



MODEL UNITED NATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE  
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Greetings comrades!

I am so excited to welcome you all to UCIMUN's 32nd annual conference! My name is Nancie Huang-Ball and I am honored to serve as the Director for this year's AD HOC Committee. This will be my sixth consecutive year in Model UN and my second year with UCIMUN. When I first began Model UN as a high school freshman delegate, I made a goal to host a special committee surrounding a particular interest of mine, and I'm finally able to share that with you all. Of course, the topic (along with the actual topic synopsis) will stay a full secret until the day of the committee. For now, I have provided this mini guide for a brief historical and political context!

Currently, I'm a second-year student at UCI majoring in Political Science and working towards attending law school after graduation. I'm very passionate about domestic and international issues, hence my involvement in Model UN, but I have a wide variety of other interests as well. In my free time, you can find me listening to music, exploring new food spots, or finding a new topic to research and hyperfixate on. Throughout my journey at UCI and UCIMUN, I've grown increasingly interested in international law and politics as I learn more. It's my goal to spread that enthusiasm and have every one of you get something out of this experience. It's safe to say that this conference will not be what you expect!

This AD HOC Committee will be a very unique experience that will test your skills in quick problem-solving and improvisation. Until the day of the committee, you will truly not know what to expect, no matter the information or hints revealed. My hope is that this conference will let you step out of your comfort zone and into a space where your collaboration, negotiation skills, and especially creativity can shine. I am so excited to see how the conference evolves over time and the insightful solutions you come up with.

This is a brief background of the time period that the topic will take place in—the 20th Century. The official topic will be revealed upon arrival to committee. While I encourage you to read this pre-topic synopsis background, AD HOC committees are not research-based. Due to the nature of this, the committee will focus on improvisation instead of research. After all, it will be very hard to figure out the topic beforehand. Instead, these topics are to get you thinking about the right historical period and to understand the evolution of historical and political events over time.

All the best,  
Nancie Huang-Ball  
Director, AD HOC  
University of Irvine, Model United Nations 2024



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## **An Introduction to Ad Hoc**

Ad Hoc committees are crisis committees where topics remain undisclosed until shortly before the conference, ranging from a couple of days before to the beginning of the first committee session. As a result, Ad Hoc committees focus on improvisation and collaboration rather than on research. For this particular Ad Hoc committee, the topics will be revealed during the first committee session.

Typically, all details are hidden leading up to the conference, but since Ad Hoc is a less common High School Model UN committee, a brief pre-background guide will be released to provide historical and political context without diving into specifics. This guide will not contain spoilers for the conference topic. It aims to get delegates to consider the political and historical conditions of the time period in question.

Although Ad Hoc is often considered an advanced or difficult committee, delegates of all experience levels are encouraged to participate and contribute to a productive debate that focuses on improving improvisational skills. Since all topic details will be hidden until delegates walk through the door, there aren't research advantages, leveling the playing field. Therefore, delegates should instead familiarize themselves with crisis procedures and work on their speech and improvisational skills in preparation for this conference.



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## The “Age of Extremes”

### Introduction

Often referred to as the ‘Age of Extremes,’ the 20th Century marks a period of unprecedented political, economic, and social change that tremendously altered the fabric of the world. Coming out of the 19th Century, many nations still focused on expanding their empire through settler colonialism and imperialism, causing tension not just between the great powers, but within each territory conquered. Because of this, the 20th Century largely became full of competition, mass migration, industrial and technological growth, immense social change, and especially an extensive process of decolonization.

### Description

The 20th Century is a huge and complex piece of history, meaning it is unable to be fully covered in a brief synopsis. There are many events left out of this background, as well as many details left out for the sake of efficiency and keeping it all brief. Because of this, this background will focus on four subtopics and serve as a historical and political basis for your own (optional) contextual research. These subtopics are Colonization & Competition, Total War, Social Change, and Globalization.



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### ***Colonization & Competition***

Continuing the boisterous rivalry between nations that had been ongoing for centuries, European empires sought to expand their territory to increase power and influence in the 20th Century. Believing that their race was superior, many empires went into non-white territories on a mission to ‘civilize’ them, believing it was their “white man’s burden” (Kipling, 1899). There they would exploit the area economically by extracting resources and making the territory dependent, often while forcing their culture, language, and religion upon the people. Some prominent European colonizing powers included Britain, France, Spain, and the Netherlands. Apart from Europe, several other nations engaged in imperialism in the 20th Century—Japan and the Soviet Union for instance—seeking to compete with the West and expand their own ideas. With colonization, however, came those challenging it in the 20th Century: Mexico, India, and South Africa for instance. The 20th Century would become a huge period of attempts at decolonization.

### ***Total War***

Instead of focusing on the specifics of two world wars, this synopsis seeks to inform why they occurred and the consequences afterward. Set between two periods of extreme regime change, the Mexican Revolution and the Russian Revolution, World War I was set into motion in the early 20th Century. While the causes of World War I are debatable and vary, there are several underlying historical conditions that fostered a tense environment to start the war: the imperial



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competition among the European powers, their arms race, and the military alliances of the time. World War I was tremendously transformational, especially with the new scale of violence that emerged through new technology and mechanized weaponry with unprecedented levels of destruction, augmented by heightened levels of nationalism and nations mobilizing all social and economic resources for the war. By the end of it, huge regime change occurred as empires fell (such as the Russian Empire becoming the USSR, Imperial China becoming China, and the Ottoman Empire becoming Türkiye) and issues such as class conflict and gender roles got increasingly challenged as anarchist, communist, and socialist ideas spread. At the same time, however, the huge economic instability (largely because of the Spanish Influenza and the Great Depression) and social issues that arose after the war created discontent among the people, who wanted unity and strong leadership. As a result, people turned to political extremes, specifically fascism, which opened the doors for World War II— an event that would be further all-encompassing and unprecedently destructive.

When the atomic bomb dropped, ending the Second World War and setting into motion the Cold War, many newly independent Asian and African nations wanted to avoid becoming involved in further conflict and colonization. They instead wanted to make sure their independence was secured. These nations attended the Bandung Conference in 1955, which focused on their international development and co-existence post World War II. Instead of taking a side in the Cold War, they joined the ‘Non-Aligned Movement.’ Out of the 29 nations involved, some key nations include Indonesia, China, Vietnam (both the Democratic Republic



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and the State), India, Pakistan, Egypt and Sri Lanka. At the same time, however, other territories were still fighting to be free from colonization. In apartheid South Africa, anti-apartheid groups were taking off, especially through the Freedom Charter, a declaration of equality, peace, and human rights. It wouldn't be until 1994, however, when apartheid ended and South Africa became a democratic government. While each region had its respective timeline of progress, the 20th century marked a milestone in ending colonial ties for many nations—though the effects of colonization and dependence would not so easily dissolve.

### *Social Change*

The 1960s encompassed many protest movements to progress society into a more equal, non-violent community. From anti-war and anti-regime protests to civil rights, women's rights, and LGBTQ+ rights movements, the second half of the twentieth century was an important time when minorities sought to stand up to oppression, seeing their subjugation as a new form of colonialism. For instance, as technology grew and television became especially prominent in homes after World War II, the Vietnam War became known as a 'living room war' since it was the first war that was broadcast and watched regularly. Consequently, the news became a strong political force and many people grew anti-war sentiment, ranging from moral reasons to economic or political ones.

People all over the world protested the war in one form or another; students in the United States protested the violence and the draft, Martin Luther King linked the Vietnam War to the



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American civil rights struggle, and students in Paris advocated for a socialist revolution because of the inequalities of capitalism—they viewed the Vietnam War as a form of US imperialism. These radical political issues then allowed people to reconsider smaller, everyday matters such as family roles, personal relationships, and violence surrounding their community—from police brutality in Europe and the US to military dictatorships in Latin America. Thus, pivotal movements emerged that pushed for feminism and gay rights. While the US had a very strong gay rights movement in the 1960s, catalyzed largely by the 1969 Stonewall riots, so did other countries all over the globe. In Argentina, for instance, the Argentine Homosexual Liberation Front viewed the family as a source of ‘in-house’ fascism, oppression over sexuality, and a space where gender roles were often forced. These specific, local-scale problems were often connected to concepts such as intersectional and fair democracy, imperialism, and the shortcomings of capitalism—ultimately advocating various equalities for the people.

### ***Globalization***

By the latter second of the 20th century, the rapid growth of technology allowed ideas, cultures, politics, and economics to become closely interconnected. While this globalization greatly nourished cultural diversity and further industrial and scientific development worldwide, it simultaneously created a large socioeconomic disparity between not just people, but nations that were capable of industrializing and less-developed ones with fewer resources. As neoliberal economics (associated with free-market capitalism) grew in popularity after World War II and



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the economic crisis in the 1970s, the disparity between the industrialized, rich countries and less-developed ones increased tremendously. There were a variety of reasons why lesser developed countries were so set back, but part of the issue was a deliberate economic dependency placed on them by civil society actors (such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. In addition, since markets had become so diverse, most countries couldn't carry the weight of a hyper-globalized neoliberal world economy, let alone the pressure to industrialize and democratize. This led to a 'trilemma' of globalization where governments were simultaneously pressured to take on global economic assimilation, democratic politics, and maintain national sovereignty—an unfeasible task for nations to carry out. Not only were these pressures fairly incompatible as is, but not many nations had the ability to integrate them successfully and instead fell further victim to the economic disparity. Today, globalization continues to be a growing force worldwide that affects various parts of society, both positively and negatively. The impacts of a hyper-globalized economy, however, left lasting impacts on a global level.

### **Bloc Positions**

Bloc positions will be stated when the topic is revealed in the Official Topic Synopsis. Keep in mind that bloc positions will also be different on Day 1 and Day 2 of the committee since the Ad Hoc topic will evolve on Day 2.



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## Committee Goals

While this guide is a brief overview of the 20th Century, a lot of events and details are left out. This is deliberate due to the sheer amount of events that occurred throughout the century, along with the various geopolitical relationships that developed. It is also because research and prior information is unnecessary for Ad Hoc committees. When approaching the 20th Century, consider the various parties involved during major events (whether listed here or not) and how they could be affected by the solutions you create. Instead of focusing on the 20th Century and what time period the committee may occur in, focus on practicing your improvisational skills so you can best respond to each update and contribute to a productive debate that can both propel your personal goals and address the larger issue as well.

## Questions to Consider

1. If hypothetically placed at any time during the 20th Century, how would you establish global relationships and assist unstable populations in countries?
2. How have relationships between the major European countries changed and evolved throughout the 20th Century?
3. How effective have international organizations (EU, NATO, etc.) been in reconciling or resolving conflicts during the 20th Century?
4. How could relationships between countries be improved in the first and second halves of the 20th Century?
5. What direction does it seem global politics are heading? How are geopolitics shifting?



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