



# ***THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL***

## ***SPECIALIZED COMMITTEE***





BACKGROUND GUIDE: THE WITCHER

## *Director's Letter*

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to UTMUN 2018! My name is Josiah Butt, and I will be your Director for UTMUN's United Nations Security Council. This UNSC is UTMUN's first application-based committee, and I would like to thank all of you for your excellent, insightful applications. Congratulations!

This committee is the product of extensive brainstorming by UTMUN staff. We wanted to create a Model UN experience that explored contemporary global issues while encouraging productive debate. We chose topics that will challenge the committee to fuse their understanding of current geopolitics with the prospect of issues our generation will likely be the first to face. The committee's structure will push delegates to quickly address crises while methodically creating long-term solutions to stem the flow of emergencies.

I would like to stress that this committee will be centred around diplomacy and debate. While good oratory is important, the best delegates are also excellent listeners. The ability to hear and productively respond to your fellow delegates is a trait our staff prizes highly. Passion is important and encouraged, but restraint and patience are equally valuable. Delegates who follow their country's foreign policy while being vocal, diplomatic, and respectful will find themselves successful in this committee.

In the lead-up to UTMUN, I encourage all of you to explore the concepts that underpin the themes of this committee. Research for this committee is less about specifics, and more about big concepts. Delegates should become familiar with historical solutions for situations similar to those presented in the background guide. Delegates should also be fluent in the hallmarks of their country's foreign policy. If research is effective, delegate stances in committee will reflect their country's activity historically on the Security Council and/or in general foreign affairs.

This committee is shaping up to be an incredible experience for everyone involved. The UNSC staff and I are incredibly excited to meet all of you. Good luck and see you in February!

Sincerely,

Josiah Butt

Director, UTMUN 2018  
United Nations Security Council  
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## *A New and Dynamic Committee Structure*

In order to provide delegates with a more immersive experience, topics in the UNSC will run a little differently than you may be used to. Because the areas of debate on the agenda are all interdependent, debate will be much more flexible and fast-paced than in a traditional specialized committee, and all topics will remain open in parallel until resolved. There will be no opening vote on a first topic, instead the committee will have the ability to prioritize debate on issues based on crisis updates and national priorities. Flexible debate will also allow the committee to combine aspects of each topic when solving major problems. Solutions that solve multiple topics are strongly encouraged.

To further support rapid debate, this edition of the UNSC will allow committee directives. These group-sourced directives are majority-pass crisis actions by the council. Those of you who have crisis experience will be familiar with personal directives. Committee directives are simply personal directives that require a public vote to enact. A group of delegates will write out an action and recruit sponsors/signatories. The delegates may then motion for it to be introduced to the committee. This process allows delegates to take real time action in response and shape the outcome of the simulation. The committee may then debate and vote on the introduced directive. Using these directives will empower the Council to take actions including but not limited to the deployment of peacekeepers, the creation of press releases, and the provision of humanitarian aid. The committee is expected to finalize debate with one resolution addressing all topics on the agenda.

Adherence to country policy is paramount to this committee. Many of your countries will not seem to have stake in the topics and crises presented to you. However, I urge you to think critically about how your country would debate, vote, and act in these situations. Who are your natural allies, who are your natural rivals? Non-P5 states hold the votes needed to pass resolutions and directives. Well-organized blocs of non-P5 states will find they have power to swing votes.



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## *The United Nations Security Council*

Since its foundation in 1946, the United Nations Security Council has been dedicated to assessing and combatting threats to international security. Threats may include, but are not limited to, civil wars, arms control, and terrorism (“The UN Security Council”, 2017).

The UNSC is comprised of fifteen, member nations. Five members are permanent: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition to permanent status, each of the P5 members has the ability to veto a UNSC resolution. The other ten council members are elected, serving two-year terms without veto power. Eligibility for council-member status is largely based on each nations’ past efforts toward the “maintenance of international peace and security”, such as their military or financial contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. The Council is also conscious of ensuring “equitable geographical distribution”, allotting a specific number of member spots to each global region (United Nations, 1945).

The UNSC primarily aims to peacefully resolve issues of global security under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which authorizes the Council to “call on parties to seek solutions via negotiation, enquiry, mediation...or other peaceful means” (UN, 1945). When diplomacy fails, the Security Council retains further powers in Chapter VII, allowing it to “take more assertive actions, such as imposing sanctions or authorizing the use of force” (“The UN Security Council”, 2017). The most common assertive action by the UNSC is sanctions, which the Council popularized the early 1990s, and which were regularly used against Iraq, Haiti, and former Yugoslavia (“The UN Security Council”, 2017). The most visible example of assertive UNSC operations are peacekeeping missions. As of mid-2017, over fifteen peace-keeping operations were deployed



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and overseen by the Security Council. While both methods have faced criticism, sanctions have remained popular for their ability to target “discrete economic and political matter and specific individuals deemed threats to international security”, but have also raised numerous human rights concerns in cases of major trade embargoes (“The UN Security Council”, 2017). Peacekeeping missions have also faced major setbacks after numerous reports of assault by UN peacekeepers, calling into question to reliability and safety of such operations.

It is important to note that, under the UN Charter, the use of force by the UN is only legal in “cases of self-defence or when it has been authorized by the council” (UN, 1945). Cases of unauthorized, prolonged force in the name of humanitarian aid call into question the illegality of these arguably-necessary interventions by international bodies. NATO’s unauthorized seventy-eight-day bombing campaign in Kosovo, intended to protect Kosovar Albanians from Serbian ethnic cleansing, is often cited as an example of this dilemma, as the mission was undertaken after Russia declared it would veto Security Council authorization of any intervention (“The UN Security Council”, 2017). Many have supported the adoption of the “responsibility to protect” (R2P) to justify force without UNSC authorization, stating that, just as states have a responsibility to protect their people from crimes against humanity, “the international community has a responsibility to use peaceful means to protect threatened populations” (“The UN Security Council”, 2017). Both the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole were chartered to do just that.



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## ***TURKISH COLLAPSE!***

Last night, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan was assassinated, and Turkey descended into chaos. With a national system entirely dependent on Erdogan's demands and no clear path toward his replacement, Turkey has now been left open and uncontrolled, facing a power vacuum with several conflicting actors seeking complete control.

The territory now known as the Republic of Turkey was part of the Ottoman Empire until the early 20th century. In 1922, the Turkish National Movement declared independence from the defeated empire, and established itself as a republic. For much of its existence, Turkey was viewed as the most modern of the Middle Eastern states—its 2003 laws easing restrictions on freedom of speech, permitting Kurdish language rights, reducing the political role of the military, and banning the death penalty made it a candidate for EU membership as early as 2005 (BBC, 2017).

Turkey maintained a largely-secular government until November 2002, when the Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) won a landslide election victory, with the leader of the AKP, Tayyip Erdogan, becoming Prime Minister in March 2003. He served three consecutive terms before being winning the first direct popular election for president in August 2014 (BBC, 2017).

Erdogan's legacy, however, was largely defined by his response to the failed 2016 coup against him. In July 2016, a section of the Turkish military attempted to oust Erdogan, dropping bombs on Parliament and kidnapping government officials. Erdogan, however, was able to rally Turkish citizens to resist the coup, and thus the attempt failed (Al Jazeera, 2017).



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Erdogan immediately declared a “state of emergency” following the coup, blaming the attempt on Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish opponent of Erdogan, and his supporters. Thus began a complete crackdown on all suspected dissenters and “Gulenists”, suspending many of the Turkish people’s basic rights and freedoms (Kingsley, 2017). Seeking to purge opposition from every corner of society, the government fired “fired or suspended about 130,000 people suspected of being dissidents from the public and private sectors” as of April 2017. This included over 40,000 teachers, 4,000 civil servants, including judges and lawyers, and over 1,500 civil groups (Kingsley, 2017). Universities were forced to expel academics who criticized Erdogan’s Kurdish policies, and countless newspapers, magazines, and internet sites were banned (Bayramoglu, 2017). Gulen denied any involvement in the attempted coup, and suggested that Erdogan staged the coup as justification for tighter control of the nation.

Erdogan won his proposed constitutional referendum in April 2017. By a vote of 51% in favor to 49% against, in an election plagued with allegations of fraud, Turkey transitioned from the parliamentary system to a presidential one, giving significantly more power to Erdogan as an individual. With the referendum victory, the president was given “sweeping powers, with ability to enact laws by decree and dismiss parliament”, with the parliament given “limited powers to investigate or impeach” the president (Lowen, 2017). Under the new constitution, members of top judicial panels were no longer to be elected by their peers, and rather appointed by Erdogan (The Economist, 2017). In this way, by April 2017, President Erdogan maintained complete control over practically all aspects of Turkish society and institutions, with the functioning of their systems entirely dependent on his leadership.



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In the 2010s, *Kurdophobia* became more prominent among nationalist movements.(Dixon and Ergin 2010) In particular, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) began to promote anti-Kurdish rhetoric in Turkey. In 2015, A Kurdish political party headquarters was vandalized by members of the MHP. (Reuters 2015) The MHP declared the Iraqi Kurdish referendum for independence a legitimate reason for war, fearing increased autonomy from the Kurdish minority in Turkey.(Devlet Bahceli 2017)

In the past few years, Erdogan's efforts to solidify power have become blatant. He pushed through legislation that prioritized state-control of media. In February 2018, AKP representatives were overseeing the production of media at Anadolu Anjasi and Dogan Haber Anjasi. The AKP representatives' presence was initially justified as a presence to ensure intelligence vital to national security remained unpublished. However, by September 2019, it soon became clear that the representatives were censoring any oppositional stories. By 2020, the government had a firm filter on the major news outlets in the region. Foreign news agencies were unable to operate in the country. Access to the internet was extremely limited. In the spring of 2020, the World Press Freedom Index ranked Turkey as 177<sup>th</sup> in the world, behind only Eritrea, Turkmenistan and North Korea. In retaliation, underground radio broadcasters, newspapers and other media organizations began publishing resistant propaganda. Leaders of these organizations disappeared or were imprisoned.

In late 2020, Erdogan began outright targeting political dissidents. A state-sponsored militia comprised of members of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) began to physically intimidate anti-Erdogan citizens. Local chapters of the MHP militias' would suppress referendums and votes, intimidate opposition gatherings, and vandalize property. Two remote





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political prison camps were established in south Anatolia. Many Kurdish leaders from the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) began to disappear. Foreign and domestic media speculated they were being housed there. Opposition speech became a punishable offense. In January 2018, Erdogan began an aggressive anti-Kurdish campaign, scapegoating much of the Kurdish minority in Turkey. By 2020, anti-PKK sentiment was at an all-time high among nationalist groups. The AKP-MHP alliance began a propaganda campaign against Kurds in the region. In response, the HDP began to strengthen ties with the PKK and other Kurdish groups in Syria and Iraq. Whispers of an independent Kurdistan were heard throughout the Kurdish minorities.

In October 2020, Erdogan's followers publically abducted Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the key opposition leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP). The CHP had represented the majority of liberal-opposition in the country. News of Kılıçdaroğlu's imprisonment resulted in a massive out roar. Violent clashes between CHP supporters and MHP militias broke out in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara. Key CHP leaders began to make connections with Turkish military officials. On Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>, CHP leaders met with the head of the Turkish Security Service (MIT) and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff. Fearing a coup, Erdogan declared a national emergency and brought in the Turkish Gendarmerie.

Since early November of 2020, two anti-AKP-MHP coalitions began to form. First, the CHP-led coalition, comprised of traditionalist military leaders and political dissidents began to plan for more drastic resistance to Erdogan's rule. Second, a Kurdish-minority began to align with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, supported by the People's Protection



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Units (YPG). Both coalitions represent the bulk of the opposition to Erdogan. The Kurdish coalition has been insular and focused on a pan-Kurdish solution.

Delegates, it is now Jan 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Erdogan has been assassinated. The Security Council does not yet know how, or by whom. But what is clear is that Turkey has been left in a tailspin. There are several actors with the potential to vie for power and influence in the region. What is left of Erdogan's loyalist support and the AKP will likely try to maintain their hold on Turkey. The more-secular opposition party in Turkey, whose opinions Erdogan oppressed, may try to take hold of government while it can. The Turkish and Iraqi Kurds have expressed interest in the region, and will likely try to seize control of the power vacuum after facing years of oppression by the Turkish and Iraqi governments.

It is impossible to deny the similarities between the aftermaths of Erdogan's fall in Turkey and Saddam Hussein's fall in Iraq. Both nations have experienced a complete power vacuum, with no clear idea of who the next leader will be and what form that new government system will take. In Iraq's case after Hussein's removal, the United States put Prime Minister al-Maliki, a pro-West Shiite, into power with a newly-formed democracy. The Iraqi Sunnis, however, remained unsatisfied, wanting a restoration of Sunni leadership in Iraq. Many Sunnis, led by ex-Baathist officers, continued to oppose the US-instituted leadership by supporting groups like ISIS, whose rise caused the region to descend into even more chaos. In this case, the removal of one tyrant led to a state being juggled by many tyrants, leaving it, some would argue, even more unstable than before.



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Turkey had withdrawn inwards during Erdogan's attempts to consolidate power. However, countries will seek to take advantage of the power vacuum caused by his death. In recent years Syria has come to a standstill, with no clear winner or peace treaty in sight. The Turkish destabilization could reignite conflict in Syria. With Syria in a deadlock, a Kurdish coalition could attempt to unify into an independent Kurdistan. Some members of the EU have supported this idea. The United States has recently allied with the YPG in an attempt to stabilize Syria and counter Assad's regime (Chivvis and Fishman 2017). Since 2018, Turkey had been a member of NATO in name only. Will the EU and the U.S. see this vacuum of power as an opportunity to install a pro-NATO Turkish government? Is NATO ready to enter an interventionist war?

On the other side, Russia has fervently backed Assad's regime in Syria (Lynch 2015). In 2015, Turkey shot down a Russian plane that had violated their airspace. ("The Turco-Russian Crisis: Erdogan vs. Putin" n.d.). It is unclear if Russia will be more invested in securing influence and a military presence in the region, or if Russia will prioritize the quick return to a stable Turkish government.

It is the UNSC's responsibility to assess the chaos in Turkey and determine its plan of action as swiftly and decisively as possible. As Delegates to the UN, you are not expected to enact your countries military strategy in the region. However, you should examine and pursue action that is in your countries national interests *via* the UNSC. There are several routes the council can take, and several questions that must be answered: for example, will it employ active military intervention or diplomatic negotiations? If there is active military intervention, will it be taken through the UNSC or by individual states? Or will the council opt for no-fly zones?



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Supplying resources? To whom? And if the crisis prompts a refugee crisis, will the council close the borders, increase border control, or accept the refugees? There are a variety of actions to take, and a variety of actors to support, but the council must decide which future is the best decision for Turkey, its people, and the world.

### **Key Questions:**

- 1. What does your country stand to gain or lose from the Turkish collapse?**
- 2. Given your countries' individual foreign policy, would your country support intervention?**
- 3. To what degree is the UNSC obligated to intervene in the Turkish collapse?**
- 4. Should the UNSC back one of the three Turkish coalitions? (Pro-Erdogan AKP, Secular-CHP, or Kurdish)**



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## ***BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS!***

Just when we thought it couldn't get worse, news broke out of Turkey's government-run, secret bio-weapon program housed outside several of its major cities. The Security Council holds the task of discovering the locations of these Level 4 Labs and putting a stop to this disastrous threat.

A biological weapon is a bacterium, protozoan, virus, parasite, or fungus, purposefully used in the means of a weapon for bioterrorism or biological warfare (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). These biological weapons are usually used as an invasive species, which are non-native species placed into new environments, where they expand their range and overpower the existing environment (Vilcinskis, 2015). These biological weapons place the possessor at a selective advantage to competitors by serving as killing and infecting agents (Vilcinskis, 2015). Biological weapons have historically been used since the 1800s, with the largest event being Japan's large-scale programme to build biological weapons in the Second World War (Frischknecht, 2003). Alarm bells should have been rung when the Japanese illegally attempted to steal yellow fever virus from the U.S., but Japan continued to test at least 25 different disease-causing agents on prisoners and unsuspecting civilians (Frischknecht, 2003). As many as up to 580,000 people were killed from bubonic plague, cholera, anthrax, and other diseases from the Japanese attacks (Barenblatt, 2004).



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The leaked intelligence places the labs on the peripheries of Istanbul, Ankara, and Adana, altogether potentially endangering over 20 million people and causing cross-country devastation. The United States (US) sold or sent biological anthrax, West Nile virus, and botulism to Iraq up



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until 1989, as Iraq claimed they were necessary for biological research. As it turned out, these materials were used for their biological weapons research program (Associated Press,

### Biological Warfare Agents: The "Dirty Dozen" (acc. to WHO more than 30 substances)

|                 | Pathogen   | Symptoms   |
|-----------------|--|--|
| <b>Bacteria</b> | <b>Inhalation Anthrax</b><br><i>Bacillus anthracis</i>                             | Nonspecific symptoms of fatigue, myalgia, fever, nonproductive cough, followed by chest pain, respiratory distress, high fever, pneumonia. Other forms: Intest./Cutan. Anthrax (not as BW-Agents)          |
|                 | <b>Pneumonic Plague</b><br><i>Yersinia pestis</i>                                  | Acute: high fever, headache, productive cough blood-tinged sputum, vomiting. Hematogenous dissemination: sepsis, shock, meningitis   |
|                 | <b>Tularemia</b><br><i>Francisella tularensis</i><br>(Rabbit Fever)                | Fever, chills, headache, myalgias, abdominal pain vomiting, diarrhea. Chest pain, pneumonia, cutaneous ulcer. Enlarged lymph nodes.  |
|                 | <b>Brucellosis</b><br><i>Brucella suis</i>   | Nonspecific: Fever, malaise, body aches, sweats, muscle and joint aches. Hepato-/splenomegaly  |
|                 | <b>Q-Fever</b><br><i>Coxiella burnetii</i>   | Extremely infectious, no characteristic illness: severe headache, back pain, fatigue, weight loss  |
|                 | <b>Glanders:</b><br><i>Burkholderia mallei</i><br><i>Burkholderia pseudomallei</i> | Severe sickness, fever, rigors, pulmonary distress abscesses of internal organs (e.g. liver and spleen)  |
| <b>Viruses</b>  | <b>Smallpox</b><br><i>Variolavirus</i>   | Acute: malaise, fever, headache, vomiting. Erythematous rash spread centrally to the trunk, quickly progresses to papules/pustular vesicles (centrifugal distribution). Pustules → scabs after 8 - 14 days |
|                 | <b>Venet. Equine Encephalitis</b><br><i>VEE-Virus</i>                              | Acute: febrile illness with severe headache, fatigue, photophobia, nausea, vomiting, rigors, myalgias (e.g. legs and lumbosacral area)   |
|                 | <b>Marburg-Fever</b><br>(Viral Hemorrh. Fever)<br><i>Marburg-Virus</i>             | Myalgia, fever, headache, flushing of the face and chest, conjunctival/cutaneous bleedings, dizziness, hypotension, renal insufficiency, shock, death  |
| <b>Toxins</b>   | <b>Botulism</b><br><i>Clostridium botulinum</i>                                    | Blurred vision, dilated pupils, photophobia, difficulty with speaking/swallowing, (severe) muscle paralysis  |
|                 | <b>Ricin-Intoxication</b><br><i>Ricin</i>  | Fever, chest tightness, nausea, gastrointestinal ailment, resp. failure, pulmonary edema   |
|                 | <b>SEB-Intoxication</b><br><i>Staphylococcal-Toxin</i>                             | Sudden onset of fever, chills, cough, vomiting, diarrhea. Higher exposure: septic shock  |

2002). A similar occurrence has now been discovered in Turkey, with the US and Canada having sold the Erdogan regime anthrax, encephalitis, smallpox, botulism, haemorrhagic fever, and tularemia. Some of these agents, like encephalitis and haemorrhagic fever cause severe brain bleeding, leading to permanent damage, and most often times, death (Gubler, 1998). Who knows which other biological agents may be contained in these biological weapons labs.



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As demonstrated in the devastating example above, biological weapons treaties, like the Biological and Toxin Weapons convention (BTWC from 1972) are not sufficient since they contain no means of control and fail to prevent interested parties from developing and using biological weapons (Frischknecht, 2003). To further aggravate the situation, a Level 4 Lab is the highest biosafety level, which entails having the lab be separated from areas receiving unrestricted traffic, having tightly controlled airflow to have clean air circulate to infectious agent locations, and airlocking the entrances to minimize the possibility of aerosols being removed from the lab (Richmond & McKinney, 1999).

As was seen after the 1991 Security Council Resolution 686 and 687, regardless of the ceasefire where Iraq was forbidden from developing, possessing, or using chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, they still did proceed with their own plans under the rule of Sadaam Hussein (White House, n.d.). This time in Turkey, there is no government left to decide what will happen with these biological weapons labs. Anyone can take control and wreak mass destruction.

These labs are now abandoned and have the potential to be over-taken by several players, such as terrorist groups. al Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS) have started experimentation with CRISPR (Acharya & Acharya, 2017) a platform for generating RNA-guided nucleases that can edit genomes (Sander & Joung, 2014). This is leading global leaders to believe that these two terrorist organizations could seek out these labs for an economic, accelerated method of achieving their mass devastation goals. ISIS's clear road from Syria, through Adana, Ankara, Istanbul can spread devastation throughout all of Turkey and to Bulgaria and Greece as well. If these threats do not get contained, Europe, Africa, and Asia may be targeted by the next





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pandemic, worse than anything seen before, from Turkey's central position. If these labs are taken control of by Al-Qaeda or ISIS, then the threat could spread across the globe. Flags should have been raised when Al-Qaeda's experiments with crude toxins and poisons were revealed in a 2002 CNN exposé, where Al-Qaeda associates infiltrated Turkey and other countries to begin coordinating and planning biological attacks (Wagner, 2017).

The other possibilities are of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) finding the biological weapons labs first. The Turkish Hezbollah (TH) could also be seeking out the labs to beat the PKK to the punch, which would further intensify the danger of a Turkey-wide destruction, since they have been active against the PKK for years, and against the Government of Turkey (Nader, n.d.)

Typically, triggered by a request from any Member State, the Secretary-General of the UN is allowed to launch an investigation that includes dispatching a fact-finding team to the site of the alleged incidents and to report to all UN member states (United Nations, n.d.). This is impossible in the current climate as it is not a safe zone to enter Turkey as a fact-finding team. The options that stand include air strikes, boots on the ground, quarantines, or the other ideas you members may come up with today.

Air strikes would be in the form of offensive counter-air (OCA), which is a military term for suppressing an enemy's military air power, through ground attacks of enemy bases and facilities, like in this case, the bioweapons facilities (Government of Canada, 2016). The issue with air strikes is that the bioweapons labs would release the deadly biological agents if bombarded, still causing mass devastations for the surrounding civilians. Boots on the ground



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would be dangerous for the UN member state soldiers, and quarantines cannot be performed until the labs are located and all pertinent information is acquired concerning the labs themselves.

It is thus up to you, the UNSC, to find these labs, figure out what destructive components the labs contain, which of the terrorist organizations are the largest and closest threats, and the best method to intervene. Only with this information, can we group together to resolve the pressing issue. It is a difficult task for the UNSC to succeed with disarmament and to account for all biological weapons, but we must try and find the best methods of achieving these goals. Just like we did once with the Iraqi chemical weapons in the early 1990s, we can do it again, but reaching for totality this time, with no weapons left unaccounted for (Cleminson, 2003; Chivers & Schmitt, 2015).

### Key Questions

- 1. How can the UNSC locate and gain control of biological weapons in the region?**
- 2. What is the UNSC plan for containment if a biological weapon is detonated?**



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## ***THE KURDS, NOT THE KURDS!***

The conflict between the Kurdish and the Turkish is one that has been entrenched in centuries of ethnic discord and dispute.(Dixon and Ergin 2010) The world's 30 million Kurds share a distinct language, heritage, and ties to a common landlocked territory spanning Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran despite being divided by modern borders. The Kurdish people are the largest ethnic minority in Turkey, comprising 11 to 15 million of its population of 74 million (Updegraff, 2012). The Kurdish Question refers to the fact that there is no distinct homeland for the Kurdish people, who suffer from a lack of autonomy, self-governance, and whose culture and language are being forcibly extinguished by the Republic of Turkey in a process known as Turkification (Updegraff, 2012).

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish War of Independence during the first World War, Mustafa Kemal came to power over the newly established Turkish state with two goals in mind: to reconstruct the Turkish identity and unify the country (Saeed, 2014). In order to do this, his government adopted a process of Turkification – the forced cultural and linguistic assimilation of non-Turkish communities, and the repression of those who dared to resist (Saeed, 2014). The Kurds, as Turkey's largest minority group, served as the biggest threat towards the ideal of a homogenous Turkish state, and as a result, suffered compulsory resettlement, regimes of torture and violence, and a myriad of other serious human rights abuses (Saatci, 2002). The pursuit of an official policy of Turkification has led to continued armed conflict, including the unsuccessful rebellion by Sheik Said in 1925, the Dersim genocide in 1930, and similar revolts throughout the 20th century (Saatci, 2002). The political and social



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attitude of Turkey's government towards Kurdish demands and interests continue to be marked by denial, intolerance, and marginalization, and the approach towards the Kurdish Question is primarily one of military intervention.

### **The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)**

The continued loss of self-governance, autonomy, and the oppression of Kurds and Kurdish by the Turkish state have led to the creation of several insurgency groups, including the PKK. The PKK, or Kurdistan Workers' Party, was founded in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist group under Abdullah Ocalan and calls for equal rights and greater autonomy for Kurds in Turkey (Saeed, 2014). The full-scale insurrection of the PKK against the Turkish state began in 1984 with their attack on the Turkish military barracks in Eruh and Semdinli, and the on-going Turkish-Kurdish conflict has since claimed more than 40,000 lives, with human rights abuses and atrocities being performed by both sides (Saeed, 2014). After the arrest of Ocalan in 1999, the PKK has declared several ceasefires, with the most recent one having been lifted in 2015. NATO, the United States, and the European Union have labelled the PKK as a terrorist organization (Saeed, 2014).

### **Kurdish Autonomy in Syria**

Before the Syrian uprising, Syrian Kurds had few outlets for political expression or mobilization; the very existence of Syrian Kurdish political parties was considered illegal under the Assad regime. However, the dynamics of the Syrian conflict and the Syrian army's withdrawal from Kurdish-populated areas of the country in 2012 have given rise to opportunities for the Kurds to establish de facto autonomy there. The rise of the Kurdish Democratic Union



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Party (PYD) and its armed wing, the People's Protection Unit (YPG) has been key to the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish administration Rojava in northern Syria (Federici, 2015). The YPG was established by former members of the PKK, and thus draws many similarities with the organization, including Ocalan's ideology and political strategy of democratic confederalism (Federici, 2015). Its alignment with the PKK has also provided the group with the necessary training, manpower, and arms to solidify its current position as one of the strongest armed actors in northern Syria.

The YPG has also gained legitimacy and support from the international community, notably from the United States, because of its involvement in the conflict against the Islamic State. (Nader et al. 2016) Western media often describes the YPG as the United States' "most effective local partner in the fight against ISIS", and it has not been labelled a terrorist organization despite its affiliation with the PKK (Federici, 2015). The United States has been supplying weapons to the YPG since May of 2017 in order to help with the coalition's fight against the Islamic State (Federici, 2015). Kurdish autonomy in Syria is also a concern in Turkey, as the Turkish government has fears that the PKK wishes to form a second base of operations in northern Syria as well, allowing the PKK to increase its influence and put pressure on Turkey to make concessions to its own Kurdish minority (Federici, 2015). The YPG's military and the PYD's affiliation with the PKK have been seen as a direct threat to Turkish national security, and Turkey has continued to attack YPG fighters despite calls from the UN, US, and EU to show restraint (Nader et al. 2016). The Syrian Kurds have accused Turkey of indirectly supporting the Islamic State and al-Qaeda terrorists, as their attacks on the PKK and YPG have helped the IS weaken the Kurdish-held frontline areas in Syria and Iraq (Federici,



## **The Kurdish Uprising in Turkey in 2021**

After suffering from decades of conflict and oppression, a full-scale Kurdish uprising led by the PKK against the Turkish state is something that the world may have predicted, but has certainly never prepared for. Aided by the members of the Peoples' United Revolutionary Movement and the YPG, the military arm of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria, the Kurdish coalition will attempt to take control of the northeastern regions of Turkey. Taking advantage of the power vacuum left in the wake of Erdogan's assassination, the PKK may move to establish its own autonomous state – a Turkish Rojava – in south-eastern Turkey, with Diyarbakir as the would-be capital of a Turkish Kurdistan.

The response of the United Nations Security Council now is of the utmost importance, but the reactions of the international community have been mixed. Russia's claim to a major pipeline running through Turkey could be jeopardized with the collapse of Erdogan's government, while the United States' support of the PKK and the YPG could be thrown into question as the power dynamics in Turkey continue to shift.

### **Key Questions:**

- 1. What is your countries' stance on the Kurdish Question?**
- 2. Should the UNSC support Kurdish Independence?**
- 3. What ramifications would Kurdish Independence have on the broader region?**



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**4. How can the UNSC reopen lines of communication between a Kurdish Coalition and other Turkish coalitions?**



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## *Research Guide*

Delegates, this is a brief guide to your committee preparation. Although this background guide gives a brief overview of the topics, you must conduct independent research in order to succeed in this committee. Clearly, we are dealing with a futuristic simulation, so assume there are no established fact beyond the information provided in the background guide. However, it is imperative for you to be able to project your countries interests from their current global foreign policy and security policies in the Turkish region. Given the futuristic nature of this committee, you have the opportunity to improvise how your country would react to the Turkish destabilization. The dais will entertain any delegate's position **so long as it is grounded in sound reasoning consistent with the past foreign policies of your country.**

First, research the broader concepts of the committee. Look into the Kurdish Question, past Turkish reforms and the recent conflict in Syria. Examine past case studies involving the removal of a dictator, such as the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Examine the current approach to international control of bioweapons. Which countries have them? Which countries have banned them?

Second, formulate an understanding of your own countries' interests within the simulation. I recommend examining your countries' current relationships with Turkey, Syria and surrounding neighbors. I further recommend examining your countries economic dependency in the region, especially dependency for oil. Finally, track how the situation in Turkey and in Syria is developing by reading quality journalistic publications (e.g. The Guardian, The Economist, The New York Times, Al Jazeera, Reuters, Associated Press).

There are a number of tools at your disposal:

- Be sure to study the bibliography within this background guide for a list of excellent resources;
- Take advantage of Google Scholar to find open source academic writing on subjects;
- Leverage your school or local library;
- Search publications and reports by renown Foreign Policy think tanks (e.g. CSIS, RAND Corp., CFR, IISS, Frasier Institute)

Finally, feel free to reach out with questions. Inquiries about the research can be directed to [Josiah.butt@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:Josiah.butt@mail.utoronto.ca) or [specialized@utmun.org](mailto:specialized@utmun.org)





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