

DPSH MUN 2024

UNSC

UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY
COUNCIL



Letter from the Executive Board

Dear delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Security Council at DPSHMUN 2024. This committee meets at a very appropriate time to discuss its agenda: the maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East with an emphasis on addressing the threats posed by non-state actors. Never before has the region in question been closer to such perilous conflict. Hence by extension, never before has the Security Council's role in preserving peace been more prominent. As delegates of your respective countries, we expect you to take a constructive and solution-oriented approach as you engage in discussions with your counterparts. You are not only to represent your country's interests, but also be a reflection of its values and culture.

With that in mind, we urge you to remain diplomatic and courteous in your engagements with your counterparts, the Organizing Committee, staff, executive board, and everyone around you. Your role is not to be the loudest voice in the room, but to be the most effective voice in the room. You can only achieve this end by being respectful, well-read, and demonstrating sharp geopolitical and interpersonal awareness. Remember to have a confident stance on matters being discussed in the committee and to substantiate your claims with evidence and reason. To that end, ensure to perform extensive research on your country's perspective on the agenda, its geopolitical relations, and the situation in the Middle East. This background guide aims to serve as a foundation for your research and not its end. Please do get in touch with us if you have any questions regarding the agenda or the committee. We look forward to meeting you in the conference.

Sincerely,

Ishan Jasuja (ishanmjasuja@gmail.com)

Adip Krishna Guduru (guduruadip@gmail.com)

Introduction to the Security Council

The UNSC is the only body that has the power to adopt binding resolutions. When a resolution is adopted, the member states theoretically must accept the Council's decision. The United Nations Security Council consists of 15 members; of which 5 are permanent (United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China) and 10 are elected for a 2 year term. For any resolution to pass, the Council must obtain 5 concurring votes of all permanent members, regardless of how many other countries vote in its favor. The committee's mandate is to maintain international peace and security and to take measures whenever those are threatened. Its authority is particularly relevant with respect to the UN's four primary purposes: maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations; co-operating in solving international problems; promoting respect for human rights as well as being a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. In order to prevent the escalation of a given conflict, the Council may call upon the parties to comply with provisional measures. The Council also

cooperates with a number of international and regional organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations to gather knowledge and implement its decisions.

The Charter of the United Nations lays out the Council's specific powers and responsibilities. It is allowed to call its members to apply sanctions and other measures. Sanctions can, among others, consist of economic and financial penalties, restrictions on travel or the cancellation of diplomatic relations. Furthermore, the Council has the mandate to investigate any dispute which may lead to aggression between two parties, such as states, other non-state groups or within national territories. Finally, the Council can decide on military action against any international peace or security-threatening situation, and - where needed - is allowed to further decide on the deployment of troops or observers. Whether a situation endangers peace or security is determined by the Council.

Introduction to the Agenda

The current situation in the Middle East is marked by high geopolitical tensions between some key regional players. Although seemingly a regional phenomenon, instability in the Middle East has global repercussions, impacting the socio-politico-economic health of countries around the world. Further, conflicts in the region involve the direct or indirect participation of several countries and their proxies, creating a geopolitically complex status quo carrying several negative externalities for the stakeholders involved. In this committee, we will be investigating the multi-faceted nature of the current conflict in the Middle East, exploring its historical context, analyzing its varied widespread impacts, and engaging in a solution-oriented discourse to find applicable solutions to the problem.

Where is the Middle East?

The Middle East is a region spanning parts of Asia and Africa and includes the Arabian Peninsula, the Eastern Mediterranean region of West Asia, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq. Most of these countries are part of the Arab World attaching religious, cultural, and historical value to the region. It is home to some of the world's most crucial trade routes, making the prospects of conflict in the region haunt politicians and economists across the globe.



Map showing the location of the Middle East

Why is it important?

The Middle East is home to several emerging economies, significant middle powers, critical trade routes, and sites of religious value. Countries such as Turkey and Egypt are rapidly developing economies that value stability in the region to boost their growth prospects as conflict inhibits their upward trajectory. Simultaneously, countries such as Iran and Israel are dominant regional powers struggling with geopolitical tensions for decades, straining their resources and testing the resilience of their populations. Furthermore, the region's economic importance is matched by a few others around the world. Crucial natural resources including oil are found here in abundance, driving the world's economy and businesses. Hence, Middle Eastern trade routes are the lifelines of major oil exporters such as the Gulf countries, making them vulnerable to economic collapse if they were to close due to conflicts. Lastly, several communities around the world including Muslims, Christians, and Jews consider the Middle East to be their religious homeland, adding another dimension to the already complex geopolitical status quo of the region.

Conflicts in the Middle East

Historical Context

The roots of the current political tensions in the region can be drawn to the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War. As the Ottomans fought on the losing side of the War, the British and French, the victors, carved the remnants of the once great Empire spanning the Middle East to incorporate its lands into their respective empires. Naturally, the British and French division of the Middle East was informed by their economic motives, such as direct access to major trade routes. This divided the diverse ethnic population sharing the same cultural roots in different countries, creating tensions among the locals. To this day, the borders of Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey remain largely unchanged from those drawn by the colonizing powers.

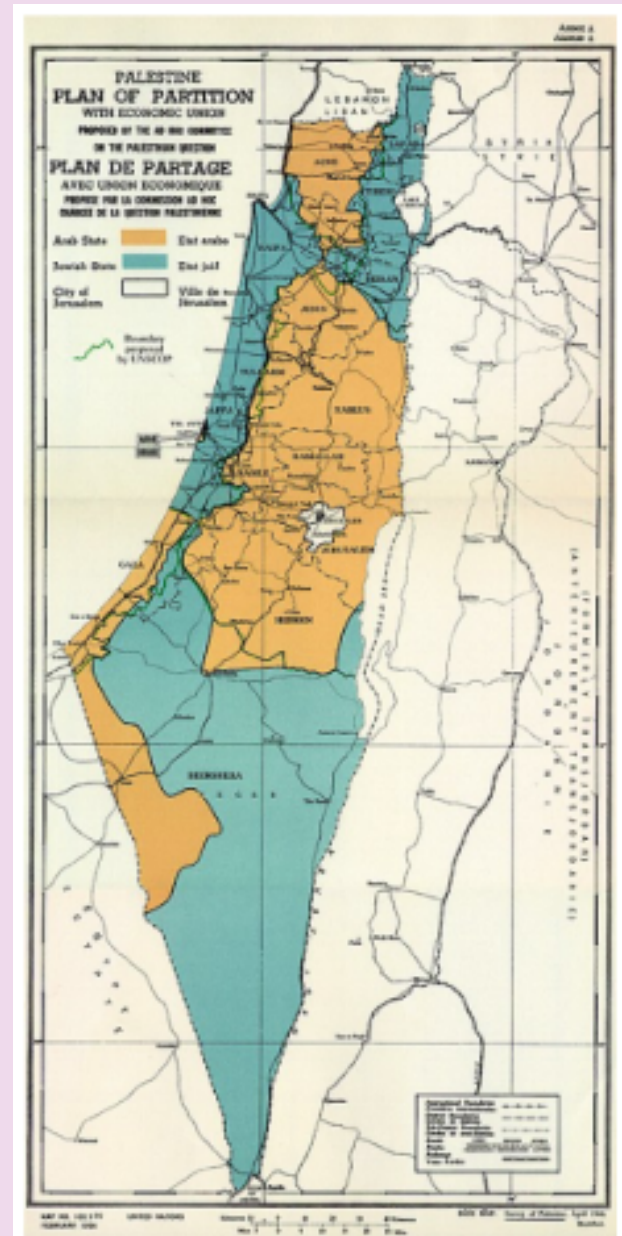
The Birth of Israel

The call for creating a politically official Jewish homeland grew louder in the 19th and early 20th centuries in wake of the widespread persecution of Jews in Europe, with the holocaust being its most explicit example. Some governments, such as Great Britain, identified this persecution and supported the Zionist cause. The British acted on their endorsement in 1917, through the Balfour Declaration, by announcing the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, a territory they controlled after the fall of the Ottoman Empire from 1920 to 1948. However, some Jews were disappointed as they had originally wished for the reconstitution of the entire Palestinian territory as a Jewish homeland. Hence began the mass mobilization of Jewish households from all across the world to establish settlements in British controlled Palestine, a territory with an unequivocal Arab majority. As the immigrating Jews bought property and lands, the indigenous Arab population felt their control eroding. Competition for limited farmland grew, disagreements over property ownership increased, sectarian divisions turned violent, and the local population's trust in the British to broker an equitable agreement between the sides waned. Moreover, the British themselves found it increasingly difficult to govern a region with such high levels of violence and instability, ultimately resorting to divide it. Thus, two independent entities were born from one British controlled territory: the Jewish State of Israel and the Arab Palestine.

The Partition Plan

The partition plan for dividing British controlled Palestine into two separate states for the Jews and Arabs at the end of the British mandate was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 181 in 1947. The resolution recommended that the newly created Jewish and Arab territories be linked economically and Jerusalem, with its adjoining areas, be declared an international zone due to its religious importance shared by communities across the globe. The Arab Palestine was to receive 42% of the old British controlled region, while the Jewish state and the international zone of Jerusalem received 56% and 2% respectively.

The plan received highly bipolar reactions from the Jews and Arabs. The Jewish community was largely satisfied to receive the political homeland they've wished for. However, some revisionist Zionists argued that the bisection of their historical homeland, which according to them spanned the entirety of the old British Palestinian mandate, put them on the back-foot. Moreover, they asserted that the acceptance of the partition plan was a tactical maneuver to enable a steady expansion of Israel at the expense of the Palestinian territory.



UNGA's partition plan for Palestine

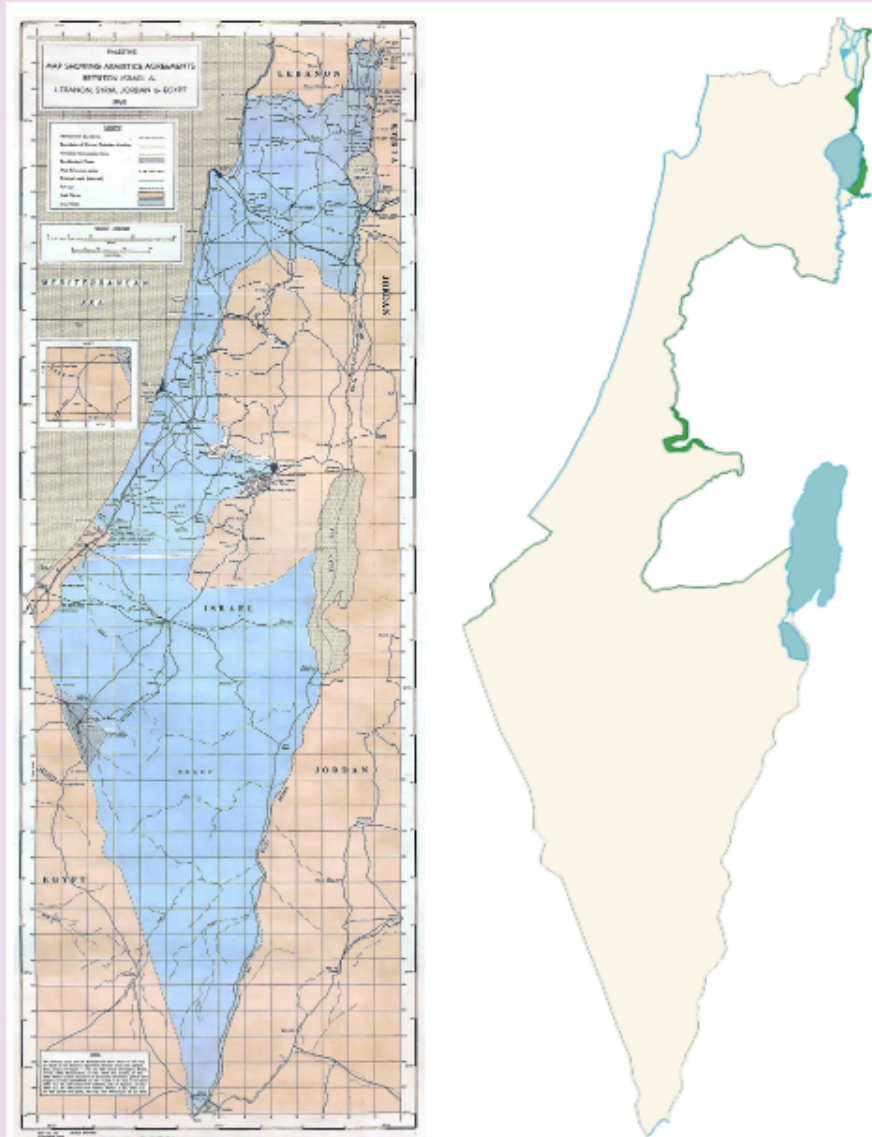
The Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world, on the other hand, unequivocally rejected the partition plan. The principle of self-determination, guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations, was at the heart of the Arab argument against any partition plans. Self-determination refers to people's right to determine their own political future and develop their own identity without interference from foreign entities. The partition plan, the Arabs argued, violated their right to self-determination and was presented to them in duress, rendering it invalid. This event makes it evident that the actions of the United Nations, or the international community at large, regardless of how well-meaning they are, seldom translate into any practical effect. The United Nations relies on the consent of parties to any dispute to execute its resolutions and recommendations therein. It cannot make a significant difference in the absence of a consensus and continuous efforts in good will among its members.

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War

Several violent skirmishes broke out between the Jews and Arabs in British controlled Palestine in the aftermath of the ineffective UN partition plan, turning into a civil war between the two sects lasting from 1947 to 1948. The British mandate for Palestine ended on 14th May 1948. This meant that the United Kingdom was no longer responsible for governing the Palestinian territory. Israel's declaration of independence followed on the same day, thus transforming the civil war between the Arabs and Jews into a war between two newly formed countries: Israel and Palestine.

on 15th May 1948, surrounding Arab countries including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq invaded nascent Israel in support of the Palestinians. The Arab states argued that they had to intervene in the conflict to meet their objectives, namely, to stop further bloodshed and establish a unitary Palestinian state by eradicating Israel. While the Arabs enjoyed some gains in the early stages of the conflict, the Israelis were able to repel later attacks and push the invading forces back. As the war progressed, it was clear that Israel held a military advantage over the Arab coalition, despite their strong challenge.

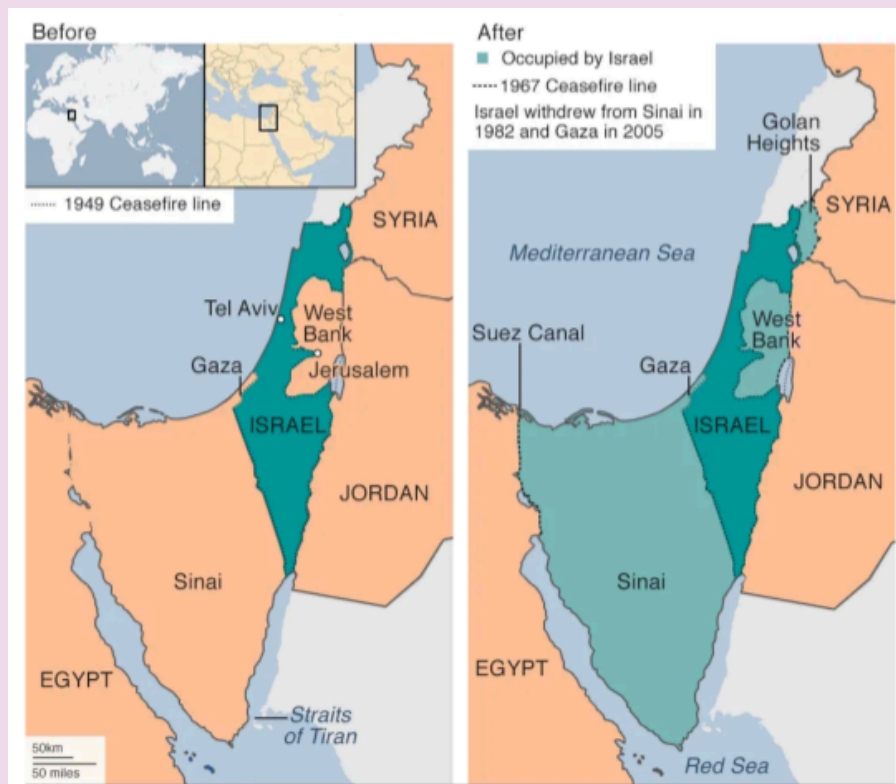
The war ended in 1949 as Israel signed separate armistice agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. By the end of the conflict, Israel controlled over 78% of the old Palestinian mandate territory, up from the 56% it was allocated in the UN's partition plan. Importantly, Israel gained control of West Jerusalem while Egypt and Jordan occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank respectively. The borders agreed upon between the Arab states and Israel in the 1949 armistice agreements came to be known as the Green Line.



Israel's 1949 Green Line

The Six-day War

Tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors hardly ever simmered down since the signing of the armistice agreements in 1949. The very formation of Israel, its participation in invading Egypt during the Suez Crisis, and the resulting Palestinian refugee crisis from prior conflicts frustrated Israel's Arab neighbors. In May 1967, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships for a second time, a critical waterway for Israel to access the Red Sea and receive seaborne imports. A mobilization of Egyptian forces to defensive positions followed as Cairo expected retaliation from the Israelis. However, Tel Aviv responded with unexpected preemptive airstrikes on Egyptian airfields even before Egypt attacked Israel, wreaking havoc on the Egyptian air force. A six day war between Israel and its Arab neighbors followed, lasting between 5th and 10th June, 1967. Jordan and Syria joined the war in Egypt's support while Iraq and Lebanon only engaged in minimal hostilities against Israel.



Israel's military conquests in the Six-Day War

The conflict ended with a crushing defeat for Egypt and its allies. The Arab coalition lost more than 15,000 soldiers while less than 1,000 Israeli soldiers were killed. This time, Israel further expanded its control of the former Palestinian British mandate. It occupied Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and the Egypt-controlled Gaza Strip. It sized control of Syria's Golan Heights, and the Jordan-controlled West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The Six-Day War had immense political consequences. The Palestinians now realized that it could not defeat Israel in military warfare, even with the support of its Arab neighbors. Instead, it now had to rely in terrorists and non-state actors to destabilize Israel and execute small-scale attacks to achieve its political gains. Egypt and Jordan eventually signed peace treaties with Israel in 1978 and 1994 respectively. As part of the deal with Egypt, Israel would withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and return it to Egypt in return for a recognition for its statehood. Egypt thus became the first Arab country to recognize Israel's statehood, a maneuver of immeasurable political and diplomatic effect. Jordan eventually withdrew its claims for sovereignty over the West Bank, leaving it open to Israeli settlers, resulting in socio-politico challenges to this day.

Israel continued to maintain a military presence in the Gaza Strip to facilitate its settlements in the area. However, it withdrew its military from the Strip and dismantled its settlements in 2005 as part of its disengagement strategy. Proposed by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the motivation of the strategy was to circumvent growing pressure on Israel to reach a settlement with the Palestinians. Thus, Israel's withdrawal was unilateral and not coordinated with the Palestinian Authority.

The Role of Non-State actors in the Current Situation

Hamas and the Gaza Strip

Gaza is a small coastal territory sandwiched between Israel and the Mediterranean Sea, sharing a small southern border with Egypt. Even after its disengagement from Gaza, Israel continues to maintain control over its airspace, borders, and coastline.

The Gaza strip is controlled by Hamas, an Islamist military organization committed to the elimination of Israel. It is designated as a terrorist organization by many countries around the world. Although it came to power by winning Gaza's last elections held in 2006, its actions have been quintessentially undemocratic.



The Gaza Strip

It has consolidated its power in Gaza by driving away other political groups like Fatah, led by West Bank-based President Mahmoud Abbas. Hamas is notorious for launching unilateral attacks against Israel and engaging in regular skirmishes. Thus, Israel and Egypt maintain an iron grip over their respective borders with Gaza to restrict the movement of Hamas fighters.

The Palestinian Authority and the West Bank

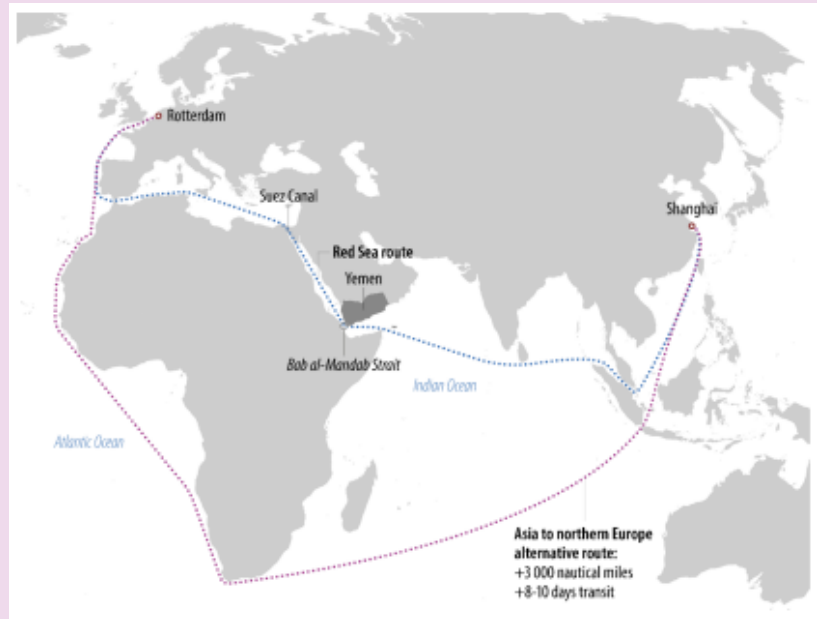
The West Bank is the other Palestinian Territory bordering Israel to its north east. It is controlled by the Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas post the 1993-95 Oslo Accords. The Oslo Accords were a two-part agreement aiming to commence a peace process between Israel and Palestine based on UN Security Council resolution 242 and 328. The accords were instrumental in establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Authority, the UN-recognized representative of the Palestinian people. The creation of the Palestinian Authority was another consequence of the Oslo Accords, granting it limited self-governance rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, it lost de facto control of the latter to Hamas after elections held in Palestine in 2006. Although the Oslo Accords faced severe opposition from Palestinian militant groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, they sparked negotiations on key issues including the international border between Israel and a future Palestinian state: negotiations for this subject are centered around Israeli settlements, the status of Jerusalem, Israel's maintenance of control over security following the establishment of Palestinian autonomy, and the Palestinian right of return.

Houthis in Lebanon

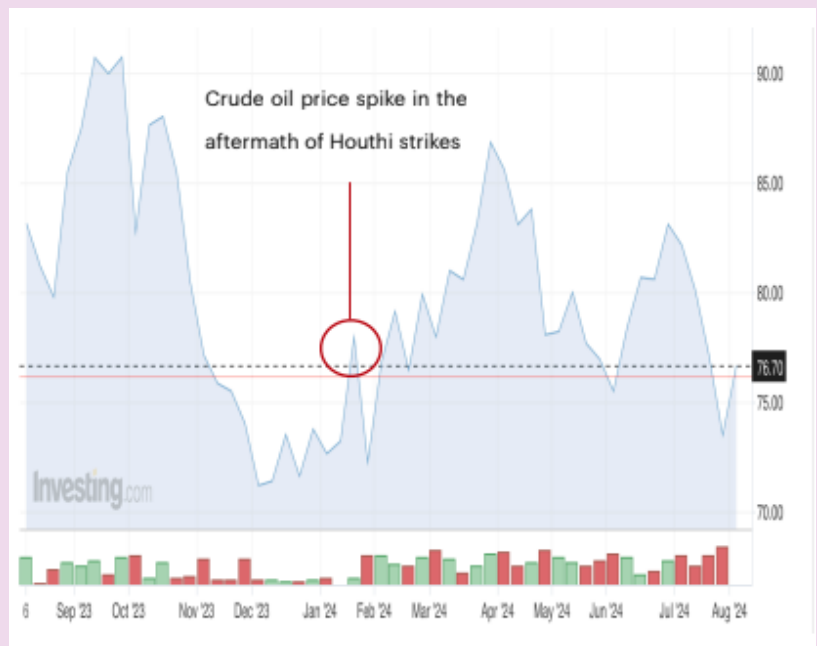
Hezbollah is a prominent political force and militant organization in Lebanon. Aside from exercising significant influence in the country, they also engage with their ideological allies such as Iran and Hamas. It was originally founded to help repel Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 but has expanded its operations well beyond its mandate since. It is designated as a terrorist organization by several countries around the world. Post-revolution Iran and its paramilitary organization the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps played a significant role in Hezbollah's founding and continue to be its primary source of funding, arms, and training. Tensions between Israel and Hezbollah have steadily increased since the October 7 attacks. The Lebanese group launched strikes against Israel in solidarity with Hamas, raising concerns of a region-wide conflict in the Middle East. Most recently, Israeli air strikes killed Faud Shukr, one of Hezbollah's top military commanders, prompting threats of a strong response from the Lebanese armed group.

Houthis in Yemen

The Houthis emerged as a prominent fighting force and rebel organization in Yemen around two decades ago. They too are supported financially and militarily by Iran, enabling them to establish a strong foothold in Yemen. However, unlike Hezbollah, the Houthis have subtle ideological differences with Iran. This makes them more of a partner to Tehran rather than an explicit proxy. In the current conflict, the Houthis' interests match closely with those of Iran and its proxies fighting Israel. Moreover, their military operations are not limited to targeting Israel alone. Recently, they have been targeting cargo ships in the Red Sea, creating major risks to the transport of critical commodities to and from the Middle East. This even presents negative externalities to countries not located in the Middle East. As cargo cannot be transported through the usually used shortest route traveling through the Suez Canal and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, ships from Europe have to circumnavigate Africa, sailing by its southernmost tip towards major ports in Asia. This raises shipping costs and transit times, creating challenges for businesses around the world.



Shipping diversions due to Houthi attacks in the Red Sea



Oil price increases in the aftermath of Houthi attacks

Iran's Role

Iran, although not a direct belligerent in the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, is employing proxy warfare to achieve its political goals in the region. Iran funds, arms, and trains non-state actor groups across the Middle East, mostly through its Revolutionary Guard Corps. By providing such assistance, Iran enables these groups to target shared enemies such as the United States and Israel. This raises the possibility of a prolonged and wider conflict in the Middle East as Israel indirectly combats Iran's resources and influence in the region. Such a situation would benefit Iran as it would be able to destabilize Middle Eastern countries, boosting the prospects of its proxies and enabling them to intensify their attacks. The proliferation of Iran's proxies and instability in the region serves Tehran's broader goals of expanding its geopolitical influence and spreading its radical Islamic ideologies in the region. Tensions between Iran and Israel are at an all-time high in wake of Tel Aviv's assassinations of top-ranking individuals in Tehran's proxy network. Given this situation, countries must address the involvement of foreign actors in this conflict to mitigate the risk of region-wide spillovers.

Guiding Questions to Answer

- How does the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict impact the current scenario?
- Is there an equitable solution to the primary problems between the Arabs and the Jews?
- What threats do non-state actors pose in the region and how worried should we be?
- Is foreign involvement in the conflict truly negative? Can it be made positive?
- What are some of the most prominent concerns arising from the rise in violence in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks?
- How can the political, social, and economic issues faced by the Middle East be resolved?
- Can the current situation evolve into a wider conflict between larger and more powerful countries? If so, how can this be avoided?

Remember to break down the agenda into smaller sections and analyze its individual aspects. Understand how your country views the situation, what are your interests, how can you collaborate effectively with your counterparts, and what your country has previously done in Israel-Palestine conflicts of the past.