

Addressing the Escalation of Armed Conflict and the Role of Regional Powers in the Middle East

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HANKUK ACADEMY OF FOREIGN STUDIES

Sejin Sarah Oh

Abstract

This paper examines the current Middle Eastern conflict with a focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and what the United Nations Security Council should do in response. Specifically, it does this by dividing the conflict into two key problems: the escalation of armed conflict and the role of regional actors. It aims to provide a historical background as well as a comprehensive state of affairs and the current stances of twenty-one of the most influential countries and regional organizations involved in this region's conflict. Lastly, this paper concludes with policy recommendations.

Introduction

More than 45 armed conflicts are currently taking place in the Middle East, resulting in tens of thousands of civilian deaths and immeasurable property damage. Thus, it is crucial for us to discuss this agenda, especially in light of the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. To first define some key terms, escalation is multi-front, multi-actor, and continuous cycles of violence.

Specifically for this agenda, we will be limiting the scope of discussion to the Middle East, which includes regions such as Gaza and the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and the Red Sea. It is important to keep in mind that Armed Conflict is no longer isolated incidents but interconnected to form a single system.

Most importantly, such conflict leads to countless casualties and the displacement of civilians. Because most of the conflict is happening in the form of urban guerrilla warfare, there is no way to ensure a safe place for civilians, as even residential areas or schools are targets for bombing or combat. The situation is further escalated by weakened governance in such areas and radicalization, which leads to a collapse of trust both between individuals and for governments. There is also always the threat of escalation, as proxy countries or regional powers may engage in interstate confrontation, such as the Israel-Iran escalation. Cross-border missile exchanges and maritime insecurity are examples of this. Refugee flows are also impacting neighboring states like Egypt and destabilizing the global economy.

Regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Israel, Turkey, Qatar, Palestine, and Egypt all play a role in Middle Eastern conflicts in the modern day, all states with significant military,

economic, and political capacity; such disputes are no longer limited to internal actors. Because such conflict has cross-border security implications, it is important for the Security Council to be able to discuss this issue. These actions alter international peace and security, triggering articles 24, 34, and 39 of the UNSC Chapter VI/VII jurisdiction. Furthermore, because state conduct affects numerous member states and because regional powers create conditions that escalate into interstate conflict, not internal conflict, this thus falls under the UNSC mandate. Regional powers are not peripheral; they are central drivers of escalation and de-escalation, making their behavior a core concern of this Council.

Such regional powers also influence both the intensity and geography of conflict, shaping secondary conflicts that extend beyond original battlefields. Such instances include arms transfers, proxy support, and direct military operations. Moreover, rivalries trigger interstate risk, which creates conflict “clusters” that escalate quickly and unpredictably. Such rivalries are also in breach of UNSC red lines, including cross-border use of force (Article 2(4) violations) and numerous violations of UNSC resolutions such as 1701, 2216, and 242. Because regional powers amplify every dimension of the crisis, regulation of their behavior is essential for any durable solution.

UNSC has legal authority and responsibility under Chapters V, VI, and VII to intervene when state actions threaten international peace, and under Article 39, regional power activities meet the threshold for action. In this context, the UNSC will have to regulate: interstate and proxy escalation, protect civilians and humanitarian access, preserve territorial integrity and sovereignty, maintain stability in international shipping and trade routes, and prevent proliferation of advanced weapons systems. Some tools UNSC can utilize include: binding resolutions, ceasefire demands, sanctions regimes, a panel of experts to investigate violations, peacekeeping or observer missions, referral to the ICC, humanitarian access mechanisms, and investigative mechanisms. There are limitations, however, as the UNSC cannot impose political solutions inside sovereign states without consent. To conclude, the UNSC must build guardrails that prevent regional power competition from escalating into regional war to preserve peace and security.

Key Terms

1. Escalation

- a. Escalation refers to the widening or intensifying of armed conflict, typically characterized by increased violence, involvement of additional actors, and expansion into new geographic fronts. In the Middle East, escalation rarely occurs as a single-event phenomenon; instead, it manifests as a multi-level process driven by retaliatory strikes, militant responses, proxy involvement, or regional power competition. Escalation may include increased airstrikes in Gaza, missile exchanges between Israel and Hezbollah, Iranian-backed militia activity in Iraq and Syria, or escalated naval attacks in the Red Sea. Delegates must understand escalation not only as a military concept but as a political process influenced by governance breakdowns, radicalization, misinformation, and miscalculation between states.

2. Armed Non-State Actors (ANSAs)

- a. Armed Non-State Actors are groups engaged in organized violence without direct affiliation to a recognized state. Examples include Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, ISIS remnants, and various militia factions in Iraq and Syria. These groups often have hierarchical structures, access to weapons, and external sponsors. Their presence complicates UNSC efforts because they do not fall under traditional state-based diplomacy mechanisms. Negotiating ceasefires, delivering humanitarian aid, protecting civilians, or enforcing arms embargoes becomes more challenging when armed groups operate independently of state control.

3. Proxy Conflict / Proxy Warfare

- a. Proxy conflict describes situations where external powers support local actors to pursue strategic interests indirectly. The Middle East is one of the world's most prominent arenas for proxy conflicts, with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Israel, the U.S., and Russia often backing different sides. Proxy warfare increases the risk of escalation because disputes between local groups can quickly become regional confrontations. For example, clashes involving the Houthis in Yemen can escalate

into Saudi–Iran tensions; militia activity in Syria can draw in U.S. or Russian forces. Understanding proxy dynamics is essential for crafting effective UNSC responses that address not just local conflicts but the external networks fueling them.

4. Urban Guerrilla Warfare

- a. Urban guerrilla warfare involves combat operations conducted within densely populated areas. In Gaza, Aleppo, Mosul, or Sanaa, civilian populations live in the same spaces used for military operations. This makes traditional warfare rules harder to enforce, complicates humanitarian assistance, and dramatically increases civilian casualties. Delegates must consider how the UNSC can support civilian protection, establish humanitarian corridors, and ensure compliance with international law within these difficult environments.

5. Humanitarian Corridors

- a. Humanitarian corridors are temporary, demilitarized routes allowing civilians or aid organizations safe passage. Establishing these corridors in the Middle East is challenging because they require agreement from all parties, state and non-state, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance. Corridors are often violated, used as political leverage, or disrupted by ongoing fighting. The UNSC may authorize peacekeeping observers, monitoring missions, or negotiated frameworks to facilitate these routes.

6. Ceasefire vs. Humanitarian Pause

- a. A ceasefire is a formal agreement to halt hostilities, often monitored and enforceable under UNSC mandates. A humanitarian pause is a temporary stop in fighting, usually requested for aid delivery. In many Middle Eastern conflicts, humanitarian pauses are more achievable than full ceasefires due to mistrust,

ongoing military objectives, or fragmentation of armed actors. Delegates must understand the distinction, as ceasefires require long-term negotiation, verification mechanisms, and international oversight.

7. Chapter VI (Peaceful Settlement)

- a. Chapter VI of the UN Charter emphasizes negotiations, mediations, inquiries, and arbitration. It does not grant the UNSC authority to enforce decisions. Many conflicts in the Middle East, especially when major powers disagree, remain under Chapter VI discussions, leading to diplomatic statements with limited operational impact. Delegates must decide whether Chapter VI is sufficient or whether escalation requires Chapter VII measures.

8. Chapter VII (Threats to Peace and Use of Force)

- a. Chapter VII authorizes binding measures, including sanctions, arms embargoes, no-fly zones, maritime interdictions, and military force. Most significant UNSC actions regarding Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and counterterrorism have been taken under Chapter VII. Whether to activate Chapter VII is often the most contentious question in the UNSC debate, as it requires political consensus that a situation threatens international peace.

9. International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

- a. IHL (also known as the laws of war or the Geneva Conventions) governs conduct during armed conflict. It prohibits targeting civilians, requires proportionality, and regulates treatment of detainees and humanitarian access. Violations, such as indiscriminate bombing, hostage-taking, or deliberate obstruction of aid, may trigger UNSC investigations or referrals to bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC). Delegates should be familiar with IHL, as civilian protection is central to this agenda.

10. Rules of Engagement (ROE)

- a. ROE defines when and how military forces may use force. In peacekeeping missions, ROE determines whether forces may defend themselves, protect civilians, or intervene to stop violence. In conflict zones like southern Lebanon or the Golan Heights, ROE balances the need for peacekeeper safety with the humanitarian mandate to prevent violence from spreading. Delegates must consider whether existing ROEs are sufficient or whether they require modification to meet current threats.

11. Sanctions / Targeted Sanctions

- a. Sanctions are tools used to pressure actors into compliance. They may include asset freezes, travel bans, arms embargoes, or trade restrictions. Targeted sanctions aim at specific individuals, militias, or entities rather than entire populations. While sanctions can reduce access to weapons or funding, they may also harm civilian economies if poorly designed. Delegates must weigh the strategic value of sanctions against potential humanitarian consequences.

12. Arms Embargo

- a. An arms embargo restricts the sale, transfer, or transport of weapons to specific actors or regions. In the Middle East, such embargoes exist in contexts like Yemen, Libya, and Iran's ballistic missile program. However, embargo violations are common due to smuggling networks, foreign military support, and the availability of black-market weapons. Delegates may consider strengthening monitoring mechanisms, maritime inspections, or sanctioning violators.

13. Monitoring and Verification Mechanisms

- a. These mechanisms ensure compliance with ceasefires, embargoes, or peace agreements. They may involve peacekeepers, satellite imagery, UN observers, or

third-party states. In the Middle East, verification is difficult due to restricted access, active combat zones, and the presence of armed groups. Delegates must evaluate whether the UNSC should authorize expanded monitoring missions or new technologies for verification.

14. Humanitarian Access Authorization

- a. Humanitarian access allows aid agencies to deliver supplies to civilians in conflict zones. Access may be negotiated (requiring consent from parties) or authorized by UNSC resolutions under international law. Restricted access is common in Gaza, Yemen, and Syria, where checkpoints, sieges, and blockades impede aid delivery. Delegates must clarify the UNSC's role in facilitating and enforcing humanitarian access.

15. State Sovereignty vs. Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

- a. The UNSC must balance a state's sovereign right to manage internal affairs with the principle that mass atrocities justify international intervention. R2P remains debated: some states insist it is necessary to protect civilians, while others argue it is misused to justify interference. Delegates must navigate this tension when discussing ceasefires, investigations, or peacekeeping mandates.

Historical Background

The Middle East has long stood at the crossroads of culture, religion, and geopolitics, producing a region whose conflicts are rooted in a complex weaving of historical grievances, colonial legacies, state-building challenges, ideological rivalries, and foreign interventions. To understand today's escalation, it is essential to examine how decades and in some cases centuries of political developments have shaped the current landscape of conflict.

1. The Post-Ottoman Legacy and the Creation of Modern Borders

- a. The end of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 marked a turning point for the Middle East. European powers, primarily Britain and France, carved the region into new political entities through agreements such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, creating

borders that often ignored ethnic, tribal, and religious realities. Communities historically interconnected were split, rival sects were placed under the same governance structures, and newly formed states struggled to build national identities in environments where political representation was uneven. These artificial boundaries later influenced conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, whose societies had no unified political foundations and whose borders were drawn more by foreign strategic interests than internal cohesion.

2. The Arab Israeli Conflict (1948 to Present)

- a. One of the longest running conflicts in the region, directly tied to today's escalation, is the Arab Israeli conflict. The 1948 establishment of the State of Israel ignited the first Arab Israeli war and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, generating one of the world's most protracted refugee crises. Further wars in 1956, 1967, and 1973 reshaped borders and intensified regional polarization. The Six-Day War in 1967 resulted in Israeli occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. Though Sinai was later returned to Egypt through the Camp David Accords, the unresolved status of Gaza and the West Bank remains core to contemporary violence.

Throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, periods of negotiation, such as the Oslo Accords, created moments of hope but ultimately failed to deliver lasting solutions. The rise of Hamas, internal Palestinian political divisions, settlement expansion, the blockade of Gaza, and repeated cycles of armed conflict gradually transformed the Israeli Palestinian issue from a territorial conflict into a broader humanitarian, security, and ideological struggle involving regional powers such as Iran and global actors such as the United States.

3. The Cold War and the Militarization of the Region

- a. During the Cold War, the Middle East became a major arena for United States Soviet competition. States aligned themselves with either superpower to secure military aid, economic support, or political backing. The United States forged

close ties with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf monarchies, while the Soviet Union supported states such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt temporarily, and South Yemen. This polarized region-wide alliances and introduced sophisticated weaponry into local conflicts, contributing to the militarization that persists today.

4. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and Shifting Regional Power Dynamics

- a. The 1979 Islamic Revolution fundamentally changed the Middle East's balance of power by replacing Iran's Western-aligned monarchy with a theocratic republic committed to exporting its revolutionary ideology. This directly challenged Saudi Arabia and other Sunni-led governments. From that point forward, Iran and Saudi Arabia emerged as rival regional powers whose rivalry, rooted in ideological and sectarian differences, continues to fuel proxy conflicts in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Their competition for influence is a defining element in today's escalation, with both sides supporting armed non-state actors and political movements aligned with their interests.

5. The Iran-Iraq War, 1980 to 1988

- a. One of the deadliest conflicts of the twentieth century, the Iran-Iraq War solidified sectarian divisions and deepened regional insecurity. Saddam Hussein's Iraq sought to prevent the spread of Iranian revolutionary ideology, while Iran mobilized its population in a war effort that lasted eight brutal years. The war's legacy, militarization, economic devastation, and mass casualties, continues to influence Iran's foreign policy, particularly its preference for proxy forces, strategic depth, and missile development.

6. The Gulf Wars, 1990 to 1991 and 2003 to 2011

- a. Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait prompted a massive international military intervention authorized by the United Nations Security Council. The conflict reshaped global perceptions of Middle Eastern security and marked the beginning of increased United States military presence in the region. A decade later, the

2003 United States-led invasion of Iraq toppled Saddam Hussein but destabilized the region. The dissolution of Iraq's military, the collapse of governance structures, and the rise of sectarian militias created a vacuum that later enabled groups such as ISIS to emerge. Many armed groups active today in Iraq and Syria trace their origins back to this period of institutional collapse and power fragmentation.

7. The Arab Spring 2011 and the Fragmentation of the Region

- a. The Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 triggered dramatic political transformations and civil wars. In Tunisia and Egypt, protests led to leadership changes, but in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, uprisings descended into violent conflicts involving regional and international actors.
 - i. Syria: Protests escalated into a civil war that now includes the Syrian government, opposition factions, Kurdish forces, Iran, Hezbollah, Russia, Turkey, the United States, and remnants of ISIS. Over half the population was displaced, and the country became a central battlefield for proxy dynamics.
 - ii. Yemen: What began as political protests evolved into a multi-sided war involving the Houthi movement, the Saudi-led coalition, the UAE, Iran, and various local militias. The conflict created one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern history.
 - iii. Libya: Conflicts between rival governments and militias destabilized North Africa and opened weapons flows into the wider region, influencing groups in the Sahel and Levant.
 - iv. These conflicts established patterns that now define the region: fragmented governance, armed non-state actors, and overlapping geopolitical competitions.

8. Rise and Fall of ISIS 2014 to 2019

- a. The Islamic State exploited state collapse in Iraq and Syria to seize territory the size of a nation-state, declaring a caliphate in 2014. International coalitions eventually dismantled their territorial control, but ISIS remnants continue operating as insurgents across Iraq, Syria, and parts of the Levant. The group's

rise reshaped counterterrorism strategies, shifted foreign military deployments, and contributed to mass displacement and regional insecurity.

9. The Israel-Gaza Conflict and the Current Escalation Cycle

- a. The latest cycle of conflict between Israel and Hamas, marked by intense urban warfare, large-scale airstrikes, hostage situations, and massive humanitarian impacts, has reignited regional tensions. Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iranian-backed militias in Syria and Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen have all increased attacks, creating a multi-front environment where escalation in one area quickly triggers responses in another.

10. Red Sea and Maritime Security Crisis

- a. Houthi attacks on ships, missile launches, and foreign naval responses have transformed the Red Sea into a major flashpoint. These developments disrupt global trade, threaten energy stability, and risk drawing external powers more deeply into regional conflict.

11. The Modern Era Interconnected Conflicts

- a. The central characteristic of Middle Eastern conflict today is interconnectedness. Events in Gaza influence Lebanon, attacks in Iraq trigger responses in Syria, the Iran-Saudi relationship shapes conflicts in Yemen, and maritime insecurity threatens global markets. Weak governance, foreign intervention, ideological extremism, and retaliation cycles have created a regional system where localized incidents rapidly escalate into regional crises.

Current State of Affairs

Addressing the Escalation of Armed Conflict in the Middle East

1. Gaza and West Bank

- a. The 2023-2024 Gaza War triggered massive Israel Defense Forces (IDF), urban destruction, and civilian casualties. Furthermore, although repeated temporary ceasefire breakdowns were brokered by Qatar, Egypt, and the U.S., they were consistently violated by both sides, and Israeli strikes on Rafah, Khan Younis, and

central Gaza despite such negotiations persisted. Meanwhile, in the Gaza Strip, there was a humanitarian collapse, including shortages of food, fuel, and medicine. leading to UN reports of famine-like conditions. Instances such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) compound strikes and multiple allegations of civilian infrastructure being hit mean that it is increasingly difficult to provide aid.

- b. West Bank has seen record-high settler-Palestinian clashes since 2023. This is partly because of frequent IDF raids in key cities such as Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarem that are becoming increasingly lethal. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has lost control over several cities with its governance crisis.

2. Lebanon and Hezbollah

- a. Recently, there have been cross-border rocket fire and anti-tank missile attacks from Hezbollah into northern Israel. To reciprocate, Israel has executed airstrikes in southern Lebanon targeting Hezbollah military infrastructure. Both cases are violations of UNSCR 1701, which bans armed groups south of the Litani River. Worsening the situation, Lebanon is experiencing an economic collapse, exacerbating instability and challenging the United Nations' Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)'s operation.

3. Iran-Israel Dynamics and Syria

- a. Israeli and U.S. assets have intercepted Iranian drone and missile launches toward Israel, and to reciprocate, Israel has struck inside Syria to target IRGC supply lines. Assassinations of IRGC commanders were also widely attributed to Israel.
- b. For Syria, Israeli strikes near Damascus and Aleppo airports have disabled runways and hit militia bases. Moreover, after attacks on American personnel, the U.S. has conducted airstrikes on IRGC-linked militias, further adding to the chaos, which ISIS remnants resurfacing in the east are exploiting.

4. Iraq

- a. The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) have attacked U.S. bases in al-Asad and Erbil via rocket and drone, resulting in several U.S. injuries and heightened U.S. force protection. There have also been repeated convoy IEDs and drone attacks on logistical supply routes between Dhi Qar, Babel, and Baghdad, which militia messaging has framed as retaliation for Gaza operations, linking Iraqi security to the broader regional conflict.

5. Yemen and the Red Sea

- a. Houthi drones and missiles have attacked commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb, and the U.S. and UK have retaliated by striking Houthi launch sites. Although calls for a ceasefire continue via peace talks, they have mostly been stalling, with occasional flare-ups of conflict on the frontlines.

6. Humanitarian Indicators

- WHO reports of medical facility collapse in Gaza, Yemen, and some parts of Syria. As of last year, 58% of Gaza's 36 hospitals were non-functional, and 78% of 73 Ministry of Health and UNRWA primary care clinics had ceased operations. WHO recorded 486 attacks on healthcare in the occupied Palestinian territory during the first half of 2024, causing 165 deaths and 275 injuries, and evacuation orders further overwhelmed remaining facilities. WHO and OCHA updates describe the system as "near collapse" in more recent snapshots.
- WFP warns of catastrophic hunger in Gaza and northern Yemen. By mid-2025, around 470,000 people in Gaza were already in Catastrophic hunger (IPC Phase 5), with the entire population acutely food insecure, and roughly 71,000 children and 17,000 pregnant or breastfeeding women in Gaza needed urgent treatment for acute malnutrition. By next year, WFP estimates that over half a million people will be in IPC Phase 5, with at least 132,000 children under 5 at risk of death from malnutrition, showing children are at disproportionate risk.

- UN displacement data reports millions internally displaced in Gaza, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. OCHA estimates that about 2.1 million remain in Gaza and that around 90% of the population has been displaced at least once since October 2023, with many experiencing displacement several times.

The Role of Regional Powers in the Middle Eastern Conflict

1. Iran

- a. Iran has supplied drones and missiles to Hezbollah, PMF groups, and Houthis. There are also Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force operations in Syria and Iraq. There have also been Iran-Israel missile exchange episodes after strikes on Iranian assets in Syria, and Iranian weapons shipments were intercepted in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman.

2. Saudi Arabia

- a. During 2015-2022, there were Saudi-led coalition operations in Yemen, and these operations continue to have influence today. Furthermore, although the Riyadh-Tehran rapprochement was brokered by China, proxy clashes have not been eliminated

3. UAE

- a. There are forward military bases in Eritrea and historical bases in Yemen showing regional projection capability. Furthermore, UAE drones have been exported to conflict zones, with the example of Libya, which has historically received exports. This is especially in the context of UAE-Israel normalization under the Abraham Accords that influence regional alignments.

4. Israel

- a. In Syria, Israel has ordered airstrikes, such as near Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo, targeting IRGC infrastructure. Against Lebanon, it has conducted operations

against Hezbollah after the cross-border fire. In terms of relations with Iran, Israel has coordinated with the U.S. on missile defense against Iranian strikes.

5. Turkey

- a. As a part of the Operation Claw series, Turkey executed military operations in northern Syria. Against Iraq, it has conducted drone strikes in northern Iraq targeting the PKK, and we have seen Turkish-Russian coordination in Idlib de-escalation zones.

6. Qatar

- a. Qatar has acted as a central mediator in the Gaza ceasefire and hostage negotiations. It has also provided financial support to Gaza under controlled monitoring frameworks.

7. Egypt

- a. Egypt has controlled the Rafah crossing, affecting humanitarian access and refugees' ability to escape. It has also assembled diplomacy between Israel, Hamas, the U.S., and Gulf states, but has also seen border security incidents, including clashes or accidental exchanges of fire.

8. Regional Alignments

- a. Overall, there has been a normalization process between Israel and several Arab states, including the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco. Furthermore, the Arab League and GCC statements have called for de-escalation and humanitarian access, also maintaining a focus on energy diplomacy, such as gas pipeline plans and Red Sea-Mediterranean trade routes.

Stance of Parties

1. United States

- a. The United States remains one of the most influential actors in Middle Eastern security. Its stance prioritizes protection of Israel, counterterrorism, freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, and containment of Iran. The United States frequently

advocates for ceasefires conditioned on hostage release, restrictions on arms transfers to militant groups, and expanded humanitarian access. Washington supports a two-state solution but faces domestic political constraints on pressuring Israel. It generally opposes United Nations Security Council resolutions that appear unbalanced or legally binding against United States allies.

2. China

- a. China emphasizes sovereignty, non-interference, and diplomatic de-escalation. Beijing opposes unilateral military actions and promotes dialogue-based approaches, positioning itself as a mediator. China has growing economic interests in the region, especially energy and trade routes, and supports maritime security and regional stability. It avoids taking explicit sides but increasingly criticizes actions that expand regional instability or threaten commercial routes.

3. Russia

- a. Russia views the Middle East as a key arena for projecting influence. It is a military ally of the Syrian government and often uses its veto to protect Damascus. Russia supports multipolar global governance and opposes Western-led interventions. Moscow typically advocates ceasefires, negotiations involving all parties, including groups Western states classify as terrorists, and frameworks that limit the United States' dominance. The Ukraine conflict has strengthened Russia's reliance on Middle Eastern partners.

4. France

- a. France supports strong humanitarian protections and is often a vocal advocate for ceasefires, humanitarian corridors, and civilian access. It has historical ties to Lebanon and Syria and plays an active diplomatic role in both. France balances counterterrorism interests with legal and humanitarian considerations. Paris pushes for accountability mechanisms and opposes actions that endanger United Nations peacekeepers.

5. United Kingdom

- a. The United Kingdom aligns closely with the United States but places additional emphasis on humanitarian law, human rights, and civilian protection. It supports maritime security in the Red Sea, monitoring missions in Lebanon, and political processes in Yemen. The United Kingdom typically seeks balanced resolutions but hesitates to support measures that could weaken counterterrorism partnerships.

6. Israel

- a. Israel maintains that its military operations are acts of self-defense in response to attacks from Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and various Iran-aligned militias. Israeli officials argue that these groups use civilian areas to launch military operations, complicating efforts to protect non-combatants. Israel strongly opposes United Nations Security Council measures that impose unilateral ceasefires, external investigative mechanisms, or constraints on Israeli military operations. It frames the current escalation as part of a broader confrontation with Iran and its allied networks across Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Israeli policy emphasizes national security, prevention of weapons smuggling into Gaza, deterrence of Hezbollah rocket fire, and protection of maritime routes. Israel resists external pressure that it views as undermining its strategic flexibility or rewarding armed groups.

7. Palestine

- a. The Palestinian position centers on immediate cessation of hostilities, expanded humanitarian access, lifting of blockades, and accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. The Palestinian Authority calls for a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders and international recognition of statehood. Palestinian representatives argue that continued settlement expansion, occupation, and military operations have created unbearable humanitarian conditions, especially in Gaza. Internal divisions between the Palestinian Authority and

Hamas complicate decision-making, but Palestinian diplomatic advocacy consistently focuses on the protection of civilians, international investigations, and reconstruction of devastated areas. Palestine emphasizes that escalation across the Middle East is rooted in unresolved occupation and lack of a political settlement.

8. Iran

- a. Iran portrays itself as a defender of regional resistance movements and argues that groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis act independently based on local grievances. Tehran denies direct involvement in attacks on United States and Israeli interests, but acknowledges political and ideological alignment with these groups. Iran views Israeli actions in Gaza and the United States military bases in the region as threats to regional stability. Iran's regional doctrine prioritizes strategic depth, meaning it supports armed groups outside its borders to prevent conflict from reaching Iran itself. Iran opposes any United Nations Security Council measure perceived as biased toward Israel or as expanding Western military presence. Tehran supports ceasefires, humanitarian access, and the removal of foreign forces from the region.

9. Saudi Arabia

- a. Saudi Arabia seeks de-escalation to protect its economic transformation agenda and regional leadership. The Kingdom is wary of Iranian influence and opposes the empowerment of Iran-backed militias in Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq. However, Saudi Arabia increasingly emphasizes diplomacy over confrontation, especially after recent normalization efforts with Iran. Riyadh supports humanitarian access in Gaza, political processes in Yemen, and stability in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia prefers United Nations Security Council language that condemns attacks by

non-state actors and calls for regional restraint. It avoids escalation that threatens energy markets or domestic security.

10. United Arab Emirates

- a. The United Arab Emirates combines assertive foreign policy with strong diplomatic engagement. It supports counterterrorism operations, maritime security in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, and stabilization efforts in Yemen. The United Arab Emirates frequently advocates humanitarian aid mechanisms, reconstruction plans, and political dialogue. However, it opposes measures that reduce pressure on the Houthis or undermine coalition security interests. The United Arab Emirates increasingly engages in mediation between rival states and seeks a stable environment conducive to economic growth, trade, and investment.

11. Qatar

- a. Qatar plays a unique role as a mediator between armed groups and the international community. It has communication channels with Hamas, the Taliban, and various regional factions, making it a central actor in hostage negotiations and ceasefire discussions. Qatar supports humanitarian access, reconstruction in Gaza, and de-escalation across Lebanon and Syria. At the same time, Qatar rejects accusations that its mediation empowers militant groups, emphasizing that dialogue is essential for conflict resolution. It often supports United Nations Security Council proposals that focus on humanitarian protection.

12. Egypt

- a. Egypt views stability in Gaza, Sinai, and the Red Sea as critical to its national security. It is wary of any large displacement of Palestinians into the Sinai Peninsula and strongly opposes proposals that alter the demographic or political structure of Gaza. Egypt regularly mediates ceasefires between Israel and

Palestinian factions and oversees humanitarian delivery through the Rafah crossing when possible. Cairo supports immediate de-escalation, protection of civilians, and restrictions on weapons smuggling. Egypt also seeks to manage tensions between regional rivals to prevent destabilization along its borders.

13. Jordan

- a. Jordan hosts a large Palestinian population and is sensitive to instability in the West Bank and Jerusalem. It sees escalation in the region as a direct threat to domestic unity and economic sustainability. Jordan advocates for strong humanitarian protections, preservation of the status of holy sites in Jerusalem, and a renewed political process. It supports a comprehensive ceasefire and opposes actions that risk mass displacement. Jordan frequently aligns with European and Arab League positions calling for a balanced approach grounded in international law.

14. Turkey

- a. Turkey positions itself as a regional power advocating for Palestinian rights while maintaining complex relations with Israel, Russia, and the United States. Ankara opposes Israeli military operations that cause large civilian casualties and calls for international investigations. Turkey supports ceasefires, humanitarian corridors, and expanded United Nations roles in monitoring. However, Turkey also maintains military operations in Syria against Kurdish groups it considers threats and opposes measures that limit its freedom of action. Turkish diplomacy aims to elevate its political influence while balancing security concerns along its borders.

15. Iraq

- a. Iraq faces internal challenges from multiple militia groups, some aligned with Iran and others more autonomous. The Iraqi government opposes foreign military presence on its territory and seeks to avoid becoming a battlefield for Iran United

States-Iran confrontation. Iraq supports ceasefires, reduction of tensions, and prevention of attacks from its soil. Iraqi leaders emphasize preventing escalation that could destabilize Baghdad or reignite internal conflict. Iraq prefers United Nations Security Council actions focused on diplomatic solutions and regional dialogue.

16. Syria

- a. The Syrian government argues that Israeli airstrikes on Syrian territory violate sovereignty and contribute to regional insecurity. It also claims that foreign forces, including Turkish and United States troops, must withdraw. Syria supports Iran-aligned militias that assist the government but opposes measures that legitimize Israeli security concerns. Damascus views the current escalation as inseparable from the continued occupation of the Golan Heights and ongoing conflict within Syria. It supports ceasefires and political solutions but resists United Nations investigations that target the Syrian government.

17. Lebanon

- a. Lebanon is deeply affected by escalation due to Hezbollah's involvement in cross-border clashes with Israel. The Lebanese government officially supports de-escalation and protection of civilians, while Hezbollah pursues its own military and ideological objectives. Lebanon faces economic collapse, political paralysis, and limited capacity to manage new displacement or military confrontation. It supports United Nations Security Council resolutions that call for ceasefires, humanitarian access, and prevention of wider war along the southern border.

18. Yemen and the Houthi Movement

- a. The internationally recognized Yemeni government supports de-escalation, cessation of Houthi attacks, and restoration of control over ports and cities. The Houthis frame their missile and drone attacks as part of a regional resistance against Israel and the United States. Their operations in the Red Sea threaten global trade and attract increasing foreign military responses. Yemen supports

actions that constrain the Houthis' capabilities, while the Houthis insist on lifting blockades and ending foreign involvement.

19. The Arab League

- a. The Arab League strongly supports ceasefires, protection of civilians, and accountability for violations of humanitarian law. It rejects forced displacement and external interference. Member states vary in their foreign policies, but the League generally advocates a two-state solution and opposes actions that deepen regional conflict. It supports humanitarian corridors, international investigations, and diplomatic engagement.

20. European Union

- a. The European Union emphasizes humanitarian obligations, access for aid organizations, and adherence to international law. It supports balanced ceasefires, restrictions on weapons entering conflict zones, and mechanisms that protect civilians. The European Union is divided internally regarding sanctions or recognition measures, but remains unified in calling for de-escalation and political dialogue. Maritime security is a major priority due to its impact on global trade.

21. African Union and Red Sea States

- a. The African Union and Horn of Africa states express concern about Red Sea insecurity and the spillover of conflict into Sudan, Somalia, and the Sahel. They support naval protection, diplomatic engagement, and mechanisms that reduce foreign military escalation. Many African states fear that the destabilization of the Red Sea corridor will worsen food insecurity and economic challenges. They advocate for comprehensive approaches that include maritime monitoring, ceasefire enforcement, and humanitarian delivery routes.

Possible Solutions

Addressing the Escalation of Armed Conflict in the Middle East

A solution to address Agenda 1 is a more structured pause in hostilities. It shouldn't be simply "stop fighting," but rather a monitored, time-bound arrangement that clarifies what each side may and may not do, and how violations are tracked. Delegates can infer: verification, reporting, and limited observers.

Another possible solution is a predictable system to deliver aid. While nothing overly technical is necessary, the basics of humanitarian access, such as stable routes, advance notification, and fewer points of interference, should be met. These may mean corridors, coordination cells, or deconfliction protocols.

One last idea is greater restraint on tools that escalate the conflict. This does not necessarily entail embargoes or bans/sanctions outright. However, there is a need to reduce the flow of weapons and external support into active fronts, however restrictive this may be.

The Role of Regional Powers in the Middle Eastern Conflict

One possible idea is a platform for regional discourse. While this does not necessarily mean a new organization, it should act as a force to allow for regional actors to talk to each other on security issues instead of acting unilaterally. The format, mandate, and participants can differ depending on what the priority of such a platform may be.

UNSC may also choose for a general call for states to be clearer about how they operate beyond their borders and increase transparency around external influence, whether through political backing, funding, or other means. How far transparency should go is up for debate, however.

There should also be a form of guardrails on cross-border activity. While the means of enforcing this, such as specific sanctions or legal restrictions, are up for debate, there is a need for boundaries that prevent local clashes from becoming regional. The strength of such norms should also differ based on what delegates think should be the priority.