you all, I am Yasemin Raithel, currently studying Biology at Middle East Technical University. I am honored to serve as the Under-Secretary General of the CC:Berlin Blockade and pleased to invite you to this challenging and historically rich experience.

The 1948-49 Berlin Blockade was one of the earliest and most defining conflicts of the Cold War. In post-war divided Germany, tensions escalated between the allied powers and the Soviet Union when land access to West Berlin was cut off. The ensuing events were not only a strategic crisis but also a test of political resolve, humanitarian responsibility, and diplomatic ingenuity. The Berlin Airlift demonstrated how decisions made under pressure can shape the future of international relations and global power dynamics.

As delegates, you will step into the roles of leaders facing uncertainty, limited information, and high risks. I encourage you to think critically, cooperate courageously, and remain open to innovative solutions. This committee is not just about reliving history, but about learning from it.

I wish you good luck, insightful discussions, and an unforgettable conference experience. I hope this committee will inspire every single one of you.

If you have any questions to ask or concerns feel free to contact me via  
[yasemin.raithel@metu.edu.tr](mailto:yasemin.raithel@metu.edu.tr)  
+90 5367840226

Sincerely,  
Yasemin RAITHEL  
Under-Secretary General of CC:Berlin Blockade

### **3. Letter from the Academic Assistant**

Distinguished Delegates,

I eagerly welcome you all to the CC: Berlin Blockade Committee. I'm Mare Tanem Yavuz, and I will be your Academic Assistant for this journey into one of the most tense and defining moments of the early Cold War.

The Berlin Blockade of 1948–49 was more than a political conflict, as it was a test of courage, ingenuity, and human resilience. A city of millions was cut off, and the world watched as leaders faced impossible choices under pressure that could alter the course of history. In this committee, you are invited to step into those shoes, to feel the weight of decisions that could shape nations and impact countless lives.

My role is to guide you through the historical and procedural complexities, to support your research, and to help you think critically about the challenges your positions demand. But beyond that, I'm here to encourage you to immerse yourselves fully, to debate boldly, and to embrace the uncertainty and urgency that defined this period.

This committee is your stage to experiment, to question, and to explore history not just as a series of dates and facts, but as a living, breathing moment filled with tension, opportunity,

and human drama. I can't wait to see the insights, strategies, and creativity each of you will bring to the table.

If at any point you need guidance or clarification, please reach out to me at:

[6b.maretanemyavuz@gmail.com](mailto:6b.maretanemyavuz@gmail.com)

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Step boldly into history, and let's make this committee an experience you will never forget.

Warmest regards,

Mare Tanem Yavuz

Academic Assistant

CC: Berlin Blockade Committee

#### **4. Overview of the Committee: The Berlin Blockade (Historical Crisis)**

In this committee, you will be placed directly into one of the first major confrontations of the Cold War, the Berlin Blockade of 1948–1949. This crisis began when the Soviet Union cut off all land and water access routes to Berlin in an effort to force the Western Allies out of the city and strengthen its influence over Germany by making them suffer, making them weaker due to the lack of resources. What started as a political and strategic decision, it quickly escalated into a situation with serious humanitarian, economic, and military implications, making it a sort of war crime.

Berlin occupied a unique and highly sensitive position in postwar Europe. Although the city was geographically located within the Soviet-controlled zone of eastern Germany, it was divided into four occupation sectors, the American, British, French, and Soviet, based on agreements made after the Second World War. This division made Berlin both a symbol and a testing ground for ideological rivalry between capitalism and communism. When access to the city was blocked, the future of Berlin, the credibility of the Western Allies, and the stability of Europe were all placed at risk.

As delegates, you will experience this crisis from its earliest moments, before the outcome is known as you will shape the new outcome. There is no predetermined solution, and history is not fixed. You will be expected to understand the historical context while also thinking creatively and strategically about how to respond to evolving developments. This is an advanced crisis committee, meaning the pace will be fast, information may be incomplete, and decisions will often need to be made under pressure. Your actions can reshape alliances, escalate or de-escalate tensions, and determine how the people of Berlin survive the blockade.

##### **4.1 Role, Authority, and Decision-Making Powers**

In this committee, you represent a key decision-maker directly involved in the Berlin Blockade, such as a political leader, senior diplomat, or military authority. Your role carries real power and responsibility, and you are expected to act in line with the influence and limitations of your position. This means balancing national interests, international diplomacy, and humanitarian considerations at all times.

You will have the authority to propose and implement actions through speeches, negotiations, and crisis directives. These actions may include diplomatic outreach, economic measures, logistical planning to supply Berlin, intelligence operations, or military responses. Every directive you submit will be evaluated based on realism, historical plausibility, and strategic impact. Your decisions will not exist in isolation, each action may trigger reactions from other actors and lead to new crisis developments.

This committee is designed to reflect the uncertainty and pressure faced by real leaders during the Berlin Blockade. You will need to think ahead, anticipate consequences, and adapt quickly as the situation changes. Effective communication, cooperation, and leadership will be essential. Ultimately, your judgment and decision-making will shape the direction of the crisis and determine whether Berlin becomes a symbol of cooperation, confrontation, or escalation in the early Cold War.

#### **4.3 Rules of Procedure of the Committee**

##### **a. Governing Rules**

Directives are important for the progress of a crisis committee however it is not only about directives. In crisis committees there are also some procedures which you need to discuss upon or talk about. Also talking will be the key factor for communication between the delegates. Without communication no directive will be truly effective. To enjoy the committee better you must know what others have been doing.

###### **i. Tour de Table**

Tour de table is a special procedure that is usually applied in crisis and some special committees. When the first official session of the committee begins, delegates must give some speeches after the roll call. For the first session, tour de table can be assumed as the opening speech. As for the content, you usually tell:

- Personal information about your allocation
- Details about your character
- Your plans if you have one from the beginning
- Information about the soldiers, population, equipment etc.

After the first session, tour de table can be assumed as the general speakers list. At the beginning of the session a tour de table procedure can be applied based on the board initiative. As for the tour de table procedures other than the first session, the content doesn't change significantly. But you don't need to introduce your character one more time since you already did it. About the content you can tell:

- Your future plans
- The directive that you're working on
- Your opinions about the progress
- Your ideas about recent updates

Also if there will be a tour de table, each delegate of the committee has to attend it. It is an obligation.

###### **ii. Procedure details**

For the procedural details you must pay attention to some certain things, such as;

-You must answer all of the WH questions(Where,when,what,why,who,how) when you are writing a directive.

-Writing your allocation,where are you sending that directive to(Related Department), committee date and real time is essential.

-Your directives will be evaluated by the academy of the committee. To make them understandable you should try to avoid grammar mistakes

-When an update is decided by the committee academy,it will be shared with you immediately.During these update times you have to be quiet.

-Sometimes there may be a lot of updates and directives to deal with. To handle the issue a freeze time can be declared by the committee academy. In freeze time you can write directives but you can not submit them.

-When you complete a directive,you need to give it to the admins of the committee.They will bring the directives to the committee academy.

## **b. Directives**

Particularly in crisis or special committees , directives are a crucial component of delegate interaction and strategy. These directives, categorized mainly into personal, joint, and intelligence directives, allow delegates to shape the committee's decisions and outcomes actively. Each type of directive serves a specific function and context.

### i.Personal Directives

Personal directives are unilateral actions taken by a single delegate, representing their assigned country or character. These directives are crafted solely by the delegate without the need for collaboration or approval from other participants, although their effectiveness might depend on the reactions of others in the committee.A typical personal directive includes specific actions, policy implementations, or responses to crises that align with the delegate's national policy and objectives. These directives can range from military maneuvers and diplomatic negotiations to economic measures and public statements.The main purpose of a personal directive is to assert a delegate's position, make immediate decisions, and respond to unfolding events in the simulation. They allow for quick, decisive action that can significantly influence the committee's direction.

### ii.Joint Directives

Joint directives are collaborative efforts where two or more delegates come together to form a consensus on a particular action or policy. These directives require negotiation, cooperation, and sometimes compromise among the involved parties.These directives typically cover actions or policies that benefit from or require multilateral support, such as international agreements, coordinated military actions, or joint humanitarian aid efforts.The effectiveness of joint directives often hinges on their ability to gather widespread support or create coalitions. They demonstrate the power of diplomacy and collective action in addressing complex international issues.

### iii. Intelligence Directives

Intelligence directives are unique to crisis committees and involve the management and use of information to gain strategic advantages. These directives can be issued by individual delegates or groups and are directed at the crisis staff who simulate intelligence agencies and other informational resources. Intelligence directives request or direct the gathering, analysis, and dissemination of crucial information relevant to the ongoing crisis or committee scenario. They may involve espionage, reconnaissance, or the securing of confidential communications. The primary goal of intelligence directives is to enhance a delegate's situational awareness and strategic positioning by obtaining valuable, often secret, information that can influence the committee's decisions and outcomes.

#### c. How to write a well-planned directive

##### *Provide Explicit Information*

Once you know exactly what you want to achieve, put it in writing. To decide whether your writing is concise and clear or how much information to add in a directive, put yourself in the position of the person providing the instructions.

##### *Keep it short and direct*

Try to avoid drafting directions that are overly long but remain specific enough to avoid misunderstandings. "I want to kill person B," for instance, should not be written. Instead, use what you already know about them to create a plan. Ask yourself every question you can think of. Where are they? In reality, who ought to perform the action? What is the weapon? Is a fallback strategy in place? Try to fill in as many story holes as you can without writing an essay. Don't make any mistakes. The second is that a complex plan needs to be prepared in a number of steps.

##### *Develop Your Strategy Step-by-Step*

Unless it is a straightforward activity, you cannot complete the entire procedure in one step. Your plan needs to be broken up into smaller parts. Hire a spy first, for instance, if you want to steal anything. Next, use your preferred method to learn more about the object and its location. Your spy must become familiar with the security measures in place as well as the guards' routines, rounds, and habits. Utilize the facts you get to develop a winning strategy and hide your identity. Although this clarifies the concept, stealing is probably not a directive that this committee will be concerned with.

##### *Each Directive, One Issue*

To avoid confusing the backrooms, be sure to specify any operations you are conducting in distinct orders.

### *Consult Your Prior Instructions*

Reminding the backrooms of any prior steps you have done (that they have approved) is a smart idea. For instance, inform the hired spy that it was already at spot A if you wish to move them from position A to location B. Additionally, to prevent misunderstandings or gaps, be clear about exactly who or what you are referring to (maybe a particular uniform color, flag design, or a distinctive piece of armament).

### *Utilize Numbers*

Whenever possible, use exact figures instead of percentages. Personal affairs, committees, and joint directions with other delegates are all subject to this rule. Providing exact figures can also speed up the answer and make the backroom's job easier. This is especially helpful when multiple strategies are implemented at the same time during a crisis, which can be confusing.

In short, be as precise and succinct as possible to convey the information, build a step-by-step strategy, avoid combining many ideas into a single command, refer to earlier directives, and utilize exact numbers.

## **4.4 MATRIX of the Committee**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION(1948-49)</b>	<b>SIDE</b>
Lucius D. Clay	U.S. Military Governor of Germany	Western Allies
George C. Marshall	U.S. Secretary of State	Western Allies
Vyacheslav Molotov	Soviet Foreign Minister	Soviet Bloc
Ernest Bevin	British Foreign Secretary	Western Allies
Clement Attlee	British Prime Minister	Western Allies
William H. Tunner	Commander, Berlin Airlift	Western Allies
Curtis LeMay	Commander, U.S. Strategic Air Command	Western Allies
Sir Brian Robertson	British Military Governor of Germany	Western Allies
Ernst Reuter	Mayor of West Berlin	Western Allies
Walter Ulbricht	Leader, Socialist Unity Party (SED)	Soviet Bloc
Wilhelm Pieck	President of East Germany	Soviet Bloc
Andrei Gromyko	Soviet Diplomat / UN Representative	Soviet Bloc
Jean Monnet	French Economic Planner	Western Allies
Marshal Georgy Zhukov	Soviet Military Commander	Soviet Bloc
Lavrentiy Beria	Head of Soviet Security	Soviet Bloc
Vincent Auriol	President of France	Western Allies
Konrad Adenauer	Political Leader (West Germany)	Western Allies

### **5.1 Definition of the Berlin Blockade and the Scope of the Crisis**

The Berlin Blockade is the first major breaking point of the bipolar world order that began to take shape after the Second World War and is the most concrete starting sign of the Cold War. This process starting with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics unilaterally closing all highways, railway lines, and water canals reaching West Berlin under the control of Western allies on the morning of June 24, 1948, is one of the most organized political siege operations history has seen. This move, far beyond being a simple transportation obstruction, is a

geopolitical blackmail mechanism used by the Soviet Union with the aim of completely uprooting Western powers from Berlin or dictating the decisions regarding Germany's future on its own terms.

When the scope of the crisis is examined, it is clearly seen that the matter did not remain limited only to the administrative borders of the city of Berlin, on the contrary, it turned into a global show of force. The Soviet administration, by positioning Berlin as the "soft underbelly" and "hostage inside" of the West, aimed to break the economic and political unification steps of Western states in Europe, especially the effects of the Marshall Plan. Depriving West Berlin, where approximately 2.5 million civilians live, completely of vital resources such as food, coal, medicine, and electricity, added a giant humanitarian disaster dimension to the crisis. This situation imprisoned the Western states into a very narrow strategic corridor between a military breakthrough operation that could trigger the Third World War and an embarrassing withdrawal.

The actual depth of the crisis originates from Berlin becoming the exact center of the ideological front between liberal-capitalist values and the communist-centralist structure. In this process Berlin, is not only a city, but the symbolic fortress of the resistance shown by the Western world against communism. The fear that the slightest concession to be given or the abandonment of Berlin could carry the Soviet influence as far as the Atlantic coasts by creating a domino effect in the whole of Europe, removed the scope of the crisis from being a local problem and turned it into a global security issue. As a result, the Berlin Blockade functioned as a micro-cosmos where diplomacy fell silent, logistical possibilities and military determination competed, determining the whole character of the Cold War.

## **5.2 Post-Second World War Quadripartite Occupation Regime and the Failure of Joint Administration**

After the Second World War the future of Germany, was shaped with a "quadripartite occupation" regime among the winning allied powers being the USA, USSR, United Kingdom and France included afterwards. According to the decisions taken at the Potsdam Conference in the year 1945 Germany and the former capital Berlin, were divided into four occupation zones each being under the military administration of an allied power. On paper this structure, was envisaging the management of Germany as a single economic and political unit within the framework of the "five D" principle (denazification, demilitarization, democratization, decentralization and decartelization). However this ambitious joint administration project, from its very first months was dragged into an administration crisis due to the ideological conflicts and strategic interest differences of the allies.

The highest institutional organ of the quadripartite administration, the Allied Control Council (ACC), was working with the rule of decisions concerning the whole of Germany being taken with "unanimity". But this voting method, caused the council to turn into a veto mechanism rather than producing solutions. The Soviet Union's policy of dismantling industrial facilities in the Eastern occupation zone and carrying them to its own lands as reparations in the name of compensating for the destruction of the war, fell diametrically opposite to the Western allies' ambition of standing Germany up economically and making it a "buffer zone" for Europe. With the Soviet delegate Marshal Sokolovsky leaving the council table on March 20,

1948, the quadripartite administration regime collapsed de facto and the cooperation between the allies left its place to an open hostility.

This institutional failure, spread also to the Kommandatura structure in the administration of Berlin and made the joint administration of the city impossible. The Western allies' moves of uniting their own occupation zones economically (Bizonia and Trizonia), were characterized by the Soviets as "a clear violation of the Potsdam Agreement"; in return the Soviet administration put into effect administrative obstacles that would restrict the allied mobility in Berlin. As a result, the dream of building Germany as a single democratic state, left its place to a divided reality where two different economic and political systems collided. This tragic end of the joint administration, made the blockade that would break out in the summer of 1948 not an accident, but an inevitable systemic result.

### **5.3 Berlin's Geopolitical Position and Its Quality of Being the West's Outpost**

Berlin, represents a geopolitical anomaly without an equal seen in the Cold War geography. The fact that the city, remained like an "island" approximately 160 kilometers deep in the Soviet occupation zone (East Germany), turned it into a strategic center extremely difficult to defend militarily for the Western allies, but impossible to give up on politically. West Berlin, was positioned as a shining "showcase" in the exact center of Western-type liberal democracy and free market economy in a geography where communist ideology tried to establish absolute dominance. While this situation, constituted a continuous security gap and an ideological challenge in the heart of its own sphere of influence for the Soviet Union; for Western powers holding Berlin, became the most concrete and vital test of the doctrine of preventing the spread of communism (Containment).

West Berlin's "outpost" quality, is directly related not only to a military presence, but at the same time to the global prestige of the Western allies. The city, is the furthest point of the psychological front established by the Western world against the Eastern Bloc and the symbol of freedom behind the "Iron Curtain". If Berlin falls or is abandoned by bowing down to Soviet pressure, it was foreseen that this situation would trigger the perception of "America leaves its allies in the lurch in their most difficult moments" in the whole of Europe and would shake the new European order built with the Marshall Plan from its foundation. Therefore Berlin, rather than being a military operation field, is a symbolic chess square whose strategic weight surpasses continents. The Western allies' physical distance to the city and logistical dependence, turn Berlin into a "battering ram" against communism on one hand and a "throat" that the Soviets can narrow at any moment on the other hand. This geographical entrapment, is the most basic structural element feeding the potential of the crisis evolving into a hot war at any moment.

### **5.4 Containment Policy and the Berlin Equation at the Beginning of the Cold War**

The Berlin Blockade is the most critical application field of the "Containment" doctrine, which became the cornerstone of US foreign policy after the Second World War and was theorized by diplomat George Kennan's "Long Telegram." This doctrine was built upon preventing Soviet influence from spreading beyond its existing borders and keeping

communism under a geopolitical siege. Since Berlin was located in the exact center of this siege line, deep within the Soviet sphere of influence, it turned into a test of "prestige and determination" on behalf of the USA and Western allies. In this process, which was the projection of the Truman Doctrine in Europe, Berlin was accepted as the breaking point of the West's will to stop communist expansionism; at this point, a single concession to be given was seen as the bankruptcy of the entire Containment policy.

The Berlin Equation was built upon a matter of "credibility" rather than a military defense strategy. According to Western strategists, the fate of Berlin was directly tied to the fate of West Germany and, consequently, all of Western Europe. If Berlin had been abandoned by bowing to Soviet pressure, this situation, in accordance with the "Domino Theory," would have shaken the confidence of the allies in Europe in the West's defense capacity and pushed them to compromise with the Soviets. For this reason, for Washington and London, Berlin was not just a geographical piece, but a psychological barrier that ensured the survival of the Western alliance system. In this equation established in Berlin in 1948, the Western powers not taking a step back aimed to declare to the whole world the reality of the barrier drawn against Soviet expansion. This situation turned a local logistics crisis into the most strategic move of a global ideological reckoning.

## **5.5 Allied Control Council and the Blockage of Decision-Making Processes**

The Allied Control Council (ACC) was designed as the highest administrative and legal authority of post-WWII Germany, aimed at ensuring that the occupied territories remained a single political and economic unit. Established in Berlin in July 1945, this council consisted of military governors from the USA, USSR, United Kingdom, and France. Although the council's operating principle, the "unanimity" rule, appeared to be a fair balancing element on paper as it required the common consent of the four great powers, in practice, it turned into the council's greatest structural shackle. The fact that each representative possessed an absolute right of veto completely paralyzed the decision-making mechanism on vital issues such as the reconstruction of postwar Germany, denazification processes, and especially war reparations.

While the Soviet delegation used its veto power as a systematic obstruction, characterizing the Western allies' attempts to economically revitalize Germany as a "violation of the Potsdam Decisions," the West exhibited a similar resistance against the reparations demands that the Soviets viewed as industrial pillage. This bureaucratic congestion left its place to an irreversible institutional bankruptcy by the year 1948.

The final collapse of the Allied Control Council occurred when Soviet Marshal Vasily Sokolovsky left the table during the famous meeting on March 20, 1948, citing the Western powers' refusal to provide information about the six-power conference they organized in London. Sokolovsky's exit from the meeting hall with the declaration "this council is no longer functional" legally and de facto ended the possibility of Germany being managed from a single center. After this date, the council never met again; this situation also created a destructive effect on the Manda Administration (Kommandatura), the joint administration organ of Berlin, shattering the city's administrative unity. With the disappearance of the council, the last diplomatic bridge between the allies was destroyed, and Berlin evolved into a

conflict arena where direct use of force (the blockade) replaced searches for institutional solutions.

### **5.6 Legal Uncertainty of Land and Railway Passage Rights**

The most fundamental vulnerability that made the Berlin Blockade operationally possible for the Soviet Union was that the land, rail, and waterway transport rights to West Berlin were never tied to a formal and written protocol in the 1945 occupation agreements. At the end of the Second World War, while three air corridors going to Berlin were guaranteed through the Allied Air Coordinating Committee with a written and legally binding agreement to be twenty miles wide, highways and railway lines were based only on oral agreements between military commanders and the principle of "goodwill cooperation."

The failure of the American military governor of the period, General Lucius Clay, to foresee the possibility that the Soviets could close these roads in the future and his failure to demand a written right of passage left the Western allies' logistical presence in Berlin entirely to the initiative of the Soviet administration. This legal vacuum created a unique maneuver area for Stalin and the Soviet administration by 1948. The roads leading to Berlin were never shown as being closed by a political decision; instead, they were de facto obstructed by hiding behind administrative excuses such as "technical malfunctions, bridge repairs, and line maintenance."

This "technical excuse" strategy of the Soviet Union created a grey area that made it difficult for Western allies to open a direct "violation of rights" case or give a military response under international law. The absence of a written agreement allowed the Soviets to claim full sovereignty over the roads passing through their own occupation zones and to see in themselves the right to stop traffic for "security reasons."

When Western powers tried to claim rights over the Helmstedt-Berlin autobahn and railway line, they found the wall of the Soviet bureaucracy saying "road repairs are continuing" instead of a legal text. This situation caused Western allies to push the option of making an Armored Column operation by land into the background during the early stages of the crisis, due to the fear of legally falling into the position of the "aggressor party." This legal uncertainty, vital for the supply of Berlin, forced the West into the air corridors (Airlift), which was the only transportation route guaranteed in writing, and turned the character of the crisis from diplomacy into a logistical war of resistance

### **5.7 Economic Competition and the Role of the Marshall Plan in the East-West Rupture**

The most powerful economic trigger of the road leading to the Berlin Blockade was the Marshall Plan declared by the USA in 1947 and the giant financial threat this plan constituted against Soviet influence in Europe.

The Marshall Plan, which aimed to economically revitalize a Europe turned into ruins after the Second World War and thus prevent the spread of communism through poverty, was characterized by the Soviet Union as "a tool of American imperialism" and an attack aimed at shattering the Eastern Bloc. The Moscow administration not only dismantled the resources in its own occupation zone to carry them away as war reparations but also strictly prohibited the

Eastern European countries under its control from benefiting from this aid. This economic polarization created by the Marshall Plan completely removed the possibility of Germany being managed as a single economic unit: the West's prosperity-oriented development model and the East's centralist and reparation-oriented economic exploitation system came face to face directly on the streets of Berlin.

This deep rift between economic systems is the actual reason for the joint administration organs of Berlin remaining dysfunctional. While the Western allies entered into a secret currency reform preparation to integrate West Germany into the European economy and to stop hyperinflation within the framework of the Marshall Plan, the Soviet Union saw this step as the final violation of the principle of "economic integrity" which was the basis of the Potsdam Agreement. For the Soviet administration, the Marshall Plan was not only an aid package but an attempt to collapse the communist regime from within by transforming West Berlin into a capitalist center of attraction in the middle of East Germany.

This economic threat perception became the greatest source of motivation pushing Stalin to start the blockade that would force Westerners to leave the city by strangling West Berlin. As a result, Berlin turned into a stage where the success or failure of the Marshall Plan was tested; with the start of the blockade, economic competition left its place to the struggle of the people of Berlin to physically survive and the absolute differentiation of two different worlds.

## **6.1 Division of Germany and Berlin**

With the end of the final military phase of the Second World War on the European front, the new administrative arrangement to be established on the territories of Nazi Germany gave birth to one of the most complex geopolitical rifts in history. In accordance with the decisions drafted with the London Protocol in 1944 and formalized at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945, the whole of Germany was divided into four separate occupation zones. According to this sharing plan, while the United States, the United Kingdom, and France controlled the western regions, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics brought the eastern part of the country under its dominance. However, the status of the former capital Berlin constituted the real crux of this administrative structure. Although Berlin geographically remained approximately one hundred and sixty kilometers deep in the Soviet occupation zone, it was divided into four separate sectors just like Germany in general according to the joint decision of the allies. This situation placed Berlin in the status of a democratic island, namely an enclave, located in the middle of a communist sea from the first years of the Cold War. This fragmented structure of the city did not consist only of a boundary line remaining on paper; on the contrary, it meant the irreversible division of the city's social, economic, and infrastructural fabric into two.

When the technical dimension of the division is examined, it is seen that all kinds of urban infrastructure from transport networks to electricity lines, and from sewage systems to telephone networks intersect with these political borders. The highways, railways, and waterways vital for the supply of West Berlin had to pass through Soviet-controlled territories. While this logistical dependence turned Berlin into a target impossible to defend militarily, it carried its political and symbolic meaning to giant dimensions. By the year 1948, the sector boundaries in the city no longer represented only the areas of duty of the military

governors, but the thinnest and most sensitive point of the Iron Curtain where two different worldviews were in direct contact. While the eastern sector of Berlin took on a centralist structure under the absolute control of the Soviet military administration, the western sectors began to adopt the principles of parliamentary democracy and market economy with the support of the allies. This physical dividedness manifested itself in the administrative organs of the city as well, and the joint administration process tried to be carried out under the four-way allied command called the Kommandatura was blocked from the very first days due to ideological differences.

This unique position of Berlin functioned as a strategic laboratory where both blocs would test each other's intentions and endurance. While the Soviet Union saw Berlin as a part of its natural sphere of influence and the weakest link of the Westerners, the Western allies defined the city as an outpost drawn against the expansionism of communism. In the first occupation plans in 1945, the fact that the allies' rights of passage from each other's zones were not tied to a written and detailed protocol gave birth to the biggest legal gap allowing the Soviet administration to use this situation as a tool of geopolitical blackmail in the future. The dividedness of Berlin weakened the hopes of unification regarding the whole of Germany day by day and transformed the city into a geopolitical nerve center that would be the first to explode in a moment of crisis. As a result, Berlin became not just a city but the most concrete monument of the absolute distrust and ideological abyss between the victors of the Second World War.

## 6.2 Yalta and Potsdam Conference Outcomes

The Yalta Conference, convened in Crimea in February 1945, constitutes the first and most decisive turn of the diplomatic process leading to the Berlin Blockade. At this summit, United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, United Kingdom Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin outlined the main framework of the new order to be established in Europe after the final collapse of Nazi Germany.

The most critical output of the conference was the formalization of the decision in principle regarding the division of Germany and Berlin into four separate occupation zones. However, because the perception of a "common enemy" among the allies still maintained its currency at this stage, vital details such as the Western powers' rights of access to Berlin were left to an environment of verbal trust instead of being put into a legal text. This situation gave Stalin the trump card of the "absence of a written passage agreement," which the Soviet Union would use in the future when closing the city to the outside world, from that very day.

The Potsdam Conference, which took place in July 1945 after the end of the war, is the most concrete document showing that the honeymoon period between the allies had ended and that ideological cracks had begun to deepen. During the conference, the sharing of information with Stalin that the USA possessed nuclear weapons and Truman taking a much harsher anti-communist stance compared to Roosevelt turned the bargaining table into a power struggle. Although it was decided to manage Germany as a single economic unit with the "five D" (denazification, demilitarization, democratization, decentralization, and decartelization) principle in accordance with the Potsdam Protocol, the issue of "reparations" made this integrity impossible. The Soviet Union obtaining the right to receive reparations by

directly dismantling industrial facilities from its own occupation zones and ten percent of the industrial facilities in the Western zones was the de facto beginning of the economic division of Germany into two.

The Allied Control Council (ACC), established at Potsdam, was defined as the highest authority over the whole of Germany; however, granting absolute veto rights to each of the four powers transformed this institution into a crisis center rather than one that produced solutions. Regarding Berlin specifically, it was accepted on paper that passages between the allied sectors of the city would be free and that it would be managed by a joint command (Kommandatura).

However, the Western allies' neglect to guarantee highways and railway passage routes with a written "legal protocol" at Potsdam made the geopolitical security of Berlin dependent only on the goodwill of the Soviets. This diplomatic gap provided the Soviet Union with the opportunity in the future to paralyze the roads leading to Berlin only on the pretext of "technical inspections" without directly violating any international agreement. As a result, the Yalta and Potsdam conferences turned Berlin into a knot of legal uncertainties and the first front line of the Cold War rather than a symbol of cooperation between allies.

### **6.3 London Six-Power Conference and the Soviet Reaction**

The London Six-Power Conference, held between the months of February and June in the year 1948, represents the final collapse of inter-allied cooperation and the formalization of the process leading to the permanent partition of Germany. This summit, which took place with the participation of the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg), is the first major diplomatic initiative from which the Soviet Union was completely excluded. The primary objective of the conference was the economic and political unification of West Germany and its acquisition of a federal state structure with its own constitution. Through this conference, the Western powers decided to establish their own Germany against the Soviet efforts to turn the whole of Germany into a satellite state by using its veto power. This situation meant the de facto termination of the principle of quadripartite administration, established by the Potsdam Agreement, by the hand of the West.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics characterized the decisions taken in London as a direct provocation against itself and an attack that overturned the geopolitical balances in Europe. The Moscow administration declared the Western allies' attempt to unilaterally establish a German state as the final violation of the Potsdam protocols. The Soviet response to this diplomatic move was not delayed; on March 20, 1948, Marshal Vasily Sokolovsky walked out of the Allied Control Council meeting and announced that this institution was now dysfunctional. The dissolution of the council is an indicator that the joint sovereignty of the allies over Germany had also ended legally. From this date onward, the Soviet administration began to increase its pressure on Berlin and put into effect the first serious restrictions on highway and railway traffic leading to Berlin under the pretext of technical inspections.

The London decisions made the status of Berlin more fragile than ever, as the western sectors of Berlin would function as a strategic showcase for the new West German state to be established. The Soviets, on the other hand, decided to use military and logistical pressure as

leverage to prevent the implementation of the London decisions or at least to force the Westerners to withdraw from Berlin. The stopping of American and British military trains in the months of April and May, the forcing of personnel into identity checks, and the harassment flights of Soviet jets over the flight corridors are the first stages of the de facto reactions given to the London Conference. This diplomatic rupture, which started with the London Conference, dragged Berlin into an absolute crisis point where two different ideologies would collide not only on paper but also on the physical field. This process took its place in history as the operational preparation phase of the Berlin Blockade.

#### **6.4 Currency Reform and the Triggering of the Crisis**

The currency reform carried out by the Western allies on June 20, 1948, in the unified occupation zones called Trizonia is the sharpest and most irreversible triggering factor that de facto started the Berlin Blockade. Following the Second World War, the Reichsmark in circulation in Germany completely lost its value due to hyperinflation and the black market, bringing economic life to a standstill. The Western powers put the Deutsche Mark (DM) into circulation as a result of an operation they conducted in secrecy to stop this economic collapse and ensure the efficient use of Marshall Plan aid. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics evaluated this step as a final blow dealt to the economic integrity of Germany and a financial siege operation directed against them.

The actual explosion point of this crisis was the debate over whether the new currency would also be valid in Berlin. The Soviet administration, arguing that Berlin was geographically located in its own zone, demanded that only the Soviet-controlled Ostmark be used in the city. However, on June 23, the Western allies decided to put Deutsche Mark banknotes bearing a "B" stamp into circulation in the western sectors of Berlin as well. This decision divided Berlin not only politically but also economically into two opposite poles. The Soviet Union characterized this move as a "currency attack" and entered the process of severing all logistical ties of the city with the outside world by cutting the electricity lines of West Berlin under the pretext of protecting the economic order of its own occupation zone.

When viewed from a delegate perspective, currency reform is a war of sovereignty. For the Soviet administration, the dominance of a foreign currency in an island within its own zone meant an unacceptable loss of authority. For the Westerners, the introduction of the Deutsche Mark into Berlin was the most concrete declaration that the city would be a part of the future unified and democratic Germany. This sharp differentiation of economic systems completely blocked diplomatic solution paths and turned the jurisdiction areas of military governors into battlegrounds. This crisis triggered by the currency reform evolved into the first great Cold War siege of history with the indefinite closure of all highways and railways by the Soviets on the morning of June 24.

#### **6.5 Initiation of the Blockade**

At the midnight connecting June twenty-third to June twenty-fourth one thousand nine hundred and forty-eight, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics military administration put into effect the final orders that completely severed West Berlin's physical connection with the

world. This operation includes the indefinite closure of all main highways, railways and water canals providing the allies' access to Berlin under diplomatic covers such as "technical failures" and "urgent repair works". This move by the Soviet Union is not only a logistical restriction but also a total strategic siege that places a massive metropolis where two and a half million civilians live at the center of the greatest political hostage crisis in modern history. In the first hours when the blockade began, all train services going to Berlin were stopped, river transportation was suspended and border controls took on the quality of an impassable wall.

The strategic calculation underlying this harsh move by the Soviet administration is to force the Western allies to withdraw from Berlin or to abandon their plans to establish a unified West German state. The fact that the center of the city's energy infrastructure was located in the Soviet sector gave Stalin a very powerful trump card and as of the first day of the blockade, the electric current supplied to West Berlin was completely cut off. The stopping of factories, the extinguishing of street lights and the plunging of homes into darkness is a planned wave of terror aimed at creating a sudden psychological collapse in the people of Berlin. According to the data at that date, West Berlin had only thirty-six days of food and approximately forty-five days of coal stocks in its possession. This limited time frame is the greatest time pressure used by the Soviets to force the Western world to the table and to unilaterally incorporate Berlin into their own sphere of influence.

The first reactions on the Western front manifested as a great uncertainty and a deep crisis management panic. General Lucius Clay, the American military governor in Berlin, characterized this action by the Soviets as a declaration of war against allied rights and advocated for an armored division to enter Berlin by land in urgent messages he sent to Washington. Clay's "armored convoy" plan was based on the assumption that the Soviets would not dare to open fire; however, President Truman and the Pentagon initially rejected this proposal in a definitive language with the concern that this move could start the Third World War while the wounds in Europe had not yet healed. At this point, Berlin became both an impossible military burden for the Western alliance to defend and a matter of honor that would shatter American prestige in all of Europe if abandoned.

While Berlin Mayor Ernst Reuter and local administrators called the people to calm during the first forty-eight hours of the blockade, West Berliners were faced with the dilemma of "hunger or communist yoke". The Soviet Union encouraged the people to change sides politically by announcing that West Berliners could receive food rations from the Eastern sector; however, a vast majority of the Berlin people rejected this offer and chose to stand by the Western allies. This civil resistance directly affected the military and diplomatic decision-making processes of the Western allies and strengthened the will to "protect Berlin at any cost". This dark wait, which began on the morning of June 24, is the actual historical breaking point that caused the allies to put on the table a radical project that seemed impossible until that time, such as feeding not only their own garrisons but the entire city from the air, namely the Berlin Airlift.

## 6.6 Berlin Airlift

The total land and sea blockade initiated by the Soviet Union on the morning of June twenty-fourth one thousand nine hundred and forty-eight has become not only a military challenge for the Western allies, but also the beginning of a deep legal and logistical labyrinth. Berlin, as a result of the administrative agreements reached after the Second World War, remained approximately one hundred and sixty kilometers deep within the Soviet occupation zone. This situation led to all food, fuel and industrial supply lines ensuring the survival of the city's western sectors being dependent on narrow corridors passing through Soviet territories. Due to the optimistic spirit of alliance in the first years of the occupation, land and railway access rights were conducted through "verbal agreements" instead of a written and binding international protocol. When Josef Stalin turned this legal ambiguity into a strategic weapon and closed the roads, the entry of the allies into Berlin by land could have been evaluated as a violation of Soviet sovereignty and therefore an open cause for war. However, with a special technical agreement signed in one thousand nine hundred and forty-five, the three air corridors twenty miles wide reaching Berlin (north, central and south) had been opened to the use of the allies in a written and official manner. These corridors changed the course of history as the only legal open door left in the sky to reach Berlin and the only diplomatic way of breaking the blockade.

In the Western alliance, serious differences of opinion were experienced initially regarding the response to be given to the blockade. American military governor General Lucius Clay, arguing that the Soviets were bluffing, proposed that an American armored division enter Berlin by force via land and break the blockade. However, the political decision-makers in Washington and London, foreseeing that conventional military superiority in Europe was in the hands of the Soviets at that time and that such a move would trigger the Third World War in a world whose wounds had not yet been healed, rejected this proposal. President Harry S. Truman's resolute stance in the form of "We are staying in Berlin, period." triggered a logistical war instead of a military conflict, namely the "Operation Vittles" (American) and "Operation Plainfare" (British) operations. Although the idea of feeding a whole metropolis by air was seen as an impossible scenario considering the aviation technology and capacity of that period, the fact that the West abandoning Berlin would break all democratic resistance in Europe made playing this logistical gamble mandatory.

The actual driving force in the air bridge turning from being just an "aid operation" into a global symbol of freedom is the immense civil will displayed by the Berlin people. At the beginning of the operation, the greatest concern of the allies was the Berliners surrendering in the face of hunger and cold and bowing to the Soviet food aid offers. However, on September 9, 1948, approximately three hundred thousand Berliners gathering in front of the ruined Reichstag building signed one of the greatest civil protests in history. Mayor Ernst Reuter's legendary address echoing in the square as "People of the world! Look at this city and understand that you cannot abandon this people!" became the declaration to the world that Berliners would not prefer hunger over freedom. This unwavering stance of the Berlin people carried the support for the operation to its peak in the American and British public opinion and raised the morale of the personnel carrying out the operation to the highest level. Berliners were involved in the operation not only with rallies but also with their physical strength; thousands of German civilians showed the success of finishing an airport in only

ninety days by working in day and night shifts in the construction of the newly built Tegel Airport.

General William H. Tunner, the technical and logistical brain of the operation, managed the air corridors with a "sky factory" discipline. Tunner reduced the margin of error to zero by putting the flight traffic into an order measured in seconds. The planes were programmed to land in Berlin at certain altitudes and with intervals of only ninety seconds. If a plane could not land on its first attempt, it had to return with its cargo and go to the end of the line in order not to disrupt the traffic. Thanks to this "conveyor belt" system, an average of more than five thousand tons of material per day began to be transported to the western sectors of Berlin. The loads carried were not limited only to basic foods such as flour, sugar or dried eggs; in order for the heating of the city and the continuation of electricity production to endure during the winter months, more than one and a half million tons of coal were delivered to Berlin in the cargo compartments of the planes. Even huge machines were dismantled into parts to repair the city's power plants, transported by planes and reassembled in Berlin. This is a massive engineering success that pushes the boundaries of modern logistics.

The most touching phase of the operation with the highest psychological impact is the "Operation Little Vittles" (Candy Bombers) movement initiated by pilot Gail Halvorsen. Halvorsen, by dropping candy and chocolate with parachutes to the children waiting for him during the landing of the planes, established an unwavering emotional bond between the German people, who were former enemies while only three years had passed since the war, and the allied soldiers. This situation completely neutralized the efforts of the Soviet administration to show the Westerners as "new occupiers" and turned Berlin into a moral and conscientious fortress of the West. The Soviet administration carried out radio jamming, organized harassment flights around cargo planes and tried to spread fear with anti-aircraft exercises to prevent the air corridors. However, the discipline of the allied pilots and the nuclear intimidation given by the West by deploying nuclear-capable B-29 bombers to Europe prevented the Soviets from opening direct fire on these planes.

As a result, the Berlin Airlift continued uninterrupted for a total of three hundred and twenty-two days and approximately two hundred and seventy-eight thousand flights were made. When the spring months of one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine were reached, the amount of supply transported by air reached levels of ten thousand tons daily, even exceeding the railway capacity before the blockade. This statistical victory proved that there was no longer any strategic meaning for Stalin to maintain the blockade. The Air Bridge not only saved a city from starvation; it also bonded the allies together, paved the way leading to the establishment of NATO and took its place in history as an absolute moral and logistical victory that the West won without using military force in the first major crisis of the Cold War. At the end of the operation, more than two million three hundred thousand tons of cargo were transported in total and Berlin turned into an unwavering window of freedom shining behind the Iron Curtain.

## 7. Focused Overview

This section is designed to help you understand the Berlin Blockade as more than a sequence of political decisions as it was a crisis shaped by uncertainty, fear, pride, and constant pressure, where every action carried meaning and every delay had consequences. What began as a strategic move between governments quickly became a daily struggle for an entire city, leading to a set of now considered war crimes. It was also a serious test of whether cooperation between former allies was still possible.

At the heart of the crisis were three tightly connected elements: the political objectives of the Soviet Union, the strategies and responses of the Western Allies, and the human reality faced by civilians living in Berlin. None of these can be separated, all of these perspectives are crucial to know for this committee. The political decisions made by each side, made at the highest level, immediately affected diplomatic relations, military planning, and, most importantly, the survival of ordinary people. Each move sent signals, raised tensions, forcing others to react, often with limited information and little time to spare. Something you will be expected to do during the committee.

As delegates, you are stepping into the roles of leaders who must make difficult choices while the world is watching. You will need to read between the lines, anticipate reactions, and balance long-term goals with short-term risks. This focused overview is meant to guide you toward a deeper understanding of why actors behaved the way they did, so that your negotiations, directives, and decisions feel grounded, realistic, and human.

## **7.1 Political Objectives of the Soviet Union**

For the Soviet Union, the Berlin Blockade was not simply about closing borders or restricting access. It was rather more about security, influence, and control in a fragile postwar Europe, giving them perfect reasoning to focus on analysis. Having suffered enormous losses during the Second World War, the Soviet leadership was deeply concerned about the possibility of a strong, Western-aligned Germany emerging once again. Germany, in this sense, was not just a country, but a symbol of both past trauma and future risk, urging states to act upon preventing their rise.

As cooperation among the Western occupation zones increased, particularly through economic coordination and currency reform, the Soviet Union began to view these developments as a direct challenge to earlier agreements and to its own influence in Germany. From Moscow's perspective, these actions suggested that the Western Allies were moving toward the creation of a separate West German state, one that would be economically stable, politically unified, and firmly tied to the West.

The blockade became a way to apply pressure without immediately turning to military force. By isolating Berlin, the Soviet Union aimed to test Western resolve, to expose the weaknesses of their position, and to force them into negotiations on Soviet terms, trying to keep the upper hand as a sort of stakeholder. At the same time, control over Berlin carried immense symbolic value. Reducing or eliminating the Western presence in the city would strengthen Soviet authority in eastern Germany and reinforce its image as a decisive global power.

Understanding these objectives is essential, as they explain why the Soviet Union was willing to take significant risks while still carefully avoiding direct armed conflict.

## **7.2 Western Allied Strategy and Responses**

For the Western Allies, the Berlin Blockade was not just a strategic challenge, but a moment of intense pressure that forced them to confront their own limits, priorities, and promises. The United States, the United Kingdom, and France understood that Berlin was more than a city on a map. It was a symbol of commitment, trust, and postwar responsibility. Walking away might have reduced immediate tensions, yet it would have deeply shaken confidence in Western leadership across Europe.

At the same time, the Allies were acutely aware of how fragile the situation was. A military response risked escalation, misunderstanding, and potentially another devastating conflict. As a result, their strategy relied heavily on restraint, cooperation, and endurance. Every response had to be measured carefully, balancing firmness with caution. Decisions were rarely simple, and often had to be made with incomplete information, under public scrutiny, and against the constant fear of provoking a wider confrontation.

Unity among the Western Allies became essential as differences in national interests and approaches had to be set aside in favor of coordinated action and shared messaging. Just as importantly, the Allies were conscious that their actions were being watched, not only by the Soviet Union, but by their own populations and by smaller states looking for reassurance. As delegates, you should think about how leadership is sometimes shown not through force, but through patience, consistency, and the ability to stand firm under prolonged pressure.

## **7.3 Civilian Impact and Humanitarian Concerns**

For the people of Berlin, the blockade turned daily life into a test of resilience. Long before decisions were announced or negotiations concluded, civilians felt the consequences in empty shelves, cold homes, and constant uncertainty. Families were forced to ration food, conserve fuel, and adjust to a reality where basic comforts could no longer be taken for granted. Each day brought new worries, especially for children, the elderly, and those already vulnerable.

Beyond physical hardship, the emotional and psychological strain was immense. Living in an isolated city, surrounded by political tension and unsure of how long the crisis would last, created fear and exhaustion. Yet, alongside this fear, there was also resilience, solidarity, and a strong sense of community. Neighbors relied on one another, routines were reshaped, and hope became as essential as food or fuel.

The humanitarian situation in Berlin quickly became inseparable from global politics. Civilian suffering influenced public opinion, shaped media narratives, and affected how governments justified their actions. The way civilians were treated, supported, or ignored carried enormous moral weight and could strengthen or undermine political legitimacy.

You must recall that every strategic choice has a human cost. Policies are not abstract, and delays are not neutral. The challenge of this committee lies in recognizing that humanitarian concerns are not secondary to political strategy, but central to it. Your decisions will shape

not only diplomatic outcomes, but the daily lives, dignity, and survival of millions of people living through the crisis.

## **8. Major Parties Involved**

The Berlin Blockade was shaped by people making difficult choices in an atmosphere filled with fear, exhaustion, pride, and uncertainty. The war had ended only a few years earlier, cities were still being rebuilt, and trust between former allies was fragile. Every actor involved entered the crisis carrying memories of loss, pressure from their own populations, and anxiety about what the future might bring. Berlin became the place where all of these emotions and interests collided.

At the center of the crisis were the four occupying powers, the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and France. On paper, they shared responsibility for Germany and Berlin. In reality, they were moving further apart politically and ideologically. Each power saw Berlin through a different lens: as a symbol of responsibility, a security risk, a political opportunity, or a test of credibility. Cooperation was still required, yet every meeting, message, and decision was shaped by growing mistrust and the fear of losing influence.

At the same time, German authorities and local actors lived with the consequences of these high-level decisions every single day. City officials, workers, and community leaders were trying to keep Berlin functioning while supplies ran low and morale was constantly tested. They had limited authority, yet enormous responsibility. Their role was deeply human, calming public fear, organizing daily life, and holding the city together while its future was debated elsewhere.

Beyond Berlin, the world was watching. Other international stakeholders, including neighboring states and emerging global institutions, paid close attention to how the crisis unfolded. For them, Berlin was more than a city, it was a signal of what kind of world was taking shape after the war. Would power be enforced through pressure and isolation, or managed through restraint and cooperation?

### **8.1 United States**

For the United States, the Berlin Blockade was not just a foreign policy challenge, it was a moment of deep reflection and pressure. Only a short time earlier, Americans had celebrated the end of a devastating war. Now, they were being asked to face a new kind of conflict, one without clear battle lines, where every decision carried long-term consequences. Berlin became the place where the United States had to prove, to itself and to others, what kind of leader it intended to be.

American leaders understood that Berlin was more than a city. It was a promise. A promise to European allies who were still rebuilding their lives and economies, and a promise to the people of Berlin themselves. Walking away would have felt safer in the short term, but it would have left behind fear, doubt, and a sense of abandonment. At the same time, staying

meant living with constant tension, knowing that one wrong move could turn political pressure into open conflict.

Behind closed doors, decisions were made under immense uncertainty. Information was incomplete, public opinion was divided, and the memory of war was still painfully close. American policymakers had to find a way to be firm without being reckless, to show resolve without provoking violence. Cooperation with allies became essential, not only for strategic reasons, but also for reassurance. Acting together meant sharing responsibility and reducing the sense of isolation that the crisis created.

## **8.2 Soviet Union**

For the Soviet Union, the Berlin Blockade was shaped by memory, fear, and a strong desire for control after years of immense suffering. The scars of the Second World War were still fresh. Entire cities had been destroyed, millions of lives had been lost, and the fear of another invasion was very real. Against this backdrop, Soviet leaders viewed security not as an abstract concept, but as a matter of survival.

Germany held a powerful place in this fear. It was not just a defeated enemy, but a reminder of trauma and vulnerability. As Western influence in Germany grew, Soviet leaders felt increasingly uneasy. The presence of Western powers in Berlin, a city located deep within the Soviet zone, felt like an open wound, a constant challenge to authority and control. Economic reforms and political cooperation in the Western zones were seen not as neutral actions, but as steps toward exclusion and containment.

The blockade was a way to regain leverage without firing a shot. It was meant to apply pressure, to test resolve, and to force the Western Allies to reconsider their direction. At the same time, Soviet leaders were careful. They did not want war. They wanted control, recognition, and security, without crossing a line that could lead to catastrophe.

## **8.3 United Kingdom**

For the United Kingdom, the Berlin Blockade unfolded during a period of quiet exhaustion and reflection. The war had ended, but its weight was still felt in everyday British life, rationing continued, cities were rebuilding, and the public was deeply aware of the cost of conflict. Britain still saw itself as a responsible global actor, yet it also understood that its power and resources were no longer what they had once been. This made every decision in Berlin feel heavy, careful, and deeply considered.

Britain's presence in Berlin was driven by a strong sense of moral and political obligation. British leaders felt that commitments made after the war could not simply be abandoned when they became difficult. Leaving Berlin would have meant leaving civilians behind and weakening trust in Britain's word. At the same time, there was realism. British policymakers knew that acting alone was neither practical nor wise. Cooperation with allies was not just strategy, it was survival.

Years of diplomatic experience and the memory of two world wars shaped Britain's approach. Escalation was something to be avoided at almost any cost. British leaders focused on calm communication, steady coordination, and practical solutions that could sustain the

city without provoking confrontation. Britain often played the role of mediator and stabilizer, helping maintain unity among allies during moments of disagreement or uncertainty.

#### **8.4 France**

For France, the Berlin Blockade was inseparable from pain, memory, and caution. The trauma of occupation during the Second World War was still vivid, and national security was a deeply emotional concern. Germany, and by extension Berlin, represented both a potential future threat and a reminder of what had been lost. This history heavily influenced how France approached the crisis.

France's involvement in Berlin was driven by a strong need to remain present and influential in shaping Europe's future. Being excluded from major decisions after previous conflicts had left deep scars, and French leaders were determined not to be sidelined again. At the same time, there was anxiety about how quickly Germany was recovering and whether enough safeguards were in place to prevent future instability.

French decision-making during the blockade was cautious, deliberate, and shaped by a desire for long-term security rather than short-term advantage. France valued Allied unity, seeing cooperation with the United States and the United Kingdom as essential for reassurance and protection. Yet France also carried its own voice, one that emphasized balance, restraint, and historical awareness.

#### **8.5 German Authorities and Local Actors**

For German authorities and local actors, the Berlin Blockade was not a moment in history, it was life unfolding under constant strain. The war had ended, yet its ruins were still everywhere, in broken buildings, fractured families, and exhausted communities. When the blockade began, there was no sense of distance from the crisis. Every shortage, every delay, every political decision made elsewhere immediately affected daily survival.

Local officials worked under intense pressure, often with unclear authority and limited resources. They had to organize food distribution, manage housing, keep transport running, and prevent unrest, all while knowing they had little control over the forces shaping the crisis. Their work required not only organization, but emotional resilience. Reassuring frightened civilians, calming anger, and maintaining a sense of order became as important as any administrative task.

For ordinary Berliners, the blockade entered their homes and routines. Long queues for food, cold apartments, and constant uncertainty became part of daily life. Parents worried about feeding their children, workers pushed through exhaustion to keep the city functioning, and communities leaned on one another to cope. Despite fear and frustration, there was also quiet determination. Many refused to leave, holding onto their city as a symbol of survival and dignity after years of war.

German authorities and civilians were not simply enduring hardship, they were shaping the spirit of the city. Their endurance, cooperation, and resilience gave meaning to larger political strategies and reminded the world that behind every diplomatic crisis are human lives trying to move forward.

## 8.6 Other International Stakeholders

The Berlin Blockade captured the attention of the world because it felt like a turning point. For many countries, especially those still recovering from the devastation of war, Berlin became a warning sign. If tension could escalate so sharply there, it could happen anywhere. Governments watched closely, weighing what the crisis meant for their own security and future.

Neighboring states felt especially vulnerable. They feared that a breakdown in Berlin could spread instability across Europe or pull them into a confrontation they were unprepared for. Memories of occupation, displacement, and destruction were still fresh, making the situation emotionally charged as well as politically dangerous.

International organizations and emerging alliances viewed the blockade as a test of cooperation in a divided world. The suffering of civilians raised difficult questions about responsibility and moral leadership. Could the international community respond to humanitarian needs without deepening conflict? Could dialogue survive growing ideological divisions?

Public opinion also played a powerful role. Images and reports of shortages, cold winters, and civilian hardship stirred sympathy and concern far beyond Germany. People around the world began to see Berlin not just as a strategic location, but as a human story. The blockade became a global moment of reflection, forcing nations to confront how power, responsibility, and humanity would shape the postwar order.

## 9. Military, Economic, and Diplomatic Dimensions

The Berlin Blockade was not defined by a single battlefield or a single decision. Instead, it unfolded across military planning rooms, economic systems, and diplomatic conversations, all happening at the same time. Each dimension was tightly connected to the others. A military move could trigger an economic crisis, while a diplomatic statement could calm, or inflame, tensions overnight. This made the situation fragile, complex, and deeply human.

Militarily, the crisis was filled with restraint and anxiety. Armed forces were present on all sides, yet open conflict was something everyone feared. Soldiers stood ready, aircraft were prepared, and plans were drawn up, but every action was weighed carefully to avoid crossing an invisible line. The presence of military power was meant to signal resolve, not start a war.

Economically, Berlin became a city on the edge. The blockade cut off food, fuel, and raw materials that were essential for survival. Factories slowed or stopped, homes went unheated, and daily life became a struggle. Economic pressure was not abstract, it was felt in empty shelves, cold apartments, and anxious families wondering how long the situation would last.

Diplomatically, conversations continued even as tensions rose. Messages were exchanged, meetings were held, and statements were carefully worded. Diplomacy became a lifeline, allowing communication to continue when trust was fading. Even when progress seemed impossible, dialogue helped prevent misunderstandings from turning into violence.

Together, these military, economic, and diplomatic dimensions show that the Berlin Blockade was a crisis of balance. Power had to be demonstrated without being used, pressure applied without breaking the city, and dialogue maintained despite deep disagreement.

## 9.1 Logistics and Supply Routes

Logistics lay at the heart of the Berlin Blockade. The crisis was not only about ideology or politics, it was about how food, fuel, and everyday necessities could physically reach a city surrounded by hostile control. When land and water routes into West Berlin were cut, the question became urgent and personal: how could millions of people survive without access to their basic supply lines?

Before the blockade, Berlin depended heavily on roads, railways, and canals for its daily needs. These routes carried coal for heating, food for households, and materials for industry. When they were suddenly shut down, the impact was immediate. Warehouses emptied, production halted, and fear spread quickly among civilians who remembered wartime shortages all too well.

Organizing alternative supply routes required enormous coordination and precision. Every shipment had to be planned, tracked, and delivered on time. A missed delivery could mean cold homes or hunger. Workers, pilots, engineers, and administrators became part of an enormous effort to keep the city alive. Their work was repetitive, exhausting, and often invisible, yet absolutely essential.

Logistics during the blockade were not just about efficiency, they were about trust and morale. Each successful delivery reassured the population that they had not been abandoned. In this way, supply routes became more than physical pathways; they became symbols of commitment, resilience, and the determination to sustain a city under pressure.

## 9.2 The Role of Air Power

Air power became the lifeline of Berlin and, at the same time, one of the most delicate balancing acts of the entire crisis. When land and water routes were cut off, the skies became the only remaining connection between West Berlin and the outside world. What followed was not just a technical operation, but a massive human effort built on urgency, pressure, and determination.

Aircraft flew around the clock, landing every few minutes, carrying food, coal, medicine, and basic necessities for an entire city. Pilots operated under exhausting conditions, often flying the same narrow corridors repeatedly, in bad weather, low visibility, and constant tension. There was little room for error. One mistake could cause accidents, disrupt supply chains, or provoke political consequences.

Air crews, ground staff, and planners worked in near-constant fatigue, fully aware that millions of civilians depended on their precision.

Beyond logistics, air power carried enormous symbolic weight. Every plane landing in Berlin sent a message: the city was not abandoned. The airlift became a quiet but powerful statement of commitment, resilience, and resolve. However, it was also risky. Aircraft from opposing

sides operated in close proximity, increasing the chance of miscalculations, collisions, or misunderstandings. Air power sustained life, but it also intensified tension, as each flight tested how far pressure could go without triggering direct confrontation.

In this sense, air power was both a solution and a strain. It kept Berlin alive, yet constantly reminded all sides how fragile the situation was, and how quickly support could turn into escalation if control was lost.

### **9.3 Risks of Military Escalation**

Throughout the Berlin Blockade, the risk of military escalation loomed quietly but persistently. While no shots were fired, the crisis unfolded in an environment saturated with suspicion, fear, and unresolved trauma from the recent war. Troops were present, weapons were ready, and nerves were tight on all sides. Peace depended not on trust, but on restraint. Every move carried the potential to be misread. A delayed convoy, an aircraft flying too close, or a public statement made too aggressively could have triggered a chain reaction. Leaders understood that even a small incident could spiral into a larger conflict, especially in a city where opposing forces were stationed only meters apart. The memory of how easily Europe had fallen into war in the past weighed heavily on decision-makers.

Military escalation was also a psychological threat. Civilians lived with the constant awareness that the situation could change overnight. Soldiers on the ground had to maintain discipline under immense pressure, knowing that a single misjudgment could have catastrophic consequences. Commanders were forced to balance readiness with restraint, strength with patience.

The blockade became a test of control as much as power. Avoiding war required constant communication, careful signaling, and an unspoken agreement to stop just short of violence. The absence of open conflict was not accidental, it was the result of continuous, tense decision-making, where the cost of escalation was understood to be far greater than any immediate gain.

### **9.4 Diplomatic Channels and Negotiations**

While planes flew and supplies were calculated down to the last ton, diplomacy continued quietly, and often tensely, behind closed doors. The Berlin Blockade was not only fought through logistics and air corridors, but through conversations, cables, meetings, and carefully chosen words. These diplomatic channels became the fragile threads holding back a much larger conflict.

Negotiations during this period were slow, exhausting, and filled with mistrust. Former wartime allies now sat across from each other with very different visions of Europe's future. Every statement was weighed carefully, every silence analyzed. Diplomats understood that a poorly phrased message or a public accusation could harden positions or provoke escalation. As a result, much of the dialogue was indirect, cautious, and at times deliberately ambiguous. Formal meetings between the occupying powers continued, but they were often marked by frustration. Agreements were difficult to reach, and progress felt minimal. Still, the very act of continuing to talk mattered. It kept communication open and created space for

de-escalation, even when compromise seemed impossible. Alongside official talks, informal contacts and backchannel communications played a crucial role, allowing ideas to be tested quietly without public pressure.

Diplomacy during the blockade was also shaped by public opinion and global attention. Leaders were not negotiating in isolation; they were aware that the world was watching. Civilian suffering in Berlin, media coverage, and international reactions all influenced how far each side was willing to go. Diplomacy became a balancing act between appearing firm and avoiding blame for worsening the crisis.

Ultimately, diplomatic channels did not produce quick solutions, but they prevented the crisis from slipping into open conflict. They allowed time, time for tempers to cool, for realities on the ground to be reassessed, and for a path out of the blockade to slowly emerge. The negotiations of the Berlin Blockade remind us that diplomacy is often imperfect and frustrating, yet essential. Even when it feels unproductive, dialogue can be the difference between tension and tragedy.

## **10. Legal and International Framework**

The Berlin Blockade did not take place in a legal vacuum. Every action taken by the occupying powers was shaped, justified, and contested through a complex web of postwar agreements, legal interpretations, and emerging international norms. Yet, while laws and treaties existed on paper, their meaning was far from clear in practice. The crisis exposed how fragile the legal foundations of postwar Europe truly were, and how easily law could become a tool of political pressure.

After the Second World War, Germany was no longer a sovereign state. Instead, it existed under occupation, governed collectively by the Allied powers who had defeated Nazi Germany. This arrangement was meant to ensure stability, prevent future aggression, and guide Germany toward recovery. However, as relations between former allies deteriorated, these shared legal frameworks became sources of tension rather than cooperation. Each side interpreted its rights and responsibilities differently, often bending legal language to fit political goals.

Berlin, in particular, occupied a legally unusual position. Located deep within the Soviet occupation zone, yet jointly governed by all four powers, the city existed in a constant state of legal ambiguity. This made every restriction, supply route, and administrative decision legally contentious. The blockade transformed legal debates into lived realities, where abstract agreements suddenly determined whether a city could eat, heat itself, or survive.

At its core, the legal framework of the Berlin Blockade reveals a deeply human struggle: the attempt to rely on rules in a world where trust was breaking down. The crisis showed both the importance of international law and its limitations when power, fear, and ideology take precedence.

### **10.1 Occupation Rights and Agreements**

The occupation of Germany was governed by a series of agreements made during and after the war, including decisions from Yalta and Potsdam. These agreements outlined shared responsibility over Germany and Berlin, emphasizing cooperation, joint administration, and equal access among the four occupying powers. In theory, no single power was meant to dominate or isolate parts of the country. In reality, these agreements were fragile compromises, dependent on goodwill that was rapidly fading.

For the Western Allies, access to Berlin was considered a fundamental occupation right. Although specific supply routes were not always clearly written into agreements, the long-standing practice of land, rail, and air access had become accepted as essential for governing the city. From their perspective, restricting this access violated both the spirit and the intent of postwar cooperation.

The Soviet Union, however, viewed the agreements through a different lens. While acknowledging joint occupation, Soviet authorities emphasized their control over the surrounding territory and argued that certain actions by the Western powers, such as economic reforms and currency changes had broken earlier understandings. From this viewpoint, restricting access was framed as a legal and administrative response, not an outright violation.

This clash of interpretations turned legal language into a battlefield. Words like “rights,” “access,” and “authority” took on immense significance, shaping decisions that affected millions of lives. Occupation agreements, once meant to ensure stability and peace, became instruments of pressure and leverage.

The human cost of this legal conflict was profound. Civilians were not arguing over clauses or interpretations, yet their survival depended on them. The Berlin Blockade revealed how deeply international agreements can shape everyday life, and how legal uncertainty, when combined with political rivalry, can place entire populations in a state of vulnerability.

## 10.2 Sovereignty and International Law

One of the most profound tensions of the Berlin Blockade was the question of sovereignty, a principle that sounded simple on paper but became painfully complicated in reality. Germany, defeated and fractured, no longer held control over its own destiny. Yet Berlin was not a blank canvas; it was a living, breathing city, home to millions of people trying to continue their lives amid chaos. Families struggled to find food, workers navigated daily shortages, and children went to school in a city divided by invisible lines of power. All around them, foreign armies and bureaucrats claimed authority, each with a different interpretation of the law and a different vision for the city’s future.

International law at the time was struggling to catch up with these unprecedented circumstances. Traditional ideas of absolute state sovereignty, the idea that a country has the final say over its own territory, did not apply to a Germany divided among victorious powers. The legal frameworks used by the Allies were rooted in treaties and occupation agreements, yet those frameworks were often stretched to fit political goals. The Soviet Union insisted that it acted fully within its rights as an occupying power, while the Western Allies argued

that access to Berlin and the protection of civilians were legal obligations under international norms. Behind these claims, strategic ambitions quietly guided each move.

What made the situation even more complex was the lack of a global enforcement mechanism. There was no supranational court, no world police, no decisive authority capable of resolving disputes. Law became a tool of negotiation, a language of diplomacy where each note, statement, and press release carried weight. Legal arguments were often used less to resolve disputes than to justify actions already chosen for strategic or political reasons. The lines between law and power blurred, leaving ordinary Berliners caught in the middle.

The human cost of this fragile sovereignty was real. For residents, the blockade was not an abstract legal dilemma; it was a daily struggle to survive as resources dwindled and uncertainty loomed. The crisis forced the world to confront a painful truth: legal principles mattered, but they were fragile when confronted with the realities of power. The Berlin Blockade highlighted the moral and practical dilemmas of sovereignty in a divided and unstable world, challenging states to ask whether protecting civilians and maintaining stability could sometimes be more important than strict adherence to legal frameworks.

### **10.3 Precedents for Collective Security**

The Berlin Blockade also became one of the earliest and most visible tests of collective security in the postwar era. After the devastation of World War II, there was a shared hope among nations that future crises could be managed through cooperation rather than through renewed conflict. Berlin, however, put that hope under intense pressure. The question was no longer theoretical: could countries truly work together to resist coercion without resorting to war? Could shared principles and mutual trust stand against the real threats of military force and political intimidation?

The response of the Western Allies was remarkable in its ambition and coordination. Instead of reacting individually, they pooled resources, coordinated strategies, and presented a united front. The Berlin Airlift became a symbol of this cooperation: planes carrying food, fuel, and medicine landed around the clock, creating a lifeline that kept millions alive. This extraordinary effort was not without difficulty. Tensions arose over logistics, supply routes, and risk management. Leaders debated tirelessly, sometimes arguing late into the night about the best path forward. Fear of escalation weighed heavily on every decision, yet the commitment to stand together became a source of collective strength. Unity itself was transformed into power.

At the same time, the blockade revealed the limits of collective security. Cooperation depended on trust, communication, and a shared sense of purpose. When these factors weakened, the system became vulnerable. The crisis showed that collective security was not automatic; it required constant vigilance, negotiation, and political courage. The successes of Berlin were hard-won, fragile, and dependent on the willingness of nations to prioritize the greater good over immediate self-interest.

The legacy of the Berlin Blockade extended far beyond the city. It reshaped the way nations thought about alliances, demonstrating that in a connected world, the struggles of one city could ripple across continents. The crisis reinforced a powerful lesson: standing together, even under pressure, could preserve peace more effectively than acting alone. Yet this unity

was not simple or easy; it required patience, compromise, and constant effort. For the people of Berlin and the nations watching, the blockade became a defining example of both the promise and the difficulty of collective action in the modern world.

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