South Bay Model United Nations 2024

118th Congress (US SENATE)

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Welcome Message

Co-Chair: Pranav Gunhal

Hey delegates! My name is Pranav Gunhal, and I'll be a chair for Senate this year. I'm the president of Homestead High School's MUN club, and this is my fourth year of doing Model UN as a delegate. Being a part of MUN has increased my public speaking, research skills, and knowledge of world affairs. In addition, I am involved in Homestead's AI club and in my spare time, I love reading (I'm currently reading The Rembrandt Affair by Daniel Silva), watching NCIS and The Big Bang Theory, and programming. If you have any questions about the Senate, or other MUN-related queries, don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to seeing all of you in this year's conference!

Co-Chair: Shreyas Chatterjee

Hello delegates, I am Shreyas Chatterjee, and I am thrilled to be your co-chair for SBMUN's Senate committee! This is my third year in MUN as a delegate and my first experience chairing a conference. For me, MUN has always been a way to debate important issues while also having fun. Outside of MUN, I enjoy editing videos, watching stand up comedy, etc. I look forward to meeting every delegation and seeing passionate debate!

Position Papers

You will not be eligible for any award if you do not submit a position statement.

In order to show your research into your topics, we request that each delegate submit a 2–5 page, typed, and double-spaced position paper, to be emailed as a PDF to senate.sbmunviii@gmail.com by **March 31 at 11:59** for research awards, or by **April 5 at 11:59** for any committee award. Google Drive links will not be accepted. In this research paper, we request that you write three sections: one on an overview of your topic, one on your country or individual's policies as extrapolated from the sources you evaluate, and one on the solution(s) you propose in your topic. We would also like for you to cite your sources in this paper to show that you have performed research.

For the crisis committees, you will be expected to put forward a plan for the success of the organization in your solutions section.

The heading should look like this (please do not include your name OR your school name in the heading!):

> Senator Name (R/D/I-State)
> Senate
> SBMUN VIII

If you have any specific questions about position papers, please feel free to email senate.sbmunviii@gmail.com!

Introduction to Senate and Procedures

Introduction to Senate
The United States Senate is one of the two chambers of the US Congress. It consists of 100 representatives from each of the 50 states, each serving for 6 years. Following the ratification of the 17th amendment in 1913, Senators are directly elected through a popular vote in each state.

As the Upper House of the Legislative Branch, the Senate's primary purpose is to help create and pass the laws of the United States. It may also ratify treaties, confirm the appointments of judges and other federal officials, and override presidential vetoes with a 2/3 supermajority (Senate.gov). The Senate is also well known for presiding in the impeachment trials of federal officials and declaring war.

Due to these broad responsibilities, the Senate has a unique set of procedures and practices that differ from other legislative bodies. For this session of Senate at SBMUN, we have chosen to incorporate some of these, albeit in an adapted way to fit the structure of a MUN committee. As such, please be sure to read through them thoroughly to ensure your success in committee.

Party Leadership

Party leaders are expected to coordinate bill writing and are the only ones who may motion to reset the agenda at the beginning of a committee session through a motion. They are primarily expected to help find compromises with the other party during caucuses instead of writing, so that other Senators can contribute to writing. On the other hand, Party Whips should aim to gain votes within their own party. For a given bill, they are expected to count votes and ensure it has enough support to pass. There will be two Party leaders in committee - majority and minority, belonging to the Democratic and Republican parties respectively. Each party will also have 1 whip.

For SBMUN, Party Leaders/Whips **will not be assigned** before committee begins. We will allot 10 minutes prior to the start of debate for the first party caucus. The majority/minority leaders as well as the whips will be chosen through brief speeches and a secret ballot vote within each party. If no leadership is chosen within the allotted time, the chairs will randomly assign leaders for the party. **New leaders are expected to be selected for these roles for each committee session**. It is important to note that being in the position of Majority/Minority Leader and/or Whip **has no impact in consideration for awards**.

Flow of Debate

After the debate to start debate has passed, the Majority and Minority Leaders will be given an opportunity to speak for 1 minute and 30 seconds each. Next, a speaker's list will be set, similar to other committees. Additional speakers will be added as per standard MUN procedure, and 2 comments will be allowed after each speech.

Moderated caucuses may be proposed in the same manner as other MUN committees, and are meant to discuss issues and policies in a structured environment. While unmoderated caucuses are allowed, it is encouraged that a **Party Caucus** is proposed primarily. While in traditional MUN committees it is essential for delegates to understand the perspectives of all other delegates, regardless of affiliations, in the Senate, most informal debate time is spent within party caucuses writing bills. The process for proposing a Party Caucus is ideal to that of an unmoderated caucus (only time needs to be specified).

Another type of caucus, unique to the Senate, is the filibuster. Traditionally, a Senator in a filibuster is allowed to take the floor for any amount of time. Any Senator can propose a filibuster, and a simple majority is required for it to pass. The purpose of a filibuster is to buy

one's party more time to complete bills. This can be done through detailed debate regarding an issue, or just stalling the committee with **any** discussion, regardless of the relevance. However, a filibuster can be ended at any time with a simple majority vote subject to the discretion of the dais (otherwise known as a cloture).

Formal caucus is proposed in the same manner as other committees, although Senate Bills must first be sent to the Director(s) of the Senate for approval. The amendment process remains the same as well.

Bills and Voting

While multiple bills may be written throughout committee, only **1** bill may be passed at the end of committee. This is meant to be done through compromise beyond party lines, ensuring that the final legislation satisfies a majority of Senators. The formatting details for a Senate Bill can be found [here](#) (this template will also be made available during committee).

Following formal caucus and amendments, bills may be voted on in a slightly modified format. A **motion for cloture** must first be passed (60% supermajority required), although no speeches will be allowed in favor of/against this. Voting bloc will function the same as other MUN committees, and a bill may pass with a simple majority.

If there are still any questions regarding Senate procedure, there are a lot of resources online from other conferences and training sites that may be of assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact your chairs for any clarifying questions as well.

Topic Overview

Definitions

Counterterrorism is the practice, techniques, or tactics used by governments to combat or eliminate terrorism. Radicalization is the general progression through which a group of people or someone adopts radical positions on political and social issues.

Key Issues and Challenges

The battle against radicalization demands a multifaceted approach that confronts not only the immediate threat of online propaganda and recruitment but also the underlying societal issues that make individuals vulnerable. Disrupting the online echo chambers of extremism requires striking a delicate balance between content moderation and freedom of speech. Meanwhile, addressing vulnerabilities like poverty, discrimination, and lack of opportunities requires investments in social programs and community initiatives that foster inclusion and a sense of belonging. Equipping individuals with critical thinking skills through education is crucial in building resilience against manipulative narratives, while actively countering divisive rhetoric and hate speech through interfaith dialogue and intercultural understanding helps dismantle the ideologies that fuel terrorism.

The Importance of Technology in Radicalization Pipelines

In this digital age, the threat landscape has shifted from organized groups to lone wolves, often lured down a chilling pipeline of online radicalization. Social media platforms, ironically designed for connection, become breeding grounds for extremist narratives, where recruiters exploit vulnerabilities like loneliness and alienation. These manipulators, skilled in the art of online persona crafting, befriend potential targets, mirroring their struggles and frustrations. Over time, they inject poisonous narratives, warping realities and offering the allure of belonging within radical groups. This twisted sense of community, promising solutions to all woes, draws individuals down a rabbit hole of extremism, further isolating them from reality and nurturing the seeds of violence. Countering this pipeline requires a multifaceted approach. Disrupting online propaganda through technology and content moderation is crucial, but navigating the tightrope of free speech remains a delicate act. Investing in social programs and community initiatives that foster inclusion and address societal ills like poverty and discrimination can dry up the well of vulnerabilities recruiters exploit. Most importantly, equipping individuals with critical thinking skills through education is key to inoculating them against manipulative narratives.

Recent Events

January 6th and 9/11 share disturbing parallels in the context of radicalization and domestic extremism. Both events involved individuals driven by extremist ideologies, fueled by misinformation and online echo chambers, aiming to violently disrupt American democracy. January 6th's attackers embraced narratives of stolen elections and deep state conspiracies, while 9/11 hijackers were radicalized by anti-Western narratives and religious extremism.

Understanding how these different forms of radicalization can ignite violence through targeted manipulation and amplified grievances strengthens the need for multifaceted counterterrorism efforts.

Past Action

There have been multiple acts that affect counterterrorism and preventing radicalization in the past 20 years, but the main ones are the Patriot Act (and its reauthorizations) and the USA Freedom Act. The US strategy mainly revolves around inside surveillance and the use of federal forces to arrest and prevent terrorism. In more recent times, there have been failed proposed acts such as Domestic Terrorism Prevention and Hate Crimes Act of 2022 (denied by a republican filibuster) and the Countering Extremism in Our Community Act.

Enacted in the wake of 9/11, the Patriot Act significantly expanded the US government's surveillance and investigative powers for counterterrorism purposes. It allowed broader use of wiretaps, data mining, and information sharing between intelligence and law enforcement agencies. While praised for its role in disrupting potential attacks, the act also faced intense criticism for infringing on civil liberties and potentially creating opportunities for government overreach. There were reauthorizations in 2005, 2009, and 2011 that passed the Senate easily. However, since then, the discussion surrounding the infringement on civil liberties done by the Patriot Act has been negative towards the government. Many were concerned that the US was overreaching and spying on its citizens too much. Therefore, certain key provisions of the Patriot Act have not been renewed due to this discussion. Regardless, other aspects are considered permanent such as with the USA Freedom Act of 2015.

Born in the wake of controversy surrounding the Patriot Act's mass data collection, the USA Freedom Act of 2015 reshaped the surveillance landscape. It replaced indiscriminate phone record hoovering with targeted warrants, empowered independent oversight, and mandated transparency measures. While lauded by privacy advocates, the Act continues to spark debate about its impact on security, reminding us that the tightrope walk between protecting liberty and ensuring safety remains a constant challenge in the digital age.

Though both the Terrorism Prevention and Hate Crimes Act and the Countering Extremism in Our Communities Act tackled crucial issues in 2022, they ultimately stumbled over partisan

divides. The Terrorism Act, aimed at strengthening legal tools, faced concerns about civil liberties infringement, while the Community Act, focusing on prevention efforts, lacked a clear definition of "extremism," triggering anxieties about potential discrimination. Ultimately, neither garnered enough cross-party support to pass, leaving the pressing issues of domestic terrorism and radicalization unaddressed at the legislative level. Knowing that these recent acts have failed to tackle counterterrorism and radicalization, it is the job of this Senate Committee to offer a potential solution. These specific failed pieces of failed legislation should guide your proposed solutions as well as your thoughts surrounding how to tackle the issue.

Case Studies

Anwar al-Awlaki

Anwar al-Awlaki was an American-born leader of al-Qaeda in Yemen. Having grown up in the United States to immigrant parents, he worked as an imam in various mosques in Colorado, California, and Virginia before emigrating to the United Kingdom and then Yemen. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, Awlaki was seen as a "bridge" between the West and Muslims, being interviewed by multiple news outlets regarding the issue. The New York Times described him as a "new generation of Muslim leader capable of merging East and West."

Yet, less than 10 years later, al-Awlaki emerged as a prominent figure in al-Qaeda, the terrorist group responsible for the 9/11 attacks. While it has been said that his imprisonment in Yemen in 2006-7 was a driving factor in his shift from moderate to radical Muslim, the US State Department has alleged that he had ties with al-Qaeda prior to the attacks (New York Times). While no solid evidence linking him to the attacks has been made publicly available, multiple hijackers frequented his mosque in San Diego when he served as an imam, and his contact information was found at the residence of a key coordinator of the attacks (Washington Post). When he reemerged, Awlaki's ideology resembled that of Osama bin Laden. However, he was more fluent in English and acquainted with Western culture, something that allowed him to spread his radical ideology to more Westerners. He is famously quoted to have claimed that jihad was becoming "as American as apple pie and as British as afternoon tea."

Awlaki utilized online videos, blog posts, and social media to reach out to potential followers, making him one of the first jihadist leaders to recognize and exploit the power of online platforms for such recruitment purposes. His online lectures and sermons, which often

glorified jihad and martyrdom, were widely accessible and influential, particularly among English-speaking audiences in the West. This digital outreach played a crucial role in his ability to inspire individuals involved in several terrorist plots and attacks in the United States and Europe. In doing so, he is said to have influenced at least 55 US and 34 European extremists who carried out attacks post-9/11 (Counter Extremism Project).

Consequently, the National Security Council approved adding him to a CIA kill list by President Obama although he was an American citizen. The decision to kill Awlaki was based on intelligence that he was directly involved in terrorist activities against the United States. Following much debate, he was also placed by the United Nations Security Council on its list of individuals associated with al-Qaeda (Res. 1267). Al-Awlaki's killing by a targeted American drone strike in Yemen in 2011 raised many legal and ethical questions, particularly concerning the targeted killing of American citizens without due process. Following his death, al-Awlaki's father filed a lawsuit against various US government officials and agencies, alleging wrongdoing in the death of his son. His case was dismissed on the grounds that his claim was not justiciable under the Alien Tort Statute and that the political question doctrine disallowed the court from ruling in the case.

Nidal Hasan

Among the many extremists that al-Awlaki influenced, Nidal Hasan stands out for his unique background prior to being radicalized. Born in Virginia to naturalized American parents, Hasan joined the United States military, saying it was his "duty to the country" (NY Times). Following the death of his parents, Hasan began a more devout practice of Islam, and eventually contacted al-Awlaki via email in late 2008.* Although intelligence officials intercepted some of these emails between an Army major and a known extremist, they were dismissed as the two seemed to discuss questions about Islam rather than militant ideas.

During his time in the Army, Hasan became increasingly opposed to the viewpoints of his fellow soldiers. For example, during his residency as an Army psychiatrist, he presented a project in which he advocated for the US Department of Defense allowing "Muslims [sic] Soldiers the option of being released... to decrease adverse events." The "adverse effects" he referred to included killing of fellow citizens and soldiers (The Washington Post).

Ultimately, Hasan killed 13 people and injured at least 28 more in the Fort Hood Shootings in November 2009. Hasan later stated that the motive for his attack was to defend Taliban leadership in Afghanistan from the American military (NY Times). Hasan was found guilty of carrying out "the largest mass murder at a military installation in American history" (NY Times) and is currently awaiting death by lethal injection.

Analyzing the life of Nidal Hasan prior to his radicalization, there are no indicators of his movement towards radical Islam. Following the traumatic deaths of his parents, he became more devout in his religion. However, in doing so, he was misled onto a path of jihad by Awlaki and other terrorist recruiters online.

*Hasan had also attended the Virginia mosque where Awlaki preached when the latter was an imam; it is unclear whether the two had direct contact during this time.

Possible Solutions

The issue of radicalization requires multiple solutions tailored to its many aspects and manifestations – no one blanket solution can effectively address this problem.

Revisions and renewals of the Patriot Act have been occurring for the past 20 years in Congress. Due to the broad nature of the act and changing public sentiment regarding certain portions of the latter, a lot of anti-radicalization policy has been enacted as a result of it. Thus, possible solutions should at least consider this act with regards to what has historically worked and been the will of the American people, and what could be improved upon.

A primary medium of radicalization is the internet. There exists relatively little government regulation on internet usage and content in the United States; most restrictions originate from companies and other private entities. However, the presence of extremist content and recruiters actively posing threats to American society on such platforms may warrant a revision of this policy. Potential solutions addressing internet control and censorship must take into account previous efforts by the government to do so, and the practical role of government in regulating online spaces.

Another important and controversial aspect is surveillance of individual citizens by the government. A major criticism of the Patriot Act has been its broad allowances with regards to government surveillance of private citizens. Given this history, any form of such monitoring should consider the historical response to such monitoring and the legality of any surveillance with regards to the Bill of Rights.

Perhaps the most important priority of any potential solution should be the protection of the American people and their rights. Under the First Amendment, all persons are entitled to both the freedoms of speech and religion. While there are practical limits to these freedoms, the government must actively protect these rights when enacting new legislation. At a certain point, it is possible that the potential infringements of civil liberties outweighs any potential benefit of legislation; this should be avoided.

Questions to Consider

1. There have been multiple terrorist attacks in the US post-9/11. What mistakes were made in preventing and/or reacting to them, and how could these be addressed in the future?
2. The Patriot Act and its renewals have been debated since the act's inception following 9/11. What are the current shortcomings of the existing legislation, and what needs to be changed in the future?
3. Consider the case of Anwar al-Awlaki. Was the Obama Administration and the National Security Council justified in ordering the killing of Awlaki without a formal trial? Should this case set a precedent for future policy regarding killing US citizens who commit acts of terrorism?
4. Awlaki and other terrorist recruiters used online platforms to recruit potential militants. What is the role, if any, of the United States government in monitoring such platforms and preventing radicalization in the future?
5. What could have been done to prevent the radicalization of Nidal Hasan? What about the thousands of other American citizens being exposed to such ideologies online?
6. Is internet surveillance and/or censorship of private citizens ever justified? If yes, how would the government practically implement such policies in collaboration with the private sector?

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