**Handouts (for Students)**

**1 What is the United Nations (and what is Model United Nations)?**

The United Nations is an international organisation that aims to work towards the promotion of peace around the world. It has multiple functions – serving as a discussion space for countries all over the world regardless of politics, allowing for the world to discuss and agree on united action on important topics and working as an independent organisation to promote progress on many issues, including global poverty and child mortality. Countries are represented at the United Nations by ‘delegates’.

The United Nations comprises six main bodies – although there are several smaller forums and discussion groups. These bodies are the General Assembly (where all nations can send representatives to speak), the Security Council (a smaller body, but one with legally binding power, which means nations are legally bound to abide by the Security Council’s orders, while they can disregard other resolutions), the Economic and Social Council (formed to promote economic and social prosperity across much of the world), the Trusteeship Council (a relic of the colonial age), the International Court of Justice (where international disputes, such as the Pedra Branca dispute between Singapore and Malaysia, have been decided) and the United Nations Secretariat (the main leadership of the United Nations).

The United Nations itself is led by a Secretary-General who serves a typical maximum of two five-year terms. Currently, the UN’s Secretary-General is Antonio Guterres of Portugal, who succeeded Ban Ki-Moon of South Korea. It was founded in the aftermath of World War II, succeeding the earlier, ineffective League of Nations, which was thought to fail because of its inability to achieve consensus on any matter due to the requirement that all member states not object to any resolution. The formation of the United Nations was agreed upon at the Yalta Conference between the Allied powers and was strongly supported by the United States.

The Model United Nations is a simulation exercise, mostly of the real United Nations itself, but sometimes of other bodies. Typically, delegates/participants will represent a country within the United Nations. They should refer to themselves in third person, as the delegate of the country, and will be taken as speaking for the entire country. Delegates can come up with solutions and present them as resolutions to the rest of the committee.

**2 What is the Security Council?**

As mentioned above, the Security Council is the main executive body of the United Nations. That means that it is the only body of the United Nations that produces legally-binding resolutions – resolutions that all countries have to abide by. Normal United Nations resolutions are largely voluntary, and thus many resolutions which might appear politically impossible in the real world can pass in the United Nations, including pushes for banning the death penalty.

The Security Council has been instrumental in the past before. The Security Council was the body which voted to authorise United Nations intervention in Korea during the Korean War, which helped lend the United States international legitimacy and credibility as it intervened in the Korean War on behalf of South Korea. The Security Council has also authorised multiple peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, which have been vital in restoring peace and stability to regions around the world, such as East Timor and Cyprus.

The special feature of the Security Council is the ‘veto’ power – accorded to five of the countries most powerful after World War II – the United States, Russia (then the Soviet Union), the United Kingdom, China (then the Republic of China, now the Peoples’ Republic of China) and France. The veto was founded out of a desire to have the world be led by, in the words of then-President of the United States Roosevelt, four ‘policemen’ (Roosevelt was not including France in that statement at the time).

In the modern day, the Security Council works significantly with regional councils not part of the United Nations, as many parts of global diplomacy have been devolved to such council. After the Arab League (a confederation of Arabic nations) called for the Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya as the Libyan Civil War raged in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the Council imposed one. The Security Council contemporarily also works to impose sanctions on rogue regimes such as North Korea when possible, the veto serving to prevent any one global power from promoting its own interest above all else.

**3 How do countries identify and represent their stances?**

A stance refers to the attitude of a country towards a certain issue (*adapted from Merriam-Webster)*. An example of a stance a country holds could be the United States’ unyielding support of Israel on the international stage, even as multiple resolutions have been proposed in the United Nations condemning Israel for a variety of practices. Countries hold stances towards issues because of a variety of reasons, including but not limited to –

* The impact on their domestic policy – Countries have different laws and policies at home. A country like Singapore, for example, which strongly criminalises drugs and imposes long jail sentences for the use and trafficking of such, has previously spoken out harshly against United Nations resolutions promoting the decriminalisation of drugs.
* Diplomatic realities – Countries have different allies and rivals. Countries may support their allies and oppose their rivals even if they have no real stake in the issue, as maintaining these alliances may be quite beneficial to them in the future – especially as seen with the earlier mentioned U.S. – Israel relationship.
* Political realities – Especially in democracies, countries’ leaders are accountable to their people, and it may be worth it for some countries to act a certain way on the international stage to maintain the trust of the leaders’ voters or the populace, even if it may sometimes not be entirely ideal.
* Cost – This may seem like it should be trivial, but much of the world is still developing and cannot afford expensive programs or policies internationally that would be very expensive to themselves – such as for instance, carbon emissions policies – and may therefore either reject these policies wholesale or demand that developed countries pay for the majority of these policies – in the case of carbon emissions, a policy known as ‘differentiation.'

**Activity:** You will be watching a speech made by Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan of Singapore in the United Nations. Try to identify the key stances expressed by Singapore in the speech, and explain why Singapore might have taken up those stances.

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| **Stance** | **Reasons (based on the earlier framework)** |
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**Activity:** You will be given the opportunity to research and identify the stances of various countries on various issues. You will need to conduct research individually (or in teams, depending) and make a short presentation on the country’s stance and why they hold that stance, with reference to the framework taught.

You will be speaking as the country, so pay some mind to your lexical choice to make sure that whatever you say doesn’t paint your country in a bad light. You should also include a small portion at the end to try and persuade others to take up your stance.

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| **Issue:** |
| **Stance:** |
| **Reasons for your stance:** |
| **Why should other countries agree with your stance?** |

**4 Negotiation and Persuasion**

Countries at the United Nations need to persuade and negotiate with other countries to get their way all the time. The United Nations is full of countries with differing interests in a large number of areas, and many countries may not be interested in supporting your policies without active advocacy for their support. Within the global context, this is known as ‘lobbying’.

As earlier mentioned, one of the primary functions of the United Nations is to serve as a ‘talk shop’ for representatives of countries to talk to one another. This has served the United Nations well in the past – the United Nations was a significant mediator for the Cuban Missile Crisis and other world crises in the past., Another function, beyond mediation, is for a country to find support for its efforts.

This is important because the approval of the international community confers a significant amount of legitimacy on countries which have it – for instance, Kuwait alongside its allies in the international community was able to legitimise an intervention against the Iraqi intervention of Kuwait due to broad UN Security Council support, which manifested itself in the Gulf War of 1991. While these are the more obvious examples of negotiation and persuasion, most examples of such at the United Nations will go significantly under the radar because of their very nature – private negotiations and advocacy efforts to promote the interests of states in every matter – and thus non-diplomats will likely never know the extent of such that occurs at the United Nations.

At Model United Nations conferences, persuasion and negotiation are slightly different – your main aim at a Model UN conference will be to persuade and negotiate with others to support your stances, or to support any solutions you have come up with. Persuasion, in this context, involves less of a trade but more of convincing other students to support your ideas. Meanwhile, with negotiation, you might trade your support – you might support another stance of the other student/delegate in exchange for his support of your stance.

Both persuasion and negotiation involve having a deep understanding of the other delegates’ needs and wants. After all, being charismatic only goes so far – you must directly appeal to what the other delegates want. Thus, it is important to do fact finding to identify other delegates’ stances before you attempt to directly appeal to them through either persuasion or negotiation. Beyond that, you should be well-read and ensure you understand the issue at hand, so that you can provide yourself credibility with regards to the issue. Lobbyists for instance, are often able to persuade lawmakers to support certain laws because they are experts in the fields they discuss. You should never lie or be dishonest during negotiation and persuasion – doing such might reduce the trust people have in you in the future.

There are two types of lobbying, both for negotiation and persuasion – mass lobbying and individual lobbying –

Mass Lobbying

* Refers when you, as one delegate, tries to persuade or negotiate with a large group of people – perhaps through a speech or perhaps through talking to many people at once.
* Usually used for persuasion, as it is difficult to negotiate with a large group of people at once, as different delegates may have different needs that can be fulfilled through negotiation.

Individual Lobbying

* Usually used for both persuasion and negotiation, but more effective for negotiation.
* Negotiation tends to be quicker and more effective than persuasion, as trading support for the other delegate (or trading anything else) can be a very obvious benefit for that delegate if they support you.
* On the other hand, delegates might struggle to understand how they benefit from supporting you if you merely rely on persuasion, unless you have a lot of charisma.

**Activity:** You will be given a certain topic to support and one competitor in the class will be given the opposing stance on the same topic. You will have to persuade the others in your class to support your stance over your opponent’s stance using any mixture of persuasion or negotiation you want. After the activity, take down your reflections here –

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| **Reflections** |

**5 Designing Solutions and Understanding Their Impacts**

Part of participating in a Model United Nations (or the real United Nations) is designing solutions on a variety of different issues. With the UN’s wide participation in a large number of domains, this can include fields as diverse as solving geopolitical crises between Central Asian countries and improving internet connectivity in rural regions. Solutions are the final step of the Model United Nations process – agreed upon solutions are drafted in the form of a resolution and are voted upon after extensive debate.

Not all resolutions are universally agreed upon – all Security Council resolutions against Israel, for example, tend to be vetoed by the United States, and any resolution seen as anti-Russian (including the resolution which would have established a tribunal to investigate the MH17 crash) is vetoed by the Russians (similarly for the other veto powers, with the exception of Britain and France, which typically do not use the veto). In some committees, however, a veto doesn’t exist, and resolutions can pass with a simple majority or a super-majority.

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| **Simple Majority** |  |
| **Supermajority** |  |

Solutions that you design as delegates should be highly realistic. You can evaluate your solutions using the following CROMP framework to see whether it is a suitable solution for you.

**C**ost – Is the solution too expensive for countries, especially developing countries, to implement?

**R**ealism – Is the solution realistic – one that can actually happen?

**O**ther Stakeholders – How does the solution affect other stakeholders apart from yourself? Does it inadvertently hurt any stakeholders who might be upset about the solution?

**M**y Interest - How does the solution affect your individual interest as a country or individual?

**P**opularity – How popular will the solution be amongst the committee or group that needs to approve the solution?

We will now evaluate a few solutions from the perspective of the CROMP framework – you will have to analyse two solutions.

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| **Solution**: Brazil has suggested that rich countries should pay Brazil billions of dollars per year to save the Amazon, because cutting down the Amazon would produce many billions of dollars in economic growth to Brazil, way more than rich countries are in any way providing. | |
| **Cost**  How much will this solution cost not just the proposing country, but also the other nations? |  |
| **Realism**  Is this solution realistic? Is it feasible that this solution would be implemented? |  |
| **Other Stakeholders**  How would other stakeholders react to this? Try to identify multiple groups of other stakeholders, including non-national groups. |  |
| **My Interests**  Will this benefit or hurt the proposing country? Look beyond the most obvious impacts – solutions can impact a country’s diplomatic standing, reputation and political stability in the long run sometimes. |  |
| **Popularity**  How popular will this solution be amongst other nations? |  |

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| **Solution**: Micronesia has suggested that all countries with nuclear weapons immediately demolish them, so that the world will never be at threat of nuclear attack ever again. | |
| **Cost**  How much will this solution cost not just the proposing country, but also the other nations? |  |
| **Realism**  Is this solution realistic? Is it feasible that this solution would be implemented? |  |
| **Other Stakeholders**  How would other stakeholders react to this? Try to identify multiple groups of other stakeholders, including non-national groups. |  |
| **My Interests**  Will this benefit or hurt the proposing country? Look beyond the most obvious impacts – solutions can impact a country’s diplomatic standing, reputation and political stability in the long run sometimes. |  |
| **Popularity**  How popular will this solution be amongst other nations? |  |