

DISEC: Gulf War



Directed & Written by Hannah Leung

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Equity Disclaimer

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1. All participants of the conference, whether staff member or delegate, are expected to be respectful towards each other. Harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated, including but not limited to: sex, age, race, origin, ethnicity, colour, religion, mental/physical disabilities, socio-economic status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.
2. All attendees must refrain from any form of harassment and discrimination such as:
 - a. Offensive speech, gestures, sounds, touching, etc;
 - b. Digital or written mediums used during conference;
 - c. Physical violence or threats of violence toward an individual;
 - d. Indecent comments or actions pertaining to one's appearance.
3. All individuals will be held responsible for any physical property damage dealt within the conference building.
4. The dress code for the conference is casual western business attire; it is highly recommended for everyone to show up in dress code.
5. Cultural appropriation is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to attire or accents.
6. RGSSMUN reserves the right to decide what constitutes bullying and/or improper behaviour towards any person or group.
7. Reported incidents will be investigated by the Secretariat General, and all disciplinary actions will be up to the Secretariat's discretion.
8. The use of Artificial Intelligence, such as but not limited to ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude, will cause the removal of the delegate from all awards.

How To Report

If you witness any violations of the equity guidelines, report the incident by following this link:

[Form](#)

We will try to get back to you by email or send someone as soon as possible to resolve the issue.

Director's Letter

Dear Delegate,

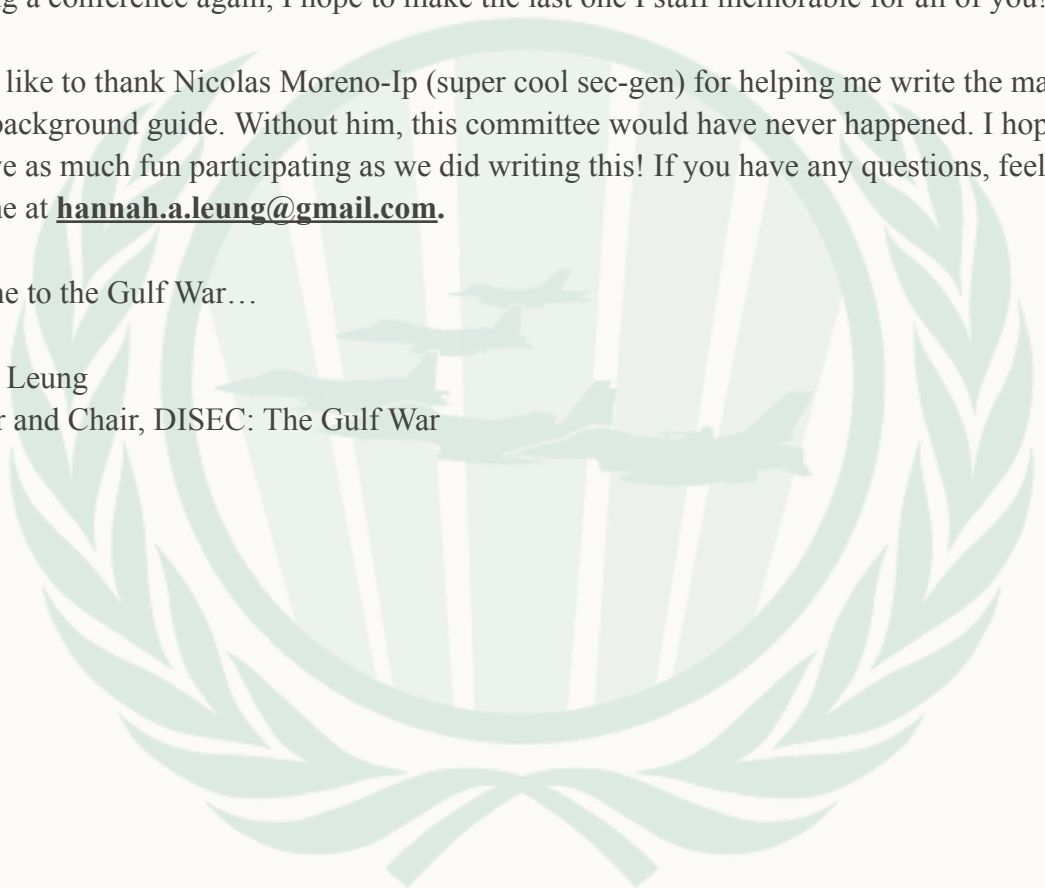
It is my pleasure to welcome you to RGSSMUNVII!

My name is Hannah Leung, and I am both the Director and Chair of this committee. I'm currently in Grade 12 at Richmond Green, and I've been in MUN for three years. It's safe to say it's been one of the weirdest ways I've ever spent my time. Though I myself will never be attending a conference again, I hope to make the last one I staff memorable for all of you!

I would like to thank Nicolas Moreno-Ip (super cool sec-gen) for helping me write the majority of this background guide. Without him, this committee would have never happened. I hope you will have as much fun participating as we did writing this! If you have any questions, feel free to email me at [**hannah.a.leung@gmail.com**](mailto:hannah.a.leung@gmail.com).

Welcome to the Gulf War...

Hannah Leung
Director and Chair, DISEC: The Gulf War



Historical Background

1980

On September 22, 1990, the Iran-Iraq War began as Saddam Hussein launched an invasion of Iran, aiming to assert regional dominance and prevent the spread of the Iranian Revolution. The war quickly became one of the longest wars in the 20th century, draining Iraq's economy and forcing it to heavily rely on loans from neighboring Gulf States including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This conflict eventually led to long-term financial strain and tension within the region.

1988

On August 20, 1988, the Iran-Iraq War officially ended in a costly stalemate. Iraq survived the military conflict, but became economically devastated and in severe financial debt to the Gulf Arab states. Despite a weakened economy, Iraq considered itself as a dominant regional power, which increased tensions among Gulf states as Iraq demanded debt forgiveness, arguing that its war had protected Arab interests.

During the war, Kuwait had loaned money to Iraq to support its military efforts, as it was a relatively wealthy country due to its large oil reserve. After the war had ended, Kuwait began demanding Iraq pay it back for the money it loaned during the war, as it was still recovering from a large stock market crash in 1972. Iraq refused, as it was around \$80 billion in debt.

1989

Tensions between Iraq and the neighbouring Gulf countries continued to increase throughout the 80s. Both Kuwait and Iraq were both members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which allowed all oil producing countries to get the market price for oil extremely high, allowing them to make more money.

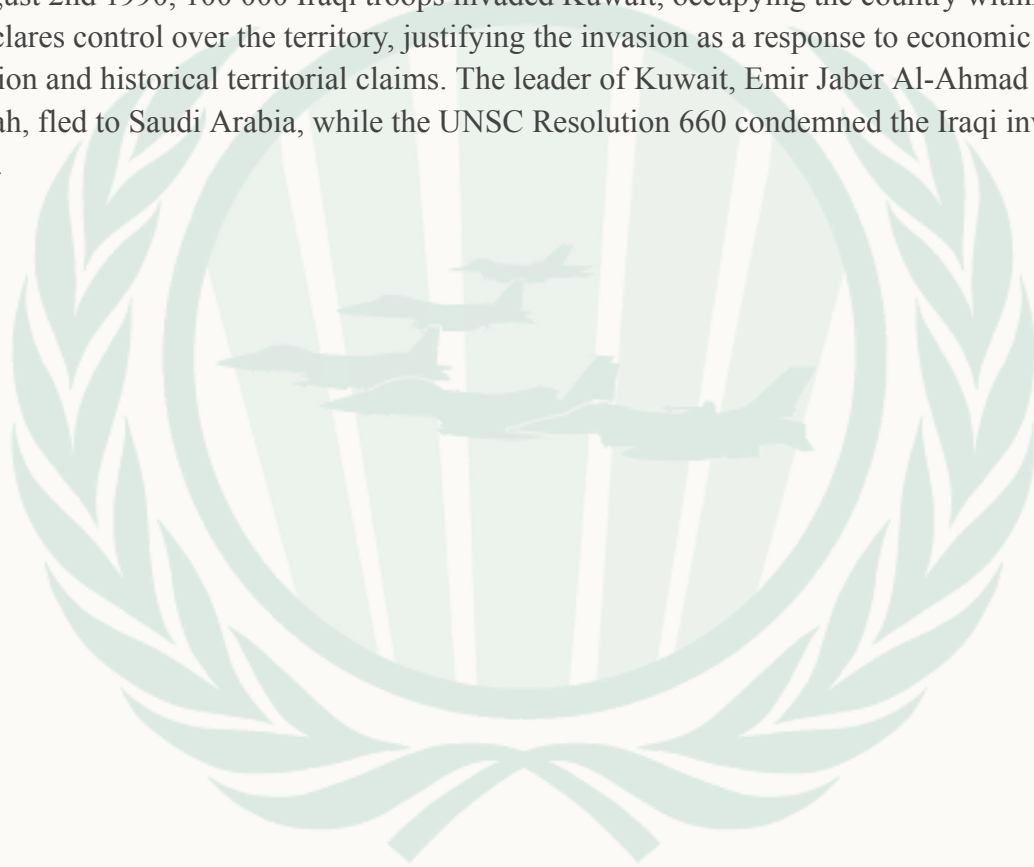
Since Iraq's post war debt created increased instability, and Iraq began accusing Kuwait of undermining its recovery efforts. There were multiple disputes over oil production quotas, as Iraq claimed Kuwait was overproducing oil and lowering global oil prices, making it harder for Iraq to recover. Due to the overproduction of oil, Iraq began losing billions of dollars, causing Saddam Hussein to begin threatening military action.

1990

Diplomatic relations between Iraq and Kuwait deteriorated significantly, as negotiations over debt relief and oil production continually failed as Iraqi accusations intensified. Iraqi president Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait of “economic warfare” through oil production, leading him to increase Iraqi military movement near the border.

On July 15th 1990, Iraqi president Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait of overproducing oil and stealing from the Rumaila oil fields in Iraq near the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. A week later, Iraq begins deploying troops at the border in anticipation for an invasion.

On August 2nd 1990, 100 000 Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, occupying the country within hours. Iraq declares control over the territory, justifying the invasion as a response to economic aggression and historical territorial claims. The leader of Kuwait, Emir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, fled to Saudi Arabia, while the UNSC Resolution 660 condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.



Current State of Affairs

Today, August 2nd 1990, regional security in the Middle East is rapidly deteriorating following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. Iraqi forces have reportedly seized key strategic cities including Kuwait City within hours.

The United Nations Security Council is in an emergency response phase, with diplomatic communications still ongoing. No coordinated military responses have been deployed, however major powers like the United States of America and the United Kingdom strongly condemn the actions of Iraq and are considering collective action under international law.

Iraqi intentions remain unclear, with some intelligence suggesting that operations are aimed for territorial annexation and control of resources. However, nothing has been concerned, and there is still uncertainty on whether Iraq will continue beyond Kuwait's borders to the neighbouring country of Saudi Arabia.

There is currently no formal coalition that has been established, however discussions are underway among many Western countries regarding the possibility of taking a defensive position in the Gulf. Many countries seem committed to a coalition led by the United States of America, however nothing has been set in stone thus far.

There is growing concern that Iraq intends to expand beyond Kuwait, and as a result the Middle East is currently in a state of heightened military readiness. Global markets have also already reacted significantly, with oil prices rising due to fears that Gulf production could be disrupted.

Topic A: Operation Desert Shield

The Middle East has long been defined by competing territorial ambitions, unresolved colonial borders, and resource rivalries that predate the modern nation-state. Following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, the international community is in a state of emergency response. There are yet to be any formal multinational military deployments, however global governments are consulting on possible responses ranging from sanctions and diplomatic pressure to potential military force through a defensive coalition. Within hours of the invasion, Iraqi forces had seized Kuwait City, dissolved the Kuwaiti government, and installed a provisional administration under Iraqi control. The Emir of Kuwait, Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, fled to Saudi Arabia, and the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 660, condemning the invasion and demanding an immediate Iraqi withdrawal.

The international community finds itself confronting the most consequential collective security decisions of the post-Cold War era. For the first time since the end of World War II, a UN member state has annexed another in its entirety. Until this point the mechanisms of international law, sanctions, condemnation, and diplomatic pressure have never been tested at this scale or speed. Unlike previous regional conflicts, the Gulf crisis will carry global consequences; Kuwait and Iraq together account for nearly 20% of global oil output, and every day the crisis is without resolution it continues to plummet the energy markets further and further.

In the hours following the invasion, global governments have begun moving rapidly from shock to deliberation. Responses ranged from calls for immediate sanctions and diplomatic pressure to serious consideration of military force through a defensive coalition. The primary aim of any such coalition, as it was debated in capitals around the world, is to prevent the expansion of the conflict while restoring regional stability. As Iraqi forces maintain complete control over Kuwait, the window for decisive action narrows with each passing day. Every week without a coordinated international response strengthens Iraq's hold on Kuwait and carries the risk of inciting further aggression. The question that dominates international discourse is not simply what tools are available, but which combination of those tools can produce a resolution without triggering the wider catastrophe that the world is trying to prevent.

Current Situation

Intelligence confirms that Iraq has successfully taken full control of Kuwait, though its intentions beyond the border remain deeply unclear. Some assessments suggest Iraqi forces are repositioning near the Saudi Arabian border, while others indicate Iraq is consolidating its hold on Kuwait City and key oil infrastructure. World powers are sharply divided over how to proceed. A bloc of Western nations led by the United States and the United Kingdom is pushing for immediate and comprehensive sanctions backed by the credible threat of military force, while a number of Arab states are pressing for an Arab League-led diplomatic resolution that would avoid Western military intervention in the region entirely. The Soviet Union, historically a major arms supplier to Iraq, is watching closely without committing to any coordinated response.

The United Nations Security Council has passed Resolution 660 condemning the invasion, but condemnation alone has done nothing to alter the situation on the ground. Further resolutions authorizing stronger measures are being drafted, yet consensus among the five permanent members remains fragile. Time is understood by all parties to be a critical variable, every day without a decisive international response risks the occupation settling and making liberation progressively more difficult.

Subtopic 1: Use of Force

The most important question now facing the international community is whether military force is a necessary, morally correct, and legally justifiable response. If so, what form that force should take. This is not being treated as a binary choice between war and inaction. The spectrum of options under serious consideration is wide, and the consequences of each remain deeply uncertain. Each country has a separate introspective and belief that may have long lasting global effects if enacted upon.

At one end of that spectrum, a coalition of states led by the United States is advocating for the immediate authorization of a multinational defensive force to be deployed in Saudi Arabia, with a mandate to deter further Iraqi aggression and eventually compel a withdrawal from Kuwait. Proponents of this notion argue that economic pressure alone has never successfully reversed a military occupation in modern history, and that without a credible military threat, Iraq has no incentive to withdraw. The speed and completeness of the Kuwaiti occupation is being cited as evidence that Iraq is not deterred by diplomatic objections alone.

At the other end of the spectrum, a coalition of Arab states and other non-aligned nations is arguing that Western military intervention in the Gulf would be deeply destabilizing and allow for far too much control. Not because Iraq should face no consequences, but because the presence of foreign military forces on Arab soil risks inflaming regional public opinion and potentially strengthening Saddam Hussein's political standing domestically and across the Arab world. These states argue that a combination of economic sanctions or sustained diplomatic pressure, and an Arab League-mediated negotiation process deserves a genuine opportunity before any military option is acted upon.

Between these perspectives sits a third, authorizing the deployment of a multinational defensive force with a strictly limited mandate to protect Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states from Iraqi expansion, without any action to enter Kuwait or Iraqi territory. This strictly defensive posture attempts to deter further aggression without crossing the threshold into offensive military action, while leaving the question of Kuwait's liberation unresolved.

The matter of debate is the legal framework governing the use of force. Article 51 of the UN Charter permits individual and collective self-defence in response to an armed attack. Kuwait has been attacked, and Saudi Arabia is arguing it is imminently threatened. But a full military campaign to liberate Kuwait would require explicit Security Council authorization under Chapter VII. This authorization requires navigating the veto powers of all five permanent members. The position of those states carries decisive weight in shaping what is ultimately possible.

Underlying all of it is a question of precedent. The international community's response to this crisis will define the rules of the post-Cold War order. If military aggression against a sovereign state is met with a military response and reversed, that establishes a kind of international norm. If it is met with sanctions and negotiation and the occupation endures, that establishes another far more sinister standard.

Guiding Questions

1. Under what legal framework can the international community authorize military force, and what threshold of Iraqi behaviour would trigger that authorization?
2. Is a defensive-only military mandate sufficient to resolve the crisis, or does the liberation of Kuwait require offensive authorization?
3. How should the international community weigh the risk of military escalation against the risk of allowing the occupation to become permanent?

Subtopic 2: The Intelligence Crisis

Emerging intelligence reports from multiple sources are suggesting that Iraqi forces may be preparing to deter foreign intervention through further military escalation potentially including preparations near the Saudi Arabian border and the possible repositioning of weapons capable of striking neighbouring states. However, the reliability of these reports is deeply contested. Intelligence agencies from different coalition partners are reaching contradictory conclusions from the same raw data, and genuine uncertainty exists about whether what is being observed represents offensive preparations, defensive consolidation, or deliberate disinformation designed to make Iraq appear more threatening than it is.

This is creating a profound dilemma for the world's decision makers. Acting on intelligence that later proves false or exaggerated risks may trigger an escalation that would not otherwise have occurred under correct intel. Waiting for certainty, on the other hand, carries its own dangers. If Iraq is genuinely preparing a further offensive and the international community delays its response while seeking confirmation, the window to prevent that expansion could close entirely before any coalition is prepared to respond.

The intelligence crisis also has a pronounced political dimension, states that seek to justify a military response have an incentive to emphasize threatening intelligence assessments. States that seek to delay or avoid military action have an incentive to cast doubt on those same assessments. The factual uncertainty about Iraqi intentions is becoming deeply intertwined with the political pressures shaping how that uncertainty is being interpreted and communicated to the public and to international players.

There is also the question of Iraqi weapons capabilities. Reports indicate Iraq possesses chemical weapons. Iraq has a history of chemical weaponry; using them against Kurdish civilians at Halabja in 1988. Uncertainty persists about whether they might be deployed against coalition forces or neighbouring civilian populations in the event of military confrontation. This aspect of the intelligence picture has significant implications for how any military operation would need to be carried out and what procedures are required for civilian protection and safeguarding across the region.

Guiding Questions

1. What standard of intelligence reliability should the international community require before taking military action, and who holds the authority to determine when that standard has been met?
2. How should the international response be designed to remain credible and effective even as key intelligence assumptions remain unverified?
3. What mechanisms exist — or should be proposed — to ensure intelligence is assessed and shared transparently across a diverse multinational coalition with competing national interests?

Subtopic 3: Mass Civilian Harm

Within hours of the Iraqi invasion, the humanitarian situation inside Kuwait is already worsening in ways that are compounding with every passing hour. An estimated 400,000 foreign nationals, the majority of which are low-wage migrant workers from South and Southeast Asia are stranded inside Kuwait with no means of evacuation; many have no functioning embassy representation as well as no clear legal status under the Iraqi occupation. Kuwaiti citizens are facing arbitrary detention or forced displacement, and the systematic seizure of public institutions including but not limited to hospitals, schools, and government ministries. Reports indicate that Iraqi forces have begun looting medical facilities and redirecting food distribution networks.

The international community is confronting an immediate question that exists entirely independently of the military and sanctions debates; how can civilians inside an occupied territory be protected when the occupying power has no interest in cooperating with relief efforts? The traditional mechanisms of humanitarian response, i.e UN agencies, the ICRC, NGO networks are dependent on the host governments consent and freedom of movement. Both have been eliminated by the Iraqi Occupation.

Several approaches are under serious consideration. The first is the negotiation of humanitarian corridors in and out of Kuwait. Designated routes through which civilians, aid workers, and essential supplies can pass under some form of guaranteed protection. This requires Iraq's cooperation, which it has little incentive to provide without receiving something in return. The second is the establishment of protected zones within Kuwait, modeled on precedents from other conflicts, where civilians could shelter free from military activity. The third is the prioritisation of mass evacuation over protection in place. Rather than attempting to shield civilians inside Kuwait, directing international resources toward getting them out as quickly as possible.

Clearly, each approach carries significant complications. Humanitarian corridors can be exploited as cover for military logistics. Protected zones require enforcement, which returns the debate immediately to the military question. Mass evacuation of foreign nationals is logistically enormous and would leave Kuwaiti citizens who cannot as easily be evacuated to third countries even more exposed than before.

There is also a longer-term dimension that cannot be set aside. However if the occupation continues for weeks or months, Kuwait's civilian infrastructure i.e: water treatment, food distribution, and healthcare system will begin to collapse entirely. The question of whether the international community has an obligation to prevent that collapse, even if doing so requires negotiating with the Iraqi occupation authority, carries deep international implications that no state is finding easy to answer.

Guiding Questions

1. What mechanisms can the international community use to secure humanitarian access to civilians in Kuwait without implicitly legitimising the Iraqi occupation?
2. How should priorities be determined between the evacuation of foreign nationals and the protection of Kuwaiti citizens when resources and diplomatic leverage are finite?
3. At what point does the scale of civilian suffering inside Kuwait constitute grounds for humanitarian intervention under international law, independent of the broader political and military debate?

Case Study: The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, 1979

The crisis now unfolding in Kuwait does not occur as a historical first. Eleven years ago, the world faced a strikingly parallel moment when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, occupying the country within days and installing a client government in Kabul. The handling of that crisis and the long-term consequences of the choices made offers a reference point for understanding the pressures and trade-offs now facing the international community in the present day.

The immediate international response to the Soviet invasion was swift but deliberately non-military. The United States, under President Jimmy Carter, led a campaign of economic sanctions, diplomatic condemnation, and symbolic pressure. Most of these factors were visible in the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The UN General Assembly passed Resolution ES-6/2 demanding an immediate Soviet withdrawal, with 104 votes in favour. The Soviet Union vetoed every Security Council

resolution that attempted to authorize a stronger response, a procedural reality that constrained the international community in ways directly comparable to the similar dynamics now emerging in the Gulf.

What followed the initial diplomatic response was a covert military strategy rather than an overt one. The United States, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and several other states began channeling weapons, funding, and training to Afghan mujahideen fighters through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency. Since then that program has become one of the largest covert operations in CIA history. This approach succeeded in making the Soviet occupation enormously costly, contributing to the Soviet withdrawal completed just last year in 1989. However, the long-term consequences of arming and empowering those same non-state actors are already raising concerns among policymakers that the creators of the strategy did not fully think through or anticipate.

The Afghanistan case raises several questions that are directly relevant to the situation in Kuwait today. When overt multilateral action is blocked by a veto-wielding power, what are the legal and ethical limits of covert or indirect support for resistance movements? Does the legitimacy of an outcome (the Soviets did eventually withdraw) justify the methods used to achieve it? Particularly when those methods may generate consequences that outlive the original crisis? What does the Afghanistan experience reveal about the limits of economic sanctions as a tool for compelling a militarily powerful occupying force to change its policy?

There is also a structural lesson embedded in the coalition that formed around Afghanistan. The alignment between the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan was driven by shared opposition to Soviet expansion, not by shared values or long-term strategic alignment. That coalition has already shown signs of separation now that the immediate threat has been resolved. The coalition now being assembled in response to the Gulf crisis faces the same underlying question. Whether the unity holding it together is deep enough to survive the end of the crisis that created it.

The Afghanistan precedent does not provide a clean answer to any of the questions Kuwait now raises. However, it does illustrate that the choices made in the early days of an occupation about whether to engage diplomatically, economically, or militarily, and about what coalitions are built and on what terms can and inevitably will generate consequences that proceed the crisis itself and extend well beyond the borders of the original conflict.

Topic B: Oil and Sanctions

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990 is not only a crisis of territorial sovereignty, it is also a crisis of the global economic order. Kuwait sits at the heart of one of the most strategically vital regions on Earth, and its occupation by Iraq has sent an immediate and debilitating shockwave through the world's energy economy. Oil prices are spiking within hours of the invasion, and the prospect of a prolonged Iraqi occupation of Kuwaiti oil infrastructure is raising alarms not only in Western capitals but in developing nations across Asia, Africa, and Latin America that had no role in producing this crisis. Although not involved, the impact is significant as many of the lesser developed countries lack the capacity to absorb the conflict's economic consequences.

The international community is confronting a fundamental question about the tools available to it short of military force. Economic sanctions, the deliberate restriction of trade, finance, and resources as a means of compelling a change in behaviour represent the most significant leverage the international community possesses that does not require a single soldier to be deployed. But sanctions are not a cost free instrument. They carry weight, and those costs are not distributed evenly. They require enforcement, and that enforcement is only as strong as the bonds willing to provide it. Another weakness is that they take time to bite. There is little time for Kuwait's civilian population and its exiled government to feel the ramifications of Economic sanctions.

The debate over sanctions in response to the Gulf crisis is therefore not simply a debate on whether to impose them. It is a debate on how they should be designed, who should bear the burden of enforcing them, what exemptions if any should be carved out for humanitarian purposes, and most importantly, how long the international community is prepared to wait before concluding that economic pressure alone is insufficient and that different measures must be considered. These are not abstract policy questions. The answers will determine whether the crisis in Kuwait is resolved peacefully or escalates into a wider regional war or economic collapse.

Current Situation

The invasion of Kuwait has triggered an immediate and severe strain to global energy markets. Kuwait and Iraq together account for nearly 20% of OPEC's total oil output, and the sudden removal of that supply from global markets is already driving prices exponentially upward. Energy analysts are warning that if the crisis is not resolved

quickly, the price shock could tip several fragile economies into recession. The ripple effects are being felt most acutely in developing nations across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, which depend heavily on imported oil and have no strategic petroleum reserves to subsidise the disruption.

Within the United Nations Security Council, discussions are underway about the imposition of mandatory international sanctions against Iraq under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. A draft resolution which will become Resolution 661 is being circulated, and preliminary indications suggest it may command broad support among the permanent five members, including a cautious endorsement from the Soviet Union. However, the design of the sanctions regime as well as its scope, and the mechanisms for its enforcement remain deeply contested.

On the ground, Iraq is showing no signs of responding to diplomatic pressure. The Iraqi government has declared Kuwait to be its nineteenth province, and state media is framing the invasion as the correction of a historical injustice rather than an act of aggression. This framing is intended to appeal to Arab nationalist sentiment and to complicate the formation of a unified Arab response. Jordan, which is heavily economically dependent on Iraq and serves as a critical transit route for Iraqi trade, has not yet declared a clear position, and its ambiguity is already being identified as a potential weak point in any sanctions enforcement plans.

Subtopic 1: Designing Structure of Sanctions

The international community faces the task of determining what kind of sanctions structure to build that will yield the best results. This is not a simple black or white choice. The variety of available options carries radically different implications for effectiveness, humanitarian consequences, political sustainability, and enforcement burden.

At one end of the scope is a comprehensive trade embargo. A near-total prohibition on all imports from and exports to Iraq, cutting off not only oil revenues but also access to food, medicine, industrial equipment, and financial systems. Proponents argue that anything less than a comprehensive regime creates gaps that Iraq will exploit, and that the severity of the invasion justifies the severity of such a fierce economic response. If enforced, it would drain Iraq's foreign exchange reserves within months, making it impossible to sustain the occupation or fund the military.

A less severe approach is a targeted or smart sanctions approach. A plan focused specifically on military-related imports and weapons technology while leaving civilian trade largely intact. Proponents of this approach argue that broad sanctions historically harm civilian populations far more than they constrain military leadership, and that a targeted regime is more likely to retain the political support of states that are uncomfortable with the humanitarian implications of a full embargo.

Between these two positions sit a variety of tiered or escalating models. They begin with targeted measures and automatically expand in scope if Iraq does not comply within a specifically defined timeframe. This approach attempts to combine the political appeal of a proportionate opening position with the credibility of a pre-committed escalation mechanism.

The design of the sanctions regime also carries significant implications for the position of OPEC. Since oil is Iraq's primary source of foreign revenue, the question of how to replace that supply immediately arises. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf producers have the physical capacity to increase output, but doing so means breaking OPEC's production discipline and potentially weakening the group's long-term pricing power in ways that its members are deeply reluctant to accept.

The question on the international stage is the matter of legal authorization. A unilateral sanctions regime imposed by individual states carries limited legal weight and creates enforcement inconsistencies. A mandatory multilateral sanctions regime authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter is legally binding on all member states; however, achieving that authorization requires Security Council consensus, and the choices made now will determine whether that consensus holds.

Guiding Questions

1. Should the international community pursue a comprehensive trade embargo or a targeted sanctions regime, and what criteria should determine where the boundaries of that regime are drawn?
2. How should the sanctions architecture account for the risk that Iraq will exploit exemptions or loopholes, particularly in sectors defined as humanitarian?
3. What role should OPEC member states play in the design of sanctions, and how should the international community address the tension between sanctions effectiveness and OPEC production discipline?

Subtopic 2: The Enforcement Problem

A sanctions regime is only as effective as the coalition willing to enforce it (bars), and the geography of the Gulf crisis creates enforcement challenges that no amount of diplomatic consensus can fully resolve. Iraq is not an island. It shares land borders with Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and Iran, all of which have existing economic relationships with Iraq that sanctions would severely disrupt, and all of which represent potential leakage points through which sanctioned goods can flow if not actively prevented.

Jordan is the most immediately pressing concern. The Jordanian economy is deeply intertwined with Iraqi trade, and Jordan receives a substantial portion of its oil supply from Iraq at heavily subsidized prices. Cutting that supply off entirely would impose enormous economic strain on a country that has not done any harm to anyone and whose domestic stability the international community has a strong interest in preserving. Yet allowing Jordan to continue trading with Iraq even under the justification of economic necessity creates a gap in the sanctions perimeter that fundamentally detracts from its effectiveness.

Turkey presents a similar dilemma. The Iraqi-Turkish oil pipeline is a critical piece of infrastructure, and Turkey is being asked to shut it down unilaterally, forgoing significant transit revenue and straining a bilateral relationship that predates the current crisis by decades. Turkey is a NATO member, which gives the Western coalition significant political leverage, but it is also a state with its own economic vulnerabilities and its own complex relationship with its peoples, such as the Kurdish populations on both sides of the border.

Iran is the most geopolitically complicated border state of all. The Iran-Iraq War ended only two years ago, and Iran has every reason to welcome a weakened Iraq. At the same time, Iran has no interest in cooperating with a US-led international coalition and may see the crisis as an opportunity to pursue its own regional interests rather than to enforce international norms.

The maritime dimension of enforcement is equally significant. Iraq's primary oil export route is through the Persian Gulf, and a naval blockade is the most direct mechanism for cutting off that revenue. Several coalition partners, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Australia, have naval assets either already in the region or capable of rapid deployment. But a naval blockade raises its own legal questions: it must be carefully distinguished from an act of war, and the rules of

engagement for intercepting vessels must be defined clearly enough to avoid an incident that escalates the crisis.

Guiding Questions

1. What diplomatic or economic arrangements should the international community offer to border states (particularly Jordan and Turkey) to secure their cooperation with the sanctions regime without rewarding non-compliance?
2. Under what legal framework can a naval enforcement operation be authorized, and what rules of engagement are necessary to prevent an enforcement incident from escalating into open conflict?
3. How should the international community respond if a major state, whether a border country or a permanent Security Council member, fails to enforce the sanctions regime or actively undermines it?

Subtopic 3: The Humanitarian and Economic Fallout

The most difficult dimension of the sanctions debate is not about Iraq. It's about everyone else. A comprehensive international sanctions regime against Iraq will impose costs that extend far beyond the Iraqi government and military. These costs will fall most heavily on people and nations that bear no responsibility for the invasion of Kuwait and have no power to end it.

Inside Iraq, a comprehensive embargo will eventually constrain the civilian population's access to food, medicine, and basic needs. This is not a distant or theoretical concern; it is a predictable consequence of the sanctions design choices being made right now. The international community is being asked to weigh the suffering that sanctions will impose on Iraqi civilians against the suffering that the continued occupation is imposing on Kuwaiti civilians, and to make a decision about which form of pressure is more justified and more likely to produce a resolution without significant casualties.

Outside Iraq, the oil price shock is already generating economic damage in nations that have no stake in the geopolitical dispute. Oil-importing developing nations in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America are watching their import bills surge and their trade balances deteriorate in real time. Several of these nations are already managing significant debt burdens, and the additional shock of sustained high oil prices risks tipping them into economic crises with serious humanitarian consequences of their own.

These nations are being asked to support a sanctions regime whose costs they will disproportionately bear and whose benefits, the restoration of Kuwaiti sovereignty, are geographically and politically insignificant to their own populations.

This raises a question of international burden-sharing that has no real easy answer. If the international community imposes sanctions and those sanctions generate significant economic harm in developing countries, does the coalition enforcing those sanctions have an obligation to compensate the affected nations? If so, who pays, how much, and through what facet? Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, whose oil revenues are increasing as prices rise, are in a position to provide financial support and there is already discussion of establishing compensation funds for the most affected economies. But the design and governance of any such fund is itself a negotiation, and the willingness of oil-producing states to transfer revenues to affected developing countries is not unlimited.

There is also the longer-term structural question that the Gulf crisis is forcing into view. The vulnerability of the global economy to a single regional conflict and the dependence of dozens of nations on oil supplies that can be disrupted overnight by military force represents a systemic risk that sanctions cannot address and that military force alone will not resolve. The current crisis is revealing, with particular clarity, the consequences of an international energy system built around concentrated supply, inadequate strategic reserves, and no meaningful diversification.

Guiding Questions

1. How should the international community design humanitarian exemptions within the sanctions regime, and what mechanisms can prevent those exemptions from being exploited by the Iraqi government to sustain its military capacity?
2. What obligations does the sanctions coalition have toward developing nations absorbing the economic fallout of the oil price shock, and what mechanisms exist or should be created to distribute that burden more equitably?
3. At what point should the international community declare the sanctions regime insufficient and consider escalating to other measures, and who holds the authority to make that determination?

Case Study: UN Sanctions Against Rhodesia, 1966–1979

The debate over whether economic sanctions can compel a government to reverse a fundamental political decision is not new in August 1990. Twenty-four years earlier, the international community faced a comparable test when the white minority government of Rhodesia unilaterally declared independence from Britain in 1965, refusing to transition to majority rule. The United Nations response to the imposition of mandatory international sanctions under Security Council Resolution 232 in 1966 represented the first time in history that the UN had imposed mandatory economic sanctions against a state. The results of that experiment carry direct lessons for the current crisis.

The Rhodesian sanctions regime, on paper, was among the most in-depth ever instituted. It prohibited the import of Rhodesian goods, most critically its tobacco and chrome exports, and restricted the supply of oil and military equipment into the country. The Security Council resolution was binding to all UN member states, giving the regime a legal foundation that voluntary coalitions lacked. Even with all that, the sanctions failed to compel the Rhodesian government to capitulate for thirteen years, during which the regime continued to function, the economy adapted, and the civilian population bore the highest costs.

The reasons for the sanctions' limited effectiveness are directly relevant to the Gulf crisis. The most critical factor was leakage through neighbouring states, particularly South Africa and Portugal's colony of Mozambique, which either openly defied the sanctions or turned a blind eye to violations. South Africa, which shared a long border with Rhodesia and had its own reasons for wanting the white minority government to survive, became an effective sanctions-busting corridor. Rhodesian chrome continued to reach international markets, most notoriously through imports by the United States under the Byrd Amendment of 1971, which exempted strategic minerals from the sanctions regime on national security grounds. This single legislative carve-out fundamentally weakened the effect of the multilateral consensus the regime depended on.

The Rhodesian case also illustrates the problem of adaptation. Sanctions are most effective in the short term, before the targeted economy can restructure around the restrictions. Rhodesia developed domestic substitutes, cultivated alternative trade partners, and used South Africa as a financial and logistical intermediary in ways that gradually neutralized much of the sanctions' bite. By the time the regime eventually collapsed in 1979, it was military pressure from liberation movements, not economic sanctions, that was the decisive factor.

What ultimately ended the Rhodesian crisis was a combination of military attrition, diplomatic pressure at the Lancaster House negotiations, and the withdrawal of South African support, not the sanctions alone. This does not mean the sanctions were irrelevant; they did impose real costs as well as constrained Rhodesian access to capital and technology. These effects were a contributing factor in a complex equation, not a sufficient cause on their own.

The parallel for the Gulf crisis is scarily similar. Iraq, like Rhodesia, shares land borders with states whose cooperation with the sanctions regime is uncertain. Iraq, like Rhodesia, has had years of experience managing international isolation and has developed relationships with Jordan, with Yemen, and with various non-aligned states that could serve as sanctions-busting channels. And Iraq, like Rhodesia, is governed by a leadership whose political survival depends on not capitulating to external pressure, making the government less sensitive to economic pain than a more democratic or accountable government might be.

The Rhodesian case does not counsel against sanctions. It counsels against naive expectations about what sanctions alone can achieve, and it shows that the design and enforcement of a sanctions regime, particularly the management of border states and the prevention of carve-outs, determines whether it functions as genuine economic pressure or as largely symbolic condemnation.

Committee Mechanics

Map

A map of the Persian Gulf will be provided to delegates, and it will be updated frequently throughout the committee to provide updates on the current situation.



Crisis Notes

As this is a specialized assembly, delegates will have limited access to crisis notes. Delegates will be allowed to send one crisis note per committee. There will be a 10 minute window in the middle of each committee session in which delegates will be able to submit their crisis note. Delegates are encouraged to make their notes as detailed as possible in order to ensure the crisis team can fully understand plans.

Dias Marking Scheme

1. Accuracy in Representing Country Policy

Delegates will be evaluated on how accurately they portray the policies and positions of their assigned country. This includes ensuring that all speeches, negotiations, and voting decisions are consistent with the country's real-world foreign policy, alliances, and priorities. Strong delegates demonstrate thorough research and avoid inserting personal opinions, instead acting in a way that reflects how their country would realistically behave in an international setting.

2. Realistic Effectiveness of Resolutions

Delegates will also be assessed on how effective their resolutions would be if implemented in the real world. High-quality resolutions clearly address the issue at hand and propose solutions that are practical, realistic, and considerate of global constraints such as funding, political feasibility, and international cooperation. The best resolutions go beyond idealistic ideas and instead offer workable solutions that countries could reasonably agree to and carry out.

3. Quantification and Legitimacy of Resolutions

Finally, delegates will be judged on the level of detail and credibility in their resolutions. This includes the use of accurate statistics, credible sources, and well-reasoned arguments to support their proposals. Strong resolutions are clearly quantified, outlining specific steps, timelines, funding mechanisms, and responsible actors, which together demonstrate a well-structured and actionable plan grounded in legitimate information.

4. Adherence to MUN Procedure and Formality

Delegates will be evaluated on how well they follow standard Model United Nations procedure and maintain appropriate formality throughout the conference. This includes avoiding the use of personal pronouns (such as "I" or "you"), consistently referring to themselves as "the delegate of [country]," and using proper diplomatic language in both speeches and written documents. Strong delegates demonstrate respect for parliamentary procedure, follow rules of debate, and communicate in a professional and structured manner that reflects real-world diplomatic standards.

Character Guide

Algeria - Algeria advocates for Arab-led diplomatic solutions and opposes US/Western military intervention, as it is concerned about their regional sovereignty.

Australia - Australia supports coalition efforts and international law. Australia is willing to contribute militarily but prioritizes stability and allied coordination.

Canada - Canada supports multilateral action through the UN and prioritizes balancing military contributions with humanitarian protection.

China - China is a supporter of non-intervention, as it is cautious about military action and prefers diplomatic or economic solutions. China plays a key role in shaping UN responses as a major global power despite limited direct involvement.

Egypt - Egypt is a leading Arab state, and it is willing to contribute militarily, but is prioritizing maintaining its regional influence while still supporting action against Iraq's government.

France - France supports coalition efforts under UN authority while prioritizing legality and multilateral cooperation between nations. France plays a key role in shaping UN responses as a major global power.

Germany - Germany supports coalition efforts and is willing to contribute significantly financially, but is limited by constitution in direct military involvement. Germany prioritizes economic stability and diplomatic solutions.

India - India supports peaceful conflict resolution, emphasizing diplomacy over military intervention. It prioritizes economic impacts and safety of its nationals in the Gulf region.

Iran - Iran opposes Iraq due to the recent Iran-Iraq war, however it still remains skeptical about Western involvement in the conflict. Iran prioritises balancing regional interests with caution towards external western influence.

Iraq - Having invaded Kuwait, Iraq is at the centre of the entire conflict. Iraq prioritizes maintaining control over Kuwait, asserting dominance within the region, and resisting international pressure and intervention.

Israel - Israel is concerned about national security and potential attacks from Iraq. While not directly involved in the conflict, it could very likely be targeted as Iraq looks to assert dominance throughout the Gulf region.

Italy - Italy supports coalition efforts and is willing to provide both military and logistical support. Italy prioritizes commitment to supporting allies while remaining cautious of escalation and long-term involvement.

Japan - Japan supports coalition efforts and is willing to contribute significantly financially, but is limited by constitution in direct military involvement. Japan remains an influential country in economic and diplomatic discussions.

Kuwait - The Kuwait government is currently in exile, but is able to fund coalition efforts and provide intelligence. Kuwait will have to rely heavily on coalition support to liberate its country

Libya - Libya opposes Western intervention in the conflict and politically aligns with Iraq. However, their alignment is backed by resistance to foreign influence, as they have limited direct impact on military development.

Norway - Norway prioritizes humanitarian and multilateral collaboration, while still supporting military intervention. Norway primarily supports civilian protection and international law.

Pakistan - Pakistan is willing to contribute to regional security, especially in defending Saudi Arabia. Pakistan prioritizes balancing coalition involvement with domestic political and religious considerations.

Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia is concerned about national security and a potential attack from Iraq. Saudi Arabia prioritizes protecting its own territory, leading it to be a large supporter in coalition efforts.

Soviet Union - The Soviet Union is not directly involved in the conflict, however it plays a crucial role in diplomatic efforts as a major global power. The Soviet Union seeks to maintain stability and global influence through the UN rather than direct military intervention

Spain - Spain is willing to provide both logistical and limited military contributions. Though Spain maintains a secondary role in the conflict, its values align with Western objectives.

Sweden - Sweden remains neutral throughout the conflict, emphasizing humanitarian assistance and international law. Sweden advocates for peaceful resolution and civilian protection.

Syria - Syria supports the coalition, seeing it as a strategic move to strengthen its political position in the Arab world. Syria prioritizes increasing regional influence and recognition on a global scale.

Turkey - Turkey supports coalition efforts due to its geographic position and strategic alliances, such as closer ties to NATO. Turkey prioritizes protecting its own national security and maintaining economic stability to prevent conflict spillover that could affect its borders.

United Kingdom - The United Kingdom is a leading coalition member, contributing significantly in military and political movements. The United Kingdom prioritizes both decisive military response and humanitarian efforts within the region.

United States of America - The United States of America is the leader of international response, planning both military strategy and coalition-building efforts. The United States of America prioritizes regional stability and protection of global oil.



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