

**STUDY GUIDE**

# UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL



**PEMUN**  
Pernambuco Model United Nations

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# 1. UNSC Permanent Members

The Security Council has five permanent members (also known as *The Big Five*). They were the great powers that emerged victorious from World War II and thus hold a permanent seat on the UNSC since 1945. These countries have the power to veto any resolution, rejecting it regardless of its level of support among the rest of the Council.

## CHINA

People's Republic of China

China has had a relatively neutral stance towards the situation in Syria. The country historically holds a non-intervention foreign policy. In the last few years, however, China has become more involved in the Syrian Civil War, aiding Assad's government with troops and training. The reasons for doing so include economic and diplomatic relations but also a growing concern, among the Chinese, for the situation in Xinjiang (alternatively called East Turkestan). The region, located on the country's western border, has a rising movement of Islamic separatists associated with the Al-Qaeda (POTTER, 2013).

China condemns human rights violations such as the use of chemical weapons. The Chinese delegation believes in a peace process led by Syria itself and tends to oppose American-led interventions like the ones in Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011. They will do what they can to defeat terrorist groups such as ISIL.

Concerning the Arab Uprisings, the Chinese government is said to have been scared of the wave of unrest that hit the globe.<sup>1</sup> Civil protests were scheduled in the country, but then-president Hu ordered massive police presence and promised economic reforms. The Chinese relation with the Uprisings is thus one of concern towards the pro-democracy protesters.

## FRANCE

French Republic

France is a strong opposition to the Syrian regime. Along with the United States and the United Kingdom, France has

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<sup>1</sup> See <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2011-02-27/china-s-wen-vows-to-contain-food-home-prices-amid-jasmine-protest-calls>>.

been against Assad's government since the beginning of the civil war. From 2013 onwards, the French have provided military aid for the Syrian rebels, and they have performed airstrikes against Assad's and ISIS' forces – which have been intensified after the November 2015 terror attacks on Paris. France is also one of the main destinations for Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war.

The two countries have a complicated diplomatic relation: on the early 20th century, France ruled Syria on behalf of a League of Nations mandate. The French delegation is thus expected to lead the Western powers on the debate, and they firmly believe that Assad must be ousted, and a new, legitimate Syrian government must be formed.

During the Arab Uprisings, France's foreign policy is said to have taken a "U-Turn". The country used to support Tunisia's Ben Ali and initially condemned the protests and demonstrations, fearing geopolitical instability in Northern Africa, only to start endorsing the revolutions – in both Tunisia and Egypt – when they seemed irreversible (MIKAIL, 2011).

France was also one of the leaders of the military intervention in Libya that resulted in the overthrow of the Gaddafi government.

## RUSSIA

Russian Federation

Due to the commercial routes that connects Europe with developing Asian countries, Syria is of utter importance to Russia, and it has proven to be a trustful abettor. Politically, the Middle Eastern country has an impact on Russia's security on the Caucasus, as it has been a target for Islamic extremist groups.

Russia is the main ally of the Syrian government. The Russian provide aid to Assad's troops since 2011 and have intervened directly with their forces since 2015. They hold strong diplomatic, economic, and military ties with Syria and even act as guarantor for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.

Russia has vetoed multiple UNSC resolutions concerning the situation in Syria, and the country's delegation has been accused of deadlocking the Security Council and



jeopardizing its international legitimacy. The Russian believe that the conflict must end and that the use of chemical weapons must be condemned, but they strongly disagree with the Western powers views on those matters, challenging the claim that they have been used by Assad against civilians<sup>2</sup>.

Despite its support of the Syrian government, Russia sided with the West on most of the other Arab revolutions, legitimizing the Tunisian and Egyptian processes. On the subject of Libya, Moscow stayed on a middle ground, not opposing the NATO-led intervention but not supporting it either.

## UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The United Kingdom is part of the coalition against the Syrian government and ISIL, fighting alongside France and the United States. Like France, the UK's military action has consisted mainly of airstrikes against the Syrian troops.

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<sup>2</sup> See <<http://www.dw.com/en/us-blames-russia-for-syria-chemical-weapons-attacks/a-42279833>>.

The UK condemns the use of chemical weapons and attributes it to the Syrian government, while also demanding further investigation. They also denounce the multiple vetoes used by Russia to keep the Council from acting and will side with the other Western powers to establish a new government in Syria, preferring a peaceful, diplomatic process but convinced that Assad has no legitimacy to stay in power.

The British were only directly involved in the political conflicts of two Arab countries, besides Syria, during the uprisings: Libya and Bahrain. In Libya, the UK, as a member of the NATO, directly took part of the military intervention. In Bahrain, a diplomatic partner of the United Kingdom, the British helped the local government suppress the rebels (LEECH e GASKARTH, 2015).

## **UNITED STATES**

United States of America

The United States has fought alongside Syria on the early 90s Gulf War to drive out Iraqi forces from Kuwait. But as the US lead the invasion of Iraq, in 2003, Bashar Al-Assad became a loud Arab critic of the war. The US then accused

Syria of sheltering high-level Iraqi Baathists. As of early 2000s, the United States considered Syria a state sponsor of terrorism, letting anti-Israel terror groups operate freely in their territory. The country has since tried to isolate Syria politically.<sup>3</sup>

The US have, since 2011, held the position that Assad must step down and that a new, democratically-elected government, must be formed in Syria. They have led a military intervention in the country since September 2014, aiding the moderate rebels and conducting surveillance flights and airstrikes against both the government forces and terrorist groups. The United States did the same in Libya, leading a military intervention that overthrew Muammar Gaddafi.

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<sup>3</sup> As an example of such actions, after failing to arbitrate a peace agreement between Syria and Israel, the United States promoted a series of actions and sanctions (Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, 2004) to isolate Syria. As a result, on September of 2004, the Security Council approved a resolution (UN Security Council Resolution 1559) that called for Syria to withdraw from Lebanon.

The US have strong ties to the Western powers of France and the United Kingdom and exert their influence in the Middle East mainly through Saudi Arabia and Israel, both close allies as well. The US has been under pressure for not being able to resolve the situation in Syria and contain ISIL, while also been criticized for leading yet another foreign intervention in the Middle East after the unsuccessful invasion in Iraq in 2003. While preferring a peaceful transition from Assad's to a new regime, the Americans have shown that they will use force if needed. The country has been criticized for its lack of action in respect to the political instability in some Arab countries with which it has had historical relations, such as Yemen and Egypt<sup>4</sup>. The American delegation tends to be in the forefront of the debate and try to dictate the agenda.

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<sup>4</sup> See <<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/middle-east-egypt-us-policy/409537/>>.

## 2. Elected Members

Besides the five permanent members, the Security Council has a rotative body of 10 countries elected for two-year terms. The current members have been elected for the 2017-18 and the 2018-19 biennials and are divided among the five UN regional groupings. They can propose and vote on resolutions, but do not have the power to single-handedly veto a proposal.

### **BOLIVIA**

Plurinational State of Bolivia

Bolivia has a historical conflict with the United States and will oppose them in most subjects. Thus, they stand alongside Russia and the Syrian government on rejecting any American-led intervention. The Bolivian delegation believes that peace in Syria must be achieved through a diplomatic and multilateral negotiation, strongly condemning the use of military power. For the Bolivians, any unilateral use of force is an act of disrespect towards the UN charter, and the only way for resolving the conflict is through a political solution.

### **EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

Republic of Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea is on the neutral side of the discussion. The Guineans strongly believe that the conflict must come to a peaceful end through a political solution and that all attacks must be ceased.

The Guinean delegation will not jump to adopt the American or Russian sides. They can resort to most of the other Elected Members to come to a moderate resolution.

## **ETHIOPIA**

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Ethiopia's position on the Security Council has been a conciliatory one. The delegation has emphasized the implementation flaws of the resolutions that have been approved so far and urged the need to resolve the deadlock imposed by the Russian with their vetoes. Being mostly neutral, the Ethiopians will prefer to side with their African colleagues and other delegations not affiliated with neither the US nor Russia to pursue a solution.

## **IVORY COAST**

Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d’Ivoire, like most countries that are mostly neutral on respect to the Syrian conflict, seeks humanitarian solutions most of all. Worried with the diminishing legitimacy of the Security Council in face of all the deaths in the Syrian civil war and the Council’s inaction, the delegation from Ivory Coast will seek to implement resolutions that aid the Syrian civilians, even if they don’t give an end to the war.

## KAZAKHSTAN

Republic of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is officially a neutral state in the Syrian conflict but has very close ties to the Russian government. They are an important country in Central Asia and have also had ties to the Assad administration in Syria<sup>5</sup>. On the Council, however, their acts have been conciliatory, expressing the desire to bridge the divide between Russia and the United States towards a mutual solution that can pave the way for peace in Syria.

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<sup>5</sup> See <<https://thedi diplomat.com/2016/12/what-does-kazakhstan-have-at-stake-in-syria/>>.

## KUWAIT

State of Kuwait

Kuwait, an Arab state located on the margins of the Persian Gulf, is much less involved in the war than most of its close neighbors. The country has good relations with the United States and most Western countries and can either join them in their decisions or stay closer to the neutral bloc of the Council.

Alongside Sweden, Kuwait has proposed Resolution 2401 (2018), which has been unanimously approved and demanded a 30-day ceasefire in Syria. The Kuwaiti delegation will thus seek humanitarian solutions that can be accepted by all parts of the conflict.

Kuwait was among the Arab countries that had waves of protests during the Arab Uprisings. The demonstrations in 2011-2012 resulted in the dissolution of the Parliament and the resignation of the Prime Minister<sup>6</sup>.

## NETHERLANDS

Netherlands

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<sup>6</sup> See <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15931526>>.



The Netherlands are a member-state of the NATO and the European Union. They will turn to the other European states to form coalitions and will prefer solutions that result in the ousting of Assad. The Dutch have been more critical of Syria than other Western states, blaming the government for the killing of civilians and demanding investigations on the use of chemical weapons<sup>7</sup>.

The Netherlands also have the refugee question as a concern. The country has been one of the biggest receivers of Syrian refugees: UNHCR data from February 2018 shows that 35,247 Syrian refugees were registered in the Netherlands.

## PERU

Republic of Peru

Peru is a neutral party much like the African elected members of the Council. Without openly taking neither the American nor the Russian stances, the Peruvian delegation has

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<sup>7</sup> See

<<https://www.permanentrepresentations.nl/latest/news/2018/04/13/statement-on-threats-to-international-peace-and-security---syria>>.

demanded for the Council to stay united in formulating a resolution that can put an end to the Syrian conflict and, most importantly, to the deaths of civilians. Peru calls all actors to avoid the use of unilateral military force and to pursue a solution of mutual consent.

## **POLAND**

Republic of Poland

Poland is a member of the European Union and of the NATO. They will typically take decisions in accordance with the other Western powers. The Polish defend a regime change and believe that the Council's role in promoting it is through the Geneva talks.

Poland has a bad diplomatic relation with Russia, which has worsened after Putin's annexation of Crimea<sup>8</sup>. Poland is a key gateway into Europe for many refugees seeking asylum, but their domestic policy has been completely unfavorable towards the refugees.

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<sup>8</sup> See <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/10/poland-warning-europe-russia-aggression-ukraine-smolensk-plane-crash/>>.

## SWEDEN

Kingdom of Sweden

Sweden is a Western European power and will tend to act in conjunction with France, the UK and the other Western delegations. The Swedish have a historical humanitarian engagement and will prefer a peaceful resolution to the Syrian conflict, while firmly believing that it's the Council's responsibility to resolve it. At the same time, Sweden is said to have supported Saudi-led interventions to suppress pro-democracy demonstrations in MENA countries<sup>9</sup>.

Sweden is also one of the main destinations for the refugees from Syria and elsewhere. The country has accepted large numbers of refugees and the subject is of great interest to the Swedish.

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<sup>9</sup> See <<https://www.thelocal.se/20120411/40210>>.

### 3. Invited Members

Delegations can be invited by the United Nations to take part in meetings that are of special interest to their countries. Invited members can express their positions and try to persuade other delegations. They can propose drafts but can't propose or vote in final resolutions; they can still vote in procedural matters.

#### EGYPT

Arab Republic of Egypt

Egypt has had a rough relation with Syria ever since the Arab Uprisings. The Egyptians have aided the Syrian rebels before, but recently the Sisi government adopted a different policy position and started to support the government forces<sup>10</sup>. Politically, Egypt stands on mostly neutral grounds, having sided with the Western powers before as an Elected Member of the Security Council, but holding even closer relations with Syria and Russia.

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<sup>10</sup> See <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2017-02-12/egypt-picks-sides-syrian-war/>>.

Having been one of the major countries on the spotlight during the Arab Uprisings, Egypt had its own wave of protests and unrest following a period of social, political and economic instability. It led to the overthrow of the Mubarak government, the election of Mohamed Morsi, and another overthrow after a new wave of social unrest, leading to the 2014 election of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who remains in power to this day.

## IRAN

Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran is the main ally of Russia in the Middle East and has very close ties with China and the Syrian government as well. For the Iranian, the maintenance of Assad is a matter of strategic concern, as they are close allies – their proximity goes as back as 1979, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran – and any new government would probably be influenced by the Western powers.

Both Iran and Syria support the Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine, and both oppose the American interventions in the Middle East. Therefore, in despite of cultural and religious differences (Syria has a majority of Sunni

muslims and Iran is a stronghold of Shi'a faith; Assad's government is, however, formed mainly by Alawis), the countries are politically very close and aligned.

Iran has invested billions of dollars in military and in resources to maintain Assad's regime<sup>11</sup>. The Iranian delegation will thus seek to defend the Syrian government in the Council and will condemn American-led military interventions.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is to the United States what Iran is to Russia: a major ally and their right hand in the Middle East. The Saudis have strong diplomatic, economic and military relations with most Western powers and see in the Syrian conflict an opportunity to reaffirm their protagonist stand in the Middle Eastern region.

The Saudis have long supported the Syrian rebels, counter-acting the Iranian and Russian influence in the civil war

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<sup>11</sup> See <[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/majid-rafizadeh/6-35-billions-annually-to\\_b\\_7890164.html/](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/majid-rafizadeh/6-35-billions-annually-to_b_7890164.html/)>.

even before the Americans became directly involved. Saudi Arabia will stand with the US when push comes to shove, but they will always prefer a solution that ends with Assad being ousted.

## SYRIA

Syrian Arab Republic

Syria is the main object of these UNSC meetings. Going through a bloody civil war for more than seven years now, the Syrian government sees the Security Council trying to intervene in its conflict. They firmly believe that any country that uses their military should be denounced for violating the UN charter. They are willing to concede in some matters to avoid bloodshed, but the Syrian delegation sees Bashar al-Assad as the legitimate president of Syria and would reject solutions that demand his ousting.

Syria's major allies are Iran and Russia, and the Syrians will use them – especially Russia and its the veto power – to have their viewpoints considered. Syria is also adept of the Pan-Arab Principle, preferring the matters to be resolved inside the subset of Arab nations to only then be treated by the UN.

## TURKEY

Republic of Turkey

Turkey has stood as one of the major opponents of the Syrian government. Ever since the beginning of the uprisings, the Turkish delegation has been a staunch Assad's critic. Turkey is a member of the NATO and an ally of the US, and they have helped the American-led coalition in Middle East and given weapons and training to Syrian rebels. But their interests seem to have recently shifted after the Syrian government began turning the tides of the war.

Because Turkey is located directly on Syria's northern border and is a major power in the region, anything that happens in Syria is of their concern. The Turkish are particularly interested in the situation of the Kurdish army in northern Syria and of ISIL all over the Middle East. Both groups are considered enemies of the Turkish state – even though the Kurds are allies to the US – and recently Turkey has focused more on fighting them than in efforts to oust Assad. Besides that, Turkey also has the spring of the Euphrates River, Syria's main water supply,



inside their borders and keeps close economic relations with Israel, which Syria sees as a threat.

Turkey is thus a crucial player in the region. Even though the country tends to be an ally of the West, it has its own interests in Syria and the Middle East and is not afraid to use its army, the second largest in the NATO, to advance them.

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