

Iowa High School Model United Nations
Security Council
Syrian Influence in Lebanon
Author: Andrew Bell (bellaac@uni.edu)

Background

Since the creation of the separate states of Syria and Lebanon after World War II, the two nations have been closely linked. Both nations have a common currency and customs union. The two are also avid trading partners, with discussion of forming an economic union. It is not surprising that there is also a political link between the two states; however, that link is the substantial influence that Syria has in Lebanese politics.

A major increase in Syrian influence in Lebanon can be traced back to the Lebanese Civil War. During the Lebanese Civil War, Syria played an active role in pushing cease-fire agreements. These measures were not effective, and in 1976, Syrian troops entered Lebanon in support of the Christian Lebanese Front. By the beginning of 1977, about 27,000 Syrian forces were stationed within Lebanon. Continuing into the 1980s, Syria continued to play a major role in Lebanon's foreign policy decision-making, along with Israel.

As for recent years, the situation between the two states has yet to be resolved. Currently, there are about 16,000 Syrian troops stationed in Lebanon. In 2004, Syria pushed for the Lebanese constitution to be changed so the term of Lebanese President Emile Lahoud. In 2005, a car bomb, believed to be tied to the Syrian government, killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

What Has Been Done/Past UN Actions

In 2005, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1595 to investigate the car bombing; however, the Syria has yet to have been proven behind the car bombing. The Lebanese government has also sought help from the United Nations Security Council to end the Syrian influence on politics in Lebanon. In 2007, the United Nations Security Council responded by adopting Resolution 1680 in 2007. Resolution 1680 calls for Syria to: resolve border controversies with Lebanon, establish a permanent diplomatic relationship with Lebanon, and control the movement of arms into Lebanon. However, Syria has yet to recognize Resolution 1680, because: Syria believes that the border relationships are best settled between the two states, the resolution fails to make note of positive Syrian actions in Lebanon, and the lack of mention towards Israel's disrespect to the Lebanese borders. Iranian Foreign Minister Maunchehr Mottaki said the resolution violated international law and interferes with the bilateral relations of Syria and Lebanon, and Lebanese legislator Muhammad Raad believed that the resolution takes Lebanon's focus off of Israel and puts it on Syria.

Possible Solutions

Creating a solution to this issue is not a simple task. Syria, since the Lebanon Civil War, has feared that leaving Lebanon will turn Lebanon into a radical Islamic state. At the same time, Lebanon deserves to be a sovereign state without a strong Syrian influence. The UN has a variety of options it can take in terms of this situation, from creating a new resolution to enforcing Resolution 1680.

Study Questions

1. Does your country have soldiers placed in another country?
2. Has your country been in a position similar to Lebanon's?
3. Does Syria have a just reason for its actions in and towards Lebanon?
4. How does Syrian influence in Lebanon affect your country?
5. Can Resolution 1680 be effective currently, or will a new resolution be needed?
6. What can the UN do to prevent this sort of situation again?

Sources

<http://countrystudies.us/lebanon/100.htm>

<http://www.voanews.com/uspolicy/archive/2004-09/a-2004-09-01-1-1.cfm>

<http://www.nysun.com/article/52409>

http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=05&y=2006&id=751695CE-050A-4C7C-9AE0-75DB045EBBC3

http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0602/0602_2.htm

Resolution 1595

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/sc8353.doc.htm>

Resolution 1680

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/351/77/PDF/N0635177.pdf?OpenElement>