

# **HS Security Council**

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## Introduction from the Chairs

Hello delegates,

Welcome to the Security Council at this year's GMUN. My name is João Vitor Ansanelli, and I am honored to serve as your Chair alongside Ian Santucci and Nicolas Fiorini. Together, we are committed to bringing a dynamic and productive committee experience for all delegates. This year's agenda features two urgent challenges that demand your critical thinking and diplomatic skill: The Situation in the South China Sea and The Illicit Arms Trade in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Both topics reflect ongoing geopolitical tensions and raise questions that are essential to international peace and security. We have intentionally selected these issues to push you beyond surface-level debates and into deep, solution-oriented negotiations that will require creativity, cooperation, and respect for diverse perspectives.

As delegates in the Security Council, your role is not simply to advocate for your assigned country's interests, but to engage with your fellow representatives in a spirit of constructive dialogue. We encourage you to come prepared, participate actively in all sessions, and contribute thoughtfully to both formal and informal discussions.

Approach each conversation with diplomacy, respect, and an open mind, recognizing that compromise and collaboration are central to effective multilateral decision-making. Our goal is for you not only to learn about the complexities of these global issues, but also to develop the leadership, negotiation, and analytical skills that define successful diplomats.

We wish you the best in your preparation and look forward to an exciting and productive committee session.

Kind regards,

JV and Ian, and Nicolas

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## Guide to Researching

The following information will serve to guide you in your research.

The first thing you should do is find the basics about your country. The sources you use should be reliable— meaning that the writer (whether that be an organization, a well-known author, an expert in the field, or a governmental organization) are credible and trusted by most. Sources such as Google Scholar and some websites that end with (examplewebsite.edu) are also great tools since they are both for educational purposes. Below are some questions you should answer and [this document](#) contains many sources that you can use to do external research.

1. Where is my country situated?
2. Who is the leader of my country? (President, Prime Minister, etc)
3. What are some major cities in my country?
4. What are the major news stories out of my country currently? (ex. Google: \_\_\_\_\_ news)
5. What is the standard of living? (Economic, political, social, humanitarian issues, Global-South country?)
6. Is my country part of any major alliance? If so, who are my allies?

Continue reading and understanding the information within the topic guide, and extend your knowledge by asking yourself more questions and search for the answers! Your chairs have worked very hard to make sure this topic guide gives you foundational knowledge on what you will be discussing, but don't be afraid to take your learning further!

Good luck and please reach out to us if anything is needed,

Ian, Joao and Nicolas

## Introduction to the Security Council



Gowan, Richard. *The UN Security Council Between Rifts and Reform*. International Crisis Group, 13 July 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/un-security-council-between-rifts-and-reform>

The UN Security Council was founded as part of the United Nations charter in 1945. Its primary aim is to maintain international peace and security by preventing conflicts and overseeing peacekeeping operations. The council is composed of five permanent members (United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China) and ten elected members that are elected for two year terms. Unlike other UN bodies, the Security Council can adopt legally binding resolutions, authorize sanctions, establish peacekeeping operations, and, in extreme cases, permit the use of force. The UNSC has not passed resolutions specifically on the South China Sea due to the strategic interests of permanent members, especially China, a direct claimant. As a P5 member, China can veto any action it perceives as challenging its territorial or maritime claims. As a result, the South China Sea issue is often managed outside the UNSC, through regional diplomacy and bilateral negotiations.

## Topic A: The Situation in the South China Sea



### Background Information

#### *Origin of the problem,*

The South China Sea is a strategically important and highly contested region for both maritime trade and fishing activities. It is bound on the western edge by the People's Republic of China and on the southern edge by Indonesia. Historically, the South China Sea dispute originated from ancient navigation records clashing with post World War II disputes. The primary dispute is that both China and Vietnam claim historical ties to the Paracel and Spratly islands, but these references were never formalized in international law. A major turning point came when China introduced the "eleven dash-line" later revised into the modern "nine-dash line" both being used to assert historical rights to most of the sea. During the Cold War, regional claims intensified, and by the 1970s multiple states began occupying features in the Spratlys in response to newly discovered resource prospects.

Key legal and political developments have shaped the modern situation. The most significant is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which defines maritime zones such as the 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and remains the central legal framework for resolving maritime disputes (UNCLOS, 1982). In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration issued a landmark ruling in *Philippines v. China*, rejecting the nine-dash line as having no basis in international law and clarifying that several contested features are legally “rocks” or “low-tide elevations,” not islands with EEZ-generating capacity (PCA, 2016). China rejected the ruling, limiting its practical impact.

The dispute involves numerous actors. China asserts extensive historical rights and has built artificial islands with military installations. The Philippines and Vietnam defend UNCLOS-based EEZ claims and frequently confront Chinese vessels. Malaysia and Brunei maintain smaller, UNCLOS-based claims. Taiwan mirrors China’s historical claim. Beyond the region, the United States conducts freedom-of-navigation operations, emphasizing open sea lanes rather than territorial claims.



## *Current Situation*

Today the South China Sea remains a highly contested and strategically critical maritime region. It is notorious for its frequent maritime confrontations and a stalled diplomacy. Most incidents occur between China and the Philippines: In January 2025, the Philippines formally protested the presence of Chinese Coast Guard vessels operating within what Manila considers its exclusive economic zone, labeling these actions “clear violations” of Philippine and international law, including UNCLOS and the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling that invalidated China’s nine-dash-line claim.

A significant event occurred on August 11, 2025, when a Chinese Coast Guard ship and a Chinese Navy vessel collided near Scarborough Shoal while pursuing a Philippine patrol vessel, a dramatic event that highlighted how hazardous operations have become in disputed waters. These incidents take place against a backdrop of escalating encounters and unsafe maneuvers, which analysts say rose substantially between 2022 and 2024, demonstrating how everyday operations risk miscalculation. [Eurasia Review](#)

In response to ongoing tensions, regional diplomacy has focused on finalizing a Code of Conduct (COC) between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China. Negotiations, which have been underway in various forms since 2002, have accelerated in 2025, with the Philippines and other ASEAN states seeking to complete a binding agreement by 2026 to reduce dangerous confrontations at sea. [Anadolu Ajansı+1](#) Still, disagreements over the code’s legal status and scope remain, particularly with China pushing for a non-binding framework and several ASEAN members advocating enforceable commitments.



*Hille, Kathrin. "Chinese Navy Begins US Economic Zone Patrols." Financial Times, 2 June 2013, [www.ft.com/content/02ce257e-cb4a-11e2-8ff3-00144feab7de](http://www.ft.com/content/02ce257e-cb4a-11e2-8ff3-00144feab7de). Accessed [date you accessed the article]*

### *Past UN Actions*



Although the United Nations has not passed any Security Council resolutions directly addressing sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, the UN has played a significant indirect role through international law, official statements, and judicial mechanisms. Its involvement has shaped the legal framework and diplomatic expectations surrounding the dispute.

The most influential UN action affecting the South China Sea is the adoption of UNCLOS, which establishes rules for territorial seas, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and maritime rights. All major claimants—China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia—are parties to UNCLOS. Another action was the Permanent Court of Arbitration's Ruling in 2016. Although the PCA is not a UN body, it operates under procedures connected to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. In *Philippines v. China*, the tribunal ruled that China's "nine-dash line" claim had no legal basis under UNCLOS and that several features claimed by China could not generate EEZs.

## Suggested questions for further research

- 1) What historical factors have contributed to the South China Sea dispute? How have colonial-era claims and resource competition shaped current tensions?
  - 2) How have different countries, such as China, the Philippines, Vietnam, and the U.S., addressed the dispute? What strategies have they used, and with what outcomes?
  - 3) What challenges prevent effective regional or international collaboration? Consider competing national interests, militarization, and lack of enforcement mechanisms.
- How do environmental degradation and resource competition in the South China Sea (such as overfishing, coral reef destruction, and oil and gas exploration) exacerbate tensions among states and complicate long-term cooperation?

## Bloc Positions

 <p style="text-align: center;">China</p>	<p>China claims sovereignty over most of the South China Sea based on historical usage, reflected in the nine-dash line. It asserts control over the Paracel and Spratly Islands and rejects the 2016 arbitration ruling, arguing the tribunal lacked jurisdiction. China emphasizes resolving disputes bilaterally, opposes “external interference,” and supports a non-binding Code of Conduct with ASEAN.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">USA</p>	<p>The United States is not a claimant in the South China Sea but supports a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. It emphasizes freedom of navigation, UNCLOS-based maritime rights, and the 2016 arbitration ruling favoring the Philippines. Overall, the U.S. seeks peaceful dispute resolution and prevents any single power from dominating the region.</p>

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Philippines</b></p>	<p>The Philippines bases its South China Sea position on UNCLOS and its 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which includes areas like the West Philippine Sea. It upholds the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling, which invalidated China’s nine-dash line and affirmed Philippine maritime rights. The Philippines seeks a rules-based, peaceful resolution and supports a binding ASEAN Code of Conduct,.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Vietnam</b></p>	<p>Vietnam claims sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly Islands, citing historical presence and international law. It rejects China’s nine-dash line and supports UNCLOS-based maritime rights, maintaining military outposts on several Spratly features. Hanoi emphasizes bilateral negotiations to resolve disputes but also strengthens regional cooperation with ASEAN and defense partnerships with countries like the United States and Japan.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Malaysia</b></p>	<p>Malaysia claims a portion of the South China Sea based on its 200-nautical-mile EEZ under UNCLOS, including parts of the Spratly Islands. Kuala Lumpur emphasizes peaceful dispute resolution and supports a binding ASEAN Code of Conduct with China. While it generally avoids direct confrontation, Malaysia monitors maritime activities to protect its fishing, energy, and security interests. Its approach is about cooperating diplomatically with neighbors and international partners.</p>

## **Timeline of Events**

**1947** – The Republic of China publishes a map showing the “eleven-dash line”, asserting historical claims over most of the South China Sea.

**1951–1974** – After World War II, multiple states begin occupying islands and reefs. China seizes the Paracel Islands from Vietnam in 1974, consolidating control.

**1970s** – Spratly Islands’ resources, including fisheries and potential oil and gas, drive competing occupations by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei.

**1982** – Adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) establishes territorial seas, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and continental shelves, forming the modern legal framework for maritime disputes.

**1992** – China enacts its Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone, asserting sovereignty over islands and maritime features in the South China Sea.

**1995** – China seizes Mischief Reef from the Philippines, increasing tensions in the Spratlys.

**2002** – ASEAN and China sign the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), pledging non-militarization and peaceful dispute resolution.

**2012** – Scarborough Shoal standoff between China and the Philippines raises international attention.

**2013–2016** – The Philippines initiates arbitration at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) under UNCLOS.

**2016** – PCA issues a ruling invalidating China’s nine-dash line claim and confirming Philippine maritime rights. China rejects the decision.

**2018–2022** – China militarizes artificial islands; the U.S. conducts regular Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) to challenge excessive claims.

**2023–2025** – ASEAN and China accelerate negotiations on a Code of Conduct (COC); sporadic maritime incidents continue, including confrontations between Chinese and Philippine vessels.

**Present** – The South China Sea remains contested, with overlapping claims, militarization, environmental degradation, and ongoing efforts to achieve a binding COC under ASEAN guidance.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

- ★ **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** A maritime zone extending **200 nautical miles** from a country's coastline, in which the state has rights to exploit resources such as fisheries and oil. EEZs are central to disputes in the South China Sea, where overlapping claims create tension.
- ★ **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** An international treaty (1982) defining territorial seas, EEZs, continental shelves, and navigational rights. UNCLOS serves as the primary legal framework for addressing maritime disputes in the South China Sea.
- ★ **Nine-Dash Line:** A demarcation used by China to claim most of the South China Sea, overlapping EEZs of several Southeast Asian countries. The line is not recognized under UNCLOS and was invalidated in the 2016 PCA ruling.
- ★ **Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs):** Naval patrols conducted to assert international rights to **free passage through international waters**. The U.S. regularly performs FONOPs in the South China Sea to challenge excessive maritime claims.

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## **Topic B: The Illicit Arms Trade in Sub-Saharan Africa**



### **Background Information**

#### *Origin of the problem,*

The illicit arms trade in Sub-Saharan Africa refers to the unregulated flow and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) such as assault rifles, pistols, ammunition, and related components, across borders and into the hands of non-state actors or insurgent groups. This underground market undermines peace, fuels violent conflict, weakens governance, and hampers economic and social development throughout the region. Given the human cost of conflict and the strategic importance of security in Africa, this issue is a critical concern for the United Nations and regional bodies alike.

The roots of the illicit arms trade in the region span decades of war, political instability, and weak state capacity. After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of many authoritarian regimes, surplus weapons entered African markets, while civil wars in Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in the 1990s created demand for cheap, portable arms. Conflicts such

as the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya dispersed large stockpiles of weapons, which spread through the Sahel and beyond, fueling rebellion and terrorism in countries like Mali, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. These dynamics have perpetuated an arms ecology in which weapons circulate freely across borders and into community and criminal contexts. [The United Nations Office at Geneva+1](#)

Over time, large networks of trafficking have developed, involving a range of actors, from organized crime groups and corrupt officials to tribal militias and non-state armed groups. In West Africa's tri-border areas (e.g., Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali), illicit arms are moved by both high-level rings and low-level transporters exploiting porous borders. [Small Arms Survey](#) These weapons often enter civilian circulation, exacerbating local disputes and enabling persistent insecurity.

Several major developments and instruments have sought to address the problem. In 2010, the Kinshasa Convention was adopted to strengthen cooperation in Central Africa by regulating small arms import, manufacture, and transfer, aiming to combat illicit trafficking and armed violence. [Wikipedia](#) At the continental level, African Union member states have engaged in declarations and protocols aimed at controlling the spread of SALW and integrating disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in post-conflict settings. Internationally, the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and regional moratoriums seek to curb illicit flows, though implementation remains uneven.

### *Current Situation*

The illicit arms trade in Sub-Saharan Africa remains a central driver of insecurity in 2025, sustaining armed conflict, violent extremism, and organized crime. UN monitoring bodies estimate that millions of small arms and light weapons (SALW) continue to circulate illegally across the region, contributing to high levels of armed violence and hindering stabilization efforts (UN PoA Report, 2024). Small Arms Survey research likewise points to a persistent

oversupply of civilian-held and diverted military weapons, particularly in the Sahel and Horn of Africa (Small Arms Survey, 2023).

Recent incidents highlight the urgency. Weapons looted from Sudan's conflict and trafficked through Libya, Chad, and South Sudan have re-armed non-state groups and militias, while extremist organizations such as Boko Haram and Islamic State affiliates continue to procure small arms through regional trafficking corridors (UN Panel of Experts, 2024). Porous borders, weak customs capacity, and corruption remain structural enablers of these flows.

Efforts to address the problem span international, regional, and national levels. Globally, the UN Programme of Action on SALW (PoA) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) underpin cooperation on stockpile management, weapons tracing, and reporting (UNODA, 2024). Regionally, the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative and frameworks such as the Bamako Declaration guide member states in harmonizing controls and improving monitoring (AU Commission, 2023). Sub-regional organizations—including ECOWAS, SADC, and the Nairobi Protocol framework—maintain legally binding mechanisms regulating arms transfers and promoting joint border operations.

Still, significant challenges persist. Politically, instability in the Sahel, Great Lakes, and Horn regions fuels demand for weapons. Economically, arms trafficking is embedded in broader illicit economies—such as gold, charcoal, and drug smuggling—creating incentives for networks to diversify and expand (GI-TOC, 2023). Socially, community-level conflicts between pastoralists and farmers become more lethal when illicit firearms are involved. Environmental pressures, especially drought and displacement, exacerbate competition over land and resources, increasing reliance on weapons for protection.

### *Past UN Actions*




Past UN actions to address the illicit arms trade in sub-Saharan Africa have centered on developing global frameworks and strengthening state capacities to control small arms and light weapons (SALW). A major milestone was the 2001 UN Programme of Action (PoA), which created the first comprehensive global strategy for preventing and combating illicit SALW



through improved national legislation, stockpile management, border controls, and international cooperation. The UN also adopted the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) to enhance the marking and tracing of weapons used in conflict zones throughout Africa. In addition to normative frameworks, the UN Security Council issued several resolutions targeting illicit arms flows into specific conflict-affected regions. Resolution 1209 (1998) highlighted the destabilizing role of illicit weapons in Africa and called on states to strengthen national controls. Resolution 1467 (2003) encouraged West African governments to coordinate border security and share intelligence to reduce cross-border trafficking. Resolution 1649 (2005) addressed arms flows fueling militia activity in the Great Lakes region, urging states to support disarmament efforts and enforce embargoes. Several UN peacekeeping missions were also mandated to monitor arms embargoes in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, providing on-the-ground verification and reporting on violations. Through agencies like UNODA and UN regional centres, the UN offered technical assistance, training, and capacity-building programs to improve states' ability to trace weapons, manage stockpiles, and curb diversion. While these actions established strong international norms and improved monitoring, they were often undermined by weak enforcement, porous borders, and limited state capacity, reducing their overall effectiveness.

### **Suggested questions for further research**

- 1) What are the root causes of the illicit arms trade in sub-Saharan Africa, including political, economic, and social factors?
- 2) How have different countries, both within Africa and globally, approached this problem in the past, and what strategies have been effective or ineffective?
- 3) What are the main obstacles to effective international cooperation on this issue, including legal, political, and logistical challenges?
- 4) How can the UN and its member states develop sustainable solutions to reduce the proliferation of illicit arms while supporting regional stability?
- 5) How do illicit arms flows interact with other issues, such as terrorism, organized crime, and resource exploitation, and how can these connections be addressed in policy-making?

## Bloc Positions

 <p>Nigeria</p>	<p>Nigeria's position emphasizes that the illicit arms trade directly fuels terrorism, banditry, and separatist violence within its borders and across West Africa. As a leading regional power, Nigeria supports stronger implementation of the UN Programme of Action while insisting on increased international assistance for border security, stockpile management, and tracing systems.</p>
 <p>USA</p>	<p>The U.S. views illicit arms flows in sub-Saharan Africa primarily through a counterterrorism and stability lens, linking weapons trafficking to the expansion of groups like al-Shabaab, ISIS-West Africa, and regional militias. Washington strongly supports implementation of the PoA, the Arms Trade Treaty principles, and advanced marking and tracing technologies. It funds numerous capacity-building programs that train African security forces, improve customs systems, and strengthen border surveillance.</p>
 <p>South Africa</p>	<p>South Africa views illicit arms trafficking as a threat to regional peace, particularly in Southern Africa and the Great Lakes region. Pretoria supports the UN Programme of Action and the Kinshasa Convention, emphasizing the need for strict national controls, stockpile management, and law-enforcement capacity. South Africa also promotes SADC-led regional cooperation, including joint border patrols and intelligence sharing, to intercept illicit weapons flows.</p>

 <p data-bbox="316 577 600 630"><b>D.R. Congo</b></p>	<p data-bbox="722 241 1404 619">The DRC views illicit arms trafficking as a central driver of armed conflict, particularly in the eastern provinces where militias and rebel groups operate. Kinshasa supports the UN Programme of Action and regional frameworks such as the Kinshasa Convention, focusing on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of armed groups. Overall, the DRC emphasizes international assistance to strengthen border controls, improve stockpile management, and enhance weapons tracing systems.</p>
 <p data-bbox="397 1071 519 1123"><b>Mali</b></p>	<p data-bbox="722 693 1404 1060">Mali sees illicit arms trafficking as a key driver of insurgency and instability in the Sahel. The country supports the UN Programme of Action and regional cooperation through ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel, focusing on border security, stockpile management, and strengthening security forces. Mali emphasizes that arms-exporting states must prevent diversion to conflict zones and links weapons proliferation to broader instability, advocating strategies that address both security and socio-economic root causes.</p>

## Timeline of Events

**1945** – United Nations (UN) established, providing a platform for global peace, security, and later arms control initiatives.

**1997** – UN Security Council imposes arms embargoes on Sierra Leone to curb illicit weapons fueling the civil war.

**1998** – UNSC Resolution 1209 highlights the destabilizing impact of illicit arms flows in Africa, urging stronger national controls.

**2001** – UN adopts the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA), establishing a global framework for preventing and combating illicit weapons proliferation.

**2003** – UNSC Resolution 1467 calls for West African states to strengthen border security and regional cooperation to stop small arms trafficking.

**2005** – UNSC Resolution 1649 addresses arms flows in the Great Lakes region, linking them to militia activity and resource exploitation.

**2010** – The Kinshasa Convention is adopted by Central African states to regulate SALW manufacture, transfer, and stockpile security.

**2019** – UNSC Resolution 2457 reaffirms concern over illicit arms in Africa, urging implementation of PoA and regional control measures.

**2020s** – Ongoing initiatives by AU, ECOWAS, SADC, and NGOs focus on border monitoring, stockpile management, weapons tracing, and capacity building to curb trafficking.

## Definition of Key Terms

- ★ **Illicit Arms Trade:** The unauthorized production, transfer, or sale of weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons (SALW), which fuel conflicts, crime, and instability in sub-Saharan Africa.
- ★ **Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW):** Weapons designed for individual or small-group use, including handguns, rifles, machine guns, and light artillery. SALW are central to regional insecurity due to their ease of transport and proliferation.
- ★ **UN Programme of Action (PoA):** A 2001 UN framework aiming to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW through national legislation, stockpile management, and international cooperation.
- ★ **International Tracing Instrument (ITI):** A UN tool for marking and tracing weapons to help identify sources of illicit arms and prevent diversion to conflict zones.
- ★ **Arms Embargo:** A UN Security Council-mandated prohibition on the sale, transfer, or supply of weapons to specific countries or groups to reduce conflict and human suffering.

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