

HMDC Presents... MONGOL 1225: Video 2 Transcripts

These are the words spoken in the two Video 2 films for MONGOL 1225 (The United Nations and International Efforts). We read along while we watch, pause at each time mark, and circle any word we do not know so we can look it up together.

VIDEO 2 (EXPLAINER)

[0:00] Welcome, delegates, to this explainer. Let's jump right into this fascinating topic. We're traveling way back in time to the year 1225, stepping straight into the Mongol court of Genghis Khan. But to really grasp the massive world-altering decisions you're about to make in your committee, we're going to look at history through a very specific lens. We'll explore how the modern world tries to prevent the exact kinds of harm the Mongol Empire faced, and how the Mongols themselves managed international relations back then. By the end of this explainer, you're going to have a serious strategic advantage for your committee sessions. So let's get started. Here is our roadmap for today. One, modern parallels and UN laws. Two, what is working today. Three, what is not working. Four, international efforts in 1225.

[0:45] And finally, five, gaps for your directive. Okay, before we go any further, we absolutely have to establish a vital ground rule for your committee. The United Nations was founded in 1945. That is more than 700 years after your committee's events. So if you hear any claim that UN law actually applied in 1225, that is completely incorrect. We are strictly using modern UN concepts as parallels to help our understanding of why your choices matter. Never ever cite these modern laws as rules that exist in your 1225 timeline. Make sense? Awesome. Section 1, modern parallels and UN laws. So the modern world created very precise international rules to prevent harm. And these fall into a few clear categories. First up, regarding human life and mass killing.

[1:33] The UN General Assembly adopted the genocide convention on December 9, 1948, under Resolution 260, Roman numeral three. According to the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention, last accessed October 2026, this officially outlaws the destruction of a people. Next, to protect physical property and stop the destruction of cities, we have the 1954 Hague Convention. UNESCO, last accessed October 2026, points out that this was the very first treaty devoted solely to protecting cultural heritage in war. Similarly, the United Nations Security Council, on March 24, 2017, issued Resolution 2347. This condemns the destruction of cultural heritage in war, explicitly stating that such attacks might actually be war crimes. Then, thinking about diplomacy and messengers, we have the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961.

[2:20] Cited by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs in March 2009, this makes diplomats inviolable. That basically means they are strictly protected from arrest and harm. Finally, looking at state security. The United Nations Security Council on October 25, 1961, used Resolution 166 to recommend modern Mongolia for UN admission. And later, the United Nations General Assembly, on December 4, 1998, passed Resolution 53-77-D to officially recognize Mongolia's highly desirable nuclear weapon-free status. Today, states seek security through exactly these types of international guarantees to build a desirable international order. Moving right along to Section 2, what is working today? Now, this brilliantly illustrates the desirable outcomes of international cooperation. According to the UNESCO World Heritage Center, last accessed October 2026, international recognition actively helps protect sacred Mongol sites today.

[3:14] For instance, the Orkhon Valley, which is home to the grand Mongol capital, Karakorum, received UNESCO protection back in 2004. Furthermore, Burkhan Khaldun, widely believed to be Genghis Khan's birthplace and burial site, was protected in 2015. And alongside this, the widespread international protection of envoys through the Vienna Convention we just mentioned is a highly desirable reality in our modern world. Section 3, What is Not Working? Despite all these laws, we do have to acknowledge a highly undesirable reality. The system just isn't perfect at preventing harm. A crucial point to look at is this number right here, 152. As of 2019, that was the total number of states parties to the genocide convention. Now, while that sounds like a large number, it actually means that dozens of UN members had still not joined it.

[4:03] Universal adoption is seriously lacking. Furthermore, even with all our modern laws, cultural heritage is sadly still destroyed in war today. Which brings us to Section 4, International Efforts. In 1225, so what did this look like historically? How did the Mongol Empire handle diplomacy and trade without a United Nations? Well, according to Columbia University Asia for Educators, last accessed October 2026, economic and trade disputes were actually the driving force behind all three of Genghis Khan's major invasions. This complete lack of diplomatic agreement caused immense harm. To give you an example, according to Encyclopaedia Iranica, published December 15, 1990, the devastating war with the Khwarazmian Empire was triggered in 1218.

[4:49] Why? Because the governor of Otrar killed a Mongol merchant caravan. When an envoy came to protest this, the Shah literally executed him. However, it wasn't all conflict. When diplomacy did work, the results were highly desirable. The Mongols eventually established the Pax Mongolica, which ensured about 100 years of safe trade across Eurasia. This amazing openness to the world even allowed the Pope to send envoys like John of Plano Carpini in 1245 and William of Rubruck between 1253 and 1255. And surprisingly, they were received quite politely by the Mongols. To actually maintain this massive empire, the Mongols built an absolutely incredible communication infrastructure. They set up postal relay stations about every 20 miles along their major routes. These stations supplied food, fresh horses, and safe lodging.

[5:38] And this didn't just help the military. It brilliantly helped merchants and foreign envoys travel safely across vast distances. As a modern parallel, we can look at the UNESCO Silk Roads Program, which studies these exact shared legacies today, highlighting how choices made way back in the 13th century helped shape our connected futures. Finally, Section 5, gaps for your directive. Okay, let's tie this all together for your committee strategy. The Mongol Empire in 1225 had some critical weaknesses. First off, there were absolutely no lasting written trade agreements with neighbors, which meant simple disputes often spiraled into incredibly destructive wars. Second, there was no shared internationally accepted rule for protecting envoys, which, as we saw at Otrar, led to total disaster.

[6:24] And third, with Genghis Khan's impending death, there is literally no plan in place to keep those vital relay roads safe and operational during a succession crisis. These massive gaps leave the empire intensely vulnerable to harm. So, I want to leave you with this provocative thought to take directly into your first session. The empire is standing at a crossroads. On one path, immense destruction. On the other, a century of desirable peace. You, as delegates, have the power to create the solutions. Which of these historical gaps will your character's first directive fill to secure the future of the Mongol Empire? Thank you so much for joining me for this explainer. HMDC Forensics. Harvard MUN Online, December 2026. Best of luck in your committee, delegates. Go make history.

VIDEO 2 (CINEMATIC)

[0:00] Welcome to 1225. You are delegates to the Mongol court, ruling the largest connected land empire in history. But you face a fatal structural flaw. There are no international organizations, which makes basic diplomacy incredibly dangerous. While your committee operates strictly in the year 1225, this briefing will jump forward to look at post-1945 modern parallels. These future treaties will help illustrate exactly what's at stake in your upcoming decisions. To understand Mongol warfare, you have to look at their ledgers. The empire desperately needed grain and manufactured goods from neighboring states. In fact, all three of Genghis Khan's major invasions originally began simply as disputes over trade access and high tariffs.

[0:46] This economic friction turned lethal in 1218. The governor of the central Asian city of Otrar seized a Mongol merchant caravan and slaughtered its members. When Genghis Khan sent an envoy to protest, the Khwarazm-shah had that ambassador executed. That single execution triggered an invasion that destroyed cities and left millions dead. Without shared rules protecting messengers and open commerce, a simple tariff dispute or seized caravan inevitably escalates into mass destruction. The Mongols attempted to solve these communication gaps by building their own massive internal network across Eurasia, the postal relay system. On this map, stations spaced every 20 miles along major routes were stocked with horses and food, allowing orders to move rapidly.

[1:33] Connecting these lines reveals the economic result. Securing this territory guaranteed traveler safety, solidifying the Pax Mongolica, where merchants moved freely across the continent. This secure network also hosted foreign diplomats. European envoys, including representatives sent by the Pope in 1245 and 1253, were received politely and traveled safely. The Mongol court understood a vital truth. Securing internal communication and safe travel is the absolute prerequisite for international wealth and modern diplomacy. If we sweep forward in time to 1945, we see the modern world attempting to formalize the exact protections the Mongols lacked. The United Nations was formed to codify these rules into international law.

[2:19] The devastation seen in places like Khorasan during the 1220s is addressed today by the 1948 Genocide Convention, which explicitly outlaws the deliberate destruction of a people. To prevent the erasure of entire cultures like the Tangut Kingdom, the 1954 Hague Convention and recent resolutions legally safeguard books, historic monuments, and manuscripts during armed conflict. As for the execution of the Mongol ambassador at Otrar, the 1961 Vienna Convention now strictly dictates that diplomatic envoys cannot be arrested or harmed by their host nations. Today, the independent state of Mongolia secures its borders through these exact international systems. Rather than relying on military expansion, they achieved long-term security by having the UN recognize their nuclear weapon-free status in 1998.

[3:11] By replacing the constant threat of military force with formal, written international agreements, modern nations can guarantee their own security and the absolute immunity of their diplomats. These modern international efforts also actively protect the Mongol legacy itself. Today, UNESCO safeguards ancestral sites like the ancient capital in the Orkhon Valley and the sacred Burkhan Khaldun mountain. However, these modern systems still face limits. Dozens of countries have yet to join some of these treaties and unlawful attacks on historic sites continue to occur. Despite these gaps, the trade routes the Mongols once protected have become a shared multinational legacy, studied globally through the UNESCO Silk Roads Program. Now, your task is to return to the great tent of 1225.

[4:00] Use these modern treaties as a blueprint to draft your first directives regarding the protection of envoys, fair trade agreements, and the management of occupied territories. You must design clear, written diplomatic systems that will outlast the life of any single ruler. If you fail, you will watch the largest land empire in history fracture into pieces.

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