

UNITED NATIONS

Party Portrait

The two most significant actors in the UN are the Secretary-General and the Security Council. The new Secretary-General largely views strife in the Middle East as a failure of the international community to effectively lead the region and a lack of international capacity to prevent and/or solve violent conflicts there. He therefore seeks a proactive leadership role in the region to promote peace and stability. The Security Council, however, views conflict in the Middle East as disparately as the countries that compose it.

Key Interests

The key interests of the UN are as varied as its member states. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' primary interest is alleviating the humanitarian refugee crisis in the Middle East. Within the Security Council and other organs of the UN, there is no consensus on key interests (such as the Syrian conflict) outside of the nominal ideological interest of preserving international peace and security.

Sources of Leverage

Political - The Secretary-Generals' primary source of leverage is his influence and high visibility within his position. In addition, he has the ability to rearrange, restructure, and refocus the agencies that make up the Secretariat.

Military/Economic/Convening Power - The Security Council has more tools available, including military action (peacekeeping operations), economic sanctions, and legally binding resolutions.

Regional Strategy

Secretary-General Guterres' regional strategy is squarely aimed at achieving great power consensus and participation in conflict management. His overarching goal is to address the refugee challenge and, then, to develop and improve the regional capacity to prevent and solve the violent conflicts that lead to large-scale displacement. Within the Security Council, there is no clear regional strategy, and division on key regional conflicts has been the norm in recent years.

Powerful Individuals

The most visible unitary actor is Secretary-General Guterres, the chief administrative officer of the UN Secretariat and spokesperson for the UN. Within the Security Council, the permanent five members (P5) – China, France, Russia, UK, and US – are undoubtedly the most powerful states due to their veto power over Security Council resolutions.

Potential Negotiation Moves

The Secretary-General may:

- Pressure Great Powers** - Use public pressure against great powers or obstructionist states to encourage productive conflict resolution
- Restructure agencies** to focus on certain conflicts or regional challenges such as forced displacement
- Shuttle Diplomacy** - Vigorously engage in shuttle diplomacy to mitigate or end conflicts

The Security Council may:

- Sponsor Political Resolution** - Seek to sponsor a political resolution to the Syrian conflict through the Geneva talks or similar fora that is acceptable to all P5 members

Internal Conflicts

Due to the sprawling bureaucracy of the UN and the diversity of interests and positions within each committee and each member state, the UN can often appear to send disparate and, often, conflicting signals on the various issues it discusses. Given the structure of the different committees – the Security Council, which can be bogged down by the threat of a P5 veto versus the more-open General Assembly, which passes resolutions with 50 percent plus one vote – certain organs offer smaller states the opportunity to play an "activist" role and "get ahead" of the UNSC or other committees.

Memberships

Quartet on the Middle East

Allies

N/A

Partners

N/A

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

SYRIA Government, PALESTINE Fatah, LEBANON Government, JORDAN, SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN, EGYPT Government

Aid Donor

UNITED STATES, JAPAN, GERMANY, UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE