

Advise the President: DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER



ADVISE *the*
PRESIDENT

About the Series

Advise the President is a program series created in partnership between the National Archives' Presidential Libraries and the National Issues Forums Institute. Moderators lead participants in guided simulations designed to promote discussion and deliberation based on pivotal issues faced by past Presidents. Teachers, students, the general public, and anyone interested in our nation's history are invited to step into the Oval Office and take on the role of one of the President's most trusted advisers.

For more information and additional resources related to the Advise the President series, visit www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/.

DELIBERATION GUIDE

How Should the United States Confront Soviet Communist Expansionism?

President Eisenhower recognizes Soviet military aggression and the subsequent spread of Communism as the greatest threat to the security of the nation. However, the current costs of fighting Communism are skyrocketing, presenting a significant threat to the nation's economic well-being. President Eisenhower is concerned that the costs are not sustainable over the long term but he believes that the spread of Communism must be stopped.

OPTION A: Contain Communism

We should contain Communism within its current borders and allow the inherent weaknesses of the Communist system to cause it to decay over time from the inside out. Our focus should be on building up the strength of the free world while pressuring the Soviets economically and diplomatically.

OPTION B: Threaten Massive Retaliation

We should draw a "line in the sand" and tell the Soviet Union that any attempt to expand Communism over that line will result in a massive and severe retaliation from the United States. Our focus should be on building up our own military capability to support that threat if the Soviet Union acts.

OPTION C: Liberate the Soviet Bloc from Communism

We should take aggressive and proactive steps to roll back Communism and free all people from Communist systems. Our focus should be on using all avenues—including military action—to liberate the people of the Soviet bloc from the oppression of Communism.



Presidential Library Issue Forums

Why are we here? What are we going to do?

We are here to participate in the decision-making process for an important policy choice facing the President.

How do we do that?

We do that by engaging in a deliberative process in which we

- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
- Know the strategic facts and how they affect the way the group thinks about each option.
- Get beyond the initial positions people hold based on their deeper motivations—the foundations they consider to be the most valuable in everyday life.
- Weigh carefully the views of others; appreciate the impact various options would have on what others consider valuable.
- Work through the conflicting emotions that arise when various options pull and tug on what people consider valuable.

Stages of a Forum



Welcome

The convener or moderator introduces the program.

Ground rules

Participants and moderator review desired outcomes and agree on ground rules.

Getting started

One good way to start is for participants to take a few minutes to talk about their personal experiences with the issue and tell their stories. Sometimes the convener or moderator begins by showing a starter video that reviews the problems underlying the issue.

Deliberation

Participants examine all the options.

Ending the forum

Participants reflect on what has been achieved.



If This Is Your First Experience as a Moderator

Remember, the role of the moderator is to

- Provide an overview of the deliberation process
- Ask questions about what is at stake in each option
- Encourage participants to direct their questions and comments to one another
- Remain neutral

You don't have to be an expert on the issue.

Reading the issue guide thoroughly, considering questions that get to the heart of the issue, and thinking through the essence of each option are the critical parts of preparation.

You should stay focused on what the forum is about—deliberation.

Ask questions that help participants explore each option from a variety of perspectives: viewpoints from different levels of government, businesses, unions, and individuals. Consider the tradeoffs that might be required. Look for common ground.

You should keep the discussion moving and focused on the issue.

Sometimes it's hard to move on to another option with so much more that could be said. But in order to make progress, participants need the chance to weigh all the major options.

You should reserve ample time for reflections on the forum.

In many ways, this is the most important work the group will do. The moderator will provide reminders that time is passing, but it is up to all the participants to help preserve the time to reflect on what they have said and what they might want to do about it.





Beginning a Forum

Before the deliberation begins, it is important for participants to review guidelines for their discussion. They should agree that

- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- No one or two individuals should dominate
- The discussion should focus on the options
- All the major options should be considered
- Everyone should maintain an open and respectful atmosphere for the discussion, and
- Everyone should listen to each other.

Ending a Forum

Before ending a forum, take a few minutes to reflect on what has been achieved. Consider the following questions:

- I. Individual reflections
 - Has your thinking about the issue changed?
 - Has your thinking about other peoples' views changed?
 - Has your perspective changed as a result of what you heard in this forum?

- II. Group reflections
 - Are there issues we did not address?
 - Can we identify any shared sense of purpose or direction?
 - Did we discover any common ground?
 - Which trade-offs are we willing to accept to move in a shared direction?
 - Which are we unwilling to accept?

- III. Next-step reflections
 - Are there viewpoints or issues we still need to talk about?



Questions to Promote Deliberation of the Issue

As you examine this issue together, remember that the purpose of this forum is to participate in the process of decision-making as it might have occurred at that moment in the President's administration. As a group, you are weighing the basic values that define us as human beings and as Americans. This is not a reenactment. You are not here to figure out or replicate the discussion that occurred at the time of the event. The Libraries hope you will gain a better understanding of their President's actions in office by exploring the information he had available and the choices he made.

Before you begin, it may be helpful to consider broad questions that need to be addressed in each option. Here are some examples:

OPTION A

- Is a state of “peaceful co-existence” ever possible between the United States and another nation when the two have diametrically opposed world views, conflicting fundamental values, and irreconcilable national goals, especially when the differences are deemed potentially dangerous to world stability or the national security of the United States?
- How far should the United States government be willing to proceed in sanctioning covert activities (spying, data mining, destabilizing governments and/or economies, deploying Special Forces) against another nation in an effort to protect our own national security?
- How important are global allies to the national security of the United States? And, if they *are* important, what is the best approach to utilize and strengthen these relationships?
- Are nations like the United States, which value political liberty and economic freedom, more likely to survive and prosper longer than those that exercise more control over their people and economies?

OPTION B

- Are ultimatums, linked to threats of military force, ever effective deterrents to rogue or dangerous regimes?
- Are there national security threats to the United States today that compare to the threatened spread of Communism, faced by President Eisenhower, during the early days of the Cold War in 1953?
- How far should the United States be willing to go to impose its will on the world stage?

OPTION C

- Due to its unique and powerful presence among nations, does the United States have a responsibility to work to control or defeat regimes that pose a grave danger to the world or is the only appropriate test its own national security?
- As a great representative democracy, does the United States have a moral obligation to help bring about self-determination and liberty to oppressed people around the world?
- What efforts, short of general war, are acceptable in the pursuit of the United States' foreign policy objectives?

BEFORE MAKING FINAL DECISION

- What would be your major concern before making a final decision?
- What political repercussions might there be for the President if he chooses this course of action?
- How do you think the American people would react if the President selected this option?

POST-DELIBERATION

- Did you have a certain viewpoint at the beginning of this discussion? Did you change your mind by the end of the process?
- What do you believe is the most important thing a President can do before making a crucial decision?
- Has this discussion changed your perception of the Presidency, the role of advisers in a Presidential administration, and your duty as a citizen?
- Through this exercise, you learned that Presidents often make tough decisions about involving the United States in foreign conflicts. What are some recent examples of a Presidential response to events abroad? What happened as a result of that President's actions?

Notes



Learning More about the Cold War and Presidential Decision Making:

For many young people today, the Cold War can be a particularly abstract and overwhelming topic, yet it is essential to dig deeper into this topic in order to put the post-World War II period through the late 20th century into a meaningful context and useful understanding. To skillfully weigh and intelligently assess the significance of the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of this era is an impossible task without a fundamental knowledge of what **was** the Cold War.

Below are a number of online resources for teaching or learning more about the Cold War. Presidential Libraries, in particular, offer rich online collections of manuscripts, oral histories, and photographs, which relate a particular presidency and sequence of events to the history of the Cold War.

- Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum: Online Documents
www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents.html
- Links to Presidential Libraries
www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/
- Cold War
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/coldwar/
- American Presidency Project: The Papers of the Presidents
www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/ (Search Cold War)
- Documents Related to American Foreign Policy: The Cold War
www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/coldwar.html
- Avalon Project: The Cold War
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/coldwar.asp
- History Channel Cold War Resources
www.history.com/topics/cold-war
- The Cold War Museum
www.coldwar.org/
- The International Spy Museum (Search Cold War)
www.spymuseum.org/

*Links are provided for further discussion on the topic of the Cold War.
Content from these sites is not endorsed by the National Archives.*



*A Different Kind of Talk,
Another Way to Act*