

YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025

Topic Descriptions

Committee: Security Council

Chairs: Ethan Selvers, Sanjana Mandadi, Sean Misquith

Topic #1: Trade Interruptions due to Global Conflict

Introduction & Background

Global trade is the exchange of products between international borders. However, due to global disputes or international conflicts, Global Trade can be constrained, affecting the citizens of these countries by limiting access to items such as food, drinking water, and consumer goods. **International conflicts affect global trade** through trade embargoes, sanctions, and infrastructure damage. Addressing these interruptions requires diplomatic efforts and conflict resolution mechanisms to foster global peace and stability.

Current Status

Trade interruptions due to global conflict manifest in various forms, showcasing a multitude of challenges this topic encases. Examples include trade embargoes, supply chain disruptions, and infrastructure damage. These disruptions not only affect economies, but livelihoods worldwide. Foreign dignitaries and global leaders often leverage global trade to gain an advantage over other countries or use it as a strategic bargaining tool, but truly the only people it is truly hurting are the citizens of these respective countries. For example, During the U.S.-China trade war, American consumers faced higher prices. According to a study by economists from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Princeton University, and Columbia University, “tariffs imposed by the U.S. on Chinese goods cost the average American household \$831 annually in 2019.” Not only does this problem affect consumers but everyone is part of the supply chain and more. Currently, we can see in the **Suez Canal**, “UNCTAD estimates that the weekly transits going through the Suez Canal decreased by 42% over the last two months.” This isn’t just isolated but also in the **Black Sea**, in July 2023, citing unmet promises related to its own agricultural exports and the impact of Western sanctions on its economy. Russian withdrawal from their promised initiative led to a de facto naval war zone in the **Black Sea**, deterring commercial shipping and exacerbating food price inflation globally. These events are all due to Geopolitical Conflict.

Themes to Consider

Delegates should prioritize resolutions that promote political dialogue, conflict resolution mechanisms, and international cooperation. PGeneral ideas to promote a solution can be found in the recent **UNCTAD** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) meeting. Progress is found in initiatives aimed at strengthening trade security and enhancing diplomatic channels. Multiple perspectives to consider for this topic are the **citizens** of affected countries, **political leaders** of these countries, **private corporations** that are either plagued by these issues, or corporations that manage to profit from these issues either by eliminating competition or monopolizing the market.

Global trade is a powerful tool. While international conflicts are often unexpected, it's crucial to focus on the needs of the citizens in the affected countries. This discussion aims to find ways to reduce the negative impacts on them. Explore the nuanced dynamics between conflict zones and their impact on trade routes, supply chains, and economies. For example, focus on hotspots such as the South China Sea, where territorial disputes escalate tensions and hinder maritime trade. How can diplomatic dialogue mitigate these tensions and ensure the free

flow of goods? Along with this, make sure to assess the challenges posed by terrorism and piracy to international trade routes.

Discussion Questions

1. How can diplomatic dialogue mitigate geopolitical conflict and ensure the free flow of goods?
2. How do international conflicts, such as Russia's actions in Ukraine (i.e. Russia's actions in Ukraine to disrupt grain exports) , affect food security in countries globally not just countries directly involved in war?
3. What measures can be implemented to safeguard shipping lanes and ensure the security of maritime commerce?

Resources

1. Kamali, Parisa, et al. "Red Sea Attacks Disrupt Global Trade." IMF, IMF Blog, 7 Mar. 2024, www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2024/03/07/Red-Sea-Attacks-Disrupt-Global-Trade.

Description: This source provides recent developments of this issue as well as a in depth background of the topic.

2. "UNCTAD Raises Alarms on Escalating Disruptions to Global Trade Due to the Geopolitical Tensions and Climate Change Affecting the World's Key Trade Routes." UNCTAD, 26 Jan. 2024, unctad.org/press-material/unctad-raises-alarms-escalating-disruptions-global-trade-due-geopolitical-tensions.

(Highly Recommend) Description: This is a non-biased source straight from the UN giving recent developments of the issue.

3. Soni, Paroma, and Giovanna Coi. "By the Numbers: How Conflict in the Red Sea Disrupts Global Trade." POLITICO, POLITICO, 5 Mar. 2024, www.politico.eu/article/how-conflict-red-sea-disrupts-global-trade-by-the-numbers-houthi-s-shipping/.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Explanation of how exactly this issue presents it self and why it happens.

4. "Immediate and Long-Term Impacts of the Russia-Ukraine War on Supply Chains." KPMG, KPMG, kpmg.com/us/en/articles/2022/impacts-russia-ukraine-war-supply-chains.html.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Source looks at long-term effects of this issue and is extremely useful to make long term resolutions to this issue.

5. Blenkinsop, Philip. "Global Trade Rift Widening as Ukraine War Passes Two-Year Mark | Reuters." Reuters.Com, Reuters, 24 Feb. 2024, www.reuters.com/markets/global-trade-rift-widening-ukraine-war-passes-two-year-mark-2024-02-22/.

Description: Examines some political dialogue relating to solutions around the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

6. Ruta, Michele. "How the War in Ukraine Is Reshaping World Trade and Investment." World Bank Blogs, World Bank Blogs , 3 May 2022, blogs.worldbank.org/en/developmenttalk/how-war-ukraine-reshaping-world-trade-and-investment.

Description: Source looks at what items are affected and how it relates to the citizens in the respective countries in this case specifically Ukraine.

Topic #2: Addressing the Spread of Violent Nationalism

Introduction & Background

Nationalism is defined as “an ideology that emphasizes loyalty, devotion, or allegiance to a nation or nation-state and holds that such obligations outweigh other individual or group interests.” When taken to extremes, nationalism can oftentimes become violent and have worldwide consequences. One example of **extreme nationalism** is Nazi Germany and the atrocious crimes perpetrated during the Holocaust. The formation of the Nazi party can be attributed to the failure of the League of Nations (essentially a less powerful, prior version of the UN) after the Treaty of Versailles. Another example is Serbian nationalism, which, in the 1990s, led to the Bosnian Genocide, as nationalists looked to “cleanse” Bosnia of all non-Serbs. By investigating these cases, experts agree that the need for a UN response to extreme nationalism is justified as many conflicts that arise from extreme nationalism are oftentimes a result of a lack of international cooperation.

Current Status

Nationalism presents itself in all different forms. Examples of the different faces that nationalism may take include the rise of authoritarian rulers, military coups, and civilian unrest. In **Brazil**, after the defeat of former president Jair Bolsonaro in 2022, Bolsonaro’s supporters stormed the Brazilian capital in an attempt to overthrow the government. Bolsonaro’s supporters have been seen to mimic Nazi gestures and are an example of extreme nationalism. However, the coup only lasted for a couple of hours when law enforcement was finally able to clear and arrest the rioters. Finally, the number of countries whose **democratic score** has decreased is far greater than those that have increased, posing a potential threat to human rights. In fact, “as of today, some 38 percent of the global population live in Not Free countries, the highest proportion since 1997” (Freedom House). This phenomenon is occurring due to populist leaders and a rise in governments that demand unchecked power, which are oftentimes a direct result of poverty, food insecurity, and general dissatisfaction amongst groups of people who may be looking to sacrifice freedom for stability and security.

Themes to Consider

Extreme Nationalism poses stark dangers not just to the nations in which it occurs, but to bordering countries as well. Nationalism is not inherently evil; every nation possesses nationalism in some manner, as its population will have pride for their country. However, when taken to extremes, the UN Security Council (UNSC) must address the matter in the interest of **keeping the peace**. It is imperative that the UNSC **balances the sovereign rights of states with the necessity of preventing a violent conflict**.

When nationalism becomes extreme, conflict can engulf that country. Consequently, funding for war-torn nations becomes extremely important, as **nations who provide aid can benefit** from increased trade with the country and gain a stronghold in the region. The veto-power nations are most likely to take the majority of the funding and tend to do so to increase their “**soft power**” in the region. China’s increasing dominance in Africa and the creation of **BRICS**, an intergovernmental organization comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, is an example of a veto power exercising its soft power.

It is also important to hold individuals and groups accountable for perpetrating hate crimes, which exacerbate intolerant ideologies towards ethnic and social groups and further fuel violent nationalism. The UN has a responsibility to provide education that counters extremist propaganda and hate speech that targets any group of people.

Discussion Questions

1. How can the UNSC maintain peace in a region without intruding on a country's national sovereignty?
2. How can the UNSC improve nations devastated by nationalist wars and improve the quality of life in these nations?
3. What role should the UNSC play in ensuring that violent nationalism does not spread across borders and potentially induce wars?

Resources

1. "Understanding the Constructive and Destructive Natures of Nationalism." *CFR Education From the Council on Foreign Relations*, 16 Feb. 2023, education.cfr.org/learn/reading/understanding-constructive-and-destructive-natures-nationalism.

(Recommend) Description: Good overview of the positives and negatives of nationalism and can help lead you to an opinion as to when the UN might need to intervene.

2. "War | History, Causes, Types, Meaning, Examples, and Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 28 Apr. 2024, www.britannica.com/topic/war/Nationalism.

(Highly Recommend) Description: An excellent overview of nationalism and extreme nationalism. Would be a great starting point in your research.

3. AfricaNews. "Africa: The 7 Military Coups Over the Last Three Years." *Africanews*, 30 Aug. 2023, www.africanews.com/2023/08/30/africa-the-7-military-coups-over-the-last-three-years/.

(Recommend) Description: This source, although not extremely in depth, gives a solid overview of the turmoil that is engulfing many African states in the past years.

4. Smith, Patrick, and Char Adams. "What to Know About the Crisis of Violence, Politics and Hunger Engulfing Haiti." *NBC News*, 15 Mar. 2024, www.nbcnews.com/news/world/haiti-crisis-what-know-president-violence-government-rcna143000.

Description: This is a really good overview of the Haiti crisis and can be a helpful first step in investigating this issue and others like it around the globe.

5. Freedom House, et al. "The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule." *Freedom House*, freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2022/global-expansion-authoritarian-rule.

(Highly Recommend) Description: This is a great source that details the “level of freedom” civilians have around the world and details the rise of authoritarian rulers world wide.

6. *Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2686 (2023), Security Council Urges International Community to Prevent Incitement, Condemn Hate Speech, Racism, Acts of Extremism | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.* 14 June 2023, press.un.org/en/2023/sc15321.doc.htm.

Description: This is the UN's latest resolution to addressing some problems associated with violent nationalism.

Topic #3: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

Introduction & Background

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a key humanitarian goal of the United Nations. **Armed conflict** is one of the driving causes of forced displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and civilian injury and death, all of which actively endanger those who are not directly involved in the conflict.

The idea of civilian protection in terms of clear, documented codes originates in the aftermath of World War II. In 1948, the United Nations ratified the **Genocide Convention** and the **Declaration of Human Rights**, both of which touched on the protection of civilians and the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. In 1949, the full scope of civilian protection was addressed in the **Fourth Geneva Convention**.

Current Status

In the global political climate of the 21st century, it is more important than ever to focus on improving the protection of civilians. Since 1999, the protection of civilians in armed conflict has been on the agenda of the UN Security Council, and some of its major goals have included the protection of humanitarian personnel and journalists, efforts against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and combating food insecurity in areas of conflict. For example, since 2015, the UN has been committed to providing vital assistance to civilians in Yemen, distributing 100,000 metric tons of food each month. Moreover, since 2022, the UNSC has been strongly advocating for a ceasefire in the Russo-Ukrainian War in an effort to protect vulnerable populations.

Themes to Consider

There are many challenges facing humanitarian efforts in areas of armed conflict. One example of this is that governments and warring factions increasingly target civilians as a weapon of war through the use of hostages and the denial of outside humanitarian aid. It is because of this that peacekeeping groups have pushed for free movement throughout areas of conflict in order to safely and efficiently deliver aid.

Another issue is the outsourcing of military operations to private companies and the use of private soldiers as opposed to official militaries. For example, at the height of their involvement in Iraq, over 50% of U.S. forces consisted of private contractors. In some cases, this allows governments to avoid being held responsible for crimes that are only technically not under their jurisdiction. Such actions can open pathways for established ethical codes to be blatantly ignored with little accountability.

It is also important to consider how various demographics are impacted by armed conflict. Women and girls are at a greater risk of sexual violence and trafficking, which oftentimes goes untracked. It is for this reason that many peacekeeping forces push for women to be involved in the decision-making in conflict resolution, as they are the best advocates for themselves. Additionally, elderly populations are more likely to experience abuse in armed conflicts due to their impaired senses and weaker constitutions. Their needs, which tend to differ from younger civilians, are also often overlooked by humanitarian services. It is therefore the UN's responsibility to address these challenges with the nuances of different situations in mind.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can the Security Council look to protect civilians by means of peacebuilding and preventing conflict?
2. How can the Security Council consider nations' refusal to cooperate with international law when attempting to handle the delicate situation of civilian safety?
3. How should the Security Council handle the role of private military groups in armed conflict when dealing with accountability?

Resources

1. "Five ways to protect civilians in contemporary armed conflict." *SIPRI*, 29 August 2023, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2023/five-ways-protect-civilians-contemporary-armed-conflict>. Accessed 18 May 2024.

(Highly Recommend) Description: An overview of the challenges to consider in the protection of civilians and ways to do so.

2. "Protection in Armed Conflict | UNHCR." *UNHCR | Emergency Handbook*, 26 January 2024, <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-mechanisms/protection-armed-conflict>. Accessed 18 May 2024.

(Highly Recommend) Description: The UN Refugee Agency's page on information about the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

3. "Protection of Civilians." *How does law protect in war?*, <https://casebook.icrc.org/highlight/protection-civilians>. Accessed 18 May 2024.

Description: A summary of who is considered a civilian and how they are protected.

4. "Protection of civilians." *OCHA*, <https://www.unocha.org/protection-civilians>. Accessed 18 May 2024.

Description: The UN and OCHA's policies regarding civilian protection.

5. "Protection of civilians mandate." *United Nations Peacekeeping*, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/protection-of-civilians-mandate>. Accessed 18 May 2024.

Description: A more in depth look at the UN's actions in civilian protection.

6. Valacheril, Delisha. *Human Rights Abuses Against Elderly During Armed Conflict – UAB Institute for Human Rights Blog*, 9 March 2023, <https://sites.uab.edu/humanrights/2023/03/09/human-rights-abuses-against-elderly-during-armed-conflict/>. Accessed 18 May 2024.

Description: Analysis of how armed conflicts impact elderly civilians.