SECURITY COUNCIL

2019 TOPICS

Regulating Biological Weapons
Government Transparency and Info Sharing
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

BACKGROUND

The organ which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security is the Security Council. The Council is composed of five permanent members--China, France, The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States, and 10 non-permanent members, elected by the General Assembly for two year terms and not eligible for immediate re-election. The number of nonpermanent members was increased from six to ten by an amendment of the Charter which came into force in 1965.

FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

While other organs of the United Nations may make recommendations to governments, the Council alone has the power to make decisions which all member States are obligated under the Charter to accept and carry out.

The Council may investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction and may recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement. Disputes and situations likely to endanger international peace and security may be brought to the attention of the Council by any Member State, by a Non-Member State which accepts in advance the obligations of pacific settlement contained in the Charter, by the General Assembly, or by the Secretary-General.

The Council may determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression. It may make recommendations or decide to take enforcement measures to maintain or restore international peace and security. Enforcement actions may include a call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures short of the use of armed force. Under the Charter, all Members undertake to make available to the Council on its call, in accordance with special agreements to be negotiated on the Council’s initiative, the armed forces, assistance and facilities necessary for maintaining international peace and security. The Council is also responsible for formulating plans to regulate armaments. In addition, the Security Council exercises the Trusteeship functions of the United Nations in areas designated as strategic. The Security Council makes annual and special reports to the General Assembly.

On the Security Council’s recommendation, the General Assembly appoints the Secretary-General.
VOTING AND PROCEDURE

Each member of the Council has one vote. Decisions on matters of procedure are taken by an affirmative vote of at least nine of the 15 Members. Decisions on substantive matters also require nine votes, including the concurring votes of all five permanent Members. This is the rule of "great power unanimity," often referred to as the "veto." All five permanent Members have exercised the right of veto at one time or another. If a permanent member does not support a decision but has no desire to block it through a veto, it may abstain; an abstention is not regarded as a veto.

A State which is a member of the United Nations, but not of the Security Council, may participate, without vote, in its discussions when the Council considers that the country’s interests are specially affected. Both Members of the United Nations and Non-Members, if they are parties to a dispute being considered by the Council, are invited to take part, without vote, in the discussions. However, the Council lays down the conditions for participation by a Non-Member State.

The presidency of the Council is held monthly in turn by members in English alphabetical order. The Council decides its own rules of procedure and may establish subsidiary organs.

The Military Staff committee, composed of the Chiefs of Staff of the five permanent members of their representatives, was established under the Charter to advise and assist the Security Council on such questions as the Council's military requirements for the maintenance of peace, the strategic direction of armed forces placed at its disposal, the regulation of armaments and possible disarmament.

UNITING FOR PEACE

The General Assembly in November 1950, adopted a three part resolution entitled "United for Peace." Under that resolution, if the Security Council, because of the lack of unanimity of its permanent Members, failed to exercise its primary responsibility in the maintenance of peace, in a case where there appeared to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression, the Assembly would consider the matter immediately with a view to making recommendations to Members of collective measures, including the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain international peace and security. If not in session, the Assembly would meet in emergency special session within 24 hours of a request for such a session by seven members of the Security Council (now amended to nine) or by a majority of General Assembly members.
DECISIONS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Resolutions of the Security Council: The resolution has been the major vehicle of Security Council action. There are two distinct types of resolutions: 1) consensus resolutions and 2) resolutions adopted by vote. The consensus resolution is a creation of the post 1966 Council. The consensus form is ideal for the council for several reasons. It places the emphasis on an image of unanimity when, in some cases, the members would feel obliged to vote against or abstain on a resolution that was formally voted on.

The resolution adopted by vote is the more traditional approach. Resolutions are adopted by vote when, in spite of consultations, the Council members have failed to reach a consensus; any member may object to an attempt to adopt a resolution by consensus, and thereby force such a vote.

Presidential Statements of Consensus: Often the Council finds that its consensus does not fit conveniently into a resolution form. In this case the Council will resort to a Presidential Statement of consensus. The President may, if he perceives a consensus and sees no resolution, wish to consult with Members concerning the substance of a formal statement. The President then reads that statement in a formal session, and the statement is made an official decision of the Council.

Communications of the President of the Consensus of the Body: This is the subtlest of forms available to the Council. This form is like the Presidential Statement of Consensus except that it is less public. This technique is used when the Council wishes to minimize damaging debate.

ADDITIONAL INFO ABOUT THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Under the Charter, the functions and powers of the Security Council are:

- to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations;
- to investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction;
- to recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement;
- to formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate armaments;
- to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- to call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression;
- to take military action against an aggressor;
- to exercise the trusteeship functions of the United Nations in “strategic areas”;
- to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General.
The Security Council has primary responsibility, under the Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is so organized as to be able to function continuously, and a representative of each of its members must be present at all times at United Nations Headquarters. On 31 January 1992, the first ever Summit Meeting of the Council was convened at Headquarters, attended by Heads of State and Government of 13 of its 15 members and by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the remaining two. The Council may meet elsewhere than at Headquarters; in 1972, it held a session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and the following year in Panama City, Panama.

When a complaint concerning a threat to peace is brought before it, the Council’s first action is usually to recommend to the parties to try to reach agreement by peaceful means. In some cases, the Council itself undertakes investigation and mediation. It may appoint special representatives or request the Secretary-General to do so or to use his good offices. It may set forth principles for a peaceful settlement.

When a dispute leads to fighting, the Council’s first concern is to bring it to an end as soon as possible. On many occasions, the Council has issued cease-fire directives which have been instrumental in preventing wider hostilities. It also sends United Nations peace-keeping forces to help reduce tensions in troubled areas keep opposing forces apart and create conditions of calm in which peaceful settlements may be sought. The Council may decide on enforcement measures, economic sanctions (such as trade embargoes) or collective military action.

A Member State against which preventive or enforcement action has been taken by the Security Council may be suspended from the exercise of the rights and privileges of membership by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. A Member State which has persistently violated the principles of the Charter may be expelled from the United Nations by the Assembly on the Council’s recommendation.

A State which is a Member of the United Nations but not of the Security Council may participate, without a vote, in its discussions when the Council considers that that country’s interests are affected. Both Members of the United Nations and non-members, if they are parties to a dispute being considered by the Council, are invited to take part, without a vote, in the Council’s discussions; the Council sets the conditions for participation by a non-member State.
2019 TOPIC: 
REGULATING BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Why this is important?
Biological weapons, as defined by the Biological Weapons Convention, are complex systems that disseminate disease-causing organisms or toxins to harm or kill humans, animals, and/or plants. The question of preventing the utilization, development, or procurement of biological weapons has never been more urgent than the present. Developing conflicts, especially in areas with undetected stockpiles coupled with increased access to biotechnologies have pushed this matter into a vital part of global security discussions. Bioweapons programming do not require prohibitive technical and logistical challenges that are present in fields such as nuclear weapon. Biological weapons don’t have a limit on civilian access and aren’t easily traceable, depending on what is created. In an era of modernization and globalization, the world enjoys an unprecedented access information and communication. Recent advances in biotechnology have served to rapidly lower the technology threshold and reduce difficulties surrounding weaponization and dispersion of lethal bioagents. These are often consequences of unintended trends and recent outbreaks like Ebola and Avian influenza.

Topic Summary and Background:
The world’s first encounter with biological weapon attacks in the globalized age of the 21st Century in the form of Anthrax Attacks of October 2011 in the United States. Government agencies were keenly aware of the impossibility of tracking down a perpetrator. The Anthrax attacks played a very large role in pushing the terror of bioweapons to the forefront of global consciousness. Beyond the United States, the Japanese developed extensive programming for Weapons of Mass Destruction, among this programming was Unit 731. Unit 731 was a research and development unit that was responsible for heinous human experimentation for bioweapons delivery systems that drove the Japanese to biological warfare. The Japanese have numerous experiences with using biological weapons including an aerial military that diffused the bubonic plague among the Chinese population as well as anthrax used to destroy crops and force massive populations to starvation as a strategy to consolidate. Biological weapons are watched by two International or United Nations organizations/committees. The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Geneva Protocol of 1925. As of November 4th, 2016, 177 states have ratified the treaty made in the Biological Weapons Convention that entered into force in 1975. BWC established the moral argument for banning biological warfare as a tool of war, among other things. The Geneva Protocol also addresses the use of biological warfare. A lot of the information that we have regarding the biological weapons as weapons of warfare are behind the times in their understanding and depth regarding current biotechnologies and uses for terrorism.
Issues to be addressed in a Resolution:

1. How can outdated international legislation and interpretive frameworks math the pace of rapid scientific developments?
2. Is there a governing body or United Nations entity that could monitor reports of at-risk research areas for weaponization?
3. Can we create or utilize a body or committee to provide oversight over the scientific community (or extend the current oversight that is being provided)?
4. Does the UN have early detection systems and prompt treatment? If not, how can we develop detection systems and prompt treatment after a biological weapon attack in a large area, covering multiple member states?

Resources

History of Biological Warfare
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1326439/

The Biological Weapons Convention
https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/bio/

Chemical and Biological Weapons Status at a Glance
https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/cbwprolif
2019 TOPIC: GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND INFO SHARING

Why this is important?
2019 is in the thick of the “information age.” The internet, 24 hour news cycle, and growing popularity of social media—especially in the developed world—have lead to a massive increase in knowledge always available for consumption. However, not all information is created equally as there are several restrictions on information worldwide. Most countries have some sort of intelligence agency that oversees and protects sensitive government secrets or initiates spying on government threats to information security as well. Some nations, most famously North Korea and China, censor the internet. Many countries have a censored or state sponsored news media in print and on broadcasted media. In the past decade, many whistleblowers such as Edward Snowden and Julian Assange have made waves by releasing sensitive government documents worldwide. What information should be shared and what should be kept secret?

Topic Summary and Background:
Even as far back as the Roman Empire, there have been government secrets. Since then, governments have gone to excessive lengths to protect their information and to collect information from other sources. Many governments use the services of spies and informants to gather and secure information. Most nations have an intelligence agency serving their government as well. Some nations go to such lengths such as restricting the internet or censoring media throughout the country to keep certain pieces of information safe. The Cold War saw an excessive period of government secrecy and security of information across the globe.

Issues to be addressed in a Resolution:
1. Do citizens have a “right” to government information?
2. Who controls the internet?
3. Do governments have a responsibility to share their information?
4. Are whistleblowers criminals? Should they be punished for their actions?

Resources
Trust in Transparency
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/trust/does-more-transparency-mean-more-trust

Advocating Open Governments
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/

Most Censored State Media
https://cpj.org/reports/2006/05/10-most-censored-countries.php