



**Security Council Guide**  
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## **Introduction to the Security Council**

Under the United Nations Charter, the Security Council is the primary maintenance of international peace and security. The committee is composed of 5 permanent members who hold veto power (the United States of America, People's Republic of China, Russian Federation, French Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), and 10 which are non-permanent and are called according to the situation at hand. This veto power means that even if the whole committee votes in favor of a directive, and one of these powers votes against, the directive will not pass.

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of the settlement. Although the United Nations remains a non-binding organism, in some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

## **Topic A: Militarization of Outer Space**

Outer space has remained an infatuating mystery to humanity for as long as we have known it existed. It is the ultimate conquest for a species keen on being the owners and masters of everything that surrounds us. In the midst, if the 20th century, the Arms Race between Cold War superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union (Now Russia) was the first, and perhaps the most iconic evidence to this claim. It has been agreed by the international community that space should remain a peaceful, unarmed territory, and used to benefit our planet, but in recent years, countries such as the United States has stated a desire to expand and develop its military capabilities outside of the earth's orbit. Outer space will be the new theater of war. More than 80 national and international spatial agencies represent the international community's space programs; 50 have been established since 1950, both with research and military purposes.

Amongst them, the USA, the Russian Federation, and China are often seen as a threat.

The Outer Space Treaty establishes that *"The exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, and shall be the province of all mankind."* The concern over the peaceful use of space arose along with the dawn of the space age. The weaponization of space will destroy strategic balance and stability, undermine international and national security, and disrupt existing arms control instruments, in particular, those related to nuclear weapons and missiles. These effects will inevitably lead to a new arms race. Space weaponization would seriously disrupt the arms control and disarmament process.

## **History of the Topic**

The question of militarising outer space has been a concern of the United Nations ever since the world's first artificial satellite, the Soviet Union's Sputnik I, was launched on October 4, 1957. Since then, outer space has been adopted as a location for military spacecraft.

In 1959, the General Assembly established the Committee for the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). As the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) states: 'The Committee was instrumental in the creation of the five treaties and five principles of outer space. International cooperation in space exploration and the use of space technology applications to meet global development goals are discussed in the Committee every year. Owing to rapid advances in space technology, the space agenda is constantly evolving. The Committee, therefore, provides a unique platform at the global level to monitor and discuss these developments.'

During the 1960s and 1970s, the international community established a number of agreements to prevent the weaponization of outer space. These include the *Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963)*, the *Outer Space Treaty (1967)*, the *Rescue Agreement (1968)*, the *Agreement Relating to the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization "Intelsat" (1971)*, the *Liability Convention (1972)*, the *Launch Registration Convention (1975)*, and the *Moon Agreement (1979)*.

In 1985 the Conference on Disarmament (CD) established a committee to identify and examine issues relevant to the topic such as the legal protection of satellites, nuclear power systems in space and various confidence-building measures. The committee met each year through 1994. No further committee meetings occurred due to objections made by the United States. In 1990 the United States stated that it "has not identified any practical outer space arms

control measures that can be dealt with within a multilateral environment.” With its large missile defense program and technical advantages in potential space weaponry, the United States has consistently refused to negotiate. The United States' withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2001 and the development of US ground and sea-based “missile defenses” have already increased tensions with Russia and led to increased missile proliferation. The deployment of these technologies or the development of space-based technologies will likely cause Russia, as well as the United States, to make smaller and smaller reductions of their nuclear arsenals and to reject the development of new treaties to regulate nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. China would likely build more warheads to maintain its nuclear deterrent, which could, in turn, encourage India and then Pakistan to follow suit. The overwhelming majority of UN member states are concerned that the weaponization of outer space will lead to an arms race and insist that a multilateral treaty is the only way to prevent such an arms race, emphasizing that this treaty would not limit space access, but would prevent such limitations. In 2006, Russia argued that if all states observe a prohibition on space weaponization, there will be no arms race. Russia and China also support establishing an obligation of no use or threat of use of force against space objects and have submitted a draft treaty to the UN on preventing the placement of weapons in outer space. In January 2007, China tested an anti-satellite weapon against one of its own aging weather satellites. The United States, while condemning the test, forged ahead with several space and missile defense projects with dual-use capabilities. In addition, in February 2008, the United States shot down one of its own failed satellites that were carrying a half-ton of hydrazine rocket fuel (a toxic chemical). The US military shot it down with a Standard Missile-3, whose primary vocation is interceptor for the US Navy's missile defense system.

## Current Situation

The militarization of outer space started when the first communication satellites were launched and today militaries everywhere rely on satellites and on the Global Positioning System (GPS). The so-called peaceful uses of outer space include the military ones, even when they involve the utilization of satellites to direct bombing raids.

Weaponization, on the other hand, is understood as **the placement in orbit of devices that have a destructive capacity.**

The concept of “space weapons” is, however, highly debated: some argue for the inclusion in the category of ground-based systems designed or used to attack space-based assets and of weapons that travel through space in order to reach their targets. Similar to the militarization of space during the Cold War, the weaponization of it would destroy the international community's balance and stability, interfering with many of the international instruments related to nuclear weapons and missiles and possibly leading to a new arms race. Even if at the moment there are no known weapons deployed in space, defense plans and anti-satellites instruments are provoking a growing instability in the sector.

## Subtopic A: Reformation of Space Law

Space law, much like general international law, comprises a variety of international agreements, treaties, conventions, and UN General Assembly resolutions as well as rules and regulations of international organizations.

The current international legal instruments concerning outer space prohibit and restrict the deployment of weapons, use of force as well as military activities in certain parts of space. However, some countries argue that they are inadequate for preventing the weaponization. Below a list of the five main legal instruments:

1. **Outer Space Treaty** (formally titled as the Treaty on the Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies). (1967)
2. **Rescue Agreement** (formally titled as the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space). (1968)
3. **Liability Convention** (formally titled as the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects). (1972)
4. **Registration Convention** (formally titled the Convention on the Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space). (1975)
5. **Moon Agreement** (formally entitled the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies) (1975)

Among the mentioned treaties, the most relevant one is the United Nations Outer Space Treaty, that provides the basic framework on international space law, saying that space should be reserved for peaceful uses. It includes the principle that the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and shall be the province of all mankind. Moreover, it provides that outer space is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means and that countries shall not place nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies or station them in outer space in any other manner. It also provides that the Moon and other celestial bodies shall be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and that States shall avoid harmful contamination of space and celestial bodies.

## **Subtopic B: Surveillance Satellites and Nations Sovereignty**

Military satellites are essentially the foundation of most space-related military activities and are also usually at the center of discussion regarding space weaponization. These satellites have a variety of uses, including reconnaissance, navigation, communication, and early warning of aerial attacks. Military satellites were fundamental for the militarization of space, and could very well also be the impetus for the weaponization of space. This is because satellites are at the core of military intelligence and communication, and therefore, in the event of a space war, they would arguably be the most valuable tool. In addition, satellites can also be weaponized, and with further scientific progress, a war between satellites may be possible. For these reasons, it is imperative that regulations regarding military satellites be revisited and renewed. Another key facet of space weaponization is the military exploitation of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), which are satellite navigation systems that can determine three-dimensional positions and provide nanosecond precise time anywhere on Earth.

The GPS system was designed and is now controlled by the United States, meaning that the U.S. has the ability to direct highly effective bombing raids through the use of GPS. Russia, China, and India, and the European Union now also have their own similar satellite navigation systems.

One of the greater issues that nations will be facing during this committee, is ensuring that nations sovereignty is not violated by espionage through these satellites.

## **Bloc Positions:**

**The United States and its Allies:** The US still is one of the leading countries, pushing forward and at the same time constituting a risk for the eventual weaponization of space. The US' withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the development of US ground- and sea-based "missile defenses" increased tensions with Russia and led to increased missile proliferation. The 2006 US National Space Policy, passed under the Bush administration, explained that the US will "preserve its rights, capabilities, and freedom of action in space; dissuade or deter others from either impeding those rights or developing capabilities intending to do so; take those actions necessary to protect its space capabilities; respond to interference; and deny, if necessary, adversaries the use of space capabilities hostile to US national interests."

Recently, the Obama administration released a statement saying that "the US shall pursue bilateral and multilateral transparency and confidence-building measures to encourage responsible action in, and the peaceful uses of, space". It also notes that the US will consider proposals for arms control measures if they are "equitable, effectively verifiable, and enhance the national security of the US and its allies." While there is a neat difference from the precedent policy, the consequences of this policy are still unknown.

**Russia:** Together with the US, Russia (USSR at the time) opened the way for the exploration and exploitation of outer space during the Cold War. After the collapse of the USSR, though, Russia's state-owned space industry has struggled to stay alive. To keep it afloat, the government turned to military space projects and manned space flights, which are not as scientifically productive as the development of new research satellites.

The plans to build anti-satellite weapons were restarted in August 2009, as announced by the Russian Air Force. In December 2016 there were reports of tests of a new anti-satellite weapon. However, Russia, together with China, is the author of the working paper "Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects (PPWT)".

**China:** The Chinese government spends billions of dollars annually on their space program, while the US continues to strip funding for NASA. In 2007, China sparked global concern when it successfully tested its first ASAT missile, destroying one of its weather satellites. However, China has long lobbied against the weaponization of outer space.

**European Union:** In 2007, a formal European Space Policy was established after being jointly drafted by the European Commission and the Director General of the European Space Agency. In 2008, the European Union (E.U.) published a draft for a Code of Conduct for Outer Space activities, in order to minimize accidents that could harm peaceful space exploration, focusing especially on space debris. At the same time, the EU works collectively to create satellite systems to rival those of the United States.

**Other Nations with Developed Space Programs:** In addition to the aforementioned traditional superpowers, there are a number of other nations that have satellite launch capability, substantial space intelligence, and in some cases, nuclear arsenals. These nations include India, Japan, Israel, and Canada. Although these nations have varying foreign policies, they all desire a level of freedom to continue to develop their space programs.

**Nations without Space Technologies:** Most of the developing world currently lacks the space capabilities of the previously mentioned blocs; however, these countries are no less relevant to the topic. These nations are highly concerned about the potential harms of the weaponization of space, and thus would be supportive of tighter regulations or a ban on space weapons and technologies. Preventing an arms race in space is the highest priority for these nations because of the security threats associated with the possibility.

## Past International Actions

1. The General Assembly established the Resolution 1348 (1958) which funded an ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), composed of 18 members. The Committee had to overview all the UN resources relating to the peaceful uses of outer space, facilitating international cooperation in this field. COPUOS was established as a permanent body in 1959 and has been working since then.
2. Moreover, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), initially created as a small expert unit within the United Nations Secretariat to service the ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, is now the United Nations office responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space and serves as the secretariat for COPUOS. The questions related to the militarization of outer space are dealt with by the Conference on Disarmament (CD) that works in close cooperation with DISEC.
3. UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS
  - a. The *"Declaration of Legal Principles"* (G.A. resolution 1962 (XVIII) of 13 December 1963)
  - b. The *"Broadcasting Principles"* (G.A. resolution 37/92 of 10 December 1982)
  - c. The *"Remote Sensing Principles"* (G.A. resolution 41/65 of 3 December 1986)
  - d. The *"Nuclear Power Sources"* Principles (G.A. resolution 47/68 of 14 December 1992)
  - e. The *"Benefits Declaration"* (G.A. resolution 51/122 of 13 December 1996).
4. Each year in the UN General Assembly a resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) is introduced and adopted.
  - a. Every country in the world votes in favor of negotiating a treaty on PAROS, except for the US and Israel, which abstained.
  - b. Some of these suggestions include exchanges of information, demonstrations, notifications, consultations, and thematic workshops.
  - c. A PAROS treaty would complement the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and would also prevent any nation from gaining a further military advantage in outer space and hopefully reduce current military uses of outer space.

## Possible Solutions

### Revising International Regulations

While previous international agreements have been fairly effective in establishing a solid framework for space exploration and use, some also have certain loopholes and flaws that can be exploited. In addition, many of these treaties were signed during the Cold War, and space technologies have progressed significantly since then. For instance, when China destroyed one of its weather satellites in 2007 with an Anti-Satellite Weapon, it was deemed that the missiles did not come under the definition of "weapons of mass destruction", and thus did not violate the

Outer Space Treaty.<sup>75</sup> Efforts to exploit the current regulations and arguments over definitions and terms will only increase in the future; therefore, a viable starting solution would be to review and look to revise the outdated or ineffective regulations that are currently in place.

### **Confidence-Building Measures**

The first step in establishing peace in outer space is increasing transparency between nations. When countries conduct weapons test or launch objects into space without notifying the rest of the world beforehand, misunderstandings and hostility are bound to follow. Currently, the United Nations Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space keeps track of satellites, probes, landers, and other spacecraft being launched into Earth's orbit.<sup>76</sup> A potential solution could be to demand more specific information from countries regarding space launches, to maximize the effectiveness of the current system. This method, if carried out successfully, would establish a more transparent and safe environment for countries to operate in space.

### **Defining Key Terms**

One of the most common controversies regarding international space law has been the ambiguous definition of terms such as "Pacific use" and even "outer space". To mitigate this problem, the committee could explore the option of redefining some of these terms to have clearer boundaries and be more applicable to the present day.

### **Questions a Resolution Must Answer:**

1. Should there be a ban on conventional space armaments?
2. Should individual nations have more freedom to do what they wish in space, or is it an international body's responsibility to oversee all actions regarding space?
3. In international space law, how should the following terms be defined? 'Pacific use', 'outer space', 'weapons of mass destruction'.
4. If a new treaty were to be constructed, which new set of rules or regulations, if any, would your nation seek to include?

## **Topic B: The Syrian Civil War**

In March 2011 Syria's government, led by Pres. Bashar al-Assad faced an unprecedented challenge to its authority when pro-democracy protests erupted throughout the country. Protesters demanded an end to the authoritarian practices of the Assad regime, in place since Assad's father, Hafez al-Assad, became president in 1971.

The Syrian government used violence to suppress demonstrations, making extensive use of police, military, and paramilitary forces. Opposition militias began to form in 2011, and by 2012 the conflict had expanded into a full-fledged civil war. The main protagonists in this problem would be:

**Syrian Democratic Forces:** Usually shortened as SDF or QSD, are an alliance of Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, Assyrian and Armenian militias mainly fighting against ISIS, Al-Nusra Front and other Jihadist groups in the Syrian Civil War. The goal of the group is to establish and protect the federal region "Rojava – Northern Syria".

**Anti-Government Forces:** Hundreds of groups fighting the government of Bashar al-Assad. The main groups are the moderate FSA and jihadist groups like Al-Nusra (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) and Ahrar al-Sham.

**Government Forces:** Forces fighting for the government of Bashar al-Assad. These forces contain the regular Syrian Arab Army, National Defense Forces and Iran-backed Shia militias like the Hezbollah.

**Islamic State of Iraq and Syria:** The "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" is a jihadist group which controls huge swathes of land in western Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. They consider themselves as the "Islamic Caliphate".

### **History of the Topic:**

- **February 2011:** At the time when the Arab Spring grew in the Middle East, children in Southern Syria were arrested and punished for a graffiti that opposed to the regime.

- **March 2011:** Crowds of people pouring into the streets to protest for the torture of the arrested. The government forces opened fire, killing dozens.
- **July 2011:** Protesters organized, while various anti-governmental organizations spring up in order to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad.
- **August 2011:** The Islamic State of Iraq (Al-Qaeda in Iraq) begins sending Syrian and Iraqi fighters across the border into Syria to recruit fighters and establish an organization.
- **August-October 2011:** The US and the EU call on Assad to step down, Russia and China veto the UN proposal to end the bloodshed.
- **April 2012:** The former head of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, proposes a plan to reduce hostilities, which however never came into use.
- **June-July 2012:** The UN accuses Syria of crimes against humanity.
- **August 2012:** US President Barack Obama warns Assad that if he uses chemical weapons against civilians, he will have crossed the "red line".
- **February 2013:** The death toll rises to 60,000 and the US promises to provide humanitarian aid to the Syrian refugees and internally displaced peoples.
- **March 2013:** Rebel forces led by the al-Nusra Front defeat Assad forces in the Battle of Raqqa and occupy the city.
- **May 2013:** The EU uses embargo on Syria and provides arms to anti-governmental groups. Russia, on the other hand, strengthens the forces of Assad.
- **August 2013:** Hundreds of people are killed outside Damascus during attacks which all indicate that chemical weapons were used. Obama asks Congress to approve a military operation in Syria.
- **September 2013:** The US Senate approves attacks on Syrian forces, and Russia is calling for the insurance that the use of chemical weapons in Syria will come under international control.
- **February 2014:** Discussions about a peaceful solution to the war lead to a dead end. The death toll reaches 140,000 and hundreds of people start the journey of a refugee. Al-Qaeda also disavows any and all relations with ISIL.
- **June 2014:** ISIL officially declares itself a worldwide caliphate and renames itself as simply "The Islamic State", which starts from western Syria and extends into eastern Iraq.
- **August 2014:** The Islamic State publishes the beheading of the American journalist James Foley. There have been dozens of murders of foreign journalists and doctors who had arrived in Syria.
- **September 2014:** The US begins airstrikes on Syria to fight the Islamic State.
- **May-August 2015:** The Islamic State occupies the Palmyra Ruins and destroys all antiquities.
- **May 2015:** ISIL takes control of Palmyra, an ancient city in eastern Syria with a rich collection of Greco-Roman monuments. ISIL later disseminates photographs and video of its fighters demolishing artifacts and structures.
- **September 2015:** Russia launches airstrikes against the rebels in Syria, in support of Assad.
- **October 2015:** Egyptian President expresses its support to the Russian military intervention while military officials of Russia and the U.S signed a "memorandum of understanding" to avoid clashes in the air over Syria.
- **November 2015:** Syrian Armed Forces reach the Kuweires Airbase and end the siege of 3 years imposed by ISIS. Russian airstrikes kill at least 18 civilians and wound dozens more in the town of Ariha.
- **December 2015:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted for the first time in public that Israeli forces have been operating in Syria. Germany's parliament approved government plans to join the military campaign against Islamic State in Syria which will operate independently than those of France, Britain, United States, and Russia.
- **January 2016:** Pro-Government National Defence Forces (Syria) captures the desert village of Al-Bayard in the northwestern countryside of Palmyra from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant now clashes between the two parties near the small village of Al-Dawa.
- **September 2016:** After a brief ceasefire fails, Russia and Syrian government forces begin heavy bombardment of rebel-held territory in Aleppo.
- **December 2016:** The Syrian government declares victory in Aleppo after the last rebel fighters are evacuated from the city.
- **April 2017:** The United States strikes Shayrat air base, a government-controlled air force base, with dozens of cruise missiles in retaliation for a chemical weapons attack carried out by government forces against

rebels in Khān Shaykhūn.

- **June 2017:** The Syrian Democratic Forces, a U.S.-aligned predominantly Kurdish force, launch an attack on Al-Raqqah, ISIL's de facto capital in Syria. The attack is supported by U.S. airstrikes and special forces.
- **October 2017:** The Syrian Democratic Forces announce that Al-Raqqah has been cleared of ISIL fighters.
- **November 2017:** Pro-government Syrian troops expel ISIL from Dayr al-Zawr in eastern Syria.
- **April 2018:** U.S, U.K, and French forces launch airstrikes targeting chemical weapons facilities near Damascus and Homs in response to a chemical weapons attack in Douma a week prior.
- **May 2018:** After a series of Israeli strikes targeting the Iranian military in Syria, Iran shells the Golan Heights from Syrian territory. Israel responds with a barrage against dozens of Iranian military sites in Syria.

## Current Situation

It is abundantly clear that there is absolutely no support whatsoever from any group or state in the international community for the Islamic State. As a group, they are universally condemned and opposed by the entire international community, and even by other Islamic extremist groups. However, that isn't to say that civilians within other countries don't support the Islamic State. Many of the people that join the Islamic State are foreign fighters from other countries.

Opinion amongst the international community is primarily divided between support for Bashar al-Assad and his Syrian Arab Republic; and support for moderate rebel groups, primarily the Free Syrian Army. Support for the FSA is based on the opinion that the Assad regime is in gross violation of human rights, with reports of indiscriminate violence directed at civilians, the use of torture and chemical weapons etc. and believe he should either step down or be deposed by force if necessary, but through support of the FSA rather than through an invasion akin to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. States and groups that subscribe to this opinion believe that the FSA should form a democratic government with respect to human rights following the removal of Assad. Support for Assad is based on the view that the rebel groups opposing Assad are not well-intentioned rebel groups at all but terrorist organizations. It is argued that these groups simply used the Arab Spring and Assad's actions to quell the dissent as a cover to legitimize their fight against the Assad regime. They liken Assad to order and peace and the rebel groups to chaos and terrorism.

With such a large variety of groups now involved in the conflict, both terrorist organizations, and states, it is difficult to comprehensively decide on a stance, but an alternative view is that support should be for the Assad regime for the sake of stability. The argument states that the FSA wouldn't be able to successfully maintain a stable state, certainly not with opposition from other rebel groups such as IS and the al-Nusra Front leading insurgencies against them if they were to depose Assad. Following on from this assumption, it's concluded that the sensible thing to do would be to support Assad so that stability may be regained in the region, and following the re-establishment of stability, as a compromise, Assad should step down and allow an interim government to bring about democratic and constitutional reform in Syria.

## Responsibility to Protect

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P), is a global commitment adopted at the 2005 United Nations World Summit which has been central to the international discourse on how to respond to mass atrocities in Syria. It establishes that individual states and the international community must protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Despite the acrimonious debate surrounding the UN Security Council- mandated intervention in Libya in 2011, individual states, regional organizations, and UN agencies have struggled to find the ways and means of upholding their responsibility to protect the people of Syria.

## Subtopic A: Use of Chemical Weapons

In February of 2018, President Bashar al-Assad launched an assault on the Eastern Ghouta, that left more than 1700 dead civilians. In March, troops split the region into three pockets; the largest of which was around Douma, home to between 80,000 and 150,000 people. Facing defeat, rebel groups in the other two pockets agreed to be evacuated to northern Syria. But the group controlling Douma, Jaysh al-Islam, did not agree to these terms. On April, after negotiations with the government stalled, air strikes resumed. Activists from the Violations Documentation Center (VDC), reported two separate incidents of bombs believed to contain toxic substances being dropped by the Syrian



Air Force.

The first occurred at approximately 16:00 (13:00 GMT) and it cited a member of the Syria Civil Defence, whose rescue workers are widely known as the White Helmets, as saying he smelt chlorine in the air after the strike, but that he could not determine its source. The second incident took place not far to the east, near Martyrs' Square, at approximately 19:30. At 19:45, more than 500 patients were brought to medical facilities with symptoms indicative of exposure to a chemical agent. The patients showed signs of "respiratory distress, central cyanosis, excessive oral foaming, corneal burns, and the emission of chlorine-like odour". Rescue workers searching homes in the affected area also found the bodies of people with oral foaming, cyanosis, and corneal burns, the statement added. The World Health Organization said on 11 April that it had received reports from its local "health cluster partners" of 43 deaths related to symptoms consistent with exposure to highly toxic chemicals".

On 13 April, the US said it assessed "with confidence that the Syrian regime used chemical weapons". President Assad has accused the US, UK, and France of "staging" the incident in Douma with the help of the Syria Civil Defence, which receives funding from Western governments. Russian permanent representative to the UN Vassily Nebenzia told the Security Council on 9 April that Russian military specialists had visited Douma and taken soil samples that showed no presence of nerve agents or substances containing chlorine. He also said no-one with symptoms of exposure to sarin or chlorine had been admitted to Douma's hospital, nor any bodies found. Four days later, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia had "irrefutable evidence that this was yet another attack, staged with the participation of special services of one state that is striving to be at the forefront of the Russophobic campaign".

The US said it had no information to suggest Jaysh al-Islam had ever used chemical weapons, and that it was unlikely that the opposition could have fabricated the number of reports that came from Douma on 7 April and "deceived multiple media outlets while evading our detection". United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said he was outraged by the reports from Douma and warned that "any confirmed use of chemical weapons, by any party to the conflict and under any circumstances, is abhorrent and a clear violation of international law". The US military said warships and jets launched 105 missiles that hit a branch of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in the capital's Barzeh district, the Him Shinshar chemical weapons storage facility west of the city of Homs, and a nearby chemical weapons bunker. US President Donald Trump said he wanted "to establish a strong deterrent against the production, spread, and use of chemical weapons".

## Subtopic B: Refugee and Migrants Crisis

The Oxford English Dictionary gives us the following definitions:

1. **Refugee:** A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster
2. **Migrant:** A person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions

Though these terms are often used interchangeably in the media they are in fact very different things. The core difference is that a migrant chooses to leave their country of origin while a refugee has no choice. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that *"Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."* In 1951, Article 14 was used as the basis for a global treaty called The Refugee Convention. This stipulates that refugees should not be sent back to their countries of origin if this will put them in harm's way. An amendment to the treaty in 1967 also states that refugees should, at a bare minimum, be given the same treatment as foreign nationals in that country.

The Syrian conflict appears to be the biggest driver of refugees to Europe, with people fleeing the tyrannical regime of Bashar al-Assad and the brutality of Islamic State. Those coming from Afghanistan and Iraq are also fleeing conflicts of different kinds. Human rights abuse is the main factor encouraging Eritreans to flee their country. However those coming from Kosovo are considered by some to be searching for a better life in Western Europe rather than their own less prosperous country. Delegates must evaluate what this situations means for the international community and how it should manage the current crisis.

## Bloc Positions:

**Russia:** Vladimir Putin has repeatedly expressed his concerns that only a political solution can end the conflict. Moscow wants to protect a key naval facility which it leases at the Syrian port of Tartus, which serves as Russia's

sole Mediterranean base for its Black Sea fleet, and has forces at an air base in Latakia, President Assad's Shia Alawite heartland. In September 2015 Russia began launching airstrikes against rebels, saying the so-called Islamic State (IS) and "all terrorists" were targets. However, Western-backed groups were reported to have been hit. Moreover it has blocked resolutions critical for President Assad at the UN Security Council and has continued to supply weapons to the Syrian military despite international criticism.

**United States:** Insists that President Assad cannot be part of Syria's future while there are accusations of responsibility for widespread atrocities. Since September 2014, the US has been conducting air strikes on IS and other jihadist groups in Syria as part of an international coalition against the jihadist group. But it has avoided attacks that might benefit Mr Assad's forces or intervening in battles between them and the rebels.

**Arab League:** Has approved sanctions against Syria to pressure the government to end its eight-month crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, effective immediately. The sanctions included, among other things, a block to relationships between Arab countries and the Syrian Central Bank, a block to trade exchanges with the Syrian government, and a travel ban on Syrian officials. A deadline was also set for Syria to allow monitors into the country and withdraw tanks from the streets, but the ultimatum didn't succeed in distracting any firm commitment from Syrian officials.

**European Union:** Has imposed an oil embargo on Syria, trying to put pressure on the regime and its surroundings. Although it was a move with almost zero impact on the energy supply of the Union, it dealt a heavy blow to the Syrian economy, since 92% of Syrian exports to Europe are energy products. The European Union has also issued a blacklist of leading figures, banning them from travelling in Europe and freezing their assets. However, this has been viewed as a more symbolic move, as compared to the direct impact of the oil embargo.

**United Kingdom:** Signalled that Assad would not have to step down at once – specifying a six-month period in which he could remain in office insisting though on the idea that Assad must face justice for war crimes. Britain is part of the anti-Isis coalition in Iraq and may extend airstrikes to Syria.

**France:** Remains more hawkish on Syria than any other EU country, opposing any role for Assad in a transitional period. "Assad is the source of the problem," François Hollande, the French president, has pointed out. "He cannot be part of the solution." After the events of November and the terrorists' attacks, Paris and its President Hollande suggest that confronting Isis will now be the top priority. In the next days the French military dropped 16 bombs on Isis targets in the stronghold of Raqqa, hitting a command and a training centre.

## **Past Actions:**

The most recent Security Council action vis-a-vis Syria took place on February 24th of 2018, when a Resolution calling for a 30-day Cessation of Hostilities in Syria was enacted unanimously. The goal was to institute a "durable humanitarian pause" to the conflict in order to enable aid and evacuation of the wounded. The resolution called for the lifting of sieges in eastern Ghouta, Yarmouk, Foua, and Kefraya. Despite this promising diplomatic step forward, there has barely been a lull in the violence.

## **Questions A Resolution Must Answer:**

1. How can the international community effectively enforce past UN measures and resolutions in a territory dominated by insurgent groups?
2. What is the quickest and most efficacious way to make sure that the injured and dying receive the help that they need?
3. How do geopolitical ulterior motives, such as oil interests, play into the conflict?
4. How can the international community attain the funding necessary to supply suitable aid?
5. Are there viable diplomatic routes that can be employed to end this conflict and crisis once and for all?

