

Advise the President

DELIBERATION GUIDE



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 _____.

What Should the United States do About the Emerging Threat Posed by the Soviet Union?

President Truman has become increasingly worried that Soviet actions threaten his vision of a peaceful postwar world in which freedom and democracy will spread throughout the liberated areas of Europe and Asia. He believes that important decisions must be made now about what to do to preserve freedom, democracy, and the American way of life.

Truman has been meeting with many people to discuss ideas for United States policy toward the Soviet Union, including members of Congress from both parties, administration officials, community leaders, various experts and advocates, and some trusted friends. He has grouped their ideas into three options.

OPTION A: Reach Out to the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union fears being surrounded by hostile capitalist states. The United States should recognize this fear and the resulting insecurity chronically felt by Soviet leaders. We should also deemphasize military might in dealings with the Soviet Union. We should show a willingness to negotiate differences and make clear our sincere commitment to working with the Soviet Union in creating a peaceful world. If we do these things, the Soviet Union can be our ally in peacetime as it was during the war.

OPTION B: Resist Soviet Expansionism

The Soviet Union is bent on expansion across the world. The United States should frustrate these expansionist ambitions. We should employ superior counterforce wherever the Soviet Union tries to advance into a new area and maintain reserve military forces capable of fighting the Soviet Union in the



event of general war. We should enter into mutual security agreements with our allies and help them to be strong economically and militarily. If we continually frustrate the Soviet Union's expansionist ambitions, we may be able to change its behavior and even, in time, its character as a nation.

OPTION C: Keep America Strong at Home

The security of the United States is based on its geographical isolation from Europe and Asia, its traditional political and social institutions, and its strong economy. We should base our national defense on maintaining these strengths at home. The United States can preserve traditional liberties and economic vitality by limiting the growth of government power, adopting conservative fiscal and monetary policies to keep expenditures and debt low, limiting the size of the military, and avoiding involvement in international affairs to the degree that national security allows. Strength at home is our surest defense against Soviet activities far from our borders.

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 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 to their deeper motivations—the things 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's 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 is the critical part 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, individuals, and 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 people's views changed?
 - Has your perspective changed as a result of what you heard in this forum?

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

- 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 this 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

- Should a nation's foreign policy be based on ideals of international peace and cooperation, or on careful calculations regarding its self interest?
- When should a nation recognize the needs of and yield to the wishes of a potential adversary; and when should a nation determine to firmly oppose the actions of a potential adversary?

OPTION B

- Is it ever morally permissible for a nation which has not been invaded and does not face imminent invasion to take defensive action which could lead to the outbreak of general war and the deaths of millions of people?
- What ideals and beliefs should be defended even if their defense results in the deaths of millions of people, and what ideals and beliefs should not be defended at such a cost?

OPTION C

- Are people innately sufficiently good that they can live according to their ideals and beliefs within nations that do not have strong structures of government and which are not overseen by strong international organizations and binding international agreements?
- Are the greatest threats to a nation's ideals and beliefs usually external—from other nations—or internal—from the people who are part of that nation?

BEFORE MAKING FINAL DECISION

- What would be your major concern before making a final decision?
- What 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 the 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 U.S. 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?



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 particularly 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/

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