

The Cold War

“The Yalta Conference: A Classroom Simulation” David Ghere

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Yalta Conference History Simulation

The Yalta Conference was a meeting in February 1945 between the leaders of the three major Allied powers fighting against Hitler’s Germany: President Franklin Roosevelt of the United States, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain, and Premier Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union. These leaders sought to defeat Nazi Germany as rapidly as possible, but they were also concerned about the future. Anticipating conflict, American and Soviet leaders sought to establish a post-war world in their own best interests. The British, uncomfortable as a second rate power, hoped to protect their power base and so emerge as the leader of a powerful post-war Western Europe. The decisions that these three men made at Yalta shaped the direction of European History for the next forty-five years. Many Cold War disputes have their origin in the agreements and disagreements at Yalta.

Simulation Learning Objectives

1. Connect the historical context of the relationships and previous disputes among the three countries with negotiations at the Yalta conference.
2. Recognize how historical context shaped the national goals and negotiation strategies of each country.
3. Assess each nation’s relative success in achieving both their short-term and long-term goals.
4. Consider the merits of those goals with the hindsight of the ensuing historical events.
5. The fates of many smaller European countries were influenced by the decisions of the three leaders at the Yalta conference: speculate about how the dynamics and outcomes of the Yalta conference would have been changed had they been included in negotiations.
6. Experience the challenges and skills needed for effective negotiations.

Handout One: Historical Context

The Soviet Union

Note: This handout is only intended as a sample. Each instructor should create his or her own summary based on information used during class sessions or assigned readings. Additionally, this handout is best provided during a previous class session or posted on the Internet for students to prepare for the simulation.

1. Russia was invaded three times by European countries (France, World War I Germany, World War II Germany) resulting in the loss of more than 50,000,000 civilians and troops and massive destruction of their land and economy.
2. Due to the numerous invasions over the course of 150 years, the Soviet Union wanted a buffer zone between its country and Europe.
3. Due to its enormous size, Russia is a blend of European and Asian cultures.
4. Russia violated agreement with other Allied countries and signed separate peace treaty with Germany at end of World War I.
5. The Soviets resented the involvement of English, French, and American troops on Russian land to support anticommunist forces during the Russian Civil War after World War I.
6. They signed an agreement with Germany before World War II to divide Poland in half between the two countries. Josef Stalin later justified the decision as necessary to provide more time for his country to prepare for the invasion of Germany.
7. The Soviets were angry that during World War II, the Allies, led by the United States and Great Britain, delayed invasion of Europe until 1944 due to their claim that they were not ready. Some Soviets believed this was deliberate to weaken the Soviet Union through huge losses of troops fighting the Germans on Russian land.
8. The Yalta Conference occurred following the Battle of the Bulge. Russian troops were quickly advancing in Germany toward capturing their capital city of Berlin while the United States and Great Britain were slowly recovering from the German offensive.
9. The leader of the Soviet Union, Josef Stalin, was willing to sacrifice millions of Russian troops for the invasion of Japan if the benefits were high enough.

Handout One: Historical Context Great Britain

Note: This handout is only intended as a sample. Each instructor should create his or her own summary based on information used during class sessions or assigned readings. Additionally, this handout is best provided during a previous class session or posted on the Internet for students to prepare for the simulation.

1. During World War II, Great Britain had a democratic political system opposed to communists worldwide.
2. Great Britain had a long tradition as a colonial power that occupied or indirectly controlled other countries.
3. The British were on the winning side of World War I, but lost many troops during the conflict.
4. Great Britain was somewhat insulated from other European countries because of the English Channel.
5. The Yalta Conference occurred following the Battle of the Bulge, which placed British and American troops in a defensive position and slowed their advance into Germany.
6. Great Britain was a much smaller country than many others with powerful military forces, such as the United States, Germany, and the Soviet Union. Because of this, Great Britain sought to divide power among a number of countries. They believed more countries with equal power would balance one another and reduce wars.

Handout One: Historical Context The United States

Note: This handout is only intended as a sample. Each instructor should create his or her own summary based on information used during class sessions or assigned readings. Additionally, this handout is best provided during a previous class session or posted on the internet for students to prepare for the simulation.

1. During World War II, the United States was a strong democratic political system opposed to communists worldwide.
2. The United States had emerged as a colonial power during the 1800s that occupied or indirectly controlled other countries.
3. The United States was on the winning side of World War I with far fewer lost troops than other countries, especially the Soviet Union.
4. The United States was insulated from most other countries in the world due to its geographic isolated location (Atlantic and Pacific oceans on the coasts and peaceful borders with Canada and Mexico).
5. Americans had a strong feeling of historic, political isolationism. Most Americans were uninterested in world political and military involvements due to the two World Wars.
6. The Yalta Conference occurred following the Battle of the Bulge, which placed British and American troops in a defensive position and slowed their advance into Germany. Since the effectiveness of the atomic bomb was still unknown at the time of the Yalta Conference, the United States was desperate for the other Allied countries to join Americans in a potentially bloody invasion of the home islands of Japan to end the war in the Pacific. It was estimated that perhaps three to five million troops would die during this invasion.

Handout Two: Goals at Yalta The Soviet Union

The Eastern European countries seized by the Soviets in 1939–40 were only a portion of the territory separated from Russia following World War I. The Soviets saw this as correcting a wrong that had been inflicted on them and they were adamant that they would retain those territories. The Soviets believed that the spread of communism was both beneficial and inevitable, and they had suffered greatly from two wars with Germany. Friendly communist governments on their borders in Eastern Europe would spread communism and provide the Soviets with allies. A permanently weakened Germany would prevent future wars so the Soviets sought to divide Germany into two countries. The Soviet Union had been devastated by World War II and they demanded war reparations from Germany to rebuild their country. Communist doctrine identified colonialism as the exploitation of others and believed that it was the only thing preventing the collapse of capitalism. Therefore, the Soviet Union favored breaking up European empires and giving independence to their colonies.

POINTS AWARDED FOR CONFERENCE AGREEMENTS:

Conference Agreement	Point Value	Points Awarded in Simulation
Retaining the territory seized in 1939–40	10	
Creating friendly governments in Eastern Europe	10	
Agreeing to divide Germany into two countries	10	
Agreeing to exact German war reparations	10	
Condemning European empires.	5	
Supporting European empires	-10	
Giving up territory seized in 1939–40	-10	

Handout Three: Goals at Yalta Great Britain

Fearing Soviet expansion and postwar confrontations, the British supported the establishment of a United Nations organization to promote world peace. In addition, a rebuilt, united, and democratic Germany would serve as a bulwark against Soviet expansion. Punishing Germany with war reparations would hinder this goal and would repeat the mistake of World War I when harsh war reparations contributed to the rise of Hitler. Recognizing their relative weakness compared to the Americans and Soviets, Great Britain hoped that a rebuilt Western Europe would emerge as a third superpower. Needing French cooperation in this effort, Great Britain sought to elevate the position of France to that of a major power. Since the power of both countries was augmented by their colonies, Great Britain wanted to protect and reestablish the British and French empires. Great Britain wanted to prevent Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, and they hoped that the exiled governments in London would be reestablished as their countries were liberated. The British were particularly concerned about Poland and Greece due to their wartime commitments.

POINTS AWARDED FOR CONFERENCE AGREEMENTS:

Conference Agreement	Point Value	Points Awarded in Simulation
Establishing the United Nations	10	
Placing France on the United Nations Security Council with veto power	10	
Creating democratic governments in Eastern Europe	10	
Agreeing to reestablish European empires	10	
Agreeing that Britain will liberate Greece	5	
Agreeing to divide Germany into two countries	-10	
Agreeing to exact German war reparations	-10	

Handout Four: Goals at Yalta The United States

The United States desperately wanted support in the Pacific war, so their primary goal was to secure a Soviet promise to declare war against Japan. Fearing Soviet expansion and postwar confrontations, the United States supported the establishment of the United Nations to promote world peace. The defeat of Japan would create a power vacuum in Asia that the United States hoped to fill with their long-time ally China, so the United States sought to elevate the position of China to that of a major power. Eastern Europe was a dilemma for the United States, which was committed to the establishment of democratic governments; but Americans also recognized that the Soviets were asking for a sphere of influence similar to what the United States and Great Britain already had. The United States advocated a compromise in which Eastern European governments would be democratic and friendly to the Soviet Union. In another dilemma, the United States generally favored independence for colonies, but also felt the need to support their allies, Great Britain and France. A third concern was containing the spread of communism, so the United States wanted to avoid the entire issue of reestablishing European colonial empires during the conference. The United States hoped that colonies could get their freedom in a gradual, orderly fashion, as long as they were not leaning toward communism.

POINTS AWARDED FOR CONFERENCE AGREEMENTS:

Conference Agreement	Point Value	Points Awarded in Simulation
Establishing the United Nations	10	
Agreeing that the Soviets will enter the war against Japan	10	
Creating a democratic Eastern Europe friendly to the Soviet Union	10	
Making no statement on European colonial empires	10	
Placing China on the United Nations Security Council with veto power	5	
Agreeing to divide Germany into two countries	-10	
Agreeing to exact German war reparations	-10	

Handout Five: Short and Long Term Achievements at Yalta (in the point values of the simulation)

The Soviet Union:

Conference Agreement	Point Value	Points Achieved at Yalta	Points Achieved by End of the Cold War
Retaining the territory seized in 1939-40	10	10	10
Creating friendly governments in Eastern Europe	10	10	10
Agreeing to divide Germany into two countries	10	0	10
Agreeing to exact German war reparations	10	0	10
Condemning European empires.	5	0	0
Supporting European empires	-10	0	0
Giving up territory seized in 1939-40	-10	0	0

Score Achieved at Yalta: 20

Score Achieved by End of the Cold War: 40

Handout Six: Short and Long Term Achievements at Yalta (in the point values of the simulation)

Great Britain:

Conference Agreement	Point Value	Points Achieved at Yalta	Points Achieved by End of the Cold War
Establishing the United Nations	10	10	5
Placing France on the United Nations Security Council with veto power	10	10	5
Creating democratic governments in Eastern Europe	10	10	5
Agreeing to reestablish European empires	10	0	0
Agreeing that Britain will liberate Greece	5	5	5
Agreeing to divide Germany into two countries	-10	0	-10
Agreeing to exact German war reparations	-10	0	-5

Score Achieved at Yalta: 35

Score Achieved by End of the Cold War: 5

**Handout Seven: Short- and
Long-Term Achievements at Yalta
(in the points values of the simulation)**

The United States:

Conference Agreement	Point Value	Points Achieved at Yalta	Points Achieved by End of the Cold War
Establishing the United Nations	10	10	5
Agreeing that the Soviets will enter the war against Japan	10	10	-10
Creating a democratic Eastern Europe friendly to the Soviet Union	10	10	5
Making no statement on European colonial empires	10	10	5
Placing China on the United Nations Security Council with veto power	5	5	-5
Agreeing to divide Germany into two countries	-10	0	-10
Agreeing to exact German war reparations	-10	0	-5

Score Achieved at Yalta: 45

Score Achieved by End of the Cold War: -15