



Security Council

MACMUN 2018 | SC Background Guide



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“We live in a complex world. The United Nations cannot succeed alone. Partnership must continue to be at the heart of our strategy. We should have the humility to acknowledge the essential role of other actors, while maintaining full awareness of our unique convening power.”
– UN Secretary General António Guterres

Committee Overview

History

The United Nations was created in the wake of World War II to maintain world peace in the place of past international organizations, such as the League of Nations. As victors of the war, the United States and the Soviet Union, along with the United Kingdom and other world powers, found themselves at the helm of a new world order in 1945. Leaders of these nations desired a united international body to maintain peace and order. The United Nations was subsequently formed in response to this intention. The Security Council (SC or the Council) was created as a “powerful institution of international relations” and was placed at the centre of the organization, with the United States, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom granting themselves permanent membership on the Council, along with China and France. The primary goal of the SC, as outlined by the United Nations Charter, is “to investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.” In the early stages of its existence, the SC was virtually paralyzed by Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, but has become increasingly active on the world stage since the 1990s and the formation of the Russian Federation.

Mandate and Function of the Committee

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the UN, with the SC at its core, has four fundamental purposes:

- I. To maintain international peace and security.
- II. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.
- III. To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, cultural, or humanitarian nature.
- IV. To be a centre of harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

The Council wields more power than any other UN body or committee. It is able to create resolutions that, unlike in other assemblies, are binding according to international law. The SC is also well-known for its peacekeeping missions; as of mid-2015, there were sixteen ongoing authorized peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, it has many tactics at its disposal, including the right to impose economic sanctions, travel bans, and arms embargoes. In extreme cases, it may take military action against any state threatening its mandate.

Structure, Governance and Members

The SC is comprised of five permanent (P5) and ten non-permanent members. The P5 members are China, France, the Russian Federation (formerly the Soviet Union), the United Kingdom, and the United States. On the original Council, there were six non-permanent members in addition to the permanent members. In 1965, however, this number was increased to ten. The non-permanent members each hold their place for a two-year term, with five new members elected every year.

The SC presidency rotates on a monthly basis, according to the English alphabetical order of their names. Meetings can be held at any time when convened by the President and by the request of any Member State. Under Article 35 of the Charter, “The president shall call a meeting if a dispute or situation calls the Council’s attention.” The provisional agenda for each meeting is set by the Secretary-General of the UN and is further approved by the President of the SC.

Each member has one vote on procedural and all other matters. Decisions are made by a vote from nine of the fifteen members. However, all five permanent members must vote in favour or abstain in order for a resolution to pass. This rule is called the “Right to Veto.” The Right to Veto was established in 1945 within the SC due to the perceived importance and influence of the permanent Member States in matters of peace and security. It was commonly used by the United States and the Soviet Union in the first several decades of the SC’s existence due to their pronounced differences in ideology during the Cold War. Because of these tensions, Council meetings used to be much less frequent. Since the end of the conflict around 1990, however, it has become intensely active and generally meets on an ongoing basis.

It is important to note that the right to veto held by the five permanent members remains a contentious issue in the UN. Many critics contend that the veto allows permanent members a disproportionate amount of power, and that even the threat of the veto is an advantageous tool for these states.

Simulation Style/Composition of the Committee

Two designated chairs will head the MACMUN SC committee, rather than the UN system of rotating presidency of a single member. The Chairs will be responsible for maintaining the course of debate in accordance with the National Model UN rules and procedures. The Chairs will open and close each meeting, recognize any points or motions on the floor, set the agenda, manage the list of speakers, and facilitate the discussion. In addition, the Chairs are given the final rule on any disputed points, and will declare when motions are to be voted on by the body. It is also the decision of the Chairs to pass any draft resolution to be introduced for debate.

MACMUN’s SC will consist of 15 delegates, each representing an assigned Member State. To provide the closest possible simulation of the SC, there will be delegates representing the P5 members, as well as ten non-permanent members. Note that the non-permanent members are not representative of the true members of the SC and have been altered to provide a more exciting simulation. As a result, the MACMUN members of the council will be: Brazil, Cuba, Egypt,

Ethiopia, France, India, Italy, People’s Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States. In anticipation of the conference, delegates are expected to research the committee topics, submit a position paper, and be prepared to debate in accordance with their country’s global stance and foreign policy.

Sample Timeline

9:30-9:40 – Roll Call

9:40-9:55 – Setting the Agenda

9:55-12:30 – Debate on the Agenda Topic and Motions

12:30-1:30 – Lunch

1:30-4:00 – Debate on the Agenda Topic, Motions, and Draft Resolutions

4:00-4:30 – Voting on the Draft Resolutions

4:30 – Closure/Adjournment of Debate

Forming Resolutions

Resolutions represent the consolidated opinions of the United Nations body and act as proposed comprehensive solutions to the issues at hand. They are a final result of the discussions and negotiations regarding the topics, and detail recommended courses of action. A resolution is first considered a draft resolution prior to being voted on by the committee. During the course of debate, delegates may work individually or collaborate with others to write a draft resolution. The delegates writing the resolution are considered its “sponsors” and must recruit a certain number of delegates as “signatories” in order for their resolution to be introduced by the Chairs to the committee. Signatories are members who wish to bring the resolution to debate but they do not have to support the document. Once brought to debate, amendments can be made until the final resolution is voted on by the committee.

Position Papers

The position paper is a detailed essay of your country’s policies and position on the topics that are going to be discussed in the committee. The creation of your position paper is an important task because it will help you, the delegate, to organize your thoughts and ideas about MACMUN topics so that you can successfully engage with the rest of the committee. Additionally, the position papers will be judged by the conference hosts, and the writer of the top position paper in each committee will be recognized at the conference award ceremony. Please note that to be considered for any award at MACMUN 2018, you must submit a position paper.

Your goals are to research your assigned country in depth, to examine the stance they take on the given topics, and to summarize this information in one position paper. The length should not exceed one page per topic, single-spaced.

A strong MACMUN position paper should include the following:

1. How your country is affected by the issues.
2. Your country’s policies with respect to the issues.

3. Quotations from your country's leaders about the topics.
4. Actions that your country has taken with regard to the issues.
5. What your country believes should be done to address the issues.
6. What your country would like to accomplish in the committee's resolution.
7. Description of your relationship with other countries as it relates to the issues at hand.

Important Notes:

- Include your name, assigned country, and committee.
- Please do not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders.
- Include citations and a reference page, making sure to use a standardized citation style of your choice consistently, giving due credit to the sources used in the research. Please note that the reference page is not included in the page limit.

The deadline to submit your position paper is **January 30th, 2018** at 11:59PM. All submissions should be emailed to usgcommittees@macmun.org.

Where to Start Your Research

The United Nations has a multitude of resources for you to explore. As a starting point for your research on your assigned country, the UN has an extensive collection of fact sheets and assessments on every state under its jurisdiction.

<http://www.un.org/en/members/>

The SC website will likely be of specific interest to you for social documents, news, and miscellaneous information.

<http://www.un.org/en/sc/>

The Security Council Report is an "independent think tank" that assesses the SC's activities on a monthly basis. Their website provides an excellent starting point for your research and should help especially the investigation of specific issues.

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/>

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Topic #1: The South Sudanese Civil War

"Not every generation is given the chance to turn the page on the past and write a new chapter in history. Yet today — after 50 years of civil wars that have killed two million people and turned millions more into refugees — this is the opportunity before the people of southern Sudan.

– President Barack Obama on the eve of the South Sudanese referendum for independence

Introduction

On July 9th 2011, South Sudan became the world’s newest country. The region gained independence from Sudan following the Second Sudanese Civil War, a violent 22-year-long conflict that ended only after international intervention (Figure 1). Upon the country’s establishment, there were hopes that South Sudan would develop into a stable and flourishing democracy, while being sustained by billions of dollars of foreign aid and profits from the country’s prolific oil reserves. However, in 2013, the country devolved into a vicious conflict marked by brutal attacks against civilians. Estimates of fatalities range as high as 300 000, and an additional four million civilians have been displaced from their homes. As the conflict increases in complexity and the country nears the brink of genocide, the chances of achieving durable peace are rapidly diminishing. It is for these reasons that collective and immediate international action is necessary in order to ameliorate the current situation at hand.



Figure 1: Country borders of South Sudan and Sudan

History and Description

Origins of the Conflict

Salva Kiir and Riek Machar served as the country’s first President and Vice President respectively. The arrangement was part of an effort to create a cohesive identity for the ethnically diverse nation, as Kiir and Machar come from different ethnic backgrounds. However, the relationship between the two men was fraught with hostility and animosity. Prior to South Sudan’s independence, both men had led separate rebel groups during the Second Sudanese Civil

War. Though these groups had sometimes allied together against the Sudanese government, it was widely known that they had also considered each other as adversaries.

In July 2013, Kiir dismissed Machar and his entire cabinet, purportedly to reduce the size of the government. In December of 2013, armed conflict broke out in Juba, South Sudan's capital, after Kiir accused Machar of staging a coup attempt. Since then, the fighting has largely been divided on the basis of ethnic lines; Kiir's national army, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has relied heavily on fighters from the Dinka ethnic group, whereas Machar's rebel forces, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) draws its forces from the Nuer ethnic group.

Effects on Civilians and the Humanitarian Response

Combatants on both sides of this conflict have inflicted numerous human rights atrocities on civilians, through mass murders, sexual assaults, and arbitrary detentions. Nearby countries and UN protection of civilian (PoC) sites have struggled to handle the rapid influx of fleeing civilians in what has become the largest refugee crisis in Africa. In February 2017, famine was formally declared in parts of the Unity State, with 100 000 people facing imminent starvation, and another million classified as being on the brink of famine (Figure 2).

While the food insecurity is partly attributable to climate change and abandoned fields, both sides of the conflict have also used civilian hunger as an instrument of war by actively restricting food access. One UN tally estimated that the government and rebel soldiers have rejected permits for planes carrying emergency food and medical aid, or denied access to entire cities, at least 80 times per month. In January 2016, 3.7 tonnes of food, which is enough to feed 220 000 people for a month, was stolen from a World Food Programme warehouse. Moreover, immediately following the declaration of famine, the South Sudanese government decided to increase the price of visas for aid workers from \$100 to \$10 000. UN officials have speculated that this move aimed to restrict aid intended for regions controlled by the opposition. With these challenges present, aid organizations have resorted to ineffective measures, such as air-dropping food, to prevent starvation amongst vulnerable civilian populations. As of January 2018, 4.8 million people remain in either crisis, emergency, or catastrophic levels of food insecurity.

Involvement and Criticism of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS)

UNMISS, a UN peacekeeping mission overseen by the Security Council, was established on the same day of South Sudan's founding, with the original mandate of supporting the new government in consolidating peace and strengthening governance institutions. Following the onset of the conflict, the mandate was extended and modified to focus on protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian assistance, and monitoring human rights abuses. The ultimate goal of this mission is to build durable peace, advance reconciliation efforts, and strengthen national cohesion within the country. Throughout the years, the strength of UNMISS was increased several times, from a force of 7 900 to a force of 14 000.

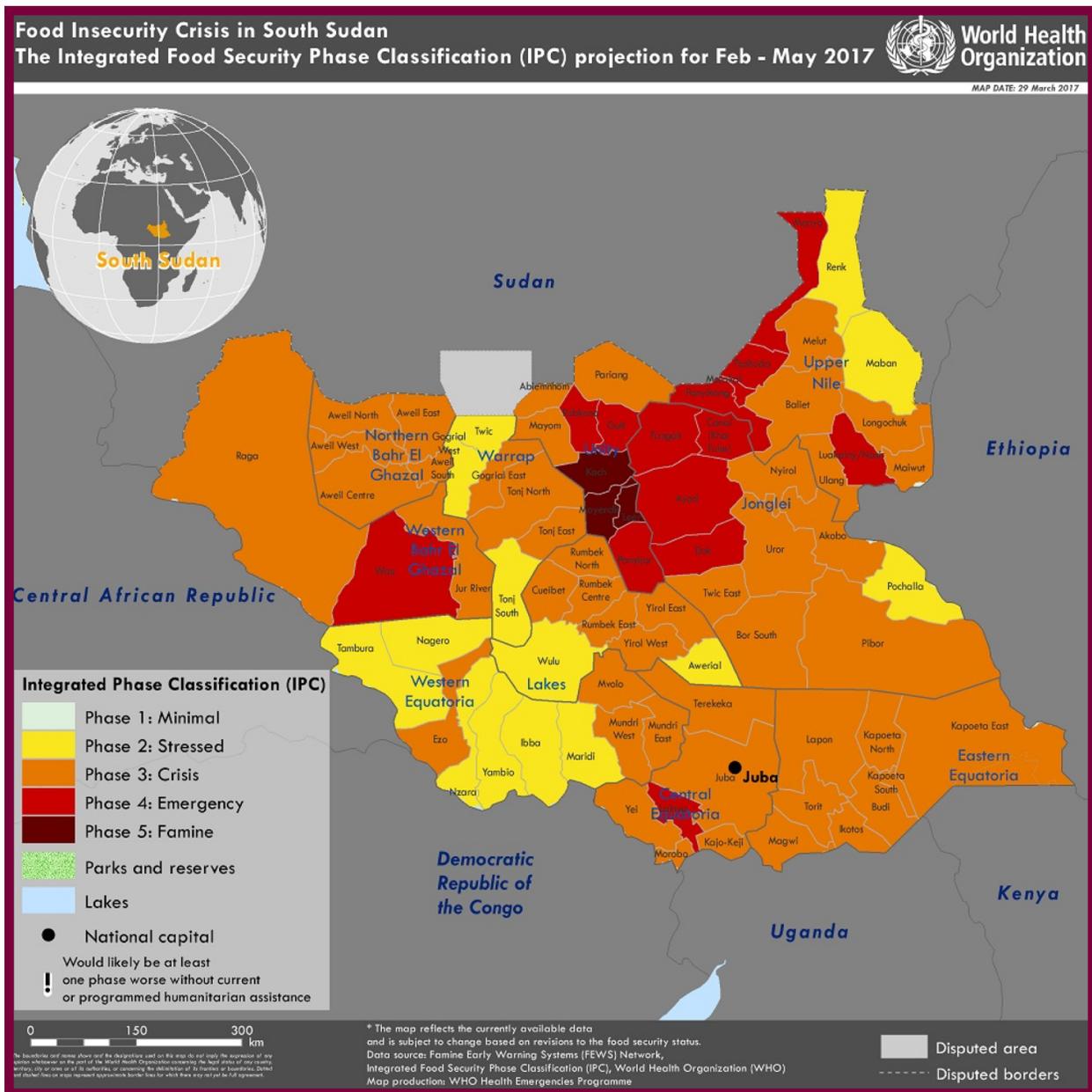


Figure 2: Food insecurity in South Sudan from February to June 2017.

UNMISS has faced criticism for their perceived inability to effectively carry out their mandate. For one, the 200 000 civilians currently housed at UN-run protection of civilian (PoC) sites reside in impoverished and crowded conditions, with overflowing latrines and frequent food shortages. Peacekeepers have also been unable to prevent violence within the camps, where members of different ethnic groups reside in tense proximity of one another. Inhabitants have taken advantage of the poorly guarded fences to smuggle in guns and weapons for combat within these PoC sites.

Additionally, UN peacekeepers have fled their posts on multiple occasions. For instance, in February of 2016, UN peacekeepers took more than 12 hours to intervene when armed government soldiers entered a PoC site in Malakal, resulting in at least 30 deaths and 123 injuries. An internal investigation later revealed that this delay had been caused by a “combination of inaction, abandonment of post, and refusal to engage.” During another attack in Juba, eyewitnesses reported that peacekeepers failed to defend the camp, instead firing tear gas at civilians to keep them from fleeing into the staff compound.

Concerns about the lack of professionalism and competence of peacekeepers are not unique to UNMISS. UN peacekeeper forces are comprised of troops voluntarily contributed by member states; as such, country allegiances and national loyalties do not easily disappear upon transferring under the command of the UN. As a senior UN official in Malakal observed, “no one wants to die for the UN.” Nonetheless, poorly performing troops are rarely dismissed, as it is often difficult to find replacements. Few higher-income countries with highly trained forces and advanced equipment are willing to contribute significant numbers of soldiers to UN missions. For instance, the US currently contributes a total of 56 personnel to peacekeeping missions. Indeed, after the Malakal incident, only two commanders were dismissed from their post.

Initial attempts at Reconciliation

Efforts at reconciliation and peace were facilitated by a trade bloc consisting of eight African nations known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as the UN, China, the European Union, the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and Norway. With the help of IGAD, the two sides reached ceasefire agreements on multiple occasions. Each collapsed within a few days, with both groups accusing one another of instigating hostilities. With further mediation by the aforementioned parties, a peace pact, known as the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS), was signed by the SPLA and the SPLM-IO (Figure 3). This agreement restored Riek Machar to vice-presidency, and established the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), which is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the terms of ARCSS.

Following the peace deal, the country remained in a state of tension. Juba remained militarized, and skirmishes continued to flare up. In October 2015, Kiir violated the peace deal through a series of strategic political maneuvers. These included increasing the number of South Sudanese states from 10 to 28, as well as appointing allies to newly-created positions of power without Machar’s consultation. This was perceived, by some, to be an attempt to dilute Machar’s political power and increase land held by the Dinka population. This, in turn, sparked boundary fights over which ethnic groups controlled certain regions. By July 2016, the country once again fell into civil conflict and Machar went into exile. From here, the war has only evolved in complexity, ultimately resulting in the opposition splintering into even more armed rebel groups.

Recent Developments

As the risk of genocide grew, and as Kiir repeatedly refused to cooperate with a regional protection force sent by the UN, several members of the Security Council, as well as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, pushed for the Security Council to approve an arms embargo

and implement targeted sanctions. These actions, they acknowledged, would not completely resolve the conflict, but would at least diminish the scope and intensity of the violence.

On December 23rd 2016, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution introduced by the United States (US), which called for the implementation of an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on three South Sudanese officials, including Machar. The timing of the vote was unfortunate for its proponents, given that Kiir had announced just nine days before that he was initiating the process of a National Dialogue to “consolidate peace [...] and bring people together.” The draft resolution was ultimately defeated. In a debrief session following the vote, proponents of the measure warned that the lack of accountability measures like sanctions would only lead to further tragedy. Members who had abstained criticized the draft resolution as being “senseless” and “counterproductive”, referring to Kiir’s decision to begin a National Dialogue as evidence that he was demonstrating the political will to work towards peace. Passing the measure, they argued, would have weakened the relationship between the Security Council and the South Sudanese government by communicating a lack of trust.

As the National Dialogue process began, the government continued its military campaign and scored a series of victories against the rebel forces. These events prompted worry that the government was not sufficiently incentivized to facilitate a genuine and inclusive reconciliation through the National Dialogue, given that it believed that it was winning the war. Testimonies from the Commission of Human Rights in South Sudan and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations casted further doubts that the National Dialogue would be productive and inclusive. Specifically, they noted that the country was locked in a pervasive climate of fear, and that significant opposition groups had continually refused to join the discussion.

Consequently, during the latter half of 2017, IGAD placed their efforts on revitalizing the peacemaking process by convening the High Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF). The HLRF presented another opportunity through which parties could discuss the means of reaching a permanent ceasefire and restoring democratic processes. This initiative was strongly supported by the Security Council as well as the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. A presidential statement released on December 14th 2017 by all 15 members of the Council warned that the HRLF was the last opportunity for the parties of the conflict to implement ARCSS and achieve sustainable peace before the Security Council would actively execute severe punishments and ramifications for the guilty parties involved.

The HLRF ran from December 18th to 22nd 2017, involving the original parties from the ARCSS, opposition groups that had formed after the temporary truce, and representatives from refugee communities. On December 21st, the parties signed an agreement to cease all hostile military actions by December 24th, to protect civilians, and to remove barriers to humanitarian aid. The HLRF is expected to reconvene in February 2018 to discuss future governance and elections arrangements.

However, since the signing of the agreement, fighting has broken out several times, with both sides once again blaming the other for violating the agreement. 34 people were killed in the first three days of 2018 alone. These developments have been strongly condemned internationally, drawing warnings from IGAD, the US, the UK, and Norway that they intend to hold the

perpetrators of such acts responsible for their misconduct. Whether the fighting will resolve and the ceasefire restored remains to be seen.

Bloc Analysis

United States

The US had been a strong supporter of the region's bid for independence during its conflict with the Sudanese government, and thus holds a particular interest in South Sudan's success. Since its independence, South Sudan has consistently ranked among the top recipients of US foreign aid.

However, relations between the two countries soured following the onset of conflict. South Sudan's continual failure to maintain domestic peace led the US to pursue implementing an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on key players of the conflict. Although the Council eventually rejected the draft resolution introduced in December 2016, the US has continued to be a vocal proponent for these measures, arguing that accountability measures are essential to restore and uphold peace. Eventually, in September 2017, the US Department of Treasury placed its own sanctions on several close associates of Kiir for derailing the peace process and abusing human rights. The following month, Nikki Haley, the US Ambassador to the UN, met with Kiir and threatened to withdraw all financial support if he did not work towards ameliorating the situation. The effectiveness of this warning is still unclear. One cabinet minister expressed a lack of concern about the potential loss of funds, stating "Maybe Russia will come in, or China will come in. Someone will fill their space."

Russian Federation

Though Russia had considered imposing an arms embargo on South Sudan following the re-emergence of violence in July 2016, it went on to oppose the usage of arm embargoes or targeted sanctions on South Sudanese officials to stem fighting. It abstained from voting on the draft resolution put forth by the US in December 2016, under the stance that pursuing such policies would only exacerbate the crisis, and that such measures have failed to have a positive effect in other similar situations in the past. Rather, the delegation expressed the belief that efforts should focus on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Sudan

Since the conclusion of the Second Sudanese War, Sudan continues to have poor relations with its former territory. With the secession of South Sudan, the country lost approximately 75% of its crude oil production, destabilizing its economy. The two countries came close to war following a border dispute over the Abyei region, a small territory sandwiched between the two countries. However, relations improved after Kiir and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir signed an agreement to divide the income generated by oil production.

Sudan is also a member state of IGAD, a crucial player in revitalizing South Sudan's peace process. The trading bloc has consistently opposed imposing an arms embargo and pursuing sanctions. Critics have challenged IGAD's ability to impartially facilitate the peace process.

Specifically, critics observed that certain member states were taking advantage of IGAD's role as a mediator to selectively advance their own political and economic interests. Currently, the two countries share tense relations. Both governments have accused each other of helping insurgents, with Kiir alleging that Sudan is actively aiding Machar by providing him with weapons.

Conclusion

Despite recent progress, there are considerable doubts as to whether the results of the HRLF agreement will last, especially given the country's inability to maintain previous ceasefires. The Council remains divided on whether the prospects of achieving peace would be improved by pursuing punitive measures against those who undermine the peace process, as well as what form those punitive measures should take. In addition to restoring peace and security, South Sudan must also address the devastating consequences of the conflict, including the mass displacement of its people, the increased food insecurity and disease burden, and its devastated economy. The future stability of South Sudan will be dictated by the ability of the country to navigate these challenges, as well as the ability of the international community to support reconstructive efforts.

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Topic #2: The Rohingya Crisis

"A genocide begins with the killing of one man — not for what he has done, but because of who he is. A campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' begins with one neighbour turning on another. Poverty begins when even one child is denied his or her fundamental right to education. What begins with the failure to uphold the dignity of one life, all too often ends with a calamity for entire nations." - Kofi Annan, Nobel lecture 2001

Introduction

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is home to an incredibly diverse population, with 135 officially recognized ethnic groups. One ethnic group, the Rohingya people, remains unrecognized by the Burmese government, and has often been described as the most persecuted minority in the world. Over the past year, the international community has grown increasingly alarmed at the escalating violence being inflicted upon the Rohingya by Myanmar's military forces, who appear to be driving the people from their homes into neighbouring countries. The UN human rights chief has called the military's actions "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing." As the Burmese government continues to deny these accusations, and the number of refugees carries on increasing, pressure grows on the Security Council to decide on effective methods of intervention in order to prevent a possible genocide.

History and Description

The state of Rakhine (outlined below in red) is home to approximately 3.2 million people, many of whom are part of the Rohingya ethnic group. These 1.1 million people have been denied citizenship and the right to vote in Myanmar. According to Myanmar state reports, three police posts in northern Rakhine were overrun by armed attackers, believed to belong to the mostly stateless Rohingya Muslim group. The attackers reportedly looted weapons and ammunition. Since then, clashes between insurgents and the military have continued. Thousands of deaths have been reported, with the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) claiming responsibility for many major attacks. ARSA, previously known as Harakah al-Yaqin, appears to be responsible for instigating many of the attacks that have spawned this potent insurgency.

The treatment of the Muslim Rohingya has emerged as a highly contentious human rights issue, drawing the attention of the international community. The systematic denial of citizenship to this minority group in a primarily Buddhist country is, in itself, a matter that has been condemned by various countries such as Malaysia and Bangladesh (which has acted as a refuge for the Rohingya), as well as organizations such as Amnesty International and the US Department of State. The situation has drawn extreme criticism from UN experts, who cited possible "crimes against humanity." The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) have questioned the actions of the Myanmar authorities, and called on them to investigate and prosecute violence in

the northern Rakhine state. They issued a joint statement that they were “... particularly worried about the fate of Rohingya women and children subject to serious violations of their human rights, including killings, rape and forced displacement.”

The mass displacement of the affected populations is undoubtedly an incredibly pressing issue. Reports have stated that over 836,000 people have been displaced from Rakhine and sought refuge in neighboring Bangladesh. There are reports of 345 villages having been burned to the ground, as mapped on this interactive graphic created by Reuters (see QR Code). A Rohingya monitoring group – the Arakan Project – has stated that a major concern is the fate of villagers who have been trapped inside a section of their village and surrounded by armed Rakhine vigilantes. “We are running for our lives,” said one of the Zay Di Pyin’s Rohingya villagers reached by telephone, adding that houses had been set on fire. The government reports claimed that the village had been burned down but blamed the fire on the Rohingya themselves.

Concerns have been raised regarding the health and security of the displaced refugees as well. Many of the displaced people have settled in the Cox’s Bazar area in Bangladesh. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has drilled a total of 374 tube wells and installed almost 5000 latrines in these settlements and host communities. The World Health Organization (WHO) also discovered that over 60% of water sources tested in the area had been contaminated with E.coli, potentially due to shallow wells being located close to latrines. Security concerns are also growing, as the settlements have become a target for human traffickers.

The international community has, in many ways, condemned the actions of Myanmar. The United Nations’ independent investigator called for international pressure on China and Russia to encourage them to oppose the human rights violations occurring within the country. However, neither China nor Russia has joined the United States, the European Union, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in condemning the crackdown that led to the mass exodus. The Govt. of Myanmar also expressed great sadness at the sanctions placed on them by the United States. They stated that the sanctions were based on “unreliable accusations without evidence.” Myanmar also barred the UN human rights investigator who made the above statement from



Figure 3: The aggression towards the Rohingya people has forced many to flee their homeland of the Rakhine State to the Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh.



Figure 4: A QR Code that leads you to an interactive graphic for burned villages in Rakhine.

visiting the country for the rest of her tenure, though she was due to visit Myanmar in January to assess the situation. The government stated that her visit suggested something “terribly awful” was taking place in the country.

Bloc Analysis

The US, the United Kingdom & France

The region of Myanmar operated as a British colony from 1824 to 1948. Anti-British sentiment was strong following Myanmar’s independence, and relations with many Western nations only worsened during its military regime. Following democratic reforms, sanctions were lifted, and diplomatic relations restored.

As the current situation progressed, these member states withdrew political and economic support from the country and began considering sanctions and arms embargoes. Representatives from all three countries have repeatedly used terms like “ethnic cleansing”, thereby emphasizing the role of the Burmese government and military in precipitating the crisis. Unlike other member states, these countries have also pushed for the Council to take concrete actions, such as demanding that UN human rights officials have full access to the Rakhine state in order to fully investigate the human rights violations taking place. In October 2017, France and the United Kingdom drafted a resolution that would eventually be released a month later in the form of a presidential statement.

China & Russian Federation

While all members of the Security Council have expressed concern about Myanmar’s state of chaos, China and Russia have been cautious to support any definitive actions to ameliorate the situation. During Council sessions, China stated on several occasions that the issue is rooted in complex historical, ethnic and religious factors, arguing that stable and long-lasting peace can only be reached by supporting the Burmese government’s efforts. Russia has also heavily emphasized ARSA’s role in invoking the state of violence. Representatives from both countries have also recommended that the international community refrain from using the labels “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing,” questioning both their applicability to the situation, and cautioning that doing so would only aggravate the conflict.

More recently, in October 2017, both delegations were unwilling to engage in drafting a resolution, stating that the timing was not right for a Council outcome given Myanmar’s recent progress in pursuing peace. Following extensive negotiations with China, Council members agreed to release a presidential statement instead, as such a statement backed by all Council members would send a much stronger, collective message than a vetoed resolution. As per China’s requests, the statement did not refer to recommendations of the Advisory Commission on the Rakhine State concerning statelessness and citizenship law.

As the United Kingdom and the United States withdraw their foreign aid and consider enacting sanctions, China has taken advantage of this opportunity to cultivate stronger diplomatic and economic ties with Myanmar. This is perhaps partly motivated by a desire to access Myanmar's long coastline, which offers a strategic outlet to the Indian Ocean.

Challenges

To ensure full accountability, CEDAW and CRC have called on the Government of Myanmar to fully cooperate with the fact-finding mission established by the UN Human Rights Council, so it can conduct thorough and independent investigations. The Security Council needs to debate on the extent to which its involvement is required. The statements of the Human Rights Council must be taken into account, for example U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini's statement that the violence is "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing." Doing so will enable a thorough and just approach to identifying the root causes and key aspects of the situation to be addressed by the international community.

Conclusion

As such, in order to comprehensively address all aspects of the crisis, it remains clear that the Security Council must determine how to establish a human rights monitoring mechanism within Myanmar; such a task may remain challenging, given the Burmese government's active attempts to prevent human rights officials from entering the country. Attention must also be given to facilitating widespread humanitarian aid access, and mediating negotiations on a framework for the voluntary return of displaced populations. The Council should also focus discussion on whether punitive measures like targeted sanctions are appropriate for the current situation. Finally, in considering perhaps the most difficult question of all – how should the international community address the root cause of the crisis at hand: ethnic hatred?

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Topic #3: Civil Unrest in Venezuela

"A revolution is an idea which has found its bayonets."
- Napoleon Bonaparte

Introduction

Over the course of the past three years, Venezuela has descended into a state of socioeconomic turmoil. This has been characterized by a series of protests that have taken place in Caracas since April 2017, with tension and subsequent violence both rising. The government and the opposition have leveled numerous accusations against each other, with the govt. claiming that Venezuela's oil reserves have boosted the economy and benefited the general populace, greatly reducing poverty. The opposition, however, claims that the United Socialist Party (PSUV) has put in place elitist policies at the expense of the poor. Some of the major issues of contention include hyperinflation, food shortage, slowing oil output, lack of healthcare, crime, and poverty.

History & Description

Protests

In January 2016 the Venezuelan Supreme Court suspended the election of four legislators, three of whom were enrolled with the current government's opposition party. The opposition accused the court of attempting to strip them of their supermajority, and went on to swear in the three legislators into the National Assembly. The Supreme Court responded to this by ruling that the entire National Assembly was in contempt, thus nullifying any of its decisions. What followed was a deadlock between the Supreme Court and the National Assembly which continued when the court suspended a recall referendum against President Maduro and postponed regional elections.

On March 30, 2017 the Supreme Court ruled that it would take over Congress' legislative powers after the National Assembly refused to approve a bill. Protestors took to the streets of Caracas the next day to protest this move, and although the court reversed its decision on April 1, protests continued for over three months, becoming increasingly violent. The protestors were vocalizing their disagreement with Nicolás Maduro's government in light of the suffocating situation in the country. In December 2017, President Maduro announced that the country's main opposition parties would be banned from taking part in the next year's presidential elections. "The parties that did not participate today, which boycotted the elections, cannot participate anymore," Maduro stated recently. "That's the criteria laid out legally by the Constituent Assembly and as the head of state, I support that."

President Maduro called for the formation of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution in May 2017, in which members of the assembly would not be openly elected. The National Electoral Council (CNE) officially approved the President's proposal, with elections to be held in late July. These actions were condemned by both the Venezuelan opposition party and members of the international community. The voting took place on July 30, 2017. Conflicting reports exist regarding turnout – the CNE claims that approximately 8 million people voted, but these numbers have been disputed. One report states that only 3.7 million people had voted an hour and a half before voting closed. This discrepancy has led to doubt regarding the legitimacy of the elections.

Venezuelan Economy

The past several years have seen Venezuela's economy falter in an unprecedented manner. In 2014, inflation was 68.5% according to the central bank, rising to 800% in 2016, while the GDP shrunk 18.6%. President Nicolas Maduro claimed that "In a year we have raised minimum wage five times, and I say today that (those increases) are well above 2016 inflation." The minimum wage, however, increased by 454% in 2016. This disparity could be linked to President Maduro's claim that "opposition-linked businesses have artificially created economic problems," and that "the inflation is a result of speculative price-gouging by unscrupulous capitalists." This is accompanied by dwindling national reserves and mounting debt. External debt has been estimated at over \$140 billion USD, of which \$60 billion USD is in bonds. National reserves are estimated at \$9.6 billion USD as of November 2017. After making a payment of \$1.1B, Maduro decreed a refinancing and restructuring of external debt to prevent the nation from defaulting. (All figures are estimated)

A large portion of the debt is held by bondholders in the United States of America. The situation is made increasingly complicated by the economic sanctions imposed by the US against many of Venezuela's government officials and any bonds issued by the Government of Venezuela. These sanctions make restructuring or refinancing the debt a complicated matter, as some of Venezuela's prominent debt negotiators are unable to enter the US to negotiate with the debtholders.

The nation is rich in natural resources, with Venezuela possessing the largest proven oil reserves in the world, totaling 302 billion barrels as of 2016. At today's market price, this is equivalent to \$18,725 billion USD. As such, oil revenue accounts for 95% of Venezuela's export earnings. Despite this, Venezuela has a shrinking economy, due in part to declining oil production, which hit a 28-year low in November 2017. This is a primary reason for the ongoing protests, as the company responsible for producing, refining, and exporting oil and natural gas is the state-run Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA). Angry citizens blame the government for its role in declining oil production, the shrinking economy, and hyperinflation.

These combined factors have fueled the already widespread poverty within the nation. An estimated 48% of Venezuelans suffered privation in 1998 when the current government, the

United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) came into power. That estimate is now at 82% according to the Venezuela Living Conditions Survey (ENCOVI) 2016. The government has fixed the exchange rate at 2640 bolivars per dollar as of June 2017, but the rate for priority supplies such as food and medicine is 10 bolivars per dollar. The special rate was put in place to ensure that more people would have access to basic amenities, but the measure has met limited success due to lack of supply.

Venezuelan Society

The economic conditions provide a means of quantitative measurement for the deteriorating quality of life in Venezuela. Data from ENCOVI 2016 shows that 74.3% of the population lost an average of 8.7 kilos of weight due to scarcity of food, with 9.6 million Venezuelans consuming two or fewer meals per day. The survey also found that 93% of Venezuelans don't have enough money to cover their food expenses. These figures have no guarantee of accuracy, but are the only point of data as there is no government census.



Figure 5: A supermarket in Caracas, Venezuela

Crime is also on a rise, reaching an all-time high of 28,479 violent deaths in 2016, and an estimated 91.8 violent deaths per hundred thousand inhabitants. Venezuela's public health system is unable to keep up with the added toll due to widespread poverty and violence; this is particularly concerning given the economic issues that make equipment and imported medicine premium commodities in the country.

"Most of the time patients die because their families are out of the hospital looking for the treatments and they don't come at a time we can use the treatment, when they bring the treatment, the patient's already dying," said Orfram Moreno, a doctor working in a public hospital in Merida. The worsening conditions may necessitate humanitarian aid, and the UN must decide on a course of action.

Bloc Analysis

The progression of the conflict has seen the formation of two primary blocs – those who approve of the government's actions, and those who condemn them. The latter includes twenty members of the Organization of American States (OAS) who backed a resolution condemning President Maduro's plans to convene a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution. Venezuela was to be the 35th member of the OAS, but announced its plans to pull out of the hemispheric bloc, and was absent for the rest of the meeting. Venezuela's foreign minister also stated that, "We don't recognize this meeting nor do we recognize the resolutions that come from it." Notable

sponsors of the resolution were the United States of America, Guyana, and Mexico. However, the resolution failed to achieve a 2/3rd majority by only 3 votes. St. Vincent and Grenadines, Dominica, St. Christopher and Nevis, Nicaragua and Bolivia all voted against the motion, while 8 other member states abstained.

The European Union stated in a press release that it doesn't recognize the Constituent Assembly due to doubts about its legitimacy. Nations such as Argentina, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom similarly condemned the vote. The People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), among others, criticized Venezuela's opposition, stating that the elections were held smoothly. They urged a peaceful solution within the legal framework to prevent further economic pressure on Caracas.

Challenges

The main challenges in this debate lie in deciding the extent to which the UN can intervene in Venezuela without infringing on its sovereignty. Are humanitarian efforts necessary to counteract the social distress and suffering of the Venezuelan people? To what extent can the UN or its member states intervene to stabilize the region? If Venezuela defaults on its loans, it could create an opportunity for the bondholders to seize control of its copious oil reserves, further upsetting the region and any attempt to get the economy back on track. What will the stance of the committee be regarding President Maduro's plans to create a new constitution?

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