

**SRI LANKA
MODEL UNITED NATIONS**



SC

STUDY GUIDE

SECURITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The United Nations Security Council consists of 15 members with 5 of them being permanent and the rest being non-permanent members elected by the UNGA for a 2-year term. Its primary responsibility is maintaining international peace and security. Other functions include amending the UN charter and granting membership to new members. The UN charter provides all 3 powers of the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches to the UNSC.

It also has the ability to implement international sanctions, authorize peacekeeping missions and other forms of military actions after determining the existence of a threat to international peace or any other form of unjustified aggression by a member state/states, by passing resolutions which immediately becomes binding on all member nations of the international community, but only after all forms of dispute settlement by diplomatic means have been explored. Any member state of the international community regardless of their membership status to the UN is allowed to bring a dispute to the attention of the council.

Discussions have been held in the recent past regarding the viability of reforms to the administrative structure of the UNSC in order to increase transparency and productivity in maintaining international peace and security perhaps by increasing membership within the council.

Article 29 of the UN charter also provides the UNSC with the power to establish subsidiary organs as it deems fit for the performance of its functions. Examples of the invocation of this article include the establishment of the sanctions committee, the creation of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, Peacekeeping Forces Committees to oversee peacekeeping missions etc.

Some of the most significant resolutions passed by the UNSC would be the UNSC resolutions 1674 and 1706 recognizing and advocating the provisions of the 2005 world summit outcome document regarding the responsibility to protect initiative to protect the civilian population against grave violations of international humanitarian law like genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

The most paramount UNGA resolution affecting the performance and functions of the UNSC would be UNGA resolution 377, the "Uniting for Peace" resolution. It gives the UNGA the power to consider matters and issue recommendations to counter a threat to international peace and security when the UNSC fails to act as required to maintain international peace and security due to a lack of unanimity amongst the UNSC's 5 permanent members.

As a place where new ideas are shaped, the security council has the ability to introduce standards and norms to promote international peace and . Nevertheless, it has been argued that the security council has not been able to achieve its full potential and has only been reaffirming its resolutions year after year with no introduction of new or improved substantive work partly because of the occurrence of deadlock with the council by the irresponsible use of the veto power. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the security council to achieve new advancements toward the pursuit of international peace and

security while continually seeking consensus in collaboration with the whole of the international community.

The security council sessions are structured into three stages:

1. General debate
2. Thematic discussions
3. Action on drafts

Conference Topic:

Combating Violent Sectarian Extremism in the Middle East

Introduction

Sectarian-based conflicts or intercommunal violence are certainly not new. Nor is Iraq or, for that matter, the Middle East as a whole, the only locus of conflict depicted as being sectarian in nature, as the disturbing events in Burma/Myanmar, as well as in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Nigeria clearly illustrate. With increasing frequency, media accounts of the civil war in Syria describe it in sectarian terms and report that the violence there has inflamed "sectarian tension" throughout the Gulf and beyond.

Across this variegated landscape, inter- and intra-sectarian violence has taken many forms — Sunni vs Shi'a Muslim, Muslim vs Christian, Buddhist vs Muslim — and has claimed far too many victims on all sides

From Syria and Iraq to Libya and Yemen, the cultural and religious fabric in the Middle East, intricately woven over centuries, was being torn apart by terrorists intent on eliminating the very diversity that had given rise to many of the world's great civilizations, the Security Council heard today as speakers implored it to help end the fighting and urgently protect the region's minorities.

Thousands of civilians were at the mercy of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Sham (ISIL/ISIS) or Da'esh, whose fighters were systematically killing ethnic and religious minorities and those who disagreed with its warped interpretation of Islam. In Iraq, information strongly suggested that Da'esh had perpetrated genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, and that minorities had been victims of that violence. In Syria, a lack of accountability had led to an exceptional rise in those atrocities, by Government and non-State armed groups alike. In Libya, Da'esh-affiliated groups were targeting minorities and attacking religious sights.

For its part, the United Nations is developing an action plan on preventing violent extremism, which it would launch in September, and strengthening efforts to protect diversity in the Middle East. As well, the United Nations plans to form an advisory group of religious, civil, cultural, academic and business leaders to offer insight on inter- and intra-sectarian dynamics.

As Islamic extremists refused to live with non-Muslims, principles based on international law were needed, keeping in mind that there was a silent, peaceful majority of Muslims that rejected the politicization of the religion. Outlining a proposal to “get out of this vicious cycle”, he advised taking legal decisions and adopting definitive measures on political, cultural and educational solutions that protected the national mosaic and safeguarded all citizens’ rights.

An intricately interwoven social fabric in Syria and Iraq was giving way to the “demented obliteration” of difference — any choice not in line with the takfiri world view, which itself was impossibly thin. In a terrible irony, Da’esh might be more accepting of diverse ethnic origins when it came to its own members — so long as they acted in line with takfiri ideology — than many States were when it came to their own citizens.

Iraq’s north is ground zero for the region’s religious wars. Many of the victims of the Islamic State have fled to Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan, an autonomous region whose people long have desired independence. The Sunni Kurds are known internationally as the largest people group without their own nation, and are spread throughout Turkey, Iran, and Syria as well.

The region has become a reluctant refuge for religious minorities fleeing from persecution elsewhere. One displaced Christian told me that Kurdistan was “not all the way there” for religious liberty, but “was the best country in the region, and far better than Iraq.” The territory today contains well over a million people displaced from persecution and fighting elsewhere. The human flood started more than a decade ago, with a sustained attack on Christians by Islamist extremists in Iraq.

BACKGROUND

Some argue that the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 has emerged as a central factor in the transformation of sectarian identities in the Middle East, fueling a resurgence of sectarian tensions and conflicts in the region. The Iraq war shifted the communal balance of power within Iraq, provided Iran with an opening to project its influence deep into the Arab Levant—deepening Iran’s ties to the Assad regime in Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon—and heightened perceptions of vulnerability among the Sunni-led regimes of the Arab Gulf. It also contributed to the emergence of newly religious and more rigidly defined conceptions of sectarian identity among both Sunnis and Shia for whom the links between religious observance and sectarian identity was previously much less explicit.

The invasion thus spurred the sectarianization of regional balance of power politics even as it gave new force to unresolved sectarian grievances in a number of states: in Syria, where a minority Alawite regime governed a majority Sunni population; in Lebanon, where the Shia political movement, Hezbollah, became a dominant power broker within a fragile political system organization along confessional lines; in Saudi Arabia, where a small Shia minority mobilized to advocate for greater communal rights and

autonomy; in Yemen, where an insurgency among a small, heterodox Shia community, the Houthi, gained momentum in the country's northwest provinces bordering Saudi Arabia; and in Bahrain, where a minority Sunni ruling family struggled to contain demands for equality from the Shia majority.

The Arab uprisings that began in early 2011 amplified and accelerated these trends. In Bahrain and Syria, peaceful mass protest movements provoked harsh government repression that brought Bahrain's Arab Spring to a close, but sparked escalating violence in Syria that grew to become a full-fledged civil war. Today, Syria's conflict threatens the underlying stability of the state order in the Levant, as it drags both Lebanon and Iraq into renewed sectarian conflict.

When sectarian conflict erupted in Iraq after the U.S. invasion in 2003, two-thirds or more of the roughly 1.5 million Christians fled their homes, many to the north. More recently the Islamic State has conducted a murderous campaign against Christians, Yazidi "infidels," who hold a monotheistic, syncretic faith considered Satanic by ISIS, and other religious minorities. Many of those under attack sought escape into Kurdistan. Shia and even Sunnis unsympathetic to ISIS also are mistreated and sometimes killed. (Christians and other minority believers in Syria have suffered a similar fate, which is why many fear the Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra and its successor, and similar groups more than Bashar al-Assad's regime; perhaps two-thirds of Syria's Christians also have been forced from their homes.)

Refugees are hard to miss: 94 families lived on the grounds of a church across the street from my hotel. Life was hard for them, but not nearly as bad as the situation facing Christians and others stuck under ISIS rule. Death, prison, mistreatment, and hardship await. Those who resist the group's harsh Islamic doctrines or seek to flee often are executed—commonly through beheadings and even crucifixions. Others suffer under oppressive "Dhimmi" status.

An estimated 5000 women, many Yazidis or Christians, were sold into sex slavery. Hundreds of children were kidnapped, indoctrinated, and sent into combat. Last June the Assyrian International News Agency published a report detailing what it termed "A systematic campaign of persecution of the Church of the East." The people known as Assyrians are being targeted "physically, economically, mentally, religiously and culturally." No wonder Iraq has ascended to number two, behind only North Korea, on Open Doors' "World Watch List" for religious persecution.

Moreover, even with ISIS gone the status of Christians and other religious minorities will remain precarious at best. The Iraqi government is unstable; its sectarian approach based on Shia domination spurred the Islamic State's success, and that organization may not be the last radical Sunni movement to arise. Turkey has intervened in the north against Baghdad's wishes and is seeking to cleanse the Mosul area of all but Sunni Muslims. Christians I met understandably feared for their safety in returning home.

Moreover, religious persecution is not a temporary response to a rare moment of conflict. Instead, it is the norm in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. In every Muslim majority nation religious minorities suffer from discrimination. In many cases brutal repression is the norm. The Islamic State, or Daesh, simply regressed in history, turning persecution into a particularly bloody practice.

It now should be obvious that religion cannot be separated from international affairs. Middle Eastern terrorism against Americans and others is primarily religious in nature. Much of it is blowback for U.S. military and political policies—bombing, invading, and occupying other nations creates enemies, as does backing tyrannical regimes—but theological acceptance, even encouragement, of violence acts as a powerful accelerant.

Religion also underlies the repressive nature of most Arab and Islamic regimes. All discriminate. Most persecute. The failure to respect freedom of conscience for religious minorities acts as a collective canary in the mine, a warning of an intolerant, repressive environment in which extremism is likely to flourish and other liberties, of speech, assembly, press, are unlikely to be protected. This may explain the correlation between protection of religious belief and practice and the vibrancy of civil society. Unfortunately, even nominal allies of Washington, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, have done much to spread religiously-motivated violence beyond their boundaries.

Thus, any response to issues of violent extremism must take religion into account. After all, there's no obvious political answer. The U.S. should accept refugees, especially religious minorities who have few options in the Middle East, but they will only be a few drops in a human flood. Terming the Islamic State's crimes "genocide" highlights rather than ends the tragedy. Overrunning the ISIS "caliphate" will eliminate this particular source of violence against religious minorities, but no one is fighting ISIS to institute religious liberty.

Areas of Contention

Russia's Middle East Influence

More than half a million people have been killed since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Peaceful anti-government protests in provincial areas, inspired by similar demonstrations in other Middle Eastern nations, were brutally suppressed. The government of President Bashar al-Assad responded with a bloody crackdown, followed by piecemeal concessions that stopped short of genuine political reform.

After almost a year and a half of unrest, the conflict between the regime and the opposition escalated to a full-scale civil war. By mid-2012 the fighting has reached capital Damascus and commercial hub Aleppo, with growing numbers of senior army officers deserting Assad. Despite peace proposals put forth by the Arab League and United Nations, the conflict only increased as additional factions joined the armed resistance and the Syrian government received support from Russia, Iran, and the Islamic group Hezbollah.

A chemical attack outside Damascus on Aug. 21, 2013, brought the U.S. on the brink of a military intervention in Syria, but Barack Obama pulled back at the last moment after Russia offered to broker a deal under which Syria would hand over its stockpile of chemical weapons. Most observers interpreted this turn-about as a major diplomatic triumph for Russia, raising questions over Moscow's influence in the wider Middle East.

The conflict continued to escalate through 2016. The terrorist group ISIS invaded northwestern Syria in late 2013, the United States launched airstrikes in Raqqa and Kobani in 2014, and Russia intervened on behalf of the Syrian government in 2015. At the end of February 2016, a ceasefire brokered by the U.N. went into effect, providing the first pause in the conflict since it began.

By the middle of 2016, the ceasefire had collapsed and the conflagration erupted again. Syrian government troops battled opposition troops, Kurdish rebels, and ISIS fighters, while Turkey, Russia, and the U.S. all continued to intervene. In February 2017, government troops recaptured the major city of Aleppo after four years of rebel control, despite a ceasefire being in effect at the time. As the year progressed, they would reclaim other cities in Syria. Kurdish forces, with the backing of the U.S., had largely vanquished ISIS and controlled the northern city of Raqqa.

Emboldened, Syrian troops continued to pursue rebel troops, while Turkish forces attacked Kurdish rebels in the north. Despite attempts to implement yet another ceasefire in late February, government forces launched a major air campaign against rebels in the eastern Syrian region of Ghouta.

On Feb. 19, 2018, Syrian government troops backed by Russian aircraft launched a major offensive against rebels in the region of Ghouta, east of the capital of Damascus. The last rebel-controlled area in the east, Ghouta has been under siege by government forces since 2013. It is home to an estimated 400,000 people and had been declared a no-fly zone for Russian and Syrian aircraft since 2017.

The outcry was swift following the Feb. 19 attack. On Feb. 25, the United Nations Security Council called for a 30-day ceasefire to allow civilians to flee and aid to be delivered. But the initial five-hour evacuation planned for Feb. 27 never occurred, and the violence continued.

International Response: Failure of Diplomacy

Diplomatic efforts at a peaceful resolution of the crisis have failed to end the violence, despite several ceasefires brokered by the United Nations. This is partly due to disagreements between Russia, Syria's traditional ally, and the West. The U.S., long at odds with Syria over its links to Iran, has called on Assad to resign. Russia, which has substantial interests in Syria, has insisted that Syrians alone should decide the fate of their government.

In the absence of an international agreement on a common approach, Gulf Arab governments and Turkey have stepped up military and financial assistance for Syrian rebels. Meanwhile, Russia continues to back Assad's regime with weapons and diplomatic support while Iran, Assad's key regional ally, provides the regime with financial assistance. In 2017, China announced that it would also send military aid to the Syrian government. Meanwhile, the U.S. announced that it would stop aiding rebels.

Arab Spring Uprisings in the Middle East

The Arab Spring was a series of protests and uprisings in the Middle East that began with unrest in Tunisia in late 2010. The Arab Spring has brought down regimes in some Arab countries, sparked mass violence in others, while some governments managed to delay the trouble with a mix of repression, promise of reform, and state largesse.

Sunni - Shiite Tension in the Middle East

The effects of the Iraq War on the Middle East have been profound, but not quite in the way intended by the architects of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein. The effects of the Iraq War on the Middle East have been profound, but not quite in the way intended by the architects of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Top positions in Saddam Hussein's regime were occupied by Sunni Arabs, a minority in Iraq, but traditionally the dominant group going back to the Ottoman times. The U.S.-led invasion enabled the Shiite Arab majority to claim the government, the first time in the modern Middle East that Shiites came to power in any Arab country. This historic event empowered Shiites across the region, in turn attracting suspicion and hostility of Sunni regimes.

Some Iraqi Sunnis launched an armed rebellion targeting the new Shiite-dominated government and foreign forces. The spiraling violence grew into a bloody and destructive civil war between Sunni and Shiite militias, which strained sectarian relations in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries with a mixed Sunni-Shiite population.

The Emergence of Al-Qaeda in Iraq

Suppressed under Saddam's brutal police state, religious extremists of all colors began popping out in the chaotic years after the regime's fall. For Al-Qaeda, the arrival of a Shiite government and the presence of US troops created a dream environment. Posing as the protector of Sunnis, Al-Qaeda created alliances with both Islamist and secular Sunni insurgent groups and began seizing territory in the Sunni tribal heartland of north-western Iraq.

Al-Qaeda's brutal tactics and extremist religious agenda soon alienated many Sunnis who turned against the group, but a distinct Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda, known as the Islamic State in Iraq, has survived. Specializing in car bombing attacks, the group continues to target government forces and Shiites, while expanding its operations into neighboring Syria.

Ascendancy of Iran

The fall of the Iraqi regime marked a critical point in Iran's ascendancy to a regional superpower. Saddam Hussein was Iran's greatest regional enemy, and the two sides fought a bitter 8-year war in the 1980s. But Saddam's Sunni-dominated regime was now replaced with Shiite Islamists who enjoyed close links with the regime in Shiite Iran.

Iran is today the most powerful foreign actor in Iraq, with extensive trade and intelligence network in the country (though strongly opposed by the Sunni minority).

The fall of Iraq to Iran was a geopolitical disaster for the US-backed Sunni monarchies in the Persian Gulf. A new cold war between Saudi Arabia and Iran came to life, as the two powers began to vie for power and influence in the region, in process exacerbating further the Sunni-Shiite tension.

Kurdish Ambitions

Iraqi Kurds were one of the principal winners of the war in Iraq. The de-facto autonomous status of the Kurdish entity in the north – protected by a UN-mandated no-fly zone since the 1991 Gulf War – was now officially recognized by Iraq's new constitution as the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Rich in oil resources and policed by its own security forces, the Iraqi Kurdistan became the most prosperous and stable region in the country.

The KRG is the closest any of the Kurdish people – split mainly between Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey – came to real statehood, emboldening Kurdish independence dreams elsewhere in the region. The civil war in Syria has provided Syria's Kurdish minority with an opportunity to renegotiate its status while forcing Turkey to consider dialogue with its own Kurdish separatists. The oil-rich Iraqi Kurds will no doubt play an important role in these developments.

Limits of US Power in the Middle East

Many advocates of Iraq war saw the toppling of Saddam Hussein as only the first step in the process of building a new regional order that would replace Arab dictatorship with US-friendly democratic governments. However, to most observers, the unintended boost to Iran and Al-Qaeda clearly showed the limits of US ability to reshape the Middle Eastern political map through military intervention.

When the push for democratization came in the shape of the Arab Spring in 2011, it happened on the back of homegrown, popular uprisings. Washington could do little to protect its allies in Egypt and Tunisia, and the outcome of this process on US regional influence remains wildly uncertain.

The US will remain the most powerful foreign player in the Middle East for some time to come, despite its diminishing need for the region's oil. But the fiasco of the state-building effort in Iraq gave way to a more cautious, "realist" foreign policy, manifested in the US reluctance to intervene in the civil war in Syria.

Past action by the UN/International Community

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees is unique in terms of its long-standing commitment to one group of refugees. It has contributed to the welfare and human development of four generations of Palestine refugees. The Agency's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict. UNRWA is committed to fostering the human development of Palestine refugees by helping them to acquire knowledge and skills, lead long and healthy lives, achieve decent standards of living, and enjoy human rights to the fullest possible extent. UNRWA Headquarters and the Jordan Field Office are located in Amman, Jordan. UNRWA also works in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria.

UN Peacekeeping Operations in the Middle East

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon is a peacekeeping mission established on 19 March 1978 by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426, to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon which Israel had invaded five days prior, restore international peace and security, and help the government of Lebanon restore its effective authority in the area.

The mandate had to be adjusted twice, due to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.

Following the 2006 Lebanon War, the United Nations Security Council enhanced UNIFIL and decided that in addition to the original mandate, it would, among other things, monitor the cessation of hostilities; accompany and support the Lebanese Armed Forces as they deploy throughout the south of Lebanon; and extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.

United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 350 on 31 May 1974, to implement Resolution 338 (1973) which called for an immediate ceasefire and implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242.

The resolution was passed on the same day the Agreement on Disengagement was signed between Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights, finally establishing a ceasefire to end the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

The Force has since performed its functions with the full cooperation of both sides. The mandate of UNDOF has been renewed every six months since 1974 (most recently until 31 December 2018). UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) and UNDOF are operating in the zone and continue to supervise the ceasefire. Before the Syrian Civil War, the situation in the Israel-Syria ceasefire line had remained quiet and there had been no serious incidents.

During the Syrian Civil War, the buffer zone between Israeli and Syrian forces became a scene of the Quneitra clashes, forcing many UN observer forces to reconsider their mission due to safety issues. The fighting between Syrian Army and Syrian Opposition came to international attention when on March 2013, the al-Qaeda affiliated group Al-Nusra Front took hostage 21 Fijian UN personnel, who had been a part of the UN Disengagement Observer Force in the neutral buffer zone between Syria and Israeli-occupied territory.

United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) is an organization founded on 29 May 1948 for peacekeeping in the Middle East. Its primary task was providing the military command structure to the peacekeeping forces in the Middle East to enable the peacekeepers to observe and maintain the ceasefire, and as may be necessary in assisting the parties to the Armistice Agreements in the supervision of the application and observance of the terms of those Agreements. The command structure of the UNTSO was maintained to cover the later peacekeeping organisations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Important Conventions & Treaties

1979 International Convention against the Taking of Hostages

Provides that "any person who seizes or detains and threatens to kill, to injure, or to continue to detain another person in order to compel a third party, namely, a State, an international intergovernmental organization, a natural or juridical person, or a group of persons, to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage commits the offence of taking of hostage within the meaning of this Convention".

1980 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material

Criminalizes the unlawful possession, use, transfer or theft of nuclear material and threats to use nuclear material to cause death, serious injury or substantial property damage.

2005 Amendments to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material

Makes it legally binding for States Parties to protect nuclear facilities and material in peaceful domestic use, storage as well as transport; and

Provides for expanded cooperation between and among States regarding rapid measures to locate and recover stolen or smuggled nuclear material, mitigate any radiological consequences or sabotage, and prevent and combat related offences.

1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings

Creates a regime of universal jurisdiction over the unlawful and intentional use of explosives and other lethal devices in, into, or against various defined public places with intent to kill or cause serious bodily injury, or with intent to cause extensive destruction of the public place.

1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism

Requires parties to take steps to prevent and counteract the financing of terrorists, whether direct or indirect, through groups claiming to have charitable, social or cultural goals or which also engage in illicit activities such as drug trafficking or gun running;

Commits States to hold those who finance terrorism criminally, civilly or administratively liable for such acts; and

Provides for the identification, freezing and seizure of funds allocated for terrorist activities, as well as for the sharing of the forfeited funds with other States on a case-by-case basis. Bank secrecy is no longer adequate justification for refusing to cooperate.

Recent Developments

The situation in the Middle East has rarely been as fluid as today, the events seldom as fascinating to watch, as well as challenging to comprehend with the barrage of news reports we receive from the region every day.

Since early 2011, heads of state of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have been driven to exile, put behind bars, or lynched by a mob. Yemeni leader was forced to step aside, while the Syrian regime is fighting a desperate battle for bare survival. Other autocrats dread what the future might bring and, of course, foreign powers are closely watching the events.

- **Bahrain**

In February 2011, the Arab Spring re-energized the largely Shia anti-government protesters in Bahrain. Mass pro-democracy protests erupted in February 2011, prompting a government crackdown aided by troops from Saudi Arabia. But unrest in the Middle East continues, as a restless Shiite majority confronts a state dominated by the Sunni minority. The ruling family has yet to offer any significant political concessions.

- **Egypt**

The dictator is gone, but Egyptian military still holds real power. Egypt remains locked in a protracted process of political transition after the resignation of the long-serving leader Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, with most of the real political power still in the hands of the military. Mass anti-government protests in July 2013 forced the army to remove Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi, amid deep polarization between the Islamists and secular groups.

- **Iraq**

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki speaks during a press conference on May 11, 2011 at the green zone area in Baghdad, Iraq. Iraq's Shiite majority dominates the governing coalition, placing growing strain on the power-sharing agreement with Sunnis and Kurds. Al Qaeda is using the Sunni resentment of the government to mobilize support for its escalating campaign of violence.

- **Iran**

Iran's oil-dependent economy is under severe strain due to sanctions imposed by the West over the country's nuclear program. Meanwhile, supporters of former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vie for power with factions backed by Ayatollah Khamenei, and reformists who are placing their hopes in President Hassan Rouhani.

- **Israel**

Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, draws a red line on a graphic of a bomb while discussing Iran during an address to the United Nations General Assembly on September 27, 2012 in New York City.

Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party came on top of the early elections held in January 2013, but faces a hard time keeping its diverse government coalition together. Prospects for a breakthrough in peace negotiations with Palestinians are close to zero, and military action against Iran is possible in Spring 2013.

- **Lebanon**

Lebanon's governing coalition backed by the Shiite militia Hezbollah has close links to the Syrian regime, while the opposition is sympathetic to Syrian rebels who have established a rear base in northern Lebanon. Clashes erupted between rival Lebanese groups in the north, capital remains calm but tense.

- **Libya**

July 2012 parliamentary elections were won by a secular political alliance. However, large parts of Libya are controlled by militias, former rebels that brought down the regime of Col. Muammar al-Qaddafi. Frequent clashes between rival militias threaten to derail the political process.

- **Syria**

After a year and a half of unrest in Syria, conflict between the regime and the opposition has escalated to full-scale civil war. Fighting has reached the capital and key members of the government have been killed or have defected.

- **Turkey**

Ruled by moderate Islamists since 2002, Turkey has seen its economy and regional influence grow in recent years. The government is battling a Kurdish separatist insurgency at home, while supporting the rebels in neighboring Syria.

- **Yemen**

Long-serving leader Ali Abdullah Saleh resigned in November 2011 under a Saudi-brokered transition deal, after nine months of protests. Interim authorities are battling Al Qaeda-linked militants and a growing separatist movement in the south, with moot prospects for a transition to a stable democratic government.

Major Blocs

United States of America

The withdrawal of the US from Syria reshapes the stability and the relations in the Middle East and has abruptly scrambled the geopolitics of the region. It most importantly creates a vacuum that will most

likely be filled by the Assad regime and Iran. Also, it could allow ISIS's reestablishment in Syria and Iraq while it abandons Kurdish and Arab allies in the area. Even though the United States has only about 2,000 troops in Syria, the consequences of its withdrawal can be far-reaching in a complex war, leaving allies struggling to cope and enemies emboldened. The President of the United States of America, Donald Trump reprimanded "We have defeated ISIS in Syria, my only reason for being there." Finally, the United States has neglected developing partnerships with non-state actors in the Middle East, such as Kurdish and Arab groups in Syria and Iraq. The United States' position has been well established over the years, and the present Trump administration has been even more vociferous in upholding its stance. The U.S. is the largest backer of the Israeli regime, providing military, political, and resource-related aid to the country. The Saudis are also a significant U.S. partner, with massive arms deals signed between them. The U.S. maintains these relations to uphold its strategic position in the Middle East, especially with respect to oil resources, and to further its counter-terrorism initiatives.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation will capitalize on the vacuum left by the USA to set path of the Syrian conflict as it wants. The withdrawal leaves way for Russia to treat Syria as part of its virtual territory. However, while Russia and Iran might benefit in the short term, the end of Syrian war will likely bring them into conflict, since the mutual alliance in support of the Assad regime will disclose to competing benefits. Specifically, on the one hand, Russia wants a strong government in Syria that is loyal to them. On the other hand, Iran seeks a regime which it can easily employ. President Vladimir Putin approved the decision naming the US withdrawal "correct" as the troops were not needed. Putin's approval came after Trump announced he was ordering the withdrawal as the US military had achieved its goal of defeating ISIS in Syria.

Iran

The Islamic State of Iran could benefit immensely and immediately from the United States' withdrawal of troops from Syria, since the US was continuously preventing Iranian military from entering Syria through Iraq. Consequently, Iran will be free to move through the Iraqi border thus, easing the movement of fighters and weapons, including movement of weaponry through Syria to Hezbollah, Iran's partner in Lebanon. Moreover, the USA's sanctions on Iran will be lifted and thus Iran's economy will rejuvenate. Other than that, since the area is rich in oil, the removal of U.S. troops increases Iran's chances of accessing oil fields in the northeast. Furthermore, the current situation possibly offers the opportunity to the country to shape the political regime in Syria, as the withdrawal emboldened further Iranian influence in Syria's politics, economy, and security. The move provides Iranians with the operational space to expand their groups of Shiite foreign fighters, both trained and equipped by Iran, who are mobilized and moved throughout the Middle East.

Israel

Israel had hoped the American presence in Syria would block Iran from completing its corridor to the sea; however, it is now left alone to face the consequences of the withdrawal and is left virtually alone

to stop Iran from expanding its influence across the region. Furthermore, the country currently seems to be alone in the battle against both the Russian Federation and Iran in Syria, which military experts have analyzed the tactical dangers of. What will undoubtedly be at the forefront of Israeli foreign policy is its indispensable territorial and security control. In recent months, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been stern in his view that Israeli settlements in the West Bank should be protected and remain in Israeli hands. Netanyahu has also been quite vocal in that Jerusalem, the so called "eternal and indivisible capital" of Israel, should not be partitioned or leave full Israeli control. The hardline coalition government in Israel is unlikely to be swayed in its demands, which include full recognition of Israeli sovereignty as a Jewish state, the ending of terrorist financing, and undivided control over settlements and Jerusalem.

Palestine and Arab States

Palestine and its Arab backers, on the other hand, believe that Israel should recognize Palestinian territorial integrity, and withdraw all Israeli settlements in Palestinian lands. Major points of contention include the fact that both Palestine and Israel see Jerusalem as their rightful territory and see territory used occupied by internationally-condemned Israeli settlements as their own. Palestine is also requesting the release of its prisoners in Israeli jails and the right for its citizens to return to their homelands, which may actually be within present Israeli boundaries. Given the absence of a Palestinian delegation in the committee, its Arab allies will play a major role in advocating for these issues. Equality of Jewish and Arab states and the elimination of a Western bias towards Israel have been important areas of focus that the Arab states which back Palestine have consistently striven to address.

Syrian Arab Republic

The withdrawal of the forces from Syria influence the instability in the region, since the actors involved in it, prepare for the political order in Syria. The People's Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish militia in Syria, will most likely enter into negotiations with the Syrian regime to forestall a full-scale Turkish incursion and maintain a degree of autonomy. The YPG will continue to be a fixture in Syria's political and governing structures. However, US influence, will be diminished or nonexistent and the Syrian regime, along with allies, such as Russia and Iran will exult. Arab states considered establishing new and improved diplomatic relations with Syria's leader, Bashar al-Assad. Furthermore, Iran remains a potentially potent guerrilla force in the eastern desert region.

Questions to Consider

- Why have the terms "sectarianism," "sectarian divide," "sectarian fault lines," "sectarian fissures" and the like become so prominent in the political discourse?
- Do religions have resources within them that can justify or even encourage violence?

- Are religious doctrinal differences primarily responsible for stoking intercommunal fear and hatred?
- What roles have state, sub-state and transnational actors played in fomenting sectarian discord?
- And importantly, what mechanisms and approaches have been or could be employed to avert sectarian violence, to foster tolerance and peaceful coexistence, and to promote reconciliation?
- What forms of protection can be offered to minority groups facing persecution?
- What efforts can be made to enforce UN legislation on human rights?
- What steps should be taken to control and eliminate religiously motivated acts of terror?
- What differences and issues divide the shia and sunni sects of Islam? What efforts can be made to bridge this schism?
- What are the demands of all actors involved in the Israel-Palestine dispute? How can these demands be incorporated into a long-term peace plan?
- To what extent can the United Nations interfere to control religious hostilities?
- How would nations in the middle east react to UN mediation or peacekeeping efforts? Can the UN appear as an unbiased third party?

Conclusion

Sectarianism fails to adequately explain conflicts in societies with sectarian cleavages. However, the term “sectarianism” seems to have taken on a life of its own since the 2003 Iraq War, and the problem of over-determining sect at the expense of patronage and mobilization strategies needs to be addressed. More than ten years after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the pitfalls of reducing the country to three monolithic ethno-sectarian communities—Kurds, Shi’a, and Sunnis—have still not been learned. As of 2014, sect continues to be used as a mechanism to explain Iraq’s internal tensions, and the same flawed model is being persistently applied to the Syrian civil war as well.

If one looked at Iraq in the 1950s and 1960s, one would witness political street battles being fought between parties that recruited from all sects, including pan-Arab Nasserists, Ba’thists, and Communists. That conflict in Iraq was a microcosm of debates raging throughout the Middle East, but by the 1970s these ideologies had died out. Analyzing sectarianism as a set of political tactics to achieve secular goals that are embedded in unique political structures, and as responses to political crises, offers a ray of hope that it could be a passing political trend in the Middle East, although it may continue for several more decades.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/>

<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/committees-working-groups-and-ad-hoc-bodies>

<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/functions-and-powers>

www.britannica.com/event/Iranian-Revolution.

www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/01/03/afteramerica-leaves-syria-what-next.

www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/12/21/what-the-u-s-withdrawal-from-syria-means-for-isis-iran-and-kurdish-allies/.

www.theguardian.com/world/bashar-al-assad.

www.britannica.com/topic/Sunni.

www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2019-01-08/withdrawing-syria-leaves-vacuum-iran-will-fill.

FURTHER READING

www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/world/middleeast/syria-us-withdrawal-iran.html.

www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/06/true-aims-of-the-syrian-democratic-forces.

www.thenational.ae/world/mena/un-reconvenes-international-group-for-syria-talks-in-geneva-1.855756.

www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/01/24/the-iranian-revolution-a-timeline-of-events/.

www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/un-office-of-disarmament-affairs/.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20971100>.

<https://undof.unmissions.org/mandate>

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/united-nations-emergency-force-unef>

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unifil>

<https://untso.unmissions.org/background>

Practice debate Topic:

Questioning the accountability, conduct, and discipline in peacekeeping operations

Introduction

During the past 25 years, peacekeeping operations have become increasingly common and extensive in their scope. This development has been accompanied by demands for increased accountability in peacekeeping operations. Accountability in peacekeeping operations should be a priority, and there are a number of opportunities for decision-makers to address this issue. Incremental steps to improve accountability include creating performance indicators for operations, establishing contact points with local communities, developing collaborative peacekeeping mandates by involving local actors in their creation, and enforcing justice for the misconduct of individual peacekeepers.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past sixty years, the United Nations peacekeeping force has evolved into one of the main tools used by the international community to manage complex military crises, which pose a threat to international peace and security. During this time, the conduct of United Nations peacekeeping operations has been guided by a largely unwritten body of principles and informed by the experiences of the many thousands of men and women who have served in the more than 60 operations launched - since 1948. Beyond simply monitoring cease-fires, today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations are called upon to facilitate the political process through the promotion of national dialogue and reconciliation, protection of civilians, assistance in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants, supporting the organization of elections, the protection of human rights, and restoring the rule of law. The Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945, gives the United Nations Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In recent years, the Security Council has adopted the practice of invoking Chapter VII (contains provisions related to "Action with Respect to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace and Acts of Aggression") of the Charter when authorizing the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping operations into volatile post conflict settings where the State is unable to maintain security and public order.

ACTION BY THE UN/INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations have been increasingly deployed in many crisis contexts. The practice has been established by the UN to ensure peace and protect victims of different types of armed conflict. Unfortunately, during the past ten years, several cases of serious human rights violations committed by peacekeepers against people who should be protected by them have emerged. The UN has gone through a widespread analysis of the issues involved, from the managerial, administrative and legal points of view. The 2005 Zeid Report has provided the basis for further action within the UN system. Since then, several policy and legal measures have been discussed by relevant UN bodies and organs, and some new developments have taken place.

The UN expects that all peacekeeping personnel adhere to the highest standards of behaviour and conduct themselves in a professional and disciplined manner at all times.

Our personnel should:

- Respect local laws, customs and practices
- Treat host country inhabitants with respect, courtesy and consideration
- Act with impartiality, integrity and tact.

Unfortunately, there are cases of misconduct involving peacekeeping personnel. In response, the UN and Member States ensure that all credible allegations are investigated and that appropriate action is taken when allegations are substantiated.

Addressing misconduct

The UN has a three-pronged strategy to address all form of misconduct including sexual exploitation and abuse: pre-vention of misconduct, enforcement of UN standards of conduct and remedial action.

This strategy is put into action through:

- Training: Conduct and discipline issues are an essential component of pre-deployment and in-mission induction training, mandatory for all civilian, military and police peacekeeping personnel. .
- Awareness-raising campaigns in the host country.
- Clear standards of conduct, such as 'The Ten Rules: Code of Personal Conduct' for Blue Helmets introduced in 1998.
- investigations and disciplinary measures: The UN investigates its own staff. When allegations of misconduct involving military and police personnel are substantiated, the UN may repatriate the individuals concerned and ban them from future peacekeeping operations. The disciplinary

sanctions and any other judicial actions remain the responsibility of the national jurisdiction of the individual involved.

- Assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN personnel.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

The UN has a zero tolerance policy with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse.

This includes any sexual activity with minors or any actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions; any actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This includes acts of transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex, and exploitative relationships. In addition, military and police personnel in most of our missions have non-fraternization policies making relations with beneficiaries of assistance a breach of the standards of conduct.

Conclusion

Outside actors can increase their accountability, and should devote time and resources to do so since the accountability problem can lead to local resistance that threatens the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. The primary burden lies with the UN as the dominant actor and legitimizer of peacekeeping operations. A first step towards accountability would be to establish performance standards to systematically evaluate the operation's legitimacy, effectiveness and impact. Establishing contacts with local structures to increase participation, as well as an ombudsperson or a community relations office, would be another way to increase accountability. While the strengthening of regional ties could help the issue of accountability, the proliferation of non-UN actors may have problematic consequences in the long term. Turning mandates upside down is another interesting idea that would increase accountability by making the process of mandate creation more collaborative and inclusive, and by giving the host government a greater responsibility in the operation. However, a lack of political will among the P5 may become a serious obstacle to this vision. Finally, holding individual peacekeepers responsible for misconduct is a key concern; the UN needs to demand that countries providing peacekeepers hold them responsible for abuse and exploitation, rejecting the existing culture of impunity. One of the major challenges to ensuring accountability on the ground is the elite-centered nature of peacekeeping operations and the lack of effective interaction with local populations. As long as operations remain detached from local realities, accountability at the grassroots level remains an illusion.

Points to consider

- Instances in which peacekeeping operations have been unsuccessful
- Methods through which peacekeeping operations could be improved to ensure future success.

- Methods through which to approach and aid nations that do not provide consent for the interference of Peacekeepers so as to conduct all operations legitimately.
- Principles that Peacekeepers must observe to ensure protection while ensuring that the fundamental rights and laws of people and nations are upheld.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/subsidiary/wgpkc>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>

<https://cpr.unu.edu/>

<http://www.un.org/>

<http://www.un.org/>

<http://www.un.org/>

FURTHER READING

<http://www.atforumz.com/showthread.php?t=171619>

<http://dir.salon.com/story/news/feature/2002/08/06/dyncorp/>

https://watson.brown.edu/files/watson/imce/research/projects/sea_un/SEA_Final_Report_2009.pdf

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13518.doc.htm>