

VHMUN 2016

Study Guide for United Nations Security Council

- Threat to International Peace and Security due to Islamic State (IS)

THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

Firstly, the UNSC has five veto power nations, namely: the United States, the United Kingdom, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation and France. When the Council moves into voting on a resolution on the table, a vote against the resolution by any of these five nations causes the resolution to fail automatically.

Secondly, UNSC Article 27 allows the rewriting of procedure if there is an affirmative vote of nine UNSC members. This can be applied to several procedural elements, including moderated caucuses, the length of unmoderated caucuses and so on.

Article 27:

1. Each member of the Security Council shall have one vote.
2. Decisions of the Security Council on procedural matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members.
3. Decisions of the Security Council on all other matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members; provided that, in decisions under Chapter VI, and under paragraph 3 of Article 52, a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting.

The Security Council has the right to do this under the provisions of Article 30 of the UN Charter.

"The Security Council shall adopt its own rules of procedure, including the method of selecting its President."

Thirdly, a feature of resolutions unique to the United Nations Security Council is that resolutions require a two-thirds majority in votes in favour of the resolution to pass. In a council of fifteen, this would be ten votes in favour of the resolution.

Fourthly, when the council entertains a motion to divide the question, veto powers' votes-against do not cause individual clauses to fail.

Fifthly, note that resolutions written in the UNSC must refer to existing frameworks of international law - the specific definitions of: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

TOPIC 1: THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY DUE TO ISLAMIC STATE (IS)

Statement of Problem:

Born from the systematic marginalization of Sunnis by the Shia-led government of Al-Maliki, Islamic State is a terrorist group en masse that consists 30,000-45,000 men, a third of whom are highly skilled fighters. Today, they control large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq but have connections all over the Middle East. Doubtless a threat to international security, IS has infamously beheaded Western journalists and made ethnic cleansing a core part of their ultimate to create an Islamic State comprising all countries of the Middle East. This issue throws into question the alliances of the international community as they seek to unite against IS despite the less-than-stellar track record of some of their more important allies (Read: Bashar Al-Assad). Members of the council will have to discuss and debate the viability of current solutions such as airstrikes and come up with better solutions to combat the rise of Islamic State.

Why did ISIS Emerge?

The seeds of a deep Sunni-Shia sectarian conflict were planted shortly after founding the of Iraq in 1921, when the Sunni minority in whom power was disproportionately concentrated discriminated against the Shia majority- neglecting, excluding and marginalising them, and stirring up discontent. Under these initial conditions, the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq (involving France, Germany and New Zealand), though dismantling Saddam Hussein's dictatorial leadership, also served to destabilise the region whose sectarian conflicts were still relatively contained by Hussein's secular Ba'athist regime. The power vacuum left in the country, making effective targeting and elimination of extremist organisations almost impossible, meant Iraq was now a safe haven for terrorist cells.

Such groups found no shortage of discontented, aggravated Shia militants ready to break out of apparently illegitimate Sunni rule, prevailing tensions further exacerbated by the US' unwavering support for the Shia leader al-Maliki (who cracked down on dissidents and pursued discriminatory policies in the government and armed forces). For example, when Maliki's troops broke into Sunni protest camps in 2013, they did so with US-made weapons. On the government's side, al-Maliki has been unable or unwilling to cooperate with the Sunnis- partly because his major electoral opposition comes from more extreme Shia factions. The Sahwa, an anti-al-Qaeda coalition between tribal Sheikhs from provinces and the Iraqi militia which was initially established and sponsored by the US military, largely responsible for ensuring the security of individual communities, were rendered almost nonexistent by due to al-Maliki's hostility towards them

(reducing their salaries, gradually alienating them), leaving its 51,900 members with the options to either enlist in the military that oppressed them, remain unemployed or join ISIS.

Out of this terrorist hotbed emerged the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), headed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a prisoner of US forces from 2005 to 2009 and listed as a terrorist by the UN. ISIS was initially supported by Al-Qaeda, but its growing clout (in terms of manpower, control over territory and finances- so much so that it could afford to establish and fund the Syrian rebel movement Al-Nusra front) led it to chafe against Al-Qaeda leadership and it was eventually excommunicated by the group.

On 2014 ISIS proclaimed a Worldwide Caliphate, claiming “religious, political and military authority over all Muslims worldwide”. It aims to do so by establishing its rule of conquered territory, and is notorious for employing methods far more brutal than its predecessors in order to gain control of territories and cleanse them of other ethnicities and religions, alongside imposing sharia law. According to a 2014 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report ISIS has killed hundreds of prisoners of war and over thousands of civilians in its slash-and-burn campaigns across provinces in Iraq, Syria, Sinai, and eastern Libya. It must be noted that the organisation subscribes to Salafism, an extreme interpretation of Islam which religious violence, and regards those who do not agree with its interpretations as infidels deserving to be eliminated.

Manpower:

Locally, ISIS finds sympathisers in groups with similar ideological slants including Sunni militants and Ba'ath nationalists particularly in Tikrit. Its ideological reach extends to other countries in the middle-eastern bowl- Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Israel and Palestine all contain splinter cells pledging allegiance to the organisation, and as of April 2015 this includes Boko Haram (giving the organisation official presence in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Ansar al-Sharia in Libya. Within and beyond Syria and Iraq, ISIS’ military wing is estimated by the CIA to have 52,500-257,800 members. This includes women who take up non-combatant, supportive roles such as providing first aid, cooking, nursing and sewing, and child soldiers who are indoctrinated with radicalised propaganda from young ages and sent to fight on battlefields.

This includes more than 20,000 foreign fighters hailing from both Middle-Eastern as well as Western countries such as the US, UK and even far-flung European countries and Scandinavian countries. The outflow of foreign fighters has created a new security threat- of foreign fighter “blowback”, referring to

when radicalised citizens return to their home countries with terrorist plans (a difficult, sensitive situation to handle given that such terrorists are difficult to identify and monitor, and secondly that they are likely to be profiled along racial and religious lines, ratcheting inter- group tensions in countries that are already struggling to keep them under control).

Also notable is that Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's executive team consists former senior officers from Saddam Hussein's army who were marginalized under the de-baathification policies instituted by America and successive Iraqi governments.

Weaponry:

ISIS largely operates on foot units but also utilises light vehicles such as gun equipped pick-up trucks (technicals), motorbikes and buses, though these possess limited capacity for mass transportation. Its main sources of weapons are Saddam Hussein's stockpiles around Iraq, but its inventory has also been replenished through weapon seizures during the Syrian Civil War and the Post - US Iraqi Insurgency. It now possesses armoured tanks and heavy weaponry such as field guns and anti- aircraft guns. ISIS is also said to have taken three Russian-built MiG jets from Syrian forces, though the Syrian military reportedly shot two of them down. ISIS also pilfers antiques and archeological treasures from captured regions to sell on the black market, making \$36m from al-Nabuk, an area in the Qalamoun mountains west of Damascus. Funding also comes from the coffers of captured cities and out from the pockets of villagers under their rule, who are taxed (though notably at a smaller rate than the one implemented by Assad's regime).

Current Situation:

Who Is Fighting ISIS On The Ground?

a) The Army of Muhajedeen

The Army of Muhajedeen controls much of the countryside west of Aleppo and exerts influence over at least some of the main supply routes from Turkey to Aleppo. Although it has a sizeable army of thousands of fighters, the Army is internally divided, with at least twelve different member factions. After three months of brutal infighting, these groups have managed to drive the ISIL out of northwestern Syria. The Army of Muhajedeen almost entirely comprises of native Iraqi Sunni Muslims. Its attacks have included the use of IEDs, vehicle bombs, rockets and mortars.

b) The Free Syrian Army

c) The Islamic Front

This is a coalition force comprising several military groups: Ahrar al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham, Liwa al-Tawhid, Liwa al-Haqq, Ansar al-Sham and the Kurdish Islamic Front⁹. These groups merged with the aim of toppling the Assad regime, but are also fighting ISIS in Syria. The leader of the Islamic Front is Ahmed Issa al-Sheikh of Suqour al-Sham, the previous leader of head of the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front. The clashes between the Islamic Front and ISIS began Jan 4 2014 in the Northern province of Aleppo.

d) The Kurdish Peshmerga

In June 2014, there were reports that a number of Sunni groups in Iraq that were opposed to the predominantly Shia government had joined ISIL, thus bolstering the group's numbers. However, the Kurds—who are mostly Sunnis—were unwilling to be drawn into the conflict, and there were clashes in the area between ISIL and the Kurdish Peshmerga. The Peshmerga are being funded and equipped by the US to fight the ISIS.

According to Al Jazeera, on 2nd September 2014, Kurdish Peshmerga recaptured from ISIL the town of Zumar. A hundred relatives of the cadets and soldiers killed at Camp Speicher in June broke into the Iraqi Parliament to ask for explanations. On 17th December, they launched the Sinjar Offensive from Zumar and managed to break through ISIL ranks to recapture 700km of territory.

Why is ISIS a Problem?

On 1st May 2014, the ISIS carried out seven public killings in the city of Ar-Raqqah in northern Syria. The corpses of the victims were mounted on wooden crosses, crucified, marking the beginning of a kingdom of cruelty to the people of Ar-Raqqah. This is only one of the many brutalities ISIS has been capable of, brutalities like suicide attacks and car bombings in Baghdad that robbed hundreds of their lives, the mass graves of the Yazidi people, yet the international community has been divided on how to tame this monster.

ISIS is a divisive force amongst the Arab states because it plays right into the Shia-Sunni divide. Some countries, like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, are allowing funds for ISIS to pass through their borders - an implicit recognition of ISIS's right to exist. It has been said that countries funding ISIS are motivated to do so because they are anti-Shia, and ISIS's captures and executions of Shia muslims are in their interest as



Shia states. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has publicly accused Saudi Arabia and Qatar of funding ISIS for months. Several reports have detailed how private Gulf funding to various Syrian rebel groups has splintered the Syrian opposition and paved the way for the rise of groups like ISIS and others.

Airstrikes by Western and non-Western countries have been somewhat effective, but are hindered by a lack of a comprehensive, cooperative attack. Rather, countries retaliated with airstrikes only after ISIS forces had taken their civilians' lives. Egypt for example, only mounted airstrikes after the kidnapping and mass beheading of 21 Coptic Christians on the beaches of Egypt by ISIS this January. Jordan only used airstrikes in the aftermath of one its pilots being shot down in January 2015. Western countries have largely been leading the charge on airstrikes, with the USA, Australia, France, Canada, Holland and Jordan sending airstrikes into Iraq and Syria. The gains have been minimal, but are more substantial than gains from fighters on the ground like the Free Syrian Army. On 29th March, the airstrikes struck 14 targets in Iraq and one in Syria, including positions held by militants near the cities of Mosul, Tikrit and Fallujah.

ISIS's social media reach has received little attention even though it is likely to have significantly contributed to its recruitment ability. ISIS's social media reach is vast. To quote Scott Shane and Ben Hubbard of the New York Times, *"Dozens of Twitter accounts spread its message, and it has posted some major speeches in seven languages. Its videos borrow from Madison Avenue and Hollywood, from combat video games and cable television dramas, and its sensational dispatches are echoed and amplified on social media."*

This recruitment ability has been fatal in Turkey, where three foreign members of ISIS - Albanians - opened fire while hijacking a truck, killing one police officer and one gendarmerie officer as well as wounding five people. Sporadic slaughtering of artists and Jews in Paris and Copenhagen earlier this year points towards more aggressive international resurgence of ISIS. The international reach of its Jihadist ideology is crucial to ISIS's success, as it views its final objective as constructing a global Islamic caliphate.

Amidst the bluster and terror of ISIS's on the ground attacks, the international community has little engaged in a discussion about how to prevent long-term resurgence of terrorist groups. The systematic marginalisation faced by ISIS militants under the government of Al-Maliki can be seen as a root cause of ISIS's resurgence.

Past UN Actions:

UN Security Council Resolution 1618 (2005):

UN Security Council Resolution 1618 (2005) unanimously adopted in 2005 calls on security council members to fulfill certain obligations related to terrorist activities in Iraq including the following:

1. Combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.
2. Prevent the transit of terrorists to and from Iraq, arms for terrorists, and financing that would support terrorists; and
3. Strengthen regional cooperation of regional countries in preventing terrorism.

19th November 2014 – US Resolution:

An anti-terrorism resolution introduced by President Obama was approved by the United Nations Security Council on 19 November 2014, part of the president's ongoing effort to rally global support behind the U.S.-led campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and other terrorist groups.

The resolution, which was passed unanimously by the 15-member council, commits nations to take action to counter violent extremism, and requires world leaders to work together to prevent the equipping, transport or financing of terrorist groups.

Several prominent commentators have argued that the airstrikes in Syria are illegal because they have not been authorized by the UN Security Council and are not acts of self-defence because ISIS poses no direct threat to the US. The US administration, however, has argued that this rests on a mistaken view of the scope of self-defence enshrined in the UN charter. Article 51 of the charter notes the "inherent right" of states to "individual or collective self-defence" (emphasis added). In other words, not only does the government of Iraq have a right to use force to defend itself against ISIS, other states have a right to assist it. The absence of a direct threat to the US or its allies does not, therefore, invalidate self-defence as grounds for intervention, because actions against ISIS in Syria are essentially a defensive response to that organization's armed aggression against Iraq.

International Community's Response:

The United States started sending troops to Iraq in June 2014, and began a large-scale air campaign over the region starting in August 2014. With different agendas and political considerations in a complex

situation, multiple countries have approached intervening in the four conflicts in different ways, and to different degrees.

On 1 February 2015, Iraq's Prime Minister declared that the War on ISIL was effectively "World War III", due to ISIL's declaration of a Worldwide Caliphate, its aims to conquer the world, and its success in spreading the conflict to multiple countries outside of the Levant region.

Humanitarian Efforts:

The U.S., the UK, and Australia, supported by international partners, launched a large humanitarian effort to support refugees stranded in northern Iraq. This included air- dropping tens of thousands of meals and thousands of gallons of drinking water to Yazidi refugees stranded in the Sinjar Mountains and threatened by advancing ISIL forces, between 7–14 August 2014.

In response to the immediate threat to the approximately 30,000 people trapped on the mountain, coalition aircraft commenced humanitarian aid drops. These air drops included basic supplies such as food, water, and shelter and were conducted at low flight levels by coalition transport aircraft under the threat of ISIL surface-to-air attacks.

Pope Francis, too, has called for the international community to collaborate together to stop an “unjust aggressor”.

Military Response:

Sunni and Shia:

The highly sectarian government of Nouri al-Maliki – installed by the U.S. and Iran – amplified the country’s division into warring Sunni and Shi’a camps. Sunni grievances simmered and then exploded under Maliki’s rule, which effectively excluded meaningful political participation by Sunnis and fostered wide-scale abuses against their community. When Sunnis attempted to peacefully protest their marginalization in 2012-13, they met violent assaults by government security forces.

The Shia militias supporting the U.S.-led bombing campaign are armed, funded, salaried, and supported by the Iranians, but also by the Iraqi government, which is in turn armed and funded by Washington. While the U.S. says that its weapons, budgeted at \$1.3 billion for 2015, are intended for Iraqi security forces, the reality is that much is ending up in the hands of these militias.

[US – Airstrikes and Funding:](#)

U.S. intelligence agencies estimate that over 15,000 foreign fighters from more than 80 nations have flooded into Syria in recent years. The U.S. and coalition forces continued airstrikes against ISIS in Syria, striking armed vehicles, weapon caches, troop positions and vehicles. The countries in the coalition include Iraq, Germany, France, Britain, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Australia, Denmark and Saudi Arabia. Leaders in Washington and London are adamant they will not collaborate with the regime of Bashar al-Assad in tackling their common enemy. The Pentagon insisted that it had yet to decide on whether to expand the US air war into Syria.

Airstrikes by the US are marginalizing some rebel groups; it has faced backlash from Harakat Hazm and other groups. This is also because America's airstrikes have targeted Jabhat al-Nusra, one of the biggest groups fighting Assad. US also doesn't cooperate with these moderate rebels despite promises to do so. The Obama doctrine of foreign non- intervention does not apply to Iraq as the stakes for U. S. allies in the long term may be very high.

[Western Bloc:](#)

US is leading the militant attack against ISIS, but vouches to not collaborate with Bashar al-Assad. The bloc includes Iraq, Germany, France, Britain, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Australia, Denmark and Saudi Arabia.

With the effort focused almost exclusively on a military defeat of the armed group, also known as ISIS, neither the Iraqi government nor its anti-ISIS allies – Iran included – have seriously addressed the reforms and accountability for abuses that could earn back the support of Iraq's Sunni population. The fragmentation of Iraq's fighting forces into unaccountable sectarian militias responsible for horrific abuses against Iraqi civilians is part of Iraq's slide into a broken state that no amount of foreign aid and military intervention will be likely to put back together.

The US administration is relying on the vague and controversial notion that the use of force is authorized when a local actor is "unwilling or unable" to contain a growing security threat.

[Russia:](#)

The Russian government, perhaps Bashar al-Assad's staunchest international ally, has objected to the U.S. bombing Syrian territory without the Syrian government's permission.

Egypt:

After ISIL killed 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya, Egypt began conducting airstrikes on ISIL targets in Libya on 16 February 2015, killing a total of 64 ISIL militants (50 in Derna) by the end of that day. Warplanes acting under orders from the "official" Libyan government also struck targets in Derna, reportedly in coordination with Egypt's airstrikes. A Libyan official stated that more joint airstrikes would follow. On 18 February 2015, Egypt reportedly launched a ground assault in the ISIL-held city of Derna, capturing at least 55 ISIL militants.

Jordan:

Jordan had initially allowed flow of Arab and Western arms into Syria to arm moderate rebels against Assad and ISIL. However, after a downed Jordanian pilot, Muath al-Kasasbeh was executed by ISIL by being burned to death, King Abdullah II vowed revenge and temporarily took the lead in the bombing raids on ISIL during February 2015.

Turkey:

Turkey has been further criticised for allowing individuals from outside the region to enter its territory and join ISIL in Syria. With many Islamist fighters passing through Turkey to fight in Syria, Turkey has been accused of becoming a transit country for such fighters and has been labelled the "Gateway to Jihad". Turkish border patrol officers are reported to have deliberately overlooked those entering Syria upon the payment of a small bribe.

In fear of retaliation from Mosul, Turkey has refused to grant the US permission to use NATO bases in Turkey to conduct airstrikes. Turkey seeks a no-fly zone and buffer zone, but the country is also against the Kurds; it had bombed the Kurdistan Workers party near the Iraqi border, and only recently allowed Turkish Kurds to cross into Iraq.

Iran:

The Prime Minister of Iraq, Abadi has called for airstrikes to be halted in built-up areas. However, this has led to other problems wherein airstrikes are freeing up space for Assad to crush rebels instead of fighting ISIL. The number of airstrikes in rebel- controlled regions of Hama and Idleb have doubled from 20 to 40 on October 13 2014. Between October 20 and 31, regime carried out 850 aerial attacks on rebel-held areas.

The Obama Administration had expressed its hopes that the US will be able to strike a deal with Mr. Rouhani, the President of Iran. There is already a tacit understanding in place regarding ISIS, with the Shiite-majority Iraqi government acting as intermediary. The negotiations between the United States and Iran go far beyond the question of nuclear enrichment; if successful, they could lead to a normalization of relations between the two nations. Iran wields enormous influence in Syria through its Levantine proxies Hezbollah and Bashar al-Assad's Alawite faction. An agreement between the US and Iran could lead to a common understanding in Syria: the maintenance of an Alawite government in Syria with some increased Sunni and Christian participation, but the departure of Mr. Assad to some comfortable exile. Such a deal might be acceptable to all parties and allow a reunited Syrian Army turn its undivided attention on ISIS.

Possible Long Term Solutions:

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy contains 14 legal instruments dealing with terrorism, but these conventions deal with what is traditionally defined as terrorist organizations - having hundreds of members at most, attack civilians, do not control territory and cannot directly confront military forces. There are no provisions to combat massive, transnational terrorist organisations like ISIS. Traditional counter-insurgent strategies used against Al-Qaeda become irrelevant: For example, drone strikes to eliminate ISIS heads only temporarily cripple ISIS, which is shielded by a complex administrative structure. ISIS fighters are clustered in civilian areas, making military intervention of such areas costly. ISIS is also protected against funding cuts by its diversified income sources. A fresh set of solutions towards international cooperation is needed.

Syria and Iraq represent vastly differing battlegrounds, containing different sets of conditions that fuel ISIS' spread. The dearth of resistance in Syria needs to be dealt with on a separate basis from the fierce struggles in Iraq, where the Iraqi army is beginning to reclaim cities captured by ISIS, driving back its forces. How the specifications should be made needs to be considered.

Should eliminating ISIS be successful, it would only be the tip of the iceberg. The institutionalised discrimination and oppression of Sunnis and weak government which drove the recruitment and radicalisation of ISIS forces could lead to the growth of like-minded terrorist cells, further endangering the delicate social and political balance of Iraqi society. The question of how to create a future for Iraq that satisfies the warring ethnic groups- Kurds, Sunnis and Shias- embroiled in a centuries-old conflict begs to be answered.

Another pertinent concern is the government in Iraq and the extent to which the government should be assisted by the international community. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1618 calls for all States to “support fully the Government of Iraq in exercising its responsibilities to provide protection to the diplomatic community, United Nations staff and other foreign civilian personnel working in Iraq”. Bearing in mind that al-Maliki’s government pursues discriminatory policies that exacerbate conflict, and that many discontented Sunnis and Kurds do not recognise the legitimacy of the Iraqi government, the effectiveness of blind, generalised support has to be called into question.

The government can punish those responsible for murderous rampages in Sunni communities, and cut off salaries for abusive units. The government can reform the justice system, make good on its promise to release unjustly detained prisoners, and end pervasive torture in Iraq’s detention facilities. It can also join the International Criminal Court, which could deter abuses by all fighting groups. The prime minister can suspend enforcement of the disastrous Anti-Terrorism and de-Ba’athification laws and judicial executions.