



DPS-East Model United Nations Conference 2018

Committee: United Nations Human
Rights Council



Background Guide
Combating asymmetric warfare
with special reference to the Syrian
conflict.

Letter from the Executive Board

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality."

-Martin Luther King Jr.

There was a day when these words were treated as hope, not naïveté- when they were seen as a glorious vision and not wistful thinking. Today, however, as the horn of war echoes louder than ever, their value is forgotten. The news paints us a picture of despair, of death, and of sorrow, and the little hope we have for humanity's future slowly crumbles.

Of the bleakness that threatens to overrun the world as we know it, a sizeable chunk is concentrated in Syria. As a subjugated people rise against their oppressor and factions emerge to protect their own interests, the Middle East is spiralling further and further into turmoil. Violence and disarray have infested the region, and never before has it been more significant to take action to remedy the threatening scenario.

The aim of the Disarmament and International Security Committee at this year's edition of DeMUN will be to combat this increasingly explosive crisis, and it is my immense pleasure to be serving as your Chairperson. Over the course of the MUN, you, delegates will have free rein to take measures to make the world a better place, and perhaps preserve Martin Luther King Jr.'s utopian perception. I look forward to seeing you all, and to a timely, effective resolution to this volatile situation.

Having the power to change the world is no small commitment, and I expect you to use it wisely.

All the best!

Gaurav Khatri,

Chairperson, UNGA-1 DISEC

"To be prepared for war is the most effective way of preserving peace."

-George Washington.

Greetings, Delegates!

I am highly honored to be serving as your Chairperson for DEMUN 2018. This will be my first ever experience as a member of the Executive Board. The DISEC has always been one of my all-time favorite committees, and having delegated in them in 4 of my 6 MUN Conferences thus far, I can guarantee that it will educate and enthrall you in the most innovative way possible.

The DISEC is the most fundamental organ of the General Assembly, as it performs the onerous task of being a recommendation body to the UN Security Council.

This makes it indispensable and requires diplomacy and compromise from

nations on a global scale. It has the power to manipulate circumstances and violence, and you as delegates must proceed bearing in mind your country's long term goals and its present role in maintaining order in the modern world.

This time, the committee will be discussing the multifarious issue of Asymmetric Warfare and its implications, a constant source of population displacement, human rights violations, war crimes and communal riots.

The sphere of debate will revolve mainly around two factors, the conduct and actions of a nation's government, and the role of Non State Actors (NSAs) in changing the country's political strata.

The committee will be a fast-paced one, not simply indulging in debate, but changing the global situation with regards to its harmonization. Every delegate is expected to meet a high standard of debate, remain vocal, proactive and flexible, which is the mark of a true diplomat.

I wish you the best of luck and look forward to an exciting two days of committee.

Godspeed and Happy Researching!

Rajas Raje,

Chairperson, UNGA-1 DISEC

Introduction

Asymmetric warfare (or asymmetric engagement) is [war](#) between [belligerents](#) whose relative military power differs significantly, or whose strategy or tactics differ significantly. This is typically a war between a [standing, professional army](#) and an insurgency or [resistance movement](#).

Asymmetric warfare can describe a conflict in which the resources of two belligerents differ in essence and in the struggle, interact and attempt to exploit each other's characteristic weaknesses. Such struggles often involve strategies and tactics of [unconventional warfare](#), the weaker combatants attempting to use strategy to offset deficiencies in quantity or quality. Such strategies may not necessarily be militarized. This is in contrast to *symmetric warfare*, where two powers have similar military power and resources and rely on tactics that are similar overall, differing only in details and execution.

The term is also frequently used to describe what is also called "[guerrilla warfare](#)", "[insurgency](#)", "[terrorism](#)", "[counterinsurgency](#)", and "[counterterrorism](#)", essentially violent conflict between a formal military and an informal, less equipped and supported, undermanned but resilient opponent. Asymmetric warfare is a form of [irregular warfare](#).

In all simplicity, it refers to clashes between two groups where one is much more powerful, well-funded, and whose tactical awareness and troop strength is much larger and technologically advanced than their enemies, as is the situation of the Syrian government, backed by Russia and Iran, who are fighting liberalists and the Islamic State, the latter being the minnows in quite a lopsided battle at present. Civilians could play an important role in determining the outcome of an asymmetric war. In such conflicts, when it is easy for insurgents to quickly assimilate into the population after an attack, tips on timing or location of insurgent activity can greatly undermine the resistance. An information-centric framework, in which civilians are seen primarily as sources of strategic information rather than resources, provides a paradigm to better understand the dynamics of such conflicts where civilian information-sharing is important.

To understand more deeply why asymmetric warfare occurs, you are expected to know why small groups with less known powers may even choose to combat governments and forces much more powerful than their own. You are expected to know about their motivation, aspirations and the resources they possess that enable them to stage an insurgency of such magnitude that countries see them a serious threat to security.

There are two different viewpoints on the relationship between asymmetric warfare and [terrorism](#). In the modern context, asymmetric warfare is increasingly considered a component of [fourth generation warfare](#). When practiced outside the [laws of war](#), it is often defined as [terrorism](#), though rarely by its practitioners or their supporters.

The other view is that asymmetric warfare does not coincide with terrorism. The use of terror by the much lesser [Mongol](#) forces in the creation and control of the [Mongol empire](#) could be viewed as asymmetric warfare. The other is the use of [state terrorism](#) by the superior [Nazi](#) forces in the [Balkans](#), in an attempt to suppress the resistance movement.

In order for committee to tackle asymmetric warfare, it is a must to clearly demarcate the line between asymmetric warfare and terrorism. If so, the specifics of who decides this and what the mandate of such a declaration would bind upon, must be outlined by you as delegates in a concise manner.

It is ABSOLUTELY VITAL that you know the difference between asymmetric warfare and terrorism, and when the transition from one to the other is likely to occur.

The Syrian Crisis

Parties Involved

1. The Syrian government: Syria was freed from French rule and made an independent republic in 1946. After several political scuffles, Hafez al-Assad (Bashar al-Assad's father) declared himself President. He was of the relatively moderate Shia Alawite sect, and was succeeded by his son Bashar al-Assad, a leader who initially showed promise of modernity and reform. The Assad regime violently put down peaceful protests in 2011, thereby setting in motion a series of events that ultimately culminated in a sectarian, religious proxy war. Through a series of referendums in which Assad continuously receives 95%+ votes, he stays in power. The regime is supported by Russia and Iran, and maintains a steady stance: that it is its responsibility to protect the people and holy land of Syria, and wipe out the belligerents that aim to tear the state apart. On the other hand, the government holds no credibility with the West and with several other Gulf nations, each of whom sees various rebel factions as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Assad declines any prospect of negotiation with rebel factions whom he sees as puppets of the West and terrorists.

2. The Free Syrian Army: The FSA was formed in 2011 by junior- or low-ranked defectors from the Syrian military who branched off when government policies began to radicalize. Headquartered in Turkey with the protection of that government, it later moved to north Syria. Rather than a well-organized group, it is more of a loosely knit band of individuals or smaller groups working against the government. Most of their ammunition comes from foreign suppliers, or is brought by the defectors from the army, or through smuggling. The group denies any association with the al-Nusra front, and in the past has received aid and training from the US and some Gulf nations. It is currently focussed, as is everyone else, on fighting the ISIS. It later formed alliances with the Kurdish front, and affiliated itself to the newly formed Supreme Military Council (SMC), which was an umbrella organization of several smaller groups.

3. Islamic Front: The Islamic Front is a 2013 merger of seven Islamist groups claiming to be an "independent political, military and social formation". Its original aim was to topple the regime through a tactic of divided responsibility culminating in an ultimate merger. It has, since the beginning, dismissed al Qaeda affiliated groups and the ISIS, but welcomes foreign fighters. The various affiliated groups carry out everything from cyber-attacks to administrations of areas under their control.

4. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): An alliance formed between Arabs, Turkmen, Assyrian and Armenian forces, it is led largely by Kurdish fighters radicalized by years of neglect in the country of Syria. Its main intention is to fight for a democratic Syria in the federal region they call "Rojava" (North Syria). It is an alliance of the following:

A. YPG (People's Protection Units)

- Began as the military wing of the leftist PYD party of Turkey
- Believed to be the most effective rebel faction fighting the ISIS

- Won major victories against the ISIS in the recapture of the capital of ISIS territory
- Enjoys backing from the US in its fight against the ISIS (founded SDF at US insistence)

B. YPG (Women's Protection Units)

- Female wing of YPG
- Kurdish military group
- Has over 10,000 female volunteers
- Fights the ISIS, and some other rebel factions

C. Jaysh al-Thuwar (army of revolutionaries)

- Comprises an alliance of Arabs, Turkmen and Kurds

D. Jaysh al-Sanadid

- Centred in Rojava, largely Arab fighters.

5. Al Nusra Front (now Jabhat Fateh al-Sham): The al Nusra Front is the biggest jihadist group in Syria and claims to be the sole and biggest representatives of Islam in Syria. It is a Salafi jihadist organization (Salafi jihadism- a school of thought that believes in physical jihad and is largely affiliated to the Sunni sect). It split from the al Qaeda in 2016. It merged in 2017 with four other groups to form the Tahrir al-Sham. Its goal is to overthrow the Assad regime and form an Islamic empire with the Sharia law. It rejected a merger with the ISIL in 2013.

6. ISIS: ISIS came into prominence in 2013-14 by capturing large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq, and proclaiming its intention to form a caliphate. It is known for its brutal and ghastly means of execution and power 11 demonstrations, as well as its reach- conducting terror attacks as far and wide as London and Paris. It is currently the biggest threat facing the world, and not just Syria. It is also known for adopting the Internet as a tool in its favour, spreading propaganda, recruiting, and posting videos of its own horrifying exploits. Several nations including USA, Russia and Australia have launched airstrikes against the ISIS to prevent its further rise. It has considerably weakened, but by no means is the threat eliminated, as is evidenced by several terrorist attacks the world over.

The Refugee Crisis

One of the most visible consequences of the mayhem in Syria has been a mass departure of people from the Middle East into other regions of the world, especially Europe. This has led to what is arguably the most acute refugee crisis witnessed in our age. The refugee crisis, in turn, has brought up new concerns in the fields of disarmament and international security. These include the question of national security with the increase in number of people orbiting between nations in search

of safety after fleeing their homelands, and the reform of immigration systems to cope with the immense pressure the crisis has put on them.

Factors to consider

The Syrian crisis is a multifaceted issue that has been ongoing for several years. The immediate question this begs is, if nothing has worked so far, what new solutions can be implemented? Solutions suggested in committee are expected to be innovative and well thought out. It is imperative for you delegates to provide evidence to show that your recommended measures will be successful where most others have failed.

Important topics for research include-

- What caused the increasingly tumultuous situation in Syria and how can such scenarios be prevented from arising in the future?
- What are the domestic impacts of the crisis on the economy, human rights and political stability?
- How can out flux of people from the Middle East be prevented? Additionally, how can rights of refugees and asylum seekers from this region be protected?

Foreign Funding

Another important aspect of the topic is the involvement of third party countries. While these countries have no direct part to play in a conflict, they have strong allegiances with certain parties and thus, are inclined to provide whatever support they can to the party they support. The stance of such nations can lead to their intervention in warfare, leading to an escalation of conflicts.

One significant manifestation of such a scenario is foreign funding. Countries will often express their support through monetary assistance or provision of arms.

While this seems like the ethically correct course of action in such a scenario, its legality remains in question.

Is it a country's place to decide which party to assist, especially if the one they choose to support is one which is working against an established government? Questions like this highlight the following, which you must keep in mind while researching:

- The requirement of a system to determine when funding is required and how it can be provided via legal methods.
- The need for a system which allows nations and multilateral organisations to assist non-government parties, if they believe the government is in the wrong.
- The role of foreign funding in the Syrian conflict

Sovereignty

At any point of time, the first issue that arises during the funding of parties in asymmetric warfare is: Who funds and organizes the weaker party, and are they right in doing so?

There can be no unanimity in answer to this. You as delegates must take a stand for your country and its gains, keeping all foreign relations and ethics of society in the rear view, as you are here not simply to befriend and warm up to other countries, but to represent and dictate your country's demands and rights on an international level.

To begin with, why do countries back rebel factions in foreign states? They do so in order to further their own political agendas, to establish regional supremacy, and to convert that region into a military stronghold which may be of strategic importance.

Plans to change the regime in Syria were hatched in 2005/6 prepared by the Israeli government and handed over to the USA. It had three objectives.

1. Firstly, to ensure Israeli security by installing a pro-west regime in Syria and weakening Israel's arch enemy namely Iran by cutting off its supply routes to Hezbollah passing through Syria. It has been now confirmed after the revelation of Hillary Clinton's emails.
2. Secondly, to facilitate Israel to cement/expand its occupation of the Golan Heights for additional oil exploration and water security.
3. Thirdly, to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian and Iranian oil and gas by building an alternative pipeline known as Qatar Jordan-Turkey-Syria Pipeline. Assad refused to agree to this pipeline passing through his country.

Look at this map which explains the cause of the tragedy of Syrian people.

Just as 9/11 provided excellent *cassis belli* to invade Afghanistan which had no role in this tragedy, Arab Spring was used to destabilize Syrian government. Within a few months of demonstration of a few hundred Syrians for greater empowerment, hundreds of armed non-Syrian rebel groups with CIA ties, entered into Syria. Government retaliated with a typical Middle Eastern style crackdown to deter this foreign meddling.

As planned, USA and its allies seized the opportunity and created a pact in 2012 called "The Group of Friends of the Syrian People," to overthrow Syrian President Bashar Assad. For this purpose, they formed a Free Syrian Army after training the mercenaries recruited from all over the Muslim countries. Trained by the MOSSAD, MI6 these rebels were provided sophisticated weapons financed by the Gulf States. Guided by the American advisors, they had the logistic support from Turkey. Interestingly, this foreign intervention in Syria came about immediately after Iran and Syria decided in principle to start work on the construction of Iran-Iraq-Syria

Pipeline shown in the map above. This pipeline was to be built between 2014 and 2016 from Iran's giant South Pars field through Iraq and Syria. With a possible extension to Lebanon, it would eventually reach Europe, the target export market. Realizing Syrian geo-economic location for any pipeline to Europe, Turkey attempted to persuade Syrian President Bashar Assad to refrain from building the Iran-Iraq-Syria Pipeline and agree to build Qatar-Jordan-Turkey-Syria Pipeline. Assad's refusal to ditch his long-time allies Russia and Iran was too much for the West; he had to be removed at any cost. Accordingly, members of al-Qaida and the Muslim Brotherhood, were armed and financed and all-out war was waged against Shiites. There is evidence that the rebels even used chemical weapons, although the Syrian government was blamed by the western press.

The United States, along with the UK and France, have continued funneling of arms, ammunition, intelligence and military tacticians to the Free Syrian Army, helping it to expand from little more than a blip on President Assad's radar to now the government's bane, which has become so resourceful as to stage a direct attempt at overthrowing the government and establishing a free and transparent government, which aims at uniting people through democracy and abolishing the feudality and autocracy of the ruling party.

While this may occur to the world community as ethical and seeing the United States as a savior, we must not forego the fact that this is a direct violation of Article 2(7), 33, 46 and 51 of the UN Charter, and that as long as the Syrian Arab Republic remains a member of the United Nations, it retains the Right to Self Defense, instated by Article 51 of the UN Charter, and that it has at its disposal every right to safeguard its sovereignty and guard against foreign influence they see as a potential threat. Furthermore, the USA has in its quest to bring down global Shia regimes, violated the much valued Chemical Weapons Convention (with effect from 29 April 1997) by providing Sarin Gas for the FSA and al-Nusra Front to use against Syrian government and its sympathizers, which include both civilians and employed militia. The verification for the above stated fact has been approved by the UN and is indisputable.

While the aim of every member of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security in the world, it is not legal to authorize a unilateral attack upon a claimed 'terrorist' or 'feudal' state without the Security Council's authorization.

The major loopholes in carrying out such operations and funding to rebels are numerous:

1. There is no organization to govern the type of weapons used,
2. Absence of a body that takes into account the human, civilian and social impacts of a large scale confrontation in a state, where the armless are the most chronic sufferers,
3. Such partnerships with rebel factions are utterly devoid of systems to punish rebels who themselves violate human rights in the process,

4. Foreign intervention can lead to gradual accumulation of technology and funds that can in the future be the source of Weapons of Mass Destruction, as seen in the case of Iraq.

From 2014-2017, NATO air strikes organized to kill ISIS leaders in north Syria have injured, killed and displaced 1.3 million civilians, with no system for their medical treatment or post-displacement rehabilitation. This points to the futility of a mindset which is a springboard of war and which does not realize the difference between waging war and preserving peace.

On account of being a third party, the USA claims that it has no obligation towards the Syrian population, claiming it to be the sole task of the government in power at present.

[International law](#) prohibits states from intervening in the affairs of other states. Commenting upon and discussing situations in other states is not caught by this prohibition, but actions of a coercive nature are. The use of force is arguably the most obvious form of such coercion, whether manifested by direct intervention through the use of a state's own military forces or indirectly through the provision of arms to opposition forces.

The only two established exceptions to the prohibition of the use of force in international law are actions [taken in self-defense](#) and those taken under the authorization of the UN Security Council. In the context of the provision of arms to the opposition forces there is no prospect for a justification of self-defense, and there is simply no hope – as things stand – of gaining an authorization by the UN Security Council, given the opposition of Russia and China, both of whom are permanent members of the Council and thus in the possession of the right to veto such a measure.

Questions A Resolution Must Answer:

1. Is there a solution that satisfies all involved parties and is there room for compromise? If this aforementioned room for compromise exists, how can negotiations between parties be incentivized?
2. To what extent should third parties be allowed to interfere with internal affairs of a country? Who has the authority to decide this extent? Can sovereignty and intervention coexist?
3. How can safety of civilians be ensured and human rights be protected?
4. How can funnelling of arms and intelligence by other countries to terrorist factions be prevented?
5. Can a legal mechanism be developed for countries to aid non-government parties involved in conflicts, without breaching sovereignty?

6. What are some means to equalize the military capabilities of various involved parties?
7. How can the refugee crisis resulting from the Syrian civil war be combatted?
8. How can we prevent the influence of insurgent groups like the ISIS from growing, especially through distinctly modern platforms like the Internet?
How can this influence be monitored and curbed?
9. Would a nation ever willingly allow an external party to intervene in its internal problems?
10. If an external party believes that the government is at fault, who then has the authority to give it consent to intervene?
11. Which factors determine the requirement for intervention? How are these factors quantified or measured?
12. How can a new mechanism to judge the requirement for intervention or lack thereof be created?

Position Paper Requirements

A position paper is a formal document outlining a nation's stance on the agenda at hand. It must include:

- All past and present involvement of the country in the ongoing crisis.
- Direct impact of the crisis on a delegate's country.
- What topics a delegate wishes to bring up in committee.

Please check demun2018.site for further information. Note that position papers must be submitted by midnight of 30th July at the latest. If a delegate fails to submit a position paper by the given deadline, they shall not be considered for placement.

Committee Focus

Delegates, it is important to note the following. The aim of any MUN is to discuss, deliberate on, and eventually solve the problem. Thus, we request that your research be largely solution oriented to ensure fast, high level debate and to facilitate that, at the end of the day, the problem at hand is resolved.

It is important for you all to understand that we, on the Executive Board, shall be looking favourably upon points that actually move committee forward and not merely for a history lesson on asymmetric warfare.

Keep these factors in mind while carrying out your research and make sure that you have clear ideas about your country's stances and its involvement in the agenda.

You are all representing countries, and ultimately, your aim must be to be heard, to participate actively, and finally to alleviate your country of its woes.

Conclusion

Delegates, here are a few important points to note. This background guide is merely the starting point of your research meant for the sole purpose of providing you with an understanding of the agenda and its various aspects. Please do not restrict your research to this background guide and use it as means of establishing which fields require research. Also note, delegates, that this document cannot be cited as a source in committee.

We are eagerly awaiting seeing you all on the 2nd and 3rd of August and are looking forward to a fast-paced, exciting committee.

The clock is ticking delegates. Get researching!

Good luck!

Executive Board

Rajas Raje and Gaurav Khatri