



NHSMUN

UNSC-A

UPDATE PAPER

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Analucia Tello
Sofia Velasco

Renata Venzor

Dear Delegates,

My name is Ayush Singhal. I am your AD for UNSC-A Session I, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to NHSMUN 2025! This will be my first-year staffing NHSMUN, but I competed in this same committee in 2023. I am very excited to see the creative solutions you all come up with and hope that all of you enjoy your time here at NHSMUN!

I study Math and Computer Science at the University of California, San Diego. I love running, haggling at swap meets, and hanging out with friends. Arguably one of my favorite in-school clubs is one where we build an offroad car from scratch. In regard to MUN, NHSMUN is unequivocally the best conference I have ever competed in. It was competitive, I got to befriend people from all over the world, and I became much closer with my teammates. That being said, please read the background guide thoroughly. It will save you from needing to play catch-up on your first day of committee.

If you need help in any way, your Directors, ADs, and the rest of the NHSMUN staff are here for you. Feel free to reach out and we will help you as much as we can. My fellow Assistant Director, Tyler Thompson, and I hope to provide a fun experience that lets you learn more about the world we live in. With that, we are pleased to present you with an Update Paper on the significant developments in Burkina Faso and Bosnia and Herzegovina since August 2024.

Happy Reading,

Ayush Singhal

United Nations Security Council A

Session I

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Renata Venzor

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! My name is Tyler Thompson, and I am happy to welcome you all to participate in the UNSC-A committee! This is my first-year staffing at NHSMUN, but I attended NHSMUN 2024 as a delegate in the UNSC; so, I am quite grateful that I can begin as Session II Assistant Director in a committee I am already familiar with! It is my wish to help create a conference environment that you can all thrive in.

I currently live in and study social sciences at the University of Toronto. Outside of school, my hobbies include reading, writing, watching TV and movies, alongside chatting with friends. Of course, I love MUN as well! As a former delegate, I understand that this experience can be stressful. Please do not worry! Research the topic well, be ready and able to discuss it, and remember how much fun MUN can be (for first-time delegates, take my word for it)! This is a great place to meet new people, and every one of you has at least one thing in common - MUN!

NHSMUN staff are always here to support you. Please come to us with any questions or concerns. We are committed to providing a positive and academically stimulating experience while fostering meaningful debate on complex topics.

My fellow Assistant Director, Ayush Singhal, and I are pleased to present to you an Update Paper which will hopefully bring you up to speed on all pertinent information since August 2024 - with some context of course. This, along with your Background Guide, should be a reliable starting point for your research.

I wish you all the best!

Sincerely,

Tyler Thompson

United Nations Security Council A

Session II

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UNSC-A

NHSMUN 2025



TOPIC A: THE SITUATION IN BURKINA FASO

Photo Credit: Sgt. Tatum Vayavananda

Introduction

In September 2022, Burkina Faso's current military government or "junta" seized power from Lieutenant Colonel Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba.¹ The junta's leader, Captain Ibrahim Traore, became the country's transitional president. This coup was primarily motivated by widespread discontent with previous leaders over national security issues.² This is a part of the much larger crisis facing Burkina Faso. For many years the country was dealing with an internal conflict from Islamic insurgents. These insurgents displaced millions of people and led to the deaths of thousands of civilians.

With more people becoming frustrated with the government, the military saw an opportunity to overthrow Damiba's government. This new government was welcomed favorably by the people. They saw the new government as an opportunity to change the country. Early in his presidency, Traore aimed to reopen democratic elections in July 2024. He had also agreed to uphold Damiba's promise to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to return the country to civilian rule. However, there has yet to be any progress towards the restoration of a democratic government. Also, the ruling military junta had made little progress in improving national security. The insurgency is still going on and attacks have increased. As a result, Traore extended the government's transitional period by five years (i.e., one presidential term) in May 2024.³

The situation in Burkina Faso has been one of the major indicators of the regional dynamics in the Western Sahel. The recent political turmoil in the country strongly underlines the importance of decisive action that addresses the geopolitical ramifications in the region. It also shows how fragile the region can be to extremist groups and internal conflicts. If allowed to continue, insurgencies could destabilize governments and hurt the progress the region has made towards democratization. In addition to the political instability, the country's human rights record has gone downhill as a consequence of Islamic insurgent groups like the Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM). This group's attack in the town of Barsalogo on August 24, 2024, represents what could happen if something is not done to stabilize the region.

As delegates of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), it is therefore important to address the ongoing developments in Burkina Faso and uphold the committee's mandate to preserve international peace and security. Delegates should consider the regional dynamics and look into the religious and historical influences on Burkina Faso. By looking at cultural conflicts in the country, there is a pathway towards finding long-lasting peace. The UNSC should also recognize the magnitude of the situation in Burkina Faso towards the regional dynamics in Western Africa. Burkina Faso acts as a predictor of what could happen to other Western African countries. The region remains very fragile with piracy, internal conflicts, and low development all harming the people there. The committee will need to develop an adequate response that contributes to sustainable peacebuilding in the long term. By doing so, the UNSC can create stability and work towards rebuilding the lives of the millions of civilians who are affected by the conflict in Burkina Faso.

Burkina Faso and the Alliance of Sahel States

In the 2020s, several coups and military governments overthrew the existing governments of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Soon after establishing these military governments, these countries encountered hostility from ECOWAS and other foreign powers. International condemnations targeted these countries and demanded that democratic elections must return to the region. Heavy economic sanctions from some of these countries' biggest trading partners were implemented along

1 Chinedu Asadu, "Burkina Faso's Junta Says Its Intelligence and Security Services Have Foiled a Coup Attempt," AP News, September 27, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/burkina-faso-coup-attempt-sahel-military-d1f1c3a9e48131ba710d108186eccd8c>.

2 Asadu, "Burkina Faso's Junta Says Its Intelligence and Security Services Have Foiled a Coup Attempt,"

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

with threats of military interventions.⁴ As a result, on January 29 and 30, 2024, the three countries officially withdrew from ECOWAS.⁵ Later, on July 6, 2024, the Burkinabe, Malian, and Nigerien leaders grouped to form the Alliance of Sahel States (AES).⁶ This series of diplomatic moves by ECOWAS and the AES countries was dramatic and changed the geopolitics of the region significantly. ECOWAS lost some of its largest members by land size and saw the organization go through a major change. The AES countries lost a significant amount of aid and trade from ECOWAS countries and saw their economies struggle as shipments stopped. Families were cut off from each other as borders closed. In Niger, the country saw 70 percent of its electricity cut off from ECOWAS and major parts of the country lost power.⁷ However, the AES countries remained defiant and resisted the calls from ECOWAS to democratize. The governments within these countries decided that it was better to find different trading partners and become

self-reliant instead of being subjected to ECOWAS's oversight.

The AES was founded to unify its member states as a single, sovereign entity with complete regional security and economic independence.⁸ These countries are all military governments that formerly had democratic governments. The military governments of AES claim to be focused on the national security of the region. Their policies have changed as a result. Armed forces have increased while the living conditions have gotten worse. However, there have been many critiques of the ability of AES countries to manage the region's security issues. Many countries claim Burkina Faso's, Mali's, and Niger's hostile departures from ECOWAS greatly exacerbated the Sahel's instability.⁹ By leaving ECOWAS in such a way, the three countries all lost some of their greatest trading partners. That meant ECOWAS could not economically monitor these countries and make sure that they were implementing policies that would have strengthened their economies. The

⁴ Vicky Wong, "ECOWAS: Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso Quit West African Bloc," BBC News, January 28, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-68122947>.

⁵ Ilaria Allegrozzi, "Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger Quit Regional Bloc," Human Rights Watch, February 2, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/02/burkina-faso-mali-and-niger-quit-regional-bloc>.

⁶ Djiby Sow and Hassane Koné, "As Aes and ECOWAS Drift Apart, Dialogue on the Fundamentals Is Vital," ISS Africa, July 23, 2024, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/as-aes-and-ecowas-drift-apart-dialogue-on-the-fundamentals-is-vital>.

⁷ Al Jazeera, "Niger Government Asks Court to Force ECOWAS to Lift Coup Sanctions," Al Jazeera, November 23, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/22/niger-asks-west-africas-court-to-compel-neighbors-to-lift-coup-sanctions-citing-hardship>.

⁸ Kester Kenn Klomegah, "The Alliance of Sahel States: Implications, Challenges and Prospects in West Africa," Modern Diplomacy, September 17, 2024, <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2024/09/17/the-alliance-of-sahel-states-implications-challenges-and-prospects-in-west-africa/>.

⁹ Matthew Edds-Reitman and Rachel Yeboah Boakye, "Sahel Coup Regime's Split from ECOWAS Risks Instability in Coastal West Africa," United States Institute of Peace, October 24, 2024, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/10/sahel-coup-regimes-split-ecowas-risks-instability-coastal-west-africa>.



Ibrahim Traoré

Credit: Lamine Traoré / VOA - Voice of America

loss of oversight lost ECOWAS a significant portion of the Sahel's common markets and joint enterprises. Additionally, it disrupted many previous trade routes and furthered internal political strife in the region.¹⁰ For the AES, member states lost all access to other ECOWAS members' resources and had drastically fewer resources to stabilize the region. There is also much concern about how the three military regimes will consolidate power if or when they unify.¹¹

Despite these hardships, the countries of AES remain steadfast in their goals. These countries see themselves as counterweight in the region. They serve as a balance against ECOWAS from becoming too overbearing with its ambitions. This has pushed AES to integrate and connect both countries more. In their pursuit of this goal, on September 15, 2024, the Malian, Burkinabe, and Nigerien junta leaders declared a biometric passport under the AES.¹² This passport will allow citizens to migrate freely between AES member states. This is similar to the open border policy of ECOWAS which allowed citizens to travel freely between the countries. This new passport further solidifies the AES' separation from ECOWAS and the Sahel as a whole. It shows that the AES is looking for a way to distinguish itself from ECOWAS.

However, the unity of the AES does not mean that all of its three members are stable themselves. Political conflicts have continued to occur among the members of the AES. On December 7, 2024, Burkinabé President Ibrahim Traore dismissed Prime Minister Apollinaire Joachim Kyelem de Tambela and dissolved Burkina Faso's national government. Per this decree, current government officials would maintain their job responsibilities until the new government was established.¹³ However, the national legislature would remain dissolved and no progress toward democracy was made. The

following day, Traore announced Tambela's replacement: former Communications Minister Rimalba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo.¹⁴ There is no known motive for the government's dissolution or Ouedraogo's promotion. Yet, it is speculated that these changes are due to Burkina Faso's unresolved terrorism crisis and political and economic instability under Tambela. President Traore essentially politically sidelined one of the ministers who worked for him to point the blame on them. By removing Tambela, Traore put all the responsibility on Tambela and blamed him for the continued struggles the country faces. However, until a new government is implemented, these changes have little impact on Burkina Faso's global and domestic politics.

Although Traore's presidency has not significantly improved national security, he has made positive contributions to Burkina Faso's economy.¹⁵ On October 23, 2024, Traore revived the former Burkinabé beverage company BRAFASO as SN-Brafaso, another state-owned beverage company dedicated to the revitalization of Burkina Faso's economy. SN-Brafaso aims to help Burkina Faso revive its manufacturing sector of the economy. By doing so, Burkina Faso could potentially attract more business from other countries to invest in Burkina Faso. Additionally, a stronger manufacturing sector will help the country export more products and earn revenue from it. With a capital fund of six billion CFA francs, the government invested 4.2 billion or 70 percent of the capital fund, with the other 30 percent owned by the private sector. The new job opportunities are expected to reduce unemployment rates and bring in much-needed revenue for the country.¹⁶ However, this is still very slow progress, and the rest of the country has yet to see any major improvements in their lives.

With Burkina Faso's withdrawal from ECOWAS, it has

10 Beverly Ochieng, "Will the Sahel Military Alliance Further Fragment ECOWAS?," CSIS, February 15, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/will-sahel-military-alliance-further-fragment-ecowas>.

11 Amira Zhanat, "Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to Launch Biometric Passports under New Alliance," The Organization for World Peace, September 17, 2024, <https://theowp.org/mali-burkina-faso-and-niger-to-launch-biometric-passports-under-new-alliance/>.

12 Basillioh Rukanga and Paul Njie, "Junta-Led Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to Launch New Biometric Passports," BBC News, September 16, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgj44nxxll6o>.

13 Associated Press, "Burkina Faso's Military Junta Sacks the Prime Minister and Dissolves the Government," AP News, December 7, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/burkina-faso-prime-minister-9da7e7503961979ddb4077d8dc4d5400?form=MG0AV3>.

14 Associated Press, "Burkina Faso Junta Appoints New Prime Minister," AP News, December 8, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/burkina-faso-junta-prime-minister-ouedraogo-8d04ccafc3ab182a59272a614f459d18>.

15 Yannick, "Burkina Faso / Economy: Significant Progress under the Presidency of Ibrahim Traoré," Afrik Times, November 4, 2024, <https://afriktimes.info/2024/11/04/burkina-faso-economy-significant-progress-under-the-presidency-of-ibrahim-traore/?form=MG0AV3>.

16 Rroydz, "Burkina Faso: Strategic Relaunch of the Burkinabe Economy under the Vision of President Ibrahim Traoré, the Case of SN-BRAFASO," Afrik Times, October 24, 2024, <https://afriktimes.info/2024/10/24/burkina-faso-strategic-relaunch-of-the-burkinabe-economy-under-the-vision-of-president-ibrahim-traore-the-case-of-sn-brafaso/>.

attempted to become more connected to its AES allies. However, this creates a new geopolitical situation in the region and could harm AES-ECOWAS relations. To effectively navigate this issue, delegates must carefully assess the political and economic impacts of any intervention deemed necessary. The weak relations between the AES and ECOWAS have only made the economic situation worse for both groups. The lack of support from ECOWAS has also made the political situation of AES countries worse. The appointment of the new Burkinabé administration led by Traore strongly suggests the vulnerability of the political institutions.¹⁷ Weak institutions set an obstacle for countries like Burkina Faso to properly function to provide national security for its citizens. Especially for Burkina Faso, the country needs to address the increasing violence between the military and jihadist groups.

Islamic Insurgencies and Human Rights

Before AES member states departed ECOWAS, residents of the Sahel region often migrated to other parts of the region during times of unrest. This often happens during natural disasters and various military conflicts. This migration was an effective way to overcome harsh conditions and became an essential aspect of Sahelian life. However, this would all change when the AES countries decided to leave ECOWAS. The AES would lose ECOWAS' military support against the Sahel's terrorism crisis. Without ECOWAS military backing, the terrorism threat plaguing the AES countries intensified. This threat is posed mainly by Al-Qaeda affiliate Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM).

Since 2016, JNIM has constantly expanded its control to most of Northern Burkina Faso. It now covers approximately 40 percent of the country's territory.¹⁸ Currently, JNIM continues

to pose a major threat to security forces and civilians. In September 2024, JNIM led an attack against a variety of different military bases and residential communities.¹⁹ Over 100 civilians and soldiers died. Some deaths have also included soldiers from other countries sent to the region to support Burkina Faso. JNIM has killed Russian soldiers in the past in Mali and had previously targeted French soldiers deployed in Burkina Faso.²⁰ The continued targeting of civilians has led to a significant loss of life. Many villages and communities that border the government and JNIM's areas of control have been turned into battlefields. However, the lack of a strong government means that Burkinabé soldiers are often unprepared for JNIM advances and offensives. JNIM has also begun to solidify its hold on Burkina Faso. As more attacks happen and JNIM gains more land, the group has been seen as a better force than the government.²¹ As JNIM's conquest continues, intensified responses from Burkinabé forces have led to more civilians being caught in the crossfire. This has resulted in a sharp increase in Sahel migration and Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs).

These massive casualties have caused a significant decline in human rights. The destruction of property and hostages captured by JNIM has made the human rights situation in the region dire. There is a perpetual lack of fresh water and food for IDPs which has made life incredibly difficult. Many IDPs have tried fleeing to neighboring countries which have also been struggling. Many IDPs have also attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea to claim asylum in Europe. On May 31, 2024, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk called on Burkinabé authorities to ensure civilian safety by all means necessary. Türk also requested full support of investigations into Burkina Faso's alleged violations of international law.²² The Burkinabé government

¹⁷ International Crisis Group, "Tracking Conflict Worldwide," accessed January 15, 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location%5B%5D=21>.

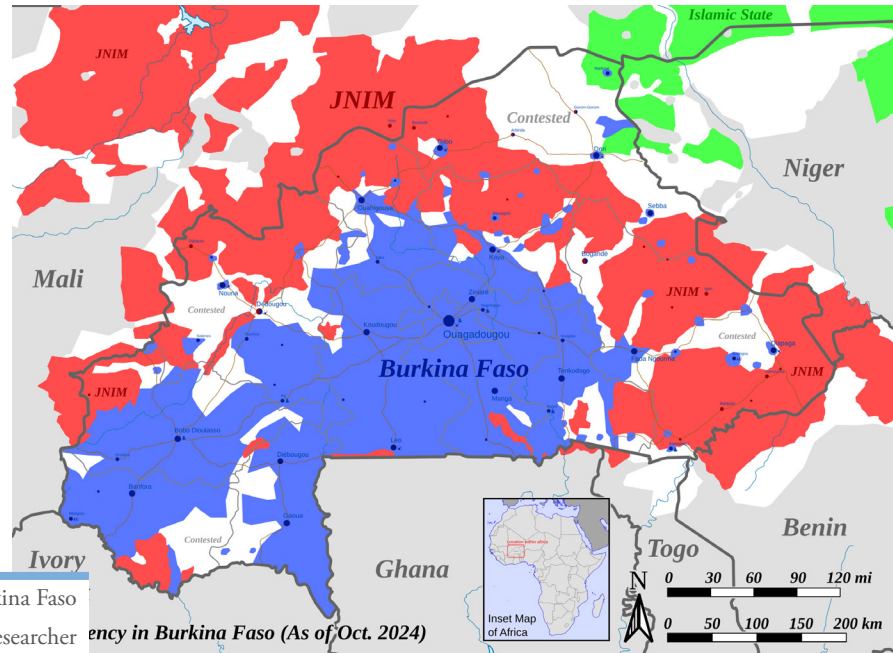
¹⁸ Eleanor Beevor, "JNIM in Burkina Faso: A Strategic Criminal Actor," Global Initiative, accessed February 7, 2025, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/jnim-burkina-faso/?form=MG0AV3>.

¹⁹ Paul Njic, "Al-Qaeda-Linked JNIM Says It Was behind Morning Assault," Bbc.com (BBC News, September 17, 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce8d996x1r0o>.

²⁰ Tim Lister, Avery Schmitz, and Darya Tarasova, "Dozens of Russian Mercenaries Killed in Rebel Ambush in Mali, in Their Worst Known Loss in Africa," CNN (CNN, July 29, 2024), <https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/29/africa/russian-mercenaries-wagner-killed-mali-intl-latam/index.html>.

²¹ Monika Pronczuk, "Attacks by Islamic Extremists Are Rampant in Africa's Sahel. Here's What We Know about Them," AP News, September 22, 2024, https://apnews.com/article/sahel-islamic-state-alqaida-niger-mali-burkina-cb640f8f2a59db08c9ba3dce86ede5a9?taid=66f01be2941c800015bc639&utm_campaign=TrueAnthem&utm_medium=AP&utm_source=Twitter.

²² Volker Türk, "Burkina Faso: UN Human Rights Chief Gravely Concerned by Rise in Killings of Civilians," United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, May 31, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/burkina-faso-un-human-rights->



Jihadist Insurgency in Burkina Faso

Credit: HetmanTheResearcher

Insurgency in Burkina Faso (As of Oct. 2024)

has refused these calls, citing the AES' lack of obligation to the international community. As such, the UN cannot take any further action without breaching sovereignty. This stance has further complicated efforts to address the humanitarian crisis and protect human rights in the country.

From around 500,000 in January 2020, the number of IDPs has surged to two million today.²³ Despite migration's commonality in the Sahel, many communities and IDP camps lacked the resources to care for and protect the increasing number of IDPs from the AES region. Many camps do not have basic food, water, or sanitation. The living conditions become even worse as more IDPs look for shelter which has overstretched resources. Current levels of humanitarian aid have not been enough to provide aid to everyone. There is also concern about where aid is going. There have been some cases of soldiers and other residents taking aid for themselves instead of the IDP camps. The lack of protection has made IDP camps the target of attacks from the JNIM and government forces.

For government forces, many of them have attacked IDPs due to suspicion that they support the Islamic insurgencies. One such attack occurred on August 24, 2024, in the town of Barsalogo. Residents were forced by Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDPs) to build defensive trenches around the town but were ambushed by the JNIM.²⁴ The residents were perceived as VDP allies, resulting in around 600 civilian deaths.²⁵ Furthering the hostility, Burkinabé Justice Minister Edasso Rodrigue Bayala announced talks of reviving the death penalty. The death penalty is planned only for terrorism-related charges.²⁶ However, Burkinabé forces labeled IDPs as terrorists without evidence. This raises concerns about how easily Burkinabé citizens, especially IDPs, can be labeled as terrorists and sentenced to death. It also represents a major breach of personal rights in the country. Citizenship could be easily questioned. For many IDPs, the conflict has caused them to lose access to identification documents. This makes them especially vulnerable since they don't have anything to

chief-gravely-concerned-rise-killings-civilians.

²³ "Burkina Faso," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations/burkina-faso>.

²⁴ Mark Banchereau, "Burkina Faso Put Civilians at 'unnecessary Risk' during Militant Attack, Rights Group Says," AP News, October 29, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/burkina-faso-massacre-jnim-human-rights-watch-2657dc01ce5ee9bd4c63ac7123cb5c8a>.

²⁵ Saskya Vandoorne, Nick Paton Walsh, and Gianluca Mezzofiore, "Massacre in Burkina Faso Left 600 Dead, Double Previous Estimates, According to French Security Assessment," CNN, October 4, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/04/africa/burkina-faso-massacre-600-dead-french-intel-intl/index.html>.

²⁶ Ilaria Allegrozzi, "Burkina Faso: Islamist Armed Groups Terrorize Civilians," Human Rights Watch, September 18, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/18/burkina-faso-islamist-armed-groups-terrorize-civilians?form=MG0AV3>.

prove their citizenship. Additionally, there is no conclusive evidence that the death penalty curbs terrorism.²⁷

The implementation of the death penalty marks a significant downturn in the country's humanitarian crisis. This directly impacts the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16 and 17. Burkina Faso's ongoing violence and instability undermines peace, justice, and the rule of law. This brings the country further away from a peaceful and just society and hinders the fulfillment of SDG 16.²⁸ Additionally, Burkina Faso's isolation from the international community prevents the Burkinabé populace from receiving necessary humanitarian aid and furthering the global partnership advocated in SDG 17.²⁹ To effectively navigate this issue, delegates must navigate Burkina Faso's severe opposition to international intervention and the armed forces (both terrorist and state actors) that threaten the Burkinabe populace.

Conclusion

The hostile takeover by Burkina Faso's ruling military junta has thrown the country into a new era of chaos and destabilization. The situation in the country has become more and more dire. The government remains unstable. Even with a new leader, Burkina Faso does not have a government strong enough to effectively coordinate its national security. The military is still not supported and cannot effectively defend itself from JNIM attacks. Islamic insurgent groups continue to gain land and turn more people onto their side. The security situation has been made worse by Burkina Faso's diplomatic relations. Its devastated diplomatic relations with ECOWAS have also cut off a vital lifeline for the country. Without ECOWAS, Burkina Faso will need to build up its economy from the ground up. ECOWAS was a crucial lifeline for Burkina Faso's economy. Without its ties to ECOWAS countries, Burkina Faso will need to redevelop its economic relationships. Additionally, the country still needs to figure out who it can turn to for more assistance. It has lost the support of the largest regional bloc. The country has also done little to liberalize its government.

This has made other democratic countries less open to supporting it. This has developed a self-sufficiency mindset that has handicapped the country. Burkina Faso continues to reject offers to democratize in return for aid. With its recent isolation from the rest of the world, citizens of Burkina Faso are no longer able to receive international aid. Even more so, Burkinabé citizens will not be able to protect themselves against the many human rights violations committed by the government.

In this crucial crisis, the UNSC must act to not only stabilize the political situation in Burkina Faso but also protect the rights of the people. At the same time, Islamic insurgent groups like JNIM continue to threaten the stability of Burkina Faso. All these factors present themselves as a unique challenge for the committee. There are many different paths delegates can take. A quick military intervention is always an option. However, this is a risky choice and could make the country even more unstable. On the other hand, a more distant approach to providing aid and supplies to the government could work. However, this option would only support a government that will likely continue to infringe on the rights of its people. Regardless of how the committee approaches the topic, delegates will need to collaborate and overcome individual interests. Together, delegates must decide on how to address the situation in Burkina Faso.

27 General Assembly, "Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty," United Nations, December 18, 2007, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n07/472/71/pdf/n0747271.pdf>.

28 "Goal 16 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs," United Nations, June 2012, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>.

29 "Goal 17 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs," United Nations, June 2012, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>.



UNSC-A
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TOPIC B: THE SITUATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Photo Credit: lz65

Introduction

The growing nationalism in the Republika Srpska (RS) threatens the peace of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and the Balkans. This primarily Serbian political entity in BiH serves as a weak point in the stability of the country. With ethnic tensions rising again, it has put the Dayton Agreement of 1995 under stress. The original terms of the agreement were already controversial. These recent issues only worsen the current situation which makes an international response necessary. BiH continues to be heavily monitored by several international agencies and peacekeeping missions. In terms of international monitoring, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) continues to monitor ethnic tensions between the RS and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Additionally, the Council of Europe is another organization that looks into the current human rights situation in the country. What makes the OSCE and the Council of Europe different is that the OSCE is more concerned about preventing a conflict. The Council of Europe is focused on protecting human rights. Additionally, the United Nations continues to monitor the region through its various agencies. Lastly, the EU's police and peacekeeping mission has been in the country since 2005.¹ This mission takes over the previous North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) peacekeeping mission. The purpose of this police force is to ensure that ethnic groups do not fight each other. Most importantly, its stated mission is to ensure the implementation of the Dayton Agreement.

In recent years, BiH has been applying for European Union (EU) membership. To become a member of the EU, they must change their political institutions to join. This means that BiH must work towards a post-Dayton future. The Dayton Agreement is seen as outdated across the political spectrum in BiH.² It is seen as a cause for government problems. The complicated terms of the Dayton Agreement have made it difficult for the country to develop its political institutions. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has also ruled that the ethnic power-sharing established by Dayton is undemocratic.³ The United States Institute for Peace has also advocated for a post-Dayton future in Bosnia. However, the Dayton Agreement's terms created a position called the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. This position has

created difficulties for BiH as it tries to move on from the Dayton Agreement. The High Representative of BiH is the main barrier. The current representative, Christian Schmidt, has the power to remove laws which threaten the Dayton Agreement.⁴ He does so with the support of the EU, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US). In this role, Schmidt can use this power to strike down laws, even in the RS. He has done so in the past to maintain unity in the country. While the High Representative has become less invasive in recent years, the role still poses difficulties for BiH.

Currently, BiH is plagued by issues of nationalism and ethnic tensions. The influence of many different foreign governments has made the problem even worse. Foreign actors and political frustration with the Dayton Agreement have emboldened nationalists. As of now, Bosnian-Serbian nationalists in the RS have begun to ally with Russia and Serbia to further their ambitions in the region.⁵ On the other hand, those who live in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to rely on NATO and EU support. This has created a clash between the two sides in an already divided country. As delegates meet in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the committee must come together and find a way to help BiH move on from its past. The UNSC has many different options. Some of these include helping BiH implement the Dayton Agreement or creating its political framework for the future. Regardless, delegates will need to consider the many different influencing powers. However, delegates should be considerate

1 Nick Hawton, "EU Troops Prepare for Bosnia Swap," Bbc.co.uk, accessed January 30, 2025, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3944191.stm>.

2 Hamza Karcic, "How 'Dayton' Became an Excuse for Inertia in Bosnia," *Balkan Insight*. December 14, 2023.

3 Dr Jasmin Mujanović, "With the upcoming Kovačević ruling, let justice be done for Bosnia's democracy," *Euroreviews*. December 11, 2024.

4 Dimitar Bechev, "Polarization Threatens to Derail Bosnia's EU Ambitions," *Strategic Europe*. April 30, 2024.

5 James McBride, "Russia's Influence in the Balkans," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed January 30, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/russias-influence-balkans>.

of the people of BiH. It is up to the committee to learn from past mistakes. If not, the citizens of BiH will only get a second version of the Dayton Agreement.

Current Foreign Influences

When it comes to foreign influences on BiH, the United States and Russian Federation are the two largest players. The US and its European allies have been especially invested in the stability of BiH. This is because of the Bosnian War and the massive humanitarian issues that the conflict created. The mass killings of Croats and Bosnians during the war led to a military intervention led by NATO.⁶ Shortly after the intervention, the US and NATO played a major role in peace talks. Ever since then, the US has become a major partner of BiH. It has contributed significant aid to help the country rebuild after the war. Additionally, the US was one of the largest contributors to the NATO peacekeeping mission after the war. Up until the Biden Administration, the US remained very active in maintaining BiH's political stability through

its support of the High Representative under the Dayton Agreement.⁷

In 2024, US President Donald Trump was re-elected as President of the United States. This created a difficult situation for the political future of RS. Following the election results, the president of RS, Milorad Dodik, said that he regrets not declaring independence during the first Trump presidency.⁸ This may be because Dodik believed that President Trump's friendly attitude toward Russia may help him gain independence from BiH. However, this type of rhetoric from Dodik was not tolerated by the US in prior presidential administrations. In the past, Dodik has been sanctioned by the US for obstructing the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. These sanctions were increased in 2022 and 2024. The most recent set of sanctions was related to Dodik's claims against a draft UN General Assembly resolution related to the political situation in BiH.⁹ Dodik had claimed that the UN resolution was not "compatible" with the existence of BiH. He had also made multiple statements that inflamed ethnic

⁶ NATO, "Peace Support Operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-2004)," NATO, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/ge/natohq/topics_52122.htm.

⁷ NATO, "Secretary General Welcomes NATO's Partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Calls for Unity and Continued Reforms," NATO, April 8, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_224628.htm.

⁸ Azem Kurtic, "Bosnia's Dodik Betting on Trump, But Hopes of US Shift Probably Misplaced," *Balkan Insight*, Sarajevo, October 29, 2024.

⁹ US Mission to the OSCE, "On Recent Developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina," U.S. Mission to the OSCE, May 2, 2024, <https://osce.usmission.gov/on-recent-developments-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

Milorad Dodik

Credit: DEMOKRATSKA STRANKA DS



tensions between Serbians and Bosniaks.¹⁰ This also continued with condemnations towards the existing BiH government, the High Representative, and the EU's police mission. As a result, the US placed sanctions on Milorad Dodik himself. The US also sanctioned three members of RS's parliament and the former chairwoman of the Presidency of BiH, Željka Cvijanović. Sanctions of this kind freeze all assets held by these individuals in the US or under control by American entities.¹¹ This has made it hard for RS leaders to develop a relationship with the US.

However, a Donald Trump presidency may change how the US approaches BiH. President Trump's administration had previously sanctioned Dodik. However, there is an anticipation of more isolationist "America First" policies and increased withdrawal from international involvement.¹² Already, President Trump has withdrawn the US from the World Health Organization (WHO) and attempted to stop all foreign aid.¹³ If this continues, President Trump's foreign policy could create some instability in BiH. This is because the US is one of the most important countries involved in monitoring BiH. US foreign aid has been a major source of funding for reconstruction projects in the country. Additionally, US relations with BiH have been important in helping the country stabilize its political system. An American isolationist policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina could enable Dodik to pursue his separatist goals. President Trump's previous term ignored European allies and tried to rush a quick deal between Serbia and Kosovo.¹⁴ This lack of care was destabilizing. The deal fell through and created confusion. If President Trump would do the same to BiH with the RS, it could create much larger issues.

On the other hand, Dodik's policy is favorable to Russia. Since he was denounced by Europe and NATO, Dodik has turned to Russian President Vladimir Putin for help. This has resulted in a close relationship between the two leaders. Dodik has even awarded the medal for "patriotic care and love" to President Putin.¹⁵ Aside from warm relations, Russia has been helping the RS strengthen itself. The RS's police forces are primarily funded and trained by Russian soldiers. Under less scrutiny, Russian mercenaries are also training Bosnian-Serb paramilitaries.¹⁶ These paramilitary groups operate as informal military units that have less control from the RS government. This increases the risk of a conflict happening between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and RS. Additionally, Russia has a strong relationship with Serbia. This has helped embolden Serbia which looks to pursue an expansionist policy through the RS. One example of Serbia's involvement was the "All-Serbian Assembly" that was hosted on June 9, 2024.¹⁷ This was a joint session between Serbia and the RS where both groups adopted a declaration of the rights of Serbian people. This document includes clauses that stipulate close cooperation between Serbia and the RS. It also calls for more aggressive actions against the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁸ This type of action and rhetoric increases the risk of a conflict. As tensions rise, there is a greater chance of an accidental conflict turning into a major war.

Russia has also taken steps that could be seen as undermining the Dayton Agreement that it had agreed to. It has continued to lobby against the High Representative and has proposed changes to eliminate the role.¹⁹ Removing the High Representative could prove to be dangerous. That is because the High Representative acts as a steward of the country. It can

¹⁰ US Mission to the OSCE, "On Recent Developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina,"

¹¹ U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo, "U.S. Treasury Targets Four Officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina for Undermining the Dayton Peace Agreement." *U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Press Release. July 31, 2024.

¹² Council on Foreign Relations, "Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Positions," [www.cfr.org](https://www.cfr.org/election2024/candidate-tracker/donald-trump), accessed January 30, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/election2024/candidate-tracker/donald-trump>.

¹³ Aamer Madhani and Zeke Miller, "In the Early Going, Trump 2.0 Approach on Foreign Policy Is to Talk Loudly and Carry a Big Stick," AP News, January 27, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-foreign-policy-tariffs-colombia-ukraine-russia-1f811090734a9589936763151363e7ba>.

¹⁴ Adnan Čerimagić and Majda Ruge, "Trump's tinderbox: US politics and the next war in the Balkans." *European Council on Foreign Relations*. October 29, 2024.

¹⁵ Eanna Mackey, "Bosnia's Rising Echoes of War." *Center for European Policy Analysis*. September 17th, 2024.

¹⁶ Ismet Fatih Cančar, "Russian-Backed Seditious in Bosnia and Herzegovina," CEPA, accessed January 31, 2025, <https://cepa.org/article/russian-backed-sedition-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

¹⁷ International and Security Affairs Center, "Analysis of the News: 'The entire text of the Declaration adopted by the first All-Serbian Assembly.'" *International and Security Affairs Center*. June 13, 2024.

¹⁸ International and Security Affairs Center, "Analysis of the News: 'The entire text of the Declaration adopted by the first All-Serbian Assembly.'" *International and Security Affairs Center*.

¹⁹ Stefano Fella, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Secessionism in the Republika Srpska," House of Commons Library, October 23, 2024, <https://>

create laws for BiH that apply to the RS and remove officials that violate the Dayton Agreement.²⁰ Eliminating this role would allow political tensions to rise and increase the risk of another conflict happening. Russia has also supported both Serbia's and RS's efforts to become more politically aligned. This has undermined the Dayton Agreement since it goes against the core purpose of the agreement to keep BiH united.

As the UNSC, delegates must consider the difficult geopolitical tensions that surround BiH. It may seem like this is just another NATO versus Russia situation. However, it becomes even more complex with the unpredictability of President Trump and an emboldened Serbia. The UNSC must navigate this situation carefully and consider the various interests in the region. Delegates should be wary of Serbian actions that embolden RS separatists. However, delegates should also be prepared for unexpected changes in US foreign policy for the next four years. Any change in the balance of power could spark significant changes in the region.

International Agreements and the European Union

The Dayton Agreement has been instrumental in stabilizing BiH. It has played a major role in helping both sides of the conflict put aside their differences and work towards peace. The terms of the agreement have carefully crafted a slow process towards reconstruction and reconciliation. It was carefully planned with the US, UK, France, Germany, Russia, the EU, and the warring parties within the conflict.²¹ Together, they created a long-term framework with the High Representative serving as the overseer and preserver of the agreement.

However, cracks had begun to form in the agreement. As mentioned earlier, Russia has been consistently undermining the agreement. It has continued to encourage separatist

rhetoric from RS leaders. However, Russia is not the only factor weakening the agreement. Some of these weakening factors are from the agreement itself. One of these factors includes how modern-day BiH is organized politically. According to the Dayton Agreement, BiH would be split into two different "entities".²² These two entities were mainly drawn based on ethnic boundaries and would create the RS and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, RS would be split in half by the Federation. This would increase tensions politically since RS representatives would feel like the Federation would be able to control the flow of trade to RS.²³ Additionally, the Dayton Agreement implemented quotas for the legislative body and government.²⁴ Implementing quotas means that no ethnic group can have too much power in the government. For the legislative branch, that means each ethnic group has an equitable amount of seats. BiH also operates under a three-way presidency where a president is representing the Serbs, Bosniaks, and Croats. On paper, this may seem like a very sensible idea. It would make sense to give all groups some influence in decision-making. In reality, this forces the groups to make decisions based on consensus. It forces the legislature and presidency to build coalitions to have any policy passed. This has made the government very slow with decision-making and implementing new policies.

The oversight by the High Representative also means that any law that gets passed could be easily vetoed by the High Representative. Under the Dayton Agreement, the High Representative can remove government officials and veto laws passed by the legislature.²⁵ In the past, the High Representative has vetoed these laws. The result of that is lots of long negotiations and slow political progress made since the High Representative could upend any of it. In recent years, the High Representative has become much less invasive and has focused more on monitoring the country and reporting to the Dayton Treaty parties the situation in BiH. This reporting

commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10013/.

20 Martin Tenev, "Trump's Tinderbox: US Politics and the next War in the Balkans," ECFR (European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), October 29, 2024), <https://ecfr.eu/publication/trumps-tinderbox-us-politics-and-the-next-war-in-the-balkans/>.

21 Ismail Ozdemir, "Bosnia Remains Divided 29 Years after Dayton Peace Agreement," Aa.com.tr, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/bosnia-remains-divided-29-years-after-dayton-peace-agreement/3399538>.

22 Ozdemir, "Bosnia Remains Divided 29 Years after Dayton Peace Agreement,"

23 Ozdemir, "Bosnia Remains Divided 29 Years after Dayton Peace Agreement,"

24 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, "XIV Review Conference on Implementation of Dayton Article IV Agreement Takes Place in Vienna," Osce.org, November 7, 2024, <https://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation/580219>.

25 Hamza Karcic, "Hopes of Updating Bosnia's Dayton Peace Deal Have Faded," Balkan Insight, December 13, 2024, <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/12/13/hopes-of-updating-bosnias-dayton-peace-deal-have-faded/>.

has helped the US, UK, France, Germany, and Russia decide on how much aid BiH needs. Over time, this aid has grown more and more.²⁶ Most of this aid is given to humanitarian groups that help the country recover. However, this has made economic development and growth slow. With aid constantly being pumped into the country, businesses have little incentive to grow. Many things are either subsidized or simply provided.²⁷ However, the aid is not limited to economic aid. Foreign governments have continued to be the main police force in the country. The EU’s police mission in the country followed many similar missions led by NATO and the UN. With so much being provided to BiH, the country has little incentive to find ways to become more self-reliant. Many have advocated for less involvement from various countries. They say that less foreign aid and direct oversight on BiH is needed for the country to develop on its own.²⁸ Additionally, the more multilateral nature of many humanitarian agencies in the country makes it so that domestic civil society does not develop. The growth of domestic civil society is very important. These groups are crucial in making sure they can

hold their leaders accountable. Additionally, these groups are the main groups that play a big role in pressuring governments to pursue certain policies. The growth of domestic civil society in BiH is crucial in helping the country develop its political environment.

However, BiH has made positive developments, especially in its foreign policies. On March 23, 2024, the country achieved its EU Candidate status.²⁹ This status is the final step before full membership for a country looking to join the EU. BiH had first applied back in 2016 and spent a lot of time making sure it had made changes that the EU approved of.³⁰ These changes included many political and economic reforms. After BiH was able to implement the changes, the EU had to review them before upgrading BiH’s status. This review looked to see if the BiH government made the right changes for the country to be more democratic and liberalized.³¹ This process took especially long since the EU was concerned with BiH’s government institutions. The constant tensions and limitations of the Dayton Agreement had made it difficult for BiH to strengthen its judicial and executive agencies. While these changes were

26 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, “XIV Review Conference on Implementation of Dayton Article IV Agreement Takes Place in Vienna,”

27 Karcic, “Hopes of Updating Bosnia’s Dayton Peace Deal Have Faded,”

28 Karcic, “Hopes of Updating Bosnia’s Dayton Peace Deal Have Faded,”

29 Mared Jones, “EU Leaders Approve Opening Accession Talks with Bosnia and Herzegovina,” EuroNews, March 21, 2024, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/03/21/european-union-leaders-approve-opening-accession-talks-with-bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

30 Jones, “EU Leaders Approve Opening Accession Talks with Bosnia and Herzegovina,”

31 Dr Jasmin Mujanović, “With the upcoming Kovačević ruling, let justice be done for Bosnia’s democracy.” *Euroreviews*. December 11, 2024.



Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Credit: TUBS

approved by the EU, there remain many political issues that BiH must address. First is the recent ruling by the European Court of Human Rights that states BiH must change how they elect presidents.³² They must also change the composition of the legislative body, the House of Peoples. While the case goes through the appeal process, it shows a major issue with the Dayton Agreement. Additionally, it represents another major issue that EU negotiators will need to confront with BiH. If BiH is to join the EU, it must stabilize its government. If the current system of electing representatives and presidents is maintained, then the government instability could affect the EU. Aside from potential EU in-fighting, BiH's instability within the EU could negatively affect local economies.

These developments are issues that the UNSC must take into consideration. In terms of the shortfalls of the Dayton Agreement, delegates should look at the main causes. Delegates should consider if the agreement is flawed and needs a revision. On the other hand, delegates could also look at regional actors as the main reasons why the Dayton Agreement isn't working. This would mean having to find ways to make sure other countries are not actively undermining the agreement. At the same time, too much involvement by the international community could hinder the development of BiH as it tries to enter the EU. BiH's candidacy for the EU is also a contentious topic. If BiH joins the EU, it will become more integrated with Western countries and NATO. These competing factors demonstrate how difficult it is to navigate the politics of BiH. With all of these factors to consider, delegates will need to determine what is the most effective way to allow BiH to grow.

Conclusion

Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a precarious situation. The recent developments in the past few months have shown that. Russia and Serbia continue to take actions that seem to undermine the Dayton Agreement. Conferences held between the volatile RS and Serbia have inflamed tensions. It has also created alarm in the international community. The US issued

a strong condemnation against separatist rhetoric from RS leaders. Sanctions have been placed but that has only made the issue worse.³³ On the other hand, the US has also proved to be very unpredictable. The new Presidential Administration under Donald Trump has led to major changes in American foreign policy. A recent policy change regarding foreign aid destabilized many parts of the world.³⁴ BiH was hurt especially by this policy change because it relies so much on the US and its partners to help the country recover. Even though the EU contributes, the US remains the biggest provider of foreign aid to BiH.

However, this much aid can negatively affect BiH. The constant stream of aid makes it difficult for the country to develop on its own. Civil society also needs to develop on its own in the country. These groups will be crucial as BiH looks to join the EU. Many political changes need to be made. That can only be possible with the support and advocacy of civil society groups. By making positive political changes, BiH will increase its chances of becoming an EU member soon. This will help the country develop significantly and play a bigger role in Europe. However, there are still many barriers to overcome. The largest one is the rigidity of the Dayton Agreement. With the agreement, BiH's government is unable to make changes and reforms quickly. The path forward means either finding a way to maintain the Dayton Agreement with less involvement from the international community or a complete revision of the agreement. Regardless of which path delegates choose, there are many groups to account for. The various ethnic groups make up the core of the issue. The many international missions, agencies, and aid inside the country limits BiH's maturity as a country. Lastly, the many third-party actors like Russia and the US complicate decision-making for the Security Council. To pass a resolution, UNSC delegates must find a way to reconcile differences in policies. At the end of the day, BiH must have a pathway towards a self-sufficient future. If not, the same issues will only get even more complicated and multifaceted.

³² Sergio Cantone, "Citizen's Legal Battle Exposes Bosnia's Unresolved Ethnic Voting Issue," EuroNews (Euronews.com, November 28, 2024), <https://www.euronews.com/2024/11/28/bosnian-citizens-legal-battle-exposes-ethnic-voting-rights-issue-in-eu-court>.

³³ US Mission to the OSCE, "On Recent Developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

³⁴ Sui-Lee Wee, Declan Walsh, and Farnaz Fassihi, "How the World Is Reeling from Trump's Aid Freeze," The New York Times, January 31, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/31/world/asia/trump-usaid-freeze.html>.

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The National High School Model United Nations Conference (NHSMUN) is a project of IMUNA, a non-profit organization formally associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications (UNDGC). IMUNA is dedicated to promoting global issues education through simulation.

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