



# **UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

## **AGENDA**

**DELIBERATING UPON THE EFFECT  
OF STRATEGIC CHOKE POINTS ON  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
SOCIAL SECURITY IN REGARDS TO  
WIDESPREAD MARITIME AND  
TERRITORIAL DISPUTES.**



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## Letter From The Executive Board

**Dear Delegates,**

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you all to the tenth edition of Welham Boys' Model United Nations, 2024. We, the Executive Board, promise you a prominent and productive time here at WELMUN.

This background guide provides you with an overview of the agenda and provides you with an idea of where your research should start. The Executive Board discourages the use of only this guide for the preparation of the conference. The information provided here is only to help you shape your stance. The agenda for the debate this year is- Deliberating upon the effect of Strategic Chokepoints on Economic Development and Social security in regards to Widespread Maritime and Territorial Disputes. In an era of globalisation, strategic maritime chokepoints like the Malacca Strait and Panama Canal are crucial for global trade, connecting regions and supporting economic prosperity. However, these chokepoints are vulnerable to geopolitical rivalries, territorial disputes, and security threats, impacting economic development and social security worldwide. Disruptions in the key maritime routes can lead to economic instability, environmental degradation, and humanitarian crises. ECOSOC's role in addressing these challenges is vital, as it promotes global economic progress, social development, and sustainable solutions through dialogue and consensus-building.

The Executive Board anticipates well-researched arguments and discussions from the delegates. We also expect the delegates to have an intricate knowledge of the issue raised. We encourage you all not to focus much on the geopolitical aspect of the agenda but to turn your attention to its effects on the economic and social landscape. Delegates must realise that although this study guide offers insightful information, it is not meant to be all-inclusive or thorough in its review of the literature. To enhance their comprehension of the subjects covered, delegates are urged to look into more sources, study more, and carry out independent research. Finally, keep in mind that learning is a lifelong endeavour. By seeking out different viewpoints and broadening our views, we improve our capacity to actively participate in the conversations and decisions that lie ahead. A solutions-oriented approach is always appreciated at the conference. Delegates must engage in critical thinking and keep in mind real-life problems with respect to the scenario too. We encourage first-time MUNers to engage as much as possible, but also to have a great learning experience from the conference. We will make sure that you have a great time and also get a platform to keep your stance and voice. The EB hopes that all of you come together with compassion for each other and people suffering in the world, and create solutions with compassion and love in your hearts. The quality of love missing in the world needs to accompany intellect.

Looking forward to learning from you.

**The Executive Board,**

**United Nations Economic and Social Council**

**[chair.ecosoc@welhamboys.org](mailto:chair.ecosoc@welhamboys.org)**



## Introduction to the Agenda

In an era marked by globalisation and interdependence, the world's maritime routes have emerged as vital conduits for global trade, connecting distant regions and fostering economic prosperity. Central to this intricate web of maritime commerce are strategic choke points—narrow passages and critical waterways that serve as linchpins in the global transportation network. From the Malacca Strait in Southeast Asia to the Panama Canal in Central America, these chokepoints facilitate the movement of goods, energy resources, and people, underpinning the functioning of the global economy.

However, the strategic importance of these maritime arteries also renders them susceptible to geopolitical rivalries, territorial disputes, and security threats, posing significant challenges to economic development and social security on a global scale. Today, amidst a backdrop of shifting geopolitical dynamics and regional tensions, strategic choke points have assumed center stage in the international arena, with maritime and territorial disputes escalating in various regions across the globe.

One of the most prominent flashpoints in recent years is the South China Sea, where overlapping territorial claims and assertive maritime actions have heightened tensions among neighboring states. Similarly, in the East China Sea, the dispute between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands continues to fuel tensions, underscoring the complex interplay of historical grievances, national interests, and strategic calculations.

In the Middle East, the Strait of Hormuz remains a critical chokepoint for the transportation of oil and natural gas, accounting for a significant portion of global energy supplies. However, the Strait's strategic significance has also made it a focal point of geopolitical rivalries and security threats. Moreover, the ongoing conflict in Yemen has further exacerbated tensions in the region, with maritime trade routes facing increased risks of disruption and piracy.

Beyond the geopolitical dimensions, the impact of strategic chokepoints extends to broader socio-economic concerns, including social stability, environmental sustainability, and humanitarian crises. Disruptions in maritime trade routes can have far-reaching consequences, affecting the livelihoods of millions of people dependent on maritime commerce for their sustenance. Moreover, the environmental degradation resulting from maritime accidents, oil spills, and pollution poses significant challenges to marine ecosystems and coastal communities, exacerbating vulnerabilities and undermining efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, the role of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by strategic chokepoints is of paramount importance. As the principal body responsible for promoting global economic progress and social development, ECOSOC plays a crucial role in fostering dialogue, building consensus, and advancing sustainable solutions to complex global issues.



### Definitions of key terms:

- **Choke Points:** Chokepoints exist where physical geography creates obstacles to the easy passage of people and goods from one place to another. In times of peace as well as war, the tactical and strategic value of choke points is not lost on militaries and armed groups of all types. During any land battle, careful attention paid to choke points is necessary. With the stabilisation of nation-state boundaries and the reduced amount of disputed territory, land-based choke points tend to become prominent only when active conflicts occur. Maritime choke points, however, are a constant geopolitical concern. The main reason is that 90% of world trade is by ship (shipping by air is much more expensive due to fuel costs). While the high seas also have risks, the most dangerous places for ships are those where land-based piracy, terrorism, and military conflict can easily target them as they move slowly through narrow straits.
- **Economic Development** is the process by which the economic well-being and quality of life of a nation, region, local community, or individual are improved according to targeted goals and objectives. The term has been used frequently in the 20th and 21st centuries, but the concept has existed in the West for far longer. "Modernization", "Westernization", and especially "industrialization" are other terms often used while discussing economic development. Historically, economic development policies focused on industrialization and infrastructure; since the 1960s, it has increasingly focused on poverty reduction.
- **Social Security:** Social security is the protection that society provides to individuals and households to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity, or loss of a breadwinner. Social security protection is clearly defined in ILO conventions and UN instruments as a basic human right
- **Maritime Disputes:** A maritime boundary dispute is a dispute relating to the demarcation of the different maritime zones between or among states. It is a common scenario all over the world. Of the World's 512 potential maritime boundaries, fewer than half have been agreed upon, creating uncertainty and room for disputes for the remainder. In addition, maritime boundary disputes regularly occur over commercial, economic, and security interests and are a common but underrated investment risk in the energy sector. Every coastal state is becoming very much concerned about marine resources because the world economy is turning into ocean-based resources which are being termed as Blue Economy. So, all the states claimed their different maritime zones according to their own interest. A maritime boundary dispute occurs mostly due to the overlapping claims between adjacent or opposite states for 12 nautical miles of territorial seas.



### Important International and Regional Treaties

#### International Treaties:

- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** This is the cornerstone legal framework for all matters relating to the sea and oceans. It establishes principles for the peaceful use of oceans, including freedom of navigation through international straits (chokepoints).
- **Montego Bay Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III):** This is a 1982 agreement that elaborates on UNCLOS and provides a dispute settlement mechanism for maritime issues.
- **International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS):** This treaty sets international standards for the safety of navigation and pollution prevention at sea. Disruptions at chokepoints could raise concerns related to SOLAS compliance.
- **Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution (MARPOL):** Similar to SOLAS, MARPOL focuses on minimizing pollution from ships, which is especially important in sensitive ecological areas near chokepoints.
- **United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of Marine Spaces (UNCLOS III Annex VI):** This annex details regulations for exploring and exploiting resources on the continental shelf, which could be relevant if there are resource disputes near chokepoints.
- **African Union Convention on Maritime Security (AU CMS):** Promotes cooperation among African states on maritime security issues, including piracy and armed robbery at sea.
- **Jeddah Amendment to the Convention on Facilitation of Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention):** This agreement, relevant to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region, aims to facilitate maritime traffic and prevent disruptions.
- **Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC):** This treaty promotes peaceful settlement of disputes among Southeast Asian nations, which could be relevant if the simulated chokepoint is in that region (e.g., Malacca Strait).
- **Caspian Sea Convention:** This agreement governs the legal status and resources of the Caspian Sea, which is a landlocked sea with strategic chokepoints at its connection points.
- **Svalbard Treaty:** This treaty establishes the legal status of the Svalbard archipelago, located near the strategically important Barents Sea.
- **The Arctic Council:** Established in 1996, this intergovernmental forum includes the eight Arctic nations and six indigenous observer organizations. It focuses on sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
- **The Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic**



(2013): This agreement establishes a framework for cooperation in responding to oil spills and other marine pollution incidents in the Arctic.

- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) Polar Code: Provides mandatory international standards for shipping operations in polar waters to protect the marine environment and enhance safety at sea.
- The Core Agreement: The Antarctic Treaty (1959): The cornerstone of the ATS, signed by 12 nations (including Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and United States). It focussed on topics like Demilitarization, Freedom of Scientific Research, and Peaceful Cooperation.
- The Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection (1991): A crucial addition to the ATS, it designates Antarctica as a "natural reserve, devoted to peace and science." It establishes
- The Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (CCAS, 1972): Addresses the conservation and management of Antarctic seal populations.
- The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR, 1980): Establishes a framework for the conservation of marine living resources (fish, krill, etc.) in the Southern Ocean surrounding Antarctica

#### **Mandate of the committee-**

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) coordinates the work of the 14 UN specialised agencies, ten functional commissions, and five regional commissions, receives reports from nine UN funds and programs (see reverse), and issues policy recommendations to the UN system and to Member States. Under the UN Charter, ECOSOC is responsible for promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social, and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. ECOSOC's purview extends over 70 percent of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system.

The Council's 54 member Governments are elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms. In carrying out its mandate, ECOSOC consults with academics, business sector representatives, and more than 2,500 registered non-governmental organisations.

The Council holds a four-week substantive session each July, alternating between New York and Geneva. The session includes a high-level segment, at which national cabinet ministers, chiefs of international agencies, and other high officials focus their attention on a selected theme of global significance.



### Policy coordination

- In 2004, the High-Level Segment focused on challenges faced by least-developed countries working to attain the MDG targets, and important support measures developed countries could provide – such as access to markets – were identified.
- A UN public-private alliance to promote rural development, with Madagascar designated as the initial beneficiary, came out of the 2003 session.
- In 2001, ad hoc advisory groups that could play an important advocacy role for African countries emerging from conflict were created.

The High-Level Segment in 2000 led directly to the formation, in 2001, of the ICT [Information and Communication Technologies] Task Force, now the universally recognized forum where ICT professionals and the development community can interact and move ahead with ICT-for-development. Also that year, the Council's review of African development resulted in the first formal international endorsement of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In 1998, the Council initiated a tradition of meeting each April with finance ministers chairing key committees of the Bretton Woods institutions – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These annual consultations paved the way for the success of the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in March 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico, and earned the Council the primary role in monitoring and assessing follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus.

At the 2005 World Summit, in paragraph 155 of the World Summit Outcome Document, Heads of State and Government mandated the Economic and Social Council to ensure the follow-up of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the internationally agreed development goals, and to hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews (AMRs) to assess progress, drawing on its functional and regional commissions and other international institutions, in accordance with their respective mandates.

In a follow-up to the World Summit, the General Assembly adopted resolution 61/16 on the “Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council”. In its resolution, the General Assembly decided that the AMR should

- be held as part of its high-level segment.
- be conducted by means of a cross-sectoral approach focusing on thematic issues common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, and related fields, including the MDGs and other IADGs
- review progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of those conferences and summits and their follow-up processes and;
- assess its impact on the achievement of the goals and targets of the conferences and summits.



**In this regard, the General Assembly:**

Recommended that such reviews provide an opportunity for countries to make voluntary national presentations;

- requested the Council to urge the functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies and follow-up mechanisms, as appropriate, to contribute, in accordance with their mandates and taking into account their specificity, to the assessment;
- recommended that the Council establish a multi-year program of work for the ministerial-level substantive reviews;
- invited the organisations of the UN system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, to contribute within their respective mandates to the consideration by the Council. It also requested ECOSOC to urge the UN regional commissions, in collaboration with other regional and subregional organisations and processes, as appropriate,
- to contribute, within their mandates, to the review of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major UN Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, and related fields and
- to provide input to the discussions of the Council in accordance with its rules of procedure.

Maritime Issues

**Straits of Gibraltar:**

Gibraltar is a British Overseas Territory claimed by Spain, the country that holds the rest of the local real estate on the north side of the Straits of Gibraltar and some on the south (the autonomous city of Ceuta) as well. Over 100,000 ships enter and exit the Mediterranean yearly, and many of them bunker, i.e., refuel, at Gibraltar.

The Strait of Gibraltar remains a vital artery for global trade. Ships carrying goods between Europe, Africa, and Asia. This heavy traffic volume makes the Strait economically crucial for international commerce. Gibraltar is also a major bunkering hub, supplying ships with fuel as they pass through the Strait. This industry generates significant revenue for Gibraltar and supports jobs in the territory. Fishing has been a traditional livelihood for communities on both sides of the Strait. However, overfishing and environmental concerns pose challenges to the sustainability of this industry. Tourism also plays a role in the economies of Gibraltar and surrounding regions.

The Strait's narrow passage makes it a strategic chokepoint, offering potential leverage to control maritime traffic. During times of tension, concerns may arise regarding freedom of navigation and military presence in the Strait. The sovereignty of Gibraltar remains a point of contention between Spain and the United Kingdom. Spain has long called for the return of Gibraltar, while Gibraltarians have overwhelmingly voted to remain under British rule. This dispute can occasionally create diplomatic friction.



### **Bab el Mandeb Strait:**

It is a strategic waterway located at the southern end of the Red Sea, connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and ultimately the Arabian Sea. It is a crucial chokepoint for international maritime trade, serving as a key shipping route for oil tankers and cargo vessels travelling between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The strait is bordered by Djibouti and Yemen, and its strategic importance has made it a focal point for geopolitical tensions and security concerns in the region.

The Strait's location at the southern tip of the Red Sea has made it a crucial link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean for millennia. Ancient civilizations like the Egyptians and Romans used it for trade and exploration. Control of the Strait has changed hands throughout history. The rise and fall of empires, from the Ottomans to European colonial powers, all sought to influence this strategic passage. Following independence movements in the 20th century, Yemen, Djibouti, and Eritrea emerged as the primary stakeholders bordering the Strait. However, historical rivalries and regional instability continue to cast a shadow.

The Strait remains a vital artery for global trade. Millions of barrels of oil and countless tons of cargo pass through here annually, connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe. Disruptions in the Strait can have significant economic repercussions worldwide. Djibouti, strategically located on the western shore, has developed into a major port and logistical hub, benefiting from the heavy traffic volume through the Strait.

The Strait's narrow width makes it a strategic chokepoint, vulnerable to potential disruption. Concerns regarding freedom of navigation and security threats from piracy or terrorism can arise, impacting international trade. Tensions and conflicts in Yemen have raised concerns about the security of the Strait. The presence of various actors in the region adds a layer of complexity to maintaining stability. The countries bordering the Strait are home to diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Yemen, for example, has a rich cultural heritage, while Djibouti has a population with ties to Somalia and Ethiopia. The ongoing conflict in Yemen has displaced millions internally and created a humanitarian crisis. Social services and infrastructure in Yemen have been severely strained.

### **Panama Canal**

This conflict-free zone carries 3% of the world's trade and is located entirely within a single country. However, as in most of the Americas, choke points like the Canal are not at risk from the types of conflicts found in the Old World.

The concept of a canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans emerged centuries ago. French attempts in the 19th century were thwarted by disease and engineering difficulties. The United States successfully completed the canal in 1914, a monumental feat of engineering. The US initially controlled the canal through a treaty with Panama. Following Panamanian protests and negotiations, full control of the canal was relinquished to Panama in 1999. To maintain the canal's competitiveness, Panama embarked on major expansion projects in recent years, increasing its capacity to handle larger cargo ships. The Panama Canal remains a vital shortcut for global shipping. It significantly reduces travel time and



transportation costs for cargo moving between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Panama charges tolls based on a ship's size and cargo. Canal tolls are a major source of revenue for Panama, contributing significantly to the country's economy. The canal has spurred development in surrounding areas. Panama City has become a major logistics hub, attracting businesses and generating employment opportunities.

The canal's strategic location makes it a potential vulnerability. Past concerns about US intervention to secure the canal have eased with the handover of control to Panama. However, the canal's smooth operation remains a geopolitical priority for the region. The Panama Canal neutrality treaties guarantee equal access for all nations. Maintaining neutrality and freedom of navigation is crucial for the canal's continued success. Ensuring the canal's security from terrorism or piracy is an ongoing concern. Panama collaborates with international partners to address these threats.

The canal project spurred infrastructure development in Panama, leading to improved transportation networks and economic growth. Canal construction and operation have displaced local communities in the past. Balancing economic development with the well-being of local populations remains important.

### **Suez Canal:**

The Suez, an artificial passage connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas and entirely controlled by Egypt, channels 12% of world trade on 19,000 ships annually. It is of enormous strategic importance, and like other choke points in this part of the world, it is heavily protected against terrorist attacks. The idea of a canal connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea dates back to ancient times. French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps championed the project in the 19th century, overcoming significant engineering challenges to complete the canal in 1869. Initially controlled by a private company, the Suez Canal came under Egyptian ownership in 1956 following nationalisation. This event led to a brief international conflict but ultimately solidified Egyptian control over the canal.

The Suez Canal remains a vital shortcut for global shipping, significantly reducing travel time and transportation costs for cargo moving between Asia and Europe. This makes the canal a crucial link in global trade. Egypt charges tolls based on a ship's size and cargo. Canal tolls are a major source of revenue for Egypt, contributing significantly to the country's economy. Canal cities like Port Said and Suez have benefited from the canal's operation. These cities have become important logistics hubs, attracting businesses and generating employment opportunities.

The canal's strategic location makes it a potential vulnerability. The 1956 Suez Crisis highlighted the geopolitical significance of the canal and the potential for regional tensions. Maintaining freedom of navigation through the canal is crucial for global trade. Egypt has generally upheld its commitment to ensure uninterrupted passage for all nations. Ensuring the canal's security from terrorism or piracy is an ongoing concern.

### **Straits of Malacca:**

This 580-mile-long water passage in Southeast Asia carries 25% of world trade and is thus the most significant choke point in the world. Mostly between Indonesia and Malaysia and passing by Singapore, the Strait has its fair share of piracy issues and is quite shallow at points. Still, alternate routes are



far longer and more expensive.

The Strait's strategic location has made it a crucial link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean for millennia. Great kingdoms and empires, like the Srivijaya and Majapahit empires, flourished due to their control of this maritime trade route. The Strait witnessed the rise and fall of various colonial powers, including Portugal, the Netherlands, and Britain, all vying for control of this strategic passage.

The legacy of these colonial eras continues to shape the region today. Carrying over one-quarter of the world's traded goods, the strait has become a vital economic artery for global commerce. Ships carrying oil, manufactured goods, and other commodities traverse the Strait daily. Singapore, located at the southern tip of the Strait, has emerged as a major global port and financial center, benefiting from the heavy traffic volume. Other port cities like Port Klang in Malaysia and Belawan in Indonesia also play a significant role in the region's economy. The Strait and surrounding waters support diverse marine life, with fishing communities depending on these resources for their livelihoods. Sustainable fishing practices are crucial for maintaining the health of the ecosystem.

The Strait's narrow width makes it a strategic chokepoint, raising concerns about potential disruptions to maritime traffic. Freedom of navigation and security threats from piracy or terrorism are some of the issues. Several countries bordering the Strait have overlapping territorial claims in the surrounding waters, which have led to tensions and disputes.

### **Strait of Hormuz:**

The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway between Iran and Oman, is a vital maritime choke point for global energy transportation. However, the Strait has also been a flashpoint for territorial disputes and heightened tensions in recent years. Here's a breakdown of the key issues:

The Strait of Hormuz is a critical passage for global oil transportation. Around 20% of the world's oil passes through this narrow waterway, making it a vital artery for the global economy.

Iran and Oman control opposite shores of the Strait, but disagreements exist regarding the territorial waters and seabed ownership. This lack of a clear legal framework creates the potential for friction.

Both Iran and the United States maintain a significant military presence in the region, raising concerns about accidental escalation or deliberate actions to disrupt oil shipments.

The potential for disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz can lead to increased oil prices and economic instability. The presence of powerful militaries in close proximity creates a risk of miscalculation and potential conflict.

### **The Arctic**

The Arctic, once a frozen frontier, is rapidly transforming due to climate change. The melting ice cap is revealing new opportunities and resources, but also exposing a complex web of maritime issues. Here's a breakdown of the key challenges:

Receding ice cover is opening new shipping routes, particularly along the Northern Sea Route (NSR). This shorter route between Europe and Asia offers potential benefits for trade efficiency, but raises concerns about the Environmental Impact of increased shipping traffic could disrupt fragile Arctic ecosystems and lead to pollution incidents. Oil spills in icy waters are particularly catastrophic and difficult to



clean up. Harsh weather conditions, limited search and rescue capabilities, and inadequate navigational infrastructure pose significant risks for vessels operating in the Arctic.

The receding ice also exposes potential reserves of oil, gas, and minerals. This has triggered nations bordering the Arctic, including Russia, Canada, the United States, Denmark, and Norway, who have overlapping territorial claims that extend into the Arctic seabed which can further lead to heightened military presence and potential conflicts.

## **Territorial disputes**

### **Antarctica**

Antarctica, a vast landmass encased in ice, presents a unique geopolitical landscape. Unlike most continents, it remains largely untouched by human settlement and resource extraction. However, beneath the pristine white lies a complex web of territorial claims, raising questions about the future governance and management of this critical region.

The 1961 Antarctic Treaty, while promoting peace and scientific cooperation, deliberately avoids addressing the issue of existing territorial claims. This creates a legal grey area. While the Treaty doesn't invalidate existing claims, it also doesn't explicitly recognize them. This ambiguity could pose challenges if resource exploration becomes a future consideration. The 1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection further complicates the issue. While focusing on environmental protection, it includes provisions that could be interpreted as strengthening territorial claims by allowing claimant states a greater say in decision-making processes for specific areas.

The melting ice cap raises questions about potential access to mineral and energy resources beneath Antarctica's surface. While the Protocol prohibits extraction for 50 years, the possibility of resource exploration being revisited in the future adds another layer of complexity to territorial disputes. Nations with existing claims might seek to leverage them to gain an advantage in any future resource development scenarios.

### **Eastern Europe vs Western Europe**

Eastern Europe, a region with a rich and complex history, continues to grapple with territorial disputes that cast a shadow on stability and security. These disputes, often rooted in historical grievances and geopolitical power struggles, have the potential to escalate and disrupt the lives of millions.

The ongoing war in Ukraine is the most immediate and dire territorial conflict in Eastern Europe. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine have sparked a devastating conflict that continues to claim lives and displace civilians.

Beyond the current war, several unresolved border issues remain between Russia and its neighbours in Eastern Europe. Notably, lingering tensions exist regarding the complicated history between Poland and Russia including disputes over territory lost and gained throughout centuries. While Belarus is a close ally of Russia, its potential conflicts with Poland allow both countries to work unitedly towards a common goal.



Territorial anxieties extend beyond individual countries. The eastward expansion of NATO, a military alliance seen by Russia as a threat, contributes to regional tensions. Additionally, concerns regarding the status of minority groups within borders, such as Hungarians in Romania and Ukraine, can further complicate regional dynamics.

### **India's Territorial Tangles: POK and Aksai Chin**

India, a nation with a rich history and diverse geography, faces several unresolved territorial disputes with its neighbours. Two of the most significant involve strategically important regions: This northwestern portion of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir is claimed by both India and Pakistan. The partition of India in 1947 and the subsequent war in 1947-48 resulted in the current situation, where India administers Jammu and Kashmir, while Pakistan controls POK. This high-altitude desert plateau lies at the intersection of India, China, and Pakistan. Both India and China claim Aksai Chin, with China controlling most of the territory. The dispute stems from differing interpretations of historical borders established during the Qing Dynasty and British India.

The ongoing disputes create a climate of distrust and hinder regional cooperation on issues like trade and infrastructure development. The contested borders necessitate a heavy military presence on both sides, diverting resources away from development projects. The potential for armed conflict due to territorial disputes remains a constant concern.

India's claim to Pok is based on the Instrument of Accession signed by the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, which integrated the princely state into India. Pakistan contends that the validity of the accession is disputed and that the people of Kashmir should be allowed to decide their future through a plebiscite as outlined in UN resolutions. India's claim to Aksai Chin is based on treaties signed between British India and China in the 19th century. China, on the other hand, asserts its claim based on historical maps and administrative control exercised for centuries.

### **Middle East**

The Middle East, a region steeped in history and cultural richness, is also a land grappling with several unresolved territorial disputes. These conflicts cast a long shadow on regional stability and hinder prospects for peace and cooperation.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is an ongoing issue in which the Palestinians seek an independent state encompassing the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, territories captured by Israel in 1967. Israel claims Jerusalem as its undivided capital and maintains settlements in the occupied territories. The conflict's roots are complex, dating back to the early 20th century and the rise of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism. Issues of displacement, religious tensions, and security concerns further complicate the situation.

The Golan Heights, a strategically important plateau, were captured by Israel from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War. Israel maintains control of the territory, citing security concerns. Syria demands the full return of the Golan Heights, arguing its capture was illegal under international law.



Other disputes to research upon

- Ogaden Region: Claimed by both Ethiopia and Somalia, this region has a long history of conflict.
- Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands: Claimed by both China and Japan, these islands are a major source of tension.
- The Kuril Islands: Claimed by both Russia and Japan, a remnant of World War II.
- Western Sahara: This dispute between Morocco and the Polisario Front is a long-standing issue in Africa.
- Dokdo/Takeshima Islands: Claimed by both South Korea and Japan, these small islands are a source of national pride for both countries.

## **Geopolitical Significance**

### **Strategic Importance of Chokepoints**

Chokepoints, such as the Strait of Malacca and the Indian Ocean passages, serve as vital conduits for global trade and transportation networks. These narrow waterways facilitate the movement of goods, energy resources, and maritime traffic between regions, connecting major economies and facilitating international commerce. Control over chokepoints enables states to exert influence over maritime routes, allowing them to regulate trade flows, project power, and assert dominance in key geopolitical regions.

### **Impact on Regional and Global Security**

The control or disruption of chokepoints can have significant implications for regional and global security. Interruptions to maritime trade routes, whether due to conflicts, piracy, or geopolitical tensions, can disrupt global supply chains, destabilise economies, and exacerbate regional conflicts. States that control strategic choke points possess considerable leverage in international affairs, as demonstrated by their ability to influence energy markets, enforce maritime regulations, and project military power. Disputes over control of chokepoints, such as the Strait of Hormuz or the South China Sea, have the potential to escalate into broader geopolitical conflicts, threatening peace and stability in affected regions.

### **Political Dynamics and Stakeholder Interests**

The political dynamics surrounding chokepoints are shaped by the interests and strategic calculations of relevant stakeholders. Major powers, such as China, India, the United States, and regional actors like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, seek to safeguard their economic interests, protect vital sea lanes, and assert influence over maritime territories. Competing territorial claims, energy security concerns, and geopolitical rivalries further complicate the political landscape, leading to tensions and rivalries among states vying for control over chokepoints. Additionally, the presence of weak democracies, economic vulnerabilities, and concerns about debt-trap diplomacy heighten the geopolitical significance of chokepoints, as states seek to navigate complex power dynamics and safeguard their national interests in these strategic maritime regions.



## Notable Conflicts and incidents in the past

**The Suez Crisis (1956):** This crisis highlighted the vulnerability of strategic choke points to political instability. It involved Egypt's nationalisation of the Suez Canal, prompting military intervention by Britain, France, and Israel. The crisis underscored the importance of ensuring the free flow of maritime traffic through critical waterways for global trade and security.

**The Falklands War (1982):** The conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom over sovereignty claims to the Falkland Islands underscored the strategic significance of controlling maritime passages. It highlighted the potential for territorial disputes to escalate into armed conflicts, impacting regional stability and economic activities.

**The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988):** This conflict in the Persian Gulf region underscored the strategic importance of choke points such as the Strait of Hormuz. It led to heightened tensions and disruptions to global oil transportation, highlighting the geopolitical implications of conflicts in key maritime passages.

**The South China Sea Disputes:** Ongoing tensions among countries bordering the South China Sea, including China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and others, over territorial claims and maritime boundaries have shaped regional dynamics. These disputes have raised concerns about freedom of navigation, economic development, and security in one of the world's busiest maritime regions.

**The Suez Canal Blockage (2021):** The blockage of the Suez Canal in March 2021 by the container ship Ever Given highlighted the critical role of strategic choke points in global trade. The incident disrupted the flow of maritime traffic through one of the world's busiest waterways, causing significant economic repercussions. With hundreds of ships stranded and billions of dollars worth of goods delayed, the event underscored the vulnerability of global supply chains to unforeseen disruptions. It also raised concerns about the geopolitical implications of chokepoint blockages and prompted discussions about alternative shipping routes and infrastructure investments to enhance resilience in international maritime transportation networks.

## Social Security and Humanitarian Concerns

Checkpoints can restrict the freedom of movement of people, especially in conflict zones, leading to difficulties in accessing essential services, such as healthcare, education, and social benefits being a source of insecurity and violence, as they can be controlled by armed groups or military forces, leading to the risk of attacks on humanitarian personnel, facilities, loss of livelihoods, and increased poverty. Local communities dependent on trade and commerce passing through these checkpoints may experience severe economic hardships. Checkpoints can cause delays and inefficiencies in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as they can be subject to lengthy registration processes, taxes, and safety inspection certificates. Checkpoints can lack transparency and accountability, as they can be controlled by unauthorised groups or individuals, leading to the risk of human rights violations and abuse.





Checkpoints can contribute to the risk of humanitarian crisis, as they can restrict access to essential services, leading to the risk of disease outbreaks, malnutrition, and other humanitarian emergencies, while also limiting humanitarian access to people in need, as they can restrict the movement of humanitarian personnel and supplies, leading to the risk of inadequate response to humanitarian crises.

The presence of chokepoints can exacerbate social tensions and divisions within and between communities. Competition for control and access to these strategic areas can lead to ethnic, religious, or political conflicts, undermining social cohesion. It can further stretch to strain international relations and contribute to regional instability. This can lead to prolonged conflicts, sanctions, and diplomatic stand-offs, affecting the broader geopolitical landscape and the well-being of populations in the region.

Military conflicts or tensions at choke points can lead to the displacement of local populations, forcing people to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. This can result in large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), who may face inadequate living conditions, lack of access to basic services, and increased vulnerability. Increased military presence and security measures at choke points can lead to human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention, restrictions on freedom of movement, and violations of privacy.

2021 FAO Report: Estimates that disruptions in key shipping lanes could push an additional 20-50 million people towards hunger.

World Bank: A 2020 report on fragile states found a strong correlation between economic hardship and social unrest. Regions experiencing economic decline due to maritime disputes may see a rise in protests and violence.

UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency reports that in 2022, over 100 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, with economic hardship being a major driver. Disruptions caused by maritime disputes could exacerbate displacement, straining resources in receiving countries.

### **Economic sphere of such chokepoints**

The escalating tensions surrounding strategic choke points pose a significant threat to the global social fabric and economic well-being. Disruptions in vital trade routes caused by maritime disputes have far-reaching consequences. Food insecurity is a major concern. The FAO estimates disruptions could push millions more towards hunger, with essential goods like grains and fertilisers facing transportation delays. Additionally, job losses and economic stagnation become more likely. The ILO warns that geopolitical tensions could cost millions of jobs globally, on top of existing challenges. The World Bank highlights the financial burden, with prolonged disputes costing regional economies billions of dollars and impacting sectors like shipping, manufacturing, and tourism.

These economic woes translate into social unrest. Frustrations over rising food prices and unemployment can lead to protests and violence. The World Bank finds a strong correlation between economic hardship and social unrest. Furthermore, displaced workers may be forced to migrate in search of opportunities, straining resources in receiving countries. The UNHCR reports over 100 million people



were forcibly displaced worldwide in 2022, with economic hardship being a major driver. Even mental health can be affected. Studies suggest a link between economic insecurity and increased rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Communities dependent on disrupted fisheries or facing economic hardship due to trade slowdowns could experience higher rates of mental health problems. The economic impact isn't limited to the regions directly involved. Disruptions in major choke points can have a ripple effect, impacting global supply chains and leading to price hikes for consumers worldwide. Increased shipping costs due to security measures translate to higher prices for imported goods. Additionally, resources are diverted away from productive economic activities. Instead of investing in infrastructure, education, or healthcare, nations may allocate resources towards military build-up and border security. This creates a climate of uncertainty for businesses, hindering investment and job creation. The World Bank estimates prolonged disruptions in the South China Sea could cost regional economies billions of dollars annually.

**World Bank:** A 2019 study found that fishery restrictions in the South China Sea dispute alone could lead to a 10-20% decline in fish catches for some Southeast Asian nations, impacting food security for millions who rely on these fisheries.

**World Bank (South China Sea Study):** Estimates that prolonged disputes could cost regional economies billions of dollars annually and lead to significant job losses in sectors like shipping, manufacturing, and tourism.

**International Labour Organization (ILO):** Estimates that disruptions in global trade due to geopolitical tensions could cost an additional 5-10 million jobs globally. (This is on top of existing job losses due to other factors.)



## QARMAS

- What are the specific economic consequences of disruptions at strategic choke points on global trade and commerce?
- How can countries diversify trade routes to reduce dependency on critical chokepoints?
- What infrastructure and technological investments are needed to enhance the capacity and resilience of strategic chokepoints?
- How do disruptions at strategic choke points impact vulnerable populations such as women, children, and the elderly?
- What measures can be implemented to protect human rights in regions affected by chokepoint-related conflicts and disruptions?
- How can access to essential services, including healthcare and education, be ensured during periods of instability?
- How can international bodies address and resolve maritime and territorial disputes that threaten the stability of strategic chokepoints?
- What diplomatic measures can be taken to reduce geopolitical tensions around critical maritime routes?
- What steps can be taken to strengthen global supply chain resilience in the face of chokepoint disruptions?
- How can international trade agreements be modified or strengthened to ensure the uninterrupted flow of goods through strategic chokepoints?
- How can security measures be enhanced to prevent piracy, terrorism, and other threats to maritime chokepoints?
- What role can regional and international naval forces play in maintaining the security of critical maritime routes?
- How can the environmental impacts of chokepoint disruptions, such as oil spills and marine pollution, be mitigated?
- What policies can be implemented to support the sustainable development of communities dependent on maritime and coastal ecosystems?



- What measures can be taken to promote economic development and investment in regions affected by chokepoint disruptions?
- How can international financial institutions support countries in building resilient infrastructure to cope with potential disruptions?
- How can international cooperation be improved to ensure the security and stability of strategic chokepoints?
- What role can multinational organizations like the UN, WTO, and IMO play in facilitating dialogue and cooperation among nations with competing interests in strategic chokepoints?

While these are some questions and problems that the Executive Board would like you to answer, these are not the only complexities of the problem at hand. We expect delegates to come prepared with some of their problems which they would like discussed in the committee.

## **Position Paper Policy**

### **What is a Position Paper?**

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format that the position paper must follow, it should include a description of the position your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

### **Purpose:**

Keep in mind the recent decisions taken by your own country, major events that have taken place after the war, and your foreign policy regarding the same. The Position papers should include the following details:

- The delegate's preliminary understanding of the topic and what it entails
- Allocation of the delegate and your stance on this agenda
- Your proposed plan of action and effective solutions
- Any information regarding your portfolio that you think the Executive Board members should know
- Furthermore, your expectations as to how this committee should progress and what are your expectations from the debate.

Each position paper should not exceed two pages, and should all be combined into a single PDF format per delegate (other formats will not be accepted.)



## Formatting

Position papers should include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee, along with the agenda —

- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins

### Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for the committee must be submitted by midnight of July 25, 2024. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your country and position paper and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as your country name and position paper. (The file should be saved as a country position paper) The subject of the mail should be:

Country Name - Position Paper. Each position paper will be manually reviewed.

### Documentation

For documentation guidelines, please refer to the following link <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EAihksWXLIPaUWDJm-fTaBhg76kTmY1P/view> Please note that the Executive Board will be stringent in the formatting as well as the foreign policies that you mention in the document. Also, any particulars, regarding the types of documents accepted and when the window will be open will be shared with the delegates during the actual working of the committee. Delegates are advised to focus on the quality rather than quantity of any documentation that they send through and are highly suggested to not prepare any document other than the Position Paper beforehand.

### Conclusion

We look forward to hosting you all at the tenth edition of the Welham Boys' School Model United Nations '24. We hope that this background guide has now provided you with the direction to follow in your research. Please keep in mind the points that we have mentioned while proceeding with your research.

**Note** - The background guide is not the only source that should be followed to research the agenda. It is only to provide everybody with an equal framework to stand and to find a common point to start. We look forward to meeting you all and to a fruitful and fun session ahead! Please Contact us in case of any emergency or any queries at [chair.ecosoc@welhamboys.org](mailto:chair.ecosoc@welhamboys.org)

**Warm Regards and the very Best Wishes,  
The Executive Board,  
United Nations Economic and Social Council.**



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