United Nations General Assembly- Disarmament and International Security Committee

Background Guide

Agenda

1. Revisiting the Kurdish Status
2. Preventing an arms race in outer space
Letter from Executive Board

Dear Prospective Members,

At the outset on behalf of the Executive Board, we extend a warm welcome to all of you and congratulate you on being a part of the United Nations General Assembly simulation at The Punjab Public School Model United Nations Conference 2019.

We believe that ‘study guides’ are detrimental to the individual growth of the members since they overlook a very important aspect of this activity, which is Research. We are sure however that this background guide gives you a perfect launching pad to start with your research. The Background guide would be as abstract as possible, and would just give you a basic perspective on what the executive board believes you should know before you commence your research.

This being clear, kindly do not limit your research to the areas highlighted, further but ensure that you logically deduce and push your research to areas associated with the issues mentioned.

The objective of this background guide is to provide you with a ‘background’ of the issue at hand and therefore it might seem to some as not being comprehensive enough.
We are not looking for existing solutions, or strategies that would be a copy paste of what countries you are representing have already stated; instead we seek an out of the box solution from you, while knowing and understanding your impending practical and ideological limitations.

The onus is on you, members, to formulate a resolution which gives a fair attempt and frame practical solutions for impairment of treaties, failing and showing no progress, crippled by political interest pushing humanity towards the brim of war. Wishing you all a very warm good luck and hoping to see you all at this conference discussing imperative issues of international interest and we look forward to meeting you all at Punjab.

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About The Committee

The United Nations General Assembly was established in 1945 through the Charter of the United Nations. In the entire United Nations framework, the General Assembly occupies a central position as the chief deliberative and representative organ of the United Nations. Comprising of all 193 Members of the United Nations, it offers member states a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of regional and international issues that fall under purview of the Charter. The committee also caters to a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law.

The mandate and main functions of the United Nations General assembly are enshrined in Chapter IV of the United Nations Charter. Under the Charter, the committee has the power to make recommendations to States on international issues within its competence. It has, in the past initiated actions on political, economic, humanitarian, social and legal issues through its sub committees to protect the interests of millions of people across the globe.
Meetings of the Committee

The sessions of the United Nations General Assembly take place in the form of Regular Sessions and sometimes in form of Special Sessions. The information about the meetings of the General Assembly (both regular sessions and irregular sessions) are mentioned in Part I of the Rules of Procedure document of the UN General assembly.

Regular Sessions: The United Nations General Assembly meets bi-annual basis the year, first from September to December, and then resumes session in January until all issues on the agenda are addressed – which often is just before the next session starts. During the resumed part of the session, the assembly considers current issues of critical importance to the international community in the form of High-level Thematic Debates.

Special Sessions: The General Assembly can also take action in cases of a threat to the peace, breach of peace or act of aggression through a Special Session or an Emergency Special Sessions. Under Rule of Procedure of the committee, a Special Session can be convened if the UN Secretary General receives such a request from the members of the UNSC under Rule 8 or a from a majority of members of the UN pursuant to Rule 9.

Emergency Special Sessions: In cases where the UN Security Council has failed to
act due to deadlock in the council or a negative vote of a permanent member of the UNSC, a Emergency Special Sessions of the UN General assembly can be convened pursuant to Uniting for Peace Resolution of November 1950. Such a session shall be convened upon the request for such a session by the UNSC through nine affirmative votes or a request from a majority of the Members of the United Nations.

**Functions and Powers of the Committee**

Though there is a lot of literature on the roles and responsibilities of the United Nations General assembly, lets just focus on the main tenets of the committee. I am stating the Functions and Powers of the committee from the UN Charter but in simpler language.

❖ Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States;

❖ Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General;

❖ Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for
maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament;

❖ Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it;

❖ Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations;

❖ Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields;

❖ Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries;

❖ Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs.
Introduction to the Agendas

I. Revisiting the Kurdish Status

**Historical Background**

The Kurdish population spans Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, and a very small section of Armenia. Kurds constitute one of, if not the, largest minority in each state. Driven by the notion of national self-determination, the Kurds have been pushing for a sovereign state, or some level of autonomy, since the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. However, because they are a minority in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, Kurds have not always received the equal treatment. Indeed, one can argue the basic rights of Kurds have been violated by each of the states they reside. Since the Kurdish people make up a substantial percentage of the population in each of the states, it is important to address the mistreatment Kurds face so to prevent escalation into yet another international humanitarian tragedy.

While peacekeeping missions have contributed significantly to security and stability in many ways around the globe, there have been too many instances of the “blue helmets” engaging in unethical behavior in the states in which they are deployed, including sex trafficking. It is important to make sure that peacekeeping missions are done efficiently and ethically. Poorly behaving peacekeeping troops and other
problems can undermine UN values, exploit already victimized civilians, and ultimately lead to the failure of peacekeeping missions. In this committee, delegates will have to explore ways to prevent such outcomes and devise reforms that bolster the efficiency and ethicality of peacekeeping missions.

The Kurds are known as the largest group of people without its own state. Dispersed among Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, the Kurdish people are largely a Sunni Muslim non-Arab people that speak language most similar to Persian. Prior to the First World War, the Kurds were mostly a nomadic people living in the Mesopotamian plains and highlands of Ottoman Empire and Iran. The notions of nationalism and national self-determination - important forces in Europe and beyond both before and after World War I - began to resonate among the Kurds in the early 20th century. But the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire that resulted in the creation of a number of new nation states did not include a separate Kurdistan. Indeed, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq all agreed to not recognize an independent Kurdish state.

Kurdish inability to create their own nation-state is inconsistent with the idea of national self-determination, something promoted by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson during World War I as a way to promote international peace and stability. Indeed, while promoting his famous “Fourteen Points,” Wilson argued, “National
Aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. ‘Self-determination’ is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of actions which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril.”

The creation of the UN system, along with the treaties and conventions that came out of the UN system, enshrined the idea of national self-determination in international law. For example, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article I, Section I) states, “All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. Kurds have been discriminated against in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. Since the formation of Iraq, Syria, Turkey and the rest of the states that emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Kurds have suffered from political, social, and economic discrimination. There have been movements – such as the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) that has waged a violent campaign against the government of Turkey – that have sought an independent Kurdistan because of such issues combined with national self-determination motivations.
The Kurdish issue has been affected profoundly by the lack of stability in the Middle East. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 has brought about grave changes to the Kurdish question; and the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011 has given significant impetus to the Kurdish geopolitics of the Middle East. As such, the role of the Kurds has become more prominent in the four countries, of whose social fabric the Kurds are part: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Since the creation of the state of Iraq, conflict has been raging between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish movements that have been in control of the northern part of Iraq since the 1990s. The borders that divided the Kurdish populations of the Middle East across Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria have lost their relative significance when it comes to Kurds’ political consciousness, their national project and power projections across the region. In fact, the border between the Iraqi and Syrian Kurds has effectively ceased to exist. This has become a time of political, psychological, emotional and, to some extent, even military interconnectedness among the Kurds. The fight against the Islamic State (IS) in particular has led to the emergence of a Kurdish public sphere in the region.

Before engaging in any study of Kurdistan it is worth calling to mind the nation’s most salient feature: it does not, nor has ever, existed as a sovereign state. After
World War I, the Entente nations carved new colonies out of the defunct Ottoman and Persian Empires through a series of complex and diplomatically messy compromises. The modern Middle East is a product of negotiations that often put placating local dictators and repaying wartime allies above securing peace or distributing oil wealth equitably. A sovereign nation named Kurdistan was born out of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres between the Entente nations and Ottoman Sultan Mehmed VI. This country was to stretch from southeast modern-day Turkey across northern modern-day Iraq and into parts of modern-day Iran and Armenia, blanketing the area of the Middle East with the densest Kurdish population (see figure 1). However, as the Ottoman Empire was virtually defunct by the time of the Treaty of Sèvres, and the Turkish Republic that would follow it favored incorporating all ethnic groups into a broad Anatolian nation, Kurdistan never materialized. Mustafa.

Possible Policies

While focusing on the Kurdish question in particular, it is important to keep in mind that the policies and the solution applied to this case will set a precedent to tackle similar problems all over the world. The two main alternatives are:

a. Applying the principle of the self-determination of peoples, thus moving in the direction of forming a new Kurdish state through treaties and international collaboration, [main supporters: Kurds, Israel, which is so far the only country to
openly declare its approval of an independent Kurdish state.

b. Seeking a compromise with the existing governments, thus avoiding potential conflict. [main supporters: USA, Turkey (obviously), Iraq and their allies] Both have many advantages and downsides, and neither is perfect.

However, it is clear that at present it is unrealistic to create a Kurdish independent state, given how many countries are against it. So please be realistic while writing your draft resolution or clauses, in order to make the debate as fruitful and interesting as possible. Insofar as the current Turkish policy is concerned, assimilation has been the only strategy which has ever been taken into consideration, since the Turkish state itself is based on the concept of “Turkishness”.

A similar, yet more inclusive alternative is integration. Here are the disadvantages of both. The limits of assimilation are: - The remoteness of the Kurdish region - The relative economic backwardness on the region - The lack of resources to finance the integration and education of the Kurdish inhabitants. The limits of integration are: - The fact that, to the eyes of the Turkish public, it would imply some degree of approval of the unacceptable acts of terrorism which were done in the name of the Kurdish cause - The necessity for mentality to change on a nationwide level (if not on an international level) in order for the Kurds not to be portrayed as traitors, rebels or terrorists - The difficulties of restoring the pre-existing Kurdish culture, given that the language has been almost eradicated.
Important Links for Reference Purposes and Further Research


Rules of Procedure of the United Nations GA:

A “brief” summary of the history of the Kurds, by the Kurdish Institute in Paris
http://www.institutkurde.org/en/institute/who_are_the_kurds.php

And one by an American journalist http://prospect.org/article/kurdish-question

The current situation, by Al Jazeera
http://www.meltingpot.org/La-questione-curda.html#.Wf2b-oFSzEY


http://jch.sagepub.com/content/34/4/555.full.pdf

https://books.google.it/books?hl=no&lr=&id=XSw2AAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR3&
II. Preventing an arms race in Outer Space

Historical Background and Current Events

Definition of Space and History of Human Exploration

To understand the debate about preventing an arms race in outer space, it is necessary to define outer space and understand the history of its exploration and use by humans. However, there is no internationally-accepted definition of “outer space.” What states have agreed is that each country has sovereignty over its own “air space,” and that each county’s air space extends 12 miles laterally beyond its borders (even if it overlaps with the air space of other states). This is the same way that a country’s “territorial waters” are determined. Each state has sovereignty over the water and submerged and continental shelf for 12 miles beyond its coastline. Beyond that are the “high seas,” which, according to the Law of the Sea, are for the use of all mankind.

The problem with this approach to defining “air space” is that it does not address the vertical dimension. States have never agreed how far up “outer space” begins. Even scientists are not sure where to draw the line because the Earth’s atmosphere does not suddenly end but just becomes thinner and thinner the higher one goes.
As a result, although there is a general consensus that outer space begins at the point where it is possible for objects to orbit the Earth, there are different ideas about where this point actually is. Moreover, where it is depends on prevailing technology. This is why the US State Department has argued that it would be counter-productive to define in concrete terms, such as miles, where outer space begins. According to the State Department:

5 Our position continues to be that the Legal Subcommittee should not take on this issue until practical problems have been identified so as to make it absolutely necessary to do so. ... Whatever definition or delimitation were ultimately agreed upon would by its nature be arbitrary at worst, or, at best, be constrained by the current state of technology. For example, technological advances have increased the height at which aircraft can sustain flight, while they have decreased the height at which the orbital flight of space vehicles is possible.

If we use the scientific definition of outer space as the point where it is possible for objects to orbit the Earth, we can trace the history of human exploration of outer space by reviewing the earliest objects and people to be put into orbit.

The first man-made object to completely orbit the Earth was the Soviet satellite, Sputnik, which the Soviet Union launched in 1957. It was about “twice the size of a football” and orbited the Earth for 22 days, taking about 96 minutes to complete one cycle. In 1958, the US followed with the Explorer satellite. At the time, what was most significant about these launches was that they showed that each country had the capability to fire inter-continental ballistic missiles at the
other. This took the terrestrial nuclear arms race, which began with the US development and use of nuclear weapons in 1945, to a new level.

Since 1957, satellites have become important in their own right. About 1,300 active satellites currently orbit the Earth, photographing the planet and the universe, and receiving and beaming signals for everything from radios, cell phones, computers, and televisions to telescopes, weather stations, navigational equipment, and military surveillance.

Armstrong characterized this event as “one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Since 1969, Russia, Japan, China, and India have each conducted their own exploration of the Moon. In addition, Russia, the US, Japan, and the EU have explored Venus, and 13 countries have agreed to collaborate to explore Mars. In August 2012, a NASA rover named Curiosity landed on the surface of Mars, carrying instruments designed to examine the past or present habitability of Mars. Looking to the future, Russia, the European Space Agency, India, Japan, and the US all have plans of further exploration of Mars, with goals of returning material to Earth and continuing the search for signs of previous life. North Korea is also advancing its space capabilities. It launched a space launch vehicle (SLV) into the atmosphere in February of 2016 and has built up its ballistic missile system capabilities despite strong international pushback.
Since 1998, 17 countries have participated in the construction of, experiments at, and explorations from the International Space Station (ISS), which is about the size of a football field. The space station is composed of labs built by the North American Space Agency (NASA), Russia, the European Space Agency (ESA), and Japan. It is manned by a crew of up to 6 scientists and other individuals (including tourists), who are shuttled back and forth in Russian spacecraft (now that the US has ended its space shuttle program). The ISS has been continuously occupied for 15 years and 257 days since the arrival of Expedition 1 on 2 November 2000, the longest continuous human presence in space. This was not the first space station to be created, but it is the largest to date and the first to involve extensive international cooperation in an effort to share costs. As of July 2016, 222 individuals from 17 countries had visited the space station, including Mark Shuttleworth, a South African businessman, who became the first African in space in 2002.

At the 10th anniversary of the ISS, Alan Thirkettle, the ISS Program Manager for the European Space Agency, remarked on the high level of cooperation that the 16 participating states have achieved, stating that

The Potential for and Problems of an Arms Race in Space
Despite the cooperation that has emerged for scientific and research purposes, some scholars still suggest that states are likely to develop weapons in space in the future, and that this will likely result in an arms race in space. This idea rests on three premises. First, they point to the fact that all technologies (e.g. airplanes and nuclear technology) have eventually been adopted by states as weapons. States, according to this perspective, will always seek to use new technologies, including technologies that allow for weapons in space, for military purposes.

Second, they argue that any state that initiates the process of weaponising space will have a military advantage over countries that wait to weaponise. The use of weapons in space, from a military standpoint, would provide several advantages. One would be the ability to deploy weapons to any location in the world. This could be used for offensive purposes, such as using weapons on a distant state, or for defensive purposes, such as using anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs) to protect ones’ state from attacks that originate in space or on the Earth. A second key advantage would be the ability to more easily disable other states’ space-based military technology. This could seriously debilitate other states’ military technology, including non-space technologies that rely heavily on space-based infrastructure. The US military, for instance, uses satellites for nearly all of its reconnaissance, communication, and navigation capabilities on Earth. An attack on its satellites would seriously cripple the US military in these areas. In this case, the threat of potential attacks from those who have weaponized space would drive other states to develop their own weapons programs. Some scholars thus suggest that the US in particular is likely to seek this advantage, followed by China in response to the US’s actions.
Third, scholars have suggested that the US and China will likely see space as a final space for competition in the future. Hence, just as the USSR and the US competed for military dominance and territorial control during the Cold war, the US and China may see space as a ground for competition in the future. This means they will not only develop weapons in space, but may instigate an arms race in their efforts to compete and deter one another.

While the loss of life or damage that could occur if a state using space-based weapons against targets on Earth represents one potential danger of arms in space, the use of weapons (located in space or on Earth) against targets in space would also have a detrimental impact on societies. Even if states were to attack satellites for military purposes, debris from destroyed satellites could strike those used for civilian purposes. Further, many satellites are now used for both civilian and military purposes. Thus, attacks on satellites would disrupt major industries that have become increasingly reliant on satellite technology for communication and GPS, such as “telecommunications, banking and finance, [and] energy.” Finally, some suggest that an arms race would “destabilize the international system, and lead to war on earth.” Hence, according to
experts, preventing an arms race in outer space constitutes a vital factor in not only preventing conflicts between space-based military structures, but also on Earth.

Fears over anti-satellite (ASAT) military technology increased in 2007 when China used anti-satellite weapons to destroy one of its own defunct satellites. While China has supported international agreements on limiting the weaponization of space since then, some still suspect that China, as well as the US and Russia, are continuing to develop methods for disabling satellites. This could be achieved via conventional weapons, such as the missile China used in 2007, as well as cyber-attacks, radio signals that can jam satellite communications, or even destroying components such as antennas or optics with paint or lasers. In fact, China already has ground lasers and satellite jamming technologies. In fact, in 2006, China used a laser to “blind” a US satellite. In recent years, the US has reacted to the potential of space weaponization by other states by investing $5 billion into space defense programs.

In 1967, the GA adopted the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. This treaty, generally referred to as the Outer Space Treaty, prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (such as chemical and biological weapons) in
space. However, it does not prohibit the basing of conventional weapons there. States that ratify the Treaty agree to the following provisions:

- 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;
- outer space shall be free for exploration and use by all States;
- outer space is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means;
- States 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;
- the Moon and other celestial bodies shall be used exclusively for peaceful purposes;
- astronauts shall be regarded as the envoys of mankind;
- States shall be responsible for national space activities whether carried out by governmental or non-governmental entities;
- States shall be liable for damage caused by their space objects; and
- States shall avoid harmful contamination of space and celestial bodies.

As of July 2016, 104 UN Member States have ratified the Outer Space Treaty, 25 states have signed but not ratified it, and 64 states have never even signed it.
“Preventing an Arms Race in Outer Space” is a regular item on the GA’s agenda, and typically at least one resolution per year has been passed on the topic in recent years. In 2010, the resolution “was passed by a recorded vote of 178 in favour to none against, with 2 abstentions (Israel, United States).” In addition a second resolution on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities “was adopted by a recorded vote of 183 in favour to none against, with 1 abstention (United States).

The issue of transparency is especially important for less-developed countries, who do not have the capabilities to participate in space exploration and therefore have no way of monitoring the actions of more-developed countries. In the resolution on that topic, the GA called on the UN Secretary-General to establish an international working group with “equitable geographic representation” to make recommendations on how the countries that are active in outer space can be encouraged to report more fully on their activities.

At the CPUOS annual meeting in June 2011, some delegations expressed support for a draft treaty that Russia and China presented in 2008 to the UN Conference on Disarmament, which is the UN body that generally drafts disarmament treaties. Instead of allowing states to base conventional weapons in outer space, then trying to limit how many can be based there (as the recurring resolution on “preventing an arms race in outer space” suggests), the proposed treaty would ban the basing of weapons of all kinds. In addition, it would make it illegal for states or
other actors to shoot down peaceful objects based in outer space, such as satellites and space stations.

Because no conventional weapons are currently based there, Russia and China argue that this treaty would not inconvenience anyone. However, under the terms of their proposed treaty, it would not be illegal to shoot down weapons that transit through space, such as inter-continental ballistic missiles or anti-ballistic missile (ABM) interceptors. Because the US is trying to develop ABM technology – and because it considers ABM technology to be defensive, not offensive in nature – this could be a sticking point in getting the US and countries that have agreed to have US ABM sites on their territory to agree to Russia’s and China’s proposed treaty. However, Russia and China say they are open to negotiations on this matter, and that their primary aim is to avoid a new arms race in space that could be more costly and deadly to human life than the Cold War nuclear arms race ever was.

Clearly, the U.S. and E.U. have been at odds with Russia, China, and others with how to most effectively approach this topic. In 2015, the U.S. supported a European-led initiative that would establish norms for proper behaviour through the creation of a voluntary International Code of Conduct for Outer Space. A draft of the code was introduced to the UN in July 2015, but subsequently blocked by Russia and China. An opposing draft treaty from Russia and China pushes for the ratification of their legally binding treaty completely banning space weapons, a
treaty that U.S. officials and outside experts have repeatedly rejected as a “disingenuous nonstarter.”

**Questions to consider**

23 Does your country have a space program? If so, what are its accomplishments and challenges? If not, why not?

24 What is your country’s position on disarmament, both in general and in outer space? Has it signed and ratified the Outer Space Treaty and Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space? Why or why not?

25 How much does your country spend on the military, and what kind of weapons does it have? In what military conflicts is it currently involved?

26 Should the GA encourage member states to work with CPUOS and the Conference on Disarmament to draft a new treaty banning or restricting weapons in outer space?

27 In such a treaty, how should “outer space” and “weapon” be defined? With regard to the former, should there be a particular distance from sea level that is specified to be where outer space begins? With regard to the latter, how should the treaty deal with “dual use” technologies such as satellites that can be used to target weapons? Similarly, should it adopt the Russian and Chinese
idea that weapons should be outlawed only if they are based in space and not if they pass through?

28 Should conventional weapons (like nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, which are banned by the Outer Space Treaty), be completely banned from outer space, or should conventional weapons simply be limited?

29 Who should enforce a ban or other limitations? Should that be the role of the Security Council or of some other body?

30 What can be done to minimize the gap between developed and less-developed countries in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, as well as in the knowledge of any militarization that may be occurring?

31 What can be done to ensure that the Moon and other celestial bodies do not become new locations of conflict?

Recommended Reading

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7240796.stm


https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2006/11;

https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2003/essay3;

