

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 40th Mid-South Model United Nations Conference (MSMUNC). My name is Elaine Nguyen, and I will be your United Nations Security Council (UNSC) chair, alongside Theodoros Akritidis who will also be chairing with me. I am currently a sophomore majoring in Political Science on the Pre-Law track, with a minor in International Studies. I was born and raised in Memphis, and my interest in the evolving nature of public and international law has sparked my ambition to pursue a major in political science. Theodoros and I are so excited to have you join our committee this year!

The Security Council is a specialized committee that focuses on international peace and security. The primary role of the Security Council is to address and resolve international conflicts, crises, and threats to peace and security around the world. Delegates in this committee work to find diplomatic solutions to these issues. We focus on discussing and debating ways to maintain and restore peace in regions affected by such conflicts. We may consider sanctions, peacekeeping missions, or other measures to prevent or mitigate violence. With the authority to pass resolutions, which are formal decisions or courses of action, delegates in this committee must draft, negotiate, and vote on these resolutions. Once passed, member states are expected to adhere to and implement these resolutions. The Security Council essentially engages in diplomatic negotiations with other member states to build alliances, garner support for their resolutions, and find common ground on contentious issues.

The United Nations Security Council gathers to address the escalating crisis resulting from the invasion of Azerbaijan in Armenia. This violation of international law has caused widespread concern among the international community, demanding immediate attention and resolution. The invasion poses a threat to regional stability and requires a collaborative effort to restore peace and security in the affected areas.

Teo and I both look forward to meeting each and everyone of you at the conference. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out using the emails listed below!

Sincerely,
Elaine & Teo

Theodoros Akritidis: akrth-27@rhodes.edu

Elaine Nguyen: nguet-26@rhodes.edu

Topic 1: *The question of Niger's political crisis of 2023*

Chair: Teo

History of the topic

Niger has seen many forms of corruption and mismanagement of the country ever since it gained independence on August 3, 1960. Although the constitution of 2010 makes mention of corruption by requiring a revenue report from extractive industries and a declaration of personal assets from political figures, there is hardly any legislation against corruption. Essentially, there is a theoretical condemnation and criminalization of corruption, yet there are no effective measures to go after corruption¹.

The military and political power

The military has had a genuinely strong presence in the political scene. The reason for this is fundamentally the battle against terrorism and the struggle for security in Niger and the Sahel region in general.

Various Al-Qaeda affiliated groups have been formed all over the region, seeking to either create independent states or to take over current regimes. The government body that is most actively engaged in the fight against terrorism is the military and the police force. Despite the fact that the Nigerien military is neither adequately equipped nor adequately trained to overpower the terrorist organisations, they are still doing better than the rest of the countries in the region². Yet, the very fact that the resistance that they put up is not overpowering, but rather a struggle against terrorism, this gives the military a lot of political weight. For example, in an alternative reality where the Nigerien military is able to easily exterminate the Islamic militia, then most likely this topic would have stopped being relevant a long time ago. Yet, Niger's inability to decisively deal with terrorism and ensure security within its borders makes this topic part of everyone's political agenda. As a result, since the problem of terrorism is so prevalent, it comes as a consequence that the military has a significant influence in the political scene. This way we can explain the reason why Niger has a history of having military affiliated individuals as Presidents, rather than civilians³.

At this point, it is important to understand the positions of the last two administrations in Niger, before the coup took place. Mahamadou Issoufou was elected in 2011 and left office in 2021 after two terms. His successor was Mohamed Bazoum, the President whose administration was overturned. The man who led the coup is Abdourahamane Tiani, the head

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<https://www.u4.no/publications/niger-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption>

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<https://www.u4.no/publications/niger-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption>

3

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/08/31/niger-coup-s-outsized-global-impact-pub-90463#Democracy>

of the Presidential guard under the Issoufou administration. During Issoufou's terms, there was a shift of resources and personnel to the border in an attempt to reinforce the fight against terrorism. Yet, when Bazoum took over he seemed to be openly critical of the military's ability to effectively deal with the issue at hand. Resultantly, his reputation was not the best among the ranks of the military.

Resource mismanagement and the economy

The other major factor that set the foundations of the coup is resources and allocation. Niger is a poverty-stricken country with its level of extreme poverty being expected to reach 44.1%⁴. In addition, inflation seems to be on the rise, even though it is currently only at 4.23%⁵. With standards of living already way below the bare minimum and with the costs of living looking like they are on course to start increasing we can understand that the economy of Niger is not at its best. A big portion of the people cannot make ends meet and cover even the most basic human needs, signifying that the political corruption and security issues in Niger cause a humanitarian crisis along with a political one.

The poor state of Niger's economy can be justified by the allocation of resources in the country. For example, non-governmental organisations in Niger have filed an official legal complaint over a 99 million US dollar loss⁶. Additionally, Niger's allocation index lies at 3.4417⁷, in a range from 1 to 6 with 6 being the best and 1 being the worst. Through this index we can understand that essentially funds go towards the wrong goals, which does not allow for the development of the country and the increase in standards of living. For example, instead of resources flowing towards social welfare, infrastructure, or education they go in the wrong pockets. To exemplify, in 2014, the President Mamadou Tandja was charged with corruption after an 800 million loss. In addition, Niger's civil service and government is characterised by its size rather than its quality. Even though there is high personnel investment in necessary training and equipment is inadequate. The almost non-existent focus on the quality of civil service, mainly the sector related to security, is a major reason for corruption in the police force, which encourages crime and corruption, undermining the effort towards national security and leaving the people exposed to uncertainty and fluidity in the process, as law enforcement is not functioning⁸.

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<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/niger/overview>

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<https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/NER/niger/inflation-rate-cpi>

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<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/13/niger-ngos-file-complaint-over-alleged-loss-of-99-m-in-state-funds>

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<https://tradingeconomics.com/niger/ida-resource-allocation-index-1-low-to-6-high-wb-data.html>

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<https://www.u4.no/publications/niger-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption>

Past global engagement

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)⁹

The heads of state of the ECOWAS convened on July 30th, 2023, in Abuja, Nigeria to discuss the issue of the coup d'état in Niger. ECOWAS strongly condemned the overthrowing of President Bazoum and demanded his unconditional return to power, while rejecting any purported statements of resignation coming from Bazoum and any decisions, announcements, and declarations that do not come from Bazoum or his officials. For the time being, ECOWAS has taken a number of measures such as closing all the borders of ECOWAS members with Niger, suspending all commercial flights from and to Niger, freezing all transactions with Niger, freezing of Nigerien state assets in ECOWAS central banks, and suspension of all financial assistance, among other things.

The United Nations' officials

The Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, has strongly condemned the coup d'état that took place in Niger, taking a clear stance in favour of the democratically elected President, Mohamed Bazoum, and called upon all actors to protect constitutional order¹⁰. His words were also echoed by the UN Acting Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Nicole Kouassi in her speech at the Nigerien capital Niamey¹¹.

Current Situation

The aforementioned issues of corruption are the two fundamental elements that undermine the integrity of the Nigerien government, which also lie at the core of the coup that took place in July. The leader of the coup, essentially captured the moment in Niger so that they could overthrow the government and rise to power. The justifications that Tiani gave for the coup were the government's inability to ensure national security and poor economic performance as a result of the Bazoum administration. Yet, whether it is Bazoum to blame for these problems is debatable.

It is indeed true that ever since Bazoum was elected, the economy has not been outperforming its past self. If anything, the Nigerien economy has been pretty consistent across the board in its economic affairs. For example, as we can see in *Figure 1* Niger's

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<https://ecowas.int/final-communique-fifty-first-extraordinary-summit-of-the-ecowas-authority-of-heads-of-state-and-government-on-the-political-situation-in-niger/>

¹⁰

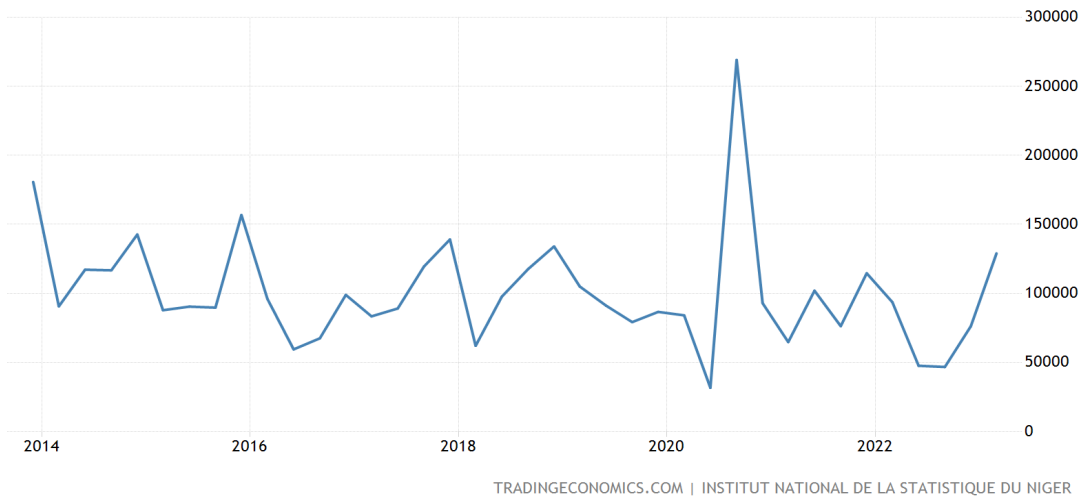
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1139127>

¹¹

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1139247>

exports have remained at the same level since 2014, with only one short spike in between 2020 and 2021.

Figure 1¹²

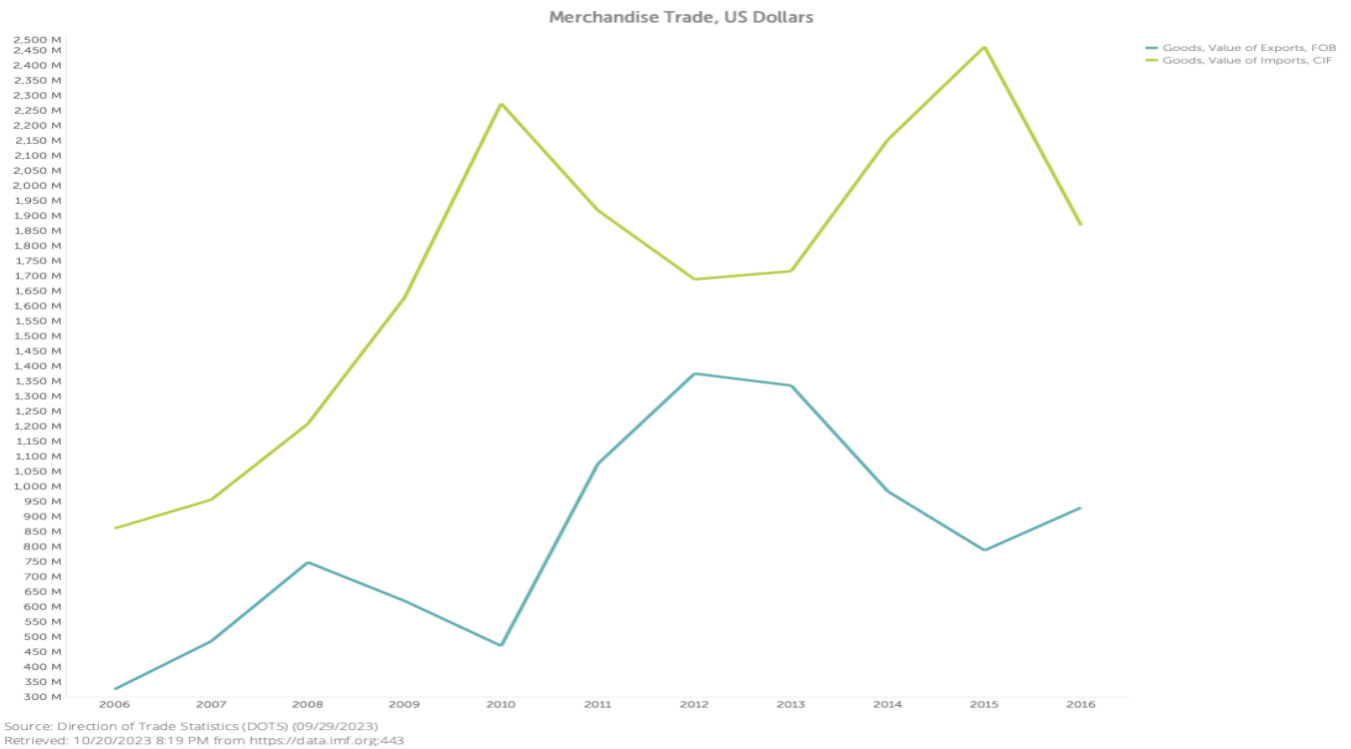


In addition, looking at the exports of the country relative to the imports in *Figure 2* we can understand that the stagnation in the exports of Niger is not problematic only on account of growth and progress in the economy, but also because it has been causing the country consistent current account deficits. Such a situation cannot be sustained for as long as it has been in Niger, as it is the reason for currency depreciation, which also brings inflation. Niger is a poverty stricken country and so a depreciating currency would further harm the people, as it means limited purchasing power, meaning that their ability to cover basic human needs is further limited. Also, notice that the issue of stagnant exports and consistent negative net exports has been an issue for many years before the election of Bazoum in 2021. As a result, it is difficult for one to make a convincing argument against Bazoum on the topic of economic management, while at the same time justifying an undemocratic usurpation of power and authority in Niger. Despite the fact that Bazoum can be blamed for the economy on the grounds that he has not contributed to progress in the economy, he was only in power for two years before the coup, which is a very short time period for any plans to be formed and implemented. At the same time the poor performance of the economy had been going on for many years consecutively, meaning that he also did not have a lot to work with in the first place. As a result of a poor economic performance, the fight against terrorism and the pursuit of high national security become more difficult tasks.

12

<https://data.imf.org/?sk=85b51b5a-b74f-473a-be16-49f1786949b3>

Figure 2¹³



In terms of security, the junta further accused Bazoum of being unable to ensure national security, as the terrorist groups have yet to be dealt with and have been inflicting casualties. Similarly to the economy, problems have been persistent before and after Bazoum’s election, so whether it is his administration to blame for the terrorist attacks in Niger is debatable.

Niger’s inability to combat crime and terrorism is the result of a number of factors. These factors include the territory of the country, the borders, and the allocation of resources, which has been mentioned in a previous section. The majority of Niger territory is covered by the Sahara desert, with more than 80% of the country being covered by it¹⁴, meaning that there are harsh climatic conditions under which security forces have to operate. In addition, as we can see in *Figure 3*, Niger’s borders with the neighbouring countries are very extensive. Consequently, the Nigerien security forces have a very long distance to cover, making border control more difficult.

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<https://tradingeconomics.com/niger/exports>

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<https://www.awf.org/node/2943>

Figure 3¹⁵



Combining the harsh climate and unfavourable borders creates a very unique situation for Niger, which requires a well-trained military and police force. Yet, as it has been previously mentioned, civil service, and especially in the security sector, is seeing a vast misallocation of resources, as officers are lacking proper training and equipment, making it impossible to ensure the security of the country. For this reason, Niger is dealing with illegal weapons trade, encouraging crime, and further empowering the terrorist groups in the region.

Yet, who is to blame for this situation? Is it Bazoum, or his predecessors? Bazoum came into office in April, 2021. Looking at events happening prior and after his election, we can understand that Bazoum can be hardly blamed for the terrorist attacks in Niger. Before Bazoum's election, in January, 2021, just 2 terrorists managed to kill 101 civilians in Tondikiwindi, in south-western Niger¹⁶. Again, in May of 2021, hardly a month after Bazoum's election, 200 terrorists attacked Bani Bangou, an area just south of the border of Niger and Mali, but this time killing 15 soldiers and injuring four others¹⁷. As we can understand, the extremist organisations do not hide in the shadows, resorting to mere tricks to inflict as much damage as possible, as they can engage the Nigerien military head on, as they amass more power. This situation is not one that occurs a month after one's election, but it is rather a chronic issue that the country is facing and is unable to tackle, due to a misallocation of resources and weak legislation.

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<https://www.britannica.com/place/Niger#/media/1/414746/61976>

16

<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/niger/>

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<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/niger/>

Possible considerations for the future

What needs to be put emphasis on is the restoration of democracy in Niger. Obviously, the coup leaders will not be willing to give away power, so a number of measures will take place. Following the example of ECOWAS, many previous allies of Niger might take economic measures against the junta and resort to sanctioning Niger to put pressure on the coup leaders. At the same time, we may see military intervention happening in the region, which would be everyone's last resort. The case of military intervention can put civilians in Niger in great danger, as the focus being shifted away from the terrorist groups to the junta allows the former to attack civilian areas unbothered, increasing their power in the region and endangering innocents. In the case of economic measures against the coup, the civilians are again caught in the crossfire, as their already low standard of living will be further affected by a plummeting economy, due to the imposed sanctions. As a result, the need for humanitarian aid in Niger will vastly increase, yet the goals of taking care of the civilians while putting pressure on the junta may go against each other.

Questions a resolution must answer

How can we maximise political transparency in Niger?

How can we reinforce the legal system in Niger?

What measures are to be taken to bring democracy back to Niger?

How can we put pressure on the junta while providing humanitarian aid to civilians?

What can be done to achieve Niger's goals on national security?

Conclusion

In conclusion, Niger has found itself in a very difficult situation, as the country is threatened on many fronts. The coup d'état that took place on July 26th, 2023 is a constitutional threat to Niger, as it overthrew the democratically elected President, Mohamed Bazoum. This new regime undermines the democracy of Niger, even though they are justifying their actions on the grounds that the Bazoum administration does not effectively deal with the economic and security issues of the country, yet this does not seem to be exactly the case. At the same time, as sanctions are being imposed on the country, it is the people who bear the brunt, as their already low standard of living is likely to be significantly affected. As the junta continues to remain in power, the possibility of a military operation in the region to reinstate President Bazoum does not seem unlikely, putting civilians in further danger and allowing terrorist groups to continue their activities. As a result, the current situation in Niger is a very delicate issue that is not only political but also humanitarian, and it requires the utmost attention of the international community so that Niger is able to stand on its own feet again.

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Topic 2: *Addressing the conflict in Nagorno-karabakh*

Chair: Elaine

Historical Context

The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region has deep historical roots, dating back to the early 20th century. The region's ethnic and territorial complexities have led to ongoing tensions between the two nations. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 heightened these tensions, leading to a full-scale war between the two countries. Multiple ceasefires and peace agreements were brokered, including the 1994 Bishkek Protocol and the 2020 Moscow ceasefire, have attempted to mitigate hostilities. However, the conflict remains unresolved, resulting in sporadic outbreaks of violence over the years.

Past global engagement

Following the border conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan that began in May 2021, U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi led a congressional delegation to Armenia, marking a significant display of renewed U.S. commitment. During her visit, Pelosi strongly condemned what she termed as the "illegal and deadly attacks by Azerbaijan." Azerbaijan dismissed her remarks as "Armenian propaganda," asserting that it could exacerbate the conflict.¹⁸ Unfortunately, Pelosi's visit disrupted ongoing U.S. and international diplomatic efforts aimed at restarting peace talks with Azerbaijan.

In December 2022, Azerbaijani activists occupied the Lachin corridor, ostensibly protesting environmental degradation due to illegal mining in Nagorno-Karabakh. These protesters, reportedly backed by the state in Baku, effectively halted all traffic except for Red Cross and Russian convoys. Despite the presence of Russian peacekeepers tasked with keeping the artery open for Armenian supplies, they were unable or unwilling to secure and reopen the highway. Consequently, residents in Nagorno-Karabakh faced severe shortages and rationing.

On April 23, 2023, Azerbaijan established a checkpoint on the highway, claiming it was necessary to intercept and deter military shipments from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh. The protests ceased shortly after the checkpoint was established, indicating that the government's true objective was to block Armenian passage. Both Armenia and ethnic Armenian leaders in Nagorno-Karabakh condemned the checkpoint, accusing Azerbaijan of attempting to isolate Karabakh Armenians and solidify its control over the region. Russia, however, issued a mild statement criticizing the move. The passivity of the Russian peacekeeping force in the face of

¹⁸ <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/nagorno-karabakh-conflict>

repeated attempts to restrict Armenia's access eroded trust in Russia as a reliable security guarantor.¹⁹

In May 2023, a flurry of diplomacy ensued, with the United States, European Union, and Russia hosting peace talks. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken facilitated four days of discussions with the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, indicating progress toward normalization and peace. European Council President Charles Michel mediated talks between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, during which "clear progress" toward peace was reported. Later that month, Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted a trilateral meeting with the two leaders to discuss the reopening of transportation links between Armenia and Azerbaijan, although no agreement was reached. Subsequent U.S.-led talks on Nagorno-Karabakh in late June showed "further progress" toward a peace agreement, with both sides demonstrating a willingness to engage in serious negotiations, according to Secretary Blinken.²⁰

The United Nations' Response

During a recent session at the Security Council, a senior United Nations official emphasized the paramount importance of prioritizing the well-being of civilians trapped in the enduring conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Miroslav Jenča²¹, addressing the ambassadors, revealed that two days prior, Azerbaijan had declared "local counter-terrorism activities in the Karabakh economic region." This response was triggered by the tragic deaths of two civilians and four police officers in incidents allegedly involving landmines placed by the Armenian military.

Jenča highlighted that Azerbaijan had informed the Russian peacekeeping force in the area about their actions to prevent significant provocations by Armenian troops. The goal was to ensure the withdrawal of Armenian forces and restore constitutional order within internationally recognized Azerbaijani territory.

Expressing deep concern, Jenča noted a significant escalation in military operations along the Line of Contact, resulting in civilian casualties and the evacuation of thousands from the conflict zone. He pointed out the absence of UN observers in the region, making it impossible to verify the various claims and allegations made by the conflicting parties.

Jenča reminded the Council of the UN's support for the full implementation of the Trilateral Statement made by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia on November 9, 2020. This statement followed the ceasefire established that year and aimed to reduce tensions and promote normalized relations between Baku and Yerevan. Secretary-General António Guterres, as emphasized by Jenča, called upon all parties involved to strictly adhere to the

¹⁹ <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90768>

²⁰ <https://eurasianet.org/fears-linger-in-armenia-of-azerbaijani-invasion>

²¹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/09/1141232>

ceasefire and uphold their obligations concerning international humanitarian and human rights law, in accordance with the 2020 Statement.

Current Situation

Since May 12, 2021, military forces from Armenia and Azerbaijan have been embroiled in a border conflict²². Azerbaijani soldiers breached Armenian borders in the provinces of Syunik and Gegharkunik, advancing several kilometers into Armenian territory. Presently, Azerbaijan maintains control over at least 215 square kilometers (83 sq mi) of Armenian land.

Recent military actions by Azerbaijan have resulted in the invasion of Armenian territories, exacerbating the existing conflict. This invasion has led to displacement of civilians, loss of lives, and destruction of infrastructure, creating a humanitarian crisis in the region. The international community has condemned the invasion, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Several nations and organizations have offered humanitarian aid to the affected populations.



Possible considerations for the future

The invasion of Azerbaijan in Armenia constitutes a breach of international law, including the UN Charter's principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Delegates must consider the legal implications and advocate for a peaceful resolution in compliance with international law. The committee must address the urgent humanitarian needs of the affected populations, including access to food, shelter, and medical assistance. Ensuring the safety and well-being of civilians caught in the conflict should be a priority. Additionally, the invasion has broader implications for regional stability. It has strained relations not only between Azerbaijan and

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenia%E2%80%93Azerbaijan_border_crisis

Armenia but also with neighboring countries and international allies. The conflict has the potential to destabilize the entire region, leading to a refugee crisis, economic disruptions, and diplomatic challenges for neighboring nations.

Questions a resolution must answer:

- 1.) Should the UNSC call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, urging all parties to lay down their arms and cease all hostilities?
- 2.) Should the Security Council Committee consider endorsing international mediation efforts, potentially led by the United Nations or regional organizations, to facilitate negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia?
- 3.) Would deployment of a UN-mandated peacekeeping mission to the affected areas could help stabilize the situation, protect civilians, and create an environment conducive to diplomatic solutions?
- 4.) What are some ways the international community could provide significant humanitarian aid to the affected populations and support post-conflict reconstruction efforts to rebuild infrastructure and communities?

Conclusion

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, particularly the military operations in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, has led to significant humanitarian concerns. Both sides have experienced civilian casualties, displacement, and the destruction of infrastructure. The situation has been characterized by a serious escalation in military activities, leading to widespread suffering among the affected populations. The conflict has drawn international attention, with concerns raised about the impact on civilians and the need for a peaceful resolution to mitigate the human toll of the ongoing crisis. The UNSC faces the critical task of addressing the invasion of Azerbaijan in Armenia, striving for a peaceful resolution, upholding international law, and ensuring the well-being of the affected populations. Delegates must collaborate, negotiate, and advocate for solutions that promote lasting peace, stability, and reconciliation in the region.

Members of the Security Council

Algeria

Country in Northern Africa. Borders Niger's northern border and has been facing issues of human trafficking, yet relatively low terrorism compared to the region. One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council.

China

Permanent member of the Security Council. Holds veto-power. China has been having friendly diplomatic relations with Niger since 2013. China has also been assisting Niger economically, through trade and infrastructure projects.

Ecuador

Country in Latin America. One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. Has strong economic and diplomatic ties with the United States.

France

Permanent member of the Security Council. Holds veto-power. Niger was a former French colony. France has been having very close ties with Niger, as it is Niger's largest export partner. The French government has refused to recognize the junta as a legitimate government.

Guyana

Country in Latin America. One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council.

Japan

One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. Japan has not had a very strong presence in Africa compared to other major economies. However, Niger has been importing a variety of goods from Japan.

Malta

One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. Malta is an island country in the Mediterranean below Italy. It signed a healthcare agreement with Niger just before the coup took place.

Mozambique

Country in South-Eastern Africa. Non-permanent member of the Security Council. Has been having diplomatic relations with Niger since 2021.

Republic of Korea

One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. Strong ally of the United States and Japan.

Russian Federation

Permanent member of the Security Council. Holds veto-power. Some people believe that Russia and the Wagner group were behind the coup, yet there is no evidence to support that claim. Wagner's leadership welcomed the junta, but also claimed no involvement in the coup.

Sierra Leone

Country in West Africa. Member of the ECOWAS and non-permanent member of the Security Council. As a member of the ECOWAS, Sierra Leone has suspended flights from and to Niger and stopped economic activities as well.

Slovenia

One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. Country in the North-West of the Balkan peninsula. Member of NATO and the EU.

Switzerland

One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. Switzerland has been loyal to a policy of absolute neutrality and equal treatment between parties in global affairs. However, they have taken a position against the junta and in favour of President Bazoum.

United Kingdom

One of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. The United Kingdom has decided to cut off all aid towards Niger until Bazoum's unconditional Presidency has been restored. Niger is considered a key ally of the UK in the region by the House of Commons.

United States

Permanent member of the Security Council. Holds veto-power. The United States has cut off a part of the financial aid it offered to Niger, with the exception of humanitarian aid, by pausing major projects in the country. At the same time, security and counter-terrorism operations have been frozen as well.

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