STUDY GUIDE
United Nations Security Council
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Membership

The Security Council is composed of 15 members. Five of these members have permanent seats. These members are: United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Russian Federation and People’s Republic of China. This group of countries owe their permanent membership to their status as the recognised victors of WWII, in the wake of which the United Nations and its Security Council were created, largely with the aim of preventing such a large scale conflicting from ever arising again. The remaining 10 positions on the Security Council are distributed on a regional basis, with membership terms of two years. Non-permanent members are elected by the UN General Assembly. Three non-permanent positions are accorded to the African regional bloc, one position to the Eastern European region, and two to each the Asia-Pacific region, the Latin and Central American region and the Western European region, respectively. Membership of the Security Council is regarded as highly prestigious and countries often expend considerable political and financial capital in order to achieve it. Under the charter of the United Nations, the Security Council is the only UN organ with the power to issue binding decisions, which all member states must agree to heed and to implement.
History

Following the failure of the League of Nations in the interwar period, the United Nations was set up following World War II, officially established on 24 October 1945. The Security Council has been around as long as the UN itself, alongside the five other main organs of the United Nations (GA, EcoSoC, ICJ, Trusteeship Council and the Secretariat). The Security Council has been constrained in its ability to fully exercise the role that was envisioned for it at the time of its creation due to the the almost immediate emergence of the Cold War. With both superpowers as permanent members, and the remaining permanent members split among ideological lines (Western UK and France X Socialist PRC), the Security Council could hardly ever take any significant action due to the constant threat of a veto from one or more of its permanent members. The Security Council has been largely unable to take on a notable role in larger military conflicts since 1945, perhaps with the exception of authorising the US led intervention in the Korea war. The UN and by extension, the Security Council, has largely focused on authorising and overseeing peacekeeping missions in conflict zones around the world. Currently, there are 15 active peacekeeping mission, primarily in Africa and the Middle East.
Responsibilities and Actions

The Security Council’s primary responsibility is react to and ideally prevent threats to international peace. It regularly issues resolutions on ongoing conflicts, such as the civil war in Yemen, Afghanistan Somalia etc. and also regularly discusses larger topics, such as “threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts”. Actions taken by the Security Council can range to investigation and mediation on one end of the scale, to the authorisation of military interventions on the other end of the scale. The Security Council is also tasked with approving and dispatching UN peacekeeping missions. Peacekeeping has become a major aspect of the United Nations’, and by extension, the Security Council’s work and currently the UN has well over 100,000 peacekeepers, with 14 active missions and a budget of over seven billion USD. Another frequent action taken by the UNSC is the issuing of economic sanctions.

However, in order to get a resolution passed in the Security Council, much diplomacy needs to take place and resolutions are often exceedingly vague and open to interpretation in order to avoid being vetoed. This is one of the biggest challenges delegates will face in this committee.
Topic A: Securing Minorities and Indigenous People and Their Rights

A. Who are minorities under international law?

Adopted by consensus in 1992, the United Nations Minorities Declaration in its article 1 refers to minorities as based on national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity, and provides that States should protect their existence. There is no internationally agreed definition as to which groups constitute minorities. It is often stressed that the existence of a minority is a question of fact and that any definition must include both objective factors (such as the existence of a shared ethnicity, language or religion) and subjective factors (including that individuals must identify themselves as members of a minority). The difficulty in arriving at a widely acceptable definition lies in the variety of situations in which minorities live. Some live together in well-defined areas, separated from the dominant part of the population. Others are scattered throughout the country. Some minorities have a strong sense of collective identity and recorded history; others retain only a fragmented notion of their common heritage. The term minority as used in the United Nations human rights system usually refers to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, pursuant to the United Nations Minorities Declaration. All States have one or more minority groups within their national territories,
characterized by their own national, ethnic, linguistic or religious identity, which differs from that of the majority population. According to a definition offered in 1977 by Francesco Capotorti, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, a minority is: A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the State—possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.1 While the nationality criterion included in the above definition has often been challenged, the requirement to be in a non-dominant position remains important. In most instances a minority group will be a numerical minority, but in others a numerical majority may also find itself in a minority-like or non-dominant position, such as Blacks under the apartheid regime in South Africa. In some situations, a group which constitutes a majority in a State as a whole may be in a non-dominant position within a particular region of the State in question. In addition, it has been argued that the use of subjective criteria, such as the will on the part of the members of the groups in question to preserve their own characteristics and the wish of the individuals concerned to be considered part of that group, combined with certain specific objective requirements, such as those listed in the Capotorti definition, should be taken into account. It is now commonly accepted that recognition of minority status is not solely for the State to decide, but should be based on both objective and subjective criteria. The question often arises as to whether, for example,
persons with disabilities, persons belonging to certain political groups or persons with a particular sexual orientation or identity (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersexual persons) constitute minorities. While the United Nations Minorities Declaration is devoted to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, it is also important to combat multiple discrimination and to address situations where a person belonging to a national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minority is also discriminated against on other grounds such as gender, disability or sexual orientation. Similarly, it is important to keep in mind that, in many countries, minorities are often found to be among the most marginalized groups in society and severely affected by, for example, pandemic diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, and in general have limited access to health services.

**B. Are indigenous peoples considered to be minorities?**

Similarly to minorities, there is no universally accepted international definition of indigenous peoples. Guidance in this regard can be obtained, for instance, from the work of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the provisions of Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the contents of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Various sources cite the following characteristics, either alone or in combination: indigenous peoples are descendants of the peoples who inhabited the land or territory prior to colonization or the establishment of State borders; they possess distinct social, economic and political
systems, languages, cultures and beliefs, and are determined to maintain and develop this distinct identity; they exhibit strong attachment to their ancestral lands and the natural resources contained therein; and/or they belong to the non-dominant groups of a society and identify themselves as indigenous peoples. While indigenous peoples can claim minority rights under international law, there are United Nations mandates and mechanisms dedicated specifically to protecting their rights. In its work, the United Nations has applied the principle of self-identification with regard to indigenous peoples and minorities. In practical terms, a number of connections and commonalities exist between indigenous peoples and national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. Both groups are usually in a non-dominant position in the society in which they live and their cultures, languages or religious beliefs may be different from the majority or the dominant groups. Both indigenous peoples and minorities commonly wish to retain and promote their identity. Situations can be found on the ground where an indigenous group could find itself in a minority-like situation and, equally, some minorities have strong and long-standing attachments to their lands and territories as do indigenous peoples. Minorities, however, do not necessarily have the long ancestral, traditional and spiritual attachment and connections to their lands and territories that are usually associated with self-identification as indigenous peoples. In terms of rights, minorities have traditionally highlighted their rights to have their existence as a group protected, their identity recognized and their effective participation in public life and respect for their cultural, religious and linguistic pluralism safeguarded. Indigenous peoples, while also highlighting such rights, have
also traditionally advocated recognition of their rights over land and resources, self-determination and being part of decision-making in matters that affect them. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requires States to consult and cooperate with indigenous peoples to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before undertaking development activities that might have an impact on them, whereas the United Nations Minorities Declaration contains a more general right to participate in decision-making and requires that the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities should be taken into account in national planning and programming. This publication does not address the specificities of indigenous peoples, as its main focus is on non-indigenous national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.

C. Do minority rights apply to non-citizens?

Under the provisions of human rights instruments, States have an obligation to protect the rights of all persons subject to or under their jurisdictions. Express exceptions to this principle relate, inter alia, to political rights. The Commentary on the United Nations Minorities Declaration by the Working Group on Minorities is important as it clarifies the interpretation of the substantive provisions of the document. Regarding citizenship for instance, it considers that “while citizenship as such should not be a distinguishing criterion that excludes some persons or groups from enjoying minority rights under the Declaration, other factors can be relevant in distinguishing between the rights that can be demanded by different minorities”. For example, “those who have been established for a long time on
the territory may have stronger rights than those who have recently arrived.” It suggests that “the best approach appears to be to avoid making an absolute distinction between ‘new’ and ‘old’ minorities by excluding the former and including the latter, but to recognize that in the application of the Declaration the ‘old’ minorities have stronger entitlements than the ‘new’.” In practice, under international law, certain minority rights have been made applicable to recently arrived migrants who share an ethnic, religious or linguistic identity. Their treatment is to be rooted in the customary international law principle of non-discrimination, which is fundamental in international law and is reflected in all human rights instruments and documents. Indeed, the right not to be discriminated against is guaranteed under several instruments of direct relevance to minorities. These include the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and the Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals Who are not Nationals of the Country in which They Live.

D. What is the relationship between minorities, non-citizens and stateless persons?

A particular problem relating to minorities and citizenship is that all too often members of certain groups are denied or deprived of their citizenship because of their national or ethnic, religious and linguistic characteristics. This practice is contrary to
international law, particularly in regard to article 9 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which states that “a Contracting State may not deprive any person or group of persons of their nationality on racial, ethnic, religious or political grounds.” It is thus important to note that discrimination against a person on one of the aforementioned grounds resulting in the arbitrary deprivation of nationality may contribute to meeting some of the requirements in the determination of refugee status. Most of the world’s estimated 15 million stateless persons also belong to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities. Discrimination against minorities has frequently led to their exclusion from citizenship. Such exclusion is often experienced in newly independent States that define citizenship in a manner that excludes persons belonging to certain minority groups who are considered as “outsiders” despite long-standing ties to the territory of the new State. Just as discrimination against minorities may be a cause of statelessness, the very fact that members of a group are stateless can undermine their exercise of a broad range of human rights. Although in principle most human rights are guaranteed to everyone under the jurisdiction of the State, in practice non-citizens, including stateless persons, face obstacles in exercising these rights. These obstacles may be greater still if the stateless person also belongs to a minority group. Statelessness can be addressed by applying the norms set out in the major universal and regional human rights instruments, including those pertaining to birth registration, the right to acquire a nationality, non-discrimination in the acquisition, change and retention of nationality by men and women, and the conferral of nationality on children. The
Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness provides detailed guidance in this respect.

E. Promotion and protection of the identity of minorities

Central to the rights of minorities are the promotion and protection of their identity. Promoting and protecting their identity prevent forced assimilation and the loss of cultures, religions and languages—the basis of the richness of the world and therefore part of its heritage. Non-assimilation requires diversity and plural identities to be not only tolerated but protected and respected. Minority rights are about ensuring respect for distinctive identities while ensuring that any differential treatment towards groups or persons belonging to such groups does not mask discriminatory practices and policies. Therefore, positive action is required to respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, and acknowledge that minorities enrich society through this diversity.
Topic B: Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

A. Topic History

With the end of the Cold War, global attention turned to the prevalence of localized armed conflict - or “low-intensity conflict - estimated to have caused over a million deaths in the past decade, 90% of which are civilian casualties from the indiscriminate use of violence. SALW lies at the heart of such violence, as such weapons are easily obtainable and operable. Not only are they used by militias, insurgents and combatants in conflict zones around the world, they are often widespread amongst crime syndicates and terrorist groups as well. This has had severe impact on developing countries--government resources are diverted from crucial public services such as health and education, foreign investment and economic growth take a dive, and society is deprived of the skills and labor of small arms victims, some of whom are even recruited into gangs and militias since young. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) refer to any weapon that can be carried or operated by one or two individuals. These range from guns--pistols, assault rifles, and light machine guns--to rocket launchers, grenade launchers, mortars and shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile
B. Definition of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

I. Small Arms

Small arms are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for individual use. They are usually at the lower end of the calibre spectrum (4.6–40 or 66 mm). Small arms include handguns (self-loading pistols and revolvers) and shoulder arms (rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns and light machine guns, and grenade launchers).

- **Handguns** are small arms which, in theory, can be fired one-handed. They are widely available and can be easily concealed, which makes them one of the weapon types most often used in crime, especially in urban areas. Their military use is limited, but police officers are often armed with handguns.

- **Automatic pistols** store the ammunition in the grip, and prepare a new round for firing until the magazine in the grip is empty.

- **Revolvers**, which tend to be older weapons and have bullets in a rotating cylinder above the trigger, are seen less frequently.

- **Shoulder arms** are designed to be fired with the back end – the butt – held into the shooter’s shoulder for greater stability. They are the most common SALW found in South
Sudan and other parts of Africa, and are the cause of most arms-related deaths and injuries, both accidental and deliberate. A shoulder arm requires two hands to use effectively.

- **Assault rifles** are capable of automatic fire – i.e. squeezing the trigger once releases a burst of bullets. They are the most common shoulder arm today, and are found in almost all areas of civil or military conflict. The most (in)famous are the Kalashnikov family (AK-47, AKM, AK-74). They tend to be short (up to 70 cm with the butt) and light-weight, and can be identified by the presence of a large semi-curved (banana-shaped) magazine.

- **Bolt rifles** are long guns that shoot single bullets to a great distance. After each round is fired, the shooter moves a bolt to load the next round for firing.

- **Semi-automatic rifles** use the energy released during firing to reload another round from a box magazine suspended underneath the weapon. Semi-automatic rifles can be configured to full automatic fire.

- **Shotguns and hunting rifles** are intended primarily for sport and hunting. They are extremely lethal. As shotguns fire cluster pellets instead of bullets, they are very dangerous to bystanders.
• **Machine-guns** are firearms that fire in bursts and are capable of a high rate of sustained fire. Both light machine-guns and submachine guns are portable and can be fired by one person.

• **Under-barrel hand-held grenade launchers** are designed to fire grenades beyond throwing range. The launchers (tubes) come in three formats: a tube suspended underneath an assault rifle barrel; a hand-held tube that looks like a stubby, thick-barrelled rifle; or a heavy machine gun. The first two are usually lightweight, single-shot, shoulder-fired weapons

**II. Light Weapons**

Light weapons are weapons designed for use by two or three persons serving as a crew, although some may be carried and used by a single person. Light weapons include heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable antiaircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of a calibre of less than 100 mm.

• **Heavy machine guns**, like light and medium machine guns, are belt-fed and are designed to fire at high,
sustained rates. They are supported by a tripod at the centre of the body, or mounted on vehicles. The main difference between heavy and other machine guns is their size and weight and the penetrating power of their ammunition.

- **Light cannons** generally tend towards the heavier end of the SALW calibre spectrum (57mm–100mm). They sometimes fire single shots and sometimes may have automatic loaders attached to the rear. Like heavy machine guns, they need mechanical support. They often have two wheels.

- **Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPG)** are small rocket-propelled explosives larger than a grenade, designed to be fired at distant targets. The tube of the grenade launcher is a steel pipe with a firing grip and sights attached. Both the warhead and the propellant are explosive and must be treated as highly dangerous. It is also very dangerous to stand behind them when they are fired.

- ‘**Portable missile launchers**’ is a catch-all term for a family of relatively new light weapons used to destroy armour, personnel and fortifications with a guided missile. They are highly portable and normally look like stubby (1.5 m or more long) thick (20–30 cm) tubes that are fired over the shooter’s shoulder or from a tripod. The round is guided to its target using a control mechanism attached to the tube.
launchers. By definition, these weapons are mobile, portable and relatively easy to operate, rendering them accessible to the average civilian. The proliferation of small arms is no doubt a pertinent issue in developed nations such as the US, where gun control has been a topic of much controversy. However, the nature of SALW trade in developed countries differs significantly from the rest of the world. Thus for the purposes of a more structured debate, we will focus on the SALW trade in developing nations faced with weak state protection, feeble law enforcement and protracted conflict zones. The infographic below is illustrative of the impact and distribution of small arms around the world and gives a good idea of which developing nations are most adversely affected by the trade.

C. The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The use and misuse of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) are estimated to result in over 500,000 deaths per year, and countless injuries.1 For example, one often cited statistic indicates that in 90 percent of conflicts since 1990, SALW have been the only weapons used in fighting, and have contributed to between 30 and 90 percent of civilian deaths in those conflicts.2 SALW were used extensively in the organization and conduct of the Rwandan Genocide; are the primary weapons of narco-insurgents and paramilitaries in Colombia; and are the dominant tools of ongoing insurgency in Iraq, to name but a few
examples. Their widespread availability and misuse contributes to transnational organized crime and conflicts of all types, and is closely related to current concerns such as weak and collapsed states, human rights abuses, and the pantheon of both traditional and nontraditional security issues. They are the tools of the trade for terrorists, rebels, and criminals and their spread has gone largely unchecked for many decades. Concern about the spread and use of SALW has developed rapidly since the mid-1990s. Initially stemming from increasing international involvement in peacekeeping operations in intrastate conflicts, various concerned groups have raised issues related to SALW in a variety of situations and for a variety of purposes ranging from major armed conflict to criminality. Due to the wideranging implications of the misuse of SALW, constituencies of concern include those that are primarily concerned with: conflict prevention and resolution, conflict management and peacebuilding, security sector reform, development, humanitarian assistance, law and order, and a range of other issues. Definitions of SALW have proved contentious throughout the development of the issue and international responses. The UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms disaggregated the two terms by making the distinction that: “Broadly speaking, small arms are those weapons designed for personal use, and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew.” This primarily includes revolvers, pistols, rifles, assault rifles, and various types of machine guns. Additionally it also includes some larger weapons such as portable antitank and antiaircraft weapons, and the shoulder fired missiles and rockets that cause great concern for the potential for terrorist attacks on
passenger aircraft—everything from the ubiquitous AK-47 to Stinger missiles. These weapons are possessed and used by most military forces, some police forces, and civilians. They are also the primary weapons of many non-state actors with which this volume is concerned: rebel groups, militia, criminals, and some terrorist organizations. This chapter outlines and examines the nature of the proliferation of SALW, with a particular emphasis on the roles of non-state actors. Non-state actors of various types populate the processes of SALW proliferation as suppliers, facilitators, and recipients. However, they do not do so autonomously or in isolation from states. While the spread of SALW is considerably less state-centric than the proliferation of other types of weapons, the dominant framework within which SALW spread occurs remains the legal trade involving or authorized by states. Section one outlines the concerns about SALW and some of the key characteristics of their proliferation. Sections two and three then add to these understandings by focusing on the spread of SALW to conflicts on the supplier and recipient sides of the processes, respectively. In so doing this chapter demonstrates that SALW proliferation is an area of national and international security concern that operates in system populated by both state and non-state actors. Indeed, the illicit flow of SALW to conflicts is not a threat outside of the reach of states. Rather, it is a phenomenon that relies on the cooperation between states and those non-state actors that are suppliers, facilitators, and recipients of illicit SALW. It is because of this that the fight against SALW proliferation requires cooperation among states and other non-state actors: civil society groups at the international and national levels.
D. Examples of Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Light weapons proliferation is a serious problem in West Africa. A regional moratorium on imports of small arms and light weapons has not worked and UN arms embargoes on Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have had limited impact. The Economic Community of West African States is currently drafting a new binding legal instrument aimed at controlling flows in West Africa but this will only succeed if the heads of state and government seriously adopt it. This needs to include greater compliance of UN sanctions, international reform of the End User Certificate system, mapping the spread of artisan production and an examination of ammunition imports to West Africa. Better control of ammunition imports in particular may assist the combat of light weapons proliferation as well as the comprehensive destruction of weapons from disarmament efforts. The illicit weapons trade in West Africa is increasingly transnational and it requires regional and international cooperation and support to combat it.

Small arms and light weapons are an enormous problem. They kill over 300,000 people every year, cause injury to over 900,000 people and affect millions indirectly through the dislocation of communities and destruction of livelihoods. This official UK policy briefing summarises the damage caused by small arms and light weapons and outlines current UK initiatives to combat the problem. There are an estimated 550 million small arms and light weapons: One for every 10 people on the planet. Small arms and light weapons are also cheap, durable, robust, easy to manufacture and copy and have a long lifespan. It is difficult to achieve effective controls: The manufacture and trade of small arms and light weapons is decentralised, and illicit transfers are believed to account for a significant proportion of the global trade—a market which is thought to be worth over one billion dollars annually. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons also has serious development costs: Post-conflict reconstruction and political, social
and economic development are undermined, as are the security and stability of the country or region.

The UK Government has responded to this problem in the following manner:

- It has set up a committee mandated to combat illicit trafficking, pursue a ‘responsible and transparent’ policy on legal transfers, and promote the removal and destruction of weapons.
- It is working towards securing agreements with the European Union (EU) and Organisation for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and has pledged its support for the UN’s 2001 Programme of Action on Small Arms.
- The UK Small Arms and Light Weapons Programme has said that it will be working on practical programmes over the next three years to reduce the volume of weapons in circulation.
- The UK has pledged its support for governments and civil society organisations in affected regions in order to build political commitment and effective controls.
- The UK has said it will support the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiative to help countries develop their own weapons collection, management and destruction programmes, by providing UK experts in this area.

Because the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a worldwide problem, it requires a comprehensive, coordinated response at the local, national, regional and global levels. General recommendations are that:

- A comprehensive response should integrate the perspectives of defence, development, foreign policy, law enforcement and trade and needs to work in partnership with international institutions.
- Agreements to control small arms will have little impact unless they are matched by efforts to collect, securely manage and destroy the weapons in circulation.
- Peace accords must provide for demobilisation, disarmament and the rehabilitation of combatants.
- Peacekeeping operations must make provision for weapons collection and destruction.
These measures will only be effective if they take place within the framework of a programme for Security Sector Reform — the remodelling of the military forces and structures appropriate to the legitimate defence needs of a country.