



STUDY GUIDE FOR



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION TO THE UNSC

The United Nations Security Council occupies a central position in the UN system as the organ charged primarily with the maintenance of international peace and security. Created by the UN Charter in 1945 in the aftermath of World War II, the Council was designed to provide a mechanism for collective security that could prevent, manage, and resolve international conflicts through collective action by member states. Its decisions carry special weight in the international system because the Charter gives the Council unique powers not available to other UN organs: it can investigate disputes, recommend procedures for settlement, impose measures to maintain or restore peace, and, in certain circumstances, authorize the use of force. Over time the Council has exercised its mandate across a broad spectrum of situations—from interstate wars and large-scale occupations to intra-state civil wars, mass atrocities, proliferation risks, and threats posed by non-state armed groups—shaping both legal norms and political practice in the field of international peace and security.

MANDATE, POWERS & FUNCTIONS

The Security Council's mandate and powers are grounded in the UN Charter, in particular the provisions that confer on the Council primary responsibility for peace and security and empower it to take measures to address threats to international peace. The Charter sets out a graduated approach: The Council may first seek to prevent or resolve disputes by investigation and negotiation; if peaceful means fail and a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression is identified, the Council may adopt coercive measures under Chapter VII, ranging from economic sanctions and arms embargoes to authorizations of collective military action. The Council furthermore authorizes and mandates peacekeeping operations, establishes sanctions committees and tribunals, and can refer situations to international judicial bodies when appropriate. A fundamental legal distinction under the Charter is between recommendations and binding decisions: resolutions taken under Chapter VII are considered legally binding on UN Member States, while other Council acts or General Assembly recommendations may be non-binding. In practice the Council also develops flexibility through subsidiary organs, expert panels, sanctions regimes, and tailored mandates that mix political, humanitarian, and security tools; however, the effectiveness of these tools depends heavily on member states' willingness to implement Council decisions and on political cohesion among the Council's membership.

MEMBERSHIP & VOTING RULES

The Security Council's composition and voting procedures reflect a compromise reached at the UN's founding: the body comprises fifteen members, five of which are permanent—China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and ten of which are elected by the General Assembly to serve two-year non-permanent terms with regional distribution to ensure geographic representation. Each Council member has one vote. For procedural matters the Charter provides that decisions require the affirmative votes of nine members; for substantive matters the same numerical threshold applies but is complicated by the veto: any negative or “no” vote by a permanent member prevents adoption of a substantive decision. The veto power, a product of the post-war settlement and the desire to secure great-power consensus, therefore gives the P5 the capacity to block Council action even when a majority supports it; abstentions by permanent members do not count as vetoes and can allow a resolution to pass. The Council's presidency rotates monthly among its members in English alphabetical order, a procedural arrangement that affects agenda-setting, meeting management, and the issuance of presidential statements. These arrangements together mean that formal decision-making is relatively compact but politically concentrated, producing both efficiency when major powers agree and paralysis when they do not.

UNDERSTANDING “OPEN AGENDA”

An “open agenda” in a Security Council simulation or MUN context means that the Council’s docket is not confined to a single pre-assigned topic but is left flexible so delegates may raise, prioritize, and respond to any crisis or issue that reasonably falls within the Council’s mandate to maintain international peace and security. This format mirrors the real Council’s operational reality, where sudden crises—from interstate invasions to emerging humanitarian catastrophes or transnational security threats—can demand immediate attention. Practically, an open agenda requires delegates to prepare broadly across regions and issue areas, to monitor breaking developments, and to be adept at rapid coalition-building and procedural maneuvering (for example, proposing emergency meetings, drafting presidential statements, or tabling resolutions). It also encourages realistic debate dynamics: priorities are negotiated in committee; members may seek to put items on the provisional agenda, propose presidential statements or press elements, and use procedural tools to shape the Council’s response. The open-agenda format therefore tests both substantive knowledge and diplomatic skills, reflecting how the real Security Council must balance competing claims to urgency, sovereignty, humanitarian concern, and strategic interest when confronted by multiple simultaneous security challenges.

KEY ISSUES LIKELY TO BE RAISED

ISRAEL–PALESTINE CONFLICT BACKGROUND

The Israel–Palestine conflict is one of the most entrenched disputes in modern international politics, rooted in historical claims to the land, nationalism, religion, and colonial legacies. The origins of the conflict trace back to the late nineteenth century with the rise of Jewish and Arab nationalist movements, both of which laid claim to the same territory. The situation escalated during the British Mandate of Palestine, particularly after the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which expressed support for the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people” without safeguarding Arab rights. Following World War II and the Holocaust, Jewish migration to Palestine intensified, leading to clashes with the indigenous Arab population. The United Nations attempted to resolve the situation through the 1947 Partition Plan, which proposed separate Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem under international administration. This plan was accepted by the Jewish leadership but rejected by Arab states. The 1948 Arab–Israeli War ensued after Israel declared independence, resulting in the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians in what they term the Nakba (catastrophe). Since then, successive wars, the occupation of Palestinian territories after the 1967 Six-Day War, failed peace processes, and the expansion of Israeli settlements have entrenched the conflict.

CURRENT SITUATION

The present dynamics of the Israel–Palestine conflict remain volatile and deeply polarized. The Gaza Strip, governed by Hamas since 2007, faces a crippling blockade by Israel and Egypt, leading to acute shortages of electricity, medicine, and essential goods. Repeated escalations, such as the large-scale Israeli military operations in Gaza in 2008, 2014, and 2021, and the most devastating conflict in 2023–24, have caused immense civilian suffering and destruction. The West Bank, under partial Palestinian Authority control, is heavily fragmented by Israeli settlements, military checkpoints, and the separation barrier, which many international bodies have deemed illegal under international law. East Jerusalem remains a contested city, with Palestinians seeking it as their future capital while Israel asserts sovereignty over the whole city. Efforts for peace, such as the Oslo Accords of the 1990s and later initiatives like the Quartet’s Roadmap, have failed to produce a lasting settlement. The lack of trust, internal Palestinian divisions between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, and Israeli domestic politics have further complicated negotiations.

GLOBAL IMPACTS

The conflict's significance extends well beyond the Middle East. It has become a symbolic struggle over colonialism, self-determination, and international justice, shaping political discourse worldwide. The humanitarian crisis fuels radicalization and extremist narratives that destabilize not only the Middle East but also broader global security. Refugee populations, particularly in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, place long-term pressures on host nations and complicate regional politics. Energy security is indirectly linked to the conflict, as instability in the Middle East can impact oil prices and global markets. Moreover, the conflict strains relations between major powers, as the United States consistently defends Israel while Russia and China advocate for Palestinian rights in the Security Council, creating diplomatic friction. For Muslim-majority nations, especially in the Arab and Islamic world, the Palestinian cause remains central to foreign policy, often influencing bilateral relations, regional alliances, and cooperation with Western powers.

INTERNATIONAL AND UN RESPONSE

The United Nations has played a central yet limited role in addressing the conflict. The General Assembly has passed numerous resolutions affirming Palestinian rights, including Resolution 194 (1948) on the right of return and Resolution 3236 (1974) recognizing the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. The Security Council has adopted critical resolutions such as Resolution 242 (1967), which called for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the Six-Day War, and Resolution 338 (1973), which urged negotiations for a just and lasting peace. More recent UNSC Resolution 2334 (2016) condemned Israeli settlements as illegal under international law. Despite these frameworks, implementation remains absent due to the frequent use of the veto, particularly by the United States, which has blocked resolutions perceived as unfavorable to Israel. International agreements, such as the Oslo Accords (1993–95) and the Arab Peace Initiative (2002), sought to establish a two-state solution but were undermined by subsequent violence and political stalemate. Humanitarian aid is coordinated by agencies such as UNRWA, which supports millions of Palestinian refugees, though its funding is often politicized. Overall, while the UN has provided important frameworks, its ability to enforce compliance remains limited due to the geopolitical interests of permanent Security Council members.

BLOC POSITIONS

Bloc politics play a decisive role in shaping discussions on this issue within the UNSC. The United States consistently supports Israel's security concerns and has frequently used its veto to block resolutions it perceives as one-sided. The European Union is divided, with some member states taking a stronger stance on Palestinian statehood and settlement activity, while others prioritize Israel's security and bilateral relations. The Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) strongly support Palestinian statehood, emphasize the illegality of occupation, and call for greater UN enforcement. Russia and China often highlight humanitarian concerns and sovereignty, supporting ceasefire resolutions and criticizing settlement activity, while also using the issue to challenge Western influence. Non-aligned and Global South states tend to align with the Palestinian cause, framing the conflict in terms of decolonization and human rights. These blocs often result in deadlock, making consensus in the Security Council difficult.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO BE DISCUSSED

- How can the UNSC address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza while balancing Israel's right to security?
- Should the international community formally recognize East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, or leave its status to bilateral negotiations?
- What concrete steps can the UN take to enforce past resolutions such as 242 and 2334?
- Should the UNSC refer alleged violations of international humanitarian law in the conflict to the International Criminal Court?
- Can the two-state solution still be considered viable, or should alternative frameworks be explored?

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

BACKGROUND

The conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine has deep historical, political, and security roots. Tensions intensified after the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia and the onset of armed conflict in the Donbas region, developments that followed Ukraine's shifting domestic politics and debates over Euro-Atlantic integration. In February 2022 the conflict dramatically escalated when Russia launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, creating the largest conventional war in Europe since World War II and prompting massive population displacement, infrastructure destruction, and wide-ranging sanctions on Russia. The war has since involved conventional operations, long-range strikes and missile attacks, drone campaigns, and efforts by Ukraine to retake occupied territory while receiving major military and economic assistance from Western partners.

CURRENT SITUATION

Fighting has continued at scale, with the frontlines changing in some sectors and protracted attrition in others. Both sides have suffered large casualties and equipment losses, and major population centers and energy and transport infrastructure have been repeatedly struck, producing acute humanitarian needs and internal displacement. Western states have continued to provide military assistance to Ukraine, including air-defense systems and ammunition that have shaped battlefield dynamics, while Russia has responded with sustained missile and drone strikes and mobilization measures. Diplomatic efforts have included ceasefire proposals, negotiation attempts, and parallel processes in fora such as the UN General Assembly, but the Security Council has been constrained in taking binding measures because of Russia's veto and political shielding of its actions.



GLOBAL IMPACTS

The war has produced profound global effects, including severe disruptions to food and energy markets, elevated inflationary pressures, and reconfiguration of defense and security postures in Europe and beyond. Grain and fertilizer export disruptions originating from and through the Black Sea created price volatility and raised food security concerns in import-dependent regions in Africa and the Middle East. Energy supply shocks prompted shifts in European energy sourcing and accelerated some states' diversification strategies. The conflict has also catalyzed NATO's increased deterrence posture in Europe, renewed defense spending, and deeper strategic alignments among Western states. In the diplomatic sphere, the war has intensified geopolitical competition, influencing relations between major powers and complicating cooperation on other international agendas.

INTERNATIONAL AND UN RESPONSE (WITH AGREEMENTS/RESOLUTIONS)

The international response has combined humanitarian operations, sanctions, arms transfers, and multilateral diplomacy. The UN General Assembly adopted resolutions deplored the use of force and affirmed Ukraine's sovereignty, while the Security Council has repeatedly been unable to adopt binding measures to address the invasion because of vetoes by the Russian Federation. Multifaceted sanctions regimes led by the United States, European Union, and partners have targeted Russian finance, energy, and individuals; at the same time, humanitarian organizations and UN agencies have sought to deliver aid amid access constraints and security risks. Negotiation formats outside the Council, and efforts in regional and ad hoc groupings, have sought ceasefires and prisoner exchanges, but a comprehensive political settlement has remained elusive. Debates have also emerged about accountability for alleged violations of international humanitarian law and about avenues to pursue reparations, but these processes face legal and political obstacles.



BLOC POSITIONS

- United States, United Kingdom, EU members: Provide military, economic, and diplomatic support to Ukraine; call for restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity; support sanctions against Russia.
- Russian Federation: Frames actions as defensive and tied to security concerns about NATO expansion; rejects resolutions that condemn its operations and uses vetoes in the UNSC.
- China and some Global South states: Advocate de-escalation and negotiations, often calling for restraint and dialogue while generally avoiding explicit condemnation of Russia; positions vary across countries.
- Non-aligned/Developing states: Divided between support for sovereignty principles and concerns about economic fallout and geopolitical coercion; many backed General Assembly texts calling for withdrawal of forces.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO BE DISCUSSED

- What realistic pathways exist for a negotiated settlement that ensures Ukraine's territorial integrity while addressing the security concerns claimed by parties?
- How can the UN system, including the Security Council, be more effective in protecting civilians and facilitating humanitarian access when a permanent member is a party to the conflict?
- What forms of accountability and reparations mechanisms are feasible under international law for alleged violations during the conflict?
- Should and how could third-party security guarantees or peacekeeping architectures be structured to provide credible protections without escalating the war?
- What are the long-term implications of sanctions and arms transfers for regional stability and global economic resilience?

TENSIONS IN TAIWAN STRAIT AND SOUTH CHINA BACKGROUND

Disputes in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea involve overlapping claims of sovereignty, maritime entitlements, and questions about freedom of navigation and regional order. The Taiwan issue is shaped by the People's Republic of China's policy that Taiwan is part of China and by Taiwan's de facto self-government and international diplomatic ambiguity since 1949. Cross-strait relations have varied between engagement and confrontation, with the United States and other partners maintaining policies intended to deter unilateral changes to the status quo. In the South China Sea, multiple littoral states assert competing claims over maritime zones and features; the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling in the Philippines' case rejected broad Chinese historic rights as incompatible with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), but China has not accepted the tribunal's jurisdiction and continues to assert wide maritime claims while building infrastructure on features. These two maritime theatres are therefore focal points for great-power competition and regional security concerns.

CURRENT SITUATION

In recent years, tensions have risen in both theatres as states increase patrols, military exercises, and law-enforcement activity. China has expanded naval and air operations near Taiwan and increased deployments and exercises purportedly to assert its claims, while Taiwan has strengthened its civil and military preparedness with international support. In the South China Sea, incidents between claimant states and with external navies conducting freedom-of-navigation operations have occurred intermittently, and land reclamation and militarization of features have added friction. The United States and regional partners reiterate commitments to uphold freedom of navigation and overflight and to deter coercive unilateral actions, while many Southeast Asian states seek to manage disputes through diplomacy, codes of conduct, and ASEAN mechanisms. These dynamics create a risk environment where accidents, miscalculations, or escalation between naval and air platforms could lead to broader confrontation.

GLOBAL IMPACTS

The Taiwan Strait and South China Sea are critical to global commerce and technology supply chains. The South China Sea carries a significant proportion of world maritime trade, and any major disruption could have immediate effects on global shipping, energy transport, and commodity markets. Taiwan is a central node in the global semiconductor industry, so severe instability across the Strait could disrupt global technology and manufacturing sectors. Militarization and coercive measures in these waterways affect investor confidence, regional economic integration, and broader security architectures in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, these disputes influence alliance politics and defense planning beyond the region, shaping diplomatic alignments and defence spending decisions of extra-regional powers.

INTERNATIONAL AND UN RESPONSE (WITH AGREEMENTS/RESOLUTIONS)

Responses have blended bilateral deterrence, multilateral diplomacy, legal rulings, and regional dialogue. The 2016 arbitral award under UNCLOS in the Philippines' case established important legal findings on maritime entitlements, though it lacked direct enforcement mechanisms and was not accepted by China. ASEAN and dialogue partners have pursued a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea to manage disputes and reduce the risk of incidents, with negotiations ongoing and incremental confidence-building measures in place. In the Taiwan Strait, while the UN does not play a central operational role because of the diplomatic status of Taiwan and Security Council politics, states have used multilateral fora, bilateral channels, and public statements to urge restraint and avoid unilateral changes to the status quo. The United States has publicly affirmed commitments to regional security and freedom of navigation, while several partners have increased interoperability and joint exercises to deter escalation. International law, including UNCLOS, continues to provide a normative framework for dispute settlement even where compliance is partial.

BLOC POSITIONS

- **United States and allies (Japan, Australia, some EU members):** Emphasize freedom of navigation, oppose coercion, support partners' rights under international law, and increase naval presence and joint exercises.
- **People's Republic of China:** Asserts sovereignty claims (including historical maritime claims and the “One China” principle regarding Taiwan), defends measures as territorial integrity and national security actions, and resists external interference.
- **ASEAN claimant states (Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei):** Seek to defend maritime rights and resources while balancing economic and diplomatic relations with China; approach via legal means (e.g., Philippines arbitration) and ASEAN diplomacy.
- **Taiwan (Republic of China):** Maintains de facto self-government, strengthens defensive capabilities, and seeks international space and partnerships for security and economic resilience.
- **Non-aligned/other regional states:** Often favor diplomatic de-escalation, rules-based order, and negotiated codes of conduct to manage disputes.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO BE DISCUSSED

- To what extent can UNCLOS-based mechanisms and arbitration provide effective dispute settlement when major parties reject rulings, and what alternative legal or diplomatic tools could be strengthened?
- How should the international community balance freedom of navigation operations with measures that reduce the risk of escalation from close military encounters?
- What confidence-building measures or regional frameworks would credibly reduce the risk of accidental conflict in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea?
- Under what conditions should the Security Council treat a blockade, extended air or naval campaign, or annexation of features as a threat to international peace and security warranting Chapter VII consideration?
- How can the global community mitigate the economic risks of supply-chain disruptions originating from instability in the Taiwan Strait or South China Sea?

DESTABILIZATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST

BACKGROUND

The Middle East's contemporary instability results from a combination of historical legacies, interstate rivalries, internal political fragility, sectarian and ethnic cleavages, resource competition, and external interventions. A sequence of regime changes, civil wars, foreign interventions, and proxy dynamics from the late twentieth century through the early twenty-first century reshaped state capacities and regional balances. Conflicts such as the 2003 Iraq war, the Syrian civil war, the Yemeni civil conflict, recurrent Israeli-Palestinian hostilities, and tensions between Iran and regional rivals have produced contested governance, humanitarian emergencies, and transnational militant activity. These multilayered crises overlap and interact through refugee flows, arms transfers, and proxy networks, complicating peacemaking and reconstruction efforts.

CURRENT SITUATION

As of the most recent reporting, several theatres in the Middle East remain volatile. Syria continues to experience fragmentation with a mix of state, non-state, and foreign military presences, and humanitarian needs remain significant. Yemen's conflict has produced a severe humanitarian emergency with intermittent escalations and maritime security implications due to Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping. Lebanon faces political paralysis and security tensions linked to Hezbollah and spillover from neighboring conflicts. Iran's tensions with regional actors, including Israel and Gulf states, have manifested in direct and proxy strikes and periodic cross-border operations, increasing the risk of wider confrontation. These dynamics are further complicated by political instability, economic crises, and social grievances across multiple states, making comprehensive regional stabilization difficult.

GLOBAL IMPACTS

Regional destabilization in the Middle East affects global energy markets, maritime security, migration flows, and the international counter-terrorism landscape. Disruptions to shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden raise insurance costs and threaten critical trade routes, while volatility around major oil-producing states can quickly affect global energy prices. Large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons strain neighboring states and create long-term development and political challenges. Persistent instability also enables transnational extremist and criminal networks to exploit governance vacuums, posing global security risks. Moreover, competing external interventions by major powers and regional actors can internationalize local conflicts and complicate coordinated multilateral responses.

INTERNATIONAL AND UN RESPONSE (WITH AGREEMENTS/RESOLUTIONS)

The UN and international community have engaged through peacekeeping mandates, sanctions regimes, humanitarian operations, and diplomatic mediation, though outcomes vary across cases. The Security Council has authorized missions such as UNIFIL in Lebanon and adopted sanctions and resolutions addressing threats from non-state armed groups and proliferation concerns. UN agencies and international NGOs provide large-scale humanitarian assistance and coordinate relief efforts, while special envoys and mediators have pursued political dialogues to end conflicts or reduce violence. Regional initiatives, confidence-building measures, and bilateral arrangements have occasionally produced local ceasefires and prisoner exchanges, yet durable political settlements have been elusive in many contexts. The UN's effectiveness is sometimes constrained by access limitations, competing priorities among member states, and geopolitical rivalries in the Security Council that affect the scope and enforcement of measures.

BLOC POSITIONS

- **United States and some Western partners:** Emphasize counter-terrorism, support certain regional partners (e.g., Gulf states, Israel), and pursue diplomatic pressure on Iran's regional activities; back humanitarian assistance and some stabilization initiatives.
- **Russian Federation:** Seeks influence via diplomatic support to certain governments (notably Syria), military cooperation, and economic ties; positions itself as a security partner to several regional actors.
- **Islamic Republic of Iran:** Projects influence through allied non-state actors and militias (often described as the “Axis of Resistance”); disputes with Gulf states and Israel drive proxy dynamics.
- **Gulf Cooperation Council (selected members):** Pursue security partnerships, balancing relations with external powers and addressing Iranian influence; also invest in reconstruction and political initiatives where possible.
- **United Nations & regional organizations (Arab League, OIC):** Advocate humanitarian action, mediation, and frameworks for political solutions, while member states' divergent interests shape their effectiveness.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO BE DISCUSSED

- What integrated approaches can the international community take to link humanitarian relief, protection of civilians, and political negotiations to achieve durable stabilization in theatres such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya?
- How can maritime security in critical corridors (Red Sea, Gulf of Aden) be ensured without escalating military confrontation among external and regional navies?
- What mechanisms can realistically limit the proxy escalation between regional powers, and what incentives or guarantees would be needed to induce restraint?
- How should the UN and member states sequence reconstruction, governance reforms, and accountability processes to avoid reinforcing fragility or fueling renewed conflict?
- What roles can regional organizations and local civil-society actors play in reconciliation, transitional justice, and rebuilding social cohesion?

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION BACKGROUND

The issue of nuclear non-proliferation has been central to the global security agenda since the advent of nuclear weapons in 1945. The devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated the unprecedented destructive potential of atomic warfare, leading to early calls for international control. The Cold War accelerated nuclear arms races, first between the United States and the Soviet Union, and later involving other states such as the United Kingdom, France, and China. To prevent further proliferation, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was adopted in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. The treaty rests on three pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. While it has achieved near-universal membership, several states remain outside (India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea after withdrawal), and challenges such as clandestine programs, nuclear modernization, and limited progress on disarmament continue to undermine its credibility.

CURRENT SITUATION

Today, nuclear non-proliferation faces renewed stress amid growing geopolitical tensions. North Korea has advanced its nuclear weapons and missile programs despite international sanctions and denuclearization talks. Iran's nuclear program remains contested, with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 offering a temporary solution, but U.S. withdrawal in 2018 and subsequent non-compliance by Iran has reignited concerns. Nuclear modernization by established powers—including new delivery systems and warhead upgrades—raises questions about compliance with Article VI of the NPT, which obligates good-faith disarmament efforts. Additionally, debates around the use of nuclear technology for civilian energy purposes continue, particularly regarding safeguards to prevent diversion to weapons use. Emerging technologies such as hypersonic delivery systems, cyber vulnerabilities, and nuclear security risks further complicate the global landscape.



GLOBAL IMPACTS

The stakes of nuclear proliferation are global and existential. A single nuclear detonation, whether intentional or accidental, could cause catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences. The spread of nuclear weapons risks destabilizing regional balances of power, such as in South Asia between India and Pakistan or in Northeast Asia involving North Korea. Non-state actors gaining access to nuclear materials remains a critical concern for international security. Beyond security, proliferation undermines trust in international law and weakens the broader arms control architecture, affecting related issues such as chemical and biological weapons, conventional arms races, and even outer space militarization. The financial costs of nuclear weapons programs also divert resources from sustainable development and humanitarian needs.

INTERNATIONAL AND UN RESPONSE (WITH AGREEMENTS/RESOLUTIONS)

The cornerstone of global governance on this issue is the NPT (1970), reviewed every five years at NPT Review Conferences. Complementary mechanisms include the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted in 1996 but not yet in force, and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW, 2017), which reflects growing frustration among non-nuclear states over slow progress toward disarmament. The IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) plays a central role in monitoring compliance through its safeguards system. The Security Council has imposed binding sanctions in cases of non-compliance, most prominently against North Korea (through Resolutions 1718 and successors) and Iran (prior to the JCPOA framework). However, divisions among major powers often limit consensus, especially regarding modernization by nuclear-weapon states under the NPT. The Council has also affirmed the link between non-proliferation and international peace and security, notably in Resolution 1540 (2004), which obliges all states to prevent non-state actors from acquiring nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons.

BLOC POSITIONS

- **United States, United Kingdom, France (P3):** Support the NPT as the foundation of the non-proliferation regime; focus on compliance by non-nuclear states such as Iran and North Korea; emphasize deterrence and modernization for their own arsenals.
- **Russian Federation:** Supports the NPT but criticizes Western missile defense systems and NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements; modernizes its arsenal while opposing U.S.-led sanctions approaches in some cases.
- **China:** Advocates for complete prohibition and destruction of nuclear weapons in principle; supports non-proliferation efforts while maintaining its own deterrent; emphasizes peaceful nuclear technology transfer under safeguards.
- **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):** Criticizes nuclear-weapon states for failing to disarm under Article VI; supports the TPNW as a legally binding pathway to elimination.
- **European Union:** Strongly supports the NPT, CTBT, and JCPOA; advocates multilateral approaches, verification, and gradual disarmament steps.
- **India, Pakistan, Israel (non-NPT states):** Possess nuclear arsenals outside the NPT framework; emphasize regional security concerns and resist disarmament obligations without reciprocal recognition of their status.
- **North Korea:** Declared itself a nuclear-armed state after leaving the NPT in 2003; continues weapons development despite sanctions.
- **Civil society and NGOs:** Promote humanitarian disarmament arguments, stressing catastrophic consequences of nuclear use, and lobby for TPNW universalization.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO BE DISCUSSED

- How can the Security Council address the credibility gap between nuclear-weapon states' disarmament obligations and their modernization programs?
- What measures could strengthen compliance with the NPT and enhance verification through the IAEA?
- How should the Council respond to non-NPT states with nuclear capabilities while maintaining the treaty's integrity?

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