General Assembly, First Committee:
Disarmament and International Security
Background Guide

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In 1945, when the United Nations was founded, DISEC was created as one of the six main committees of the UN General Assembly. Despite the committee originally focusing its efforts on political and security matters, the Cold War switched that focus to disarmament. DISEC currently stands as the main deliberative policymaking and representative organ of the UN, and deals with a wide array of issues relating to disarmament. This includes global challenges and threats to international peace and security. DISEC also seeks to solve these challenges in the international security regime.¹ DISEC is among the largest committees in the United Nations, because all UN member states have an active presence on the committee. As a result, DISEC brings together various perspectives on current issues.

I. The Regulation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)

Statement of the Issue:

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones, are remotely controlled (unpiloted) aircrafts. Drones can vary in shape and size, with some being as big as a Boeing 737 and others being as small as a hummingbird.² Drones are able to be used in a variety of situations. They are able to “leapfrog” over places that have poor infrastructure and they can deliver supplies to places with damaged or no transportation networks. They are also able to provide Wi-Fi to areas that need it, such as schools or refugee camps, and, in emergency or

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crisis area, are able to gather imagery and data in the wake of natural disasters. Aside from these breakthroughs in drone technology, in the past decade, drones have also become a critical tool in anti-terrorism and military engagement. Not only is using drone technology effective in putting pressure on extremist organizations, by providing a constant overhead threat, but drone use also removes the threat of having a soldier operating technology on the ground, as drones are operated remotely. The issue facing the international community today is how to regulate commercial, and mainly, military drones. While airspace regulation is more easily dealt with for flying objects like airplanes, drone regulation encounters more barriers. These autonomous airspace vehicles are seen as an integral advancement to help humankind, yet many believe this rapidly advancing technology, if not properly tested and regulated, could create hazardous risks. As the debate over drone advancement and technology reaches the discussion of national sovereignty, it is important to formulate cohesive action before this issue becomes more polarized.

History:

The evolution of drone technology has been fast, and the possible uses of drones have grown quickly as well. Their development has taken great strides, ranging from military and consumer use, and soon advancements will allow for them to be used commercially. As early as 1917, the first pilotless winged military aircraft, called the Ruston Proctor Aerial Target, was developed to act as a ‘flying bomb.’ In 1943, the first drone successfully and actively used in the military was the FX-1400, or Fritz X. It was a German military drone used in World War II to sink ships; being able to carry up to 2,300 pounds in bombs, it was a rudimentary form of today’s anti-ship missiles. In 2001, the first fully functioning unmanned aerial combat vehicle was developed and used by the United States. These new drones were not only able to survey large areas of land to gather intelligence and be controlled from over 1,000 miles away, but also could provide tactical support such as close air support, precision strike, and route clearance. With these drone uses in operations like the War on Terror, the concerns of drone warfare were brought to light with the killing of an innocent man, Daraz Khan, who was mistaken for Osama Bin Laden. False identification is a concern among many new war technology critics and, the

3 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
instance of Khan’s death helped solidify the concerns that were already present. Although drone technology was meant to save lives, especially those of soldiers who would be in danger, the threat that it poses to civilian populations is evident.

Drones have uses outside of the military realm mainly in the consumer and corporate spheres. Consumer use of drones has been permitted since the 1960s. The first consumer drone was a kit RC plane that implemented simple radio control technology. Today, drones for consumers range in ability from ones that simply fly to those that can use video, picture, and tracking technology. Consumer drone permits were developed with the intent to increase accountability, and ensure smart usage of this new technology. In 2012, Amazon released a video that sparked innovation and creativity in the consumer uses of drone technology. Their concept video showed the implementation and possibilities of a drone-based delivery system that cuts labor costs as well as delivery times. The advancements in drone use for commercial purposes, as well as military ones, has increasingly come into question. It is debated whether to encourage this development or to impose further regulation on technological advancements, seeing as such a versatile and critical technological development is unlike any in history.

Analysis:

The possible uses for drone technology are undeniably vast and expanding at a fast pace. However, the laws and regulations for drones lag significantly behind in most countries. In the process of regulation development, there are varying requirements across personal, corporate, and military use. The military uses of Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles have been extensively discussed at the United Nations. The Study on Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, prepared by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, discusses and examines the characteristics of UAVs and how existing international law applies to them. Emphasis is placed on the transparency, oversight, and accountability for the use of armed UAVs outside of active combat. Similarly, international human rights laws must be abided by, and military drone usage presents issues not only internationally, but domestically as well. Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights discusses the right to privacy and the right to protection under the law against violation of this right. In areas such as Pakistan, where US drones have been known to monitor civilian populations and subsequently carry out attacks, citizen trust has

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9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
decreased and citizens are increasingly put at risk. Not only were the Pakistani civilians lacking privacy, but with the threat of death via drones surrounding them, their right to life is also violated, as civilians have been killed in drone strikes.\textsuperscript{13} This situation, and others like it, illustrate how drone usage relates to other critical issues.

Drone usage presents many risks for domestic security, as well as the international community. Such risks include: data theft, loss of control that leads to injury, and in air collisions of drones and planes.\textsuperscript{14} Data theft and hacking presents another significant issue for the international community. The possible dissemination of sensitive information by drones creates a cybersecurity and national security issue for countries.\textsuperscript{15} In one instance, popular drone manufacturer D.J.I. may have been sending data to China from the United States. Although none of the information was sensitive, China and other state actors would not have otherwise had access to that specific information.\textsuperscript{16} Not only is this a matter of national security for countries and individuals, but it can cause tensions between countries to form; this may in turn impede the ability for cohesive action and planning on multiple issues. The issue of national and border sovereignty is a continually debated and concerning issue to the international realm, especially in relation to drones. Again, it is helpful to look at the instance of drone strikes and monitoring in the case of the U.S. and Pakistan. The strikes on Pakistan were unauthorized and the Pakistani prime minister was not informed of U.S. intentions and actions beforehand. Pakistan then claimed that their national sovereignty was violated because said actions were not authorized.\textsuperscript{17} Issues with air sovereignty are presented in situational use, such as commercial flights/air travel, and with military usage. Military usage of air space, especially of another country, is seen as infringement on that country’s control of their own land and air. The use of drones in other countries’ airspaces is critical to consider when discussing the right to (air space) sovereignty as well as the conditional use of drones, especially in relation to the military.

Commercial and consumer drones face little to no regulation in the international realm of law, but domestically, the ownership and flight of UAVs is heavily regulated in some countries,

\textsuperscript{13} Amnesty International. ""Will I Be Next' US Drone Strikes in Pakistan". 2012. Documentation of US drone strikes in Pakistan
\textsuperscript{16} Ludwig, "Drones as a Security tool."
while in others, it is barely regulated at all. In countries that regulate drones, mostly Western or developed nations, it is common to have laws adapted in accordance to a drone’s intended use. Some of these uses are: recreational flyers, commercial operators, public safety or government operators, as well as educational users.\(^\text{18}\) In regards to commercial drones, there are a few approaches taken by members of the international community: outright ban, effective ban, within visual line of sight, experimental beyond visual line of sight, and permissive.\(^\text{19}\) Another approach is a “wait-and-see” policy, where nations monitor drone-related legislation in other regions or countries, and analyze its use for effectiveness.\(^\text{20}\) There are a few basic regulations that many countries implement when it comes to general drone usage: no flight over government buildings and no flight in or around airspace such as airports.\(^\text{21}\) Commercial drones, although important to take in account when formulating international action, pose less of a threat to international peace than drones that are developed for military use.

There are also a number of benefits to further the development and use of drones. Drones provide risk assessment, inspections, security, emergency relief, as well as cost savings if used for commercial purposes. One of the most valuable uses of drones internationally is to provide humanitarian aid to places that are hard to reach or too dangerous for services to be provided.\(^\text{22}\) Both small and large drones can be used in humanitarian efforts. Small drones provide mapping and monitor changes in conditions while larger drones, normally those associated with the military, have the opportunity to deliver supplies to areas in need.\(^\text{23}\) Although they can be of great use, lack of regulation and defining parameters for uses of drones (large and small) internationally limit the ways in which such vital tools may be used.\(^\text{24}\)

**Conclusion:**

The regulation of drones is not uniform across countries, and often, domestic regulations of drone use are out of date. Drone technology is developing faster than laws and regulations in many countries, and with those developments, the possible uses and benefits of drones increases, as well as the threats and issues that this technology can pose. Although cohesive

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\(^\text{20}\) Ibid.


\(^\text{23}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{24}\) Ibid.
drone laws may not be formulated, it is critical to develop plans and regulations in relation to international use of drones in respect to sovereignty, safety of citizens, and aircraft technology. It is important to understand existing international law in regards to military UAVs, and how this can influence the work done by the United Nations, as well as leaders in regulation regarding drones and upcoming technology. Cohesive action on behalf of the international community is critical for the security and peace of member states, especially as drones are increasingly used in war and as part of military operations.

Questions:

1. Should there be international standards and regulations for drone usage? Should these regulations depend on the size of the drones or intent of use or another issue?
2. What uses could drones have that benefit the international community? Do you make exceptions to laws in emergency cases like natural disaster and other humanitarian crises?
3. What are the implications of a lack of national aerial sovereignty in relation to various forms of drones?
4. Do laws regarding military uses of drones need to be reformed?
Resources


II. Combating Extremism in Northern Africa

Statement of the Issue:

Over the past few decades, Africa has become a major hub for growth in extremism, and continues to pose a threat as extremist groups have begun battling and recruiting across, primarily, northern Africa. Driven by factors such as unemployment, poverty, deprivation, and marginalization, citizens in North Africa turn to extremist groups in an attempt to improve their livelihoods. Extremist groups use marketing tactics to create false promises, leaving individuals to believe they will be better off socially and economically if they join the ranks of the group in question. Between 2011 and 2016, there have been an estimated 33,300 deaths due to extremism in Africa. The expansion of violent extremism continues today and poses a threat to the international community through global recruitment, extremism driving the continuance of conflict, and acts of terror committed worldwide. Extremist groups and recruitment methods are continually spreading at a more rapid pace because of the increased spread of technology, uses of social media, and increased methods of travel and transportation. These technologies directly connect people that are being marginalized and recruited online; they also allow terror groups to use the Internet and social media as a way to call their recruits to action.

Jihadist groups maintain a strong presence in North Africa despite the efforts of authorities in the area combating their expansion. Extremist propaganda is continually spread in countries like Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt in an effort to mobilize and convert marginalized groups in the countries, including socially marginalized individuals and the unemployed. The main source of extremism in the area has religious roots, resulting in the harassment of ‘impure’ Muslims, Christians, and Jewish populations. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) maintain the highest levels of religious hostilities in the world, reaching as far as four times the global median. Extreme hate and persecution continues to rise yearly, and in the future, can present even more of an issue than it does currently. The international community needs to address the rise of extremism in northern Africa not only to ensure

29 Ibid.
safety of citizens there, but around the world because of its geographic location near Europe, the Middle East, and the rest of Africa.

History:

Northern Africa has a rich history of civilizations attempting to gain control of the region through religious and ethnic persecution. Civilizations such as Carthage and Rome have fought over and sought to control northern Africa. In the early seventh century, Arabic Muslims arrived in the region, and began a campaign to control and influence the native North African populations. This led to early jihad movements that helped Islam penetrate the region, and establish a stronghold that would last for centuries. Nineteenth century North Africa faced colonization from France, Great Britain, Spain, and Italy that left a lasting mark on the people, governments, and institutions in the region.

The roots of extremism, and by extension terrorism, can be found to grow from a few main causes. Some of these may be because of religion, nationalism, and wanting to join a community with the same beliefs. In the latter case, groups become mobilized when they believe that the community they’re joining will provide them an escape from their reality. Extremist organizations lure individuals to join the group under false claims that may be motivated by religious reasons. Today, extreme jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Islamic State are spurred by the idea that their ‘ideal form of Islam is being violated’ or not practiced correctly and, as a result, they fight against the status quo, local governments, and to control territory for their own uses.

There are key aspects to creating an environment that causes the radicalization of individuals. A state’s failure to meet security requirements, poor education, and high levels of unemployment are some of the most significant sources of extremism within a community. In these instances, individuals are more easily radicalized because of the social factors that push them to make a change. The existence of extremist groups in countries, both revolving around religion and politics, serves to weaken the already deteriorating governmental institutions in the region. From 2004 to 2014, political turmoil such as regime change and civil wars have impacted the government’s effectiveness (namely in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya). The issues

31 Ibid.
that the central government has in providing for their citizens drives individual actors and groups to provide what is needed; for instance, the military group named Hezbollah in Lebanon provides health care, education systems, and social networks that are arguably more reliable than those provided by the Lebanese government. Additionally, in active warzones, extremist groups are known to set up health care systems and schools in order to prove their supposed worth to those within the country. This can lead to a transfer of trust from the central governing authority to non-state actors that provide for communities.\textsuperscript{34}

The significance of this region is shown through the attention and assistance that it has received in the past from other countries. The Middle East and North Africa receives the third largest amount of foreign aid following Central and Southern Africa, and Asia. MENA is geopolitically and commercially important to many Western powers. Not only does it maintain a strategic geographic location, but it is conflict ridden and the source of much of the world’s oil.\textsuperscript{35} Factors such as these illustrate the critical nature of the region both to the international community as well as other countries domestic functions. This foreign aid to the MENA region has previously played a large role in assisting in economic development, especially in the Middle East. Subsides and other forms of cash payments from foreign entities have been decreasing since 2014 because of conflicts with oil producing countries.\textsuperscript{36} This has led to increasing severity of various socio-economic problems. Apart from economic assistance, foreign aid has been given in an attempt to strengthen peace and security in the region. From the United States alone, MENA has received over seven billion dollars in the fiscal 2017 year for that purpose. Overall, changes in aid that the region receives can possibly have a large impact on the fight against extremism.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Analysis:}

The conflicts that extremist groups are involved in are multi-layered, often consisting of their own agenda that coincides with other groups fighting with the central government. A central aspect to addressing the issue of extremism in Northern Africa is that these extremist groups do not revolve around terrorism.\textsuperscript{38} They combine terror tactics with other forms of warfare such as insurgent warfare. Groups such as ISIS and Al-Shabaab are able to easily

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Gonzalez. "Global Trends."
adapt to changing situations and regional conditions because of their diversified tactics and recruitment across numerous countries and regions.\textsuperscript{39}

It is critical to recognize that the impact of extremist groups in North Africa extends beyond the region. Violent extremism is an issue that impacts over 66 countries, 18 of which are some of the world’s most developed.\textsuperscript{40} The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has enacted plans to compact and prevent violent extremism as well as terrorism.\textsuperscript{41} The resolution (A/RES/70/291) reaffirms the global fight against extremism through a holistic approach to address the underlying conditions that lead to terrorist action as well as security-based measures. The Plan of Action contains more than 70 recommendations to the Member States of the UN System on how to prevent the further spread of extremism. The plan combines the abilities of various UN agencies in an inter-agency process that comprises the “All-of-UN” approach.\textsuperscript{42} Extremist organizations are not contained to one region and they threaten communities surrounding hotspots such as North Africa. Additionally, radicalized individuals continue to threaten other areas by conducting attacks in the West and pledging their actions to an extremist group.

Experts and policy makers in northern Africa, as well as other regions of the world, are focusing on the “push-actors” of extremism that creates the environment in which extremist ideologies flourish.\textsuperscript{43} The factors leading to extremism can be grouped into: civic, social, and economic reasons. Civic factors include issues such as corruption, weak governance, and others centered on governmental institutions. Social factors can be lack of education, marginalization, and other aspects that intersect with social identity and status. Economic factors include issues such as inequality, poverty, and high unemployment.\textsuperscript{44} There have been instances of local success when attempting to build local resilience to extremist ideologies revolving around those three factors. By promoting soft skills for economic opportunity development, providing information that increases local dialogue around social issues, as well as civil issues, communities grow and develop together.\textsuperscript{45} The development of community resilience could be further strengthened, provided the local organizations have the means

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
necessary to do so. International support of such initiatives may increase the effectiveness of
the program. Another instance of fighting against extremism is opening a way for people to
leave the extremist organization; most of the time, once in the organization, it is almost
impossible to leave. A project called Exit, established in Norway in 1997, establishes local
networks that allow young people to disengage from these groups. The peer-to-peer approach
that it takes helps assess the social attraction of extremist groups, as well as remove the appeal
of the extremist community by creating another that can relate to the circumstances.46 Exit, now
functioning in many countries, works through social, physiological, emotional, and legal barriers
to provide individuals with the opportunity to start life again. Support organizations and projects
like Exit also provide the means necessary to show radicalized individuals that there is a
community of care where they came from, and they do not need to seek it out in extremist
organizations.47

The international community must realize that the threat that extremist organizations
pose to communities is varied and cannot be addressed with a ‘blanket’ plan.48 The impact that
these extremist organizations can have on communities is not always immediate. Some
extremist organizations work on the periphery of communities. This leads to the slow and steady
influence on smaller communities, leading to gradual radicalization as individuals express their
frustrations.

**Conclusion:**

Extremism in North Africa presents a serious problem both locally and to the
international community. The grievances that communities have with their national and local
government systems run deep in many situations. It is time for the international community to
move past managing systems of crises, to bringing an effective end to the issues. The
international community has proved itself able to recognize the critical aspects of extremist
development and spread. More decisive preventative and reactive action plans and frame work
needs to be developed to ensure regional stability.

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47 Ibid.
48 Atwood. "Violent Extremism and Crisis Management."
Questions:

1. What are the best ways to address the ‘push factors’ of radicalization?
   a. Economic
   b. Social
   c. civic

2. How can different levels (local, national, international) of action impact the fight against extremism?

3. How does extremism impact the stability of the international community? Of your country’s own communities?
Resources


