Research Report

Model United Nations Oud-Beijerland 2026

Crisis Committee

Addressing the threat of an escalating war following U.S. military action in the Middle East

Lea van Alphen and Cynthia de Jong

Introduction

Military action by the United States in the Middle East can have consequences for the entire region. Other countries may become involved, armed groups may respond, and existing conflicts could become worse. This creates the risk that a conflict between a few parties could develop into a much larger regional war. The UN therefore needs to consider how to prevent further escalation. The United Nations and countries in the region can play an important role by encouraging negotiations, supporting ceasefires, and protecting civilians. However, this is difficult because countries have different interests and security concerns. The main challenge is finding a way to prevent a wider war while still addressing the reasons behind the conflict.

General Overview

One of the biggest concerns following military action in the Middle East is that the conflict could spread to other countries. When one country carries out military strikes, the targeted country may respond, and other countries or armed groups may become involved. This can create a cycle of attacks and counterattacks that becomes increasingly difficult to stop. If more countries become involved, the conflict could develop into a wider regional war. It could threaten international security and make it harder to restore peace in the region.

The United States and Iran are important actors in the tensions in the Middle East. Both countries have their own security concerns and political goals, which can make it difficult to reach an agreement. The United States has military partnerships and security interests across the region, while Iran has its own regional relationships and influence.

Military action can lead to a counterattack, even if the country carrying out the initial attack believes it is necessary for its security. The other side may view the attack as a threat and respond with further military action. This can cause tensions to increase instead of resolving the original disagreement. Other countries in the region may also be affected, even if they are not directly involved in the fighting. Preventing these tensions from spreading is therefore an important challenge for the international community. The United Nations plays an important role in maintaining international peace and security. The UN Security Council can discuss the conflict, call for negotiations, and consider measures to reduce the fighting. Under the UN treaty, it can also take action when a situation threatens international peace and security.

However, the Security Council can struggle to reach agreements when its members have different political interests. This can make it difficult for the UN to take action, especially when one of these countries is directly involved in the conflict.

This raises questions about how the international community can respond effectively when political disagreements prevent the UN from reaching a decision. Countries may disagree about whether a particular military operation is lawful. This can create further political tensions and make it harder to agree on an appropriate response. The international community must therefore consider how countries can address security threats while respecting international law. A wider war could have serious consequences for civilians. People may be killed or injured, forced to leave their homes or lose access to essential services such as healthcare, electricity and clean water. International humanitarian law requires parties to an armed conflict to distinguish between civilians and military targets and to take precautions to reduce harm to civilians. These rules apply to all parties involved in the fighting.

Diplomacy is one of the main ways to prevent a regional conflict from becoming a larger war. Countries can use negotiations, mediation, and international meetings to discuss their concerns and agree on ways to reduce tensions. A ceasefire can stop immediate violence and create an opportunity for further discussions. However, reaching an agreement can be difficult when countries do not trust each other or disagree about the causes of the conflict. A ceasefire may also fail if the parties do not follow its terms or if the main disagreements remain unresolved.

Major Parties Involved

1. United States of America (USA)
The United States is a major military power with security interests and military partnerships across the Middle East. In February 2026, the U.S. began military operations against Iran, stating that it was acting in self-defence and responding to security threats. The United States is therefore an important party in discussions about military restraint, negotiations, and preventing further escalation. 2. Iran
Iran is a major regional power and a central party in the conflict with the United States. Iran is relevant to this issue because reducing tensions requires addressing its security concerns and encouraging negotiations rather than continued counterattacks against the US.
3. United Nations Security Council (UNSC)
The UN Security Council is the UN body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. In this issue, it is important because it can help respond to military escalation and encourage peaceful solutions. However, disagreements between its permanent members, including the United States, can make it difficult to agree on action.
4. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
The International Committee of the Red Cross is a humanitarian organisation that protects and assists people affected by armed conflict. The ICRC is relevant because a wider war could increase civilian casualties and shortages of essential supplies. Its work focuses on protecting people affected by conflict rather than deciding how governments should respond militarily.

Possible Solutions

1. Negotiating a ceasefire
The United Nations could encourage the United States, Iran, and other parties involved to agree

to a ceasefire. A ceasefire could reduce violence and create an opportunity to work towards a longer-term peace agreement.

2. Increasing diplomatic cooperation
The United States, Iran, and other regional countries could participate in diplomatic talks to discuss their security concerns and disagreements. The UN could support these negotiations and help find compromises that all sides can accept. Continued communication could reduce misunderstandings and make further escalation less likely.

3. Supporting a long-term regional peace agreement
The UN may encourage negotiations that address the underlying political disagreements and security concerns contributing to the conflict. Agreement could include clear commitments from the parties and ways to monitor whether those commitments are being followed. This could help prevent temporary ceasefires from breaking down and reduce the risk of renewed fighting.

4. Providing humanitarian aid to affected communities
Governments and humanitarian organisations may provide medical care, food, clean water and shelter to people affected by the fighting. Although humanitarian aid cannot end the conflict by itself, it can reduce civilian suffering and further casualties.