

[Simulation](#) from [Terrorism](#) and [Foreign Policy](#)

Boko Haram in Nigeria in 2017 (UNSC)

Set in February 2017. A Boko Haram attack threatens the stability of Nigeria, as the country seeks international aid.

Case Overview

Set in February, 2017. The Radical Islamist movement [Boko Haram](#) is waging an [insurgency](#) in northeast Nigeria estimated to have killed at least twenty thousand people in recent years. The insurgency threatens the stability of Nigeria, a major oil producer and Africa's most populous country. Nigerian security forces have made some progress against Boko Haram, but humanitarian and media organizations have reported extensive human rights abuses by these forces, including the killing of civilians. The UN secretary-general has called a meeting of the UN Security Council to address the unrest in Nigeria, with regard to both the presence of Boko Haram and the human rights violations committed by the Nigerian armed forces. The response will entail balancing a variety of considerations, including Nigeria's role as a regional power and major contributor to UN peacekeeping forces, the threat posed by Boko Haram's insurgency, and the significant violations of human rights committed by Nigerian forces.

Guide

Global Literacy

Global literacy is the ability to understand and engage effectively in today's interconnected world. Today's interdependent global economy and geopolitical landscape connect America's interests more than ever to the actions and interests of other countries and their citizens. To ensure students understand this interconnected world, they need to be globally literate. [Learn more about global literacy.](#)

The United Nations is the largest and most prominent international organization. The membership of the UN includes nearly all the world's countries. It was established in 1945, after the end of World War II, by the United States and some four dozen other countries in an effort to build a more peaceful and cooperative postwar world. The United Nations has [four main priorities](#): to keep peace throughout the world, promote fundamental human rights, strengthen international law, and pursue "social progress" and higher standards of living.

One of the most important functions of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security. This is primarily the task of the UN Security Council, a decision-making body that comprises fifteen countries. Five of these countries hold permanent seats and ten are elected on a rotating basis. The five permanent members (known as the P5) are the United States, China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom. The council's main responsibilities are to evaluate threats to international peace and security and to promote the peaceful resolution of disputes. When a peaceful settlement cannot be reached, the Security Council can impose diplomatic or economic sanctions. The Security Council can even authorize using force to resolve conflicts and prevent new ones. The Security Council has addressed a variety of issues, such as civil wars, terrorism, arms control, and natural disasters.

Despite its prominent position the Security Council's influence is limited. Any action requires the unanimous agreement of the P5. This means that no resolution can be adopted if even one permanent member votes no—or vetoes—the measure. This kind of agreement is often difficult to reach, especially when a permanent member thinks its interests will be jeopardized if the measure passes. Moreover, the United Nations lacks its own military forces and has no enforcement power. In short, the Security Council can only do that to which its member states agree. These factors mean that countries, especially major powers, can bypass the Security Council or ignore its decisions. Nonetheless, the United Nations is the only organization with essentially universal membership, making it an important feature of international affairs.

Resources related to UN:

- [“What is the UN Security Council,”](#) CFR Education, April 25, 2023.
- [“Current Members | United Nations Security Council,”](#) United Nations.
- [“What Happens When the UN Security Council Can't Agree?,”](#) Better World Campaign, October 21, 2023.
- Séverine Autesserre, [“The Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can't End Wars,”](#) *Foreign Affairs*, December 11, 2018.

The UN System

Since its founding in 1945, the United Nations has grown to include 193 member states. The United Nations has several subsidiary bodies, and a network of offices and programs around the world. The nature of the issues on the UN agenda has evolved over time. The Cold War and its associated conflicts dominated for much of the twentieth century. Hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union held up much UN activity. During the Cold War, the Security Council was often deadlocked, given the veto each country held as a permanent member. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, this dynamic began to change. In the past twenty years, issues including climate change, terrorism, and international migration have shifted the UN focus away from interstate conflict. Increasingly, the focus is on problems that transcend national borders.

Organs

The United Nations is divided into six principal organs or parts: the General Assembly, the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the Security Council.

The General Assembly deliberates on the widest range of issues, spanning all areas of the United Nations' work. The General Assembly is the only body in which all 193 UN member states are represented, each having one vote. General Assembly resolutions are nonbinding. In other words, they are recommendations.

The Secretariat carries out the institution's day-to-day work. Led by the secretary-general and comprising tens of thousands of staff members from various countries, it staffs UN offices around the world. The Secretariat administers peacekeeping missions and operates communications, financial, and many other functions. As the organization's chief administrative officer, the secretary-general attends sessions of UN bodies, consults with world leaders and others, reports on the work of the United Nations, and acts as a spokesperson.

The United Nations also includes the [Economic and Social Council](#). This body is tasked with coordinating and discussing economic, social, and environmental issues. The United Nations also includes the [Trusteeship Council](#), created to provide international supervision for decolonization and now largely inactive. Another organ of the United Nations is the [International Court of Justice](#) (ICJ), responsible for settling legal disputes between countries.

The UN Security Council

The Security Council is tasked with identifying and addressing threats to international security. In addition, it makes recommendations to the General Assembly for the appointment of the secretary-general and the admission of new members to the United Nations. Security Council decisions are communicated through [resolutions](#). These are formal texts that outline steps to be taken and the reasoning behind those steps. In the absence of agreement, the body could also issue [presidential statements](#). Presidential statements are similar in content and form to a formal resolution but do not legally bind member states.

Structure

Membership

The United States, China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom make up the permanent members of the council. The remaining ten members are elected by the General Assembly to serve two-year terms. In electing nonpermanent council members, the General Assembly considers two factors. It must consider the “contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization.” This stipulation means that aggressive, norm-defying countries tend not to be elected to the council and that countries that contribute significantly to the United Nations (financially or in the form of personnel and equipment) appear more frequently. Second, nonpermanent members must reflect an equitable geographic distribution, meaning members must be elected from each of the major regions of the world.

Presidency

The Security Council presidency is held on a rotating basis by both permanent and nonpermanent member states. The position rotates in English alphabetical order by country name, each country holding office for one month. The president presides over meetings and serves as the Security Council’s representative before all other UN organizations. However, the UN secretary-general, not the Security Council president, sets the agenda for council meetings. The president simply approves this agenda.

Subsidiary Organs

Various subsidiary organs exist to support the Security Council’s mission and implement its resolutions. These range from committees on sanctions, counterterrorism, and nonproliferation to international criminal tribunals that prosecute those responsible for genocide and war crimes. The council also maintains partnerships or close relationships with a variety of other elements in the UN system, such as the [Department of Peacekeeping Operations](#), and the [International Court of Justice](#).

Proceedings

Meetings of the Security Council are typically called when a state—even a nonmember (one of the [two observer states](#) at the United Nations or other states whose sovereignty is disputed)—brings a dispute to the Security Council’s attention. Meetings of the Security Council can also be called when the General Assembly refers a question to the council, or when the secretary-general raises a concern about international peace and security. Once the president decides that a meeting is necessary, they call for a session to address the issue.

Both UN members and nonmembers—the latter if they are parties to a dispute being considered by the Security Council—are invited to participate, though nonmembers do not have a vote in the council’s discussions. If a Security Council member is party to the dispute being discussed, it must abstain (in other words, formally refrain) from voting.

Both Security Council members and invited participants can introduce a draft of a resolution—a ruling or recommendation made by a UN body—expressing a Security Council decision. After debating proposals, any member can call for a vote. A resolution needs nine votes to pass. A dissenting vote from any of the five permanent Security Council members can defeat a

resolution, no matter how many affirmative votes it receives. This powerful dissenting vote is known as the veto. Permanent members can use their veto for any reason. Typically, they do so to stop resolutions that threaten their national interests. Security Council members can also abstain from voting. In any case, a resolution passes as long as it receives nine votes and no permanent member exercises a veto. Permanent members sometimes abstain from a vote if they disagree with a resolution but are not sufficiently opposed to veto it.

Powers, Functions, and Tools

If a resolution passes, the Security Council has several powers that it can use to ensure that resolution's implementation. Certain Security Council resolutions are considered legally binding on all UN member states. This means that countries are obligated to comply with the terms of the resolution. This power sets the Security Council apart from other UN organs, which are empowered only to issue recommendations.

The United Nations' founding document, the UN Charter, lays out the tools the Security Council can use to execute its work. These are established in Chapter VI and Chapter VII of the charter. Under [Chapter VI](#), the council can only make recommendations of how parties should resolve a dispute. Under Chapter VII, the council can use more forceful methods. Generally, resolutions under [Chapter VII](#) are considered legally binding.

Chapter VI: Peaceful Settlement of Disputes

Chapter VI allows the Security Council to seek solutions to disputes by “negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means.”

Actions taken under Chapter VI include

- referring legal disputes to the International Court of Justice,
- recommending terms for the settlement of conflicts,
- facilitating dispute resolution through a formal arbitration, and
- launching peacekeeping missions.

The recommendations made under Chapter VI are just that—recommendations. They cannot be imposed on the parties concerned without their consent.

[Peacekeeping missions](#) can fall under Chapter VI or Chapter VII. In the case of Chapter VI missions, forces are deployed to help maintain a peace agreement, cease-fire, or other such arrangement that has already taken hold between warring parties. Peacekeeping missions under Chapter VI can include unarmed observers, lightly armed troops, or both. Their goal is to prevent new outbreaks of conflict and peacefully resolve disputes that arise. UN personnel tend to be stationed along a boundary line and their role is usually to report infractions of peace agreements rather than to intervene. Chapter VI peacekeeping missions require the consent (or agreement) of the parties involved in the conflict, are considered impartial, and do not use force except in self-defense.

Chapter VII: Maintaining or Enforcing Peace

Chapter VII addresses “action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression.”

Actions taken under Chapter VII include

- severing diplomatic relations;
- imposing economic sanctions, travel bans, and financial or diplomatic restrictions;
- creating international tribunals, such as those for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia;
- establishing or modifying peace enforcement or peace-building missions; and

calling for military intervention, either by multinational forces (organized, e.g., by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]) or by regional organizations (such as the African Union).

Unlike Security Council resolutions issued under Chapter VI, those adopted under Chapter VII are binding. Two examples of Chapter VII resolutions are Resolution 1695, which in 2006 imposed sanctions on North Korea for its nuclear program. Likewise, resolution 1973 in 2011 established the legal basis for military intervention in the Libyan civil war.

One of the most frequently used tools under Chapter VII is the imposition of [sanctions](#). Sanctions are restrictions on a country, organization, or individual, typically limiting the target's ability to travel, trade, or access financial resources. They can be used to discourage certain future actions, such as building nuclear weapons, to pressure a party to act, or to punish it for violating international rules. Sanctions can target entire sectors of a country's economy. Generally, the Security Council pursues targeted sanctions—sometimes called smart sanctions—against certain industries, businesses, or individuals. These can include arms embargoes, travel restrictions, or financial asset freezes.

Sanctions have become a popular tool because they offer a way to intervene in an issue without the risks and costs associated with using military force. However, sanctions have raised some concerns as well. Critics have argued that even highly targeted sanctions can have unintended consequences, especially on already vulnerable populations. Furthermore, the Security Council lacks a concrete method of enforcing its sanctions. Instead, it must rely on individual countries to enact them. If sanctions are weakly enforced, the target could possibly work around them, avoiding their effects and potentially discrediting the value of sanctions in the future.

If nonmilitary options, such as sanctions, fail to resolve a dispute, the Security Council can authorize a peace enforcement mission. Unlike Chapter VI peacekeeping missions, Chapter VII enforcement missions do not require the consent of the parties involved. [Chapter VII enforcement missions](#) are authorized to “take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.” The personnel involved can include heavily armed troops and can use force in situations other than self-defense. Chapter VII peace enforcement missions can take different forms. Sometimes they are undertaken by UN peacekeeping forces and operate under UN command. In other instances they can be led by a coalition of member states authorized to do so by a Security Council resolution.

The line between Chapter VI and Chapter VII missions is not always clear. A Security Council resolution does not need to explicitly refer to the chapter it is invoking. A mission's mandate—or description of its mission—can change over time to adjust to changing circumstances; a mission established under Chapter VI can be expanded to also fall under Chapter VII if the situation evolves and requires a more robust intervention.

Current Issues

The Security Council was able to greatly expand its activities at the end of the Cold War. Without the United States and the Soviet Union in direct opposition, the number of vetoes declined significantly. The council was able to take action on a greater range of issues, including civil conflicts and humanitarian crises. During the 1990s, the Security Council authorized more peacekeeping missions than it had in the previous forty years combined. It authorized UN-led missions such as those in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. The Security Council also authorized coalition operations such as the 1990 Gulf War. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, international terrorism also came to the forefront of the council's agenda.

The Security Council has also broadened its view of international security in recent years, adopting resolutions on issues such as HIV/AIDS, the protection of women and children in humanitarian crises, and climate change. In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted a series of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aiming to promote global economic development, environmental protection, and social well-being. The SDGs emphasize the interconnected nature of global challenges and the need for cooperation across governments and institutions. Accordingly, the Security Council has paid increasing attention to the ways in which social, economic, and environmental factors influence the maintenance of peace and security.

Despite this increased activity, the Security Council continues to face significant challenges. The United Nations greatly expanded its peacekeeping efforts after the Cold War. But peacekeeping missions have faced criticism for being underfunded,

for being limited in scope, and for abuses committed by peacekeepers themselves. In some cases, such as in Rwanda in 1994, peacekeepers have been accused of [failing to prevent genocide](#). Those failures led many countries to argue for a new understanding of peacekeeping and foreign intervention. In 2005, UN member countries adopted the [responsibility to protect](#) (R2P) doctrine. This doctrine establishes that countries have a responsibility to intervene in cases of genocide or crimes against humanity that a national government cannot or will not stop. This remains a nonbinding norm, and its applicability in specific situations is often disputed. Moreover, conflicting interests among the security council's veto-wielding permanent members often curtail the possibility of approving a robust intervention.

In recent years, renewed tension among the United States, China, and Russia has emerged as an obstacle to Security Council action. Observers and Security Council members themselves have [sharply criticized](#) the council's inability to take action on the Syrian civil war. This inability to take action is in spite of multiple reports of war crimes and an estimated death toll of at least [five hundred thousand people](#). Russia, an ally of Syria's government, has vetoed several resolutions aimed at stabilizing the conflict and alleviating the growing humanitarian crisis, arguing that any such resolution would be a violation of Syria's sovereignty. Vetoes have increased in the last decade, with Russia and the United States casting the majority of them.

These challenges have led many UN members, including the United States, to call for changes to the Security Council. Many observers argue that the council's composition, which allots the five permanent seats to the winners of World War II (the United States, China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom), does not reflect the power structure of today's world. They argue instead for extending permanent membership to more countries and adjusting the regional distribution of permanent membership. These reforms could help better represent large and growing populations in Africa and South America. Another source of criticism has been the P5's veto, which, critics assert, undermines the council's ability to take action. In recent years, a growing number of UN member states—including France, a permanent member—have supported calls for P5 members to voluntarily refrain from using their veto power in situations involving mass atrocities. Other member states have suggested that the veto power be removed altogether.

Reform is controversial and complicated. Any reform of the Security Council would likely require an amendment to the UN Charter that is approved and ratified by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly and then a vote in the Security Council. Permanent members of the Security Council would retain their usual right to veto. Given this, any reform of the UN Security Council that is not supported, or at least tolerated, by the P5 is unachievable, and garnering such support or tolerance will almost certainly prove impossible.

Case Notes

Fuel a lively classroom discussion with simulations that put your students in the shoes of either the National Security Council or the UN Security Council.

CFR Education simulations can be run for several days or weeks and include background readings, videos, and assignments to help students understand the situation and their roles.

[Instructions](#)

[How to Run a CFR Simulation Role-Play](#)

The Issue

Since 2009, [Boko Haram](#), a radical Islamist group, has fought against the secular government of Nigeria. The group has killed tens of thousands leading to widespread displacement. Nigerian forces, with assistance from neighboring countries, managed to push Boko Haram out of several provinces in Nigeria, but was unable to fully curtail the violence.

The Nigerian government at times requested international assistance in the fight against Boko Haram. Most of these came in the form of military equipment. Some countries, including the United States, provided limited support. However, many

voiced hesitations because of human rights abuses by Nigeria's security services. International humanitarian organizations and the international press have reported extensive abuses by Nigerian forces. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that these abuses drive public support for Boko Haram. Observers have estimated that during certain periods the security services have killed as many civilians as Boko Haram. Even so, the Nigerian government largely dismissed the charges and conducted few credible investigations.

Muhammadu Buhari, who became Nigeria's president in 2015, claimed he would restore discipline within the military. In September 2015, he promised to issue new rules of engagement designed to protect civilians. However, these steps appear to have had little practical consequence. In 2015, the human rights organization [Amnesty International](#) began issuing reports every year documenting ongoing human rights abuses. These reports included details about unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture.

Accountability for abuses by the military remained elusive. The government refrained from launching a formal investigation into a 2014 incident in which the army killed some 640 recaptured prison escapees alleged to be members of Boko Haram. In December 2015, the army killed several hundred members of a Shiite sect known as the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN). The army claimed that they had attacked the motorcade of the chief of army staff. A 2016 inquiry found the Nigerian army responsible for the killings, condemned the IMN for provoking the attack, and called for all involved parties to be prosecuted. Nigeria's justice system did not take any further legal action.

Decision Point—Set in 2017

Reports have recently emerged from Northeast Nigeria of a [suicide bombing](#) by Boko Haram. This bombing has killed at least 50 people and wounded many others. The attack has inflamed popular criticism of President Buhari, who was elected on a promise to restore security by destroying Boko Haram. It has prompted several neighboring governments, alongside those with prominent economic ties with Nigeria, to express concern that Nigeria appears unable to contain the crisis.

The UN Secretary-General has called a meeting of the UN Security Council. The hope is to address the unrest in Nigeria, with regard to both the presence of Boko Haram and the human rights violations committed by Nigerian armed forces. Nigeria is a regional power and major contributor to UN peacekeeping forces. On the other hand, it is a fragile state facing a serious [insurgency](#). Likewise, its forces are widely deemed responsible for significant violations of human rights. As they address the situation in Nigeria, member states will need to weigh the desire for a timely response to a crisis against the need to secure support from as many council members as possible, especially permanent members.

Background

In 2016, Nigeria had Africa's largest population, [186 million](#) and growing, especially in urban areas. The United Nations predicts that by 2050 Nigeria will be the third most populous country in the world.

The country has more than 350 ethnic groups and languages and a population evenly divided between Christians and Muslims. Because of this, Nigeria has dealt with weak national identity and social cohesion. In 1967, Nigeria's [Biafra](#) region attempted to secede, sparking a [civil war](#) that lasted until 1970. After the war, a generation of military rule left Nigeria's [democratic institutions](#) fragile. Democratic, civilian government was restored in 1999. However, elite leaders continued to rule Nigeria as they did under the military, organizing themselves into political parties based on personalities rather than issues.

Nigeria has Africa's largest economy and is the continent's largest oil producer. Since the 1970s, most of the country's revenue has come from oil sales. The country also has immense reserves of other natural resources, including natural gas, gold, and coal. Despite this wealth, there is vast economic inequality. Some elites are spectacularly wealthy while most Nigerians have remained poor. By 2016, Nigeria was among the poorest, least developed, and most unequal countries in the world. The 2015–16 collapse of oil prices impoverished the country even further. It greatly reduced the government's ability to respond to the security and humanitarian challenges of [Boko Haram](#).

Against this backdrop of inequality, weak democratic institutions, and fragmented national and religious identities, Boko Haram was born. The Islamist group was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in Nigeria's northern Borno State in 2002. Boko Haram rejected the secular state, Western education, and traditional Nigerian elites. (Boko, meaning book in Hausa—one of Nigeria's major languages—refers to Western education and values; haram refers to practices and beliefs forbidden by Islam. The group's leaders call it by other names, which vary and are rarely used.) Although Boko Haram began as a primarily non-violent group, over time it became large, influential, and violent.

In 2009, Boko Haram launched a rebellion in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. Nigerian security services responded brutally, killing over eight hundred people, destroying mosques, and murdering Yusuf in cold blood, an episode that went viral on social media. Boko Haram then went underground but reemerged in 2011 with much more violent leadership. The new leaders advocated practices and principles similar to those of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Boko Haram was especially violent against Muslims who accepted the secular Nigerian state. The group routinely cited seventh-century beliefs to characterize them as "apostates" who had turned away from Islam, a charge that, according to these beliefs, justifies their execution.

In increasingly sophisticated operations, Boko Haram conducted widespread kidnappings of women and girls, including the [Chibok schoolgirls](#). This incident became well known internationally. It funded itself through ransoms and bank robberies. The group armed itself by raiding government armories, some of which had likely been deliberately left unlocked. It also staged devastating attacks on government jails and prisons to free captured fighters.

As of 2017, Boko Haram operated primarily in northeastern Nigeria. However, it also conducted operations in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, and in Kano, the largest city in the north. Its factions have also carried out operations in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger in the Lake Chad basin. Credible estimates hold that in the six-year period leading up to February 2017, Boko Haram killed over forty thousand people.

Support for Boko Haram has been difficult to judge. Past polling has indicated that about 10 percent of Nigeria's population viewed the group favorably. However, Boko Haram did not advance a political or economic program. Unlike other radical Islamist movements, Boko Haram showed little interest in the United States. It attacked no Western facilities. Nevertheless, observers voiced concerns that Boko Haram could provide other radical jihadi Islamist movements opposed to Western interests access to sub-Saharan Africa.

In February and March 2015, then President Goodluck Jonathan launched an offensive against Boko Haram. President Jonathan used Chadian, Nigerian, and Nigerien troops supported by South African-led mercenaries. The offensive dislodged Boko Haram from most of the territories it had occupied but did not destroy it. Nigerian authorities were unable to reestablish firm control of those areas. As a result, Boko Haram appeared to continue moving about freely.

In the March 2015 Nigerian presidential election, Muhammadu Buhari defeated Jonathan on an anticorruption platform and a promise to destroy Boko Haram. After his inauguration, Buhari approved corruption investigations of numerous high-level officials of the Jonathan administration as well as senior military officers. Despite these investigations, Nigeria's overall corruption status has remained unchanged since the election.

Buhari also pursued military effort against Boko Haram but was unable to successfully eradicate the group. The Nigerian military conducted a number of momentarily successful operations against the [terrorist](#) group in 2015, and the number of monthly deaths in Nigeria [declined](#). Buhari repeatedly claimed that the struggle against Boko Haram was all but over. But, despite this apparent initial success, Boko Haram remained a serious threat.

Role of the UN Security Council

Nigeria plays an important regional role, not just for its democratic [governance](#) but also because of Nigeria's size, diversity, and potential to be a positive model for other African states. Democratic failure in Nigeria could be a setback to the development and maintenance of democratic [norms](#) that have facilitated increased diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation among many African countries. As the continent's biggest oil producer, stability in Nigeria is important to both regional and international economic interests. The United Nations' interests in Nigeria include supporting democratic

governance and ensuring the government follows [international laws](#) and respects human rights. The United Nations also seeks to promote the acceleration of economic development in Nigeria, which would likely promote political stability both in Nigeria and the larger region.

Yet the United Nations' most urgent interests in Nigeria are humanitarian. Past UN actions concerning the crisis have stressed the need to protect both displaced civilians and host communities affected by [Boko Haram](#). The United Nations prioritizes preventing conflict and thwarting [terrorist](#) groups worldwide, as they present a severe threat to international peace and security. The UN Security Council has [strongly condemned](#) Boko Haram's activities and called on countries to support Nigeria and its neighbors in their efforts to combat the group. However, the Security Council has also expressed concern about Nigerian forces' continued human rights violations. It has also urged greater respect for international human rights standards. As Security Council members consider how to mount a response to the present situation in Nigeria, they will need to consider and prioritize how to counter Boko Haram, how to improve conditions and protections for Nigerian civilians, and how to address human rights violations by Nigerian security forces. UN Security Council members could consider several options:

Preparation and Role-Play

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[Instructions](#)

[Video: How to Run a CFR Simulation Role-Play](#)

Roles Overview

Print these [custom placards](#) for use during your simulation. If you need to edit them, make a copy to your Google Drive.

Roles

Permanent Member

There are five permanent UN Security Council members, known as the P5: the United States, China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom. Permanent members wield veto power, meaning they can block a resolution simply by voting "no." P5 representatives are responsible for attending meetings, presenting motions, making statements, and voting on behalf of their government, using a veto when necessary.

A P5 country's representative's goals are to

- promote their government's interests and values at the United Nations, specifically by drafting and negotiating Security Council documents;
- liaise and consult with other member states, nonmember states, UN staff, and other interested parties on behalf of their government; and
- analyze how policy options will affect the interests, reputation, and relationships of their country.

Issues for Consideration

- How does the situation in Nigeria threaten your country's national security?
- What national interests are at stake in this crisis? How should they be prioritized?
- What is the nature of the relationship between your country and Nigeria? How does this inform potential national action in this case?
- What is your country's relationship with other parties relevant to this case? How does this affect your response to the proposed policy options?
- What are the costs, benefits, and risks that accompany each policy option open to the UN Security Council?
- Are there any policy options that you absolutely do not support? If this policy option came to a vote, would you use a [veto](#)? Why or why not?
- How has your country's veto usage changed over time? What issues does your country tend to use a veto on?
- Have other permanent members used vetoes on votes regarding this issue? What kind of policy options or resolutions have they vetoed? How should this influence your negotiation strategy within the Council?
- What are the trade-offs raised by the potential policy options in this case?
- What are the positions and interests of other countries and organizations that have a stake in the situation in Nigeria?

Nonpermanent Member

Ten nonpermanent members—two-thirds of the council—are elected by the UN General Assembly to serve two-year terms. The representatives of nonpermanent members are responsible for attending meetings, presenting motions, making statements, and voting on behalf of their government. Because nonpermanent members are elected to represent one of five regional groups, they are often expected, but not required, to consult with other nonpermanent members of their regional group to ensure they are putting forward a unified policy.

A nonpermanent member country's representative's goals are to

- promote their government's interests and values at the United Nations, specifically by drafting and negotiating Security Council documents;
- liaise and consult with other member states, nonmember states, UN staff, and other interested parties on behalf of their government; and
- analyze how policy options will affect the interests, reputation, and relationships of their country.

Issues for Consideration

- How does the situation in Nigeria threaten your country's national security?
- What national interests are at stake in this crisis? How should they be prioritized?
- What is the nature of the relationship between your country and Nigeria? How does this inform potential national action in this case?
- What is your country's relationship with other parties relevant to this case? How does this affect your response to the proposed policy options?
- Have permanent members used vetoes on votes regarding this issue? What kind of policy options or resolutions have they vetoed? How should this influence your negotiation strategy within the Council?
- What are the costs, benefits, and risks that accompany each policy option open to the UN Security Council?
- What are the trade-offs raised by the potential policy options in this case?
- What are the positions and interests of other countries and organizations that have a stake in the situation in Nigeria?

UN Secretary-General

As the United Nations' chief administrative officer, the secretary-general attends sessions of UN bodies, consults with world leaders and other interested parties, issues reports on the work of the United Nations, and acts as a spokesperson for the organization. The secretary-general is the face of the UN system. Within the UN Security Council, the secretary-general represents the UN Secretariat and assists the council president by preparing agendas for meetings, maintaining the speakers list, and overseeing routine tasks such as the distribution of documents and the logistics for council meetings.

The Secretary-General's goals are to

- promote the maintenance of international peace and security by bringing relevant matters to the attention of the UN Security Council,
- build trust as an honest broker among the participants, and
- represent the interests of the UN Secretariat at the UN Security Council by making statements and setting meeting agendas.

Issues for Consideration

- How does [Boko Haram](#), and particularly the situation presented in this case, threaten global security?
- What role should the United Nations play in resolving this crisis? What are the benefits and costs of [unilateral](#) versus [multilateral](#) responses?
- What is the nature of the relationship between the United Nations and Nigeria? How does this inform potential UN action in this case?
- What are the costs, benefits, and risks that accompany each policy option open to the UN Security Council?
- What are the trade-offs raised by the potential policy options in this case?
- What are the positions and interests of UN Security Council member states and other organizations that have a stake in the situation in Nigeria?

Your assignment prior to the role-play is to prepare a set of prepared clauses for a potential Security Council resolution. These clauses, along with those of other students, will form the basis of the discussion in the role-play.

You should bring

- two to three preambular clauses that describe the issue at hand, consider the international context, and outline previous agreements and existing organizations; and
- three to four operative clauses that present responses to the situation.

Each operative clause should present a complete proposal. Make sure that your proposed solutions are within the powers of the Security Council and are practical. Your operative clauses might be designed to work in concert (perhaps economic sanctions, mediation, and a peacekeeping force) or might be a set of alternatives from which you hope one will be adopted (perhaps three peacekeeping proposals that differ in their details).

In writing each of your operative clauses, consider the following points:

- Who: Who is acting, and for whose benefit?
- What: What is the response specifically?
- When: When will it be implemented? Is there a deadline, a time frame, or recurrence?
- Where: Where will it be implemented specifically?

- Why: Why is this solution effective?
- How: How will this solution be implemented? If countries must support the response, how will they be persuaded to do so?
- Funding: How will the response be funded?

If your operative clauses start to get long and messy, use subsidiary clauses!

The goal should be to create clauses that include all the information necessary for putting the plan into action. It can be helpful to imagine an official tasked with carrying out the resolution and asking whether they have all the information they need to implement it.

Guide to the Role-Play

- There is no right or wrong way to participate in a role-play, but the better prepared you are, the more likely you will be able to advance a position effectively, and the more you and your peers will get out of the experience.
- Be patient during the role-play. Do not hold back from sharing your perspective, but be sure to give others a chance to do the same.
- Where there are competing interests, make the judgment calls that you would make if you were a government official, as informed by your earlier consideration of potential trade-offs. Ensure that the consequences of various decisions are carefully weighed.

Round	Timing	Objectives	Procedural Notes
One: Public Meeting	2 to 3 minutes per participant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive a five-minute briefing from the secretary-general on the issue to be discussed. 2. Present opening statements. 3. Crystalize the central questions of debate. 	During opening statements, the president of the UN Security Council will recognize country representatives in the order in which they request to speak, and no representative may speak again if others have not yet spoken. Following opening statements, country representatives are free to openly debate the statements made, evaluating the various positions on their merits.
Two: Informal Meeting	30 to 60 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Debate each participant's proposed clauses. 2. Edit, add, or drop proposed clauses and combine them into one or more draft resolutions. 3. Draft a presidential statement using proposed clauses and/or new material if no draft resolution appears acceptable to the group. 	The president will recognize country representatives in the order in which they request to speak. Representatives should limit their statements to one minute each, but if time allows the president may permit them to speak longer. The president may also invite any participant to speak as they deem it appropriate. Any participant may motion for a ten- to fifteen-minute break, during which representatives can move freely and work on their draft resolutions individually or in small groups.
Three: Public Meeting	30 to 60 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hear summaries of any draft resolutions as well as arguments for and against adoption. 2. Vote on draft resolutions in order of submission. 3. Attempt to adopt a presidential statement by consensus if no resolutions are proposed or passed. 	The president will call first on the draft resolution's main author(s) and then on other countries that wish to make arguments for or against the resolution. To be adopted, Security Council resolutions must receive at least nine votes in favor and no dissenting votes (vetoes) from any of the five permanent members. A state may abstain, often to indicate ambivalence or mild disapproval (in contrast to strong opposition). According to the charter, abstentions are mandatory if the state is a party to the dispute in question. Abstentions by permanent members do not count as vetoes; the resolution will pass if it receives the necessary nine votes.

Wrap-up

Fuel a lively classroom discussion with simulations that put your students in the shoes of either the National Security Council or the UN Security Council.

CFR Education simulations can be run for several days or weeks and include background readings, videos, and assignments to help students understand the situation and their roles.

Instructions

Role-Play How-To Video

If time permits, you will participate in a debrief following the UN Security Council's final vote.

Be active in this debrief. The role-play might seem to be the most challenging part of the experience, but the debrief is equally important. It will reinforce what you learned during the role-play exercise and refine your analytical skills. It will also force you to step out of your role and to view the case from a personal perspective. You will have the opportunity to discuss any challenges you encountered as you worked through the discussion with your peers and how you felt about the UN Security Council vote.

The debrief will close with a reflection on the complexities and challenges of multilateral negotiations. This should help clarify your understanding of what you learned and answer any lingering questions. This exercise will also assist you in completing your final assignment, the policy review memo.

What Actually Happened

The UN Security Council met in early 2017 to consider the increasing violence in Nigeria and its neighbors in the Lake Chad basin. Ultimately, the Council adopted a resolution strongly condemning terror attacks. The Council also called for increased cooperation among Nigeria and its neighbors to combat [Boko Haram](#). It also called for greater attention to human rights practices from the region's governments and increased international assistance for the fight against Boko Haram. The resolution further called on the UN Secretary General to produce a report detailing the security, humanitarian, and economic challenges that the region faces. With the resolution, the Security Council signaled that the world's attention was on the deteriorating situation in Nigeria, but ultimately opted not to take robust coordinated international action to assist Nigeria.

In the following years, increased international attention did lead several countries to supply assistance to Nigeria in its fight against Boko Haram. U.S. President Donald Trump increased [counterterrorism](#) assistance, including by approving the sale of [twelve light surveillance aircraft](#) to Nigeria. In January 2021, shortly before Trump left office, the Nigerian government further proposed purchasing twelve heavy attack helicopters. They also requested munitions and accompanying defense systems. Although the U.S. Congress initially blocked the sale over human rights concerns, [President Joe Biden approved it](#) in April 2022. The United Kingdom promised additional equipment and training support for Nigerian security forces. Italy delivered five AW109 attack helicopters. Russia agreed to a contract for twelve Mi-35 helicopter gunships.

Nigerian security forces and military have continued to commit human rights violations and crimes under Nigerian law. These violations include illegal executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, and incommunicado detentions. In one of the worst abuses, reports surfaced in February 2020 of the Nigerian military burning down villages and forcibly displacing hundreds of people.

Despite increased international assistance, Boko Haram remained active and, starting in late 2018, instances of violence spiked. Boko Haram increasingly began attacking Nigerian state targets—primarily military and police personnel. Successful attacks on troops and military installations allowed the group to supply itself to carry out further attacks. Militants also turned more frequently to suicide bombings. These attacks indicate both a shift in tactics and a new role for women within the group. Boko Haram has deployed [more female suicide bombers](#) than any other [terrorist](#) group in history. In 2019 alone, Boko Haram's attacks forced [more than sixty thousand](#) Nigerians to flee to neighboring Cameroon and Chad.

In May 2021, multiple Nigerian news reports announced the death of Abubakar Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram's main faction. In the months after the announcement, defections from Boko Haram multiplied. However, the group and various factions that have splintered off from it have continued to conduct attacks in Northern Nigeria.

In February 2023, Nigeria elected a new president, Bola Tinubu. Tinubu [received international praise](#) for some early economic reforms after taking office. However, Tinubu has also faced criticism over [failing to adopt human rights reforms](#) and allegations of corruption.

The UN Security Council [turned its attention](#) to Nigeria and the surrounding region several times in the years following its initial 2017 resolution. It repeatedly condemned outbursts of violence and expressed concern over developments in the area. However, the Council refrained from taking stronger action. Still, the Security Council could once again face the question of whether and how to address terrorism in Nigeria.

Reflecting on the Experience

The following questions are proposed to guide the discussion in the debrief. This is not an exhaustive list and may vary depending on how your role-play exercise unfolded. If your class or group does not hold a debrief, these questions will nonetheless help you reflect on the role-play and write your written reflection:

- Which issues received adequate attention during the role-play? Which, if any, received excessive attention or were left unresolved?
- Did the group consider long-term strategic concerns, or was it able to focus only on the immediate issue and the short-term implications of policy options?
- Did time constraints affect the discussion and influence the drafting process?
- What techniques did you use to convince others that your policy position was the best option? What were successful strategies employed by others?
- What were the most significant challenges to your position? Did any make you rethink or adjust your position?
- Did your points cause anyone else to change their arguments or position?
- What political, economic, and other issues arose that you had not previously considered?
- How did the simulation change your perspective on multilateral negotiations?
- If you could go back, what would you have done differently in presenting and advocating your point of view?

The written reflection is your final assignment in the simulation. In the debrief discussion after the role-play, you and your peers went beyond the role you played and thought about the issue from a variety of perspectives. Now that the UN Security Council meeting and debrief are behind you, you can consider whether you personally support your recommended policy given the subsequent discussion. Shedding your institutional role and writing from a personal point of view, you will craft a policy review memo that outlines and reflects on the policy options discussed, incorporating and critiquing the UN Security Council's decision where appropriate.

No matter which role you played originally, take into account all that you have learned. Your instructor or facilitator will want to see if and how your understanding of the issue and of the policymaking process has evolved from that expressed in your position memo.

More details about the written reflection are available under Student Resources.

Student Resources

Fuel a lively classroom discussion with simulations that put your students in the shoes of either the National Security Council or the UN Security Council.

CFR Education simulations can be run for several days or weeks and include background readings, videos, and assignments to help students understand the situation and their roles.

[Instructions](#) [How-To Video](#)

Reading List

Country Resources:

Essential facts about your country

- [CIA World Factbook](#)
- [BBC Country Profiles](#)

Information about your country's foreign policy

- [Blue Book | The United Nations Office at Geneva](#)

Essential Resources

- [“Boko Haram in Nigeria Case Study,”](#) YouTube video, 4:27, posted by CFR Education, November 16, 2016.
- Claire Klobucista, [“Nigeria’s Battle With Boko Haram,”](#) CFR.org, August 8, 2018.
- [“Nigeria Security Tracker,”](#) CFR.org, July 1, 2023.
- [“Boko Haram and the Crisis in Nigeria, Explained,”](#) YouTube video, 2:41, posted by Vox, February 18, 2015.
- Farouk Chothia, [“Who Are Nigeria’s Boko Haram Islamists?”](#) BBC Africa, November 24, 2016.
- [“Nigeria,”](#) in *Amnesty International Report 2019: The State of the World’s Human Rights*.
- Zack Beauchamp, [“The Crisis in Nigeria, in 11 Maps and Charts,”](#) Vox, May 13, 2014.
- Human Rights Watch, [“Nigeria: Events of 2019.”](#)
- Dionne Searcey, [“Nigeria Finds a National Crisis in Every Direction It Turns,”](#) *New York Times*, July 17, 2016.
- [“Trump Administration ‘to Sell Nigeria Planes’ for Boko Haram Fight,”](#) BBC, April 11, 2017.
- [“Peacebuilding Efforts Needed to Tackle Boko Haram, End Lake Chad Basin Crisis, Security Council Told,”](#) *UN News*, September 13, 2017.
- Margaret Besheer, [“UN Security Council Delegation Heads to Lake Chad Basin,”](#) *VOA News*, March 1, 2017.
- YOUTUBE PLAYLIST

Additional Resources

- John Campbell, [“Mixed Results in Evaluation of Multinational Effort Against Boko Haram,”](#) Council on Foreign Relations, July 16, 2020.
- John Campbell, [“Nigeria’s Buhari Administration, the Chibok Girls, and the ICRC,”](#) CFR.org, October 20, 2016.
- Helene Cooper and Dionne Searcey, [“U.S. Plans Sale of Warplanes to Nigeria for Fighting Boko Haram,”](#) *New York Times*, April 11, 2017.
- Human Rights Watch, [“Nigeria: Northeast Children Robbed of Education; Boko Haram’s Devastating Toll on Students, Teachers, Schools,”](#) April 11, 2016.
- Ron Nurwisah, [“82 Chibok Schoolgirls Released In Boko Haram Prisoner Swap,”](#) *HuffPost Canada*, May 07, 2017.
- Dionne Searcey, [“Women, Children and Razor Wire: Inside a Compound for Boko Haram Families,”](#) *New York Times*, October 10, 2016.
- Lai Mohammed, [“Nigeria’s Difficult Path to Lasting Peace with Boko Haram,”](#) *Al Jazeera*, May 10, 2018.

- [“Nigerian military jet 'mistakenly bombs refugee camp', killing more than 100 including 20 Red Cross volunteers,”](#) *Telegraph*, January 17, 2017.
- Jacob Olidort, [“What is Salafism? How a Nonpolitical Ideology Became a Political Force,”](#) *Foreign Affairs*, November 24, 2015.

Research and Preparation

- Draw on the case notes, additional case materials, and your own research to familiarize yourself with
 - the goals of the UN Security Council in general and of this Council meeting in particular;
 - the national interests at stake in the case for the country you’re representing and their importance to national security;
 - the aspects of the case most relevant to your country;
 - the elements that a comprehensive UN Security Council resolution on the case should contain; and
 - the major debates or conflicts likely to occur during the role-play. You need not resolve these yourself, of course, but you will want to anticipate them in order to articulate and defend your position in the UN Security Council deliberation.
- Set goals for your research. Know which questions you seek to answer and refer back to the case notes, additional readings, and research leads as needed.
- Make a list of questions that you feel are not fully answered by the given materials. What do you need to research in greater depth? Can your peers help you understand these subjects?
- Using the case materials, additional readings, and discussions with your peers, weigh the relative importance of the interests at stake in the case. Determine where trade-offs might be required and think through the potential consequences of several different policy options.
- Conduct your research from the perspective of your assigned role, rather than the particular perspective of the person who currently inhabits that role. Make sure to consider the full range of country positions and foreign interests, whether diplomatic, military, economic, environmental, moral, or otherwise. This will help you strengthen your policy position and anticipate and prepare for debates in the role-play.
- Consider what questions or challenges the secretary-general or other UN Security Council members might raise regarding the options you propose and have responses ready.

Sources

- Consult a wide range of sources to gain a full perspective on the issues raised in the case and on policy options. Seek out sources that you may not normally use, such as publications from the region(s) under discussion, unclassified and declassified government documents, and specialized policy reports and journals.
- Remember: Wikipedia is not a reliable source, but it can be a reasonable starting point. The citations at the bottom of each entry often contain useful resources.
- Just as policymakers tackle issues that are controversial and subject to multiple interpretations, so will you in your preparation for the writing assignments and role-play. For this reason, evaluate your sources carefully. Always ask yourself:
 - When was the information produced? Is it still relevant and accurate?
 - Who is writing or speaking and why? Does the author or speaker have a particular motivation or affiliation that you should take into account?
 - Where is the information published? Determine the political leanings of journals, magazines, and newspapers by reading several articles published by each one.
 - Who is the intended audience?
 - Does the author provide sufficient evidence for their analysis or opinion? Does the author cite reliable and impartial sources?
 - Does the information appear one-sided? Does it consider multiple points of view?
 - Is the language measured or inflammatory? Do any of the points appear exaggerated?
- Take note of and cite your sources correctly. This is important not just for reasons of academic integrity, but so that you can revisit them as needed.

- Ask your teacher which style they prefer you use when citing sources, such as Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago Manual of Style, or Associated Press (AP).

How to Write a UN Resolution

What is a UN resolution?

A UN resolution is a formal expression of the opinion or will of a UN body. Resolutions follow a common, relatively strict format and are published online once approved. They are written and approved (or rejected) in a complex process. They typically go through several drafts, and multiple countries are typically involved, though a single country may write a draft resolution on its own and seek a direct vote. You will navigate an abbreviated version of this collaborative process in your role-play.

A Security Council resolution has three sections:

- header
- preambular clauses
- operative clauses

The entire resolution is one long sentence; individual items are separated by semicolons and commas. The header gives the date, an alphabetical list of countries that have contributed to the document (sponsors), and the name of the issuing body (in this case, the Security Council). This body serves as the subject of the sentence.

Preambular clauses provide a framework through which to view the issue by outlining past action on the subject (usually in treaties, conventions, and previous resolutions) and explaining the purpose of or need for a resolution. Preambular clauses are unnumbered, begin with adjectives or verbs, and end with commas. Common preambular words include

- alarmed by
- considering
- convinced
- emphasizing
- guided by
- having adopted
- keeping in mind
- mindful of
- (re)affirming
- recognizing
- taking note/noting
- underscoring

An example of an existing preambular clause is

- *Underlining* that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Operative clauses state the opinion of the organ and the actions to be taken. Unlike preambular clauses, operative clauses are sequentially numbered and follow a logical progression, each clause calling for a specific action. Operative clauses begin with

italicized verbs, sometimes modified by adverbs, and end with semicolons (with the exception of the last clause). Common operative words include

- authorizes
- calls for
- condemns
- decides
- emphasizes
- (re)affirms
- recommends
- reiterates
- requests
- stresses
- supports
- urges

The last operative clause in a Security Council resolution is almost always “*Decides* to remain seized of the matter.” In line with [Article 12](#) of the UN Charter, this language keeps the issue under the Security Council’s authority and prevents the General Assembly from taking its own action. An example existing operative clause is

- *Urges* all States that have either not signed or not ratified the Treaty, particularly the eight remaining Annex 2 States, to do so without further delay.

Click [here](#) to see a full example of a UN Security Council resolution.

How to Write a Presidential Statement

If the Security Council is unable to come to agreement on a resolution, another option is to issue a presidential statement.

What is a presidential statement?

A presidential statement is made by the president of the Security Council on behalf of the council. It is adopted at a formal council meeting, issued as an official document, and [published](#). No formal vote is taken on a presidential statement; instead, it is adopted by consensus (the agreement of all members, though some may abstain). Member states have the option of voicing opposition to the statement, which is then recorded in the document. Often released when the council cannot reach consensus on a resolution or is prevented from passing one by a permanent member’s veto, presidential statements are similar in content and tone to resolutions but tend to be less specific. They are not legally binding.

All presidential statements generally follow the same loose structure, which is more flexible and relaxed than that of a UN resolution:

1. Overview: an overview of the meeting or informal session that gave rise to the statement in question.
2. Body: five to fifteen paragraphs, each beginning with “The Security Council,” reflecting the consensus opinion of council members and sometimes providing an overview of past actions on the subject. A presidential statement is often used to reaffirm the council’s support for ongoing UN missions and initiatives or to provide progress reports on these initiatives.
3. Signature: the signature of the president of the Security Council.

Click [here](#) to see a full example of a UN Security Council presidential statement.

How to Prepare for Role-Play

Role-play Guidelines

1. Stay in your role at all times. (Keep in mind that your role refers to the perspective and duties of the country or position you represent, and not the specific person currently holding that role.)
2. Follow the general protocol for speaking.
 1. Signaling to Speak
 1. The president of the UN Security Council will administer the meeting and should decide on a speaking order. Wait to be called on by the president.
 2. If you would like to speak out of turn, signal to the president, perhaps by raising a hand or a placard, and wait until the president calls on you.
 2. Form of Speech
 1. All UN Security Council members can be addressed as Mr./Madam/Mx. Ambassador or simply Ambassador [last name]. Before you begin the role-play, share which title you would like to use, and make sure to respect the title your fellow UN Security Council members choose to use as well.
 2. Do not exceed predetermined time limits. If you exceed these limits, the president will cut you off.
 3. Frame your comments with a purpose and stay on topic.
 3. Listening
 1. Take notes while others are speaking.
 2. Refrain from whispering or conducting side conversations.
 3. Applause and booing are not appropriate. Your words will be the most effective tool to indicate agreement or disagreement.

How to Write a Written Reflection

Guidelines

- **Subject (one short paragraph):** Offer a brief statement about the significance of the issue as it relates to global politics and international organizations. Provide just enough information about the crisis so the reader can understand the purpose and importance of your memo. Be sure to include an initial statement of whether you agree or disagree with the UN Security Council's decision.
- **Options and analysis (one paragraph per option):** Present and analyze the options that were discussed during the debate, deliberation, and/or debrief. Discuss their drawbacks, benefits, and resource needs. Be sure to acknowledge any weaknesses or disadvantages of the proposed options.
- **Recommendation and justification (several paragraphs):** Identify and explain your preferred policy option or options in more detail. Here, you can explain why you personally favor one or more of the recommendations that you initially presented or the UN Security Council voted on, or different options entirely. If you choose to support the options you presented in your position memo, make sure to justify why you feel yours is still the best position.
- **Reflection (one to two paragraphs):** Discuss how your position and the final UN Security Council decision are similar; if they are not, discuss how they are different. Use this section to give your thoughts on what the UN Security Council should have included in its resolution or presidential statement and what you would have done differently. Remember, this is from your point of view; you are no longer advocating on behalf of a country or a UN agency.

Click [here](#) to see a full example of a written reflection.

Boko Haram in Nigeria in 2017 (UNSC)

Educator Simulation Guide

Global Literacy

Global literacy is the ability to understand and engage effectively in today's interconnected world. Today's interdependent global economy and geopolitical landscape connect America's interests more than ever to the actions and interests of other countries and their citizens. To ensure students understand this interconnected world, they need to be globally literate. [Learn more about global literacy.](#)

Case Overview

Set in February, 2017. The Radical Islamist movement [Boko Haram](#) is waging an [insurgency](#) in northeast Nigeria estimated to have killed at least twenty thousand people in recent years. The insurgency threatens the stability of Nigeria, a major oil producer and Africa's most populous country. Nigerian security forces have made some progress against Boko Haram, but humanitarian and media organizations have reported extensive human rights abuses by these forces, including the killing of civilians. The UN secretary-general has called a meeting of the UN Security Council to address the unrest in Nigeria, with regard to both the presence of Boko Haram and the human rights violations committed by the Nigerian armed forces. The response will entail balancing a variety of considerations, including Nigeria's role as a regional power and major contributor to UN peacekeeping forces, the threat posed by Boko Haram's insurgency, and the significant violations of human rights committed by Nigerian forces.

Decision Point

Reports have recently emerged from Northeast Nigeria of a [suicide bombing](#) by [Boko Haram](#). This bombing has killed at least 50 people and wounded many others. The attack has inflamed popular criticism of President Buhari, who was elected on a promise to restore security by destroying Boko Haram. It has prompted several neighboring governments, alongside those with prominent economic ties with Nigeria, to express concern that Nigeria appears unable to contain the crisis.

The UN Secretary-General has called a meeting of the UN Security Council. The hope is to address the unrest in Nigeria, with regard to both the presence of Boko Haram and the human rights violations committed by Nigerian armed forces. Nigeria is a regional power and major contributor to UN peacekeeping forces. On the other hand, it is a fragile state facing a serious [insurgency](#). Likewise, its forces are widely deemed responsible for significant violations of human rights. As they address the situation in Nigeria, member states will need to weigh the desire for a timely response to a crisis against the need to secure support from as many council members as possible, especially permanent members.

Learning Goals

CFR Education extended simulations use a variety of pedagogical tools to create an effective, meaningful, and memorable learning experience for students that builds their global literacy. Students will develop crucial skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Students will complete authentic assessments that feel relevant: instead of five-

paragraph essays and book reports, students will write policy memos and participate in a role-play of a meeting of a foreign policy-making body. There are no right or wrong answers in actual policy deliberations, and there are none here, either; students will walk away from this experience with an appreciation for the complexity of policy questions.

In this simulation, students will learn about the UN Security Council, as well as meeting these learning outcomes specific to this simulation:

- Students will understand the threat [Boko Haram](#) poses to Nigeria, the surrounding region, and international peace and security.
- Students will consider how the UN Security Council should support the fight against Boko Haram while safeguarding civilians from human rights violations perpetrated by Nigerian forces.
- Students will evaluate options available for the UN Security Council to address the present situation in Nigeria.

Concepts and Issues

Concepts

- Human rights
- [Insurgency](#)
- Oil and other natural resources
- Terrorism and [counterterrorism](#)
- Peacekeeping

Issues

- Nigerian political and religious dynamics
- Promotion of human rights, democratization, and the [rule of law](#)
- Regional security in West Africa

Policy Options: Educator's Guide

This section presents context, potential benefits and drawbacks, and other information about the policy options outlined in the case that you may find helpful as you guide the role-play and assess students.

Nigeria plays an important regional role, not just for its democratic [governance](#) but also because of Nigeria's size, diversity, and potential to be a positive model for other African states. Democratic failure in Nigeria could be a setback to the development and maintenance of democratic [norms](#) that have facilitated increased diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation among many African countries. As the continent's biggest oil producer, stability in Nigeria is important to both regional and international economic interests. The United Nations' interests in Nigeria include supporting democratic governance and ensuring the government follows [international laws](#) and respects human rights. The United Nations also seeks to promote the acceleration of economic development in Nigeria, which would likely promote political stability both in Nigeria and the larger region.

Yet the United Nations' most urgent interests in Nigeria are humanitarian. Past UN actions concerning the crisis have stressed the need to protect both displaced civilians and host communities affected by [Boko Haram](#). The United Nations prioritizes preventing conflict and thwarting [terrorist](#) groups worldwide, as they present a severe threat to international peace and security. The UN Security Council has [strongly condemned](#) Boko Haram's activities and called on countries to support Nigeria and its

neighbors in their efforts to combat the group. However, the Security Council has also expressed concern about Nigerian forces' continued human rights violations. It has also urged greater respect for international human rights standards. As Security Council members consider how to mount a response to the present situation in Nigeria, they will need to consider and prioritize how to counter Boko Haram, how to improve conditions and protections for Nigerian civilians, and how to address human rights violations by Nigerian security forces. UN Security Council members could consider several options:

Commission a report on human rights abuses in Nigeria

Security Council members could adopt a resolution commissioning a report from the UN secretary-general on the human rights practices of Nigeria's military. The Security Council could then request that Nigeria implement certain recommendations to improve these practices and address violations. Nigeria has signed several major UN human rights treaties, including the UN Convention against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. A report on Nigerian human rights practices could urge Nigeria to uphold the agreements that it has entered. If the Nigerian government complies, governments could be more willing to provide increased assistance. They might also consider selling Nigerian military equipment that they previously denied on human rights grounds. If Nigeria declined to implement the report's recommendations, the Security Council could threaten to impose economic [sanctions](#) on Nigerian government officials or adopt a resolution blocking arms sales to Nigeria until certain conditions are met.

Commissioning a report would be the least demanding option that the UN Security Council could pursue, as it would require few resource contributions from member states and is unlikely to be controversial among permanent, [veto-wielding](#) members. If successful, it could improve human rights practices in Nigeria and potentially pave the way for increased assistance against Boko Haram. However, the Nigerian government would not be guaranteed to implement the report's recommendations. Furthermore, sanctions to enforce compliance could harm Nigeria's ability to combat Boko Haram. Such a report also would not guarantee actions against Boko Haram, and individual states would have to determine whether to rethink their provision of assistance if the report's recommendations were met. Moreover, such a report would take time to complete, during which conflict, displacement, and human rights abuses could potentially worsen.

Deploy peacekeeping forces to Nigeria

The Security Council could seek to adopt a resolution establishing a peacekeeping mission in Nigeria. This mission would support the efforts of Nigerian troops and those of neighboring countries. This mission's mandate could include ensuring access to humanitarian assistance, protecting civilians, assisting with the return of displaced individuals. It would also provide monitoring and training of Nigerian forces to prevent human rights abuses. A more robust peacekeeping plan could involve authorizing a peacekeeping mission to take offensive action or provide tactical support to Nigerian forces.

A peacekeeping mission could ease the humanitarian crisis caused by Boko Haram's activities. It could also reduce human rights abuses, and potentially provide Nigeria the assistance necessary to defeat Boko Haram. Gaining the support of the permanent members to establish such a mission could be difficult. Nigerian forces have been resistant to monitoring by human rights groups in the past and could be reluctant to agree to monitoring by peacekeepers.

If a resolution did pass, a peacekeeping mission would be expensive. The Security Council would need to request contributions of troops and supplies from UN member states. Member states could be hesitant to put their troops at risk. Security Council members will also need to consider how long the mission would stay in Nigeria, how local communities would respond to its presence. Finally, it would have to decide what measures it could adopt to ensure that Boko Haram does not reemerge.

Authorize an intervention by UN member states

Security Council members could adopt a resolution declaring a [cease-fire](#). This resolution would also call on member states to use all necessary means to enforce peace in Nigeria if Boko Haram failed to comply. This option would authorize countries to mount interventions, either by regional organizations such as the [African Union](#) or individual member states. These forces would bolster existing efforts to combat Boko Haram and improve stability in Nigeria and its neighbors.

Authorizing an intervention could have the greatest effect against Boko Haram. Intervening states would likely have better supplied and better trained militaries. However, a military intervention would be the most difficult option to implement. First, a

resolution calling for intervention could be difficult to pass. Many states, including the United States, do not see Boko Haram as a direct threat and could thus be reluctant to put their military personnel at risk. Moreover, a resolution calling for intervention may not address human rights abuses committed by Nigerian forces. States that have been reluctant to supply arms to Nigeria over human rights concerns in the past could be far more hesitant to provide the resources and personnel that a full intervention would entail. Even if the resolution passed, success could not be guaranteed. Boko Haram's decentralized structure would make achieving victory difficult. It could also intensify the conflict for civilians. Moreover, past UN Security Council–authorized interventions have been criticized for having poorly defined mandates and ineffective command structures. For an intervention to be effective, UN Security Council members would need to consider how to define the mission's mandate, how long forces should remain in Nigeria to ensure a safe transition and lasting peace. Finally, they would have to consider what measures they can take to bolster political stability and protect human rights in Nigeria.

Running the Simulation

CFR Education extended simulations are project-based learning activities. Project-based learning (PBL) [leads to](#) better learning outcomes and improves skills, and is more fun than traditional instructional methods. The website that students will navigate throughout the simulation is divided into several parts:

In the **UNSC Guide**, students will learn about the UN Security Council, the body they will be simulating. Included are details on its history, how it works, who its major players are, and more. There is also a video interview with experts who have served on the body.

In the **Case Notes**, students dive into the actual situation they will be trying to solve in their simulation. At the beginning is a clear decision point: the question that students will debate during the role-play. This is followed by detailed background material and a discussion of the role that the United Nations plays.

Preparation and Role-Play includes details on the various roles students could take on, guidelines for the draft resolution clauses they will write, as well as an outline of how the discussion will flow during the role-play.

The **Wrap-Up** is an important part of the project and includes reflection questions and guidelines for reflecting in a class discussion and in a second memorandum. For historical cases, this section also includes a short description of how the decision point was addressed by policymakers in real life.

The simulation also includes **Student Resources**, which include a reading list to support research, additional directions and exemplars for writing assignments, and other tips students may find helpful.

Tips for Role-Play

Once students have read the simulation and prepared their draft clauses, here is how we recommend structuring the role-play:

Round	Timing	Objectives	Procedural Notes
One: Public Meeting	2 to 3 minutes per participant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive a five-minute briefing from the secretary-general on the issue to be discussed. 2. Present opening statements. 3. Crystalize the central questions of debate. 	During opening statements, the president of the UN Security Council will recognize country representatives in the order in which they request to speak, and no representative may speak again if others have not yet spoken. Following opening statements, country representatives are free to openly debate the statements made, evaluating the various positions on their merits.
Two: Informal Meeting	30 to 60 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Debate each participant's proposed clauses. 2. Edit, add, or drop proposed clauses and combine them into one or more draft resolutions. 3. Draft a presidential statement using proposed clauses and/or new material if no draft resolution appears acceptable to the group. 	The president will recognize country representatives in the order in which they request to speak. Representatives should limit their statements to one minute each, but if time allows the president may permit them to speak longer. The president may also invite any participant to speak as they deem it appropriate. Any participant may motion for a ten- to fifteen-minute break, during which representatives can move freely and work on their draft resolutions individually or in small groups.
Three: Public Meeting	30 to 60 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hear summaries of any draft resolutions as well as arguments for and against adoption. 2. Vote on draft resolutions in order of submission. 3. Attempt to adopt a presidential statement by consensus if no resolutions are proposed or passed. 	The president will call first on the draft resolution's main author(s) and then on other countries that wish to make arguments for or against the resolution. To be adopted, Security Council resolutions must receive at least nine votes in favor and no dissenting votes (vetoes) from any of the five permanent members. A state may abstain, often to indicate ambivalence or mild disapproval (in contrast to strong opposition). According to the charter, abstentions are mandatory if the state is a party to the dispute in question. Abstentions by permanent members do not count as vetoes; the resolution will pass if it receives the necessary nine votes.

Tips for the President of the UN Security Council

In Round 1, you will chair a formal session. Make absolutely sure that every country gives their opening statement before any country is allowed to speak a second time. You will also have to use your judgment about when to move into the more informal meeting of Round 2. Give enough time for students to flesh out their positions and to identify potential allies, but do not wait too long—the most productive negotiations happen in informal meetings, so you want to save time for those in Round 2.

In Round 2, you will call on speakers one at a time. The time limits on speeches are a little looser, so pay close attention to make sure everyone is included and no one dominates. Deciding whether to grant a break for negotiations is a matter of balance. Negotiations can be advanced in small-group discussions, but it is also important for the whole body to be updated on what goes on during the breaks. You will want to strike a balance between breaks for negotiating, and informal meeting time for giving updates and rounding up support for resolutions. It is often helpful to set a deadline for the end of Round 2 to encourage negotiators to come to agreements in a timely manner.

In Round 3, completed draft resolutions will be presented, discussed, and voted on. Before starting, make sure you are clear on the order in which the resolutions were submitted and who is sponsoring each one. When it comes time to vote, it will be helpful to remind everyone of the unique voting rules of the Security Council. If none of the resolutions passes, you can allow further debate and attempt to vote again, or you can move on and guide the council through debate on a presidential statement.

Use your judgment about which process is more likely to be successful.

Tips for Online Classes

We suggest conducting the role-play in three rounds and that three-round structure is a helpful way to approach chunking the role-play for online learning as well. You can conduct each round synchronously or asynchronously.

In round one, participants present their positions.

- In a synchronous meeting, you can go through opening statements using videoconferencing software, allowing for live clarifying questions.
- However, this is probably the easiest round to conduct asynchronously. You could disseminate positions in writing by having participants share their position memos or write a summary for the purpose of the role-play. You could also have participants record a video of themselves delivering their opening statement and disseminate it for all to watch.

In round two, participants debate the various policy options.

- In a synchronous setting, you can simply run a full-class discussion for round two. If you need more structure or want to prod reticent participants, consider starting by randomly assigning students to breakout rooms, assigning each breakout room one policy option. After working through pros and cons, representatives from each breakout room can share out to kick off the general discussion.
- In an asynchronous setting, consider a discussion forum, with a thread for each policy option.

In round three, debate begins to coalesce around the draft resolutions that have substantial support.

- This round can be approached similarly to round two. In this round, organize breakout rooms or threads around each draft resolution.

Flashpoints

To add spice or challenge to the role-play, partway through the discussion throw in one of the following flashpoints—additional hypothetical developments that fit within the case’s existing decision point—or create your own.

1. A [coalition](#) of U.S., British, and Nigerian human rights organizations releases a report containing fresh evidence of widespread abuses by Nigerian security forces in their fight against [Boko Haram](#) and other insurgent groups. The report ascribes “hundreds, perhaps thousands, of previously unreported deaths” to Nigerian forces. It ignites a firestorm in the international press and on social media. President Buhari says he will not tolerate the abuses and pledges “a full, independent, and transparent investigation” of every charge. However, he also notes that “we are fighting against people who kill civilians, who kidnap and enslave women and children.”
2. Only four days after the massive Boko Haram attack in Lagos, two more suicide bombings occur at a crowded commercial center in the city. The first bombing kills six and injures fifteen more. The second occurs twenty minutes later, when emergency personnel and civilians have begun to crowd the scene. Another thirty-two people perish, and some one hundred are injured. Boko Haram has not yet claimed responsibility for the blasts, though political leaders and observers widely assume it is responsible. At the presidential residence in Abuja, President Buhari pledges “to stop at nothing to protect all Nigerians from the scourge of terrorism.”
3. Nigeria’s attorney general, who also serves as minister of justice, announces that “several dozen” soldiers will be arrested in the coming days and tried on charges of human rights abuses and [extrajudicial](#) killings in the fight against Boko Haram. Reports from diplomats and intelligence officers in Nigeria, along with media reports, offer competing interpretations. Some believe the announcement is a major step toward accountability and discipline in the Nigerian security forces. Others believe nothing will come of the announcement, which they view as a transparent effort by President Buhari’s administration to curry favor with the United States and other international partners.

After introducing a flashpoint, you might want to help students refocus their discussion by considering critical questions such as these:

1. Who is affected by this event or development, and how?
2. Is there any uncertainty about what has taken place? How credible is the report?
3. Does this event or development affect the feasibility of any policy options? If so, how?
4. Does this event or development affect the desirability of any policy options? If so, how?

Case Assessment

1. What is [Boko Haram](#)? Why is the group considered a threat to Nigerian, West African, and possibly global security?
2. What are the major criticisms of the ways in which Nigeria has sought to fight Boko Haram?
3. What are the interests of the UN Security Council in the situation in Nigeria? Why is Nigeria, in particular, important to the UNSC?
4. What actions has the UN Security Council already taken on the situation in Nigeria?
5. What are the potential benefits of the UN Security Council establishing a peacekeeping mission in Nigeria? What are the drawbacks?

1. What are the six organs of the United Nations system? What are their responsibilities?
2. How is the UN Security Council structured? How are Security Council decisions made?
3. What are the two categories of tools that the UN Security Council has at its disposal to implement its decisions, and what are the range of specific tools available in each?
4. What is the difference between a Chapter VI peacekeeping mission and a Chapter VII peace enforcement mission?
5. What are the main challenges and limitations that the UN Security Council faces as it carries out its work? What solutions have been proposed to address these challenges?

Each CFR Education extended simulation involves writing assignments that help students think through policy options and reflect on their learning experience.

In UNSC cases, there are two types of writing assignments.

- Before the role-play, everyone writes draft clauses for a Security Council resolution.
- As part of the wrap-up, everyone writes a written reflection.

Simulations have instructions for written assignments (found under the Student Facing Simulation), rubrics, and samples for each of these writing exercises.

Samples:

- [UN example resolution](#)
- [UN example presidential statement](#)

Rubric

Below are sample rubrics for your use in assessing the writing students will do as part of this extended simulation.

These are single-point rubrics. Jennifer Gonzalez, who writes the blog [Cult of Pedagogy](#), has a great [explainer](#), but the bottom line is that single-point rubrics are relatively easy for students to digest but still have all the advantages of giving structure to instructors' feedback.

UN Security Council Draft Clauses Rubric

CONCERNS*What needs improvement***CRITERIA***What is expected***ADVANCED***What is excellent***Purpose**

- There are two to three preambular and three to four operative clauses
- Clauses are properly formatted and styled

Preambular clauses

- Accurately identify relevant prior agreements and existing organizations

Operative clauses

- Are practical and within the UN Security Council's powers
 - Address who
 - Address what
 - Address when
 - Address where
 - Address why
 - Address how
 - Address funding
-

UN Security Council Written Reflection Rubric

CONCERNS

What needs improvement

CRITERIA

What is expected

ADVANCED

What is excellent

Subject paragraph

- Is brief
- Places the issue in the larger context of U.S. foreign policy
- Clearly states whether the writer agrees or disagrees with the president's decision

Options and Analysis paragraph

- Discusses each option that came up during the role-play in discrete paragraphs
- Weighs the advantages and disadvantages of each option
- If options from the position memo are discussed, those options contain additional analysis

Recommendation and Justification paragraph

- Makes a clear recommendation based on the writer's personal position
- Supports the recommendation effectively

Reflection paragraph or paragraphs

- Reflects on and critiques the Security Council's decision
- Is written from a personal point of view, not that of the assigned role

Downloadable rubrics are available here:

- [UNSC draft clauses rubric](#)
- [UNSC written reflection rubric](#)