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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL STUDY GUIDE

Presidents
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Welcome from your Chairs

Dear delegates,

My name is Moritz F. Adam and it is my great privilege to be your committee director at this session of CUIMUN HS. I am 22 years of age and a graduate student in theology at Keble College, Oxford, my research focusses on Old Testament studies and Hebrew.

In the context of this conference it is my role to facilitate the debate, provide you with a good basis of information, based on which you can prepare for your roles as delegates, and to help you to have a rewarding and fruitful experience at the conference. This entails both reading and providing feedback on material which you submit prior to the conference as well as chairing the debate during the conference in such a way that fits your needs as delegates whilst remaining a productive working environment.

I very much look forward to working with you. In case of any questions, please do not hesitate to email our Committee address.

Yours sincerely,

Moritz F. Adam

President of Security Council
The Conference and the Committee

This study guide is your initial point of departure whilst preparing for the conference. However, it is enormously important for you to bear in mind that it will be necessary for you to do a substantial amount of reading beyond this guide. As the UNSC only consists of 15 member states and this is an “advanced” committee at CUIMUN HS, the expectations for you to prepare well and contribute actively are higher in the case of this committee than in others at the conference.

In preparation for the conference you have the option to write a position paper, which should outline your country’s interests in the topic at hand and your specific focusses and aims in the debate. Please attempt to write it in such a manner that it can be seen as distinctively representing the policies of the country that you have been assigned, rather than being just a summary of the problem or otherwise imprecise.

You will be expected to submit the position paper in advance and the chair will provide feedback. This document should be no longer than one and a half A4 pages in font size 12, but no shorter than three quarters of a page. Aim to express your country’s policies as concisely but comprehensively as possible, generally you can presuppose that the level of knowledge of your fellow committee members at least covers the contents of this study guide. However, as noted, this is an optional document.

In addition, you are expected to prepare clauses for a draft resolution, both perambulatory and operative. It is generally helpful to articulate your policy ideas in the style that is prescribed for UN resolutions, so that you can use them more easily during the debate when you seek to write draft resolutions together with other delegates. Information on how to do this will be provided below. Both must be submitted no later than the Wednesday before the conference (the 11th of September).

Besides this you may wish to consult the CUIMUN HS conference handbook to find out which other countries are represented in the SC during this simulation. Knowledge of this can also be of help for you, as it can inform you whether your country’s views are likely going to be a minority opinion or aid you to read a bit about the other countries’ policies before the conference, so as to enable you to
know who might be potential allies. Especially if you have been assigned a country with veto privileges, we invite you to come up with a strategy to pass, rather than oppose, a resolution that can find a majority. While the veto is of course a powerful tool and influences your importance in the debate, it is encouraged to seek consensus so as to enable the committee to pass a resolution.

With respect to further procedural matters, I refer you to the Rules of Procedure of CUIMUN HS. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the chair.
Introduction to the Committee

The UNSC was founded in 1945 and met for the first time on the 17th January 1946; its creation was predominantly influenced by the experiences of the Second World War and the need to create an international body to ensure peace and stability in order to avoid a conflict like WWII to happen again. Since then, this body, whose main aim is to ensure peace and stability and to assist in solving conflicts threatening peace, has passed a total of 2480 resolutions on a plethora of matters, it is arguably the most powerful body of the United Nations, as it has the most far-reaching rights, in some cases even to infringe upon aspects of national sovereignty, as in the case of the Responsibility to Protect.

It would be overly excessive to discuss the entire history of the UNSC here, but I refer you to literature like Sievers and Daws’ book *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*,\(^1\) to read about the inner workings and development of this Council.

The UNSC consists of fifteen members, of which five are permanent members while the remaining ten places are filled by alternating countries who are elected to the UNSC on the basis of regional quotas. The permanent members are the People’s Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

The current temporary members, which are the basis for the CUIMUN simulation, are Belgium, Côte d’Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Germany, Indonesia, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, and South Africa. In addition, there will be four further countries represented at this simulation, namely Tajikistan, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These countries are present to further the debate, however do not have voting rights in the committee, which however most certainly does not diminish their importance for the debate.

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The Question of Kurdistan – Background Information

This section consists of two parts. The first contains information which should be of use to understand the Kurdish origins, history, and culture, in order to qualify delegates to informedly speak about the people and the region in question besides considering the policies of their countries. The second section serves to provide an overview of the historical circumstances since 1920 which have led to conflict in the region, providing information on political interests of involved parties, the legal circumstances, and indications as to what main problems a UNSC resolution should aim to solve.

Although these parts are rather different in content, they are both very important as both a grasp of the background of political circumstances, needs, and possibilities and a sound understanding of the object of the discussion are the prerequisites for fruitful contributions in the debate at CUIMUN.

Historical and Cultural Considerations

The term Kurdistan defines a region which is not a country in the sense of having fixed borders in the modern sense of a sovereign nation state, rather it is a geo-cultural region describing the area predominantly inhabited by the Kurdish people. Its area, which is scarcely unambiguously defined, covers parts of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. In the case of the Kurdish region of Iraq, the Kurds have been granted some privileges of autonomy since 1970, and the “Kurdistan Region of Iraq” is treated as an autonomous region according to article 113 of the Iraqi constitution, moreover there is a province of called “Kurdistan” in Iran, however there, as well as in Turkey and Syria, these regions have not been granted privileges of autonomy.

Such divisions of the Kurdish territories are hardly a modern phenomenon, a first division of the region between two hegemonies can be traced back to the aftermath of the battle of Chaldiran of 1514 and the Treaty of Zuhab of 1639, where parts of Kurdistan fell to the Ottomans and the Safavids respectively.

The etymology of the term “Kurdistan”, or “Kurd” is ambiguous. In 1923 the English scholar of Semitic languages, G.R. Driver, of Magdalen College, suggested that the term originated from a toponym and only later developed into an
ethnonym.² He cites a Sumerian clay tablet of the third millennium BCE, as the earliest source for a reference to the name Kurd. Specifically, the location of what the tablet describes “land of Qar-da”, is described as next to the dwelling-place of the “people of the land of Su”, south of lake Wan. This lake is in the easternmost part of modern Turkey and at its shore was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Urartu. It is possible that indeed an etymologically related term was used to describe a people as early as the 11th century BCE, as the cylinder inscription of Tiglath-Pileser I, who was king of the Middle Assyrian kingdom, names the people of Qur-ti-e, with whom the king engaged in battle.

However, the relation between these terms has been contested. Subsequently, the first reference in the Greek language is found in Xenophon’s Anabasis, where the Καρδοῦχοι are mentioned. Strabo, who discussed this region in the first century, links this people of Xenophon’s account with the inhabitants of Corduene. Specific ethnic assessments are difficult to make, as there is for instance disagreement which language the people of that region spoke; while Xenophon suggests that the Καρδοῦχοι spoke Scythian dialect, modern scholars suggest that rather a language related to Old Iranian was spoken there.

However, a watertight etymological line of development cannot be established, and it is plausible that in the course of the development of this word also the Persian kurd or gurd, was influential, in soundplay with such earlier toponyms and ethnonyms. This word, with a Babylonian cognate, means “brave”, “valiant”, or “warlike”, and Driver suggests that “bravery and the love of fighting are the outstanding traits of the Kurdish character.”³ Thus it appears plausible that the name Kurds, is not a linguistic successor of earlier names for this people, but rather based on a Persian word which sounded similar and applied to these people in admiration of their valiance.

Historically, the region now known as Kurdistan was inhabited by a number of peoples who settled in the fertile crescent, and the region which is now known as Kurdistan was inhabited by e.g. the Hittites, the Sea Peoples, the Phrygians and the Armenians. The term Kurdistan is a Persian term, meaning “Region of the Kurds”; I have just the etymology of Kurd, the suffix -stan is Persian for region, as is well known in names of countries of the region, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan etc. According to M. Strohmeier and L. Yalçın-Heckmann,

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³ Driver, ibid., p. 403
the term Kurdistan was first used in an official context to describe a region of the Seljuq empire between the 11th and 13th century CE; likewise the Ottomans referred to approximately the same area by that designation. It is generally a problem that the borders of Kurdistan have changed frequently since, for instance is the Kurdish territory described as much smaller in the 1597 book Sharafnama, the “Book of Honour by the historian and poet Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi, than e.g. in the Nozhat al-Gholub by Hamdallah Mustawfi Qazvini about 300 years earlier.

Commonly Kurdistan is now understood as that area which is inhabited by a majority of Kurds, which is also problematic, as there is a substantial intermingling of ethnicities further away from the solely Kurdish territories, and the region cannot, unlike in other parts of the words, be easily divided into ethnically homogenous parts. There is a substantial area in which Kurds form rather substantial minorities which to separate from regions in which the Kurds are a majority would be ill advised. For details, confer the map below.

![Map of Kurdistan](image)

*The darkest shade denotes areas with 75 – 100 % Kurdish population, the second darkest 30 – 75 % and the lightest shade under 30 %.*

*Unfortunately the names of countries, cities, etc. are in German, please refer to an atlas for the English equivalents.*

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It should also be noted that today many Kurds live in areas outside Kurdistan, most notably the former Soviet Republics Armenia and Azerbaijan but also the major cities of the region, such as Istanbul, Damascus, Bagdad and Tehran. The circumstance of the difficulties in defining Kurdistan’s borders complicates defining questions of identity. Although the Kurdish language is prevalent throughout the area in which Kurdistan is situated, there are also other languages which are spoken in that region, such as Zazaki or Gorani, while the Kurdish language in itself only describes a dialect continuum rather than a rigorously defined language, including Kurmanji, Sorani, and Pehlewani. While all of these belong to the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European languages, it would be mistaken not to note language barriers amongst the Kurdish people of the region.

Indeed, further difficulty arises in an attempt to understand the Kurds in ethnic categories. The reason for taking the Kurdish language(s) as the main marker denoting a Kurd is that speaking of the Kurds as a people is most difficult if that category is understood in ethnic terms. Studies have found that the inhabitants of the region of Kurdistan are of i.a. Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, Azerbaijani, Jewish, Ossetian, Persian and Turkish background, and belong to a variety of different religious faiths, Islam being the most widespread, and also Alevism, Christianity, Judaism, Yarzanism, and Yazidism. However, most Jewish people of the region have now emigrated to Israel.

Given the difficult geopolitical circumstances of the region, there are hardly any reliable numbers as to how many Kurds there are. Informed estimates suggest that a number between 24 and 27 million is plausible, of whom about half live in Turkey, four million in Iraq, six million in Iran and one million in Syria. In addition approximately 700,000 Kurds have emigrated to Western Europe and 400,000 to former Soviet Republics.

The Kurds have a rich tradition of literature, the majority of which was solely transmitted orally until the 19th century. It consists mostly of folk literature, such as proverbs, riddles, songs, or fables. Some of these stories are of foundational relevance for their identity, as they contain elements of election. One example for this is a myth describing the Kurds as the offspring of angelic beings who had procreated with five hundred beautiful maidens who were initially supposed to be brought to the harem of the biblical king Solomon.

Another describes a heroic figure called Kaveh the Blacksmith who killed a frightening and evil king called Zahak, who had previously terrorised the region and demanded daily sacrifices of human brains, subsequently became king himself and
was since understood as the progenitor of the Kurdish people. Besides these myths, there is also a substantial body of politically coloured literature, especially since the 19th century, containing both anti-Ottoman and anti-religious elements, such as the poems of Haji Qadir Koyi, who sought to encourage the Kurds to rebel against the Ottomans, following the example of e.g. the Greeks and the Armenians. Most of this literature was poetic in nature, the first major writings in prose emerged in the 19th century with the foundation of Kurdish newspapers. A problem of much of Kurdish literature is the use of different scripts, Latin, Cyrillic and Arabic, in different areas of Kurdistan. Only since the 1930s the Latin script has been established as the main way of writing.

A further aspect of interest besides matters pertaining to the Kurdish people is the region they inhabit, which is most intriguing in geographical terms. Most notably, it is estimated that the soil of those parts of Kurdistan controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq contains 45 billion barrels of oil. Similar strategical importance is attributed to the Al-Hasakah province in Syria, which is predominantly inhabited by Kurds, where there are also substantial oil reserves.

Especially in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, this is a cause of political controversy, given that the regional government has negotiated agreements with international oil and gas corporations, such as ExxonMobil or Total S.A. This has led to tensions in the oil markets within Iraq, as the Kurds, who are able to negotiate deals independently from the central government, thus have become a competitor of the government in Baghdad, who control the oil reserves in the rest of the country. Further mineral resources found in significant quantities in Kurdistan include coal, copper, gold, iron, limestone, marble, rock sulfur, and zinc.

The current political situation of Kurdistan is mainly a result of the political developments in the aftermath of the First World War, specifically the Treaties of Sèvres (1920) and Lausanne (1923). These will be the starting point of the second part of this section. Prior to these developments, the region underwent a series of partitions and a number of dynasties ruled all or part of Kurdistan. The following are the most noteworthy: Subsequent to the partition of Kurdistan in the Treaty of Zuhab, which has been referred to previously, the Ottoman parts of the region were incorporated into the empire as the Vilayet (province) Kürdistan and further subdivided into the Sanjaks (administrative districts) Van, Muş, and Hakkâri, later in 1864 these Vilayets were restructured and reorganised, with the territory of Kürdistan becoming part of the Vilayets Diyarbekir and Van, which existed until the rearrangement of the borders of the region after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.
In those regions which used to be part of the Sassanid empire, Kurdish dynasties controlled some territories since the 10th century. Amongst them, the principality of Ardalan was the most noteworthy, which was established in the 14th century and remained until 1867, when it suffered defeat against Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, the King of Persia. Moreover, a number of Kurdish tribes, the Mukriyan, the Ardalan and the Shekak established emirates near Lake Urmia during the period of the Safavid dynasty, however those were defeated and many Kurds were deported in the 15th and 16th centuries. Moreover, between 1923 and 1929 a Soviet administrative unit then known as Kurdistansky Uyezd, known as “Red Kurdistan”, which was situated between the Armenian province Sjunik and the region Nagorno-Karabakh, about which both Armenia and Azerbaijan are now making territorial claims. This region was granted the status of an Oblast within the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, but was later dissolved, i.a. due to the problem that other Kurdish territories could not join the Soviet Union.

Further modern examples of territorial entities include the Republic of Ararat, a self-proclaimed Kurdish state founded in a rebellion against the Turks, the Republic of Mahabad, a small self-governing Kurdish state existing only in 1946, Iraqi Kurdistan, which was mentioned above, and Kordestān, which is one of the thirty-one provinces of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Political and Legal Considerations

As is evident from the previous consideration, the development of Kurdistan substantially differs from the development of nation states in the way it occurred in Europe and was subsequently superimposed onto the rest of the world. Indeed, in the process of the development of the nation state in the 19th and 20th century, the Kurds were notably neglected. Smaller self-proclaimed states have been mentioned above.

The most notable events which had great influence on the modern debate are the treaties of Sèvres (1920) and Lausanne (1923). The treaty of Sèvres had become necessary due to territorial circumstances which had changed in the Second World War, namely the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. It was part of the negotiations which formally ended the First World War. In that light it was considered necessary or appropriate to consider the prospect of the future independence of Armenia.

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5 In this section, specifically on the question of statehood, thanks must be expressed to John Smith of the University of Kent, who was initially due to co-chair this committee but had to withdraw. Much of the paragraph on statehood relies on and uses his writing and research, and his intellectual contribution is hereby noted.
Mesopotamia and Hejaz. However, this treaty was never ratified, as the Ottoman Empire with its last Sultan, Mehmed VI., was overthrown in 1922 by a group lead by Mustafa Kemal, known as “ Atatürk”. In this treaty, namely in article 62 the Kurds would have been granted autonomy, and furthermore article 64 contained arrangements for the establishment of an independent nation state, which were made subject to further assessments by the League of Nations and the Kurdish people demonstrating their willingness and ability to govern themselves.

After the support for such independence of the Kurds had abated, these provisions were removed from the subsequent treaty of Lausanne which was re-negotiated with the new Turkish leaders. Thus the territories inhabited by the Kurds were divided into four parts, falling to Turkey, Iraq, Persia, and the French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon. In the aftermath of the ratification of this treaty also the currently still existing Republic of Turkey was internationally recognised.

While the Kurds had initially supported Mustafa Kemal’s movement after having been promised independence after the First World War, Kemal’s policy of overcoming ethnic and cultural diversity in favour of Turkish nationalism quickly led to violent conflict. This however remained rather unsuccessful and the Kurds were repeatedly defeated by the Turkish military. In 1945 the use of the Kurdish language in public was prohibited; this was reiterated in 1967 and supplemented by the prohibition of Kurdish music, literature, and newspapers.

With respect to the development of Iraq the matter is rather similar. In a declaration to the League of Nations in 1924 by the governments of the United Kingdom, and Iraq, then being a British protectorate, it was said that the Kurdish people living in Iraq was granted would be granted rights with respect to free choice of their form of government, borders, and economic and political relations to the governments of Iraq and the United Kingdom.

However, this also was never implemented after the ratification of the treaty of Lausanne, and instead the Kingdom of Iraq, as well as the British and the French, had great interest in financially benefitting from the abundance of oil available in this region. The resistance against this only occurred sporadically and hardly beyond the level of insurrections of individual Kurdish tribes, and remained essentially futile. The most notable result of such an attempt was the brief existence of the Republic of Mahabad, which is mentioned above. Only in 1969 the Kurds were offered the right to autonomously govern themselves. Subsequently, in 1970 partial and in 1991, after the Second Gulf War, de-facto full autonomy was granted. Probably the most
notable feature of the rights which come along with this autonomy is that the Kurdish territories must not be entered by Iraqi military. Moreover, the Kurds have their own parliament, are able to trade their oil independently, and maintain diplomatic relations with a number of countries, amongst them the P5, as well as notably Germany, Iran, and Turkey through consulates existing besides the embassies to Iraq in Bagdad.

Recently, however, a number of conflicts occurred. Amongst them are most notably the bombardment of this region by the Turkish military, given the circumstance that many partisans of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) which is banned in Turkey, fled to Iraqi Kurdistan. In addition, the Kurds claimed control over the previously contested city of Kirkuk, after Kurdish fighters had reconquered it from the so-called Islamic State. Generally, the important role of Kurds fighting against Daesh must be noted.

Most importantly for the debate at hand, however, is a referendum held in 2017 on the matter of independence of the Kurdish territories from Iraq. Probably unsurprisingly, this referendum resulted in an overwhelming declaration of support for independence, and was of course rejected by the central government of Iraq, and notably the United States of America as a key international ally of both the Iraqi government and the Kurds. Similar opposition was expressed by the governments of Iran and Turkey, which claimed that it would endanger their countries’ national security. Other political motivations, especially the desire to avoid such referenda in their own countries must of course be seen as contributing factors.

The development and situation of political arrangements and their history in the cases of Iran and Syria are of less important to this debate and will not be discussed further here. Information can be found in appropriate items of scholarly literature on the matter.

In addition to this discussion of historical background, the following is of importance specifically for the debate on the subject of Kurdistan in the United Nations Security Council. In September 2017, four days before the referendum in Kurdistan, the Security Council issued the following statement, made by the President of the Council, Tekeda Alemu of Ethiopia:

“The members of the Security Council expressed concern over the potentially destabilizing impact of the Kurdistan Regional Government’s plans to unilaterally hold a referendum next week.
Council members note that the planned referendum is scheduled to be held while counter-Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) operations — in which Kurdish forces have played a critical role — are ongoing, and could detract from efforts to ensure the safe, voluntary return of over 3 million refugees and internally displaced persons.

Council members expressed their continuing respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and unity of Iraq and urged all outstanding issues between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to be resolved, in accordance with the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution, through structured dialogue and compromise supported by the international community. Council members expressed full support for United Nations efforts to facilitate dialogue between Iraqi stakeholders.”

The most crucial question, besides the matter of the current existence of Kurdish groups existing in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria having a bearing on the national security of these countries, and perhaps also e.g. infringements upon rights granted by the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992, will be matters of statehood and independence, and how the United Nations can be of influence there as well as the question whether it should.

Perhaps it might be of interest here how the United Nations Security Council has recently evaluated other cases of independence, the most recent for instance being the resolution 1996 on South Sudan from 2011, with a plethora of subsequent resolutions on this matter. Notably delegated will have to re-familiarise themselves with the rights of the Security Council, and the established set of circumstances, in which only it is permitted to consider an issue; this is in essence the question if a political situation constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

Here a short excursus is necessary, in which I draw on the work the originally assigned co-chair of this committee, which I have already acknowledged in footnote 6. This excursus if concerned with defining statehood, and I quote him at length:

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“The question of Statehood will be of paramount importance through the course of any discussions, as there is no positivist international law that allows one to make a judgement to any criteria for statehood. With this being the case, it falls to the notion of customary international law. Customary international law is defined as being the body of international law where states feel a sense of legal obligation through a general and consistent application of a practice by states. ‘General’ is often defined when the practice is used by many states.

The Montevideo Convention restates the customary international law, and to an extent codifies legal norms already present within the context of a state being a state. The Convention was signed by a majority of North and South American States, that highlights the rights and duties of a state, all the states that have signed the treaty are former colonies and wish to make a restatement on customary international law. The Convention states the following qualifications are required for a state to be considered a state:

- a) a permanent population
- b) a defined territory
- c) a government; and
- d) the capacity to enter into relations with other states

However, while this Convention codifies the rights and duties of states it is not signed by states outside the American continent. In light of that material fact, these should be considered customary international law rather that black letter law. However, there is another right established as a jus cogens norm of international law (also known as a cardinal principle) is the right to self-determination.

The right can be found within the UN Charter, but is not explicitly described. Specifically, what the limits of this right are – for example [...] the freedom of speech – it is not absolute and subject to reasonable restriction. In this example, [one] cannot protest loudly at night in front of someone’s home. The General Assembly attempted the following definition: “All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status.”

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7 Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (concluded 26 December 1933, entered into 23 December 1934) 165 LNTS 19, article 1
8 Black letter law is defined as meaning ‘law’ that is established legal rules that are no longer subject to reasonable dispute. An example of black letter law in an international context, could be the right to self-defence.
9 Jus cogens, ‘compelling law’, in an international law context it means that no treaty may be made that infringes on the rights under this principle. Furthermore, a state may not derogate from this principle as it is a matter of foundational law of the international legal order. It is also the case, that if a treaty is in contradiction with a jus cogens principle, it is considered void under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (article 53 and 64)
10 UNGA Declaration on the Granting of Independence to colonial countries and peoples, article 2
reaffirmed as being applicable international law by the International Court of Justice when it held “self-determination requires a free and genuine expression of the will of the peoples concerned.”\textsuperscript{11}

This right can come into conflict with the above, in that a local government of an area that wishes to succeed is not able to enter into relations with other states as that is considered the competence of a central government. Considering this, one may interpret that a geographical area so long as it has a permanent population that desires to become its own state must become its own state in order to be in compliance with international law norms.” In this respect one may consider UNSC resolutions 688 and 2470 for precedents.

\textsuperscript{11} \url{https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/61/061-19751016-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf}, §55
What to do with this Study Guide - Practical Information

This study guide is a point of departure. It contains information on the background of the situation with which the Security Council will concern itself at CUIMUN HS 2019, as well as some indications as to what questions delegates might wish to attend to in their preparation and during the debate. It is specifically not a document aiming to influence delegates on what their countries’ views ought to be or how they should present them.

An indispensable starting point for any delegate is to familiarise themselves as thoroughly as possible with the current state of affairs of the country they represent and especially the government which governs it at the moment. Delegates to the Security Council are sent by the current government of a country, so it is their policies which a delegate must know and use as the basis of the arguments that he or she puts in the debate. Unawareness of such matters is not only a hindrance to the debate, but also discourteous to the other delegates who consider other countries’ policies in their preparation and thus prepare specific points for which they expect to find a sufficient number of allies. Helpful sources for this can be general reports on countries in current newspapers or the “World Factbook” published by the CIA.

In addition to such preparations, and immensely more importantly, delegates must be aware of the current state of affairs with respect to the topic at hand, here the question of Kurdistan. Delegates must constantly update their knowledge in order to be aware of ongoing developments. While information on the history of the situation can be obtained from scholarly literature, this is less immediately possible for current developments and their evaluations.

Generally, newspapers are a helpful source, but caution is necessary. When consulting them, one must always be mindful of the origin of the source, and especially whether the report might be in some way politically biased. Should a delegate be proficient in the language of the country they represent, it is strongly advised to consult the domestic press of it; and more generally to seek for material beyond solely European and American sources if possible.

Even in an environment such as a MUN debate, where it is paramount to support one’s country’s position with great alacrity and force, it is crucial to contemplate in advance upon the question what points might be made by those of an opposing
position in the debate. This will prove greatly beneficial in attempts to refute those points in the context of the exchanges during the committee sessions.

Besides these technical points, finally an equally important word of advice. We all attend MUN debates to enjoy ourselves.

As important as preparation before, and argumentative force during the conference is, please bear in mind that this event exists to facilitate personal growth and education in different ways from how we normally encounter it in schools and universities. In all attempts to make your country’s position trump others, please seek to prepare yourself in such a way that you will be able to participate in a debate in the spirit of diplomacy and the quest for agreement and compromise. This is the key spirit of MUN debate and must not be neglected.