

BSBMUN VIII



Political Committee

Study Guide

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Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

As members of this year's Political Committee, we would like to welcome you to the 2022 edition of BSBMUN! We are highly honoured to be serving as your chair throughout this conference and are committed to making our committee a comfortable and lively environment for all of your participants. We are beyond excited to have the opportunity to work with you and eager to hear your contribution to the lively and fruitful debate that will take place.

As you may know, the Political committee is derived from the real UN committee, Special Political and Decolonization Committee(SPECOL). However, the Political Committee (POCO) differs in that it deals with territorial, diplomatic, and political issues rather than decolonization. As such our committee will be made up of 17 different delegations all representing vastly different interests and opinions. The goal of this committee will be to reach a peaceful resolution for these conflicts and find the best possible compromise. Delegates will be expected to complete these tasks with the utmost regard for the dignity of others and diplomacy. We are confident all of the debates will be held in good spirits and will provide excellent experiences for you.

This year, in the Political Committee, we will be discussing and trying to find cooperative solutions to the conflicts in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Kurdish situation in southern Turkey. The aforementioned topics are of extreme importance in today's geopolitical sphere and have real impacts on the lives of people that reside in these territories. This will be an excellent opportunity for you to expand your horizons and acquire more knowledge regarding the geo-political state of the world. We have carefully prepared this study guide to help guide you through your research and preparation for this conference.

If any questions arise, please do not hesitate to contact us (contacts below). We cannot wait to meet and debate with you!

Sincerely,

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Topic A:

Addressing territorial disputes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region



Azerbaijani Soldiers at Victory March held in Baku
The Guardian

Background Information

Introduction:

The Region of **Nagorno-Karabakh** has been highly disputed for decades due to both the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijani Republic claiming parts of it as their own country. This frontier conflict stems from the close proximity of ethnic Armenians and ethnic Azerbaijanis in the area. Tensions between these two ethnic groups has not been uncommon throughout history and continue today. These conflicts and flare-ups have caused over 30,000 casualties and hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the war.

Soviet Implications and the Bishkek Protocol:

These two nations were formerly a part of the Soviet Union. This made quelled tensions for many years as this significantly decreased the importance of borders. However, ethnic tensions have always existed between the two and the Soviet Union Collapsed so did the relative stability of the region. As both nations gained their statehood amidst the dissolution of the Soviet Union the Nagorno-Karabakh region declared independence. This caused a war to break out between Armenia and Azerbaijan to secure full control of the region. By 1993 Armenia secured around 20% of the territory and this prompted Russia to broker a cease-fire in 1994. This cease-fire was named the **Bishkek Protocol**. This deal lets the region act as independent while still relying on the economic help of both nations. In 1994 the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security was created. This group is currently chaired by the Russian Federation, France and the United States. This group was mainly created to give a platform for peace talks and to bring stability to the region. Although, this forum has failed to find a permanent solution.

2016 flare-up and high tensions:

Drone and Missile operations led by both states caused intermittent fighting at the border but overall the region stayed relatively peaceful until 2016 when full-fledged fighting broke out at the borders for 4 days. This caused hundreds of casualties on both sides. However, the situation was quickly resolved by a cease-fire signed by both countries but this solution did not last long as diplomatic talks and relations broke down thereafter.

Since diplomatic relations stalled both countries have been accusing each other of various cease-fire violations and tensions have remained extremely high.

Second Nagorno-Karabakh War:

In September 2020 heavy fighting broke out due to repeated cross-border attacks from both sides. This led to a six-week war where over 7,000 military and civilians perished. What was more concerning about this conflict however was the refusal of both nations to engage in diplomatic discussion even after international and UN pleads. Both states rejected these demands and instead vowed to keep fighting. This was until Russia managed to broker a peace agreement in which Azerbaijan gained back much of the land it had lost in the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. This cease-fire was further strengthened by Russian peacekeeping forces. This cease-fire was generally regarded as a band-aid fix to the situation and did not stop fighting from breaking out again in 2022.



<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/01/azerbaijan-armenia-scores-of-civilians-killed-by-indiscriminate-use-of-weapons-in-conflict-over-nagorno-karabakh/>

Global Political Implications:

This conflict brings more instability to an already extremely futile region and could deem catastrophic in terms of loss of life. Over 800,000 people have already been displaced from their homes due to past flare-ups in tension. This is not to mention the immense loss of life both countries could incur if further war were to break out. As well as all this region has significant oil exports shipping about 800,000 barrels a day meaning complications created by war might complicate the exportation. There are also many underlying political alliances at play; Russia is a long-time supporter of Armenia and has bilateral security

agreements with the nations while Turkey is a very vocal and active supporter of the Azerbaijani invasion. Turkey is of course a NATO member and war in the area could pit two long-time opposing blocks against each other.

Timeline of Events

First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988–1994)

This war was fought by the ethnic groups of the regions. These groups enjoyed backing from both sides until both sides formally got entangled. Full-fledged fighting started in 1992 and was hence considered a war. OSCE failed to find a peaceful resolution to this conflict. A Russian brokered Cease-Fire was signed in 1994 and opened up diplomatic relationships.

Border clashes (1994–2020)

Unrest at the border continued between the two sides with the worst violence coming in 2008 and 2010. In 2008 Armenia accused Azerbaijan of taking advantage of ongoing unrest in Armenia.

In 2016 heavy fighting broke out along the border leaving above 80 soldiers dead and tensions at an all-time high.

Second Nagorno-Karabakh war (2020)

Fighting at the border re-erupted and prompted Armenia to declare martial law and a mobilization. Azerbaijan was also forced to declare a state of emergency and martial law. This war lasted 44 days and caused the greatest amount of casualties since the 1994 cease-fire was signed. In the end, Russia once again brokered a peace deal and sent in peace-keeping troops.

Current border crisis (2021–present)

The ongoing crisis started when Azerbaijani forces crossed into the Armenian territory and took control of about 41 square kilometres of land. Azerbaijani troops remain in the area to this day even with international condemnation. Now in September of 2022, an even larger-scale conflict broke out when Azerbaijan attacked Armenian positions in multiple cities. Azerbaijan claimed it was due to Armenian provocation and Armenia alleges it was unprovoked.

Position of Major Blocs and Countries

Azerbaijani Coalition/Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia

This bloc strongly supports the Azerbaijani incursions into Armenia and believes in furthering military operations in the region to expand Azerbaijani territory.

CSTO/Armenia, Russia

These countries support the Armenian position and have bilateral security agreements meaning Russia would be obligated to intervene if a war were to break out. Ultimately Russia has been trying to find a peaceful resolution and has sent peacekeeping troops.

Active Peace Seeking/ Iran

Iran has declared itself neutral and has actively been making efforts to resolve the war as rapidly as possible. They have even offered themselves as mediators for a possible peace deal.

Neutral(Support Diplomatic option)/UK, Pakistan, Syria, Greece, Lebanon, Israel, Iraq, and Sweden

These nations want to see a peaceful and diplomatic resolution to the conflict while starting investigations into the alleged war crimes.

Support Both/USA

The USA's stance on this war has varied and they have continued to supply weapons to both sides. As of late, they have expressed vocal support of Armenia.

Questions to Consider

- 1) What response would be appropriate from the international community?
- 2) Are Russia and The United States suitable chair for the Minsk Security group given the current situation in regions like Ukraine?
- 3) Should there be international military intervention in the area and if so to who should the land go to?

Further Research

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- <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/latest-developments-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan-uk-statement-to-the-osce>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/10/human-rights-groups-detail-war-crimes-in-nagorno-karabakh>
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- <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/15/azerbaijan-says-71-soldiers-killed-in-armenia-border-clashes>
- <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/nagorno-karabakh-conflict>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/photography/2020/10/26/nagorno-karabakh-chronicle-endless-strife/>

Topic B:

Tackling the impact of the Kurdish - Turkish conflict on the political stability of the region.



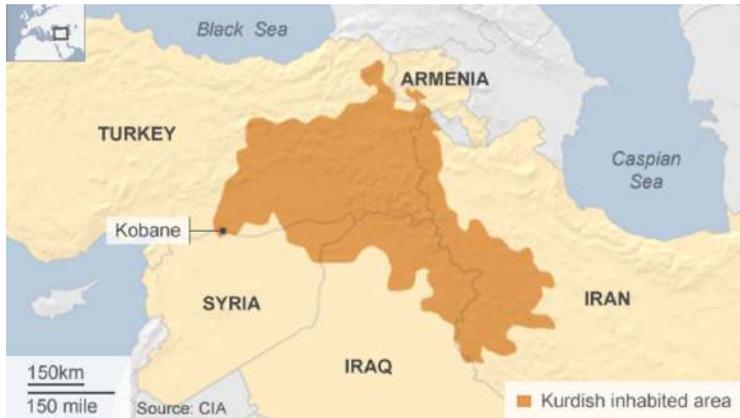
Turkish soldiers outside the border town of Ras al-Ain during their assault on Kurdish-held border towns.

[The New York Time](#)

Background Information

Introduction

The Kurds are one of the indigenous peoples of the Mesopotamian plain and the highlands in what are now south-eastern Turkey, north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, north-western Iran, and south-western Armenia.



Having originated even before the 7th century, the Kurd community is strongly united through race, culture, and language. They adhere to a number of different religions and creeds, but the majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims. There are currently over 30 million Kurds in the Middle East, comprising nearly

[Kurdish inhabited area - BBC](#)

one-fifth of Turkey's population of seventy-nine million. The Kurds have been attempting to establish their own independent state, Kurdistan, since the end of World War I. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey renouncing rights over certain areas in Asia and North Africa, the Treaty of Sèvres called for the recognition of new independent states, including an autonomous Kurdistan. However, it never ratified. Later, the Treaty of Lausanne divided the designated Kurdish territory among several other countries. From 1923 to 1978, the Kurds made several attempts to impose themselves by staging uprisings, gaining control of certain areas, and creating Kurdish political parties. However, all of such attempts were unsuccessful. The Kurdish forces were constantly repelled, the territory retaken, and the political parties forcefully disassembled. Accompanied by this, the Kurdish people were constantly oppressed and pressured by the surrounding countries to abandon their identity and become a part of the country's respective population.

Consolidation of the Kurdish Identity

In 1978, Abdullah Ocalan established the Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel or KGK, formerly the Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK). Now internationally recognized as a terrorist group, the PKK has waged an insurgency since 1984 against Turkish authorities for greater cultural and political rights with the same objective of establishing an independent Kurdish state. The ongoing conflict has resulted in nearly forty thousand deaths. Under the Turkish President Erdogan's regime, popular discontent has steadily increased as seen in the June 2013 Gezi park protests and a July 2016 coup attempt. Proportionally, the tensions have also risen between Turkish authorities and Kurdish groups. Specifically, the PKK, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP - a left pro Kurdish party), and the People's Protection Unit (YPG - armed wing of the Syrian Democratic Union Party with ties to the PKK) have increasingly conducted numerous attacks against Turkish authorities in the southeast.

In July 2015, a two-year cease-fire between Turkey's government and the PKK collapsed following a suicide bombing by suspected self-proclaimed Islamic State (formerly known as ISIS/ISIL) militants that killed nearly thirty Kurds near the Syrian border. The PKK attempted to stage a coup in July 2015 but was unsuccessful. Following the attempt, Erdogan cracked down on suspected coup conspirators and consequently arrested an estimated fifty thousand people and increased airstrikes on PKK militants in southeastern Turkey. He also began conducting military operations in Syria against the YPG and the self-declared Islamic State.



[Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers fighting against IS militants in northern Iraq](#)

Outside of Turkey, Syrian Kurdish fighters have been combating the Islamic State largely as part of the SDF, an alliance of Arab and Kurdish fighters backed by the United States, and have created a semi-autonomous region in Northern Syria. In September 2014, PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan called for the Kurds to start an “all-out resistance” in the fight against the Islamic State. Later that month, the Kurdish-controlled town of Kobani was besieged and eventually captured, resulting in the mass departure of tens of thousands of Syrian Kurds to Turkey. The ensuing battle for Kobani resulted in more than 1,600 deaths but the Kurdish-led SDF forces eventually regained control of the city in January 2015. The SDF also liberated the strategic Syrian city of Manbik from the Islamic State in August 2016, though YPG forces (part of the SDF coalition) clashed with Turkish-backed rebels attempting to gain control.

After the YPG and SDF consolidated control over territory captured from the Islamic State in northern Syria, Turkey and Turkish-backed Syrian militias, including the Free Syrian

Army (FSA), moved to recapture cities and expel the Kurds. Turkish troops and the FSA launched an assault on the city of Afrin in January 2018, eventually capturing the city in March 2018. Turkey continues to threaten assaults on other Kurdish-held areas inside Syria, including Manbij, and despite sharing a common enemy, many of Turkey's air strikes have targeted Kurdish fighters rather than Islamic State militants.



[The YPF has emerged as a key ally of the US-led coalition battle against IS](#)

The alliance of Kurdish fighters has also converged in Iraq where the Islamic State had advanced toward the autonomous Kurdish region in the northern part of the country. The Peshmerga (armed fighters who protect Iraqi Kurdistan) have joined with Iraqi security forces and received arms and financial assistance from the United States.

Concerns on the Political Consequences

If the Kurds do succeed in establishing an independent state in Syria amid the chaos gripping the region, it could accelerate secessionist movements in other Kurdish areas of the Middle East. Heightened terrorist activity by Kurdish separatists is also a growing concern for the United States, and its allies, which designated the PKK a foreign terrorist organization in 1997.

U.S.-Turkey relations have faltered since Erdogan renewed calls for the extradition of Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish political and religious leader in self-imposed exile in the United States, whom Erdogan believes to be an organizer of the July 2016 coup. Relations have also suffered because of the United States' close relationship with Kurdish groups. The United States continues to supply arms to Peshmerga troops fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and

has provided arms to the Syrian YPG. Meanwhile, the relationship between Russia and Turkey becomes increasingly closer.

Recent Developments



[Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani meets with US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum summit in Davos Switzerland](#)

The Turkish military regularly targets Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) bases in Iraq and in 2018, Erdogan said he would launch a formal operation against Kurds in Iraq. The Iraqi government has issued formal complaints against Turkish incursions into its sovereign territory. In January 2019, the Turkish government claimed that separatist Kurdish militants tied to the PKK conducted an attack on a Turkish army base in northern Iraq that resulted in damage to military equipment but no casualties.

In December 2018, U.S. President Donald J. Trump announced that the United States would begin withdrawing troops from Syria. Syrian Kurds, who have largely fought as members of the U.S. backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), expressed concerns that Turkey would increase its attacks against them. Illham Ahmed, the leader of the Syrian Kurds' largest political organization, asked western governments to create an international observer force along the Syria-Turkey border. In January 2019, Trump threatened to sanction Turkey should the Turkish military attack U.S. backed Kurdish forces in Syria. U.S. National Security

Advisor John Bolton indicated that the United States would continue to seek reassurances from Erdogan that the Syrian Kurds would not be attacked. As the Syrian civil war winded down, Erdogan and Trump continued to discuss options for establishing a safe zone and whether the United States will retrieve the weapons it provided to Syrian Kurds.

Timeline of Events

1978

Abdullah Ocalan created the PKK with the goal of establishing an independent Kurdistan state.

1997

The United States formally recognized the

PKK as a foreign terrorist organization.

June 2013

Gezi Park Protests

A wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Turkey, initially to contest the urban development plan for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park. Dissatisfaction with Erdogan's rule increased.

September 2014

PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan calls for the Kurds to start an "all-out resistance" in the fight against the Islamic State.

January 2015

Siege of Kobani

Kobani became a battleground between Islamic State (IS) militants and Kurdish fighters when IS fighters overran the small northern Syrian town, forcing almost all of its civilians to flee into Turkey. International air strikes led by the US helped to push back IS fighters, allowing Kurdish fighters to eventually regain control of the town at the start of 2015. However, IS militants managed to quickly come back and launch a coordinated 2-week attack on the 25th of June.

July 2015

Two-year cease-fire between Turkey's government and the PKK collapsed.

The PKK attempted to stage a coup in Turkey but it was unsuccessful.

As a consequence, Erdogan increased airstrikes on PKK militants in southeastern Turkey.

July 2016

Dissatisfied with Erdogan's rule, a faction within the Turkish Armed Forces attempted a coup d'état against state institutions.

August 2016

The SDF liberated the Syrian city of Manbik from the Islamic State. YPG forces clashed with Turkish-backed rebels who were attempting to gain control.

2018

Erdogan said he would launch a formal operation against Kurds in Iraq.

January 2018

Turkish troops and the FSA launched an assault on the city of Afrin, which was home to many Kurds. The city was eventually captured in March 2018.

December 2018

Trump announced that the United States would begin withdrawing troops from Syria, causing concern to Syrian Kurds who were members of the SDF.

January 2019

The Turkish government claimed that separatist Kurdish militants tied to the PKK conducted an attack on a Turkish army base in northern Iraq.

After withdrawing troops, Trump threatened to sanction Turkey should the Turkish military attack U.S. backed Kurdish forces in Syria.

Key Terms

Kurdish People

An ethnic and linguistic group native to parts of what are now Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, and Syria. Traditionally nomadic, most were forced into farming by the redrawing of state borders after World War I. Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims. Plans for a Kurdish state, promised by the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which dissolved the Ottoman Empire, were never

realized. Kurds in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq have been continuously persecuted and pressured to assimilate; Iraqi attacks were particularly severe during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88) and following the Persian Gulf War (1990–91).

PKK

The Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel or KGK, formerly the Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK) is a Kurdish separatist group primarily active in part of northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey. It was established by Abdullah Ocalan, a Kurdish militant, in 1978.

SDF

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is the key powerbroker in north-eastern Syria. Operating through the local Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria (AANES), the Kurdish-dominated SDF has established itself as the West's main partner in the fight against the Islamic State group (ISIS).

YPG

The YPG mostly consists of ethnic Kurds, but also includes Arabs and foreign volunteers; it is closely allied to the Syriac Military Council, an Assyrian militia. The YPG was formed in 2011. It expanded rapidly in the Syrian Civil War and came to predominate over other armed Syrian Kurdish groups.

Position of Major Blocs and Countries

Turkey

Turkey's government says the YPG and the PYD are extensions of the PKK, share its goal of secession through armed struggle, and are terrorist organisations that must be eliminated. To this day, they do not recognize the Kurdish culture and its people.

United States of America

After withdrawing troops from the Middle East, the U.S. saw the upcoming Kurdish forces and their conflict with the Islamic State as an opportunity to intervene with the IS' growing control of the region, even from afar. As a consequence, the U.S. has offered financial support to the Syrian YPG at the cost of straining political relations with Turkey. The U.S. has also offered financial support to the Peshmerga, who were also fighting the IS.

Iraq

Turkey has consistently gone into Iraqi territory in order to combat PKK bases in Iraq. The Iraqi government has issued formal complaints against these incursions into its sovereign territory. Iraq does not look towards the Kurds favourably even though they compose around 15-20% of the Iraqi population. In September 2017, the Kurds were almost able to establish a Kurdistan Region in Iraq which included the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. However, Iraqi pro-government forces quickly retook the disputed territory.

Questions to Consider

- 1) To what extent is your country influenced by this conflict?
- 2) Is your country affiliated with any terrorist group? If so, which other terrorist groups are placed against your country as a consequence of this affiliation?
- 3) Given the long historical conflict regarding the Kurds' rights to an independent state but taking into consideration the acts of terror that the PKK has committed against

civilians in the region of conflict, how should a resolution take both sides into consideration? Which standpoint does your country present an incline towards?

- 4) What has the U.N. done regarding this conflict?
- 5) Would your country suggest a diplomatic solution or a military conquest? Why?
- 6) If territory is to be given to the Kurds, where should it be taken from?

Further Research

- Kurdish people fast facts + Extensive timeline of the conflict
 - <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/18/world/kurdish-people-fast-facts/index.html>
- Why does the US support the YPG?
 - <https://mepc.org/commentary/us-ypg-relationship-us-foreign-policy-future-kurds-syria-and-turkey>
- Turkish domestic terrorism

- https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/turkey_domestic_terrorism.html
- Detailed timeline of the PKK's terror campaign
 - <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/a-timeline-of-the-pkk-s-war-on-turkey-1974-2019-30618>
- The Whos, Wheres, Whys, and Whats of the Kurdish people
 - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>
 - <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/kurds-quest-independence>
- Visual timeline of the conflict
 - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkeys-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer>
- More information on the Battle of Kobani
 - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29688108>
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Topic B

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