



THE HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCIL OF 1956

MEMBERS OF THE HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCIL OF 1956

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The 2013 American Model United Nations Historical Security Council (HSC) will simulate the events of the world beginning on 18 June 1956. The key international security concerns of this time revolve around the situations in the Middle East in relation to the General Armistice Agreements; the treatment of ethnic groups in South Africa; issues of colonialism, human rights, and self-determination in Algeria, Cyprus, West Irian, and many other areas seeking independence; and military clashes, territorial disputes, and disputes over UN representation continue between the two Chinas. As it has for years, the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union permeates international politics and remains a constant undercurrent in how world affairs are seen and handled.

In 1956, Dag Hammarskjöld was the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dwight Eisenhower, the US President, and Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Premier. The Shah's government was in power in Iran, Batista's Cuba was in the American sphere of influence, and the Republic of China (on Formosa/Taiwan), rather than the People's Republic of China, was officially represented in the United Nations. During this decade, Cold War tensions grew, decolonization created a plethora of new States and membership in the United Nations subsequently expanded by leaps and bounds. Issues of "Palestine" revolved around continued violations of the General Armistice Agreements that followed the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and the only issues involving "Palestinians" were regarding their status as refugees. There were numerous "internal" conflicts in this time period (including South Africa, Algeria and Morocco), but most never reached the Security Council or were discussed with no action taken, due to the powerful patronage of one or more of the Permanent Members.

From time to time, other countries will be involved in the deliberations of the HSC. Some of the delegations that may be called before the HSC include: Israel, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, South Africa, Algeria, Greece, Morocco, Hungary and India.

The following are brief synopses of select international situations facing the Security Council in mid-1956. The prominent events of late 1955 and early 1956 are discussed, as well as some of the questions that will face the Security Council in the latter half of the year. The briefs provided are intended merely as starting points for Representatives' continued exploration of the topics. Any issue on the world scene in 1956 is fair game for discussion in the Historical Security Council; the following topic brief list is not considered to be all inclusive regarding topics that the Council may face. At AMUN Representative actions as well as Simulation Directors shape the flow of the simulation and the topics brought before the Council.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that Representatives have a broad historical knowledge of world affairs as they stood prior to 18 June 1956.

For each topic area, Representatives should consider the following questions. These questions should assist Representatives in gaining a better understanding of the issues at hand, particularly from your country's perspective:

- Should the U.N. be involved in the situation? If yes, what role can the U.N. play in the situation?
- How can regional organizations be utilized?
- Does your government feel that this situation is a threat to international peace and security?
- What are your government's interests in the region?

THE PALESTINE QUESTION: INCIDENTS ON LAKE TIBERIAS

Incidents on the disputed Lake Tiberias, located along the 1949 Armistice line between Syria and Israel, were the basis of conflicts between Syria and Israel in 1955 and early 1956. In December 1955, Israeli armed forces attacked Syrian civilians and military personnel on the shores of Lake Tiberias from both the land and sea. In response, Syria brought the matter to the attention of the Security Council in December 1955.

These attacks were documented by United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine (UNTSO) personnel stationed in the region. The UNTSO reports noted that Israel deliberately violated provisions of the General Armistice Agreements (GAA) by engaging in government-authorized military operations in the lake region. The report also noted, however, that Syrian authorities had, over the past year, interfered with legitimate Israeli commercial and civilian activities on the lake in violation of the GAA provisions. Israel claimed this violation as the basis for its military actions in December, but was rebuked by both the UNTSO report and the Security Council.

On 19 January 1956, the Security Council passed Resolution 111 (S/3538) condemning Israel for its attacks on Syria and calling for a cessation of hostilities and return to the terms of the GAA. The resolution passed unanimously, and all members of the Council also verbally condemned the Israeli attacks. While hostilities remain high in the region, no further attacks have been noted.



THE PALESTINE QUESTION: STATUS OF COMPLIANCE WITH ARMISTICE AGREEMENTS

The most difficult question facing the Council in 1955- 1956 involved the overall status of compliance with the GAA, in particular issues arising along the Egyptian and Israeli borders. Throughout 1955, the Council discussed this aspect of the Palestine Question, focusing on Israeli and Egyptian military incursions into the Gaza Area, which was formally laid out in the GAA as a demilitarized zone (DMZ).

On 29 March 1955, the Council passed Resolution 106, which condemned attacks by the Israeli regular military against Egyptian regular military forces in the Gaza area. With tensions heightening, on 30 March the Council also passed Resolution 107, requesting the assistance of the UNTSO Chief of Staff in facilitating consultation with the governments of both parties on ways to lessen the strain in the area and maintain the Armistice provisions. Following the apparently successful efforts of the Chief of Staff in negotiations with Israel and Egypt, the Council on 8 September also passed Resolution 108 (S/3435), calling for a ceasefire, which had already been accepted by the parties, and the free movement of UN observers in the Gaza area. While steps taken by the Council in 1955 led to verbal declarations of reduced hostility, tensions remained high along the lines of demarcation moving into 1956.

Throughout March and April of 1956, the Council held six discussions regarding compliance with Armistice Agreements. Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria were invited participants in these discussions. The general consensus among Council Members at this time was that commitments by the parties to reduce tensions had not been carried out, and that further actions were needed. On 4 April 1956, the Council adopted Resolution 113 (S/3575) on these issues. This document requested the Secretary-General's (SG) assistance in completing an "enforcement survey" of the GAA provisions, and in seeking discussions by all parties to adopt already accepted GAA measures. It also requested the withdrawal of all forces to the demarcation lines specified in the GAA, the continued freedom of movement of observers, and the creation of local arrangements, in each area, for the prevention of future incidents. The Council realistically noted the improbability of full compliance with the GAA, but stressed the importance of all parties' attempts to comply whenever possible.

From 10 April through 3 May 1956, Dag Hammarskjöld traveled to all of the countries involved in the Armistice Agreements, seeking the cooperation requested by the Council. In his reports of 2 May and 9 May, the SG noted that he regarded his mandate to include negotiations between the parties to re-establish full compliance with the Armistice Agreements, and he also reported generally positive results. While the Council had not specifically sought to include the SG in negotiations, they did respond positively to the results of the trip.

The SG's reports noted that, while all parties accepted the GAA provisions as in their overall best interests, political and practical circumstances had led to the current state of affairs in the region. Namely, mutual mistrust, combined with an inability to guarantee compliance by any given party, was contributing greatly to tensions, which all parties stated they would rather avoid. The SG received personal assurances from each party that they would unconditionally observe the cease fire clauses in the GAA and subsequent Council resolutions, reserving

only the right to self-defense. This specifically included the idea that the parties would not respond with military force to anything less than an attack by the regular military of another party.

As a show of good will on this issue, the SG also reported that Egypt and Israel, on 18 April, both gave strict orders to abide by ceasefire assurances, which served to relieve tensions along the Gaza demarcation line. Additionally, Egypt and Israel provided specific assurances that they would seek to actively prevent crossing of the demarcation lines, including both the Gaza DMZ and the contested El Auja region, in which both sides had a military presence in violation of the GAA provisions.

The SG noted two key issues left unanswered by his trip. The first was the issue of Egyptian interference in Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran. This issue was first raised in September 1951, and was still on the table through early 1956. Major concerns included the harassment of Israeli vessels as they passed through the area and the potential that Egypt might block access to this vital shipping lane. The second unanswered issue involved a recent Israeli plan for diversion of the Jordan River, which would be disastrous for Jordan and another likely precursor to renewed conflict in the region.

On 4 June 1956, the Council passed Resolution 114, commending the SG on this report, endorsing the view that full compliance with the GAA provisions as the key to peace in the region, and asking the SG to continue his Good Office efforts to ensure the cease fires and bring the parties closer to full Armistice compliance in the future.

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THE SITUATION IN ALGERIA

In April 1956, seventeen Asian and African Member States brought before the Security Council a request to discuss the situation in Algeria. While the issue was ultimately not brought to the floor, the question within the Council centered on the body's competency to discuss an issue described by France as an internal issue within the purview of France's domestic jurisdiction. The French assertion of the situation in Algeria was disputed by many as a threat to peace involving the flagrant violation of human rights and violation of the Algerian people's right to self-determination. While the topic was being discussed prior to a vote on adding the item to the agenda, debate focused on France's policy of repression and extermination of Algerian people including a possible violation of the Genocide Convention. A significant increase in troop numbers from approximately 150,000 in 1955 to over 400,000 in 1956 was cited as a significant "threat to peace."

France however maintained that consideration of the situation in Algeria would violate the UN Charter declaring the situation in Algeria an internal matter. After its conquest in 1830, Algeria was incorporated as a department of France, which meant that France considered Algeria to be an integral part of France rather than a mere colony. The French government asserted that its occupation of Algeria began at a time when no other government was recognized as having sovereignty over the territory and no other State had challenged its claim to the territory in over 120 years.

On 18 June 1956 a letter was submitted by the Secretary General to the Council on behalf of 13 Member States requesting reexamination of the topic of Algeria, citing "grievous loss of human life" due to recent French military actions.

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THE SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The treatment of peoples of Indian origin and the issue of Apartheid in South Africa are two of the issues the UN has confronted. The deteriorating racial situation in South Africa along with the government's public refusal to redress the issues, created a difficult situation for the UN. Although the topic has been primarily discussed by the General Assembly, the Council has monitored the situation for possible international repercussions arising out of the Bantu Education Act (1953), Separate Registration of Voters Act (1951), and other public policies. While the Security Council has taken no official action on either issue,

it has monitored the political situation closely. Political changes within opposition groups to the South African government may provoke violence as both groups seek equality.

To date, outside of debating the issue, the UN has not gone further than attempting to create an atmosphere that would facilitate resolution of the matters through diplomatic discussions and encouraging South Africa to observe its obligations under Article 56 of the UN Charter.

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THE QUESTION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF CHINA

Since the inception of the United Nations, the Republic of China has held the official Chinese seat, including in the Security Council. The rise of the People's Republic of China on the mainland, however, has raised questions about the legitimacy of this arrangement. This issue has been most strongly stressed by the Soviet Union in discussions before the Council. First discussed in January of 1955, the Council invited a representative of the central government of the People's Republic of China to participate without a vote in the Council's discussion of the issue.

The issue is complicated by continued acts of violence between the forces of the two Chinas in 1955. These actions included raids by the Republic of China into the People's Republic of China and the shelling and seizure of disputed islands by the People's Republic of China. While the military situation has stalemated due in part to nuclear brinkmanship between their respective supporters in the USSR and USA, tensions remain high. To date, the Council has decided to take no action on seating the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of China retains UN representation.

THE SITUATION IN WEST IRIAN (WEST NEW GUINEA)

West Irian (West New Guinea) is one of many colonial disputes in the world accompanied by minor international hostilities. A colonial possession of the Netherlands, the political status of West Irian is currently an object of contention between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Indonesia feels that West Irian should either be ceded to Indonesia, or given the right of self-determination, and some hostilities have arisen over the issue.

THE SITUATION IN CYPRUS

Cyprus is another colonial territory embroiled in a dispute over the right to self-determination. This colony of the United Kingdom, with a significant Greek population, is currently seeking independence from the UK. This has so far been denied due to the island's significance as a military base in close proximity to the Middle East. Incidents which most concern the Security Council include a rise in terrorism on the island, attacks on police, military, and government installations



apparently incited by Greece against the UK government on Cyprus, and continued calls by Greece and peoples inside Cyprus for the right to self-determination.

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ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBER STATES

With many former colonial territories gaining independence, and more expected in 1956, the Security Council has been dealing with the issue of admitting new Member States to the United Nations. In 1955 alone, Resolution 109 (S/3509) of 19 December recommended the admission of sixteen new members to the UN: Albania, Jordan, Ireland, Portugal, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Finland, Ceylon, Nepal, Libya, Cambodia, Laos and Spain. The question was again addressed with Resolution 112 (S/3546) on 6 February 1956, recommending the admission of Sudan. The recent independence of Morocco and Tunisia may also lead to their request for admission in the near future. It should be noted that, following the submission of a request for admission to the Secretary-General, potential Member States must be recommended by the Security Council before they can be accepted into the UN by a vote of the General Assembly.

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Please note: The books and documents listed below provide both contemporary and historical information on the years 1955 and 1956. Any information provided for dates after 18 June 1956 will not be considered factual or appropriate in debates before the Council. It is strongly recommended that representatives to the Historical Security Council consult period materials, especially from late 1955 and the first half of 1956. These might include the *UN Chronicle*, the *New York Times*, *Time* magazine and similar sources.

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