



NHSMUN

UNSC-A

BACKGROUND GUIDE

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Delegate Experience
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Global Partnerships
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Sofia Velasco
Renata Venzor

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! My name is Natalie Guo, and it is my pleasure to serve as your director, alongside Ale, for the United Nations Security Council A! I am currently a freshman at Cornell University studying government on a pre-law track. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy “coaching” a fantasy basketball team alongside my friends (Luka Dončić is my favorite). I love grabbing a treat (sweet or savory) while exploring new places. More importantly, I will stop at any given moment to pet a dog (or any cuddly animal, I don’t discriminate)!

Even though NHSMUN 2025 will be my first year as an NHSMUN staffer, in the past I represented the DPRK in DISEC during an NHSMUN 2023 conference. As someone who has done Model UN throughout the entirety of their high school career, I have been to plenty of conferences, including those hosted by Ivy League institutions. However, the amount of time and dedication spent on the planning and execution of NHSMUN spoke to me as a delegate. It was an environment more than just “speeches” and “research” (though both are extremely important and I encourage you all to put much thought into preparation) — the genuine and long-lasting connections I was able to forge with people from all walks of life is something I’ll hold close to.

The Background Guide regarding the Topic of “the Situation in Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH)” will serve as a starting point for understanding and evaluating the historical context and current circumstances surrounding the challenges faced by BiH as well as the international community. There are several layers and defining factors that have shaped the current socio-economic landscape of the country including historical, geopolitical, ethnic, and religious dynamics. There are countless ways to look into every one of the subtopics — so much so that this background guide does not serve to be an exhaustive overview of the current situation; I implore you all to delve deeper into the nuances within to better address the topic(s) at hand.

I hope you all will fully utilize the background guide as a point of reference to build upon as you all conduct research and draft position papers. I look forward to both hearing and reading the arguments you all will expound in hopes of bettering the livelihoods of Bosnians while also representing your respective national interests.

Best,

Natalie Guo

United Nations Security Council A, Session I

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Hello delegates!

My name is Alejandra Lasso Placencia and I am delighted to welcome you to the Security Council – A for NHSMUN 2025. It is an honor for me to be your director for Session II. Natalie (our Session I Director!) and I have worked intensively to prepare a complete guide to help with your research during our committee sessions.

As for my MUN career, I started participating in UN simulations back in middle school and continued until my first year of college. This is my fourth year with NHSMUN—two as a delegate and two as a staff member. MUN has opened doors for me that otherwise would have been out of my reach. It has led me to meet wonderful people and friends and also helped me find my passion for diplomacy and international affairs. I hope that your Model UN experience is as amazing as it was to me.

I am currently doing a double major in International Affairs and Journalism at Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Ecuador—mostly to fulfill my Rory Gilmore aspiration. Some of the things I love are doing puzzles (especially big ones), reading, and going out. Also, it does not matter where, but I just love traveling, visiting new places, or discovering new cute cafes to hang out with friends. I also love hiking; Ecuador is a great place to be a nature-lover since it has awesome landscapes to explore.

My favorite part of NHSMUN, besides visiting NYC every year, is the people. I will guarantee you that everyone is kind and welcoming, never missing the opportunity to smile at you when you spot them around the Hilton. But, if I can add a second favorite, especially for the delegate experience, it would be the friends you make in that packed week of debate. As your directors, we will always be here to help if you need us. If you have questions or need any advice, do not hesitate to reach out to us. At the end of the day, we want you to have the most enjoyable experience possible! I cannot wait to meet you all!

Sincerely,

Alejandra Lasso

United Nations Security Council A, Session II

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A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! We are Terry Wang and Jordan Baker, and we are this year's Secretary-General and Director-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse Model United Nations conference for secondary school students. We are thrilled to welcome you to New York City in March.

As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. Our organization provides a uniquely tailored experience for all through innovative and accessible programming. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience, and this idea permeates throughout numerous aspects of the conference:

Realism and accuracy: Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. Each NHSMUN committee is a simulation of a real deliberative body so that delegates can research what their country has said in the committee. Our topics are chosen from the issues currently on the agenda of that committee (except historical committees, which take topics from the appropriate time period). We also strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. Our delegates have the incredible opportunity to conduct first-hand research, asking thought-provoking questions to current UN representatives and experts in their respective fields of study. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

Educational emphasis, even for awards: At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN so special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN as an activity. NHSMUN seeks to reward students who excel in the arts of compromise and diplomacy. More importantly, we seek to develop an environment in which delegates can employ their critical thought processes and share ideas with their counterparts from around the world. Given our delegates' plurality of perspectives and experiences, we center our programming around the values of diplomacy and teamwork. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership that strives towards consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

Debate founded on strong knowledge and accessibility: With knowledgeable staff members and delegates from over 70 countries, NHSMUN can facilitate an enriching experience reliant on substantively rigorous debate. To ensure this high quality of debate, our staff members produce detailed, accessible, and comprehensive topic guides (like the one below) to prepare delegates for the nuances inherent in each global issue. This process takes over six months, during which the Directors who lead our committees develop their topics with the valuable input of expert contributors. Because these topics are always changing and evolving, NHSMUN also produces update papers intended to bridge the gap of time between when the background guides are published and when committee starts in March. As such, this guide is designed to be a launching point from which delegates should delve further into their topics. The detailed knowledge that our Directors provide in this background guide through diligent research aims to increase critical thinking within delegates at NHSMUN.

Extremely engaged staff: At NHSMUN, our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Before the conference, our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained rigorously through hours of workshops and exercises both virtual and in-person to provide the best conference experience possible. At the conference,

delegates will have the opportunity to meet their dais members prior to the first committee session, where they may engage one-on-one to discuss their committees and topics. Our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained and empowered to be experts on their topics and they are always available to rapidly answer any questions delegates may have prior to the conference. Our Directors and Assistant Directors read every position paper submitted to NHSMUN and provide thoughtful comments on those submitted by the feedback deadline. Our staff aims not only to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

Empowering participation: The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions most likely to make a meaningful impact on the world. That is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. We believe that to properly delve into an issue and produce fruitful debate, it is crucial to focus the entire energy and attention of the room on the topic at hand. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of each delegate's country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. MUN delegates are well researched and aware of the UN's priorities, and they can serve as the vanguard for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are proud to connect students with other action-oriented organizations to encourage further work on the topics.

Focused committee time: We feel strongly that face-to-face interpersonal connections during debate are critical to producing superior committee experiences and allow for the free flow of ideas. Ensuring policies based on equality and inclusion is one way in which NHSMUN guarantees that every delegate has an equal opportunity to succeed in committee. In order to allow communication and collaboration to be maximized during committee, we have a very dedicated administrative team who work throughout the conference to type up, format, and print draft resolutions and working papers.

As always, we welcome any questions or concerns about the substantive program at NHSMUN 2025 and would be happy to discuss NHSMUN pedagogy with faculty or delegates.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Terry Wang
Secretary-General

Jordan Baker
Director-General

A Note on Research and Preparation

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to NHSMUN in March.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#) and [Advanced Delegate Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are prepared to debate no matter which topic is selected first. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the NHSMUN Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections:

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Country Policy – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and font size. **We recommend 3–5 pages per topic as a suitable length.** The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for sending a copy of its papers to their committee Directors via [myDais](#) on or before **February 21, 2025**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 31, 2025**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at info@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.

Committee History

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was created in 1945 through the UN Charter as one of the six main organs of the United Nations. It was established with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Since its first meeting on January 17, 1946, the Security Council has been housed at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City but has held sessions in other cities.¹ The Council comprises 15 members—10 non-permanent and five permanent members. The five permanent members are known as the P5, which includes China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.² The ten non-permanent members are allocated based on a geographic representation quota and serve two-year terms each. The seat breakdown is as follows: five for African and Asian states, one for Eastern European States, two for the Latin American and Caribbean States, and two for Western European and other States.³ Currently, these include Algeria, Denmark, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia, and South Korea.⁴

Each member of the Security Council has one vote. An affirmative vote of nine members passes resolutions in the Security Council. However, only the P5 possesses the unique “right to veto” any resolution. If a P5 member votes “no” to a presented resolution, veto power is activated, and the resolution fails automatically. The P5’s veto power is used to defend their national interests, uphold a tenet of their foreign policy, or promote an important issue to a state. Since February 16, 1946, the veto has been cast a total of 310 times. Specifically, the veto has been used 154 times by the former USSR/Russia, 87 times by the United States, 32 times by the United Kingdom, and less than 20 times by China and France.⁵ Thus, the P5’s veto power has been a major source of controversy, with veto reform often being a primary element of initiatives to alter the Council.⁶ Many member states argue that vetoes harm the Council’s ability to address some of the most serious violations of the UN Charter and international law. While the veto was most frequently used during the early years of the UN and the Cold War, P5 members continue to use the veto power when their foreign policies and national interests are at risk. However, this has prevented the Council’s ability to address humanitarian crises.⁷ Most recently, the veto has prevented the Council’s condemnation of the chemical weapons attack in Syria or the establishment of criminal tribunals in Ukraine.⁸ This tension has led to resolutions modifying the use of the veto, such as Resolution 76/262, passed on April 26, 2022, which mandates that the General Assembly meets within 10 days every time a veto is cast in the Security Council to debate why the veto was cast.⁹

The Security Council has passed 2751 resolutions thus far. These resolutions focus mainly on the peaceful resolution of international disputes through negotiations and arbitration.¹⁰ Peacekeeping missions are one of the Council’s most visible forms of conflict management. These missions work to protect civilians, facilitate political processes, promote human rights, and

1 “What is the Security Council?” United Nations Security Council, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/what-security-council>.

2 “The UN Security Council,” Council on Foreign Relations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/un-security-council>.

3 “FAQ Security Council,” United Nations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/faq>.

4 United Nations Security Council. “What is the Security Council?”/United Nations Official Website. Security Council. 2020. <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/current-members>

5 “Peace & Security Data Hub,” United Nations, last accessed September 29, 2024, <https://psdata.un.org/dataset/DPPA-SCVETOES>.

6 Shamala Kandiah Thompson, Karin Landgren, and Paul Romita, “The United Nations in Hindsight: Challenging the Power of the Security Council Veto,” *Just Security*, last modified April 28, 2022, <https://www.justsecurity.org/81294/the-united-nations-in-hindsight-challenging-the-power-of-the-security-council-veto/>.

7 “The Veto: UN Security Council Working Methods,” Security Council Report, last modified December 16, 2020, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>.

8 Thompson, Landgren, and Romita, “The United Nations in Hindsight: Challenging the Power of the Security Council Veto;” “Russia Uses Veto to End UN Investigation of Syria Chemical Attacks,” *The Guardian*, last modified October 24, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/24/russia-uses-veto-end-un-investigation-chemical-attacks>.

9 Rebecca Barber, “The U.N. General Assembly’s Veto Initiative Turns One. Is It Working?” *Just Security*, last modified April 26, 2023, <https://www.justsecurity.org/86140/the-u-n-general-assemblys-veto-initiative-turns-one-is-it-working/>.

10 Council on Foreign Relations, “The UN Security Council;” “Resolutions Adopted by the Security Council in 2024 Security Council,” United Nations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/resolutions-adopted-security-council-2024/>.

more.¹¹ In the past 75 years, over one million peacekeepers from 125 countries have served in 71 peacekeeping missions.¹² Unlike the General Assembly, decisions made by the Council are legally binding and must be carried out by member states. According to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council can enforce its decisions by imposing economic sanctions, ordering an arms embargo, or enacting military action.¹³

Examples of the Security Council's important role in peacekeeping missions to stabilize conflict zones and protect civilians are abundant. Between 1992-1993, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) led the peaceful transition and democratic elections after several years of civil war and authoritarian rule under the Khmer Rouge regime.¹⁴ Perhaps one of the UNSC's most significant actions was its authorization of military force during the Gulf War in Iraq; UNSC Resolution 678 authorized the use of "all necessary means" to liberate Kuwait and led to the expulsion of Iraqi forces in 1991.¹⁵

Aside from other UN bodies, the Security Council has worked with many international organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to maintain international peace and security. The Security Council has aided in providing the mandate for NATO's operations in areas like the Western Balkans, Afghanistan, and Libya.¹⁶ Considering the Security Council's power and influence, delegates must treat these issues with care and reflection.

11 "Maintain International Peace and Security," United Nations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/maintain-international-peace-and-security>.

12 "UN Peacekeeping," Better World Campaign, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://betterworldcampaign.org/un-peacekeeping>.

13 "Security Council," United Nations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/security-council>.

14 UNTAC, "Cambodia - UNTAC." United Nations, Completed Peacekeeping Operations, last accessed October 3, 2024 <https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/untacbackgr1.html/>.

15 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 678. A/RES/678/2. (Nov. 29, 1990), [securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Chap%20VII%20SRES%20678.pdf](https://www.un.org/peace/peacekeeping/678.html)

16 "Relations with the United Nations," NATO, last modified, July 25, 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50321.htm.

Simulation

As delegates serving on the Security Council at NHSMUN 2025, all members will have the opportunity to put forth resolutions aimed at addressing some of the world's most complex international issues. These resolutions are meant to embody the work of the UNSC and should reflect the central objective of the body: to maintain global security and stability.

The five permanent members of the Security Council, known as the P5, possess veto power on substantive issues. The ten remaining delegations, which bring total committee membership to fifteen, do not have veto power. If there are no permanent members voting against the resolution (i.e. vetoing the resolution), nine affirmative votes are required to pass a resolution regardless of the number of members in attendance. The Council may, from time to time, invite non-SC states, organizations, and/or members to participate in the proceedings. Such members may only vote on procedural matters; once the committee has entered formal voting procedure on any resolution, the invitee is not permitted to cast their vote.

In the simulation of the SC at NHSMUN, the Director and Assistant Director (AD) will chair debate. Together, the Director and AD are referred to as the dais. The dais is charged with the task of maintaining decorum throughout the committee session. The dais will also assist delegates with parliamentary procedure and work to ensure that all points of order are handled appropriately.

A delegate's first job before coming to committee is to research both topics before the committee and to feel comfortable advocating their assigned country's policies. It is important that even if someone does not agree personally with a country's policies, the delegate remains true to country policy and continues to voice these ideas to the committee, remaining cognizant of how these policies are reflected in resolutions written during the simulation. As members on a very specialized committee, delegates are encouraged to work together towards a viable solution, and all members should seek to collaborate with states whose policies and opinions on the issues similar to their own.

The first task in committee will be to set the agenda. Following the vote on the setting of the agenda, delegates will motion to open a new speakers list intended for substantive debate on the first issue on the agenda. Debate will move in the order of this speakers list until a vote by the Council moves the discussion into either a moderated or unmoderated caucus. As committee progresses, the dais might choose to introduce different debate styles (such as round robin or round table) as needed. These forms of debate may be utilized when in the best interest of the committee and will be explained further during the first committee session. Votes on procedural matters such as unmoderated or moderated caucuses are procedural matters and will require a simple majority vote with any abstentions being prohibited.

The goal of this simulation is to produce well-written, comprehensive resolutions to the issues at hand. Through formal and informal debate, delegates will begin this resolution writing process by creating a working paper, which is essentially a collection of ideas on possible solutions. Once the dais accepts the working paper it becomes a draft resolution and may be edited, withdrawn, or merged with another draft resolution at any time prior to formal voting procedure. When the dais accepts a motion to close debate or the speakers list is exhausted, the committee moves into voting procedure on the draft resolutions.

Throughout committee, as the dais sees fit, shorter resolutions focused on more short-term, immediate solutions may be accepted to be voted on more rapidly with less intense debate or amendment processes. During these times, veto power for the P5 is active and abstentions are permitted. Draft resolutions may be passed with any nine countries voting in favor; however, if one or more of the P5 votes negatively on the resolution it automatically does not pass. Working on the Security Council at NHSMUN is a unique, unparalleled opportunity for students to take control of their own education. Delegates' abilities to work together, compromise, and accurately advocate the policies of the states they represent will determine the success of the committee.



UNSC-A

NHSMUN 2025



TOPIC A: THE SITUATION IN BURKINA FASO

Photo Credit: Sgt. Tatum Vayavananda

Introduction

Burkina Faso finds itself at a crossroads, facing one of the most severe crises in its history. From political instability to an economic crisis, Burkina Faso's domestic situation is unstable. A coup d'état has severely undermined the country's governance structures. The political situation has created more opportunities for extremist groups to spread terror. Millions of civilians have been displaced and continue to flee from being caught in the crossfire. However, extremist groups are not the only ones to blame for the surge in civilian deaths. Pro-government militias have also committed a variety of human rights abuses that have forced many from their homes.

The violence from both sides has triggered a humanitarian disaster. As reported by Human Rights Watch, over two million civilians have been internally displaced.¹ Social services in the country are struggling to address the needs of this growing group. Medical services have been stretched to a breaking point, with many hospitals in the country struggling to provide the necessary care.² Additionally, civilians are facing a food crisis. The country now depends on international aid, as the fighting disrupted trade and economic growth.

With crises pushing Burkina Faso to a tipping point, other Western African countries have become increasingly concerned. In extreme cases, violence can spill over into neighboring countries and destabilize the region. Additionally, the refugee situation could greatly affect neighboring countries. As refugees begin to cross the border at higher rates, they risk depleting the resources of underequipped host countries. A domino effect of crises can emerge as a result.

Currently, small steps have been taken to address the situation. Burkina Faso has resorted to drafting young men to grow its military ranks.³ Despite the larger security force, the central government still has difficulty controlling the rural countryside. This security force is supplemented by assistance from the Russian Federation, which has provided materials and military advisors. While the advisors have provided counter-insurgency training, the forces still struggle against such groups. The United States also continues to provide millions of US dollars' worth of humanitarian aid. However, this aid is

often intercepted at the border or misused by corrupt bodies.

As the international community observes these developments, the situation calls for a collective response. The humanitarian crisis, coupled with the threat of terrorism, demands the creation of robust international alliances to provide support. While humanitarian aid and peacekeeping missions, such as MINUSMA and RC-G5S, have provided some relief, efforts must be strengthened. The situation in Burkina Faso requires more than just immediate relief efforts. Therefore, the UN Security Council (UNSC) is tasked with finding longer-term solutions to assist the country in recovering and growing sustainably.

History and Description of the Issue

Coup d'état and Political Instability

Burkina Faso, formerly Upper Volta, was a French colony until its independence in 1960. The French administration left behind important ethical tensions and a weak government system.⁴ These issues were a result of poor border management and ethnic divisions that left many communities isolated and unprotected. However, Burkina Faso has been relatively peaceful compared to other states in the region facing similar situations. Tensions between different ethnic groups have fueled discontent and violence in neighboring territories. Nevertheless, race-related disputes have been a major cause

1 "Burkina Faso: Events of 2023," Human Rights Watch, December 18, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/burkina-faso>.

2 Human Rights Watch, "Burkina Faso: Events of 2023."

3 Elian Peltier and Guerchom Ndebo, "A Military Leader to His People: 'Fight or You Disappear,'" *The New York Times*, July 25, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/25/world/africa/burkina-faso-extremists-coup.html>.

4 Daniel N. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa of Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), https://www.google.be/books/edition/Institutions_and_Ethnic_Politics_in_Afri/ogGqPV6C1bUC?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover.

of political turbulence, which heightened as the post-colonial period began.

The independence from France marked a significant transition in the history of Burkina Faso. Since the establishment of the Republic, the country oversaw the adoption of the 1960 Constitution which granted civil rights, such as the universal suffrage of the president and the national assembly. The leader of the Voltaic Democratic Union (UDV), Maurice Yaméogo, became the first president of the country. Yaméogo administration shortly after reduced the traditional power of the Mossi states, which was a group of kingdoms that ruled the Upper Volta region for centuries.⁵

The criticism against Yaméogo's corrupt presidency became clear when the ban on all political parties except UDV was announced. After Yaméogo's re-election in 1965, the government announced the austerity measures due to the poor performance of the economy of Upper Volta. This led to mass demonstrations from the labor unions, students, and civil servants who were not satisfied with the financial measures.⁶ This political turmoil explains the background of the Upper Voltan coup in 1966 led by Sangoulé Lamizana. Yaméogo was thus ousted from the office as a result.

Political instability and coups d'état have been significant issues in the Western Sahel, particularly in Burkina Faso. The country has experienced numerous military takeovers since gaining independence in 1960.⁷ Coup's d'état—or sudden overthrow of government—are often driven by internal power struggles, economic challenges, and external influences.⁸ These frequent changes in government have complicated the stability of political institutions and the development of the country. In these unpredictable environments, coups are more likely to occur, as actors outside of the government structures

crave control.

Coup's d'état are often the results of deeper issues within a country. They arise in contexts with widespread dissatisfaction with the government, mainly due to economic struggles, corruption, and weak governance structures. Social divisions and ethnic tensions can also play a significant role. Marginalized groups may support a coup in the hopes of gaining more equitable treatment or resources.⁹ External influences, such as foreign intervention or regional instability, can also worsen living conditions, making coups more likely. In the particular situation of Burkina Faso, some of the causes for the political instability can be traced back to colonialism and the post-colonial administrations, where external influences played a crucial role in the government's decisions.

The transition to independence during the post-colonial period was not accompanied by solid democratic institutions or economic development. The French colonial administration did not leave behind any guidance. Instead, government documents were either burned or transported back to France.¹⁰ The lack of institutional knowledge was made even worse with the drafting of a weak constitution and little to no competition in the democratic process. As a result, the new government institutions allowed for easy exploitation and general mismanagement of the country. In addition to this, Burkina Faso never built a “democratic political culture,” which led to the appointment of many authoritarian leaders, as well as the continuous occurrence of coups d'état.

Understanding the causes and impacts of coups is crucial for addressing the issues that lead to political instability. In the case of Burkina Faso, these coups have not only disrupted governance but also impeded economic progress and development.¹¹ Each coup has left a lasting impact on the

5 “Burkina Faso: 2016 Country Review,” CountryWatch, accessed September 19, 2024, <https://www.countrywatch.com/Content/pdfs/reviews/B35M8ZQQ.01c.pdf>.

6 CountryWatch, “Burkina Faso: 2016 Country Review.”

7 Abdoulié Sawo, “The Chronology of Military Coup d'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015,” *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 48 (May 2017): 1-18, https://doi.org/10.1501/Intrel_0000000310.

8 Festus Kofi Aubyin, Inusah Ziblim, and Richard Apau, *Coup d'états and Political Instability in the Western Sahel: Implications for the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2022), <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-policy-paper-coups200522.pdf>.

9 Pierre Englebert, “Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa,” *The Journal of Developing Areas* 31, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 279-282, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4192675>.

10 “30. Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present),” University of Central Arkansas, accessed August 25, 2024, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

11 Aubyin, Ziblim, and Apau, *Coup d'états and Political Instability in the Western Sahel: Implications for the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism*.

political landscape, creating a cycle of instability. The most notable among these started shortly after the country gained independence from France. In 1980, Colonel Saye Zerbo overthrew President Sangoulé Lamizana. This coup was driven by dissatisfaction with Lamizana's failure to address economic hardships and corruption. This is something that is repeatedly observed in multiple coups d'état since the population is often dissatisfied with the socio-economic situation of the country. Zerbo's regime, however, was short-lived, as he was also subject to a coup two years later, led by Major Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo. These two coups would set the stage for a long trend of authoritarian leaders, often from the military, deposing each other.

The most recent significant coup occurred in 2014 when a popular uprising forced Compaoré to resign after attempting to amend the constitution to extend his rule. Following his departure, a transitional government was established. However, in September 2015, elements of the presidential guard loyal to Compaoré staged another coup, disrupting the transition.¹² This coup was short-lived due to widespread condemnation, and the transitional government was restored. These frequent leadership changes have slowed the establishment of stable

¹² Aubyn, Ziblim, and Apau, *Coup d'états and Political Instability in the Western Sahel: Implications for the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism*.

¹³ Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*, 279-282.

¹⁴ Pat McGowan and Thomas H. Johnson, "African Military Coups d'État and Underdevelopment: A Quantitative Historical Analysis," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, no. 4 (1984): 633-66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/160389>.

institutions and development in Burkina Faso.

Each of these coups, while unique in their circumstances, share themes of economic distress, corruption, and power struggles. In the specific case of Burkina Faso, corruption and power struggles emerged due to the heavy militarization of the region. The military has played a key role in the country's politics, often acting as an adjudicator in power disputes.¹³ High-ranking military leaders would frequently step into domestic politics if they felt controlled or unsatisfied with the state of things. Military intervention in Burkinabé politics has been done through coups or by applying pressure on civilian governments. This intervention often worsened instability, as inexperienced military leaders often prioritized their interests over the rest of society.¹⁴

The coup of 1980 remains the most major example in the country's history. Once the military entered power, many civil servants and government workers either stopped working or continued without proper supervision. Across the country, regional and national leaders were replaced by military members lacking political experience. As a result, rules and procedures were frequently broken by the newly appointed



Blaise Compaoré

Credit: U.S. Department of State

leaders.¹⁵ Ministers lacked experience and had no transition materials to prepare for their new bureaucratic roles. The lack of clear guidance resulted in a variety of issues. Government programs for everyday people were neglected, while those targeting specific wealthy individuals were strengthened. Funds were misallocated and often taken away from projects due to corruption.¹⁶ These issues were made even worse with many experienced civil servants leaving their jobs. The subsequent loss of expertise accelerated the downfall of the economy and the mismanagement of the country.

The constant changes of government and the absence of clear policies have led to systematic corruption in Burkina Faso. Corruption has impacted all levels of government, from the highest echelons of power to civil service in public institutions. This has resulted in the inefficient management of public resources, an unequal distribution of wealth, and constant economic struggles. Corruption has weakened state institutions and prevented the implementation of effective policies for development and stability, fueling social discomfort and distrust in government.

The constant change continues to shake the country and its institutions. Civil servants represent the most crucial part of each government's transition to a new leader. However, the violent nature of each government transition has allowed uncertainty to flow through. The unexpected nature of a lot of these coups has made it increasingly difficult for the government to keep its expert civil servants in its ranks. Additionally, the lack of a clear direction of leadership continues to push Burkina Faso into a downward spiral. And continues to fuel distrust from the public. All of these factors combined contribute to the country's constant struggle to battle crises.

Humanitarian Crisis and Internal Displacement in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has been battling an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, driven by political instability and terrorism. This turmoil has led to a notable internal displacement crisis, with millions forced to flee their homes. The situation has reached critical levels, as detailed by various reports from key humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Crisis Group (ICG), and International Organization for Migration (IOM). More recently, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has opened a case file on the insecurity of the Sahel region caused by terrorism and jihadist violence, which has unleashed serious migratory crises, famine, and forced displacements.¹⁷

The scale of the crisis in Burkina Faso is staggering. The ongoing violence has displaced over 1.8 million individuals.¹⁸ The conflict has intensified the struggles of civilians, creating a dire need for humanitarian intervention. The main actors sustaining the crises in Burkina Faso are the terrorist groups dominating the Sahel region. The Sahel has been the epicenter of jihadist violence since 2015, with groups such as Ansaroul Islam, the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (EIGS), and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).¹⁹ This violence has forced a high number of people to flee their homes. Internal displacement monitoring conducted by IDMC confirmed that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) exceeds 1.5 million.²⁰ This mass displacement has strained the country's capacity to provide shelter, food, and medical care.

The impact on the affected population is profound. Over three million people are facing severe food insecurity. The crisis has

¹⁵ University of Central Arkansas, "30. Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)."

¹⁶ University of Central Arkansas, "30. Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)."

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Burkina Faso: Army Massacres 223 Villagers," *Human Rights Watch*, April 25, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/25/burkina-faso-army-massacres-223-villagers>.

¹⁸ "Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Response Plan 2023," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, accessed September 19, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/burkina-faso>.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Sahel: End Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations," *Human Rights Watch*, February 13, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/13/sahel-end-abuses-counterterrorism-operations>.

²⁰ "Burkina Faso," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, accessed September 19, 2024, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/burkina-faso>.



IDP Camps in Burkina Faso
Credit: Lamine Traoré (VOA)

led to increased vulnerability, with displaced families enduring harsh living conditions and lacking access to essential services.²¹ Women and children have been affected the most, with most children in the region losing access to education, food, and basic needs. At the same time, women are under constant threat of violence. They are often caught in the crossfire between military and extremist groups. These groups are at risk of exploitation and abuse, further amplifying the humanitarian emergency. Migration caused by jihadist violence in Burkina Faso also affects neighboring countries, because of the cross-border displacements, the regional insecurity, and the lack of resources and humanitarian aid.²²

Cross-border displacement has affected Burkinabé neighbors such as Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana. These countries' resources and services are unexpectedly required, while they also face their own economic and security challenges.²³ The migration resulting from the jihadist violence has had a destabilizing effect throughout West Africa. Jihadist groups have taken advantage of porous borders to expand their operations, spreading the conflict in the region.²⁴ Countries in the Sahel region have been forced to increase their security

measures, leading to increased militarization in the region, as well as a resource shortage. However, counter-insurgency efforts across Western Africa have not been coordinated, making it difficult for the neighboring countries to unite against insurgents. While the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has deployed peacekeeping forces in the region before, they have not implemented any permanent measures to combat such fighters. As a result, no substantial effort has been made by any country towards countering extremist groups.

Adding to the crisis, the influx of refugees has strained neighboring countries' ability to assist them. Due to limited economic resources, Burkina Faso's neighbors have had a difficult time providing necessary housing, food, and services for IDPs. IDPs often find themselves unsupported by neighboring countries and left to gather their resources. Aid from international organizations (IOs) has been flowing into the region. However, the amount is very limited, with only enough to serve as a temporary solution. IOs have had to redirect resources to serve displaced populations, affecting the availability of aid in other areas. Many different strategies

21 "Burkina Faso: UNICEF Humanitarian Situation Report," ReliefWeb, June 18, 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-3-1-31-may-2024>.

22 "Migration and Asylum: Responding to the Crisis in the Sahel," European Commission, October 6, 2022, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e2389e33-5e35-40cc-93ca-e7bc664be2b6_en?filename=report-migration-asylum-2022.pdf.

23 UN High Commissioner for Refugees, "Burkina Faso."

24 "Sahel," International Crisis Group, accessed September 19, 2024, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel>.

and approaches have been used to provide aid. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs outlines a comprehensive plan for delivering essential services, protection, and psychosocial support to those in need.²⁵ This plan provides a comprehensive look at various UN agencies to ensure the most efficient support. Agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are participants in the plan. Additionally, IOM has focused on improving living conditions for displaced populations by constructing temporary shelters and enhancing basic infrastructure.²⁶ Despite these efforts, the scale of the crisis makes effective implementation complicated.

The UNHCR has provided crucial humanitarian support to the country. The UNHCR has been involved in addressing the needs of displaced populations by providing shelter, protection, and necessities. Their work also involves coordinating with other local and international organizations to ensure a comprehensive response to the crisis. Nevertheless, the UNHCR faces various challenges in delivering aid, such as the volatile security situation and logistical difficulties.

As previously studied, Burkina Faso is grappling with severe security summons due to the rise of extremist violence and internal conflicts. Since 2015, the country has witnessed a surge in terrorist attacks, primarily in the northern and eastern regions.²⁷ These attacks have resulted in significant casualties, forced displacements, and disruption of local economies. UNHCR reports that over one million have been displaced within the country, exacerbating the mobility crisis and stretching the already limited resources of the government and aid organizations.²⁸ Additionally, the judicial system in Burkina Faso faces numerous challenges, including insufficient funding, shortage of trained personnel, and corruption. Many Burkinabé citizens lack access to legal assistance, and court

cases often suffer significant delays. Corruption remains a significant barrier to good governance. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index consistently ranks the country poorly, reflecting widespread corruption in both public and private sectors.²⁹ These issues contribute to a lack of public confidence as the government is seen as ineffective and biased.

Efforts to combat corruption have been slow. However, some plans regarding security have helped the safety situation, mostly because they do not rely on the government. Recently, the Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger armies announced an alliance to fight terrorism in the region.³⁰ This alliance is different from the G5 Sahel and promises to implement new logistical strategies to counter the effects of extremism on local communities. However, the joint forces have been heavily criticized in the past for the abuse they have committed in the communities they claim to protect. Consequently, international protection organizations have increased their presence in the training, education, and monitoring of protection agents in joint alliances.

Economic Issues and Poverty in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso faces significant economic challenges, as high levels of poverty continue to impact development. Burkina Faso's economy is highly dependent on agriculture, which is vulnerable to climatic variations and international market fluctuations. These factors lead the country into cycles of economic crises.³¹ Agriculture in Burkina Faso employs more than 80 percent of its population. A crisis in this sector would severely impact the economy, as well as households across the country.³² Agricultural crises can be caused by many factors, including climate shocks, droughts, and pests. Ultimately, crops are devastated and incomes are reduced.

25 "Burkina Faso Humanitarian Response Plan 2024," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, March 19, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-humanitarian-response-plan-2024-glance-published-march-2024>.

26 "Burkina Faso," International Organization for Migration, last modified August, 2014, <https://www.iom.int/burkina-faso>.

27 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre - Burkina Faso."

28 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Burkina Faso."

29 "Corruption Perceptions Index," Transparency International, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023/index/bfa>.

30 SWI Swissinfo, "Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso announce joint force to fight terrorism," *Swissinfo.ch*, March 07, 2024, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/n%C3%ADger,-mali-y-burkina-faso-anuncian-una-fuerza-conjunta-para-luchar-contra-el-terrorismo/73443538>.

31 Aminata Diallo, "Economic Challenges in Burkina Faso," *Journal of African Economics* 19, no. 4 (2022): 301-320.

32 World Bank, *2021 April Economic Update - Burkina Faso* (Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2021), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/667441623270219232/pdf/Burkina-Faso-Protecting-the-Poor-During-the-Recovery-and-Beyond.pdf>.

Limited infrastructure and investment worsen these issues by constraining economic growth and diversification. Infrastructure is fundamental to the economic and social development of any country. In Burkina Faso, the lack of adequate infrastructure is a major obstacle. This deficiency affects several key sectors, such as transportation, medicine, energy, and water. For example, the World Bank reports that Burkina Faso has poorly maintained transport infrastructure, especially with roads and railroads that are impassable. This further restricts mobility and trade.

The government has tried to diversify the economy by encouraging sectors such as mining and telecommunications. Despite progress in maintaining economic reforms, high poverty and unemployment rates persist. These issues are influenced by global economic uncertainties and regional challenges. Continued reform, especially in social assistance programs, is crucial to mitigating adverse effects on vulnerable populations.³³

33 “Burkina Faso Economic Update 2024 - Special chapter: Maintaining Reform Momentum on Social Assistance,” World Bank, June 27, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso/publication/burkina-faso-economic-update-2024-special-chapter-maintaining-reform-momentum-on-social-assistance>.

34 World Bank Group, *Burkina Faso - Social Safety Net Project* (Washington D.C.: World Bank Group, 2014), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/516971468016184394/Burkina-Faso-Social-Safety-Net-Project>.

35 Rebekka Grun, *Burkina Faso - Social Safety Net Project: P124015 - Implementation Status Results Report: Sequence 07* (Washington D.C: World Bank Group, 2017), <https://documents.bancomundial.org/es/publication/document-reports/documentdetail/502591484241789968/burkina-faso-social-safety-net-project-p124015-implementation-status-results-report-sequence-07>.

36 “Burkina Faso,” Sustainable Development Report, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/burkina-faso>.

37 World Bank Group, *Burkina Faso - Social Safety Net Project*.

To combat poverty, Burkina Faso has enhanced its Social Protection Systems with programs such as Social Safety Net Project.³⁴ This system provides cash transfers to vulnerable households, aiming to improve food security and reduce poverty. The Burkinabé government has also initiated a plan for microfinance institutions to improve access to financial services for farmers and entrepreneurs, one of the most economically dependent segments of the country’s economy.³⁵ While these efforts have shown positive impacts, the most recent Sustainable Development report reveals that major challenges remain active regarding their fight against poverty.³⁶ The report’s indicators reveal that people are living on less than USD four per day, placing them in extreme poverty. Several projects have great potential but lack coverage. As an example of the latter, the Social Safety Nets Project has reached over one million beneficiaries but has not reached more remote communities that still lack economic security.³⁷

Other governmental efforts to improve productivity include vocational training programs and initiatives to support



A woman processes Shea tree nuts into Shea butter as it can provide a pathway out of poverty.

Credit: TREEAID

small and medium-sized enterprises. Approved in 2018, the Promotion of Youth Employment and Productive Inclusion Project aims to enhance skills and employability among young people. It intends to create favorable conditions for more inclusive employment that can reduce unemployment in the country. The project-specific rural approach, PADEJ-MR, expects to improve employment opportunities for farmers, agricultural workers, forestry, and livestock workers. The main beneficiaries of this program are people between the ages of 15 and 35.³⁸ The Project has trained over 20,000 youths, resulting in improved employment rates for 2020.³⁹ The creation of business incubation centers and support for startups has led to the emergence of new enterprises, contributing to economic diversification. Despite that, Burkina Faso cannot achieve economic stability without international cooperation.

Despite some progress, Burkina Faso remains one of the least developed countries. Comprehensive policies that address both economic growth and human development are vital.⁴⁰ Some of the key drivers of poverty include limited access to education and healthcare, poor infrastructure, and low agricultural productivity.⁴¹ Additionally, the illiteracy rate in Burkina Faso is one of the highest in the world, where only 41 percent of adults can read and write. Only 64 percent of school-age children attend elementary school. There is also a high infant mortality rate, with 76 deaths per 1000 live births. Life expectancy in the country is only 60 years old. At the same time, only 52 percent of the population has access to improved drinking water sources, contributing to the prevalence of waterborne diseases.

Effective poverty reduction requires targeted interventions to enhance productivity, improve social services, and create economic opportunities for all. Marginalized communities, like displaced ethnic groups, displaced families, and rural communities, require more opportunities to thrive. It is important to address poverty as more than an economic

result as it is something that affects the quality of life of a large number of people. Food insecurity, unemployment, subsistence farming, lack of sanitation, and lack of resources create a cycle of crisis that keeps the people in a critical situation. Economic growth in Burkina Faso has been modest, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate averaging 6 percent annually over the past decade. This has not directly translated into significant poverty reduction or improved living standards for many.

Impact on Education and Public Health in Burkina Faso

The ongoing crisis in Burkina Faso has severely impacted both education and public health. The infrastructure crisis described earlier has affected the already poor quality of education and health care. Many schools and hospitals, especially in rural areas, lack adequate buildings, equipment, and personnel. This limits many children's access to education. It also contributes to high maternal and infant mortality rates. Such insecurity has led to widespread school closures and disrupted educational services.⁴² Many schools have closed due to safety concerns, while those remaining face overcrowded classrooms and limited resources. On December 12, 2019, an armed group attacked the Prissila Primary School, located in the Centre-North region of Burkina Faso. While there were no fatalities, some buildings were burnt to ashes, and school supplies were stolen during the attack. This attack was part of a series of violent raids carried out by jihadist groups in the area that have increased in frequency and intensity since 2014.

UNICEF's "Education in Emergencies" report documents the effects of violence on educational facilities and the displaced students unable to continue their education.⁴³ The report emphasizes the need to maintain educational services during emergencies. It also highlights initiatives providing temporary learning spaces and psychosocial support to affected children. Despite these efforts, the scale of the crisis poses a significant

38 "Burkina Faso - Support Project for Youth Employment and Skills Development in Rural Areas (PADEJ-MR)," MapAfrica, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://mapafrica.afdb.org/en/projects/46002-P-BF-100-002>.

39 World Bank, *Implementation Completion and Results Report: Burkina Faso for the BF-Youth Employment & Skills Development Project* (Washington D.C.: World Bank Group, 2020), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/222601601994479512/pdf/Burkina-Faso-Youth-Employment-Skills-Development-Project.pdf>.

40 "UNDP in Burkina Faso," United Nations Development Programme, accessed September 19, 2024, <https://www.undp.org/burkina-faso>.

41 Pierre Madi, "Poverty and Development in Burkina Faso," *African Development Review* 32, no. 3 (2021): 245-265.

42 Fatou Saar, "Education in Crisis: Burkina Faso's Struggles," *Journal of African Education Studies* 27, no. 2 (2022): 89-108.

43 "Education in Emergencies," United Nations Children's Fund, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/education/emergencies>.

challenge to continuous education and illiteracy issues in the country.

Lack of quality learning not only impoverishes the population but also increases the likelihood of dropping out of school. Recent studies by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS Data) disclose how completion rates are lower for secondary and tertiary education. By 2021, completion levels for primary education were high for both boys and girls, with an overall 67 percent completion. However, for secondary education, only 41 percent and 33.6 percent completed this level. Enrollment for upper secondary levels (tertiary education) highlights gender-based discrimination, with only seven percent of females and 12 percent of males. Additionally, there's a 71 percent probability students will drop off before graduation due to the high child labor rates in the country. Efforts to reduce the illiteracy rates in Burkina Faso include building new schools, providing scholarships, and training teachers. Further investment and innovative approaches are required to ensure inclusive and quality education.⁴⁴

Moreover, the conflict has disrupted healthcare services, leading to shortages of medical supplies, personnel, and essential services.⁴⁵ The health system is overwhelmed as

⁴⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Burkina Faso: Education Country Brief."

⁴⁵ "Crisis in Burkina Faso," Rescue, February 14, 2024, <https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/crisis-burkina-faso-what-you-need-know-and-how-you-can-help>.

disease outbreaks—such as cholera and malaria—strain the fragile infrastructure. Other health problems include the lack of sanitization and the treatment of critical health conditions. Burkina Faso has one of the largest rates of maternal mortality in the region, with approximately 320 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Limited access to maternal health services, infections, complications during childbirth, and poor prenatal care are the leading causes behind these figures. According to UNICEF, only 67 percent of deliveries are attended by skilled medical personnel.

Other significant challenges for Burkina Faso's health system are pandemics, epidemics, and prevention. The country struggled with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other diseases like malaria, meningitis, and yellow fever. As of mid-2023, the country has confirmed over 15,000 cases of COVID and 300 deaths. This reflects the lack of immunization in many parts of the world. During the pandemic, the medical system collapsed due to the lack of personnel, personal protective equipment, intensive care units, and even hospital beds. The ability to test and trace was also limited, making it difficult to control the spread of the virus.

For other diseases, Burkina Faso is not ready to provide proper



Classroom in Burkina Faso

Credit: Al hayy

medical care. Malaria is one of the main causes of mortality, with more than 12 million malaria cases and 400 deaths reported in 2022. It is not always treatable in the country due to the lack of insecticide-treated nets. Additionally, Burkina Faso is located in the “Meningitis-belt” in Africa, where outbreaks are common. In 2019 alone, a significant meningitis outbreak affected thousands of people and caused hundreds of deaths.⁴⁶ Addressing these challenges requires investment in healthcare, coordination of international aid, and strengthening community-based health initiatives.

The international community has played a crucial role in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso. The ongoing conflicts and severe socio-economic conditions created urgent needs for assistance, as they were not properly addressed by the local government. For example, the European Union (EU) has been a major donor, providing financial support for various initiatives, addressing both immediate needs and long-term recovery.⁴⁷ This aid includes funding for food assistance, health care, and education for vulnerable populations. The European Commission’s report emphasizes the importance of a coordinated approach for effective aid. These points are shared by the World Bank, which has supported Burkina Faso through various projects. These plans aimed at improving infrastructure, promoting economic development, and strengthening social services.⁴⁸ The report highlights the role of international support in enhancing future resilience. It also notes the challenges of ensuring that aid reaches its intended recipients in times of crisis.

Moving into children’s well-being, UNICEF focuses on efforts to address the humanitarian needs of families affected by the crisis. UNICEF has been involved in providing emergency education, child protection services, and health care. The organization highlights the critical need for support to prevent a generation of children from suffering beyond the conflict. UNICEF’s efforts are integral to addressing the developmental

needs of the most vulnerable populations.

Lastly, UN Peacekeeping has been very important for stabilizing the region and supporting humanitarian operations. Peacekeeping missions have been deployed to protect civilians, facilitate aid delivery, and support local authorities in maintaining security.⁴⁹ The presence of peacekeepers is crucial for creating a safer environment in which humanitarian work can be carried out. Still, the effectiveness of these missions can be influenced by the complex security situation.

Current Status

Case study: The role of “Dozos” in enhancing security in Burkina Faso

Over the past decade, the security landscape in Burkina Faso has deteriorated due to rising violence and the community conflicts powered by the unstable government.⁵⁰ In just one decade, the Burkinabé government had four leaders, all of them with different policies and strategies for security and control, leading to the deterioration of the security system. This deterioration has affected the northern and eastern regions of the country the most. In response to the escalating threats, local communities have taken their initiatives to safeguard their security. One such initiative involves the Dozos, a traditional group of hunters known for their cultural heritage to the region.

The Dozos are a fraternity of traditional hunters known as a local self-defense group that gained strength in the last decade. The Dozos, as well as the Koglweogos, have been an important element in attracting the public to the idea of “the new Burkina Faso” that began in 2014 after the fall of Blaise Compaoré.⁵¹ Therefore, self-defense groups in the region represent resilience and change, while providing the population with a sense of security that the state has failed to offer. Self-defense groups all

⁴⁶ “Burkina Faso - Health,” U.S. Agency for International Development, accessed October 7, 2024, <https://www.usaid.gov/burkina-faso/health>.

⁴⁷ “Burkina Faso,” European Commission, accessed October 7, 2024, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/burkina-faso_en.

⁴⁸ “International Support for Burkina Faso,” World Bank, accessed October 7, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso>.

⁴⁹ “UN Peacekeeping in Burkina Faso,” UN Peacekeeping, accessed September 19, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/burkina-faso>.

⁵⁰ Sten Hagberg, “The Rise and Fall of a Political Party: Handling Political Failure in Municipal Elections in Burkina Faso,” *Kritisk Etnografi Swedish Journal of Anthropology* 2, no. 1-2 (Jan. 2019): 141-56, <https://doi.org/10.33063/diva-409768>.

⁵¹ Sten Hagberg, “Performing Tradition while Doing Politics: A comparative study of the dozos and koglweogos self-defense movements in Burkina Faso,” *African Studies Review* 62, no. 1 (March 2019): 173-93. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.52>.

over the West Africa region have fulfilled the same role since 1990, when they began to form.

Self-defense movements in West Africa have grown since the 90s, often in light of post-colonial democratization processes or conflict. These movements represent the grassroots of the people while being amid political processes.⁵² In many West African countries, like Burkina Faso, citizens face terrorism, theft, banditry, extreme violence, and corruption, either due to the absence of a state or by the failure of the government to provide safety.⁵³ With that, these self-defense movements address the security situation in local communities when the government does not while preserving cultural heritage.

The Dozos' roots can be traced to the pre-colonial era in the Mandé-speaking regions of West Africa. Dozos are renowned not only for their hunting skills but also for their roles as spiritual leaders and healers, making them elite hunters and warriors in West African societies.⁵⁴ Their knowledge of the forest, spiritual practices, and tracking skills earned them a revered status. The Dozos continue to play vital roles in their communities, providing not only security but traditional medicine.⁵⁵

Regarding their forms and practices, Dozos operate in a highly organized manner, with a hierarchical structure that includes a leader.⁵⁶ This is extremely important to understand and highlight this structure, especially from an international law perspective. In International Humanitarian Law, the law bench that studies armed conflicts and their effects distinguishes between non-state armed groups and rebel groups. The International Criminal Court (ICC) in its cases

Prosecutor v. Ntaganda and Prosecutor v. Tadic, recognizes a list of minimum requirements for a group to be recognized as a non-state armed group such as organization and structure, the capacity to carry out sustained and concerted military operations, a clear hierarchy, the ability to plan and execute coordinated attacks, control over territory, and many more that the Dozos meet.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, since the Burkinabe government and the national military forces are not directly confronting this group, this classification is of little relevance. However, in the event of a civil war, the state of Burkina Faso, guided by these classifications, could declare the Dozos as a legitimate enemy and initiate an armed conflict like Colombia or Yemen did before.

The rise of the Dozos as security providers in Burkina Faso comes against the backdrop of several key challenges the government has not addressed properly. Northern Burkina Faso has become a hotspot for extremist activities, causing numerous casualties among the local population.⁵⁸ To control this issue, Dozos implemented patrols to deter criminal activities and respond to threats. Their effectiveness is guaranteed as they have a deep knowledge of the terrain and a close tie to local communities, enabling them to gather valuable information about the plans of terrorist groups. Despite that, Dozos also face inter-communal tensions that leave different ethnic and community groups unprotected.⁵⁹

Throughout history, Dozos have had a major impact on wars and mediations all over West Africa. In wars waged against colonial armies in the past century, Dozos constituted the army of colonized peoples against governments, playing a key role in many independence movements in Burkina Faso, Mali,

52 Hagberg, "Performing Tradition while Doing Politics: A comparative study of the dozos and koglwegos self-defense movements in Burkina Faso," 173-93.

53 Peter Albrecht and Helene Maria Kyed, *Policing and the Politics of Order-Making* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2015), <https://www.routledge.com/Policing-and-the-Politics-of-Order-Making/Albrecht-Kyed/p/book/9781138211223?srsltid=AfmBOorW0p5mnQTJFeu-GQ4pSYvYjhjx0bA-a-eMMVctteb9ZIQ5h9Oc>.

54 Hagberg, "Performing Tradition while Doing Politics: A comparative study of the dozos and koglwegos self-defense movements in Burkina Faso," 173-93; Janneke Tiega, "Vigilantism in western Burkina Faso," *Fieldwork Meets Crisis*, October, 14, 2020, <https://boasblogs.org/fieldworkmeetscrisis/vigilantism-in-western-burkina-faso/>.

55 Hagberg, "Performing Tradition while Doing Politics: A comparative study of the dozos and koglwegos self-defense movements in Burkina Faso," 173-93; Tiega, "Vigilantism in western Burkina Faso."

56 Hagberg, "Performing Tradition while Doing Politics: A comparative study of the dozos and koglwegos self-defense movements in Burkina Faso," 173-93.

57 Nils Melzer, *International Humanitarian Law: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2019), https://www.jep.gov.co/sala-de-Prensa/Documents/4231_002-IHL_WEB_13.pdf.

58 Hagberg, "Performing Tradition while Doing Politics: A comparative study of the dozos and koglwegos self-defense movements in Burkina Faso," 173-93.

59 Tiega, "Vigilantism in western Burkina Faso;" Loïc Bisson, Ine Cottyn, Kars de Bruijne, and Fransje Molenaar, *Between Hope and Despair: Pastoralist adaptation in Burkina Faso* (The Hague: Clingendael, 2021), <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/between-hope-and-despair.pdf>.

Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Dozos, as well as Koglweogos, are respected figures who often mediate local disputes peacefully. For example, in 2019, a peace agreement was made between communities of Dozo farmers, herders, and hunters in the Djeneé Circle in Mali, that is still in force.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, Dozos and some Koglweogos have refused to form part of regional mediation groups such as the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDPs), founded in 2022 by President Ibrahim Traoré.⁶¹

An International Crisis Group report about self-defense groups has questioned the coherence and lawfulness of these groups, considering that they are not an internationally recognized army.⁶² They mainly question whether these “armed civilians” are a threat to social coherence. According to their report, “the use of VDPs is a double-edged sword,” mainly because they lack important protections and training to fight against the jihadist groups.⁶³ This lack of training and capacity has resulted in multiple casualties and civilians caught in the middle of crossfire battles.

Another great concern regarding Dozos is the challenges they face within politics. The Burkinabé government has tried to contain self-defense movements, following a trend of bureaucratically blocking the self-defense groups in the region.⁶⁴ These obstacles affect both the Dozos and the Koglweogos. This is extremely serious when analyzed from the perspective of the most isolated communities, abandoned by the state, as they rely heavily on their protection. The limited presence of the state security forces in remote areas leaves many communities vulnerable to attacks and, in such cases, the self-defense movements are their only support.

With that being said, the Dozos’ efforts this past decade have supported numerous communities and contributed to the country’s safety.⁶⁵ This is visible through the impact the Dozos have had in the Boucle du Mouhoun Region. Back in 2019, the governor of Boucle du Mouhoun, Edgard Sié Sou, held a meeting with “The Brotherhood of the Dozos” to talk about peace and social cohesion.⁶⁶ This meeting led to the establishment of an important alliance between the local government and the brotherhood.⁶⁷ Ever since the Dozos have implemented patrols and intelligence groups that have contributed to a reduction in incidents of banditry and terrorist attacks.

The Dozos in Burkina Faso represent a fascinating example of how traditional practices can be integrated into modern strategies. They also highlight how important self-defense groups are to preserving peace in vulnerable communities. Yet, it is important to preserve balance; while their involvement has had a positive impact on local security, their strategies must improve and comply with international standards to protect more people fairly and lawfully. A balanced approach that includes support for local communities, sustainability, and diverse thinking about ethnicity is necessary for their impact to be magnified.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established by the Security Council in 2013 by resolution S/RES/2100 to support the political processes in the country and to improve

60 Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, *Mediation of local conflicts in the Sahel: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger*, (Geneva: Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2022), <https://hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/HDC-PUBLICATION-mediationconflicts-Sahel-ENG-WEB.pdf>.

61 Hagberg, “Performing Tradition while Doing Politics: A comparative study of the dozos and koglweogos self-defense movements in Burkina Faso,” 173-93.

62 International Crisis Group, *Burkina Faso: Arming Civilians at the Cost of Social Cohesion?* (Dakar/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2023), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/burkina-faso/burkina-faso/313-armer-les-civils-au-prix-de-la-cohesion-sociale>.

63 International Crisis Group, *Burkina Faso: Arming Civilians at the Cost of Social Cohesion?*

64 Hagberg, “Performing Tradition while Doing Politics: A comparative study of the dozos and koglweogos self-defense movements in Burkina Faso,” 173-93.

65 André Tibiri, Wamtinga Richard Sawadogo, Abou Dao, Bethany G. Elkington, Noufou Ouedraogo, and Innocent Pierre Guissou, “Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants among Dozo hunters: an ethnobotanical survey in Niamberla village, Burkina Faso,” *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* Vol. 21, No. 5 (May 2015): 294-303, doi.org/10.1089/acm.2014.0016.

66 Amnesty International, “Death was slowly creeping on us” *Living Under Siege in Burkina Faso* (London: Amnesty International, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AFR6072092023ENGLISH.pdf>.

67 Az Aïb, “Insecurity in the Boucle du Mouhoun: the governor and the dozos talk about peace and social cohesion,” *Agence d’information du Burkina Faso*, March 25, 2019, https://www.aib-media.translate.google.com/regions/2019/03/25/insecurite-dans-la-boucle-du-mouhoun-le-gouverneur-et-les-dozos-parlent-de-paix-et-cohesion-sociale/?_x_tr_sl=fr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc.

security-related efforts.⁶⁸ MINUSMA primarily operated in Mali but has had significant implications for Burkina Faso. It was initiated to assist Mali in its stabilization processes and transition to democracy. As of July 2023, MINUSMA deployed 15,779 personnel to help, including civilians, troops, UN Volunteers, and police officers.⁶⁹ Most countries in West Africa contributed economically and militarily to the mission, with Burkina Faso being one of the top ten contributors by July 2023.⁷⁰ The mission was unanimously closed by the Security Council in 2023 with its Resolution 2690 (2023) and was officially withdrawn in December 2023. Still, it is a relevant case to observe the current situation of regional and international cooperation with the situation in Burkina Faso.⁷¹

The mission's objectives, described in UNSC resolution 2164, include stabilizing population centers, protecting civilians, and facilitating humanitarian assistance in Mali.⁷² However, due to the interconnected nature of security threats in the Sahel

region, MINUSMA's activities extended into neighboring countries, including Burkina Faso, Niger and Sierra Leone. The shared borders allowed extremist groups to operate beyond their home regions, necessitating a regional approach to security. While there are other regional organizations with similar agendas to MINUSMA, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), they have not made the same progress as the mission.⁷³ In February 2024, several countries, including Burkina Faso, left ECOWAS due to disagreements between the military governments and the organization's mandates, making the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations one of the few remaining active regional bodies in the Sahel.⁷⁴

One of the critical aspects of MINUSMA's support to Burkina Faso was intelligence sharing. Given the nature of the threat, timely and accurate information is crucial. MINUSMA has established mechanisms for sharing extremist activities and

68 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2100, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, S/RES/2100, ¶ (April 25, 2013), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2100\(2013\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2100(2013)).

69 "MINUSMA FACT SHEET," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed August 3, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusma>.

70 United Nations Peacekeeping, "MINUSMA FACT SHEET."

71 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2690, Termination of MINUSMA's Mandate, S/RES/2690 ¶ (June 30, 2023), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2690\(2023\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2690(2023)); United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Press Statement on Closure of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali," news release, January 5, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15557.doc.htm>.

72 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2164, Framework for long term peace and stability in Mali, S/RES/2164 ¶ (June 25, 2014), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/sres2164.php>.

73 "ECOWAS," Economic Community of West African States, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://www.ecowas.int/>.

74 Francica Zanker, Amanda Bisong, and Leonie Jegen, "Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso could exacerbate the migration crisis in West Africa by leaving the regional alliance," *The Conversation*, February 28, 2024, <https://theconversation.com/niger-mali-y-burkina-faso-podrian-agudizar-la-crisis-migratoria-en-africa-occidental-al-abandonar-la-alianza-regional-224560>.

MINUSMA
Credit: MONUSCO Photos



potential threats to Burkinabé forces. This collaboration was carried out between MINUSMA and the G5 Sahel, a joint military force project founded in 2014 by five Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mauritania and Niger.⁷⁵ The G5 Sahel, also known as the FC-G5S, was established to combat terrorism and organized crime in the region, operating across borders of member states.⁷⁶ FC-G5S focuses on three operational zones: the Western sector (Mali and Mauritania), the Central Sector (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), and the Eastern Sector (Chad and Niger). The collaboration between the FC-G5S and MINUSMA is crucial, particularly in the realm of intelligence sharing due to the complementary capabilities and the diverse intelligence sources.

With that in mind, it is vital to note the difference in capabilities between the two organizations. Although the FC-G5S has in-depth local knowledge, it lacks the resources and mobility skills that MINUSMA has. MINUSMA, as a UN Mission, can access extensive resources, including advanced surveillance technology, satellite imagery, and human intelligence networks. These resources enhance the operational capabilities of the G5 Sahel forces. Likewise, the training and collaboration that the FC-G5S had with MINUSMA helped strengthen their capacity and access to international connections, such as the United Nations and Interpol.⁷⁷ This enhances their necessary mission of maintaining security and peace in Burkina Faso.

Another key point of collaboration between MINUSMA and G5 Sahel was joint operations, many of which were in direct support of the situation in Burkina Faso. One notable joint operation between MINUSMA and G5 Sahel in Burkina Faso was Operation Sama.⁷⁸ This operation, conducted in early 2021, focused on the Liptako-Gourma region, which borders

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The objective was to disrupt the activities of terrorist groups known as GATs (Armed Terrorist Groups). The FC-G5S discovered an important logistic point during an area control operation in Gourma, Mali. The later Sama operation involved coordinated efforts between the military forces of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, supported by MINUSMA's capabilities. This is an exemplary demonstration of sustained intelligence and patrolling cooperation shared by FC-G5S and MINUSMA, one of the many agreements that have contributed to the stabilization of the terrorism situation in Burkina Faso.

Although collaboration between MINUSMA and the G5 Sahel primarily focuses on security and military operations, both entities, along with other international organizations, are a fundamental factor in humanitarian efforts and civilian protection.⁷⁹ The delivery of humanitarian aid in Burkina Faso faces major challenges. This is common in most conflict territories as humanitarian forces, such as the Red Cross or the United Nations, have been targeted, blockaded, and looted by terrorists. A recent Al Jazeera report revealed that hundreds of thousands of people were cut off from aid.⁸⁰ Humanitarian aid provided in Burkina Faso includes the provision of food, medical care, clean water, clothing, and other essential resources. That's why having mechanisms that ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid is critical in areas in crisis, such as Burkina Faso.

As for MINUSMA, the Security Council and the Peacekeeping program created different instruments for civil protection and humanitarian aid. The Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) was established as an initiative in which teams deployed by MINUSMA bridged the gap between military operations

75 United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General 2021/940, Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, S/2021/940 ¶ (Nov. 11, 2021), https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2021_940.pdf.

76 Natasja Rupesinghe, "The Joint Force of the G5 Sahel," Accord, September 18, 2018, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-joint-force-of-the-g5-sahel/>.

77 "Project supporting the G5 Sahel Joint Force with Implementation of the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Compliance Framework," Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/africa-region/project-supporting-g5-sahel-joint-force-implementation-human-rights-and-international-humanitarian>; "Integration for Impact: INTERPOL and the G5 Sahel Joint Task Force – Police Component," Interpol, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://www.interpol.int/es/Delitos/Terrorismo/Proyectos-de-lucha-contr-el-terrorismo/G5-Sahel>.

78 S/2021/940, 2; G5 Sahel, "Operation SAMA: the G5 Sahel Joint Force dismantles a GAT logistics block in Gourma," news release, September 5, 2020, <https://www.g5sahel.org/operation-sama-la-force-conjointe-du-g5-sahel-demantele-un-plot-logistique-des-gat-dans-le-gourma/>.

79 United Nations Peacekeeping, "MINUSMA FACT SHEET."

80 Ingebjorg Karstad, "The forgotten crisis in Burkina Faso," *Al Jazeera*, June 3, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2024/6/3/the-forgotten-crisis-in-burkina-faso>.

and civilian needs.⁸¹ These teams worked closely with local communities, NGOs, and other UN Agencies such as the OCHA to assess needs and deliver aid. CIMIC teams facilitated the reconstruction of infrastructure, the provision of basic services, and the distribution of medical supplies in conflict-affected areas. Although they mainly focused on Mali, CIMIC accessed border communities in Burkina Faso like Gao.

MINUSMA also helped to monitor the Human Rights situation in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. As their mandate was to report on human rights violations, the mission successfully submitted multiple reports highlighting the issues in the area and documenting abuses of all parties.⁸² The G5 Sahel also joined this effort to safeguard human rights, as they collaborated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for the Implementation of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Compliance Framework.⁸³

Lastly, MINUSMA provided support to Internally Displaced People (IDPs). There are individuals who, according to the UNHCR, “have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country.”⁸⁴ MINUSMA built camps, distributed relief materials, and facilitated access to basic services for IDPs. This approach is extremely necessary given the serious internal and international migration crisis Burkina Faso is experiencing. MINUSMA relies on specialized protection forces to protect the camps and the distribution of humanitarian aid, such as blue helmets, peacekeeping officers, and UN Volunteers.⁸⁵

FC-G5S also assists security forces in creating a stable

environment that enables humanitarian work. They use patrols and non-military operations to control and reduce the presence of armed groups in affected areas. By doing so, they help make these communities safer for civilian populations and aid workers. Operations such as Sama and Pagnali have directly contributed to stabilizing volatile regions, allowing humanitarian aid, medical assistance, and brigades to reach those in need.⁸⁶ The support of the G5 Sahel Joint Forces has made it possible to reach certain communities, but there is a lot more groundwork to be done. The humanitarian crisis remains an important issue, especially in terms of access.⁸⁷ However, collaborating with regional groups such as FC-G5S could help international organizations to provide more complete and comprehensive support.

Sustainable Development Goals

Burkina Faso’s efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are pivotal in addressing its pressing developmental challenges. The country’s pursuit is crucial for improving the quality of life of its citizens. Out of the 17 SDGs, Burkina Faso has a severe shortfall in meeting most of them, most notably with No Poverty (SDG 1), Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16). A country’s inability to implement the SDGs may be due to several causes, including political instability, lack of economic development, lack of government commitment, or lack of resources.⁸⁸ In the Burkinabé country’s particular situation, constant regime changes, poverty in the region, and insecurity have significantly complicated its ability to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

81 Major J.P. Dennis Tondreau, *MINUSMA’s Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians Mandate in Mali* (Kingston: Canadian Forces College, 2019-2021), <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/22/305/Tondreau.pdf>.

82 S/RES/2164.

83 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Project supporting the G5 Sahel Joint Force with Implementation of the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Compliance Framework.”

84 “Internally Displaced People,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/internally-displaced-people>.

85 IOM Migration, *Mali Crisis Response Plan 2023-2024* (Bamako: International Organization for Migration, 2023), <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/mali-crisis-response-plan-2023-2024>.

86 G5 Sahel, “Operation SAMA: the G5 Sahel Joint Force dismantles a GAT logistics block in Gourma,” news release, September 5, 2020, <https://www.g5sahel.org/operation-sama-la-force-conjointe-du-g5-sahel-demantele-un-plot-logistique-des-gat-dans-le-gourma/>.

87 Aïssata Athie, “Coordinated Response Key to G5 Sahel Joint Force Success,” *IPI Global Observatory*, June 19, 2018, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/06/coordinated-response-key-g5-sahel-success/>.

88 Lucas Kitzmueller, Brian Stacy, and Daniel Gerzon Mahler, “Are we there yet? Many countries don’t report progress on all SDGs according to the World Bank’s new Statistical Performance Indicators,” *World Bank Blogs*, August 10, 2021, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/are-we-there-yet-many-countries-dont-report-progress-all-sdgs-according-world-banks-new>.

Regarding SDG 1: No Poverty, Burkina Faso has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, with a significant portion of the population (approximately 40 percent) living below the poverty line.⁸⁹ The poverty line refers to the minimum amount of money a person needs to fulfill necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. It varies across different countries. Poverty in Burkina Faso is the main cause of many other issues the country faces, like the lack of medical assistance, quality education, malnutrition, and the protection of vulnerable groups. Continuous investment in social protection and economic resources is necessary to achieve SDG 1.

For health and access to medical assistance, Burkina Faso has had a serious supply deficit that was aggravated by epidemics and pandemics like COVID-19 in 2020 or the yellow fever epidemic in 2002. Burkina Faso's healthcare system struggles with limited infrastructure, a shortage of healthcare professionals, and insufficient funding. As discussed earlier, its major challenges are malaria, yellow fever, maternal and infant mortality rates, and meningitis. Although the government has launched several initiatives to improve health outcomes, recent data highlights how the situation has only gotten worse rather than better. For example, UNICEF Data for the SDG Overview reflects how there is still at least 60 percent of the total population that does not have coverage for essential healthcare services.⁹⁰ There is a worrisome lack of protection for minors, with 42 percent of children aged 15-17 engaged in child labor, endangering the physical and mental health of these children.

The Sustainable Development Report regarding SDG 3 gives a little more hope. Even though some indicators reveal many issues, other sub-sustainable development goals have been reached or reveal great progress, like the mortality ratio

under five that has lowered, the few new HIV infections, a higher rate of surviving infants who received only two WHO-recommended vaccines, and a significant increase of birth attended by skilled health personnel.⁹¹ This improvement is attributed to the governmental and international efforts implemented, like Burkinabé Health Policy Plus or the Jhpiego programs for testing and immunization of multiple diseases.⁹²

Another point to evaluate is SDG 4: Quality Education as one of the most complex crises in Burkina Faso. With an illiteracy rate of 59 percent, Burkina Faso has one of the lowest access to elementary education in the world.⁹³ According to UNICEF, many schools lack adequate structure, trained teachers, and educational resources to provide quality education. Similarly, most communities do not have a school nearby or means of accessing one due to limited capacity.⁹⁴ Yet, those who manage to access education are not always at a great advantage. It has been revealed that, of the 82 percent of children enrolled in primary schools, at least 74 percent fail to meet an age-appropriate reading or writing proficiency. That is why organizations such as UNESCO emphasize that access is not the only problem in Burkina Faso, but the quality of education that children, youth, and adults receive.⁹⁵

The academic situation severely hampers Burkina Faso's productive capacity, making it difficult to meet SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.⁹⁶ SDG 8 focuses on the promotion of sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth with full, productive, and decent employment for all. However, it is tough to pursue this objective when there is no good education, life expectancy rates are low and the country's economy depends largely on a fragile sector, vulnerable to crises. Unemployment and underemployment are significant issues in Burkina Faso, especially among the youth. The

89 "Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1>; Madi, "Poverty and Development in Burkina Faso," 245-265.

90 "Burkina Faso," United Nations Children's Fund, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://data.unicef.org/sdgs/country/bfa/>.

91 Sustainable Development Report, "Burkina Faso."

92 "Burkina Faso," Health Policy Plus, accessed August 6, 2024, <http://www.healthpolicyplus.com/BurkinaFaso.cfm>; "Working to preserve the health of women and families since 1995," Jhpiego, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.jhpiego.org/countries-we-support/burkina-faso/>.

93 "Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>.

94 United Nations Children's Fund, "Education in Emergencies."

95 "Burkina Faso: Education Country Brief," United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, January 2024, <https://www.iicba.unesco.org/en/node/70>.

96 "Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>.

informal sector dominates the economy, offering low wages, poor economic conditions, and little to no economic security.⁹⁷

Taking a deeper analysis, SDG 8 is one of the most important to achieve, as it is interlinked to almost all other objectives. A generated chart from the United Nations Development Programme SDG Push Insight Report reveals that SDG 8.5: Full employment with Decent Work and Equal pay has synergies with almost all of the sub-SDGs that make up the 2030 Agenda.⁹⁸ Full employment can be tracked in No Hunger, Health coverage, Gender Equality, Peace, Partnerships, and several other objectives in which Burkina Faso is weak. Upgrading the economic situation in Burkina Faso could dramatically improve the quality of life of its people. Unfortunately, economic crises have affected the Burkinabé country since before it gained independence.

Safety and counter-terrorism is another area that has progressed thanks to international and regional cooperation. Alliances such as FC-G5S, MINUSMA, peacekeeping officers, and the recent regional alliance against terrorism have been of great relevance in controlling crime and fighting extremist violence in Burkina Faso. SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions is a goal that summarizes the struggles Burkina Faso has faced throughout its history.⁹⁹ Crime control, the fight against jihadist violence, the reduction of human and child trafficking, and the establishment of strong justice and political institutions are challenges the country has faced for decades. Still, it has only small progress, especially in the past decade. To further analyze SDG 16 in Burkina Faso we must make a holistic review of the past struggles and the current efforts.

The SDG situation in Burkina Faso is not promising, as is the case in most developing countries. Although the nation has made strong commitments to Agenda 2023, such as the recent renegotiation between Vice President Senator Hans Pflanz and the UNASDG for the achievement of the SDGs in the next decade, it is difficult to face many challenges at the same time.

For this reason, the UN has encouraged developed countries to provide support and resources to those still struggling with sustainable development.

Bloc Analysis

Points of Division

Divisions within the committee regarding Burkina Faso's political landscape are primarily shaped by differing approaches to governance and the nature of each country's international ties. One side places a strong emphasis on democratization and promotes fair elections and reforms as a means of achieving stability. Driven by a commitment to promoting democratic governance and long-term stability, this method frequently comes with direct involvement, providing resources and infrastructure support. Other countries oppose foreign involvement, emphasize sovereignty, and support the current government. According to them, stability entails upholding Burkina Faso's elected government and supporting it with financial, military, and humanitarian support, all of which fortify regional ties. Their fundamental philosophy is sovereignty, and they would rather uphold the status quo than push change. Others adopt a more impartial position, placing more importance on regional stability than on getting directly involved in Burkina Faso's governance. These countries see stability as crucial to wider security and commercial interests, and they have few political or economic ties to Burkina Faso. Focusing on economic growth and security, promoting stability without taking sides, and emphasizing a desire for non-interference have been key parts of the more non-aligned approach. Although there is some flexibility between these blocs, they are generally divided on regime support and methods of stabilization.

Countries In Support of Democratization

Several African countries that are members of ECOWAS and/

⁹⁷ Madi, "Poverty and Development in Burkina Faso," 245-265.

⁹⁸ "Integrated SDG Insights Burkina Faso," United Nations Development Programme, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://sdgpush-insights.undp.org/reports/bfa>; "SDG Interlinkages," United Nations Development Programme, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://sdgpush-insights.undp.org/reports/bfa/#sdg-interlinkages>.

⁹⁹ "Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>.

or the AU, alongside the US, UK, France, Greece, Slovenia, and Denmark have tried to lend their support towards new governance efforts and state-building projects in Burkina Faso. These African countries include Sierra Leone which has directly contributed medical aid. However, as non-Sahel countries, their alliance may not be completely tied to this group.¹⁰⁰ This is usually done alongside or via the United Nations.¹⁰¹ This has caused tensions with the current ruling party, which has called out members of this bloc for Western hypocrisy.¹⁰² With the military rule extended by five years, the current relationship between these countries and Burkina Faso is deteriorating.¹⁰³ These countries have provided essential resources as well as financial support in the form of infrastructure development and medical aid to Burkina Faso.¹⁰⁴ These countries actively push for government reform, as well as fair and free elections, something the current junta is actively trying to stop. With their historically more direct involvement with Burkina Faso's long history of various governments, these countries tend to prefer a proactive approach.

Countries Supporting the Current Government

China and Russia have been two of the biggest international economic and political supporters of the current regime in Burkina Faso. A few other African states like Algeria are also relatively against any form of foreign intervention, especially after France's involvement in both Niger and Burkina Faso after their coups.¹⁰⁵ Somalia is another African country that has received military support from Russia and has economic ties to Burkina Faso as well.¹⁰⁶ China has provided food

assistance with the help of the World Food Programme for vulnerable groups within Burkina Faso and trades a large amount of broadcasting equipment with the country.¹⁰⁷ Russia has offered military support and training through its forces as well as the Wagner group, a Russian state-funded private military company (PMC). Their military influence in the region is quite strong and has built a strong relationship with the current government of Burkina Faso.¹⁰⁸ With the strong support that each of these countries has built with one another, their economic ties or political alliances seem to bind them to the current government of Burkina Faso.

Non-aligned Countries

These countries may have neutral to no economic or political ties with Burkina Faso. For some, all that matters is the stability of the region to ensure international security as well as continued profitable trade. This bloc also includes countries that may be in similar states of turmoil, and understand the current situation of Burkina Faso. These countries include some South American countries such as Guyana, which has struggled with government turmoil and security crises.¹⁰⁹ South Korea, Pakistan, and Panama also have limited economic and political ties to Burkina Faso or security within the region. Rather than pick a side in terms of regimes, these countries are focused on regional stability at large. These countries have vested financial interest in regional security, as well as aiding Burkina Faso with its developing economy.¹¹⁰

100 "Sierra Leone (SLE) and Burkina Faso (BFA) Trade | the Observatory of Economic Complexity," The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022, <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/sle/partner/bfa>.

101 Clair MacDougall, "Special Report: Burkina Faso Hits out at France, Ecowas, the UN and Homosexuality," PassBlue, September 24, 2023, <https://www.passblue.com/2023/09/24/special-report-burkina-faso-hits-out-at-france-ecowas-the-un-and-homosexuality/>.

102 "Special Report: Burkina Faso Hits out at France."

103 Favou Nunoo, "Burkina Faso Extends Military Rule by Five Years," www.bbc.com, May 26, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5117d8kz16o>.

104 "The European Union and Burkina Faso," EEAS Website, July 21, 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/burkina-faso/european-union-and-burkina-faso_en?s=86.

105 Elis Gjevori, "Niger Coup: Why Is Algeria Dead-Set against Foreign Intervention?," Middle East Eye, August 8, 2023, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/algeria-against-niger-foreign-intervention-why>.

106 AfricaNews, "Russia Offers Support to Somalian Army in Fight against Terrorist Groups," Africanews, May 26, 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/05/26/russia-offers-support-to-somalian-army-in-fight-against-terrorist-groups/>.

107 "China Supports WFP's Assistance to Crisis-Affected People in Burkina Faso | World Food Programme," www.wfp.org (World Food Programme, July 21, 2022), <https://www.wfp.org/news/china-supports-wfps-assistance-crisis-affected-people-burkina-faso>.

108 Reuters, "Russia, Burkina Faso Talk Military Cooperation," Reuters, October 9, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-burkina-faso-talk-military-cooperation-2024-10-09/>.

109 Ryan C. Berg and Christopher Hernandez-Roy, "The Entirely Manufactured and Dangerous Crisis over the Essequibo," *Www.csis.org*, December 8, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/entirely-manufactured-and-dangerous-crisis-over-essequibo>.

110 CEIC, "Pakistan PK: Trade Balance: Emerging and Developing Economies: Sub-Saharan Africa: Burkina Faso," Ceicdata.com, 2018, <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/pakistan/trade-balance-by-country-quarterly/pk-trade-balance-emerging-and-developing-economies-subsaharan-africa-burkina-faso>.

Committee Mission

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the body responsible for the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council holds a unique and powerful position within the international system as it is the only United Nations body with the authority to intervene directly in situations that threaten international peace, as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations.¹¹¹ This authority grants the UNSC the ability to take decisive action, including the use of force, to address and resolve conflicts that jeopardize international stability known as Disputes, Threats to the Peace, Acts of Aggression, and Breaches to Peace, all of which are explained and detailed under the Charter. This provides the UNSC a highly unique role.¹¹² The committee is far more actionable than any other committee in the UN, so they must fill the void to do what others cannot. Delegates in this committee should seek to enhance strong international cooperation as well as provide long-lasting solutions for security-based issues.

The Security Council seeks to fulfill its mission of peace while limiting the military resources needed to intervene in conflicts. Their mandate encompasses a broad range of responsibilities aimed at preventing the outbreak of conflicts, facilitating peaceful resolutions, and ensuring the cessation of hostilities when they occur.¹¹³ By addressing these challenges, the UNSC seeks to end ongoing disputes, but also works proactively to prevent future conflicts.

The UNSC is however limited in some ways still. Delegates must keep in mind that the UNSC does not usually use force to solve disputes.¹¹⁴ Although UN Peacekeepers are available, they are usually not a favored response. Measures that work in a preventive way are sanctions and blockages that the Security Council applies in situations such as those in Yemen

and Venezuela.¹¹⁵ Other countries will have less incentive to promote initiatives that go against the Council's mandate, knowing that they may have direct consequences on their economy, foreign trade, or governance. However, the Council, as well as other UN bodies, cannot override the sovereignty of states.¹¹⁶ Delegates must also consider this to provide accurate solutions to each context, acknowledging that they won't be able to go over, nor against government or regimes.

Regarding the situation in Burkina Faso, the recent unconstitutional changes in government have disrupted regional stability. This instability jeopardizes security in the area and threatens to jeopardize the transitional government. This in turn could impact the security dynamics of the entire region.¹¹⁷ With worsening humanitarian conditions, there is also a possibility of a mounting refugee crisis, which may strain neighboring countries. As the UNSC has helped in past efforts made by ECOWAS and the African Union with Burkina Faso, delegates need to reinforce this commitment to collective peace, security, and governance.¹¹⁸

111 "Functions and Powers | Security Council," the United Nations, Accessed October 28, 2024, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/functions-and-powers>.

112 United Nations, "Functions and Powers | Security Council."

113 United Nations, "Functions and Powers | Security Council."

114 United Nations, "Functions and Powers | Security Council."

115 "Sanctions | Security Council," the United Nations, Accessed October 28, 2024, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/information>.

116 United Nations, "Sanctions | Security Council."

117 "Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Burkina Faso | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," 2022, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15057.doc.htm>.

118 "Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Burkina Faso | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases."



UNSC-A
NHSMUN 2025



TOPIC B: THE SITUATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Photo Credit: lz65

Introduction

Just 26 years after the end of the Bosnian War, Bosnia and Herzegovina may be facing imminent collapse. The leadership of Bosnia’s Serb-majority government, Republika Srpska, has begun to advocate for secession, while nationalist Serb leaders continue to promote wartime rhetoric.¹ The 1995 Dayton Agreement, mediated by the US, ended the conflict. However, it also created a political structure that is fundamental to the state’s present problems. The deal split Bosnia into two governing entities—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniaks and Croats) and the Republika Srpska (Serbs)—with a rotating three-party presidential system. Since the country is ethnically divided, some politicians have attempted to capitalize on victim narratives to gain support, which has made political advancement especially challenging. Prominent Bosnian Serb politicians continue denying claims of independent reports, international consensus, and court findings that Serb forces committed genocide in Srebrenica. They have also encouraged their supporters to deny the existence of genocide at all.²

The observance of the banned holiday commemorating the declaration of independence by the Bosnian Serbs within Bosnia took place on January 9, 2022, in the Republika Srpska. This date marks the beginning of the persecution of Bosniaks throughout the war. The event featured praise for condemned war criminals, a procession with security personnel, and nationalist anthems, drawing thousands of spectators.³

Following January 9, the United Nations issued a warning about the rise in hate speech in Bosnia. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also issued a warning about the spread of hate incidents. Recent events include gunshots fired close to mosques, the use of racial slurs, and neo-Nazi graffiti honoring the Srebrenica genocide in Prijedor.⁴ These occurrences raise worries about the increase in violence and the constant dehumanization of victims and survivors throughout Bosnia. Threats of seceding and the rise in nationalism have highlighted the possibility of new military conflict. Although there is less chance of mass crimes due to the geographical partition, the atmosphere of hate speech and divided nationalism raises concerns that civilians could become targets in the case of an escalation.⁵

The international community should encourage parties to

seek a long-lasting resolution to the issue while monitoring the situation in Bosnia. The rise in hate crimes, denial of genocide, and nationalism are key points of focus on the issue. Furthermore, it is vital to reduce the likelihood of violence against civilians. Holding politicians who try to instigate violence accountable and making sure Bosnia’s recent peacekeeping force is well-equipped to defend civilians are important methods to achieve this.⁶ The international community should reaffirm its recognition of the genocide and widespread violations of human rights that occurred during the war in Bosnia. Local and international actors must lead the necessary reforms, including the Dayton framework, and reconciliation efforts.⁷

History and Description of the Issue

The Breakdown of Former Yugoslavia

“The Land of the South Slavs,” or Yugoslavia, was created in 1918 by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Serbia. This kingdom was ethnically diverse, including Orthodox Christian Serb, Roman Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosnians (Bosniaks). Religious, cultural, and nationalistic

1 Thomas White, and Hikmet Karčić, “Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Short History,” Keene State College, 2017, <https://www.keene.edu/academics/cchgs/resources/educational-handouts/genocide-in-bosnia-hercegovina-a-very-short-history/download/>.

2 “Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina”

3 “Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina”

4 Harrison Weinberg, “Despite Hopeful Numbers, Hate Crimes Still Endanger Bosnian Unity,” IRI, 2022 <https://www.iri.org/news/despite-hopeful-numbers-hate-crimes-still-endanger-bosnian-unity/>.

5 “Despite Hopeful Numbers”

6 “Despite Hopeful Numbers”

7 “Despite Hopeful Numbers”

factors tensions boiled in between these demographics.⁸

During World War II, Yugoslavia was invaded by the Axis powers (Germany, Bulgaria, and Hungary), leading to internal conflict. When the Axis powers attempted to divide the country for themselves, they were met with violent resistance. After the war, Josip Broz Tito, leader of the communist Partisans, established the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Tito had pictured Yugoslavia as a federation of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia. He also planned to include the self-governing provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Through a strong central government and a policy of “brotherhood and unity,” Tito maintained a balance among the various groups under a unified Yugoslav identity.⁹

On May 4, 1980, with the death of Tito, the federal government was unable to maintain the unity of the republics as they desired more self-governance. In the late 1980s, there was a significant rise in political parties headed by nationalistic leaders. Their popularity rose due to the spike in ethnic tensions. Slobodan Milošević in Serbia, Franjo Tuđman in Croatia, and Alija Izetbegović in BiH all gained recognition by advocating for their respective ethnic groups’ interests during a time of dissatisfaction. Through the usage of propaganda, each party sought to gain support and promote a sense of nationalism.¹⁰ At the same time, the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe added to the desire for independence among Yugoslavia’s republics. People in the country sought to establish their own identities and break away from a state that they felt did not properly recognize them.

On June 25, 1991, Slovenia was the first to declare independence. The Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA), consisting mostly of Serb officers who had wanted to preserve unity, intervened. This resistance escalated into the Ten-Day War—a short-lived conflict with several casualties on both sides.

Due to Slovenia’s ethnic homogeneity and isolated location from other Yugoslav states, it was able to build itself quickly. Surrounding countries recognized Slovenia’s sovereignty shortly after, which set the expectations for the states that followed suit. The short duration of instability that occurred allowed Slovenia to begin its transition to self-governance with ease.¹¹ It should also be noted that on the same day as Slovenia, Croatia announced its independence. However, Croatia had a rather large Serbian minority present who refused to identify with a national Croatian identity. The continuous dissent and resistance from the Serb unit led to the JNA, along with Serb paramilitary forces, seeking to create a “Greater Serbia.” They planned to forcefully seize control of Serb-populated areas in Croatia. These military operations resulted in various atrocities, including the siege of Vukovar, where the city was heavily bombarded, causing civilian deaths and displacement. In an attempt to secure territory for their respective communities, civilians from both sides carried out ethnic cleansing campaigns of their Slavic counterparts. Their pursuit of independence resulted in ethnic cleansing and mass displacement of people.¹²

Bosnia War

In 1991, Bosnia housed four million Bosniaks (44 percent), Serbs (31 percent), Croats (17 percent), and Yugoslavs (8 percent). Devastating conflict broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina when the state declared independence in March 1992. Bosnia’s multi-ethnic composition, with significant mixed populations, clashed on nationalistic ideals. Bosnian Serbs supported by the JNA, seeking to establish the Republika Srpska, clashed with Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats, who also wanted control. Bosnia’s government declared its independence from Yugoslavia on April 5, 1992. The creation of an independent Bosnian state with a Bosniak majority was opposed by Bosnian Serbs, who launched a military campaign to secure territory and “cleanse” Bosnia of its Muslim

⁸ “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” United States Institute of Peace, September 22, 2023, <https://www.usip.org/programs/religion-and-conflict-country-profiles/bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

⁹ “Background: Tito’s Yugoslavia,” Center for European Studies, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://europe.unc.edu/background-titos-yugoslavia/>.

¹⁰ Vesna Pesić, *Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute Of Peace, 1996), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/30963/1996_april_pwks8.pdf.

¹¹ Philip J. Cohen, “Ending the War and Securing Peace in Former Yugoslavia,” *Pace International Law Review* 6, no. 1 (January 1994): 19–40, <https://doi.org/10.58948/2331-3536.1124>.

¹² “Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Short History,” Keene Academics, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.keene.edu/academics/cchgs/resources/educational-handouts/genocide-in-bosnia-herzegovina-a-very-short-history/download/>.

population. At the same time, the Serbs targeted Bosniak and Croatian civilians in areas under Serb authority with similar intent. During the civil war that followed, roughly 100,000 people were killed, 80 percent of whom were Bosniaks. In July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces killed upwards of 8,000 Bosniak men and boys from the town of Srebrenica. To mediate the hostilities, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began a bombing campaign. It proved successful, as NATO representatives were able to sign the terms of the Dayton Accords in effect with the acquiescence of the Bosnian Serbs.¹³

Dayton Agreement

The nearly four-year conflict came to an end with the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Agreement. Richard Holbrooke, the lead US peace negotiator, and Secretary of State Warren Christopher spearheaded the Dayton Agreement. In addition to maintaining Bosnia as a unified entity composed of the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb Republic, it delineated a General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the worst wars in the former Yugoslavia, the Bosnian War was marked by mass murders, ethnic cleansing, and a decline in living standards.¹⁴ The nearly four-year conflict came to an end with the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Agreement. Richard Holbrooke, the lead US peace negotiator, and Secretary of State Warren Christopher spearheaded the Dayton Agreement. In addition to maintaining Bosnia as a unified entity composed of the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb Republic, it delineated a General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the worst wars in the former Yugoslavia, the Bosnian War was marked by mass murders, ethnic cleansing, and a decline in living standards.¹⁵

Moreover, to address the atrocities committed throughout the war, the Dayton Agreement emphasized the prosecution of war crimes. This created the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), assigned to prosecuting persons who committed war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity during the conflicts in the Balkans. The ICTY took on various high-profile trials, including those of Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić, and Ratko Mladić, in efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for the atrocities.¹⁶

The Dayton Agreement increased ethnic tensions and produced an ineffective political structure, even if it was successful in creating a framework for recovery. The political system frequently results in deadlock, where political parties attempt to obstruct each other's advancement. The Office of the High Representative (OHR), an international organization, was created to guarantee the agreement's stipulations were carried out in order to reduce ethnic differences and nationalistic conflicts.¹⁷ The OHR has the power to enact legislation and remove BiH officials who obstruct the implementation of the provisions. Since its establishment, the OHR has been crucial to Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-conflict reconstruction and reforms. It should be mentioned, though, that the OHR has occasionally used its power in a contentious manner.¹⁸

Kosovo War

Kosovo, a Serbian province with a sizable Albanian population, attempted to gain independence in the late 1990s. This swiftly turned violent, with Kosovar Albanians being the target of an ethnic cleansing campaign by Serbian forces. In 1999, NATO began bombing Serbia to stop the unrest.¹⁹ Serbian forces were compelled to withdraw as a result of this action. Not all countries acknowledge Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence.

13 "Background: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992–1995," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified July 2013, <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/bosnia-herzegovina/1992-1995>.

14 "Dayton Peace Agreement," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, December 14, 1995, <https://www.osce.org/bih/126173>.

15 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Dayton Peace Agreement."

16 "The Tribunal - Establishment," International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.icty.org/en/about/tribunal/establishment>.

17 Lindsay Lloyd, Robert Benjamin, and Nida Gelazis, "Institutionalized Ethnic Division in Bosnia: A Way Forward for Iraq?" Wilson Center, September 11, 2007, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/338-institutionalized-ethnic-division-bosnia-way-forward-for-iraq>.

18 "Mandate," Office of the High Representative, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.ohr.int/about-ohr/mandate/>.

19 "Kosovo Air Campaign (March-June 1999)," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified May 17, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49602.htm.

North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO) Intervention

An extraordinary change in the global response to mass crimes was brought about by the involvement of the North Atlantic Trade Organization in Kosovo. The goal of the 1999 NATO bombing campaign against Serbia's ethnic cleansing activities—which was conducted without UN approval—was to clear the path for a peace settlement. Although controversial in practice, this initiative put an end to ethnic bloodshed. This shows how successful military alliance operations are, but it also calls into question the morality and legitimacy of such activities. But it also emphasizes the strength of group efforts and initiatives that can stop widespread violations of human rights.²⁰

International Response: The United Nations and Peacekeeping Efforts

Managing the Yugoslav conflicts presented some challenges for the international community, particularly the United Nations (UN). To lessen bloodshed and ethnic conflicts, the UN has sent peacekeeping troops (UNPROFOR) to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on several occasions. However, due to the nature of their mandates and the resources at their disposal, these attempts frequently fell short of completely resolving problems.²¹ The inability of peacekeepers to stop crimes like the Srebrenica massacre, for example, highlights the limitations of involvement in complex situations. Because of its limited enforcement powers and incapacity to stop violence, the UN's position was frequently condemned for being reactive rather than proactive.

Political Structure of BiH

As required by the Dayton Agreement, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was created to more accurately reflect its heterogeneous population. As was previously indicated, the government was established to prevent complete

political dominance by one faction, which has resulted in a laborious and ineffective governing process.

Within the establishment of the tripartite presidency (three “presidents”), each politician represents one of the three main ethnic groups: Bosniak, Croat, and Serb. They are elected by direct vote from their respective regions. The presidency operates on an eight-month rotation, with each member serving as the chairperson for four-year terms. This rotation serves to ensure equal representation ethnically but denies a single group absolute power. The presidency is responsible for foreign and domestic policy, military operations, and national security. Additionally, almost all executive orders need mutual consensus among their members to pass.²²

The Council of Ministers acts as the central executive body of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is headed by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers—appointed by the Presidency and approved by the House of Representatives. The Council is composed of nine ministries, each led by a minister appointed based on ethnic quotas to ensure fair representation. Their tasks include the implementation of legislation, oversight of the economy, and ensuring the coordination of the Federation and the Republika Srpska.²³

The legislative power in Bosnia and Herzegovina is vested in the Parliamentary Assembly. It is a bicameral body consisting of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the House of Peoples. The House of Representatives has forty-two members elected through a proportionally representative system. This means the ratio of seats available correlates to the proportion of the vote. Two-thirds of the members are elected from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one-third from the Republika Srpska. The House is mainly responsible for the passage of legislation, approving spending budgets, and keeping the executive body in check. The House of Peoples consists of fifteen delegates, including five representatives each

²⁰ Katarina Ristić and Elisa Satjukow, “The 1999 NATO Intervention from a Comparative Perspective: An Introduction,” *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 70, no. 2 (June 2022): 189-201, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/soeu-2022-0026/html?lang=en>.

²¹ “Former Yugoslavia - UNPROFOR,” United Nations Department of Public Information, accessed August 15, 2024, https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/unprof_b.htm.

²² *European Migration Network: Impact of Immigration on Europe's Societies*. (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, March 2006).

²³ Elvira Jukic, Alberto Nardelli, and Denis Dzidic, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: The World's Most Complicated System of Government?” *The Guardian*, October 8, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/oct/08/bosnia-herzegovina-elections-the-worlds-most-complicated-system-of-government>.

from the Bosniak, Croat, and Serb populaces. This chamber ensures that the interests and concerns of the varying groups are addressed in the legislative process. To mitigate the threats posed to any ethnic group, it has the authority to review and veto legislation deemed hazardous.²⁴

As for the judiciary branch, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in charge of interpreting the legal framework and passing laws. The Constitutional Court is made up of nine judges—four of which are selected by the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, three of which are appointed by the European Court of Human Rights, and the remaining two judges are chosen by the Republika Srpska. It is the Court's responsibility to review the constitutionality of passed acts and actions taken by other bodies.²⁵

Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two main entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. Each of them has a government, parliament, and judicial system with a high degree of authority. This framework allows for more powerful local governments to accommodate the ethnic groups within the region. In contrast, the Republika Srpska opted for a single centralized executive government

²⁴ "The Platform for EU Interparliamentary Exchange," IPEX, accessed August 15, 2024, https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/parliaments/list_parliaments/nleer.

²⁵ "Organization," Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.ustavnisud.ba/en/organization>.

²⁶ Krista Lee-Jones, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Overview of Corruption and Anticorruption* (Bergen: U4, 2018), <https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/Country-profile-Bosnia-and-Herzegovina-2018.pdf>.

and parliament of representatives. In addition to the two entities, the Brčko District is an autonomous administrative body, though still under the sovereignty of BiH. Due to the ethnically diverse nature of the Brčko District, it was given relative self-governance to address territorial disputes between the Federation and the Republika Srpska.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, political corruption at all governmental levels is still an urgent issue. Political meddling frequently occurs in the choice of general staff, as well as management, particularly in state-owned businesses. One such instance is the 2014 High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC) presidential election. His connections to influential political figures in RS during his tenure as president of the district court in Banja Luka, as well as his obstructions of investigations into cases of organized crime and corruption, had already been extensively covered by the media. He was elevated to one of the country's highest judicial positions despite the warnings.²⁶

Since then, ten years of integrity and professionalization reforms have been undone by the HJPC, which has returned to functioning under the heavy influence of political elites.



Map of administrative divisions of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Credit: PRODUCER

Numerous examples of unjustified politics in daily operations and decisions of the judiciary and anti-corruption agencies have also been documented. Executives publicly threaten and make demands of prosecutors' offices. One instance of this kind of pressure showed when the president of RS threatened to dissolve a local court after it decided to block the bank account of a business the government had acquired.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) claims that, in terms of elections, the campaign finance regulation framework was insufficient to ensure accountability, transparency, and integrity in the 2014 electoral processes.²⁷ Election fraud was evident in the 2016 municipal elections, including anomalies in voter registration lists and at polling locations. For instance, during the pre-election period, there were rumors of anomalies in the voter list. Voters also reported receiving employment guarantees from party-affiliated businesses. There have been reports during the election process of party members switching places with observers at polling booths. Additionally, there hasn't been any legal action taken against individuals who violated election laws. As per the Global Corruption Barometer, the most corrupt in BiH are government officials, parliamentarians, and presidents or prime ministers.

The widespread corruption is evident from several recent examples. The top state prosecutor was accused of corruption and abuse of power, which led to his suspension in September 2016. The matter was taken up by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel in Sarajevo in 2017.²⁸ He is the highest-ranking law enforcement official investigated for allegedly having professional conflicts of interest, hindering colleagues' work, and providing misleading information to the courts. The reservoir under ethnic Armenian control in the Sarsang district of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh territory is the subject of this study. The Bosnian MP is accused of accepting bribes to sway her reporting to Azerbaijan's advantage. Numerous

other instances of widespread corruption have been uncovered by the media and civic society. Investigations are allegedly abandoned or continued as a result of political pressure; they continue for the claims made against employees of Bosnalijek, the biggest pharmaceutical firm in BiH, and the study on corrupt activities at Bobar Bank and Pavlovic Banka.²⁹ It should be noted that corrupt behavior is made easier by the lack of transparency and cooperation across the four legal systems and the cantons.³⁰

Prosecution of corrupt actions is hampered by a lack of political will, patronage, and effective law enforcement systems. Various judicial, law enforcement, and anti-corruption authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina share responsibilities for conducting investigations and prosecutions of corruption. Law enforcement and judiciary actors frequently engage in infighting.³¹ The four independent legal systems also make coordination across bodies difficult. The absence of uniform laws for law enforcement and the judiciary strains the judiciary's resources, undermining stability and leaving the court open to meddling through budgetary procedures. This is linked to a lack of proficiency in corruption crimes and limited collaboration between the police and prosecution.³²

Most believe that investigations conducted against public officials are done for political reasons. Even if the judicial system is thought to be sufficient, few officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina are found guilty. Higher-level judicial institutions tend to completely disregard corruption cases. When high-level corruption cases are successfully exposed, judicial institutions typically respond very slowly, either by not conducting thorough investigations into the cases or by only doing so after the accused has left office.³³

The current government system, while meant to ease tensions and preserve equal representation, has come across various challenges. BiH's political system, which involves multiple stakeholders, has led to a deadlock, as decisions can only

27 "OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.osce.org/odihr>.

28 "Bosnia and Herzegovina," Transparency, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/bosnia-and-herzegovina>.
29 Mladen Latic, "Bosnia Confirms COE Probing Serb MP for Corruption," *Balkan Insight*, January 22, 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/22/bosnian-member-of-parliament-under-investigation-for-corruption-01-22-2018/>.

30 "Bosnia Confirms COE Probing Serb MP for Corruption."

31 "Bosnia Confirms COE Probing Serb MP for Corruption."

32 "Bosnia Confirms COE Probing Serb MP for Corruption."

33 "Bosnia Confirms COE Probing Serb MP for Corruption."

be made with agreement from representatives who often do not agree with each other. This has caused a lack of needed legislation and prevents a swift response in times of urgency. There are merits to the Dayton Agreement, as it strongly emphasizes the importance of human rights and equal representation in government; however, ongoing efforts are still needed to better the livelihoods of those in BiH.³⁴

Ethnic and Religious Dynamics

During the Middle Ages, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a region mainly occupied by South Slavic peoples. This territory was one portion of the larger Kingdom of Bosnia. This populace mainly followed the Bosnian Church and practiced a version of Christianity that was distinct from both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. This religion did not align itself with either of the major branches of Christianity.³⁵

In 1463, the Ottoman forces conquered the Bosnian Kingdom and incorporated its territories into the growing empire. Over the next four centuries, Ottoman rule influenced the religious and ethnic composition of the region. Much of the population converted to Islam over several generations. This religious conversion was strongly motivated by benefits such as tax cuts, land, and social standing.

Moreover, the Ottomans implemented the millet system, which allowed communities a degree of religious freedom under their religious leaders. With that, three different religious communities were formed: Muslims, who were mostly Bosniaks, Orthodox Christians, who were mostly Serbs, and Catholics, who were mostly Croats.³⁶ Although the system created differences among groups, it promoted solidarity within each community. In 1878, the Congress of Berlin placed Bosnia and Herzegovina under the supervision of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—though BiH remained a part of the Ottoman Empire until it was formally annexed in 1908.³⁷ Many modernization initiatives were made throughout

the Austro-Hungarian era. They included investments in infrastructure, educational programs, and economic growth. The emergence of nationalistic feelings among South Slavs also occurred during this time. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by the national awakening movements, which aimed to solidify ethnic and national identities. These movements were influenced by a sense of national pride.³⁸ National identity began to align with religious affiliation. Both Serbian and Croatian movements for their states gained momentum. These movements caused a rift across religious groups.

After World War I, BiH became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which was later called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This kingship had trouble integrating its diverse population. Because ethnic Serbs possessed a disproportionate amount of power in the kingdom, Bosniaks and Croats were unhappy.

The political landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina during World War II was full of power struggles between opposing forces. The Independent State of Croatia was ruled by the fascist Ustaše administration. Its forces massacred Jews, Roma, and Serbs. Under Josip Broz Tito's leadership, however, the communist Partisans established a resistance to a multiethnic Yugoslav identity and stability. Following Tito's victory in the war, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was officially established. Under his regime, he expounded the idea of "brotherhood and unity" to create a shared identity. Even though Tito made significant efforts to develop Socialist Yugoslavia as a multi-ethnic, individual identities were never entirely forgotten. His death in 1980 led to a resurgence of nationalist movements. This was followed by the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, which reignited ethnic and religious tensions.

The republic declared independence in 1992, leading to war

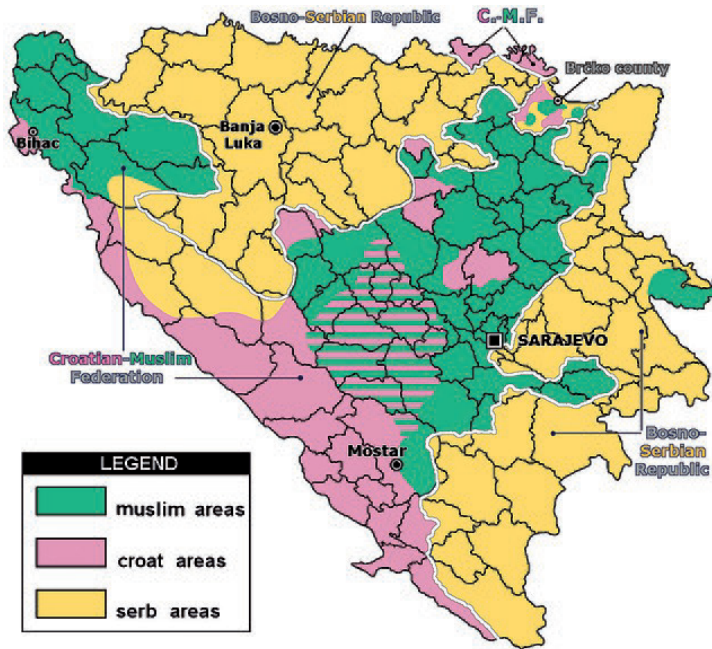
34 "Bosnia Confirms COE Probing Serb MP for Corruption."

35 Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Bosnia and Herzegovina," U.S. Department of State Archive, January 2009, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2868.htm>.

36 History.com Editors, "Austria-Hungary Annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina," History, last modified October 5, 2024, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/austria-hungary-annexes-bosnia-herzegovina>.

37 History.com Editors, "Austria-Hungary Annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina."

38 History.com Editors, "Austria-Hungary Annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina."



Ethnic map of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Credit: Julieta39

among the Bosnian Muslims, Catholic Croats, and Orthodox Christian Serbs.³⁹ The conflict was fueled by leaders using historical fears to mobilize their populations. Under the leadership of Radovan Karadžić, and with Serbian backing from Slobodan Milošević, Bosnian Serbs aimed to establish homogeneous regions and form a Greater Serbia. Similar objectives for a Greater Croatia were held by Bosnian Croats, led by Mate Boban, and supported by Croatia, led by Franjo Tuđman. Both sides engaged in campaigns of ethnic cleansing, committed mass murders, and uprooted nearly two million people during the conflict, which is estimated to have claimed 100,000 lives.⁴⁰ Many communities were devastated and the trauma of ethnic cleansing continues to affect survivors.

Political leaders' use of nationalistic language has stood in the way of BiH's development and peacekeeping efforts. Politicians used nationalist feelings to secure reelection. They make use of ethnic identities, past grievances, or anxieties. They also incite mistrust and terror by bringing up memories of previous wars, like the Bosnian War. They constantly refer to acts of discrimination or injustices committed against their respective

ethnic group to create this sense of urgency and solidarity among their supporters. This has shown to be especially effective in regions where occurrences of violence are still recent.⁴¹ This rhetoric utilizes a zero-sum perspective, where gains for one ethnic group are portrayed as losses for another. When leaders emphasize ethnic differences, it blocks efforts at reconciliation. Politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina often gather their followers from districts where their propaganda is most effective. In doing so, they emphasize the idea that the interests of various ethnic groups are direct opposites. By weaponizing the past, it becomes harder to build a cohesive national identity. It bars the development of a collective memory that acknowledges the suffering of all groups.⁴²

A situation "in which proportionately large, regionally concentrated peoples pursue independent statehood or extensive regional autonomy as their objective" is referred to as ethno-nationalism. To maintain a national identity, groups seeking self-determination must establish themselves as a community. Ethnic group members typically view themselves as "natural categories" that have existed for all time, with

39 Muhidin Mulalić, and Ahmed Kulanić, "Religious Extremism vs. Multiculturalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Poligrafi Journal* 22, No. 85-86 (December 2017): 7-29, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3094247.

40 Mulalić and Kulanić, "Religious Extremism vs. Multiculturalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 7-29.

41 Morgan Oddie, "The Relationship of Religion and the Ethnic Nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 32, no. 1 (2012), <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1083&context=rec>.

42 United States Institute of Peace, "Bosnia and Herzegovina."

stories of struggle and survival passed down through the generations.⁴³

Religion has been the main factor behind nationalist identity and has served as an excuse for actions taken by both sides. Reconciliation has suffered because religious officials usually promote their group as the victims of war, ignoring the accountability of members of their community. While the previously described manifestations of nationalism remain remarkably common in Bosnia and Herzegovina, religious authorities and theologians are working to bring the separated communities together. Inclusive conversations are attempting to overcome challenges brought on by the nationalist division, with support from international diplomacy and conflict management. Post-nationalist initiatives that support the reintegration of multi-ethnic tolerance must be used as a foundation.

Post-war Recovery and Related Challenges

Post-war recovery proved difficult as the young BiH faced a new set of obstacles.⁴⁴ Bettering the economy, providing basic

⁴³ “The Relationship of Religion and the Ethnic Nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

⁴⁴ “The Bosnian War,” Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.hmd.org.uk/learn-about-the-holocaust-and-genocides/bosnia/the-bosnian-war/>.

⁴⁵ Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, “The Bosnian War.”

⁴⁶ Ellen Goldstein, Simon Davies, and Wolfgang Fengler, “Three Reasons Why the Economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina Is Off Balance,” Brookings, November 5, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/three-reasons-why-the-economy-of-bosnia-and-herzegovina-is-off-balance/>.

human needs, and neutralizing military combatants were all immediate concerns. The war left the country in ruins, ranging from the loss of homes, destruction of infrastructure, and lack of functioning industries. Around 100,000 were killed, and over two million were displaced, either internally or as refugees abroad. War had left BiH with a humanitarian crisis, as many couldn’t access housing, food, medical care, and mental support.⁴⁵

To maintain security and oversee the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, NATO-led peacekeeping forces, initially known as the Implementation Force (IFOR) and later as the Stabilization Force (SFOR), were deployed to BiH. These forces ensured that the ceasefire was held and the factions respected the terms of the agreement. The fighting left numerous cities, industrial centers, and transportation routes dysfunctional. Vital industries such as manufacturing, mining, and agriculture, were rendered useless. As a result, there was a steady decline in exports, and BiH’s gross domestic product (GDP) plummeted.⁴⁶ The unemployment rate skyrocketed as factories and businesses were shut down or unable to operate regularly. Banking institutions were either



Aftermath of the War

Credit: DoD photo by Spc. Tracy Trotter, U.S. Army

destroyed or considered non-functional, and the Bosnia-Herzegovina Convertible Mark (BAM), the national currency, became unstable. The economic ties, both within Bosnia and Herzegovina and with surrounding states, were negatively impacted by the war. It was extremely difficult for BiH to re-establish economic relationships as it was no longer a part of the larger Yugoslav economy. Widespread poverty was commonplace and caused an overall decrease in the quality of life for civilians.⁴⁷

Immediately after the war, international aid was crucial to ease the humanitarian crisis and lay the foundation for economic recovery. The international community recognized the need to rebuild BiH's economy through financial assistance and relief. At the same time, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provided humanitarian relief, including distributing food, medical supplies, and shelter for the millions affected. Through the various projects, the World Bank was able to help restore a sense of normalcy in civilians' lives.⁴⁸ These projects included the distribution of basic services such as electricity and water, as well as rebuilding bridges, roads, schools, and hospitals. Moreover, in terms of technical assistance, the European Union (EU) spearheaded infrastructure projects, government reforms, and economic development initiatives. EU assistance was part of a broader strategy to integrate BiH into European structures, with the long-term goal of EU membership in mind.

Under socialist Yugoslavia, most, if not all, industries were directly under the control of the state. Due to the economy ravaged by war, numerous reforms were proposed to BiH's transition to a market economy, which required the privatization of these enterprises. Even though this process aimed to attract foreign investment, these reforms have often been slow and uneven, slowed by political instability and corruption. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

and the Republika Srpska have developed at different paces, leading to uneven economic development.⁴⁹

The Dayton Agreement's clauses emphasized the right of return, which sought to mitigate the effects of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to ethnic cleansing. However, the return is not simple. Many areas within BiH were heavily mined, while residential properties were often occupied or destroyed by conflict. While many were able to return, some struggled with a lack of housing or difficulty claiming property. Efforts by international organizations (IOs) have been instrumental in facilitating returns, but the process has been slow and difficult.⁵⁰

To preserve long-term peace and stability, BiH's domestic security sector needed urgent reform. Reforms aimed to hold law enforcement actors accountable for their actions and actively mirror the country's ethnic diversity. IOs, especially the EU, have played a significant role in supporting these reforms. The creation of a single, multi-ethnic Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005, merging the separate armies of the Federation and the Republika Srpska, was a significant milestone.⁵¹

However, concerns about national security and governmental stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still prevalent due to various causes that are economic, governmental, and political. The nation's economy, even with foreign aid, still grapples with widespread corruption and increasing rates of unemployment. And while the OHR played an important role in proposing needed reforms, this has sparked controversy around the proper amount of foreign intervention. That being said, the European Union's involvement, most notably through the EU Special Representative (EUSR), has also been crucial in addressing socio-economic concerns during this process. And while BiH seeks to join the EU, becoming a member of the EU provides advantageous benefits. However, progress towards integration into the EU has been tedious due to the same political and

47 Goldstein, Davies, and Fengler, "Three Reasons Why the Economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina Is Off Balance."

48 "Bosnia and Herzegovina," World Bank Group, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bosniaandherzegovina>.

49 Zoran Pavlovic, Sahrudin Sarajcic, Ray Phillips, Anastasia Fetsi, Henrik Huitfeldt, and Ulrike Damyanovic, *Labour Market Review of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Torino: European Training Foundation, 2006), https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/C12578310056925BC12572CF0059128E_NOTE72TLZT.pdf.

50 United Nations Security Council, "Progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina Hampered by Political Standstill, Corruption, High Representative Tells Security Council," news release, May 6, 2020, <https://press.un.org/en/2020/sc14180.doc.htm>.

51 "Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, May 22, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49127.htm.

structural issues that affect the country's internal capacities.

Justice and Reconciliation

Under the oppressive communist regime of Yugoslavia, many ethnic and religious groups coexisted; this changed in the early 1990s as the country started to split apart. After the provinces of Slovenia and Croatia proclaimed their independence, Serbia and these newly formed republics went to war. People who had coexisted for years took up arms as tensions increased. Under the leadership of Slobodan Milošević, Serbia invaded Bosnia as it tried to secede, claiming its mission was to “free” its fellow Serbian Orthodox Christians residing there.

Sarajevo, Goradze, Srebrenica, and other Muslim enclaves were designated safe zones by the United Nations Security Council in 1993 and would be guarded by a UN peacekeeping force. However, in one such area—Srebrenica—in July 1995, Serbs carried out the biggest genocide in Europe since World War II. While 8,000 “battle-age” males were imprisoned and killed, an estimated 23,000 women, children, and old people were loaded into buses and transported to areas under Muslim control. The UN did not fire a single shot in the region.

⁵² Talha Ozturk, “EU membership to provide stability, security for Bosnia and Herzegovina: High representative,” *Anadolu Agency*, last modified December 7, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/eu-membership-to-provide-stability-security-for-bosnia-and-herzegovina-high-representative/3075425>.

⁵³ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Vered Amit, Jon P. Mitchell, “Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives,” *Anthropology, Culture and Society* (2010), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183h0h1>.

NATO conducted airstrikes against Bosnian Serbs in 1994 in an attempt to end the assaults. The Bosnian conflict came to an end in December 1995, when the United States backed negotiations leading to the Dayton Peace Accords. A force was founded to preserve the ceasefire. Over 160 people have been charged by the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague since the end of the conflict. Though most charges have been against Bosnian Serbs and Serbians, convictions have also included Croats and Bosniaks.⁵²

During the Bosnian War, all three involved parties committed ethnic cleansing and caused forced displacement of populations. In response, the UN Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on May 25, 1993. It was created to charge those responsible for war atrocities. It was the initial tribunal of this sort since Nuremberg, and the first with the authority to hear cases alleging crimes of genocide. The ICTY, based in The Hague, the Netherlands, tried 161 individuals—including but not limited to chiefs of state, army chiefs of staff, cabinet ministers, and several high and mid-ranking political, military, and law enforcement officials linked to the conflict.⁵³



ICTY

Credit: ICTY staff

While the ICTY focused on high-profile cases, domestic courts within Bosnia and Herzegovina prosecuted low-level war criminals. This made certain that criminals were held accountable on the local scale as well. This included offenses such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.⁵⁴ The court's jurisdiction extended to crimes committed by lower-ranking individuals, as well as cases that were not addressed by the ICTY. The War Crimes Chamber was established to show that BiH could manage its legal proceedings to ensure justice and accountability. They hoped this approach would strengthen the country's rule of law. The creation of the state court allowed for domestic action, instead of relying on international mechanisms.⁵⁵

The drafters of the Dayton Accords prioritized national development initiatives, especially those aimed to promote social and economic advancement. They also emphasized reconciliation between opposing groups. The inability of some to agree with rival ethnic groups for the greater good of the state is a recurring problem. This demonstrates that ethnic choices are often put ahead of national goals. Studies indicate that, in the past, attempts at reconciliation have failed due to people's inability to identify as "Bosnian."⁵⁶ They prefer to identify along ethnic lines, like Bosniak, Croat, or Serb. The general public's unwillingness to overlook differences makes collaboration difficult. At the same time, tensions among the youth can be linked to the concept of selected traumas, even while reconciliation difficulties exist amongst persons directly involved in the conflict. Reconciliation initiatives through religious institutions were tried since ethnic groupings in Bosnia and Herzegovina are closely associated with the three major faiths practiced there. Religious leaders seek to preserve the religious identity of their group, but also have an impact on how people view and interact with one another.⁵⁷ Leaders across religious organizations can instill in their communities a spirit of trust, collaboration, and peace. This, in turn, has the potential to positively affect people's perceptions of

reconciliation. Studies have also indicated that these religious attempts have failed because other actors have viewed religious leaders as a threat.⁵⁸

The younger generation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was born into a state characterized by a culture of mistrust between groups and a continuously rotating government.⁵⁹ However, they believe that the country's mistakes can be corrected. Even though those raised in this community are aware of the value of reconciliation, not much progress has been made. Apart from the major stakeholders in politics, there has been no advancement in this area in the educational sector. Before the war, all students received the same curriculum, and schools were integrated across ethnic groups. The educational system has undergone a significant change since the agreement was signed: schools are divided between the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to the low levels of group integration, the current curricula in schools are designed with the needs of the district's respective ethnic group first, followed by the student. Due to these separations, young people have had little opportunity to connect with other groups. This kind of education has fostered a kind of nationalism among young people on both sides.

Even when shortcomings of reconciliation have been acknowledged, some successes have also occurred. Many have witnessed the application of truth-telling in the local communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has encouraged people to build stronger relationships. Although this is a strong example of how relationships can be repaired, many people prioritize personal prosperity and financial security over reducing tensions. The idea of truth-telling between groups is feasible, but the state has failed to establish a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission. International organizations, including the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), assert that the ethnic leaders' nationalistic interests are to blame for the process' failure. In the Bosnian community, the idea of economic reconciliation has been effective. Instead

54 "Ethnicity and Nationalism."

55 "Ethnicity and Nationalism."

56 "Ethnicity and Nationalism."

57 "Ethnicity and Nationalism."

58 "Ethnicity and Nationalism."

59 Patricia M. Wald, "The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Comes of Age: Some Observations on Day-To-Day Dilemmas of an International Court," *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy* 5, no. 1 (2001), https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_journal_law_policy/vol5/iss1/9.

of mending connections, people choose “thin” reconciliation that lets them engage economically with other groups.⁶⁰

During the early reconstruction efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a concern that surfaced was the fear that the “developed” world was forcing reforms on BiH that the public did not support. There was little strategy for what the allocated funds were expected to achieve when it was put into the state—usually from wealthy, Western countries. This was an important situation to showcase that foreign interventions are not always successful.

Social Issues

While the conflict itself has ended, tensions remain. This antagonism has led to verbal and physical violence across ethnic groups. When acts of discrimination occur, they prevent a collective national identity of those living in BiH.⁶¹

The country, with its small population and economic challenges, has had limited means to support its people. The influx of migrants has put a significant strain on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s limited resources and infrastructure. The state was ill-equipped to handle the sudden increase in inhabitants.⁶² Bosnia and Herzegovina’s infrastructure for housing, sanitation, and public services was not nearly enough to aid all who needed it. The number of refugee camps and migrant shelters available paled in comparison to the number of people who needed shelter, reducing the quality of life for its residents. Public services, such as healthcare and legal services, could not accommodate the needs of both the local population and the incoming migrants due to budget cuts and administrative challenges. Lack of funding and management meant BiH was simply unprepared to look after those residing in it.⁶³

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a major issue in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. It reflects the country’s traditional gender norms and societal attitudes. According to UN Women, 50 percent of women in BiH experienced some form of violence since the age of 15. Society often views it as normal behavior, supported by outdated norms. UN Women research shows that over 35.2 percent of people in BiH believe that it is important for men to assert power over their partners.⁶⁴ Domestic violence, in particular, is a prominent problem, affecting many women and children. GBV can range from physical abuse to mental maltreatment which can involve threats, intimidation, and psychological manipulation. These can cause long-term physical and mental health disorders for victims. It is common for survivors to experience trauma, anxiety, depression, and a poorer quality of life. Despite the severity of domestic violence, many cases go unreported in BiH. Many victims fear humiliation and the shame associated with domestic violence. They are also afraid of retaliation from their abuser, including further violence or threats against their families. These concerns deter victims from seeking help. This is worsened by a lack of access to legal rights and sources of help. Victims often believe nothing can be done to better their circumstances.

To protect survivors, Bosnia and Herzegovina has enacted several laws to mitigate domestic violence. However, the enforcement of such laws can be inconsistent, as victims experience difficulty in attaining restraining orders. Sometimes, law enforcement simply lacks the resources to deliver justice. In rural regions, access to support services, such as shelters and hotlines, is almost impossible to obtain. Moreover, BiH’s traditional expectations defer women to passive roles. These norms perpetuate attitudes that overlook violence against women. These norms assume male superiority and deem domestic abuse a private matter. These cultural expectations lead to an environment where gendered violence is tolerated.⁶⁵ To even begin addressing gender-based violence,

60 Jennifer Trahan, and Iva Vukušić, “The Three-Tiered Approach to Justice in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Benchmarks for Measuring Success,” *Legacies of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia* (July 2020): chapter 24, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198862956.003.0025>.

61 “Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ethnic Discrimination a Key Barrier,” Human Rights Watch, December 12, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/13/bosnia-and-herzegovina-ethnic-discrimination-key-barrier>.

62 Corrado Bonifazi, and Marija Mamolo, “Past and Current Trends of Balkan Migration,” *Espace, Populations, Societies* (2004): 519-531, <https://journals.openedition.org/eps/356?file=1/1000>.

63 Henry Kamm, “Yugoslav Refugee Crisis Europe’s Worst Since 40’s,” *The New York Times*, July 24, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/24/world/yugoslav-refugee-crisis-europe-s-worst-since-40-s.html>.

64 “Ending Violence Against Women,” United Nations Women, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/bosnia-and-herzegovina/ending-violence-against-women>.

65 United Nations Population Fund, *The Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls* (Bratislava: United Nations Population Fund, 2002),

there must be legal and educational steps taken to protect and defuse misinformation. Public awareness and education on gender equality are crucial to challenge traditional norms and promote women's rights. These initiatives can help deliver needed aid to the vulnerable.⁶⁶

Moreover, economic and social mobility has been a large point of contention. The World Bank and other financial institutions criticized BiH's economic and social rights. They perceived an expensive and inefficient social protection system that offers huge subsidies to families of veterans but only little aid to those in need. Despite the government's commitment to reform, attempts to control this area by scrutinizing the status of war veterans failed, protecting them more than others. In BiH, since the ten cantons' (regions) capacities to deliver healthcare varied widely, access to healthcare is problematic. This is still the case, although there has been an improvement in the cooperation between entities, allowing more equitable patient protection. As the question of the domestic labor force's decline arises.

In general, the country's inability to handle migration became evident in 2016 when it joined the "migrants' route." Although many who crossed the border into Bosnia and Herzegovina did so illegally, large numbers stayed behind and were housed close to the border with Croatia.⁶⁷ The slow deceleration of the migration flow was due to external factors rather than internal border management procedures. Improving the rights of migrants and migrant workers is a priority that is not given enough attention or funding. One important source of income for the state is remittances from employees who work overseas.

After 2015, there was no longer any practice of withholding payments to employees or social security and health insurance providers because of the increased monitoring of tax and benefit collections. Employee rights improved as a result, which was

motivated by the need for budgetary stability.⁶⁸ After certain categories of BiH workers were granted more access to the EU labor market, there was a similar impact. A large number of workers in underpaid industries, such as carpenters, started to get higher wages as a result of a labor shortage. Because many workers overseas have not been documented as such, unemployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina has drastically fallen and is likely considerably lower than claimed. The country is still impoverished, despite these employment gains, and real pay growth has lagged. 2008 saw average salaries in Bosnia and Herzegovina either match or exceed those in the WB6, Romania, and Bulgaria. They are currently only higher than those in Albania, North Macedonia, and Kosovo.⁶⁹

Importing workers would not be an easy way for the state to get over its labor problems because it lacks the necessary frameworks and policies. The gradual rise of migrant laborers is not due to policy; rather, it is the consequence of companies' desperation to issue more work permits to foreign nationals. The migration problem has impacted the education sector. Despite this, there are now more schools and colleges than there were before due to the liberalization of establishment laws. However, this has cast questions on the quality of education provided. Prosecutors have discovered that certain high schools and universities function as degree mills, providing the required documentation (diplomas) in return for payment in at least two cases. Several high-ranking officers, including Osman Mehmedagic, the chief of the Bosnian intelligence service (OSA), possess a forged diploma.⁷⁰ The education sector is rife with discrimination as well. For example, Bosniak and Croat students in 34 schools in certain parts of the FBiH are separated by the idea of "two schools under one roof," and primary school and high school students in some regions of the country have limited access to the so-called national group of subjects (mostly Bosniaks and Croats in RS).⁷¹ Both cases

https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/impact_conflict_women.pdf.

⁶⁶ "Bosnia and Herzegovina," Minority Rights Group, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://minorityrights.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

⁶⁷ Juliane Winkelmann, Yulia Litvinova, and Boris Rebac, *Health Systems in action: Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Geneva: World Health Organizations and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2022), <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/362330/9789289059114-eng.pdf?sequence=1>.

⁶⁸ "The ILO in Bosnia and Herzegovina," International Labour Organization, May 14, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/ilo-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

⁶⁹ Aaron O'Neill, "Bosnia & Herzegovina - Employment by Economic Sector 2012-2022," Statista, July 4, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/454016/employment-by-economic-sector-in-bosnia-herzegovina/>.

⁷⁰ Reuters, "Bosnia's Intelligence Chief Arrested Over Forged Diploma Accusations," *Reuters*, July 14, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/bosnias-intelligence-chief-arrested-over-forged-diploma-accusations-2021-07-14/>.

⁷¹ Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley, *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion* (Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2004),

were brought before the nation's courts, which concluded that discrimination is present in both situations. But with distinct epilogues. The relevant ministry in RS has mostly stopped its discriminating practices.

Current Status

Democratic Concerns of the Power of the High Representative

In 2022, after Bosnia and Herzegovina's general elections, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) implemented new amendments to the Election Law of BiH and the Constitution of the Federation to improve the "practicality" of election results.⁷² In a letter, Christian Schmidt, the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, announced a new series of electoral reforms to better the logistical functions of institutions. This is not the first time Schmidt used "Bonn powers" (special authority given to the OHR to maintain international standards).⁷³ Since the OHR is an international governing body, the process of the High Representative's selection comes from an international perspective. The eleven-member Peace Implementation Council Steering Board has been nominated and voted on by each High Representative since 1995. Canada, the US, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, the UK, the European Commission, Russia, Türkiye, and the Presidency of the Council of the European Union make up the Steering Board.⁷⁴ In other words, as BiH does not participate in the electoral process, it cannot affect the appointment of individuals to this important position.

Over time, there was controversy around the delegation of such

authority to an outsider. As a result, the High Representative did not use his authority from mid-2011 to July 2021. Still, when retiring, High Representative Valentin Inzko submitted a bill establishing criminal penalties for anyone who denies genocide. The Srebrenica atrocity was mentioned in the legislation; however, many Serbs do not believe it to be a genocide. Thus, Inzko's proposal pushed secessionist desires within the Serb minority.⁷⁵

Christian Schmidt took up Inzko's position in August 2021. China and Russia refused to accept his appointment at the time and questioned his validity.⁷⁶ Because of this, Schmidt is seen as a divisive personality, a perception that is strengthened by his frequent use of the Bonn powers. He stopped the Republika Srpska's Law on Immovable Property in April 2022, marking the first time he used his exterior powers. Schmidt took this action in response to Bosnian Serbs who had given up their right to manage real estate on their territory.⁷⁷

In actuality, Schmidt set up a system whereby state property could only be governed by the state. The political elite of Republika Srpska, particularly Milorad Dodik, the head of the Serb entity, swiftly denounced his initiative. Schmidt explained that a bill passed by the Republika Srpska would lessen BiH's investment potential and stability. Schmidt funded October's election with the second use of his Bonn powers in June 2022. Even though BiH has a statute requiring state institutions to give cash within 15 days of the polls' announcement, he took this action because the parties were unable to agree on how to pay for elections. Schmidt made sure that 12.5 million Bosnian marks (about 6.5 million EUR) were taken out of the state reserves before the time set by law expired on May 19.⁷⁸

chap. 2, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000136258>.

72 "Texts Adopted - Wednesday, 6 July 2022," European Parliament, July 6, 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-07-06_EN.html.

73 EEAS Press Team, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Statement by the Spokesperson on High Representative's Amendment of the Election Law," news release, March 26, 2024, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/bosnia-and-herzegovina-statement-spokesperson-high-representatives-amendment-election-law_en.

74 "Peace Implementation Council," Office of the High Representative, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.ohr.int/international-community-in-bih/peace-implementation-council/>.

75 Balkan Insight, "Bosnia's High Representative Imposes Genocide Denial Ban," *Balkan Insight*, July 23, 2021, <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/07/23/bosnias-high-representative-imposes-genocide-denial-ban/>.

76 Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, "Appointment of Christian Schmidt as High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina," news release, last modified 31 December, 2021, <https://onu.delegfrance.org/appointment-of-christian-schmidt-as-high-representative-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

77 RFE/RL's Balkan Service, "Republika Srpska Implements Property Law in Direct Challenge to High Representative," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 28, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/republika-srpska-property-law-132292374.html>.

78 Azem Kurtic, "Bosnia's International Overseer Orders State to Fund Elections," *Balkan Insight*, June 7, 2022, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/06/07/bosnias-international-overseer-orders-state-to-fund-elections/>.



Protest in front of the OHR in Sarajevo

Credit: Niegodzisic

For the third time, Schmidt used his Bonn powers in October 2022 to resolve a dispute between Bosnians and Croats, as well as to suppress Serb secessionists. On election night, he announced the “functionality package,” which modifies the political system on several levels. It adjusts the overrepresentation of some ethnic groups and inclines others; it sets a deadline for the formation of a government after the elections and implements measures to ensure the Federation’s functionality. However, this package, which was initiated to conciliate growing tensions, has achieved the exact opposite. When Schmidt announced his intervention, protests broke out outside the seat of the High Representative. More than 7,000 citizens expressed their disapproval of the plans, to no avail. The situation was made worse by Schmidt’s timing. He announced the legislative modifications at a moment when it was no longer possible to reverse an election that might have turned out differently, had the public known the changes he planned to make.

Schmidt’s action incited uproar both domestically and internationally. Some have called Schmidt’s move “illiberal,” while others have publicly distanced themselves from the

issue. He was also called by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament to address the undemocratic modifications to election regulations.⁷⁹ There is disagreement within the steering board on whether or not to endorse Schmidt’s activities. As previously stated, Russia does not support Schmidt. Other countries, including Germany and Italy, have also shown ambiguous support for the High Representative.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the loss of it might put the office’s very survival in jeopardy because his authority depends on outside funding. Such foreign interference is considered controversial in a country that has suffered with democratization for nearly thirty years.

Many countries have applauded Schmidt’s decision to strengthen stability and functionality by amending laws and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Constitution. His judgment deals with issues that the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been dealing with for a long time.⁸¹ The Federation has not implemented the outcomes of the 2018 elections four years later, and the Federation Constitutional Court is all but paralyzed. As a result, citizens have lost their constitutional rights, the rule of law has been compromised,

⁷⁹ Benjamin Nurkić and Faris Hasanović, “Christian Schmidt’s Stabilitocracy: A Rather Terrible Decision by the High Representative,” *Verfassungsblog*, October 21, 2022, <https://verfassungsblog.de/christian-schmidts-stabilitocracy/>.

⁸⁰ RFE/RL’s Balkan Service, “Republika Srpska Assembly Votes to No Longer Publish Decisions of Bosnia High Representative,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 21, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-srpska-high-representative-schmidt-decisions-/32469653.html>.

⁸¹ Dariusz Kalan, “Bosnia’s Peace Envoy Is Caught in a Political Tug of War,” *Foreign Policy*, February 24, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/24/bosnia-christian-schmidt-peace-envoy-constitution-changes/>.

and ethno-nationalists in BiH have become more content.⁸² All of these issues pose a danger to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and multiethnic nature of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Political parties had years to find solutions to persistent issues with functionality and power-sharing. The High Representative has called on them to look for a sincere agreement; rather than doing so, many of them continue to undermine the country's institutional integrity. Citizens of BiH need a functioning government that can handle the increasing number of emergencies.

The international community moved to impose sanctions on the leaders of the Republika Srpska for their actions, which intended to weaken state institutions and the integrity of BiH. The international community intervened to fund elections and defend the democratic rights of the people when politicians tried to hold election money hostage.⁸³ The international community cannot allow the dysfunctionality of the Federation to persist for a further four years. It must ensure that they will engage in genuine negotiations, offer concessions, and prioritize the interests of the people above all else.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was described as one country by the Dayton Peace Agreement, made up of two entities, three component peoples, others, and all residents. The European Court of Human Rights has emphasized that the political parties in BiH bear the obligation of amending the Dayton Constitution, and the High Representative is unable to do so. Putting the agreement into action, however, is the duty of the High Representative.⁸⁴ This involves ensuring institutions and power-sharing systems in BiH continue to operate. Citizens have no input in these areas in case of failed governance.

The first step in reestablishing the internal balance that BiH needs to handle governance difficulties, provide prosperity,

answer to broader geopolitical challenges, and guarantee its place in the Euro-Atlantic community of countries is the restoration of functionality to the Federation.

Democratic Concerns Over Electoral College System

Eight general elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) following the signing of the Accords in 1995. The Accords established the foundation for a democratic state and offered a framework for peace. The result was a constitution that established a mixed presidential and parliamentary electoral system, as well as an ethno-political division between two autonomous entities and three ethnic designations within the State: the Republika Srpska (RS), which is populated primarily by Serb Orthodox people, and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), which is populated primarily by Muslim Bosniak and Catholic Croat people.⁸⁵ While the system helped bring about instant peace and power sharing in the short term, it has not produced a truly democratic, egalitarian, or inclusive system of government over the long run.

Voters in the two entities select 136 ministries, 14 parliaments, and three presidential candidates. In the RS, voters choose 83 members of the National Assembly and the RS President, while in the Federation of BiH, 445 representatives will be chosen for the Parliament of the Federation of BiH and ten cantonal legislatures. In addition, 42 members of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be chosen by the electorate (28 in the Federation and 14 in the RS). Although the National Assembly, the RS's centralized legislative, is part of the Federation, which consists of ten independent cantons with independent governments, legislatures, and departments of public service including education and law enforcement.⁸⁶ There is also the

⁸² RFE/RL's Balkan Service, "Constitutional Court in Bosnia Temporarily Suspends Republika Srpska's Election Law," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 21, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-republika-srpska-election-law-constitutional-court/33049572.html>.

⁸³ Matthew Miller, "Imposing Sanctions on Bosnia and Herzegovina Officials Who Undermined Dayton Peace Accord," news release, July 31, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/imposing-sanctions-on-bosnia-and-herzegovina-officials-who-undermined-dayton-peace-accord/>.

⁸⁴ Daniel S. Hamilton, *Fixing Dayton: A New Deal for Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Washington D.C.: Wilson Center, 2020), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/fixing-dayton-new-deal-bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

⁸⁵ United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Security Council, General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, A/50/79C, (Nov. 29, 1995), https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/wp-content/accords/The_General_Framework_Agreement_for_Peace_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina.pdf.

⁸⁶ Damir Kapidžić, "General Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2 October 2022," Groupe d'études géopolitiques, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://geopolitique.eu/en/articles/general-elections-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-2-october-2022/>.

autonomous region of Brčko in northeastern Bosnia. The House of Peoples and the House of Representatives, which together make up the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are the two houses of the bicameral national legislature. Additionally, there is a three-person president who serves as head of state at the national level, with each member representing one of the three legally recognized ethnic constituencies: Bosniak, Serb, and Croat. The House of Representatives must ratify the nomination of the Prime Minister, who is also formally known as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸⁷

The state mandates that political candidates register their ethnicity to compete for office, and voters can only support one presidential candidate from their ethnic community. This means that people can only vote for a Bosniak or Croat candidate if they live in the Federation, and can only vote for a Serbian candidate if they live in the Republic of Srpska. BiH's other minority groups, such as ethnic Romans and Jews, are not only underrepresented at the federal level but also prohibited from seeking public office, alienating both groups from national politics on many levels.⁸⁸ The public loses faith in political parties and electoral institutions as a result of nationalism and the complexity of the system, making leaders more vulnerable to corruption. Transparency International's recent election observer reports discovered over 1,300 instances of the use of public funds to support political parties and candidates, as well as a notable rise in pre-election public spending.

In the same vein, an OSCE survey of Bosnians discovered that over a fifth of participants reported that they had been told who to vote for at the polling place, and every fourth responder had been offered money to do so. Merely 23 percent of participants said that elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina are held fairly. Considering how common electoral fraud and campaign corruption are, over 90 percent of respondents to an

IRI survey conducted in February 2022 believed that Bosnia and Herzegovina was going in the “wrong direction.”⁸⁹

Compared to the Federation, BiH's political structure is stronger due to its centralized legislature and the president's office in the Republic of Srpska. The method of choosing three presidents (in which voters in the Federation vote for two presidents of either Bosniak or Croatian ethnicity, and voters in the single constituency of the RS vote for one president of Serbian ethnicity) violates the idea of “one person, one vote,” which states that all voter's rights should be equal to that of each other within the same state. Therefore, as candidates in the RS are not required under the electoral divisions to garner support from voters of other ethnicities, there is no need to address all constituents throughout the entirety of BiH.⁹⁰

Since political players in Bosnia and Herzegovina often turn to nationalism and cater to foreign interests, the country's political system makes the transition to liberal democracy difficult. Most people seek a liberal democratic framework, while some support an ethnocratic state. If electoral reform puts their wallets or power in jeopardy, nationalist leaders have little desire to work across party lines. This dynamic is demonstrated by the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina has not complied with all pending rulings from the European Court of Human Rights, which is a requirement for entry into the EU.⁹¹

It should be noted that pro-NATO and pro-Euro-Atlantic objectives are being undermined by illiberal foreign actors, especially Russia, who are keen to take advantage of ethnic tensions and advance their geopolitical agenda in the region. Russian electoral meddling in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as other Balkan countries, is rarely concealed. It is estimated that political parties and candidates worldwide have received around 300 million euros in donations. It is not surprising that middle-class flight is a major factor in the “brain drain”

87 “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” U.S. Department of State, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/bosniaandherzegovina/80639.htm>.

88 Josephine McDonagh, *Literature in a Time of Migration: British Fiction and the Movement of People, 1815–1876*, (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2021), chap. 1 <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192895752.003.0001>.

89 “OSCE Mission Publishes Public Opinion Survey Results on BiH Citizens' Perception of Elections and Electoral Processes,” Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, September 23, 2022, <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/526753>.

90 Jessica Keegan, “Bosnia and Herzegovina's Extremely Complicated Electoral System Unpacked,” *International Republican Institute*, October 1, 2022, <https://www.iri.org/news/bosnia-and-herzegovinas-extremely-complicated-electoral-system-unpacked/>.

91 Tracey Newell, “On Recent Developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” news release, May 2, 2024, <https://osce.usmission.gov/on-recent-developments-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

that BiH is experiencing.⁹² As a result, there aren't enough Bosnians with the optimism and education needed to take on development challenges, which has increased public anxiety about the future of democracy.

Sustainable Development Goals

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of goals designed for positive global shifts in various sectors.⁹³ From Goal 1: No Poverty to Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals, the UN has incorporated numerous sectors into these targets. In dealing with the topic at hand, Goal 5: Gender Equality, Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities, and Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions are the most prominent ones to consider.

The August 2023 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) against voting limitations based on territory and ethnicity highlighted the BiH's lack of effort in tackling the state's discriminatory electoral system. In certain regions of the country, LGBTIQ+ individuals faced official hostility and assembly restrictions.⁹⁴ Effective mechanisms to safeguard victims of gender-based violence are lacking in the state. Defamation is now illegal in Republika Srpska, and foreign funding for civil society is restricted. The European Commission stated in its November 2023 enlargement report that Bosnia and Herzegovina must work more to achieve reform targets.⁹⁵

A video depicting a staff member at a state-run institution abusing a man with a handicap surfaced, underscoring the long-standing inability of BiH authorities to protect the rights

of those with disabilities and put a stop to institutionalization.⁹⁶ It came after instances of child abuse at the same facility in the past. The Minister of Labor and Social Policy of FBiH threatened to press criminal charges against those who recorded and leaked the video, instead of addressing the greater issue.

It still takes years for investigations, prosecutions, and court cases to result in war crimes being held accountable. The 2023 deadline for implementing the Revised National War Crime Strategy was missed by the authorities.⁹⁷ The Council of Ministers established a committee to oversee its execution in March. Unstable regulations that let fines be substituted for war crime sentences under one year continue to worry the public. Eight people convicted of war crimes, including two males found guilty of rape and attempted rape of girls, have allegedly exploited this loophole to escape going to jail in the last five years, according to the OSCE. This practice was proposed to be discontinued, but the BiH Parliamentary Assembly rejected it.⁹⁸

The number of applicants who registered with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs between January and August 2023 expressed a desire to seek asylum increased to 18,995 from 11,881 during the same time in 2022. Asylum processing times have reportedly improved, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).⁹⁹ There have been ongoing reports of Croatian police mistreating migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers at the border and forcing them back into Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2023, a man killed his ex-wife and streamed the crime live.¹⁰⁰ The woman had reported her ex-husband's threats and

92 Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis, "NATO in the 21st Century: Preparing the Alliance for the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow," The Heritage Foundation, August 10, 2020, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-the-21st-century-preparing-the-alliance-the-challenges-today-and-tomorrow>.

93 "The 17 Goals," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed October 14, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

94 "European Court of Human Rights Rules That Territorial and Ethnic Voting Restrictions Outlined in Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina Violate Human Rights," Constitution Net, August 30, 2023, <https://constitutionnet.org/news/european-court-human-rights-rules-territorial-and-ethnic-voting-restrictions-outlined>.

95 European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report*, (Brussels: European Commission, November 8, 2023, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_691%20Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20report.pdf).

96 Emina Cerimović, "Bosnia and Herzegovina Should Stop Institutionalizing People with Disabilities," Human Rights Watch, August 25, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/25/bosnia-and-herzegovina-should-stop-institutionalizing-people-disabilities>.

97 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Considers Initial Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina," news release, March 28, 2017, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2017/03/committee-rights-persons-disabilities-considers-initial-report-bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

98 "OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

99 Valery Perry and Soeren Keil, *The OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Testing the Limits of Ownership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/nationalities-papers/article/abs/osce-mission-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-testing-the-limits-of-ownership/4141B53399250B916AC0E2723B1AE4D6>.

100 Miran Jelenek, Dzenana Halimovic, and Austin Malloy, "My Alma Is Gone': Bosnian Woman Killed by Husband despite Repeated

violence to the police before her death, but the court denied the police's request for a restraining order against the man due to a lack of proof. Eldin Hodzic was given a 35-year prison term in a different case. Before killing her in front of their daughter, she filed 150 reports of domestic abuse against him with the police. It has been ten years since the Bosnian authorities ratified the Istanbul Convention, and still, no laws have been passed to stop, look into, and punish gender-based violence. August of that year saw Bosnian officials committing to strengthening laws, particularly domestic abuse law, and improving police and judicial responses. The Federation BiH House of Peoples passed a bill in 2022 to regulate domestic laws by the Istanbul Convention; however, because of a lack of local agreement, the law's implementation has been postponed.¹⁰¹

Even though the 2023 Sarajevo Pride march was incident-free, LGBTIQ+ rights are not always protected. In March 2023, an attack took place in Banja Luka when activists were planning a film showing. Two days before the incident, Banja Luka's mayor and President Milorad Dodik, who is Bosnian Serb, had called for the film screening to be banned by police. The police ordered the event's organizers to leave the city after it was canceled because they could not ensure their safety. Activists present said that a group of males physically attacked them while the cops looked on. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe urged the authorities to investigate this manner and hold perpetrators.¹⁰²

Bloc Analysis

Points of Division

One of the most pressing areas of contention is the balance of power between federal and local branches of government

in BiH. Those who oppose the current governance system believe that with decentralized power, there is a lack of consistency within policy, as well as widespread corruption. However, those who support centralization argue that it allows for the creation of a singular national identity. In doing so, it would also improve the likelihood that BiH can achieve EU membership which would bolster the economy and allow for the implementation of more consistent policies by EU regulations. Conversely, those who back the current governance system see that it has brought peace and a sense of stability within the past few decades.¹⁰³

Additionally, the balance between nationality and ethnicity has been difficult to scale. Many states support policies that stress the importance of developing a stronger sense of patriotism for Bosnians. They emphasize that BiH's electoral system, political representation, and education amplify ethnic divides and prevent progress towards a collective identity.¹⁰⁴ However other member states stress the importance of Bosnians remembering their heritage and distinct culture. These states find that a multi-ethnic country should have multi-ethnic governing bodies to properly represent the population. These countries back the current governing system, as it ensures no group will fully dominate the political sphere.

Countries Backing Federal Governance in BiH

This bloc includes states that firmly believe a stronger federal government with centralized power would better serve the people in BiH. This bloc advocates for capping a certain level of authority within local government while increasing the power of the federal branches. These member states view a collective system as one capable of bridging ethnic divisions and tensions present in BiH.¹⁰⁵ Through an emphasis on federal governance, these countries aim to create a sense of

Warnings of Domestic Violence," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, May 4, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-domestic-violence-murder-sarajevo/32396475.html>.

101 Jelenek, Halimovic, and Malloy, "'My Alma Is Gone': Bosnian Woman Killed by Husband despite Repeated Warnings of Domestic Violence."

102 Jelenek, Halimovic, and Malloy, "'My Alma Is Gone': Bosnian Woman Killed by Husband despite Repeated Warnings of Domestic Violence."

103 Matthew Miller, "Background on the Council of Ministers," news release, June 29, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/condemning-republika-srpska-actions-that-undermine-the-dayton-peace-agreement/>.

104 International Crisis Group, "Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Introduction and Background," Refworld, September 22, 1996, <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/icg/1996/en/18985>.

105 Sven Petke and Jan Petzke, "Government Formations in Bosnia and Herzegovina through New Coalitions," Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, May 5, 2023, <https://www.kas.de/en/country-reports/detail/-/content/formation-of-governments-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-through-new-coalitions>.

collective identity and integration amongst the people of BiH.

Notably, Germany has emphasized the implementation of EU-based policies and legislation that would solidify a unified legal and political system as it would greatly benefit the citizens of BiH. In terms of political, economic, and cultural relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been very interconnected to Germany. Currently, Germany is one of the biggest donors, and international relations partners as well as an advocate within the EU to Bosnia and Herzegovina. This cooperation has allowed the promotion of BiH's reform processes and advanced the country's rapprochement with the EU.¹⁰⁶ The United States has also been a long-time advocate for a more unified BiH and has been doing so by promoting policies that encourage civic integration and patriotism. Moreover, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has aided in building fully functional and obliging institutions that meet the needs of citizens residing in BiH.¹⁰⁷

Countries Backing Local Governance in BiH

These include member states that advocate for a more decentralized federal government in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure better governance of the various ethnic groups. This bloc firmly believes in resting the authority in the hands of local agencies. In doing so, local governing bodies can tailor their policies to the special concerns faced by the various ethnic groups in BiH, which will better serve the people and lead to ease of tension through better quality of life.

As of the start of this year, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has spearheaded a conference in Banja Luka, which gathered an estimated sixty key stakeholders to examine and discuss the issues facing local governments in BiH. These talks have spanned from January 2024 to March 2024, as an effort to provide a platform to converse.¹⁰⁸

These issues are organized into seven different classifications

(which include public financial management, integrity and accountability, public services and infrastructure, meritocracy and professionalism, civic engagement, etc) where interposition can lead to positive change. During these talks, representatives stressed the significance of keeping the concerns of the people at the forefront. In BiH, UNDP supports local governance as it better the livelihoods of those residing in both urban and rural areas, generates trust between people and institutions, and allows the people to be heard by their elected officials.¹⁰⁹

Countries Backing International Peacekeeping and Oversight in BiH

These include member states that advocate for the need for continued international oversight and peacekeeping efforts to ensure national security. This bloc supports the strengthening of international agencies in BiH while maintaining a level of authority for the local and federal agencies within the country. These countries encourage the continued deployment of international mediating forces to oversee the current situation and aid in peacekeeping efforts.

The United Kingdom (UK) firmly believes that, despite current tensions, the situation remains stable and leaves room for reconciliation. However, it is due to the overarching concern of escalation that leads to the need for the presence of international peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Recently, the European Council's decision on BiH's EU accession status was granted in March, which in many European countries is seen as a significant step as the rigid framework that comes with being a member of the EU can be extremely beneficial to a country needing guidance. The UK has encouraged the Bosnian authorities to cooperate and compromise as needed to ensure that the negotiating framework will be successfully adopted.

Given the country's recent and violent history where terror

¹⁰⁶ "Bosnia and Herzegovina," Council of the European Union, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/bosnia-herzegovina/>.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Herman, Mara Galaty, and Lawrence Robertson, *Bosnia-Herzegovina Conflict Assessment* (Washington D. C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, 2005), https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadd627.pdf.

¹⁰⁸ "New Trends and Practices of Local Governments Contribute to Improving the Quality of Life of Citizens," United Nations Development Programme, December 18, 2023, <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/press-releases/new-trends-and-practices-local-governments-contribute-improving-quality-life-citizens>.

¹⁰⁹ Julia Stewart, *Local Governance in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings: Building a Resilient Foundation for Peace and Development* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2016), <https://www.undp.org/publications/local-governance-fragile-and-conflict-affected-settings>.

still runs rampant, global entities and countries believe that BiH is still unable to fully govern itself without international oversight. Due to the uncertainty in BiH's political sphere, the United Kingdom stresses the role played by the High Representative and the necessity of continued international supervision working in tandem with Bosnian authorities.

Committee Mission

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal UN bodies created by the United Nations Charter. It assigns the Security Council primary responsibility for upholding global peace and security, allowing it to convene anytime peace is in jeopardy. Per the UN Charter, the UNSC has four key purposes: to uphold world peace and security, foster goodwill among states, work together to solve global issues and advance respect for human rights, and serve as a hub for coordinating international policy.¹¹⁰

The UNSC is composed of 15 members. Five of these members—China, France, the Russian Federation, the UK, and the U.S.—are permanent members; they are referred to as the P5, and each can veto resolutions. The remaining 10 are elected to serve two-year terms.

The Council can set rules for agreements, initiate an inquiry, and, in some cases, mediate, dispatch a mission, appoint special envoys, or request that the Secretary-General negotiate a peaceful solution to the dispute. In addition, the Council may decide to use enforcement actions, such as travel bans, financial penalties, and limitations, arms embargoes, economic sanctions, severance of diplomatic connections, blockades, or even collective military action. One of the main concerns is limiting the effects of the measures implemented on other segments of the people and economy while concentrating action on those accountable for the policies or practices denounced by the international community.¹¹¹

Currently, the many issues that surround Bosnia and Herzegovina are worsening with each growing day. Out of

all of the governing bodies in the United Nations, only the Security Council can issue legally binding resolutions to member states that adopt said resolutions. In terms of the current human rights violations, ongoing cases of violence, and possible succession, only the UNSC has grounds to hold member states accountable for their end.¹¹²

110 Stewart, *Local Governance in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings: Building a Resilient Foundation for Peace and Development*.

111 "Actions with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression | Security Council," United Nations, accessed August 15, 2024. <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/repertoire/actions>.

112 "The United Nations & Its Legal Authority," Justia, last modified June 2024, <https://www.justia.com/international-law/the-united-nations/>.

Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

Topic A

1. What are some major contributing factors to Burkina Faso's fragile balance of power, and what happens if those factors are altered?
2. How do the humanitarian crises occurring in Burkina Faso pose financial benefits to certain organizations? How can your state go about intervening in this business?
3. How will you determine when a forceful solution is necessary, and what measures will be taken to avoid it?
4. How will your country ensure that any measures against the hostile occupiers of Burkina Faso do not compromise the state's natural resources?
5. How will your country distinguish corrupt from honest authorities and prevent future corruption (as much as possible)?

Topic B

1. What is your country's current and past stance in terms of international interference in other states (e.g. isolationism, internationalism, etc)?
2. Does your state believe in maintaining local governance, federal governance, or international supervision in Bosnia and Herzegovina?
3. How has your country previously interacted with Bosnia and Herzegovina historically as well as diplomatically? How do these interactions influence your current foreign policy towards BiH?
4. Considering your state's geographical location, how does geopolitics shape your country's national agenda towards BiH?
5. Has your state experienced a national divide? If so, what measures has your country taken to solve such an issue?

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