



YMUN China 2025  
*Topic Guide*

# UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

*Yolanda Wang*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Introduction


Welcome Letter  
Committee History  
Positions

## Topic 1

Introduction  
Glossary  
Topic History  
Current Situation  
Questions to Consider  
Additional Resources

## Topic 2

Introduction  
Glossary  
Topic History  
Current Situation  
Questions to Consider  
Additional Resources



## Letter from the Dais

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the **United Nations Security Council** at Yale Model United Nations China! My name is Yolanda Wang, and I'm excited to serve as your chair this year. I'm a junior in Yale College from Buffalo, New York majoring in political science and pursuing a certificate in Chinese. Whether on the debate floor or during workshops and dances with the Secretariat, I look forward to meeting all of you and witnessing your skills as future diplomats and leaders.

The Security Council balances state sovereignty and international peace with its authority to enforce binding resolutions on member states. While the UNSC is powerful, it also faces certain structural and political limitations. In our committee, you will navigate the Security Council's unique capabilities and constraints to build relationships and resolve conflicts.

We will consider two pressing topics: Addressing Technological Threats in Warfare and Re-evaluating the Role of the UN Peacekeepers. These issues will require a keen understanding of the dynamics among the UNSC's member states as well as a sensitivity for the global consequences implicated in your debate.

I hope that your experience in UNSC will help you learn about these issues from new perspectives. In Model UN, debate is a tool of expression and collaboration, and I look forward to seeing how you will use this valuable tool with professionalism and passion, creativity and convention.

If you have any questions or would like to introduce yourself ahead of the conference, please feel free to reach out to me through email at [yolanda.wang@yale.edu](mailto:yolanda.wang@yale.edu). I can't wait to see you all in Shenzhen!

Sincerely,  
Yolanda Wang

## Committee History

The United Nations Security Council is the UN's principal crisis-management body, and it is responsible for maintaining international peace and security. It is the only organ of the UN that can enforce binding resolutions on member states. The UN Charter grants the Security Council authority over peacekeeping operations, the use of military force, and economic and diplomatic sanctions.

The UNSC's 15 member states include five permanent members (the P5) with veto power over all substantive resolutions and 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms without veto power. A resolution is adopted if nine or more members vote for the resolution, and if it is not vetoed by any of P5. For the sake of the conference simulation, there is a chance that delegates in this committee are assigned to countries that are not currently members of the United Nations Security Council at present. These delegates will nonetheless receive equal status to non-permanent members.

Veto power was granted to the P5 as founding members of the UNSC, and it remains an incentive for the most powerful nations in the world to participate in the Council. However, a common criticism of the veto power is that it unduly caters to the P5's political interests, creating deadlock in the face of crises.

As delegates debate and pass resolutions for YMUN China, it is imperative to consider the Security Council's structural realities in addition to the immediate topics at hand. While accurately representing the stances of a member state is important, collaboration may be more essential in some cases. Deadlock can be a threat, not only to the functioning of the Council, but to international peace. As such, delegates representing P5 members must carefully consider how their vetoes may impact the world beyond politics within the chamber, and non-permanent member delegates must devise creative and diplomatic ways to continue the conversation even with vetoes in play.



# TOPIC ONE

# Addressing Technological Threats in Warfare



## Introduction

The rapid evolution of technology is outpacing the United Nations' ability to govern it, and the use of technologies in warfare has shifted action and accountability from humans to machines. The Security Council must consider how to regulate the use of artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and other technological advancements in war, whether they are applied to military force, intelligence operations, sensitive negotiations, or elsewhere.

## Glossary

**Artificial Intelligence (AI):** A digital or machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings, such as reasoning, inference, prediction, generalization, or learning from past experience.

**Autonomous Weapons System (AWS), or Lethal Autonomous Weapons System (LAWS):** A weapons system that, once activated, is capable of selecting and engaging targets without further input from a human operator.

**Cloud Computing:** A technology that provides individuals and organizations with on-demand access to a shared pool of computing resources, such as servers, storage, applications and services.

**Cloud Service Provider (CSP):** A company that contracts with a client, such as a government or military force, to provide cloud computing services and share a responsibility to protect against security risks and breaches.

**Deepfake:** Any media, such as images, video, or audio, synthesized by generative AI or edited by other digital tools to convincingly misrepresent someone as doing or saying something that was not actually done or said.

**Generative Artificial Intelligence:** A type of AI that can create new content, such as text, images, video, or audio, without direct human input.

**Machine Learning (ML):** The ability of an artificial intelligence to use statistical algorithms to make sense of or recognize patterns in qualitative, unstructured data, such as news feeds, pictures, or audio and video files.

**Meaningful Human Control (MHC):** Human judgment, awareness, and input while employing an autonomous system that has an affect on the system's behavior.

**Reconnaissance:** The gathering of military information by sending troops, aircraft, or other military resources into an adversary's territory.

**Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV):** An aircraft that is piloted remotely or flies autonomously, without human operators onboard. Commonly known as a drone.

## Topic History

From the introduction of gunpowder to the development of nuclear weapons, technological advancement has repeatedly helped nations gain enormous advantages in warfare. The current generation of warfare is being revolutionized by AI and autonomous weapons, which can not only sharpen but completely replace human decision-making capabilities, narrowing life-and-death options to split-second algorithmic determinations.

In the past decade, global powers have taken the lead in investing in AI and autonomous military technology that increase competitive advantages by optimizing decision cycles through information processing and pattern recognition. In 2014, the United States Department of Defense first put forth the "Third Offset Strategy," which prioritized the advancement of AI to ensure American military superiority over its "competitors", Russia and China, as put by former Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work. By 2016, the U.S. had increased its annual investment in AI, big data, and cloud computing from \$5.6 billion just half a decade prior to \$7.4 billion, funding new combat programs such as the Sea Hunter autonomous warship.

That same year, China published a position paper questioning if international laws at the time could adequately address the growing presence of autonomous weapons in war. In line with its strategic policy of military-civil fusion, in 2017, the Chinese Communist Party set out to expand its AI industry to \$150 billion by 2030, with the goal of implementing state-owned and commercial AI technology with military purposes to close the gap.

2017 marked a major year for technological advancement in warfare, with the U.S. launching Project Maven, a machine learning program at the Pentagon enabling the autonomous discernment of human targets. In the same year, Russia announced its work on AI-guided missiles with retargeting capabilities. Other nations have also joined the fray of innovation, with many Indian companies becoming major defense contractors in other nations and Israel adding extensive autonomous tools to its national security arsenal.

Not only do these actions constitute a contemporary arms race for computing power, but they also hold implications beyond the battlefield, in situations such as cyber-espionage, surveillance, and disinformation campaigns.

## **Current Situation**

Ongoing conflicts, such as the Russo-Ukraine War and the Israel-Hamas War, underscore the increasing role of technology in modern warfare. Unlike past conflicts that relied heavily on manpower and conventional tactics, contemporary wars are now driven by rapid technological advancements. From the use of drones in Ukraine to AI-assisted targeting in Gaza, modern warfare is evolving into a digital battlefield where decision-making speed and information processing play a decisive role. However, this technological reliance also introduces new threats, such as the dangers of flash wars, data breaches, and the use of deep fakes and generative AI to disrupt both machine learning models and human decision-making.

### ***Case Study- The Russo-Ukraine War***

One of the most significant technological advancements in the Russo-Ukraine War has been the use of drones. Unlike traditional military aircraft, drones offer a cost-effective and efficient method of reconnaissance, surveillance, and targeted attacks. Ukraine has employed both commercial and military-grade drones to disrupt Russian supply lines, target enemy forces, and conduct intelligence operations. These drones, often modified from off-the-shelf commercial models, have given Ukrainian forces an asymmetric advantage. The Ukrainian military has also combined the imagery, acoustic signals, and positional information collected by drones with other data from satellites and text to create data-fusion technologies that use AI to extract predictions and insights from every available source.

Moreover, technological advancements have allowed civilians to participate in the war effort by providing intelligence and manufacturing drone components. Civilians have used open-source intelligence (OSINT) in the form of satellite imagery and publicly available data to track the movements of Russian troops. With the advent of crowdfunding and decentralized information networks, they



leveraged social media platforms and digital tools to mobilize global support, and raise funds for military equipment.

The democratization that comes with technological advancement has reduced reliance on traditional government agencies and has allowed ordinary citizens to become vital assets in the war effort. However, this increased civilian participation also raises ethical concerns regarding the distinction between combatants and non-combatants in modern conflicts. Civilian engagement has broadened the scope of warfare, blurring the lines between combatants and non-combatants. Their involvement raises potential questions for the existing international laws governing the targeting of protected classes.

### ***Case Study- The Israel-Hamas War***

The Israel-Hamas War has highlighted another critical technological advancement: the use of AI in military targeting. Similar to Ukraine's use of data-fusion fusion technology, Israel has integrated algorithms into its defense systems to process vast amounts of battlefield data in real time. Systems such as the "Lavender" AI system can analyze the movements of adversarial troops, predict potential threats, and assist in target selection with greater speed and accuracy than human operators.

One of the most controversial aspects of AI-assisted targeting is its use in the densely populated Gaza Strip. The Israel Defense Forces' use of Microsoft Azure and other cloud computing services allow for the rapid identification of patterns in massive text datasets, including text messages and transcriptions of phone calls. This cloud computing can allow Israel to cross-check findings with other in-house targeting systems, enabling the military to pinpoint locations with higher accuracy.

On the flip side, while AI can enhance precision and minimize collateral damage, critics argue that relying on imperfect algorithms to order deadly strikes with little human oversight could lead to unintended civilian casualties and reduce human accountability in warfare. Furthermore, the widespread and systematic surveillance of Palestinians in Gaza combined with the human biases in Israeli law enforcement may give rise to situations in which data sets that train AI models to recognize militants may falsely identify civilians for targeting. The processing of location data from social media posts by journalists and medical staff have also led to what some human rights organizations call the deliberate targeting of these protected groups. AI-assisted transcription and translation tools, which can malfunction or produce unexpected results, are also capable of misinterpreting audio collected from civilians, resulting in the insertion of racial commentary and violent rhetoric not present in the original material.

As warfare becomes increasingly digital, the speed at which decisions are made and information is processed has become a decisive factor. Traditional command structures, which relied on hierarchical decision-making, are being replaced by real-time data analysis and rapid response systems. The ability to process vast amounts of data instantaneously can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

For instance, AI-driven systems can assess battlefield conditions, prioritize threats, and recommend strategies within seconds—far quicker than human decision-makers. However, this rapid decision-making also introduces risks, as overreliance on automation may lead to errors, miscalculations, or unintended escalations.

The balance between speed and accuracy remains a critical challenge for modern militaries. In the case of the Israeli military, where mandatory service applies to those who are 18 to 22 years of age, the overwhelmingly young population of soldiers often face pressure to find targets quickly. This pressure, combined with an overreliance on AI, can result in a soldier jumping to conclusions or ignoring human procedural elements designed to make military operations more deliberative. Already, there have been instances where soldiers have made mistakes in confirming the targeting of civilian structures.

Beyond the Russo-Ukraine War and the Israel-Hamas Conflict, the development of autonomous weapons itself can elevate global tensions and trigger military actions to break through current peace. The increased reliance on automation and AI in warfare raises the specter of “flash wars”—conflicts that escalate rapidly due to automated responses, cyber warfare, or AI misinterpretations. Similar to “flash crashes” in financial markets, where automated trading algorithms cause rapid market collapses, flash wars could occur when AI-driven defense systems misinterpret threats and trigger unintended military escalations.

In the case that an AI system falsely detects an imminent missile attack, it may recommend a retaliatory strike before human operators can verify the threat. Such scenarios increase the risk of accidental wars, especially between nuclear-armed states. As nations integrate AI into their military infrastructure, ensuring fail-safes and human oversight will be crucial in preventing unintended conflicts.



## Questions to Consider

1. How will the Security Council reckon with the existential risk posed by the potential loss of human control over AI systems?
2. Where should the line be drawn between the necessary regulation of technology in warfare and a potential overreach of UN intervention that chills progress and prevents nations from adequately responding to security threats?
3. How will the Security Council regulate instances where AWS may violate international law by targeting protected individuals such as medical personnel and journalists?
4. What should be the standard of MHC, if any, in the use of autonomous systems in warfare?
5. If AWS and other autonomous technologies make faulty decisions outside of human operators' intent, such as wrongfully targeting individuals, who can be held accountable for these errors, and how?
6. How might social biases in the data used to train machine learning models contribute to the inadvertent—or intentional—targeting of specific ethnic or political groups?
7. As public access to technology increases and the line between military and civilian technology blurs, how might civilians potentially impact or interfere with warfare through their use of technology?
8. How might military forces' increasing reliance on cloud computing in warfare leave them vulnerable to cyberattacks and security breaches?
9. How will the Security Council protect individuals', organizations', and nations' privacy from the unethical use of AI in surveillance and intelligence operations?
10. Does the use of deepfakes and generative AI to strategically influence public opinion, spread disinformation, and confuse both human and autonomous military operators fall within the Security Council's jurisdiction?

## Additional Resources

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# TOPIC TWO

# Re-evaluating the Role of the UN Peacekeepers



## Introduction

The confluence of internal issues, such as peacekeepers' failures to use force in deadly situations and ethical misconduct, as well as external challenges, including unfeasible mandates and significant expenses, have made the United Nations' peacekeeping operations ineffective and even harmful in some cases. The Security Council must reconsider the role of its peacekeeping efforts with values of anti-imperialism, accountability, and action in order to preserve and improve one of the Council's key enforcement mechanisms for civilian protection and global peace.

## Glossary

**United Nations Charter, Chapter VII:** "Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression." Authorizes the United Nations' use of force in peacekeeping missions under specific circumstances.

**Peacekeeping Mandate:** A directive from the United Nations Security Council toward peacebuilding activities such as disarmament, mine action, the protection of human rights, electoral support, rebuilding state authority, and facilitating socioeconomic recovery or development.

**Model Status-of-Forces Agreement (Model SOFA):** The model set forth in 1990 that lays out legally enforceable rights, obligations and duties between the United Nations and the host State of a UN peace operation. The model serves as a starting point from which the UN and the host State may discuss a specialized SOFA or a Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA).

**Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA):** An agreement, usually in force for a specified but renewable period of time, between an international organization and a State in which the former has deployed a mission, which shall regulate the rights, duties, obligations and activities of that mission vis-à-vis the host State.

**Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA):** A UN Secretariat department responsible for managing field-based political missions in Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East as well as electoral support for all UN member states.

**Department of Peace Operations (DPO):** A UN department responsible for the political and executive direction to UN peacekeeping operations around the world and maintains contact with the Security Council, troop and financial contributors, and parties to the conflict in the implementation of Security Council mandates.

**Protection of Civilians (POC):** A mandate that authorizes peacekeeping forces to use all necessary means, up to and including the use of deadly force, to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians.

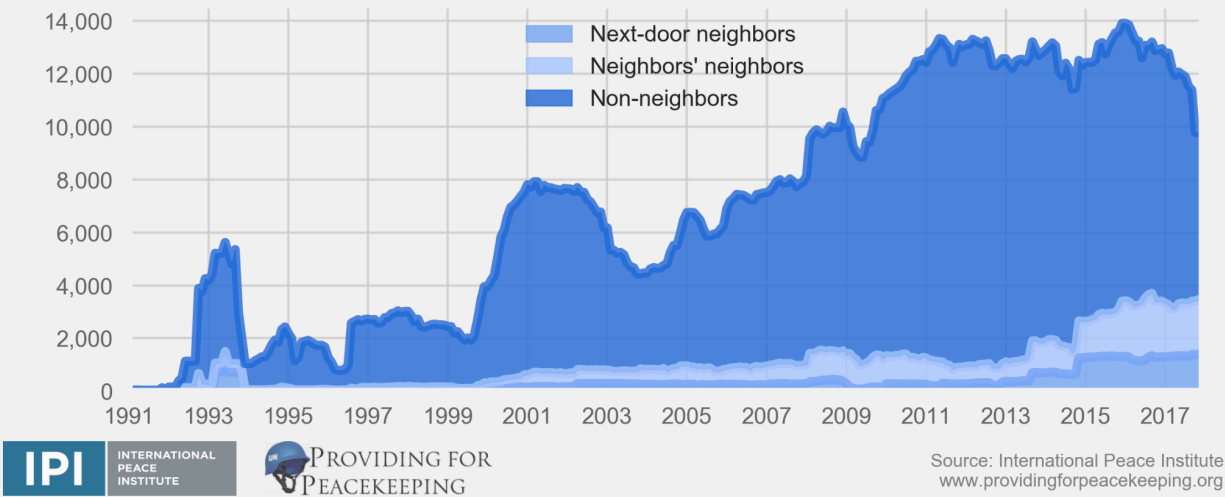
## Topic History

The United Nations' peacekeeping operations began when the Security Council authorized the deployment of UN military observers to monitor armistice agreements between Israel and the surrounding states of Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon in 1948. In the early years of UN peacekeeping, operations continued in a similar vein, with mostly unarmed observers and lightly armed troops carrying out monitoring functions in regions such as the Middle East, India, and Pakistan. The first armed peacekeeping operation was the First UN Emergency Force (UNEF I) in 1956 to respond to the Suez Crisis.

Following the Cold War, UN peacekeeping efforts greatly evolved to encompass increasingly "multidimensional" missions. Whereas missions in the early years focused on mediating conflicts and agreements among different states, post-Cold War missions often sent peacekeepers to respond to civil wars and other intra-state conflicts where local government relationships were much more strained, if not completely destabilized. Peacekeepers' tasks now include complex assignments such as rebuilding sustainable governing institutions; monitoring and protecting human rights; reforming security institutions such as local police forces; and disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating former combatants, many of whom were hostile toward peacekeepers themselves.

The rapidly complicating global circumstances after the Cold War called for a dramatic expansion of the UN peacekeeping forces, rising from 11,000 in 1989 to over 75,000 in 1994. The number of peacekeeping missions also starkly increased as operations were deployed in more regions such as Africa, Latin America, and Asia. While these initial changes were encouraging, the expanding size and responsibilities of the UN peacekeeping forces outpaced their capabilities, and the forces' bloating provided room for corruption, abuses, and inaction.

## Neighborhood police contributions to UN peacekeeping operations 1990–2017



Today, as the UN's forces total to more than 110,000 across 14 missions, these challenges persist. For YMUNC, as delegates consider the enduring role of the UN peacekeepers, the Security Council's often too-broad mandates should serve as a cautionary tale to delegates, reminding them not to cast too wide a net when devising solutions and consolidations.

## Current Situation

Various issues arise from the voluntary nature of UN peacekeeping. Peacekeepers are generally first affiliated with their nation's military, police, or other law enforcement. Military and police personnel can apply through their respective governments to join a peacekeeping unit. Police officers can also apply to become less heavily armed UN police officers, in which case they are "loaned" by their home governments for 6–12 month terms. It is also possible for individuals to serve as civilian volunteers. Member states can choose whether to contribute peacekeeping forces, so the nations represented in any given peacekeeping operation may introduce political tensions or individual state interests outside of the UN's direct functions.

One of the most pressing internal concerns within UN peacekeeping operations is the conduct of peacekeepers themselves. Reports of human rights violations, including sexual abuse committed by UN personnel, have severely undermined the credibility of these missions. While peacekeepers are meant to protect vulnerable populations, numerous cases of exploitation have emerged, particularly in missions across Africa and the Caribbean. Victims of such abuses are often left without legal recourse due to the lack of accountability mechanisms within the UN system.

Contributing countries retain legal authority over their troops, making prosecution difficult and enforcement of justice inconsistent. Despite attempts to address these concerns through stricter codes of conduct and training programs, significant gaps in enforcement persist, leaving many perpetrators unpunished.

In addition to misconduct, the lack of diversity within UN peacekeeping forces presents another challenge. Women and other marginalized groups remain underrepresented in peacekeeping missions, despite efforts to promote gender inclusivity. Female peacekeepers play a crucial role in engaging with local communities, particularly in addressing issues of sexual violence and building trust with affected populations. However, structural barriers within contributing countries, as well as entrenched biases within military and peacekeeping institutions, limit their participation. Increasing diversity in peacekeeping is not merely an issue of representation but also one of effectiveness. Diverse peacekeeping forces can better understand and respond to the needs of the populations they serve, enhancing the overall impact of UN missions.

While internal issues undermine peacekeeping credibility, external challenges also significantly impact mission effectiveness. One of the primary threats to UN peacekeepers is the danger they face in conflict zones. Unlike conventional military forces, peacekeepers often operate in volatile environments without the capacity to engage in offensive military operations. This restriction places them at considerable risk, particularly in areas where armed groups do not recognize their authority. Attacks on peacekeepers have increased in recent years, with some missions suffering heavy casualties due to ambushes, bombings, and targeted violence. The inability to use force effectively—even in self-defense—limits peacekeepers' ability to maintain security and protect civilians.

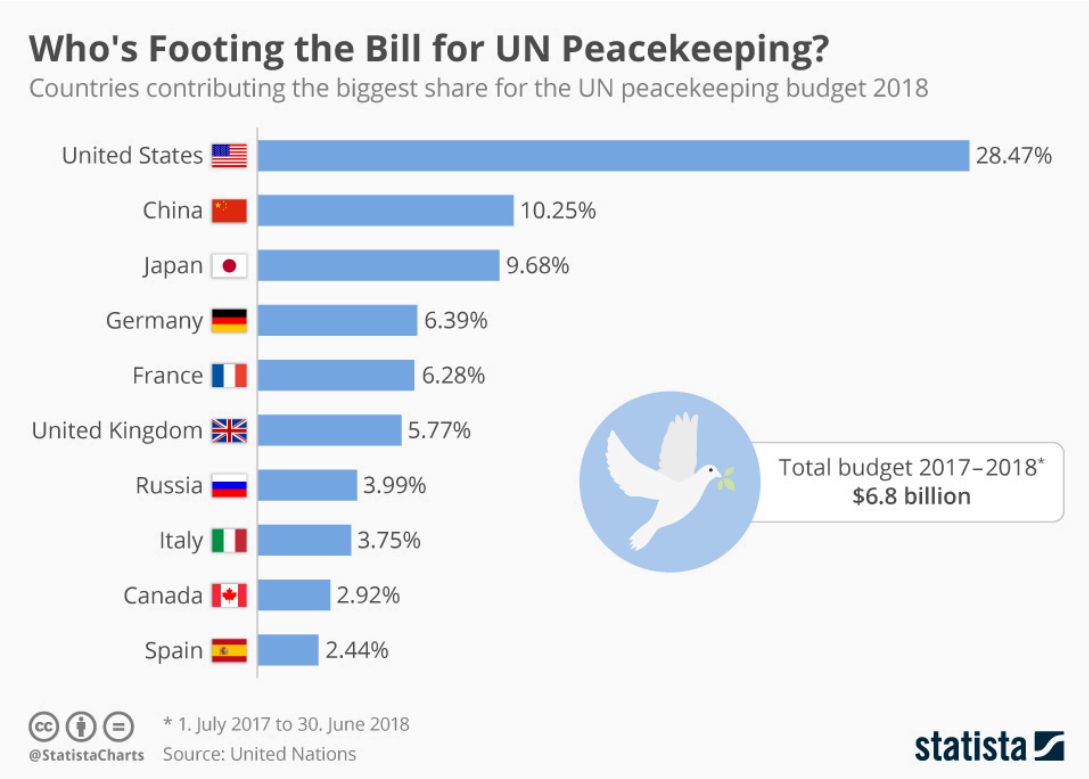
Compounding this issue is the reluctance of UN forces to use force even when their mandate allows for it. The principle of impartiality often discourages proactive engagement, even in situations where violence against civilians is imminent. This reluctance has been criticized in cases where peacekeepers failed to prevent atrocities due to constraints on their ability to intervene. The challenge remains in balancing the need for non-aggression with the responsibility to protect vulnerable populations. Reforming rules of engagement and clarifying mandates can help ensure that peacekeepers are empowered to act decisively in crises.

Another major external challenge is the feasibility of peacekeeping mandates, particularly when peacekeepers lack established relationships with local authorities. In many cases, UN missions are deployed in regions where the host government is either uncooperative or actively hostile to international intervention. This limits the ability of peacekeepers to operate effectively, as they may be denied access to conflict zones or prevented from engaging with key stakeholders. Without local cooperation, peacekeeping missions struggle to implement their objectives, often reducing their presence to symbolic rather than substantive engagement.



Eroding public trust in UN peacekeeping further complicates mission success. In regions where past peacekeeping operations have failed to prevent violence or have been marred by allegations of misconduct, local populations often view peacekeepers with skepticism. Restoring trust requires greater accountability, transparency, and engagement with local communities. Without the support of the people they are meant to protect, peacekeepers face increased resistance and diminished effectiveness.

Finally, the financial constraints of UN peacekeeping pose a fundamental challenge. Peacekeeping operations are heavily dependent on funding from a few key donors, particularly the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5). This financial dependency creates vulnerabilities, as political disputes among donor states can result in budget cuts or withdrawal of support for critical missions. Insufficient funding leads to understaffed and under-resourced missions, reducing their ability to fulfill their mandates. A more sustainable funding model—one that diversifies contributions and ensures consistent financial support—is necessary to maintain effective peacekeeping operations.



## Questions to Consider

1. How will the Security Council diversify its funding sources to finance the UN's peacekeeping operations?
2. Given the existing social problems within the UN's peacekeeping forces, including sexual abuse, how can the Security Council promote women's and gender minorities' participation in peacekeeping efforts without inadvertently increasing their exposure to danger and gender-based discrimination?
3. Does the environmental impact of the UN's peacekeeping forces fall under the Security Council's jurisdiction, and if so, how should the Council manage the carbon footprint of such a large and widespread force?
4. In conflicts where peacekeepers face significant danger, how can the UN promote relations and cooperation with local authorities to mitigate security risks and increase defensive power, especially in cases where a state's government may be destabilized?
5. Might the public's eroding trust in the UN's peacekeeping efforts due to both internal and external problems mean that vulnerable civilians are less willing to accept peacekeepers' aid?
6. How will the Security Council avoid overly broad and ill-defined mandates while also attempting to handle complex situations that require enormous resources and coordination?
7. How will the Security Council effectively deploy peacekeeping operations when a permanent member is a belligerent or supporter of a belligerent in a conflict?

## Additional Resources

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