



**Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Model United Nations Conference
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Dear delegates,

It is my distinct honor to welcome you to the very first edition of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Model United Nations Conference in China!

MITMUNC China will be the first chapter of our conference outside of the United States and represents a new, exciting opportunity. Among many things, MITMUNC China represents the power of cooperation across nations in this ever more integrated world. We are delighted to be co-hosting this conference with ASDAN China, united by our common mission of developing tomorrow's leaders.

In late August, we will all convene in Shanghai for a weekend full of debate. As a delegate, you will be tasked with the challenge of representing your assigned delegation and presenting novel, feasible solutions to the world's most pressing issues. It will be your responsibility and privilege to engage in purposeful dialogue with your fellow delegates throughout the course of three days in which you will learn extensively. However, you will not be the only ones in this endeavor. This will be my first time in China which is also the case for the majority of the MITMUNC China committee directors. As such, we are very excited in getting to know you and experiencing Chinese culture firsthand.

A great deal of planning and work from many people has gone into this conference. Thus, I invite you to take full advantage of MITMUNC China. **Prepare yourself for your committee, think freely and creatively, and do not be afraid to speak up.** The beauty of Model United Nations lies in the peaceful coordination of unique thoughts and ideas coalescing to simulate the work of real world leaders, so your work as a delegate will certainly be important.

Use this background guide as your first step in preparation. Read it in its entirety and use it as a base to conduct individual research. Your committee director has prepared it for your benefit.

As MITMUNC China's founder, I very much look forward to giving you a warm welcome in late August! See you in Shanghai!

Sincerely,

William A. Rodríguez
Secretary-General & Founder
MITMUNC China

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear SPECPOL Delegates,

Welcome to the MITMUNC China Conference! We (me and my fellow Directors) are excited to have you in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. Before we get into what topics we'll be discussing at this year's conference, I should introduce myself.

My name is Madeline Zhang, and I will be SPECPOL's Director! I am going to be a sophomore at MIT next fall studying Computer Science and Engineering. I really look forward to meeting you all during the conference.

A bit more about myself: I've been involved in Model United Nations since the beginning of my high school years. As the president of my high school's Model UN club in California, I have competed in my share of conferences, winning numerous awards. Last year, I served as the Director of Business for MITMUNC IX. I have a passion for political science and am very honored and excited to be acting as a Director of MITMUNC China. Outside of Model UN, I am involved in my sorority, Delta Phi Epsilon, and I sing for MIT's Syncopasian a cappella group. In addition, I enjoy running, listening to music, and binging weird TV shows.

Model UN is an incredibly rewarding experience, and I think you'll find the combination of wide scope and nuance in SPECPOL particularly interesting. At this conference, we'll be discussing two different topics: the Arab-Israeli Conflict and Mine Action in Myanmar/Burma. These are two very different issues – the first centers on definitions of sovereignty and peoplehood as they relate to land rights, while the second focuses on solving many different technological and humanitarian facets of the single problem of mine removal in former conflict zones. They are both, however, difficult yet very important for the international community to solve. More importantly, they both require you to think creatively about problems that affect real people. I am excited at seeing how you will tackle both of SPECPOL's complex and fascinating issues.

Welcome to MITMUNC!

Sincerely,

Madeline Zhang

Committee Director & Chair

MIT Model United Nations Conference China 2017

TOPIC 1: The Arab-Israeli Conflict



Background

To properly introduce debate surrounding the Arab-Israeli controversy, it is important to define Zionism and its roots. **Zionism**, as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is the international movement originally for the establishment of a Jewish national or religious community in Palestine and, later, for the support of modern Israel as a state. The root of the word Zionism comes from the Zion hill near Jerusalem. Contemporary Zionism took its roots in the late 19th century, in some part as a reaction to anti-Semitism and discriminatory jingoism in certain European countries. From a historically persecuted and minority group peoples, certain Zionist Jews sought towards the establishment of Jewish-majority state in the area known as Palestine, which was controlled by the Ottoman Empire.

From the 14th century until the end of World War I (WWI), the Ottoman Empire controlled much of the modern Middle East and North Africa. Prior to WWI, however, the Ottoman Empire had been financially and politically declining; seen as the “sick man of Europe,” the Ottoman Empire and its territories came under the gaze of world powers interested in colonial expansion and access to resources. In particular, Great Britain made three promises during WWI:

1. The Balfour Declaration (1917) affirmed British support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”¹ The ambiguous wording of a “national home” can be interpreted to mean a formal state, or simply the right to live peacefully. The wording was intentionally ambiguous so as not to signify that Great Britain was officially supporting the creation of a formal state against the local population's will, but there is strong evidence suggesting, and later, inactions proving, that Great Britain was in support of the formal state. Some believe the ambiguity was intentional, which illustrates the colonial power's key role in the creation of the state of Israel, through their favoring of the Zionist movement, and heavy crackdown on the Palestinian Arab independence movements.
2. The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) between Great Britain and France divided the Ottoman Empire's territories into areas under control by the two governments.² Under this agreement, Palestine would be under British control after WWI.
3. The Husayn-McMahon letters (1915-16) took place between the British government in Egypt and Sharif Husayn of Mecca.³ They included a series of demands from both sides, to the general end that Britain would support an Arab state after the end of the war in exchange for Arab military support and economic preference.⁴

After WWI, Palestine was made a British mandate under the League of Nations mandate system. The mandate created tension and brought about violence between the Jewish and Arab population and British troops.⁵ British attempts to cease the violence, such as the White Paper of 1939, which restricted Jewish immigration, instead backfired and worsened the tension. WWII also exacerbated the situation: the influx of Jews attempting to escape persecution in Europe increased, and international sympathy for the Jewish cause grew in response to the Holocaust. In 1947, the British government announced its intention to transfer jurisdiction of the mandate to the UN. At this point, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181. Called the “partition plan,” it advocated for a two-state solution according to the map below. The Jewish community accepted the plan, but the Arab community rejected it.⁶ It is worth mentioning some statistics here. The Jewish state was granted 56% of Palestine which included all the major coastal, port cities of economic importance while the Arab Palestinians were granted the remaining 42% (Jerusalem being an international zone), even though Arabs comprised 68% of the population at the time. These statistics provide some

¹ "Balfour Declaration: Text of the Declaration." *Jewish Virtual Library*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/balfour.html>>.

² "Sykes-Picot Agreement." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement>>.

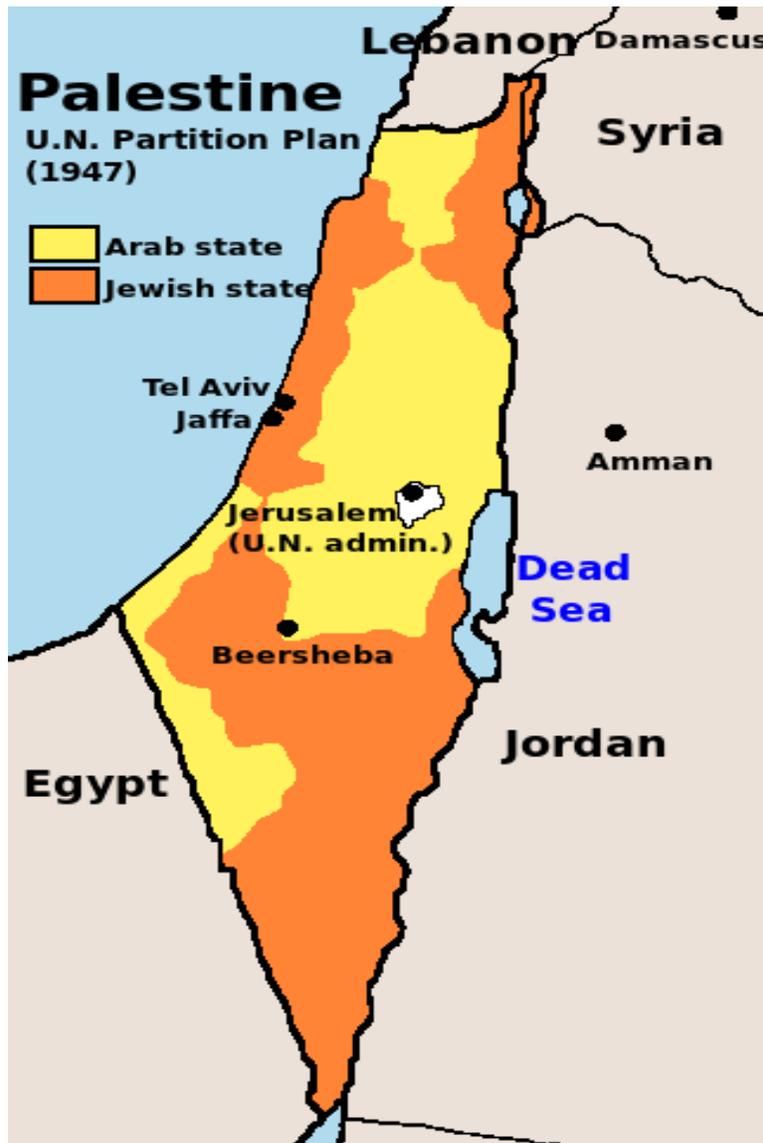
³ "Jusayn-McMahon correspondence." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016 <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Husayn-McMahon-correspondence>>.

⁴ "Pre-State Israel: The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence." *Jewish Virtual Library*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/hussmac1.html>>.

⁵ "What Was Mandatory Palestine? And Why Does It Matter?" *Time*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://time.com/3445003/mandatory-palestine/>>.

⁶ "United Nations Resolution 181." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Resolution-181>>.

basic context as to why the Arab community rejected resolution 181 (as there seems to be a general lack of knowledge on this particular part of the history), and should provoke thought on the discussion of land rights, as part of SPECPOL's directives.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UN_Partition_Plan_For_Palestine_1947.svg

British troops were scheduled to withdraw by May 15, 1948; on May 14, Israel proclaimed statehood,⁶ and on the 15th, the brewing civil war developed into a full-scale conflict when Egyptian, Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, and Lebanese forces invaded the former mandate.⁷ The war that ensued has come to be known by Zionists as the “War of Independence” and by many Palestinians and Arabs as “*al-Nakba*” (“the Disaster”). **It will be referred to here by its neutral name, the 1948-49 War.** By the end of the war, Jewish forces had experienced a decisive victory. The war had several consequences:

- The Zionist victory legitimized the presence of Israel as a viable military state.
- Massacres and expulsions by Zionist militias displaced between 750,000 and one million Palestinian refugees, mostly into neighboring Jordan.⁸
- By the end of the war, Jewish forces had gained control of almost all of the land granted to Palestinians under Resolution 181 except for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.⁸

The sheer scale of the destruction (See an interactive map of villages destroyed/depopulated in 1948: <http://www.zochrot.org/en/site/nakbaMap>) of villages and number of refugees indicates that there was an active role played by Zionist militias in the process. Even if half the population merely fled and wasn't forced out, Israel not allowing them to return could be considered effectively expulsion.

The war was resolved by armistice agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. These agreements also stipulated that Israel would turn the Gaza Strip over to Egyptian control and the West Bank over to Jordanian control.⁹ In the case of the West Bank, Jordan already held most of it and only exchanged some bits in its agreement with Israel.

However, conflict did not cease after the 1949 agreements. Three more wars broke out in the latter half of the 20th century. In 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of Egypt, nationalized the Suez Canal. In order to regain control of the vital waterway, Great Britain and France made a secret plan with Israel: Israel agreed to invade the Sinai Peninsula and take over the canal, upon which Great Britain and France would intervene, ostensibly to keep the peace between Egypt and Israel, and thus regain control of the canal.⁸ Israel did invade, taking control of the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula, and Great Britain and France intervened. After the war, a UN Emergency Force was stationed at the canal and Israel withdrew from the land it had taken over.⁸ Although Israel won a

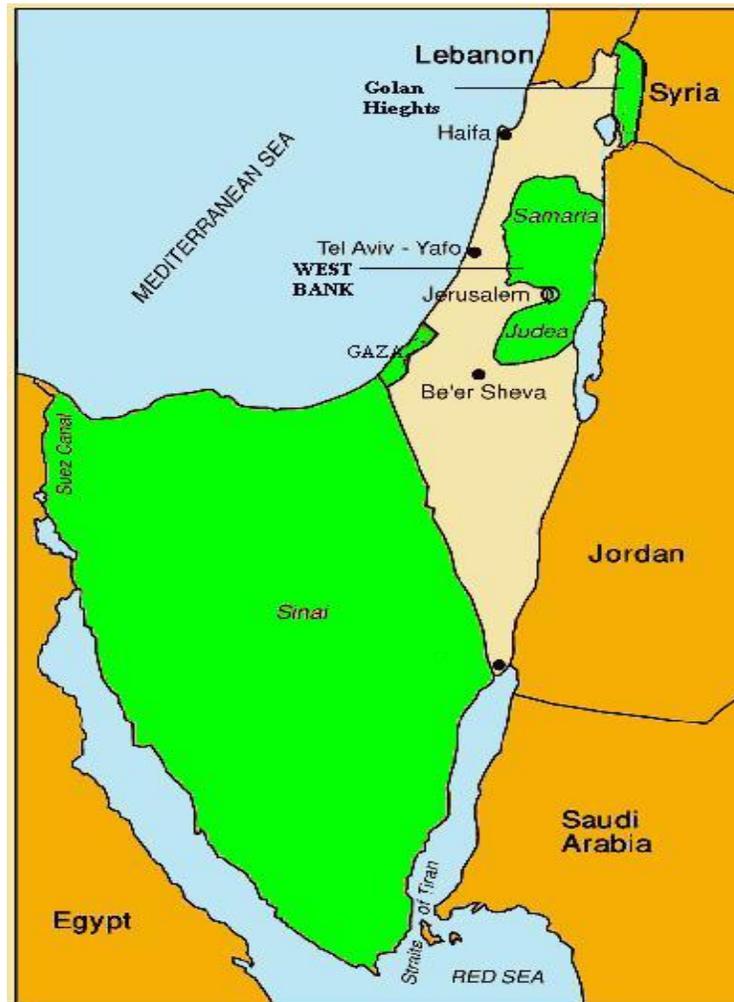
⁷ “Arab-Israeli wars.” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Israeli-wars>>.

⁸ “Quick Facts: The Palestinian Nakba.” *Institute for Middle East Understanding*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://imeu.org/article/quick-facts-the-palestinian-nakba>>.

⁹ “Israel-Egypt Armistice Agreement.” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/mfadocuments/yearbook1/pages/israel-egypt%20armistice%20agreement.aspx>>.

military victory, the war was in some respects a political victory for Arab nations because Egypt maintained its nationalization of the canal.⁸

Between 1956 and 1967, sporadic violence in the canal area continued, as well as clashes along Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese borders. In a way, the 1956 conflicts never truly ended - they became a war of attrition that transformed into a third Arab-Israeli war in 1967. In 1967, Nasser expelled UN troops in the Sinai Peninsula, mobilized Egyptian troops, and signed a defense pact with Jordan.⁸ In response, Israeli forces launched a preemptive strike and almost destroyed the entire Egyptian air force while it was still on the ground. In just six days, Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria in the north, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan in the east, and the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt in the southwest. Although Israel had been gradually gaining land since 1948, the 1967 War (or “Six-Day War”) marked an unprecedented growth in its territory in an extraordinarily short time. The green areas in the following image show the land taken by Israel during the 1967 War.



(<http://www.mideastweb.org/israelafter1967.htm>)

At the end of the 1967 War, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242, calling for Israel to withdraw from “territories occupied in the recent conflict” and for nations in the area to work to resolve the Palestinian refugee problem and recognize each other’s political sovereignty.¹⁰ Israel and Arab nations disagreed on whether Israel followed the resolution because of the ambiguous wording of “territories occupied.”

In 1973, war broke out again. In October of 1973, Egypt and Syria attacked Israel at the Golan Heights-Syria and Sinai Peninsula-Egypt borders. Initially, Arab forces were successful in pushing back Israeli forces. Eventually, Israel reversed the tide of war and defeated Egypt and Syria. However, the 1973 War (or “October War,” “Yom Kippur War”) was seen as an Arab victory for the following reasons:

- Arab forces were initially successful, and their military defeat was not as drastic as in 1967 and previous wars.
- The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) embargoed the United States in response to its pro-Israeli involvement in the war, successfully using oil as political leverage for the first time and resisting superpower involvement.¹¹
- Anwar Sadat, president of Egypt at the time, sought to push Israel to the negotiating table and was successful in this respect: the war ended in an Israel-Egyptian peace treaty and the beginning of peace negotiations.¹²

¹⁰ “Resolution 242 (1967).” *United Nations Security Council*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016.

<<https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136>>.

¹¹ “Oil Embargo, 1973-1974.” *Office of the Historian*. United States Department of State, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo>>.

¹² “The 1973 War: Link to Israeli-Egyptian Peace.” *Middle East Policy Council*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/1973-war-link-israeli-egyptian-peace?print>>.

Since 1973, there have been no major wars, and various movements towards peace have been made. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula. In 1978, Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin, then prime minister of Israel, met at Camp David at the behest of Jimmy Carter. Carter mediated historic negotiations between Sadat and Begin, who agreed upon the following measures:¹³

1. Egypt and Israel would sign a peace treaty and establish diplomatic relations.
2. Israel would withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, and Gaza Strip and cease Israeli settlements in the West Bank.
3. Israel would be allowed to pass through the Suez Canal.¹⁴
4. Egypt and Israel would meet with Jordanian and Palestinian representatives to solve the Palestinian question.

The Camp David negotiations did not successfully resolve all aspects of the conflict. For example, it did not resolve the governance of East Jerusalem or address the Palestinian refugee problem in a concrete way. In addition, soon after the Accords were finalized, Menachem Begin, then-Prime Minister of Israel, expanded settlements in the West Bank. In 1987, the First Intifada, a violent Palestinian uprising, began. The first Intifada was largely civil disobedience and boycotts. "Leaflets publicizing the uprising's aims demanded the complete withdrawal of Israel from the territories it had occupied in 1967: the lifting of curfews and checkpoints; it appealed to Palestinians to join in civic resistance, while asking them not to employ arms, since military resistance would only invite devastating retaliation from Israel". The response though was brutal. See

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Intifada

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged from relative weakness of a clear leader of the Palestinian cause, especially in the West Bank.¹⁵ Hamas emerged in the Gaza Strip as an alternative leadership source. Hamas was intentionally allowed to operate during the intifada by the Israeli forces while cracking down on any secular resistance from Fatah, PFLP or any other PLO members in order to weaken the unity of the Palestinian people under the PLO. Here is more information on this topic:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/07/30/how-israel-helped-create-hamas/?utm_term=.e7d2207c5fc2

¹³ "Camp David Accords: Fast Facts." *CNN*. Cable News Network, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/23/world/meast/camp-david-accords-fast-facts/>>.

¹⁴ "Camp David Accords." *NOVA Online*. NVCC, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<https://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/HIS135/Events/campdavid78.htm>>.

¹⁵ "The First Intifada: How the Arab-Israeli Conflict Was Transformed." *Haaretz.com*. N.p., 13 Dec. 2012. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/the-first-intifada-how-the-arab-israeli-conflict-was-transformed.premium-1.484677>>.

While the PLO was a secular political organization that had existed since the 1960s, Hamas began as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood during the intifada.

In 1993, Yitzhak Rabin, prime minister of Israel, and Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO, met to negotiate peace. The resulting agreements were called the Oslo Accords. In the Accords, Rabin and Arafat agreed upon the following:

1. The Palestinian Authority (PA) would be established to govern the Palestinian people.
2. Israel would fully withdraw from some parts of the West Bank, withdraw civilian governance but maintain a security presence in others, and maintain full control in areas with Israeli settlements.¹⁶

Again, the Accords did not resolve the governance of Jerusalem or the Palestinian refugee problem. The existences of Israeli settlers and Hamas, who both resisted the peace process, proved to be an obstacle to finishing the peace process.¹⁷ The newly established PA was dominated by Fatah, the main political party of the PLO, which had agreed to work with Israel and renounced violence as a tactic. Tension between Fatah and Hamas increased when Hamas engaged in terrorist attacks within Israel.¹⁸ In 2000, a much more violent Second Intifada broke out in Jerusalem with Hamas as a leader of the movement, and in 2004, Yasser Arafat died of natural causes.¹⁹ It is also believed that he was assassinated since he was a charismatic leader and there have been/are investigations and reports. There are several arguments for and against around, so adding "while some believe that he was assassinated" seems more natural. These events both obstructed the progression of peace and worsened tension between the two Palestinian leadership groups.

In 2006, after the Second Intifada ended, Hamas was elected to the majority of seats in the PA. With the PA divided, a civil war between Fatah and Hamas began in May 2006.¹⁸ After a brief period of reconciliation, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, and Fatah took control of the West Bank.¹⁸ Despite attempts to reconcile and establish a unified Palestinian government, as of December 2016, Fatah and Hamas remain separate and in control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively. In 2012, UN General Assembly Resolution 67/19 reaffirmed the status of Palestine as an observer

¹⁶ Rudoren, Jodi. "What the Oslo Accords Accomplished." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 30 Sept. 2015. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/world/middleeast/palestinians-mahmoud-abbas-oslo-peace-accords.html?_r=0>.

¹⁷ "Oslo Explained." *Al Jazeera America*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/13/oslo-accords-explained.html>>.

¹⁸ "Hamas-Fateh Conflict." *Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.jmcc.org/fastfactspag.aspx?tname=13>>.

¹⁹ "Al-Aqsa Intifada Timeline." *BBC News*. BBC, 29 Sept. 2004. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3677206.stm>.

state and the responsibility of the UN towards the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination.²⁰

Issues to Debate

Unresolved issues that should be debated upon include the Palestinian right of return and the refugee problem, the humanitarian and military situations in the occupied territories, and the larger issue of Palestinian sovereignty and Israeli borders. There are now 7 million Palestinian refugees worldwide, 5 million of whom are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Of these 5 million, 2 are internally displaced in the West Bank and Gaza refugee camps. And about 1.5 million are in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.²¹ Neighboring Arab nations often do not grant Palestinian refugees the full benefits of citizenship, such as access to health care, education, the workforce, and political representation. Does Israel have political, social, or economic responsibilities to these refugees? Should Palestinians displaced by Israeli settlements or military endeavors be guaranteed right of return? What would the logistical implications of such a right be? The implications for Israeli families established since the early 20th century? Do neighboring Arab nations have responsibilities towards Palestinian refugees under their jurisdiction?

Another issue is the presence of Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank, which continue to be built under prime minister Netanyahu. The continued growth of these settlements presents an obstacle to Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. In addition, Israel continues its construction of a wall around the West Bank. The wall is considered an important part of Israel's defense infrastructure by some, and a violation of international law that cuts Palestinians off from agricultural resources to others, including the **International Court of Justice in The Hague**. See <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=11292#.WWgHKtOGOAw>.

How can these issues be resolved? Keep in mind that many Israeli settlements in the West Bank have existed since 1948, that Israel has experienced violence across borders for decades, and that the wall has economic and social welfare implications as well as military ones. In the Gaza Strip, Palestinians are restricted from movement to other territories or nations, and an economic blockade is imposed. These restrictions protect Israel and Fatah from violent branches of Hamas, but also decrease municipal revenues, prevent maintenance of water and sanitation networks, undermine agriculture, and increase unemployment and food insecurity in the Gaza Strip.^{22 23}

²⁰ "Resolution adopted by the General Assembly" *Securitycouncilreport.org*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a_res_67_19.pdf>.

²¹ "Palestine Refugees." *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>>.

²² "Gaza Blockade." *Occupied Palestinian Territory*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.ochaopt.org/theme/gaza-blockade>>.

Finally, the committee should strive to resolve the issue of Palestine's sovereignty. This includes the extent of Israel's borders in the Sinai Peninsula, oil-rich Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, and West Bank. It also includes the status of Jerusalem, which falls on the border of the West Bank and has split between Israeli and Arab control in the past. The committee should consider implications of sovereignty, including the position of Israeli settlements, the Fatah-Hamas split and governance of Palestine, and rights to infrastructure.

Bloc Positions

African States: In recent years, African states have generally been either neutral or in favor of the Arab nationalist cause. North African Arab countries especially have traditionally been in support of the Palestinian cause. In 1967, eight Arab nations issued the Khartoum Resolution refusing to recognize Israel or have peace with Israel at a meeting in Sudan.²⁴ OPEC, which embargoed the United States in the 1973 war, includes Nigeria and several North African countries. The complicated history of Israeli-Egyptian relations is explored in the "background" section. Recently, Egypt voted for Israel to join the UN space committee, marking the first time Egypt has voted in favor of Israel.²⁵ Ethiopia is an Israeli ally, in part due to the large Jewish population there.

Middle Eastern States: Many Middle Eastern states are supportive of the Palestinian cause but willing to recognize and cooperate with Israel. The Jordanian government has diplomatic relations with Israel. However, almost half of Jordanians are Palestinian refugees or of Palestinian heritage, and as a result, the population is highly in favor of the Palestinian cause. Relations between Israel and Lebanon are generally hostile, due in large part to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, as well as raids and counter-raids across the border between Hezbollah, Israeli forces, and other violent nationalist Palestinian groups. Saudi Arabia maintains relations with Israel but is favorable towards Palestinian sovereignty. Syria also maintains relations, but they are tense and at times hostile due to Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights, strategic oil-rich land formerly belonging to Syria, and due to Syria's ties to Hezbollah. Since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, tensions have been high between Israel and Iran. Iran supports the Palestinian cause and has links to Hamas and Hezbollah. Israel is not recognized by and does not have diplomatic relations with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen, and Iraq.

²³ "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade." *Occupied Palestinian Territory*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Nov. 2016. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-strip-humanitarian-impact-blockade-november-2016>>.

²⁴ "Israel-Arab Peace Process: The Khartoum Resolutions." *Jewish Virtual Library*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/three_noes.html>.

²⁵ Soffer, Ari. "For the first time ever, Egypt votes for Israel at the UN." *Arutz Sheva*. N.d., 15 Feb. 2011. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/202824>>.

Central and East Asian States: Israel has neutral or favorable relations with most Central and East Asian states. China and India are both very favorable of Israel due to Israel's agricultural and technological research and resources and China's and India's strong defense and intelligence infrastructures and roles as world economic powers.^{26 27} Israel also has close ties with Singapore to serve mutual defense interests.²⁸

Israel is not recognized by and does not have diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Pakistan.

European States: The European Union (EU) has strong economic ties to Israel; it is Israel's main trading partner, with Israel importing 19 billion euros from the EU and exporting 13.3 billion euros to the EU in 2015.²⁹ Relations between the EU and Israel are codified in the EU-Israel Association Agreement.²⁹ However, the EU criticizes Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territories.³⁰ Israel and Russia also share close relations, due to factors such as the Chechen conflict and mutual economic interests, but struggle over the Iran nuclear deal and Russia's potential exacerbation of the Syrian civil war.³¹

North American States: Israel and the United States (USA) have a long history together. The Jewish lobby in America was influential in Zionist cause in the 20th century, with the USA government endorsing the Balfour Declaration in 1919.³² The USA was the first nation to recognize Israel, and provides over \$3 billion annually to Israel's military.³³ Israel is an important ally for the USA in the Middle East. However, the USA has also tried to arbitrate between the Zionist and Palestinian cause, advocating for the Resolution 181 partition plan and facilitating the Camp David negotiations and Accords. Israel has historically had positive relations with most other North American states,

²⁶ Tepper, Aryeh. "China's Deepening Interest in Israel." *The Tower*. N.d., Sep. 2015. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.thetower.org/article/chinas-deepening-interest-in-israel/>>.

²⁷ "Israel International Relations: India-Israel Relations." *Jewish Virtual Library*. N.d., n.b. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/newdelhidealings.html>>.

²⁸ Melman, Yossi. "Israel and Singapore's discreet but flourishing defense relationship." *Jerusalem Post*. N.d., n.p. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Intelligence-File-The-ties-that-bind-452543>>.

²⁹ "Israel." *European Commission*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/israel/>>.

³⁰ "EU adopts resolution criticizing Israeli settlement activity." *The Guardian*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/18/eu-adopts-resolution-criticising-israeli-settlement-activity-occupied-palestinian-territories>>.

³¹ Borshchevskaya, Anna. "The Maturing of Israel-Russian Relations." *The Washington Institute*. N.d., Spring 2016. Web. 04. Dec. 2016. <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-maturing-of-israeli-russian-relations>>.

³² "U.S.-Israel Relations: Roots of the U.S.-Israel Relationship." *Jewish Virtual Library*. N.d., n.p. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/roots_of_US-Israel.html>.

³³ "U.S. Relations With Israel." *U.S. Department of State*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>>.

including Cuba despite Cuban-American hostilities. Israel does not have diplomatic relations with Nicaragua due to Israeli actions in Gaza.³⁴

South American States: Most South American states have diplomatic relations with and neutral ties to Israel. Venezuela and Bolivia have ceased relations with Israel due to Israeli actions in Gaza.³⁵ Brazil is supportive of the Palestinian cause, welcoming the first Palestinian embassy in the Americas in early 2016 while rejecting Israeli envoy nominations.³⁶

³⁴ “Nicaragua suspends diplomatic ties with Israel.” *Ynetnews.com*. N.d., n.p. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3897773,00.html>>.

³⁵ “Venezuela, Bolivia cut ties to Israel over Gaza.” *Cnn.com*. N.p., 14 Jan. 2009. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/americas/01/14/bolivia.israel/>>.

³⁶ JTA. “While Brazil rejects Israeli envoy, it inaugurates Palestinian embassy.” *Jerusalem Post*. N.p., 05 Feb. 2016. Web. 04 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/While-Brazil-rejects-Israeli-envoy-it-inaugurates-Palestinian-embassy-443960>>.

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TOPIC 2: Mine Action in Myanmar/Burma



Modern Myanmar/Burmese Political History

Ever since Myanmar/Burma³⁷ declared its independence from the United Kingdom in 1948, it has been subject to large scale internal conflict. Initially, the Communist Party of Burma and the Karen National Union (representing the Karen ethnic group) were the primary belligerents, but during the months after independence many other ethnic violence began in Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Rakhine, and Shan states.³⁸ In 1962, the civilian parliamentary government of Myanmar/Burma was overthrown by the Union Revolutionary Council, a military government. Over the course of the 12 years they were in power, the “Burmese Way to Socialism” was enacted, expanding military power in the national economic and political spheres. During this time, ethnic minority groups were denied basic human rights, corruption skyrocketed, many types of currency were devalued by the government, and the free press was systematically suppressed.

As a result of this, many ethnic minority groups formed alternative government structures and armies in opposition to the URC, many of whom urged the government to allow the creation of multiple political parties or to adopt a federalist style of government, which would give minority groups more autonomy while still remaining under the jurisdiction of the federal government;

³⁷ In 1989, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) of Burma changed the name of the country to Myanmar. Some countries, like the United Kingdom, still refer to Myanmar as Burma as a sign of protest against that government. You should be aware of which name your country uses. In this background guide, we will refer to it using both names as the dias is neutral.

³⁸ Smith, Martin (1991). *Burma : insurgency and the politics of ethnicity* (2. impr. ed.). London: Zed Books. ISBN 0862328683.

however, the URC refused. General Ne Win, the leader of the URC, attempted to hold peace talks with leaders of ethnic minority groups right after the military takeover in 1962, and again in 1972, but neither attempt was successful.³⁹

In late 1987 and early 1988, tensions between the government and protesters worsened, culminating in the 1988 Uprising. In July of 1988, General Ne Win resigned as leader of Burma and was replaced by Sein Lwin. This choice angered many, as he was responsible for much of the violence against anti-government protesters. On August 8th, 1988, hundreds of thousands of Burmese protestors come together in nation-wide strikes to protest the government. In the following months, multiple leaders associated with the previous military government were instated and removed from power, ending with Saw Maung and the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC). In May of 1990, free and fair national elections were held in which Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy (who had been placed under house arrest in July by the SLORC), won with approximately 60% of the votes. However, the results of this election were ignored, and the SLORC remained in power for the next several decades.⁴⁰ In 2010, another national election was held and the military government was officially dissolved and replaced with a military-backed civilian government led by Thein Sein, though many critics questioned the legitimacy of the election.⁴¹

Over the next few years, the government shifted slowly towards more democratic practices -- freeing political prisoners, allowing peaceful demonstrations, ceasing operations against some ethnic minority rebels, allowing non-government newspapers to be published, and removing the ban on public gatherings. Despite these changes, violence between ethnic and religious groups and the military remained a pressing issue during the post-election years.⁴² By 2015, the NLD gained a large majority in parliament in the first widely accepted free and open vote.⁴³

Mine Action in Myanmar/Burma

Mine action is the combination of humanitarian and developmental work for the purpose of mitigating the effects of buried landmines on civilians. Because landmines are cheap and effective weapons, they were used extensively in the periods of extreme ethnic violence in Myanmar/Burma and have not been removed. Now, they pose a large threat to Myanmarese/Burmese citizens, especially those in rural areas or those who have been made refugees by ethnic violence. At this point in time, nine of Myanmar/Burma's fourteen states are considered to be contaminated with landmines, and approximately five million people live in mine-contaminated areas.⁴⁴ According to

³⁹ Schock, Kurt (1999). *People Power and Political Opportunities: Social Movement Mobilization and Outcomes in the Philippines and Burma*. Soc. Probs. 46: p. 358.

⁴⁰ "Timeline: Myanmar's '8/8/88' Uprising." NPR. NPR, 8 Aug. 2013. Web. 02 Dec. 2016.

⁴¹ "The significance of Myanmar's 2010 election." *New Mandala*, 15 Dec. 2010. Web. 02 Dec. 2016.

⁴² "Timeline: Reforms in Myanmar." *BBC News*, 08 Jul. 2015. Web. 02 Dec. 2016.

⁴³ "Myanmar's 2015 landmark elections explained." *BBC News*, 03 Dec. 2015. Web 02 Dec 2016.

⁴⁴ "Humanitarian Impact of Landmines in Burma/Myanmar." *Geneva Call*, 2011. Web 02 Dec 2016.

the **Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor**, over 3,000 people were injured or killed by landmines between 1999 and 2014, but it is widely acknowledged that these estimates are likely far lower than the real numbers because Myanmar/Burma lacks a national infrastructure for reporting landmine incidents.⁴⁵

The United Nations frames its work towards mine action in terms of five pillars: *clearance* (the act of safely identifying, flagging, and removing landmines), *education* (teaching civilians in affected areas how to identify and avoid landmines), *victim assistance* (providing medical aid and job training to victims of landmine explosions and their families), *advocacy* (promoting the acceptance of international treaties on mine usage and rights of the disabled) and *stockpile destruction* (facilitating destruction of landmine stockpiles in accordance with international regulations on mines).⁴⁶ In Myanmar/Burma, however, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) does not conduct mine removal, largely because of continued debate over the terms of peace between the government and some ethnic groups, represented by the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). In March of 2015, the Myanmarese/Burmese government and leaders of many ethnic groups not represented by UNFC signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) which, among many things, would allow for substantive mine action that includes mine removal.⁴⁷ In 2012, however, UNFC released four demands asking to meet with the Myanmarese/Burmese government before they signing the NCA, which includes an alternative plan for resolving ethnic violence.⁴⁸ These demands have not been met, leaving the NCA unable to be enacted. This means that mine action in Myanmar/Burma is limited to mine risk education (MRE) and victim assistance, both of which the Myanmarese/Burmese government and some external NGOs have implemented to limited effect. The large majority of children who live in mine-contaminated regions have not received any form of MRE, and medical care for victims can still be prohibitively expensive for many families.⁴⁹

Main Issues to Focus On

Our discussion in committee will most likely center on the UNMAS 5 pillars of mine action. However, if you have other aspects of this issue that you would like to discuss, like the sovereignty rights of different ethnic groups in Myanmar/ Burma, you are more than welcome to do so.

Clearance: Most clearance operations begin with a non-technical survey, which lays the groundwork for subsequent technical intervention. Non-technical surveys involve field visits to collect information on suspected and confirmed hazardous areas, to identify best practices for a given site, to find ways in which plans can better adhere to mine-related treaties, and more. Basically, non-

⁴⁵ “The tragedy of landmine warfare in Myanmar.”, *Al Jazeera*, 30 Oct. 2016. Web 02 Dec 2016.

⁴⁶ “Mine Action Entails More Than Removing Landmines From the Ground.”, *United Nations Mine Action Service*, 2016. Web 02 Dec 2016.

⁴⁷ “Myanmar’s Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.” *Institute for Security and Development Policy*, 01 Oct. 2015. Web. 02 Dec. 2016.

⁴⁸ “United Nationalities Federal Council.” *Myanmar Peace Monitor*, 2016. Web 02 Dec 2016.

⁴⁹ “Portfolio of Mine Action Projects: Myanmar.” *United Nations Mine Action Service*, 2016. Web 02 Dec 2016.

technical crews gather information on hazardous zones in as much detail as possible without actually conducting technical tests of the land to fully confirm presence or absence of mines. Because conducting mine-removal procedures on safe land has a large opportunity cost, non-technical survey crews rely on environmental and historical clues to determine the likelihood of mine presence in given regions.⁵⁰ One way to improve the efficacy and efficiency of non-technical survey work would be to create some sort of national infrastructure for people to report instances of landmine explosions. How would you implement such a system? How would it be accessed -- by telephone, internet, or letter? Would you require confirmation of activity in a given region from multiple sources, or investigate every claim? How would you inform the public that this infrastructure exists and encourage participation? These are the kinds of questions that you want to think about when coming up with solutions to the tricky problems of mine action.



⁵⁰ "Technical survey. Second edition." *SLNMAJ*, 20 Apr. 2010. Web 02 Dec 2016.

Non-technical surveys are often followed by technical surveys in which teams confirm the presence of buried landmines with metal-detectors. **Mine-detection technology is an important frontier -- as more accurate and cost effective mine-detection methods are developed, more land can be reliably scanned. Look at projects like Apopo (which trains mice to sniff out landmines) and Minesweepers (a competition for mechanical engineering students to build better mine-detecting robots) for excellent examples of creative innovation in the field. How can we encourage these kinds of projects? Perhaps more importantly, how can we use existing technologies to the best effect?** Technological surveys confirm either the presence or absence of landmines in a given region before any further action is taken. If a small number of landmines are found in a remote area, the land may be closed off from public access. When large numbers are found, especially in more populated regions, mine removal activity follows until a hazardous area can be reclassified as safe. Confirming an absence of landmines can be just as useful because this kind of technical survey increases local confidence in non-technical survey results. At this point, local people can begin to use this newly released land that had previously lain fallow. **Local community members are often important sources of information in cancellation activities -- how can this information best be collected and used?**

Education: Mine Risk Education (MRE), as one of the few allowed mine action activities within Myanmar/Burma, has received more attention from UNMAS and NGOs than some of these other categories. That being said, there is still work that can be done to reach more people. Many projects, like those of the NGO DanChurchAid in Kachin and Northern Shan states, focus on incorporating MRE into normally schooling for children in mine-contaminated regions.⁵¹ This can be an especially effective route for information transfer when children then teach their parents what they learn in school. However, what can be done for adults without children in school or who wish to learn for themselves? **What are the best ways to transmit information about mine risk? Where are places that people visit often and socialize with others? Are these reasonable locations for information transfer? How can you best represent information to help illiterate adults to understand? What information should be included?** Most MRE efforts focus on informing people about how to identify high-risk areas and what landmines look and sound like. However, there is an argument to be made that it is just as important to teach traumatic injury first aid so people can help those injured by landmines in the time before medical professionals arrive. **Should first aid training be given? If so, where should this happen, and how will first aid supplies be distributed? Is it necessary to ensure that these supplies are used only in case of landmine-related injuries?**

⁵¹ "Mainstreaming Mine Risk Education into Protection and Education Actions, Kachin and Northern Shan States.", *DanChurchAid*. 2016. Web 03 Dec 2016.

Victim Assistance: Victim assistance centers around four major issues: short-term medical care to mitigate the immediate effects of landmine-related injuries, long-term medical care for chronic issues related to landmine-related injuries, job retraining for victims of landmines who were previously the primary wage-earners in their households, and disability advocacy and support networks. These are all expensive national projects that require collaboration and communication between different organizations. **How can the process of victim assistance be streamlined? What kind of information infrastructure would help agencies in charge of different aspects of victim assistance communicate effectively with each other to coordinate care? What kind of job retraining opportunities would be most helpful for newly disabled victims of landmine-related injuries? How can we minimize the effects of the stigmatization of the disabled on the hiring process? What kind of psychological support can be offered to victims? How can support groups be formed for those who live in remote rural areas? These are just a few of the many questions that you can consider when thinking about how to implement the most effective forms of victim assistance.**

Advocacy: The main purpose of international advocacy in mine action is to promote the adoption of international treaties related to the regulation of landmine use and the rights of refugees and the disabled. **Has your country signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on Their Destruction? Does your country have an opinion on the fact that Myanmar/Burma has not yet signed this Convention?**⁵² The same question holds for the **Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, especially Protocols II and V.**^{53 54} Myanmar/Burma has signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.⁵⁵ **Has your country done so? Has your country created, sponsored, or signed additional legislation to support the rights of the disabled? If so, would your country like to see these changes implemented in Myanmar/Burma? To what degree?**

Stockpile Destruction: Stockpile destruction in Myanmar/Burma is a particularly tricky issue because there is no accurate estimation of how many landmines are kept in stockpiles and which groups -- governmental or UNFC -- keep them. Because of this, both sides are unlikely to willingly give up landmine stockpiles until a peace treaty is ratified by both the government and the UNFC.⁵⁶ **Does your country support the government of Myanmar/Burma, the UNFC, or neither on the stipulations of the NCA? How can productive dialogues be best facilitated? How can the international community encourage a solution this issue?**

⁵² "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on Their Destruction.", *AP Mine Ban Convention*. 2016. Web 03 Dec 2016.

⁵³ "Convention on Cluster Munitions." *UNMAS*. 2016. Web 03 Dec 2016.

⁵⁴ "Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons -- Protocols II and V." *UNMAS*. 2016. Web 03 Dec 2016.

⁵⁵ "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." *United Nations Treaty Collection*. 03 Dec. 2016. Web 03 Dec 2016.

⁵⁶ "Global Stockpiles of Antipersonnel Mines." *The Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor*. Undated. Web 03 Dec 2016.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As this is an issue largely rooted in internal conflict and ethnic violence, large scale bloc-level positions do not hold for mine action in Myanmar/Burma. Instead, when considering your country's perspective, think about their past interactions with different Myanmarese/Burmese governments and their stances on various sovereignty issues across the globe. Do they tend to support claims to sovereignty on historical grounds? Appeals to ethnic unity? And above all else, use your creative problem-solving skills to consider novel solutions. The best resolutions tend to address multiple facets of a topic, but that doesn't mean that you can't focus extensively on a particular issue you feel passionate about. You have a large amount of discretion as to where you want to focus -- be it mine detection technology, disability rights advocacy, or national-scale incident report infrastructure. We look forward to moderating your debate, and seeing what you come up with. Good luck!



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