



London School of Economics Student Union
Youth Model United Nations
11-13 March

Security Council

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Topic 1 – Revising the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) Sanctions Regime

INTRODUCTION

The issue of a sanctions regime has been a prominent and controversial one, especially on the international stage. Traditionally a defining ‘Western’ response to geopolitical challenges, nations have begun unilaterally expanding the use of such tools against adversaries, while regional and international bodies including the United Nations Security Council itself have also enacted sanctions regimes to advance a range of policy goals from counterterrorism, conflict resolution, non-proliferation and violations to international norms of behaviour (Masters, 2019). At the heart of one of such sanctions, which will be one of the focal points of this committee, is the one concerning the doctrine of non-proliferation on the Korean Peninsula. The UNSC itself has passed over 20 resolutions (9 of which are major resolutions), each progressively strengthening its asset freezes and trade bans to call on the DPRK to rejoin the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (Davenport, 2018). However, it is clear that it has not deterred the DPRK from continuing its missile exercises including recently on 31 Jan, ever-stronger ballistic missiles (Choe, 2022). Therefore, we start our exciting committee with a discussion on the effectiveness of the sanctions regime, and what kind of revisions should be made to improve such a delicate situation.

Introduction to the UNSC

The United Nations Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In particular, the Security Council takes the lead in determining what constitutes the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlements and resolution (United Nations, 2022). In particular, the Security Council can take action to maintain or restore international peace and security under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Sanctions measures, under Article 41, encompass a broad range of enforcement options that do not involve the use of armed force (United Nations Security Council, 2022). Security Council sanctions have taken a number of different forms, ranging from comprehensive economic and trade sanctions to more targeted measures such as arms embargoes, travel bans, and financial or commodity restrictions (United Nations Security Council, 2022). The Security Council claims to have applied sanctions to support peaceful transitions, deter non-constitutional changes, constrain terrorism, protect human rights and promote non-proliferation. Sanctions are often divisive, reflecting the competing interests of world powers. For example, since 2011, Russia and China have vetoed several Security Council resolutions concerning the conflict in Syria, some of which could have led to sanctions against President Bashar al-Assad’s regime (Masters, 2019). Therefore, the discussion of sanctions have often reflected contemporary international tensions, one that must be taken into account during this conference. Sanctions are also most effective at maintaining or restoring international peace and security when applied as part of a comprehensive strategy encompassing peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Domestic Background

At the heart of the conflict leading up to the sanctions being discussed today is the infamous Korean War (1950–1953). After the surrender of Imperial Japan in 1945 at the end of the Second World War, the Korean Peninsula was divided into the pro-Soviet Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) and the pro-Western Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea). The United States keeps around 28,500 soldiers in South Korea – a legacy of the Korean War, which ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty, leaving the peninsula in a technical state of war. Since then, the DPRK has maintained a “*Suryong* [leader]” system, while positioning the Workers’ Party of Korea as the actual agency of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, transferring power to a central committee (Sakai, 2016). In essence this means that a small group of leaders headed by the Kim family (most recently, Kim Jong Un) has unilateral power to decide the country’s agenda, the proportion of money dedicated to economic development, national defence, etc. Moreover, under the DPRK’s own *juche* ideology, which emphasis self-reliance (Roh, 2006) and further cements the leader’s personality cult, citizens of the state are expected to support with unwavering confidence any policy that is proposed by the leaders. In recent years, that policy is *songun*, or “military first”. The army began to participate even more in social and economic decision-making, from large-scale infrastructure development to providing its own food. While military personnel are required to serve for ten years, they spend most of their service participating in different areas of the country’s socio-economic life (Voronstov, 2006). It is therefore no surprise that there is generally popular buy-in to support the leader’s missile expansion as an aspect of the DPRK’s national security.

While South Korea was meant to become a capitalist nation and the “forefront of democracy” in East Asia, its subsequent history was marked with nominally democratic regimes, but widely regarded as the continuation of the autocratic military regime until the formation of the Sixth Republic (1987–present) after the adoption of the 1987 Constitution, which gradually stabilised the country into a liberal democracy (Ng, 2021). While it shares very close ties with the United States, the United States would take over operational control of the ROK military in wartime. This arrangement is unique to the U.S.–South Korea alliance. It is reflected in the structure of the Combined Forces Command—the alliance’s war-fighting command—which is headed by a U.S. four-star general while a South Korean four-star general serves as deputy commander (Botto, 2019). Both countries also conduct annual joint military drills, the last of which in August 2021 provoked a strong response from the DPRK as Kim Yo Jong (State Affairs Commission, DPRK) noted that US–ROK are risking a “serious security crisis” by choosing to escalate tensions, instead of improving relations (Shin, 2021).

North Korea has one of the world’s largest conventional military forces, which, combined with its missile and nuclear tests and aggressive rhetoric, has aroused concern worldwide. U.S. intelligence officials have estimated that since the first missile test 2006, the DPRK could have between twenty and sixty assembled nuclear weapons, and that every year it produces enough fissile material for twelve additional weapons (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). With each new test, North Korea’s nuclear explosions have grown in power. The first explosion in 2006 was a plutonium-fueled atomic bomb with a yield equivalent to two kilotons of TNT, but a nuclear test conducted in 2017 concluded that they might have hydrogen bombs exceeding two hundred kilotons (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). This is clearly cause for concern as it has successfully tested intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), each capable of carrying a large nuclear warhead. Analysts estimate the Hwasong-15 has a potential range of 13,000 kilometres (8,100 miles) and, if fired on a flatter trajectory, could reach anywhere on the U.S. mainland (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021), constituting a direct attack on US soil.

Global Background

Denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula remains a priority, especially among the belligerents of the Korean War (as a peace treaty has yet to be signed and the war remains technically active). Many countries have attempted to foster communication with the DPRK to seek a solution (many of which have been summarised in the timeline below), including in the past few years, summits between ROK–DPRK and US–DPRK. Under ROK Presidents Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003)’s and current President Moon Jae-in, ROK fostered a

“Sunshine Policy”, aimed for loosening containment on North Korea, embracing North Korea, and eventually making the North Korean government denuclearize by itself (Min, 2017). From 2018, the policy’s variant, the “Moonshine Policy” fostered multiple summits between DPRK and the US, including the Singapore Summit (2018) in which both countries pledged to pursue lasting peace and complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, in exchange for the suspension of U.S.-ROK military exercises and the destruction of missile testing sites (Council of Foreign Relations, 2022). However, the Hanoi Summit (2019) ended without a joint statement due to disagreements between the dismantling of nuclear and fissile material production facilities at Yongbyon and complete sanctions relief by the United States (Council of Foreign Relations, 2022).

On the other hand, we have seen that the DPRK has received external assistance for its nuclear development. The Soviet Union assisted Pyongyang’s nuclear development from the late 1950s to the 1980s, building nuclear research reactors and providing missile designs, light-water reactors, and some nuclear fuel. In the 1970s, the PRC and DPRK cooperated on the development and production of ballistic missiles (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). These countries have historically maintained friendly ties with the DPRK – while the PRC is willing to condemn its neighbour’s nuclear developments, analysts say its policies remain focused on stability in the hope of avoiding regime collapse (in the absence of nuclear weapons) and a refugee influx across their 870-mile border (Albert, 2019). Russia’s interests and objectives in the DPRK are generally similar to those of PRC, which, unlike Russia, treats the DPRK problem as a central one, due to its centuries-old ties with the country and the proximity of its major cities to the North Korean border.

Nevertheless, the world continues to denounce the actions of DPRK especially as it has not suspended its nuclear development program, and it has not ceased long-range missile testing. With cyclical levels of engagement and disengagement between the DPRK and the international sphere, the world continues to approach the situation in the Korean Peninsula hoping to maintain the status quo while avoiding further tension on the Korean Peninsula.

Timeline of Major Events

1985	DPRK ratifies the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), halting the spread of nuclear weapons and technology and promoting peaceful cooperation on nuclear energy.
1991	The United States announces it will withdraw roughly one hundred nuclear weapons from South Korea as part of the original Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).
1992	DPRK and ROK agree to “not test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons,” as well as ban nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities.
1993	Pyongyang rejects inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and announces its intent to leave the NPT. However, the country suspends its withdrawal following talks with U.S.
1994	The United States and DPRK sign the Agreed Framework, in which DPRK commits to freezing its plutonium weapons program and halting construction on nuclear reactors in exchange for sanctions relief.
1999	DPRK agrees to suspend testing of long-range missiles following talks with the United States; in exchange, the United States eases economic sanctions for the first time.
2001	President George W. Bush takes office and pursues a harder line characterising DPRK, along with Iraq and Iran, as part of an “axis of evil” and imposing new sanctions.
2003	DPRK admits to running a secret uranium-enrichment program to power nuclear weapons, and announces the reactivation of its nuclear plant in Yongbyon and withdrawal from the NPT.

2005	The U.S. Treasury freezes \$25 million in funds, which will prove to be a sticking point in negotiations between the United States and DPRK.
2006	DPRK carries out an underground nuclear test with an explosion yield estimated around one to two kilotons, which prompts the UN Security Council to issue unanimous condemnations and trade sanctions.
2007	Both Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States outline the DPRK's commitment to declare all of its nuclear programs, disable its facilities, and stop the export of nuclear material and technology.
2008	Lee Myung-bak is elected president of South Korea, shifting from his predecessors' push for reconciliation to exert more pressure on DPRK to denuclearize.
2010	DPRK reveals its a new nuclear plant built secretly and swiftly.. The news comes amid escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula after the "Battle of Yeonpyeong".
2011	Kim Jong-il dies after seventeen years in power and is succeeded by his son Kim Jong-un.
2012	DPRK commits to suspending its uranium enrichment operations in Yongbyon, invite IAEA monitors, and carry out a moratorium on long-range missile and nuclear testing. In exchange, the United States is to provide tons of food aid.
2013-16	Diplomacy stalls for several years in which the United States and its partners ratchet up sanctions in hopes that the regime will return to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, DPRK carries out nuclear tests in 2013 and again in 2016.
2017	President Donald Trump is inaugurated and shifts course in U.S. policy toward the DPRK. Pyongyang conducts its sixth nuclear test, which it claims is a hydrogen bomb and raises international alarm due to the yield of its explosion. Trump redesignates North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism.
2018	Kim becomes the first DPRK leader to cross the border south for a summit with ROK's Moon Jae-in at the truce village of Panmunjom. The summit marks the first meeting between the heads of the Koreas in eleven years, confirming the shared goal of achieving denuclearisation.
	Kim and Trump hold a historic meeting in Singapore, where they signal a desire to change the U.S.-DPRK relationship.
2019	Trump and Kim's second summit, held in Vietnam, collapses after the leaders disagree over sanctions relief and denuclearization.
	Trump and Kim agree to restart stalled nuclear negotiations after meeting in the demilitarised zone that separates North and South Korea, but in November DPRK ends all communications with the US
2020	DPRK state media announces that the country will "shut down all contact" with ROK after it called on Seoul to prevent activists from sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border.
2021	President Joe Biden is inaugurated and adopts a middle-ground approach between Obama's "strategic patience" and Trump's "grand bargain," which promised full sanctions relief in exchange for complete denuclearization.

2022	DPRK conducts seven missile tests in January, more than in all of 2021. Washington urges the UN Security Council to impose more sanctions on Pyongyang, but Beijing and Moscow block the proposal. Kim suggests that DPRK could end its self-imposed moratorium on testing long-range ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, which was established in 2018, to counter the United States' "hostile moves," including the push for additional sanctions. At the end of the month, North Korea test-launches an intermediate-range ballistic missile. It is believed to be the country's most powerful launch since late 2017, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says it is a violation of the moratorium.
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References: Council of Foreign Relations, 2022

UN Involvement

The DPRK's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003 and its nuclear test in 2006 prompted the UN Security Council to unanimously adopt Resolution 1718 that condemned DPRK's actions and imposed sanctions against the country, calling for a "complete, verifiable, and irreversible" abandonment of the nuclear program (Davenport, 2018). The Security Council has steadily ratcheted up sanctions through subsequent resolutions in the hopes of changing Pyongyang's behaviour. Each resolution continues to condemn the DPRK's latest nuclear and ballistic missile activity and calls to cease its 'illicit activities', which violates previous UN Security Council resolutions. All nine resolutions were unanimously adopted by the Security Council and all but Resolution 2087 (January 2013) contain references to acting under Chapter VII, Article 41 of the United Nations Charter (Davenport, 2018). In addition to imposing sanctions, the resolutions give UN member states the authority to interdict and inspect DPRK cargo within their territory, and subsequently seize and dispose of illicit shipments (Davenport, 2018), but logistically speaking it should be pointed out that it is difficult to regulate all international cargo deliveries. It is important to note that the sanctions regime exceptionally does allow for humanitarian assistance.

Case Study 1: Resolution 2270 (2016)

After more missile tests in 2016, Resolution 2270 further (i) expands the arms embargo to include small arms and light weapons, (ii) prohibits the DPRK from servicing and repairing any weaponry sold to third parties and (iii) prohibiting additional luxury goods. In particular, it prohibits states from providing any specialised teaching or training of DPRK nationals in disciplines which could contribute to its (especially) nuclear proliferation, and prohibits the selling or supplying of aviation fuel to DPRK so that it cannot be diverted to its ballistic missile program (Davenport, 2018). This is significant by itself as it would affect civil aviation too, especially given that the DPRK has only one state-run aviation company (Air Koryo) while no other airline companies operate inside the DPRK, further impeding its citizens' capability of movement and interstate travel. Moreover, Resolution 2270 also prohibits chartering or leasing vessels to the DPRK or providing crew services - crippling its maritime transport as well. The sanctions regime is not only sweeping in scope, in its extension to commercial trade, and in the inclusion of restrictions on transport.

The resolution also expands inspection authority to member states such that mandatory inspections on cargo destined to or originating from the DPRK will enhance the UN's monitoring capabilities and enforcement of sanctions (Davenport, 2018). But many specific prohibitions are defined in ways that grant discretion to the implementing state (Haggard, 2016). Some restrictions apply only if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the activity is suspicious—making it possible to hide behind a veil of ignorance, i.e. if a certain country couldn't directly link the shipment to missile programs it can turn a blind eye.

Case Study 2: "Grand Bargain" sanctions under the Trump-led US administration

UN Security Council Resolutions 2321, 2371, 2375 and 2397 have collectively banned DPRK exports of ores, seafood and textiles, prohibited new and existing joint ventures with North Korean enterprises, and have prohibited new permits for overseas North Korean workers. The resolutions have also called for the repatriation of all North Korean nationals earning income abroad by the end of 2019. As a result, UN sanctions had come to target nearly all the sectors that had underpinned North Korea's tentative economic recovery and contradict claims that the measures "are not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the civilian population." (Gray, 2019).

Unsurprisingly, the result is a sizable decline in DPRK's external trade. Exports to PRC recorded a massive decline of 88.2% in trade volume (Gray, 2019). Sanctions have also negatively impacted the country's already struggling agricultural sector by restricting the import of items essential for agricultural production, such as fertilisers and machinery, negatively impacted irrigation and yields while reducing storage life and the availability of food. It is also reasonable to assume that the ban on textile exports had an adverse impact on women's livelihoods, as 82% of workers in the textile industry are women, according to the most recent census (Gray, 2019).

What are the UN shortcomings with this topic?

1. Sanctions evasion

The biggest challenge is enforcement, which is the responsibility of individual states. National authorities often have insufficient resources to inspect shipments at ports of entry, carry out complex investigations, and perform other enforcement activities. Some individuals and entities, motivated by financial gain, do business with the DPRK outside the law, and smugglers take advantage of lax inspections at ports in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Black market activities often go undetected as shipments elude customs scrutiny and official reporting. According to the United Nations Panel of Experts in April 2019, North Korea had developed a number of techniques and a complex web of organisations to enable it to evade the sanctions. The techniques included falsification of documents and covert ship-to-ship transfers of cargo at sea (Albert, 2016). The lack of enforcement measures to address weak implementation or violations further undermines the sanctions regime's effectiveness.

Separately, the DPRK has a record of secret "nuclear-related and ballistic-missile-related equipment, know-how, and technology sales" with countries including Egypt, Iran, Libya, Myanmar, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, and Yemen (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). It has secretly transferred the United Nations has reported. Given North Korea's economic constraints, fears abound that North Korea could resort to selling more nuclear material and knowledge, thereby enhancing the potential for nuclear terrorism.

2. Mistargeting of sanctions

Sanctioning countries often assume that foreign economic pressure will impair the DPRK's economy and military capacity, thus undermining the support base of Kim Jong-un and the WPK, forcing the regime to capitulate to foreign pressure to avoid the erosion of its authority. However, when faced with an absolute totalitarian regime, especially those with a relatively small support base, rarely put enough pressure to induce concessions. Pyongyang has been able to shield its ruling circle from the economic costs of sanctions, so these sanctions might have even done more harm than good as they exacerbated the already dire living conditions of ordinary citizens while instigating no major policy reforms or outright regime change in Pyongyang (Peksen, 2016). Even then, extreme levels of public hardship are unlikely to lead to a popular revolution as there was little evidence of civil unrest even during a mass famine in the 1990s (Gray, 2019). There is little reason to believe that the regime's susceptibility to resistance from within has changed.

An arguably more realistic justification of sanctions is that they will cause the country's leadership to reconsider its pursuit of nuclear weapons because it will be outweighed by the potential benefits of greater integration into the global economy (Gray 2019), which is the primary argument put forward by Donald Trump. It seems clear, however, that without a radical shift in the country's external security environment, DPRK is unlikely to forgo its nuclear programme for the sake of the short-term benefits that might be gained through the lifting of sanctions.

3. Emboldening the dictator

It has also long been recognised that sanctions can in fact reinforce the regime's narrative of a hostile external environment, potentially producing a "rally round the flag" effect whereby foreign powers can credibly be blamed for domestic economic hardship. DPRK is a state that was born through the massive destruction and loss of life of the Korean War, and has since then been situated in a decades-long geopolitical standoff with both its neighbour South Korea and with the world's preeminent military superpower, the United States (Gray, 2019). The regime's long standing narrative of the role of "hostile forces" ostensibly justifies for its domestic audience the development of nuclear weapons and provides an explanation of continued economic hardships.

Moreover, the regime has remained defiant against foreign pressure also because of its continued use of repression against any potential domestic opposition (Peksen, 2016). The regime's full command over a repressive and totalitarian surveillance of society has eliminated any challenges to the status quo. Severe human rights violations such as public executions, torture, and years of imprisonment in prison camps discourage anti-regime activities and dissent. Hence, even if foreign pressure might create more grievances and dissatisfaction against the current leadership, citizens simply lack any channels to organise opposition, demonstrations or even revolutions.

4. Disunity in the UNSC

The US-ROK-Japan alliance and most of the Western world have a relatively hostile position against the actions of the DPRK in terms of their military practises and human rights violations. Japan has developed a strong opposition and became more active after the multiple missile testing occurrences over or near the waters and territory of Japan coming from the DPRK. The issues creating the most conflicting viewpoints are the development and lack of disarmament of nuclear weapons, breaching sanctions, human rights violations, and breach of sanctions.

On the other hand, major P5 countries including the PRC and Russia have been known to deliberately ignore the sanctions to aid DPRK's economy. Although Beijing has upheld some of the international sanctions against Pyongyang and taken some measures to squeeze it economically, including the suspension of fuel sales and restrictions on financial activities, relations appear to have thawed and trade has been detected between the two countries even amidst a total lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jackson, 2022). Moscow itself has even blatantly acknowledged that it missed the UN deadline to repatriate its cheap North Korean workers working in the Far East due to what the Foreign Ministry said were "objective difficulties" from limited transportation options, but reports suggest that their status has merely been replaced with "student" or "tourist" visas to evade sanctions. (Khurshudyan, 2021). A report by the Institute for Science and International Security has found that as much as 56 countries have blatantly violated UN measures in 2018 alone (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021).

Food for Thought

So... sanctions aren't working that well... then what?

Some argue that there is room for far tougher sanctions against North Korea and those who profit from transacting with it. Others fear that expanding sanctions against Chinese entities could jeopardize the U.S.-China relationship and undermine bilateral cooperation on issues such as terrorism and climate change. Some argue that sanctions will take years to have a meaningful impact, and that any approach to North Korea will require incremental increases in pressure. Experts say that sanctions must be implemented in conjunction with other measures, such as diplomacy with Pyongyang and assurances by Washington to its allies in the region (Albert, 2016).

Economic sanctions alone are unlikely to achieve the ambitious goals of regime change and denuclearization. Selective sanctions on luxury goods, dual-use products, and other items may still help contain the aggressive military behaviour of Pyongyang and keep its

nuclear program under control as it directly targets the ruling elite and sow discontent towards the Kim administration, yet they require international cooperation to be truly effective. Increasing the intensity of these sanctions in response to North Korean provocations can only have a minimal impact if enforcement of sanctions and procedures to punish those who violate them is not agreed upon, both in letter and in spirit, by sanctioning countries (Peksen, 2016). Though this is clearly easier said than done, cooperation is vital for sanctions on the DPRK to succeed.

In the meantime, it should be recognised that sanctions are causing unnecessary suffering on the people of the DPRK, and thus are not consistent with the humanitarian principle that a country's population should not be held responsible for the actions of its government. In this respect, it is important to keep in mind the case of the comprehensive sanctions regime against Iraq, which reportedly caused the deaths of at least half a million children under the age of five who would not have died under the Iraqi regime prior to sanctions (Gray, 2019). Not only did that sanctions regime cause widespread human suffering, they also failed to achieve their goals. There is a real possibility these sanctions may now be in danger of repeating this same experience. Sanctions are proving to be not only ineffective in achieving their goals, but having deleterious humanitarian and developmental impacts. They may even perpetuate the conflict they are trying to solve.

Questions to Consider

Things we are looking forward to hearing from YOU during the conference:

- What changes would you like to see made in the UN sanctions regime? Or would you like to see it all gone together? (Remember sanctions have been in place since the 1950s after the Korean War . . . it's hard to just strike them all off at once)
- How do we better enforce and monitor a sanctions regime? (With this question it's important to think about your country's role - you might secretly need the DPRK to operate nuclearly)
- Sanctions cannot be a unitary response. What alternatives can we try to promote denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula? (Maybe we can try KPOP or make a Crash Landing on You sequel...)

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Topic 2 – The “weaponization” of migrants by the Republic of Belarus across the European Union border (a memo/short guide to this topic)

INTRODUCTION

In the first topic we have discussed the effectiveness of a sanctions regime in promoting international peace and security. Moving on to the second topic we will examine another sanctions regime which has been put in place recently not by the UNSC but rather unilaterally by the United States, Canada and multilaterally by the European Union. At the heart of Eastern Europe – the Republic of Belarus – dubbed as the “North Korea of Europe,” is known for its leader, Alexander Lukashenko, who took office in 1994 and continues to be the “last dictator of Europe” to this day. However, unfair and unfree elections on 6 September 2020 have triggered unprecedented levels of mass protest across the country, and unprecedented violence and repression by the state authorities, arresting over 33,000 protestors and at least 10 deaths (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Subsequent tensions which followed between Belarus and the European Union (which have to this day imposed at least 5 rounds of sanctions) have culminated into a refugee crisis arguably ‘manufactured’ by Alexander Lukashenko himself, which the European Union has dubbed a “hybrid attack against the bloc [EU]” (Rankin & Roth, 2021) by facilitating refugees from the Middle East desperate to reach the European Union to fly into Minsk then head for the European border. Please note that this ‘memo’ serves as a short background guide to get you up to speed regarding this topic – you do not have to think of any ‘policy responses’ as this is a ‘crisis’. To prepare for this topic (as you wish) you may wish to look into countries that would have a similar position with you while balancing with your country’s individual interests. As they all say – every ‘war’ is political, there’s always things to benefit from.

Introduction to the “UNSC-style Crisis”

Unless you’ve been in a high-school level crisis conference, you may have absolutely no idea what is happening as there are no General Assembly-style committees nor is your ultimate goal to pass a UN Resolution. Instead, your general goal should be to change the world to fit your (or your President/Leader’s agenda – check your country memo).

1. Structure

The Frontroom is the committee room itself (the UNSC)! However, instead of writing resolutions, the Frontroom will pass short documents called directives, which enact the will of the committee (or yourself). Directives passed in the Frontroom tell the Backroom what happened. Your Presidents or embassy staff will respond to notes and directives which you have sent to them – so you will be sort of a double agent, being both an UN Ambassador sitting in the UNSC Committee while secretly plotting or discussing another plan with your President/Leader in the Backroom via crisis notes.

2. Crisis Notes

Crisis notes are as previously mentioned, short messages that you send to your Presiden / Leader / Embassy staff while you create your own story to fulfil your country’s interest – remember a crisis is happening in real time so while you are debating anything can happen at any time – crisis updates may be shared by your chair at any time and you will have to respond to it.

3. Directives

Much like the working papers and draft resolutions that you write/will write/wrote from General Assembly committees, directives are also composed of sponsors, signatories, and clauses. For reference, sponsors are those that have directly contributed to writing the document, while signatories are individuals who are interested in seeing the document presented for voting, but do not necessarily support the entirety of the document and did not contribute to writing it. Directives are written in-room and also consist of operative clauses [statements starting with an action verb] that describe a solution to the issue. The big difference is you do not need

preambulatory clauses as nobody wants you to recognise this or recalling that when everyone's so focused on the action, while typical directives are only 2-3 clauses maximum rather than multiple. Please note that you most likely will have to start writing solutions to the issue, circulate your directives to collect signatories as others are speaking in a moderated caucuses – so get ready to do things very simultaneously! Note that directives can be merged, debated on and will be voted on just like resolutions in General Assembly Committees... but this part we won't discuss too much.

4. Tips

The best way to figure out what on earth is happening is to definitely read the Crisis Rules of Procedure on the LSE YouthMUN website. However, some insightful tips that we have carefully curated for you from Google include: (i) establish a foundation for the chaos you want to create later in the conference, and make sure you build a climax with your crisis notes, (ii) with some imagination and independent research, you also assume your country's alignment, connections, and any other resources that you would have at the start of committee, which will be at your disposal, (iii) as you read the background guide, think of key themes that have appeared in the history leading up to committee, along with "current" issues at hand – it will help you make your far-reaching solutions more down-to-earth and more likely to be implemented.

What has happened so far?

Domestic Background

Belarus, or historically Byelorussia [White Russia] has been ruled by the Russian Empire since 1772, through multiple partitions of Poland between 1772-1793. Since then, while a brief, independent Belarusian Democratic Republic was declared in 1918 after Soviet capitulation (for an extremely short while) to Germany, the Bolsheviks quickly declared the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic was declared on New Year's Day in 1919 and by 1922, it became one of the founding republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR, Soviet Union). Nationalism was discouraged under Joseph Stalin's dictatorial rule and dissent was closely controlled. Its control by the Soviet Union would persist throughout the Cold War until Mikhail Gorbachev's rule (alongside independence by almost every other country in Eastern Europe) and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Between 1990 and 1991 Belarus declared sovereignty and then independence from the Soviet Union, changing its name to the *Republic of Belarus*. Legislative elections in Belarus in 1990 had resulted in a communist-dominated Supreme Soviet that delayed the implementation of a market economy for some three years before adopting a new constitution in March 1994, which created the *President* position and would be dominated by only one winning candidate, Alexander Lukashenko. In a referendum in November 1996 (its legitimacy was obviously disputed) Lukashenko won approval for a constitutional change that granted him near-absolute power and extended his five-year term. Lukashenko's main policies would be defined by a course of isolation with not only the European Union (i.e. Western powers), but also reservedly with Russia.

The European Union itself was obviously very unhappy with Belarus's authoritarian dictatorship – ranging from the suppression of political opposition, silencing of the press, arrest/exile of leaders from the opposition and the "disappearance" of anti-government dissidents (i.e. arrested by the police and never seen again). Subsequent elections and referendums that consolidated Alexander Lukashenko's power and extended his term in power repeatedly, were not recognized as free and fair by Western observers. Despite the fact that Belarus joined the EU's Eastern Partnership Program, which promotes ties between the EU and a number of countries in eastern Europe and the Caucasus in 2009 (Rostovtsev, 2022), governments in the EU remained concerned due to the continuation of repressive policies which went against EU ideals.

On the other hand, Belarus's relations with Russia also had its ups and downs. While support for the government's efforts to establish close ties with Russia was widespread but not without opposition. In 2002 Belarus's relations with Russia had deteriorated, partly over the desire of Gazprom, the Russian state-owned natural gas company, to raise the price of gas exported to Belarus to world levels.

Moreover, in 2008 Lukashenko failed to recognise the independence of the Russian-backed breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the Russian-Georgian conflict. Nevertheless, Belarus remains a partner of Russian-backed regional organizations, including the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Community, as well as—to a lesser extent—the Union State and the CIS.

Recent Developments

In 2020, Alexander Lukashenko's dismissal of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to widespread discontent with his rule and this was clearly reflected in the August Presidential Elections, when despite banning opinion polls and jailing opposition figures three months prior to the elections, official results handed Alexander Lukashenko 80.1% of the vote while his main rival, Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, a political newcomer and former teacher, still won 10.1%. Tikhonovskaya has rejected the outcome and insists that she would have won support ranging from 60% to 70% had votes been properly counted, and fled to neighbouring Lithuania, where she had previously evacuated her children ahead of the election fearing political repercussions (Roache, 2020). An unprecedented wave of mass and largely peaceful protests swept Belarus, but security forces arbitrarily detained thousands of people and subjected hundreds to torture and other ill-treatment in an attempt to stifle the protests. However, the abuse only served to increase public outrage. Tens of thousands continued to demonstrate peacefully for fair elections and justice for abuses until late March 2021. Protests were violently dispersed by excessive force with police resorting to rubber bullets, stun grenades, and tear gas and at one point, police detained more than 2000 protestors every weekend during spontaneous demonstrations. The current political landscape remains highly tense with a strong grip that Lukashenko holds over the political playground with a strong support of Vladimir Putin. Independent media institutions are being shut down with false allegations and mass prosecutions, while the flow of information further supports the oppressive regime in an attempt to retain power over the state.

The European Union responded by imposing sanctions in October 2020 for "repression and election falsification", instituting a travel ban that impedes the over 40 people from entering or transiting through EU territories, while the asset freeze is used against the funds or economic resources of the listed persons (European Council, 2022). More sanctions and a blanket aviation ban for Belarussian airlines were put in place when Lukashenko drew almost universal condemnation in May 2021 when he dispatched a Belarussian fighter jet to intercept a commercial airliner (RyanAir flight FR4978) and force it to land in Minsk. Once the plane arrived in the Belarussian capital, Lukashenko's security forces boarded it and arrested opposition journalist Roman Protasevich. Western leaders stated that the action was nothing less than air piracy, but Lukashenko dismissed the accusations and claimed, without providing evidence, that Belarus was the target of a Western "hybrid warfare" campaign (Rostovtsev, 2022). Belarus has since sought a growing reliance on Russia as sanctions brought increased isolation from the West, and Lukashenko became increasingly compliant and willing to cater to Russia's needs for support. In July 2021, Lukashenko removed the neutrality clause in Belarus' constitution, publicly displaying his full allegiance to Russia, as Putin comments as "publicly relinquishing any obligations to the West and demonstrating full involvement in Moscow's strategic priorities." (Coes, 2021). On August 30, Putin declared that Russia can "always count on Belarus for support." and the two presidents announced plans for deeper economic integration under the slogan "two countries, one economy." in September (Coes, 2021), essentially consolidating the two countries under a single market.

In the mindset of escalating tensions between the European Union and Belarus, in November 2021 Belarus began facilitating refugees from the Middle East who are desperate to reach the EU to fly into Minsk then head for the Polish border (despite Alexander Lukashenko, airline companies and travel agencies accused of facilitating the crisis denying it), sending scores of refugees walking out of a forest where they were encamped and making for the Kuźnica border crossing accompanied by Belarussian police in riot gear (Rankin & Roth, 2021). As of now, the standoff is continuing with the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) stepping up border patrols and setting up razor wires, while the Polish military has installed water cannons and riot police along the border crossing. Amidst what seems to be a political conflict, thousands of migrants are currently stranded at the Poland-Belarus border in freezing temperatures and dire conditions and many people have died, some due to hypothermia. Polish border guards fired water cannons

and tear gas after migrants threw stones and attempted to destroy a fence, and hundreds of migrants have been detained after attempting to cross the Belarus border into Poland. The situation is rapidly evolving each day but is expected to last for months.

European Union leaders condemned all attempts by Belarus to 'instrumentalise' migrants for political purposes, accusing Alexander Lukashenko for engaging in a 'hybrid attack' and in an unprecedented move, activated the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, thereby mobilising substantial support by member states and other participating states. The crisis, which is currently developing, will be defined as 'hybrid warfare' – the use of unconventional methods to disrupt or disable an opponent's actions to achieve strategic objectives without engaging in open hostilities.

Timeline of European Union–Belarus interactions at a glance

14 August 2020	Ministers of the EU reiterated their repeated call to the Belarusian authorities to stop the disproportionate and unacceptable violence against peaceful protesters and to release those detained. During their discussions, the ministers sent a strong signal of the EU's support to the Belarusian population in their desire for democratic change.
19 August 2020	The EU announces that it does not recognise the election results presented by the Belarus authorities and announces that it expects a complete and transparent investigation into all alleged abuses, and that civil society and opposition actors must be protected from arbitrary arrests and violence.
2 October 2020	The EU imposes sanctions for repression and election falsification.
16 November 2020	15 members of the Belarusian authorities, including Alexander Lukashenko as well as his son and National Security Advisor Viktor Lukashenko, to the list of individuals sanctioned (second-round).
17 December 2020	The EU imposes a third round of sanctions targeting high-level officials, economic actors and businessmen responsible for the ongoing violent repression and intimidation of peaceful demonstrators, opposition members and journalists, among others.
23 May 2021	Belarusian authorities scramble a fighter jet and flag what turned out to be a false bomb alert to force a Ryanair plane to land, detaining opposition journalist Roman Protasevich who was on board.
24 May 2021	The EU strongly condemns the forced landing.
26 May 2021	Alexander Lukashenko says his country will no longer prevent migrants from crossing its borders into EU member states Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.
4 June 2021	The EU introduces a ban on the overflight of EU airspace and on access to EU airports by Belarusian carriers of all kinds. EU member states will therefore be required to deny permission to land in, take off from or overfly their territories to any aircraft operated by Belarusian air carriers, including as a marketing carrier.
24 June 2021	The EU imposes a fourth round of economic sanctions on Belarus for the first time, targeting its main export industries and access to finance. July 9, 2021 – Lithuania begins building a 550-km (320-mile) razor wire barrier on its border with Belarus, after accusing Belarusian authorities of flying in migrants to send illegally into the EU.

19 July 2021	EU border agency Frontex announces the deployment of 60 border guards with helicopters and vehicles to Lithuania's frontier with Belarus following a surge in illegal crossings.
9 August 2021	Poland reports a record number of migrants crossing the border from Belarus.
10 August 2021	Latvia declares a state of emergency along its border and starts pushing migrants back into Belarus. Lithuania decides to erect a high metal fence to deter illegal crossings.
23 August 2021	Poland says it will build a high solid fence along its border with Belarus and declares a state of emergency in provinces bordering Belarus.
8 September 2021	Belarus says it may freeze an accord with the EU on taking back migrants who have entered the bloc via its territory, citing "unfriendly actions" by Brussels.
20 September 2021	Three people die after crossing into Poland from Belarus, and a fourth one is found dead on the Belarusian side of the border
8 October 2021	Poland accuses Belarusian services of firing shots, probably blanks, towards its troops and summons the Belarusian Ambassador.
14 October 2021	Poland passes legislation allowing migrant pushbacks at the border.
3 November 2021	Poland says unidentified uniformed individuals armed with long guns had crossed into Polish territory from Belarus.
8 November 2021	Polish authorities accuse Belarus of preparing a major provocation, with reports of hundreds of migrants walking towards the Polish border.
9 November 2021	Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov suggests the EU consider offering financial assistance to Belarus to help stop migrants crossing the border, along the lines of a similar deal the bloc negotiated with Turkey.

Reference: European Council, 2022

Questions to Consider

What do we expect of you?

We are sure that many of you are aware that the situation in Eastern Europe has been changing rather rapidly in recent days – for this same reason we will not be requiring a crisis paper submitted by the deadline (yay!). However, as you receive your country guides before the committee we would like to stress that our topic merely covers up to the events on 9 November 2021, and bearing this into mind is vital when devising solutions with your co-delegate (in the form of directives) to get what you want. It is also crucial to adapt to the situation as events progress throughout the committee – solutions that you had in mind may change depending on changing alliances and the practicalities of the situation may change.

What should I consider?

- What is the BEST way (by that we mean most practical and likely to garner support of a fraction of the committee) to achieve the policy goals stated in your country briefing?

- **How do we balance MY interests with that of the situation? In particular, consider that the 'weaponization' of migrants doesn't preclude the fact that there are humans (and families) involved in the situation – how do we ensure equitable humanitarian access?**
- **What further issues might be triggered out of my decision to issue this particular directive? Is my policy objective more likely to be accomplished by an individual or group directive?**

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