



ISSUES AT AMUN: FALL SECURITY COUNCIL UPDATE

2016 AMUN International Executive Committee

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THE CONTEMPORARY SECURITY COUNCIL: FALL UPDATE

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This update complements the brief background notes already published in the *Issues at AMUN* handbook. Please read the *Issues at AMUN* book before turning to this update.

The Contemporary Security Council topics below are current as of Fall 2016, but they are not all-inclusive of what the Council might talk about at Conference. Given the ever-changing nature of international peace and security, these three topics are a guide to help direct your research about your State's positions.

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

- How did this conflict begin? Is this a new conflict or a re-ignition of a previous conflict?
- How have similar situations and conflicts been peacefully resolved?
- What State and regional actors are involved in this conflict?
- If there are non-State actors involved in a conflict, are there any States supporting them? If so, which ones?

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SYRIA

By June 2015, attacks against civilians in cities like Aleppo had surged, with Assad's forces and government opposition forces both violating human rights by, among other things, using barrel bombs on civilians. While violence continued unabated, the Security Council moved forward, passing Resolution 2235 establishing a mechanism to identify chemical weapon perpetrators in Syria and to impose measures under Article VII of the United Nations Charter for violations. In August the Security Council demanded that all parties to the conflict cease attacks against civilians and the indiscriminate use of weapons in populated areas. Additionally, the Council called for both sides to work together to solve the political crisis, working to establish a transitional government with full executive powers made up of current government and opposition forces.

In September, Russia joined forces with the Assad government and began launching airstrikes against rebel forces and forces of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These strikes, along with continued American airstrikes against ISIL positions, allowed Syrian government forces to begin re-taking territory from rebel and ISIL forces in the region. In November representatives from seventeen states met in Vienna, Austria, as the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) to prepare a peace plan for the war-torn country and discuss how to transition the government. The ISSG consisted of the Permanent Five Members of

the United Nations Security Council, Germany, Italy, and concerned Middle Eastern nations, including Iran. After a 14 November meeting, the ISSG had constructed a plan that reiterated the group's commitment to observing a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition; implementing a nationwide ceasefire; establishing peace talks between the Syrian government and the opposition forces by 1 January 2016; assigning Staffan de Mistura as a UN Special Envoy to Syria; agreeing that ISIL and other terrorist forces must be defeated; and directing Jordan to help identify terrorist and terrorists groups in the region.

The United Nations Security Council approved this peace plan in Resolution 2254 in December 2015, signaling the international desire to seek peace in Syria. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that, "The United Nations stands ready to undertake these important tasks." The first round of peace talks were held in Geneva, Switzerland, in February 2016, but they stalled due to a major government offensive in Aleppo. Throughout the summer, the United States and Russia worked together to promote the ceasefire, and eventually Russia moved troops out of the country. Nevertheless, fighting continued as UN-sponsored peace talks were set to begin again in August.

As ceasefires and peace talks stalled, attacks in heavily-populated areas continued, including more intensive use of chlorine gas and their delivery systems, most commonly by barrel bombs. With the mandate from Resolution 2235 set to expire in August, the United Nations is no closer to learning which side is behind the chlorine gas attacks, although it has been noted that neither the opposition forces nor ISIL have the ability to deliver barrel bombs by helicopter. More than 500 Syrians were killed in attacks by Syrian and Russian forces in Aleppo during the week of 21 July after government forces staged an attack to help end the stalemate in Aleppo. A brief ceasefire, mainly for the purposes for securing access to humanitarian aid, went into affect on 12 September, but collapsed only a week later without aid reaching the city. As of the end of September, both Russia and the United States claim to be committed to reinstating the ceasefire, but disagree on the proposed length.

THE ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND THE LEVANT (ISIL)

The United States responded to lackluster results garnered by Resolution 2199 by launching Operation Tidal Wave II in October 2015. This operation, a more targeted version of the overall Operation Inherent Resolve operation, was launched to destroy oil-based refineries and infrastructure. Operation Tidal Wave II boasted eliminating/incapacitating more than 116 ISIL-sponsored trucks in its first month. American Colonel Steve Warren stated, "What we've done is we've used very precise carving, a very detailed analysis to strike certain parts of these facilities that will cause them to shut down for an extended period of time." To minimize civilian casualties, leaflets were dropped an hour



in advance of the planned attacks. By December 2015, the airstrikes had destroyed nearly ninety percent of ISIL's oil capacity and had ISIL fighters in retreat from some areas in Syria, including their de facto base in Raqqa. Captured documentation showed that ISIL salaries were being cut in half due to decreased revenues. On 17 December 2015, the United States and Russia sponsored Resolution 2253 calling for sanctions on ISIL similar to those placed on al-Qaeda in previous years and increased sharing of intelligence to combat ISIL. United States government officials noted that cutting ISIL financial ties and their access to the international financial market were the only ways to effectively combat ISIL.

In 2015 ISIL-related violence around the world also increased markedly. According to an analysis done by the *New York Times*, since 2014, more than 1,200 people have been killed outside Iraq and Syria in attacks inspired or orchestrated by ISIL forces, with four separate attacks in February 2015 alone killing dozens of people. After a trio of ISIL-inspired attacks in Paris in November 2015, French President Francois Hollande announced that France would be active on all fronts to confront “the barbarians from Daesh.”

Coordinated airstrikes continued in 2016, and targeted sanctions continued to affect ISIL finances; in Iraq, Iraqi forces were able to recapture some former ISIL strongholds, including Hit and Fallujah, which had been under ISIL control since 2014. However, ISIL continued to gain more ground in Syria, conquering Rai, near the Turkish border, and a gas field near Palmyra. While ISIL has gained ground, anti-ISIL forces gained new momentum as Turkey and Russia put aside their month-old feud resulting from an incident in November 2015 in which Turkey shot down a Russian airplane. To help plan for an end to the fight against ISIL, the Security Council issued Presidential Statement 2016/6 on 11 May 2016 calling for the Counter Terrorism Committee to come up with a “comprehensive international framework” to combat ISIL and other terrorist groups by 30 April 2017.

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THE SITUATION IN UKRAINE

In early 2014, Russian-aligned Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was driven from power by violent protests in Kiev. Soldiers carrying Russian weapons but no insignias then seized control of the Crimean peninsula, which spans southern Ukraine between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. On 16 March 2014, a referendum was held to vote on whether Crimea should secede from Ukraine and become part of Russia. Ethnic Russians make up the majority of the population of Crimea (about 58 percent), and the referendum passed with over 90 percent of the vote. In response to the vote Russia officially annexed the region. In the weeks following the secession and annexation, conflict between Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces flared up in eastern Ukraine. Despite negotiations and ceasefires, the conflict has killed more than 9,500 people and is still raging. The United States, the



European Union and the United Nations (in A/RES/68/262) have called the annexation referendum invalid and have declared Russia's occupation of Crimea illegal. The conflict has since become a flashpoint, exacerbating tensions between Russia, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

On 17 July 2014, Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 from Amsterdam was shot down near the village of Grabove, in rebel-held territory close to the Russian border, killing 298 people from the Netherlands, Malaysia and Australia. Western States blamed a Russian-supplied missile, believed to have been fired by rebels. Russia denied this involvement and argued instead that a Ukrainian fighter jet had flown near the airliner at the time. In response to Russia's failure to cooperate with the investigation into the MH17 flight shooting, the European Union imposed sweeping sanctions against large swaths of Russian banks, energy companies and arms makers. These sanctions remain in effect today. In a recent report, released on 28 September, a team of international prosecutors, led by the Dutch, released their report which concluded that the missile that brought down flight MH17 was supplied by Russia and launched from Russian-backed, rebel-controlled territory. Russia denies these assertions, but Ukraine has insisted since 2014 that Russian authorities allowed well-trained volunteers and heavy weapons to cross the border to help the rebels in Crimea, as well as their own regular military forces.

In February 2015, the Minsk Agreement was adopted by Ukraine, Russia, the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) to help stem the violence in eastern Ukraine. This agreement contained provisions for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry by both sides to create a demilitarized zone, and constitutional reform in Ukraine, among other things. The Security Council adopted Resolution 2202 on 17 February 2015, calling on all parties to implement the Minsk Agreement. By April 2015, the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) noted that the ceasefire was holding and that there was a good chance for peace. While this was true in many parts of the country, there were still pockets of resistance and non-compliance with the Minsk Agreement.

An exhaustive study into the Ukrainian conflict by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was conducted between January 2014 and May 2016. The report states that both sides of the conflict in Ukraine are guilty of indiscriminately shelling civilian areas and carrying out summary executions of both combatants and civilians.

Despite the Minsk Agreement, fighting continues in Ukraine's break-away eastern regions. In June 2016, OSCE-reported incidences of shelling, bursts of machine gun fire and explosions from undetermined sources in the war-stricken regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. On 21 June 2016, the European Union agreed to extend sanctions against Russia by six months to keep pressure on Moscow and Russian President Vladimir Putin over the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The current sanctions will remain in effect until 31 January 2017.

On 11 August 2016, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko placed the Ukrainian military in the eastern portion of Ukraine and on the border with Crimea on high alert amid mounting tensions between Russia and Ukraine over alleged armed incursions into Russia by Ukrainian special forces. Ukraine has criticized Russian accusations of violence and blames Russia for provoking conflict.

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THE SITUATION IN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

Sudan and South Sudan have long been beset by conflict. Two rounds of north-south civil war cost the lives of more than two million people, and a continuing conflict in the western region of Darfur has displaced over 2.5 million people and killed more than 200,000. South Darfur is also struggling to curb violence within its borders, resulting from a 2013-2015 civil war that displaced more than 2.2 million people. Various outstanding issues related to the secession of South Sudan, particularly the question of shared oil revenues and the exact border demarcation in the Abeyi region, have exacerbated tensions between the two states.

SUDAN AND DARFUR

On 29 June 2016, the Security Council voted to remain in the Darfur region until June 2017, determining that the situation in Sudan constituted a threat to international peace and security. It remains there under its partnership with the African Union, the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). As UNAMID maintains a large peacekeeping force of over 19,000 uniformed personnel, despite the Sudanese government's efforts to restrict its operations.

SOUTH SUDAN

On 15 December 2015, the Security Council voted to increase the force structure on the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) to a ceiling of 13,000 troops and 2,001 police and to extend the UNMISS mandate through 31 July 2016. On 12 August 2016, the Security Council extended the mandate once again to 15 December 2016.



Despite a ceasefire in 2015, conflicts continue to plague the country. In July 2016, clashes between the country's rival factions put a chokehold on regular food distribution for the tens of thousands of people stranded in United Nations displacement camps. United Nations reports show that the camps are rife with crime, hunger and sexual violence.

On 8 July 2016, fighting started between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir, a Dinka, and those of his first vice-president, Riek Machar, a Nuer, during a cabinet meeting at the presidential compound. Over a four-day period, government and opposition forces clashed in South Sudan's capital city, Juba. Soldiers killed and raped civilians and extensively looted civilian property, including humanitarian goods. Included in the violence were indiscriminate gunfire and shelling. Shells from these attacks landed in camps for displaced people inside United Nations bases and in other densely populated areas in the city, wounding many and killing at least 73 civilians. Over 36,000 people sought refuge at United Nations and aid group compounds during or directly after the fighting. A ceasefire was declared on 11 July, but attacks against civilians continued until at least 27 July.

On 12 August 2016, the Security Council authorized the deployment of 4,000 more peacekeepers under UNMISS to act as a protection force in Juba. Members of the Security Council have threatened an arms embargo against South Sudan if the government does not cooperate.

ABYEI REGION

Conflict over the border region of Abyei remains unabated. In March 2016, it was reported that South Sudan's foreign affairs minister, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, had conceded the Abyei region to Sudan. Minister Benjamin refuted these claims, stating that Sudan and South Sudan have yet to resolve the status of the disputed region. Troops from both Sudan and South Sudan remain in the proposed demilitarized zone, and elections are no closer to taking place. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) mandate remains in effect until 15 November.

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THE SITUATION IN NORTH KOREA

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) emerged in the wake of the Second World War, as the Soviets disarmed Japanese occupiers in the north (above the 38th parallel) and Americans disarmed Japanese occupiers in the south. The two Koreas formed provisional governments and formally declared statehood in 1948—the North (DPRK) under Kim Il-Sung and the South (the Republic of Korea, ROK) under Syngman Rhee. With the Soviet's blessing and Chinese communist support as well, the North Koreans launched an attack on South Korea, ostensibly to unify the peninsula, in June 1950.

DPRK quickly overran and occupied much of the southern half of the Peninsula. After the outbreak of violence, the United Nations adopted a series of resolutions, ultimately authorizing the use of force to assist the ROK. On 27 July 1953, the United Nations Command (represented by the United States, the North Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army) signed an armistice, establishing a ceasefire and demilitarized zone across the peninsula at the 38th parallel but leaving many issues, such as a maritime border, unresolved.

Though tensions remained high, DPRK ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on 12 December 1985, agreeing to pursue only peaceful uses of nuclear energy for the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament. The North Koreans operationalized a research nuclear reactor in Yongbyon in 1986, and tested a medium-range Rodong ballistic missile in 1993. The North Koreans indicated a desire to exit the NPT, and signed an Agreed Framework with the United States in October 1994. Testing continued under the regime of Kim Jong-il (after Kim Il-Sung's death in 1994), with the DPRK testing a multistage long-range missile in 1998.

In 2003, the DPRK withdrew from its commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The state then launched a number of underground and above-ground missile tests between 2004 and 2011. Kim Jong-il died of a heart attack in December 2011 and was succeeded as supreme leader by his youngest son, Kim Jong-un. Since Kim Jong-un's ascension, the DPRK has continued to perform nuclear research and launch short and medium-range missiles despite United Nations Security Council mandates. To date, United Nations Security Council resolutions have been largely unsuccessful in preventing North Korea from advancing its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, although the sanctions have slowed development in these areas. The 1718 Committee, established by Security Council Resolution 1718 in 2006, oversees implementation and enforcement of sanctions against North Korea.

On 6 January 2016, the DPRK conducted a nuclear test, announcing the results as its first successful test of a hydrogen bomb. On 9 March 2016, Kim Jong-un announced that North Korea was able to make nuclear warheads small enough to fit on ballistic missiles. This claim came as North Korea made a series of threats to carry out indiscriminate attacks against the United States and South Korea. Following the DPRK's 6 January missile test, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2270, which calls for inspecting all cargo going in



and out of the country, banning all weapons trade and expanding the list of individuals facing sanctions. This resolution contains the most stringent measures yet to undermine the North's ability to raise money and secure technology and other resources for its nuclear weapons program. Despite the threat of more sanctions, the DPRK conducted another nuclear test on 9 September. The Council has yet to respond in any formal way to the most recent actions of the DPRK.

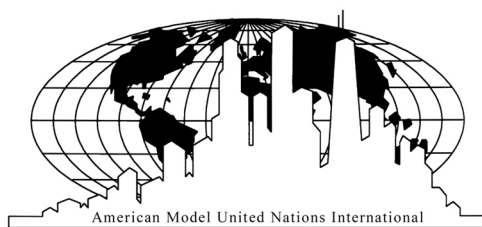
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