

Security Council – President’s Letter

Introductions

Hello and welcome to this year’s St. Bonaventure University high school Model United Nations conference! My name is Daniel Bakowski and I am pleased and honored to be the Chair of the Security Council. A little bit about me before we all meet again in March: I am an Honors Political Science and International Studies double major here at St. Bonaventure with a minor in Pre-law and Civil Society. I have participated in both Model UN and Mock Trial throughout both my high school and collegiate level careers and have received several awards in both clubs and organizations. Additionally, I also have quite a few years of experience in both chairing and competing in various different conferences for various different committees. I am truly so excited to share in this experience with all of you! I am looking forward to seeing you all in March!

As your Chair, it is my responsibility to preside over debate, evaluate your motions, and score each of you based on your individual performance as you assume your roles as diplomatic representatives of your assigned countries. I believe that you must all be familiar with the rules of procedure in all of your presentations and you must have substantial knowledge of your country’s profiles and its position regarding the issues we will be discussing. Finally, with respect to evaluations of your performance, I score each individual delegate on their overall knowledge and use of formal procedure, their professionalism, knowledge of their countries, the issues we will be debating, and overall behavior during both moderated and unmoderated caucuses and in all Security Council’s activities and deliberations. Remember, it is not just the quantity of your contributions that counts, but the overall quality of what and how you say it as well.

The Topics

Because the rotating members of the Security Council are selected according to geographical and regional representation, your topics this year have been chosen with that in mind and will reflect key global hotspots and conflicts that are found in various different cultural and continental locations. With that being said, here are your three topics for this year.

The Crisis and War in Yemen

Following the outburst of revolutions that spread across the Middle East during the Arab Spring in 2011, Yemen was finally able to see its first successful and effective transition of political power as the nation’s previously long-standing President/dictator, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was ultimately forced to step down and hand control over to the current Yemeni President, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi.

Unfortunately, however, the peace and optimism of the revolution soon faded as the Yemeni government once again fell into turmoil and instability. Within just the first few years of Hadi's presidency, the country had become plagued by an onslaught of violent terrorist attacks committed by insurgency groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, corruption within both the government and its military, and even the arrival of secession movements like the Southern Transitional Council (STC) that now threatens to quite literally tear the country apart. And to make matters worse, the Shiite-affiliated Muslim minority movement known as the *Houthi Movement* saw an opportunity to formally challenge the rule of the official Yemeni government and seize control of parts of the north-west Yemen for themselves in 2014 and 2015. Since then, countless non-state terrorist organizations have sprung up in the cities all across Yemen. Because Saudi Arabia views the Houthis as Iran's allies (Saudi Arabia sees Iran as its enemy), the Saudis assembled a coalition of their allies and launched a vicious war against Houthis who at one point controlled large parts of Yemen. The Saudi war has led to tens of thousands of deaths of innocent civilians, especially women and children and the elderly. The Saudi war also destroyed the little infrastructure that Yemen has and created near-famine conditions for the majority of Yemenis and contributed to the spread of cholera. Today, as the conflict persists, it is estimated that upwards of 22.2 million Yemeni people are currently in desperate need of humanitarian aid as Saudi Arabia and its allies continue their war in Yemen, causing an influx of 2 million displaced refugees in just 2016 alone.

Questions to Consider

- How did the crisis in Yemen begin?
- Who are the major players?
- Who are the Houthis? What do they want?
- Besides the Saudis, who else is participating in the war against Houthis?
- What is your state's relationship with Yemen? Does your state have any stakes there?
- Has your country tried to end the armed conflict currently going on in Yemen?
- Who are your allies/enemies within the region?
- Which side of the civil war does your state favor or support? Why?
- What would an end to the Yemeni conflict mean for your country and the surrounding region?
- What would the persistence of the war in Yemen do to neighboring countries and the world? Think of the number of refugees fleeing war zones....

Resources:

- [Global Conflict Tracker: War in Yemen](#)
- [Aljazeera: Key facts about the war in Yemen](#)
- [Why are 10 countries attacking Yemen?](#)
- [What's Really Behind The War In Yemen?](#)
- [Yemeni Civil War \(2015–present\)](#)

The Current Situation in the Ukraine

Winning its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the small Eastern European nation of Ukraine has had quite a complicated history with its far more powerful European neighbors. The turmoil began first with a series of protests against the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in 2013. Following a military altercation that turned the once peaceful protests violent, President Yanukovich fled from the Ukraine and left the government in shambles, prompting the Russian Federation to invade the Crimean Peninsula in March of 2014 to reclaim their allegedly lost land. Crimea was formally annexed by a referendum vote. Russia succeeded in annexing the Crimea peninsula even though not a single country recognizes this annexation. For many European countries and for the US, this was an overtly aggressive Russian behavior that must be countered.

The conflict did not end with the annexation of the Crimea. Ukraine has a large population of Russians especially in the South and East of the country. The conflict then escalated in the following months as Ukrainians became divided along ethnic lines. The revival of a Pro-Russian secession movement only heightened the tensions of a brewing civil war. The ensuing armed conflict only grew until it came to a tragic global climax in July of 2014 when a Malaysian Airlines flight was shot down over Ukrainian airspace, killing all 298 passengers. Many nations have since speculated that the Russian Federation is responsible for the attack and for the continuation of the war.

Today, the conflict is estimated to have claimed over 10,000 civilian lives as the war's frontline has extended far beyond a total of 280 miles across the entire nation, causing more than 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens to become displaced within their own country while Crimea remains under Russian control and the population is still deeply divided.

Questions to Consider

- What is the situation in the Ukraine?
- Who are the major players in Ukraine?
- What exactly happened? Why did the war start? How? Who caused it?
- What is your state's relationship with the Ukraine? With Russia?
- Has your country engaged in any initiatives to resolve the ongoing conflict?
- Is your country concerned about the situation in Ukraine? Why?
- Who are your allies/enemies in the region?
- Why is peace and stability in Ukraine important to your country and the region?
- Does the UN have any role to play in this conflict?

Resources:

- [Global Conflict Tracker: Conflict in Ukraine](#)
- [Human Rights Watch: Ukraine: Events of 2017](#)
- [Russian military intervention in Ukraine \(2014–present\)](#)

- [The war in Ukraine is more devastating than you know](#)
- [U.N. finds growing signs of Russian involvement in Ukraine war](#)
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-un-idUSKBN0OH2SK20150601>

The Growing Tensions in the East and South China Sea

Referring to the 81,000 square mile area of maritime economic and international free waters boundary just off the coast of China and Japan, the East China Sea exists as a hotbed of rising tensions and instability as the major powers of the region battle for economic control of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and other territories. Originally claimed by Japan in 1895 as a part of their privately-owned economic exclusion zone, debates over the true ownership of the isles have existed since the early 1970's with China in particular arguing for control to be returned over to them. Tensions have only continued to rise as of late with several global powers beginning to increase their armed capabilities in the region to protect their own political and economic interests.

As for the South China Sea itself, it exists as one of the world's most active trading routes in recent history, responsible for the transportation of around 40 percent of all the world's oil and liquified natural gas in 2017 and an annually generated revenue of 3.37 trillion dollars in 2016 alone. This is a major strategic issue that has some serious repercussions. The South China Sea disputes involve both island and maritime claims among several sovereign states within the region, namely Brunei, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Republic of China (Taiwan), Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Approximately US \$5 trillion worth of global trade passes through the South China Sea annually. This area is strategic and many states want the South China Sea to remain international waters. The disputes include the islands, reefs, banks, and other features of the South China Sea, including the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, and various boundaries in the Gulf of Tonkin. Claimant states want to retain or to acquire the rights to fishing areas, the exploration and potential exploitation of crude oil and natural gas in the seabed of the South China Sea, and the strategic control of important shipping lanes.

Most recently, however, China, has taken to creating man-made islands that have become military bases in the South China Sea territory in an attempt to assert Chinese legitimacy claims over the area and to pressure neighboring countries to accept those as facts on the ground (or facts in the sea in this case)! Today, almost all smaller Asian nations in the region feel the threat of a potential conflict. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam have all been worried about the escalating events there. The United States totally rejected those claims and to keep the South China Sea an international water, the US has frequently conducted "freedom of navigation" operations in the Sea. The United States has also recently stepped up its military activity and naval presence in the region, including freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in January and March 2018. In a speech during his November 2017 visit to Southeast Asia, President Donald J. Trump emphasized the importance of such operations, and of ensuring free and open access to the South China Sea. Since May 2017, the United States has conducted six FONOPs in the region.

Questions to Consider

- What is the current state of affairs in the South China Sea?
- Who is in control there?
- Why is China building man-made islands?
- Who are the primary combatants in the South China Sea conflict?
- Does your country have trade claims in the South China Sea?
- Who are your nation's foremost trading partners in the South China Sea?
- What could the crisis in the South China mean for the state of your nation and its economy?
- How can stability be restored before the conflict turns violent?
- Is your country worried about escalation?
- Even if your country is not in the vicinity of the South China Sea, do you think your country might still suffer the consequences of a potential conflict there?

Resources:

- [Global Conflict Tracker: Tensions in the East China Sea](#)
- [Global Conflict Tracker: Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea](#)
- [Wikipedia: Territorial disputes in the South China Sea](#)
- [The South China Sea: Explaining the Dispute](#)
- [Making Sense Of The South China Sea Dispute](#)

Other Resources:

- www.un.org
- www.embassy.org
- <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/10-conflicts-watch-2018>