



LOUISIANA YOUTH & GOVERNMENT

Louisiana Model United Nations 2022 Topics

General Assembly Topics

General Assembly Topic 1

Endangered Species and Biodiversity

The growing number of endangered species is a major world problem that will worsen if not addressed. According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), there are over 30,000 endangered animals, and over 25% of all mammals are endangered. According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the current extinction rate is over 1,000 times greater than normal rates. The UN has called the decline of nature “unprecedented”.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of organisms of a particular environment. High biodiversity levels are particularly important because they boost the productivity of an ecosystem. Each organism in an environment plays an important role by helping to ensure that certain specific and necessary functions are carried out within an ecosystem, keeping it diverse and healthy.

A significant contributing factor to the endangerment of species, and the subsequent decline in biodiversity, is the loss of natural habitats, such as forests, ponds, marshes, and deserts. Today, the loss of these natural habitats is largely due to human activity, such as deforestation. Notably, the deforestation crisis is caused by the expansion of agricultural areas, extensive timber harvesting, and the use of forest tree wood as fuel. Deforestation results in the loss of natural habitats for land animals, which leads to their endangerment. For example, there are predictions that Australia will lose 7.4 million acres to deforestation in the next 10 years alone.

Invasive species are organisms not native to a specific area that overpopulate and negatively affect their new environment. Invasive species can be animals, plants, or other living organisms, such as microbes. They can be introduced to environments through ships, accidental release, and most frequently, human action. These species can drive native plants and animals to extinction, reducing the biodiversity of the native ecosystem, and completely altering natural habitats. For example, an invasive species nicknamed “Killer Algae” has taken over the Mediterranean Sea, suppressing fish populations and inflicting millions of dollars of damages.

Overfishing is another major problem in the world today that leads to the endangerment of species. The WWF estimates that the global fishing fleet is 2.5 times larger than what the ocean can sustainably support, and over 75% of the world’s fisheries have been overexploited or depleted. Some forms of overfishing, such as sharks for shark fin soup, have disrupted entire marine ecosystems. Additionally, bottom trawling nets dragged across the ocean floor have led to the unintentional catching and harming of threatened populations, like sea turtles. Overfishing, and the resulting depletion and endangerment of fish, can also threaten the food security and livelihood of coastal fishing economies. Human interaction with marine natural resources has significantly contributed to the degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems, negatively affecting marine populations and biodiversity.

According to the World Animal Foundation, industrial agriculture is the leading cause of species extinction, habitat destruction, ocean dead zones, and accounts for 75% of all global deforestation. It takes 20 times more land to produce meat than to produce an equivalent

caloric amount of vegetables - meaning that significantly more land must be cleared to feed the animals. This further contributes to the deforestation crisis and loss of biodiversity.

In addition, to produce massive amounts of crops, the industrialized agricultural system partakes in seemingly unsustainable practices, including monoculture (overwhelming emphasis on just a few crops), and overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Monoculturalism fails to support the rich range of life that diverse farms need, which leads to poor biodiversity levels. The overuse of chemical pesticides and fertilizers leads to pesticide drift, secondary poisoning, and groundwater contamination, which greatly hurts wildlife populations.

What endangered species is your country home to? How does your country protect the natural habitats of endangered species, and could it improve upon these efforts? Are invasive species a significant challenge to the biodiversity of your country? Could your country reform its fishing and agricultural practices to better protect biodiversity?

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General Assembly Topic 2

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a lack of consistent access to enough food for a healthy lifestyle. It is a problem in areas greatly affected by climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and tends to be greatly exacerbated in areas affected by extreme racial, social, and economical inequalities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 118 million more people faced hunger than in 2019. These all play a role in the issue that is Global Food Insecurity. As there is no clear end to food insecurity, it is up to countries around the world to take action against this lack of access.

A goal for countries to combat this issue could be to invest more money into their agricultural industry to boost food production and nutrition. According to the "Role of Agriculture in Ensuring Food Security" published in 2020, investment in the agricultural sector can greatly improve food security and stability of supplies. It is seemingly necessary to increase agriculture production by 60-70% to provide enough food for entire populations in the upcoming 30 years. Increased funds can enhance the production of staple crops for domestic consumption and improve food security indirectly through rising rural incomes - improving access to more healthy and nutritious diets. Investment in agricultural research, as well, can improve available technologies and facilitate the creation of new ones, allowing for more efficient forms of agriculture and higher crop yields.

With a decrease in food security and available resources, the number of rising food deserts in UN countries is alarming. Food deserts, defined by the UN, are "areas that have limited access to affordable and nutritious food." Food pricing is regarded as a major cause of obesity rates worldwide because the price of a calorie is shown to be substantially cheaper in unhealthy foods. This disparity in food prices between unhealthy and healthy foods creates an appeal for cheaper diets, which tend to add up to eating less healthy foods.

Malnourishment is particularly damaging to children, as it can cause stunting, wasting, and delayed development. The World Health Organization's Child Growth Standards defines stunting as any child who falls beneath the median height-for-age. The impacts of stunting on child development are largely considered to be irreversible and can have severe impacts on cognitive and physical development. Stunting is especially prevalent in developing countries with little to no access to nutritional foods. Data from the Demographic and Health Surveys Program shows that rates of stunting are high in families where the mother has a lower education level, as well. Wasting is defined as being dangerously thin for one's height and occurs in children exposed to acute food shortages or disease. Wasting is highest in areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, India, and Sri Lanka, which have the most limited access to nutritional foods. Access to healthcare also plays a part in the prevalence of these effects.

Food stamps are a form of defense against malnourishment for many families; however, there is contention over the growing accessibility of food stamps, with opponents claiming that the rules are too relaxed and allow for abuse of the program, while proponents claim that the growing leniency has made the program more cost-efficient. The usage of anti-fraud technology such as biometric technology is often used to reduce fraud. The usage of biometric technology can increase the costs of food stamps, and thus decrease participation, while the absence of biometric technology could leave the system more susceptible to fraud. Also, while food stamps

can combat malnourishment, the types of food available through the program may be primarily unhealthy, which can have a negative impact on citizens' health.

Does your country have a food equity issue? What steps has your country, if any, taken to combat food insecurity? Does your country provide enough food to lead a healthy lifestyle to those living below the poverty line? Does your country have some form of food stamps or government service to address food insecurity? If applicable, what has your country done to help other countries struggling with food insecurity?

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General Assembly Topic 3 Global Internet Access & Censorship

Over half of the world today does not have access to the internet. This is due to a variety of reasons, including lack of infrastructure, especially in low-income rural areas, and lack of digital literacy education. The lack of internet access leads to a disconnect from current events and an inability to integrate with the digitized economy.

In today's digital age, many people rely on access to the internet for nearly every part of their day-to-day lives; however, according to the World Economic Forum, almost 3.7 billion people worldwide have no internet access. Most people without internet access are located in developing countries. Without access to the internet, people do not have access to the most up-to-date current events, local resources, or are at a disadvantage at their school or jobs, due to the growing integration of digitalization academically and professionally. During COVID-19, lack of information about prevention techniques, or access to the vaccine, can exacerbate the lasting impact of the pandemic. In addition, according to UNICEF, two-thirds of the world's school-aged children lack broadband access, meaning that they do not have ready access to their school, if virtual. Of these school-aged children, only 16% of those from low-income households have access to the internet. This statistic can be assumed to be lower for women since according to UNESCO, women are less likely to have access to the internet. Lack of internet access also contributes to global income inequality. According to the International Monetary Fund, there is a positive direct correlation between the percentage of people who have access to the internet and a country's per capita growth.

There are four main factors that contribute to the lack of internet access in developing countries. Perhaps the most important of these is the lack of funding and proper infrastructure. Since many people who don't have broadband access live in low-income rural areas, they cannot afford the necessary technology required to access the internet. Moreover, many of these communities lack the grid electricity necessary to support broadband. Another factor that contributes to the lack of internet access is the lack of digital literacy in many developing countries due to underfunded education systems.

In 2016, the United Nations declared internet access a right due to countries such as Belgium, Nigeria, and Paraguay leading the charge. Although the necessity of internet access is a relatively recent issue, countries such as the United States, China, and India represent over one billion internet users. African countries, such as Gabon, are importing over 900 km of fiber optic cables in conjunction with their efforts to provide solar energy nationally. Ethiopia, Brazil, and Cuba are some countries that have not fully entered the digital age and may require assistance in furthering their efforts.

How many citizens in your country have broadband and internet access? What obstacles are there to internet access in your country? What steps is your country taking to increase access to the internet? How has your current status of internet access impacted your country?

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Eco/Soc Topics

Eco/Soc Topic 1

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels, and anyone can be a victim of domestic violence, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or economic class. Domestic abuse also encompasses topics such as reproductive coercion, digital abuse, stalking, child marriage, family abuse, intimate partner violence, family economic extortion, and gender-based discrimination.

Domestic abuse is considered significantly worse in certain parts of the world and specific communities, such as for people who are disabled, those who fall into the LGBTQIA+ community, and people of color in predominantly white communities. Abusers often target more vulnerable people that are members of minority communities, have less of an ability to seek help from the authorities or other protective agencies, and are less likely to be believed if they were to report domestic abuse.

Globally, before the COVID-19 pandemic even began, 1 in 3 or approximately 243 million women, had experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) says that domestic violence was already one of the greatest human rights violations before COVID-19, but it has greatly increased since then. Factors like monetary shortfalls, quarantined isolation with abusers, limited travel, and deserted public spaces have exacerbated this issue worldwide. Data from individual countries have shown a sharp uptick in reporting of domestic abuse, as well. Singapore and Cyprus have both seen an increase of over 30% in the number of calls picked up by their national abuse hotlines. France has seen a 35% increase in domestic violence cases since the lockdowns in March of 2020. In the United Kingdom, visits, emails, and calls to the national domestic violence charity, Respect, have increased by over 581%.

In addition to partner-based violence and abuse, child marriage has also experienced a severe increase in incidence. Although over 25 million child marriages have been prevented in the past 5 years, through efforts such as the World Health Organization's strengthening of medical support for children and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's programs, due to the pandemic, around 12 million child marriages are predicted to happen in 2022. Children who marry are more likely to drop out of school, experience mental health problems, unwanted pregnancy, pregnancy-based mortality, and domestic abuse. Due to COVID-19, job losses and increased economic insecurity forced families to marry their daughters to ease financial burdens, specifically in countries like Sub-Saharan Africa. Worldwide school closures, hospitals being at capacity, and economic crises have only perpetuated this issue. In countries where child marriage is common, such as Niger, the Central African Republic, Chad, Bangladesh, Mali, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mozambique, and India; child marriages have risen exponentially.

Other types of domestic abuse that have risen in prevalence in recent years are both digital and financial abuse. Digital abuse is defined as the broad category of any abuses concerning a partner's digital presence. This ranges from going through a partner's phone and reading confidential text messages, monitoring their browsing history, withholding access to communication devices a partner might use to contact their family or friends, or using social networking to bully, harass, stalk or intimidate a partner. As cellular communications have become more common across the world, so has digital abuse.

Financial abuse has also become more and more common with rising technology. Financial abuse is defined as withholding, stealing, or restricting a partner's use of their monetary funds. This can be exploited by manipulating a partner's lack of financial literacy, hiding or restricting access to joint accounts, or giving the partner an "allowance". It can also manifest as the abuser restricting the employment or ability of the partner to make their own money, often through forbidding them from working outside of the home, stalking their partner at their workplace, forcing their partner to miss or be late for work, withholding transportation to a job, and interfering with a partner's attempts to further their education or get a promotion. Once an abuser limits access to finances, it is considerably harder for a partner to leave.

Some questions for your country to consider are: Do you have pre-existing programs that deal with domestic abuse, and could they be successfully applied to other countries? Has the pandemic drastically affected domestic abuse in your country, and if so, what possible solutions could you offer to reduce it? Is child marriage a socially or religiously acceptable practice in your country? What can the United Nations do to lessen domestic abuse across the globe?

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Eco/Soc Topic 2

The Impact of Vaccine Equity on Global Unemployment

Unemployment refers to the number of employable people actively searching for jobs, but are unsuccessful in securing one. The unemployment rate, a measurement that offers a glimpse into countries' economies, is calculated by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by the number of all currently employed individuals in the workforce. Many consider a "normal" global unemployment rate to be 4- 5%, which has increased to 6-7% in the past two years. The International Labor Office (ILO) states that global unemployment will reach 205 million people in 2022, which is a large increase from 187 million people in 2019. There was a large drop in working hours, due to the pandemic, in the past two years, amounting to the equivalent of 100 million full-time jobs in 2021. There are several main causes of unemployment, including but not limited to, limited job opportunities for rapidly growing populations, technological improvements taking over certain jobs, and lack of education creating a barrier for workers. A recent, major cause of unemployment is the COVID-19 global pandemic, exacerbated by the growing issue of global vaccine inequity.

Vaccine equity is defined as the equal allocation of vaccines across all countries, regardless of their economic or developmental status. Just over 1% of people in low-income countries have been vaccinated against COVID-19 whereas more than 50% of people in high-income countries have been vaccinated. According to the World Bank, at least 84% of all vaccination doses that have been administered have gone to people in high and upper-middle-income countries. In low-income countries, the percentage of administered doses is 0.3%. Europe and North America have over 80% of administered doses, South America has 59%, Asia has 54%, and Africa has less than 5%. The US paid for enough vaccines for twice its population and the UK paid for four times its population. Although vaccines are being made constantly, most of the doses have already been "pre-ordered" for developed nations.

Not only does the lack of affordable and accessible vaccines have a major impact on human health internationally, but it also has a profound mark on welfare and jobs. The World Economic Forum's study results show that if low-income nations had the same vaccination rates as more developed nations, \$38 billion would have been added to their forecasted 2021 GDP: a major economic benefit that could have improved unemployment rates. IMF studies show that developed nations in North America and Europe have a possibility of reaching their pre-COVID-19 GDP in the next year. If more vaccines are not made accessible soon, low-income countries would need to increase their healthcare spending by 30-60% to be able to vaccinate at least 70% of their population, which would be a significant economic strain. As more countries have access to and can administer the COVID-19 vaccines, more people can start returning to the workforce, helping to decrease the worsened unemployment rates caused by the pandemic.

When relating this topic to your own country, consider the following questions: How badly is your nation riddled with unemployment concerns; are most of your unemployment and economic problems stemming directly from COVID-19 or vaccine distributions? Is your country financially stable enough to afford the increases in healthcare spending needed to allocate vaccinations to more people? If not, what alternate route would your nation seek? Will your

nation stick to a more domestic plan to fix these problems or open up to a universal offer to help people of all nations, including your own?

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Eco/Soc Topic 3

Global Tax Evasion: The Pandora Papers

Tax Havens are places that have extremely low “effective” taxation rates for foreign investors, or in more colloquial terms, they offer financial secrecy to people who utilize them. Tax havens are utilized mainly by people who wish to keep their finances from being attached to their names, or wish to move their fortunes into offshore accounts. The most famous tax havens include the Cayman Islands, South Dakota, the British Virgin Islands, Switzerland, and Luxembourg. Tax havens collectively cost governments between \$500 billion and \$600 billion a year in lost corporate tax revenue through legal and not-so-legal avenues. Of that lost revenue, around \$200 billion is lost from low-income economies, meaning that less developed countries take a much larger hit than more powerful and developed countries. However, tax havens provide much more than tax escapes: they give an escape route from financial regulators, disclosure, and criminal liability. Because large corporations often use tax havens under duplicitous reasoning, the playing field becomes stacked against small or medium businesses, boosting monopolization.

After the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, governments came under pressure to close budget deficits and rebuild the economy. This led to the release of three major data leaks: the Panama Papers, the Paradise Papers, and the Luxembourg Leaks. These three reports revealed the use of tax havens for often nefarious purposes. In response, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a UN observer that sets the standard for most international tax matters, launched two projects: the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) and Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS). CRS was created to exchange financial information automatically across borders to help tax authorities track the offshore holdings of their taxpayers. However, the CRS contains many loopholes. For example, it allows people with a specific passport to claim residence in a tax haven, rather than their country of residence. An even bigger geographic loophole resides in the United States; under the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, the US collects information from overseas on its taxpayers, but it shares little information the other way - so nonresidents can hold assets in the country and maintain secrecy, making the United States a major tax haven. Despite these loopholes, the CRS was still successful, with the sharing of information on almost 47 million offshore accounts and creating over \$110 million in tax revenue. On the other hand, the BEPS project, which was aimed at multinational corporations, is mostly seen as a failed effort by the OECD.

Although these projects have begun to regulate international tax evasion, not much reform happened to the tax havens themselves. Many were still protected by their governments and never had actions taken to directly oppose them. Then, on October 3, 2021, another data leak occurred: the Pandora Papers, a conglomerate of 11.9 million financial records and other pieces of evidence gathered by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICJI). This data came from a team of 600 journalists, spanning 150 new outlets, and took two years to compile. The leaked records came from 14 global offshore services firms that had shell companies and other offshore accounts for clients often seeking to keep their financial activities hidden. The papers include information about the dealings of nearly three times as many current and former country leaders as any previous leak from offshore havens. The documents include information of more than 29,000 offshore accounts and companies,

spanning over 200 countries and territories - the largest among which are Russia, the United Kingdom, China, and Argentina.

Following the release of the Pandora Papers, the leaders of both Iceland and Pakistan resigned, protests against leaders whose information was leaked took place, and hundreds of international tax probes and criminal investigations were launched. The impact of the Pandora Papers could continue to topple world leaders because of the exposed activities these tax havens previously kept secret. Leaders at risk include the King of Jordan, the President of the Dominican Republic, the Prime Minister of Ivory Coast, the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, the President of Montenegro, the President of Kenya, the President of Ecuador, the former Chief Executive of Hong Kong, the ruler of Dubai and Prime Minister of the UAE, the President of Chile, the President of Ukraine, and the former Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. For the President of the Dominican Republic, Luis Abinader, and the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Andrej Babis, this is especially complicated by the ironic fact they ran on promises of transparency. The Pandora Papers also detail the finances of a random assortment of other influential figures, ranging from former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Colombian pop star Shakira, members of the Chinese elite, several members of Saudi Arabia's royal family, Elton John, Texas billionaire Robert T. Brockman, and former U.S. President Donald Trump. Many leaders listed have already committed tax fraud and money laundering, and according to these papers, many of them are hiding away money they have made under illegal circumstances. As stories continue to come to light, only one question remains: what do we do with this newly unearthed information?

Some questions for your country to consider: Are there tax havens in your country? Does your country have any laws in place that shield tax havens? Have any of your leaders been mentioned in the Pandora Papers? Does your country have any ways of preventing tax havens that can be applied on a global scale? What has been your response to the Pandora Papers? Does your country extend leniency or strict punishments regarding tax evasion?

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Security Topics

Security Topic 1

Reform the Security Council

The Security Council is designed to be the United Nation's premier body for crisis management. It is the only U.N. body authorized to pass resolutions that bind all the United Nations' 193 member countries, except for budgeting resolutions from other councils. It is well-regarded by the global community for its role in maintaining international peace and security. However, critics have suggested a number of reforms to be implemented within the Security Council. Structurally, the council remains majorly unchanged since the UN's founding in 1946, hence the accusations of "outdated" policy.

The Security Council is comprised of five permanent and ten elected members. Those five permanent members are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The permanent members can veto any resolution, while the council's elected members serve nonconsecutive terms and cannot veto. The permanent five's (P5) privileged status can be attributed to the end of World War II when the United States, Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom were the clear victors and thereby shaped the postwar political order. China and France were then inducted by those three countries. Members of the P5 have exercised veto power at varying degrees, but Russia, counting the years when the Soviet Union held its seat, has exercised it the most, blocking over one hundred resolutions since the council's founding.

The Security Council's non-permanent members are elected by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly, the main criterion for eligibility being the contribution "to maintenance of international peace and security," which is most often defined by financial contributions to peacekeeping projects, or leadership on matters of security that are likely to appear before the council. A second consideration, "equitable geographical distribution," gave rise to the regional groups that have been used since the 1965 elections. These consist of three seats for the African group, two for the Asia-Pacific Group, one for the Eastern European group, one for the Latin American and Caribbean group, and two for the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). An Arab seat alternates between the African and Asian blocs via an informal agreement.

Outside organs also support the council's mission. These are most commonly ad hoc committees - committees formed for a limited period of time - which can address issues from counterterrorism and weaponry to more specific regional conflicts.

The Security Council's reliability suffers due to the lack of international representation in Africa and Latin America, as well as India, a country that holds almost 18% of the world's population. The veto power among the permanent members has consistently disrupted peacekeeping actions, specifically China and Russia vetoing resolutions regarding maintenance in the Middle East. It is primarily China's stance on the UNSC that has kept reform at a standstill.

Keep in mind that this reform is regarding the larger policies of the United Nations Security Council and is not limited to the practices of our Model UN Security Council. Ask yourself: How does your country feel about its current position in the Security Council? How

does your country feel about the larger policies of the Security Council? How does your country feel about the privileges awarded to P5 countries? Should the criteria for membership be changed in any way? Are all areas fairly represented by the current regional allocations? What practices of the Security Council Should be reformed? What should the Security Council do to prevent internal corruption?

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Security Topic 2 The Afghan Conflict

The conflict in Afghanistan has reentered the media spotlight recently due to the Taliban's regained power. Attacks by the Taliban and other armed groups have deliberately targeted civilians and civilian objects in violation of international humanitarian law. Sites that have been targeted include maternity hospitals and educational institutions, which are telling of the specific violence that has met women and children in Afghanistan. Other forces in Afghanistan, like the United States military and NATO allies, have also contributed to conflict that has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions.

The Taliban is a major party in the Afghan conflict. The Taliban translates to "students" in Pashto. The group emerged in the 1990s in Northern Pakistan after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, who were mostly funded by Saudi Arabian powers preaching anti-Shia sentiments. The promise made by the Taliban was to restore peace and security in Pashtun areas and institute a harsher version of Sharia, or Islamic Law, once in power.

The Taliban extended its influence after its founding. In September 1995, they captured the province of Herat, bordering Iran, and a year later captured Kabul, overthrowing the regime of President Burhanuddin Rabbani. Rabbani was one of the founding fathers of the Afghan mujahideen - the ruling party that gained power by resisting both Soviet occupation and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. By 1998, the Taliban had gained control of almost 90% of Afghanistan.

Many Afghans, having grown weary of the mujahideen, welcomed the Taliban presence at first. Their early popularity came from the Taliban's success in eliminating corruption and making areas under their control safe for commerce. With this control, however, the Taliban also instituted its austere interpretation of Islamic law. This included public executions of convicted murderers and adulterers and amputations for those guilty of theft. Under Taliban rule, men were required to wear beards, and women were required to wear loose garments to cover their bodies. There were multiple other restrictions under Taliban rule, and the group has been accused of numerous human rights violations and cultural abuses.

The Taliban were removed from power in Afghanistan by US-led military forces in 2001, which spurred a decade of violent conflict with horrid civilian casualties. The United States began to remove its troops from the area in February 2020. This removal was done very suddenly, giving the Afghan government little time to prepare. After the initial withdrawal of U.S. troops in June of 2021, the Taliban once again gained control of approximately 33% of Afghanistan and occupied its capital of Kabul. NATO-supported Afghan leaders have fled the country due to the takeover. Taliban leaders are promising to rule differently this time, respecting the freedoms of women under true Islamic values, but many are skeptical.

Ask yourself: Does your country recognize the Taliban as the current Afghan government? Does it support reinstating Afghanistan's previous leadership? Who is your country allied with? How does this conflict impact your nation's economic interests? How does this conflict impact your country's military interests? What stance does your country take on the humanitarian crises happening in Afghanistan?

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Security Topic 3

Espionage

Espionage, or spying, is the act of obtaining or publicizing secret or confidential information from undisclosed sources without the permission of the holder of the information. Espionage, in this sense, has been used in wartime efforts for millennia, but the primary focus in the last few decades has been on cyber counterintelligence.

Before World War II, execution was the most common way of handling discovered spies, but penal punishment became more accepted during the Cold War. This relaxed sentence is primarily due to the Geneva Convention of 1949 which required a trial with council, an appeal process, and a 6-month waiting period before a death penalty can be instituted. Espionage is not a crime under international law; thus it is common during wartime for spies to infiltrate enemy lines under disguises. If captured and discovered, spies are not granted prisoner of war status and their fates are determined by the capturer.

Almost every country has espionage laws governing their own treatment and usage of spies, but the only international regulation by the U.N. restricts member states from spying on the United Nations. This resolution within the U.N. charter has not been respected by many; the United States, The United Kingdom, Australia, Morocco, Cyprus, and Israel and many of their allies have wiretapped, used spy satellites, bugged the devices of U.N. officials, and intercepted highly classified documents.

As far as peacetime espionage legality is considered, it is also not stated anywhere specifically in the U.N. Charter and is thus open to interpretation. Precedent within the International Court of Justice (ICJ) leads to the assumption that it is illegal. In *Nicaragua v. United States*, the ICJ ruled that the U.S. had violated its customary international law obligations “not to use force against another State” and “not to violate [another State’s] sovereignty” by supporting the rebelling Contras. The ICJ found that a prohibited intervention does not necessarily require the use of force, but rather that a “prohibited intervention is particularly obvious in the case of an intervention which uses force.” This decision, accordingly, stood for the principle that armed force is not necessary to violate international law’s prohibition on intervention. Essentially, any espionage that takes secret information is a *prima facie* “intervention” and is, therefore, a violation of another country’s sovereignty.

The U.N. Charter barely mentions enforcement of its legislation, and where it is mentioned, the U.N. does not require itself to enforce international law in any way. As an illustration, in the Nicaragua case, although the ICJ was found for Nicaragua and against the U.S., the ICJ was unable to enforce the judgment. During the case, the U.S. refused to participate in the proceedings, and after the judgment, the U.S. vetoed applicable U.N. Security Council resolutions, effectively preventing Nicaragua from obtaining compensation.

Ask yourself: Does your country have adequate domestic and international espionage laws? Should the U.N. adopt resolutions to alter peacetime and wartime espionage legality to reduce ambiguity within the Charter? Has your country had issues with espionage in the past? Is there any punishment the U.N. could enforce that could effectively discourage espionage?

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