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Environmental, Extremist, Economic: New Challenges to International Security

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United Nations Security Council

Official Study Guide

Mathieu Alderson & Jaqueline Wendel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Words of Welcome

Honourable Delegates,

First of all, we would like to welcome and congratulate you with your upcoming participation at the BerlInMUN 2018 Conference.

All of you have been selected for the simulation of the United Nations Security Council, without a single doubt the most well-known of the UN bodies. Over the years, it has been the locus of many tense debates, mutual cooperation and crucial resolutions. We can only hope that history will repeat itself in Berlin upcoming August.

This edition of the Security Council's agenda will contain two topics which are closely interlinked with the conference theme of "Environmental, Extremist, Economic: New Challenges to International Security". Both of them represent a transnational threat calling into question our common conceptions regarding national sovereignty and the role of the international community; but also require a unified response if they are to be dealt with. By representing the policies of your member state, you will try to find a suitable solution together with your committee partners.

The key to a successful MUN performance lies in its preparation and we hope that the Study Guide lying before you will support you in said task. Your prior work will enable you to present a sound discourse during the negotiations while understanding the stakes on the table. At the end it should allow you to present the interests of your assigned country in the best of ways in order to heighten the quality of the debate.

MUN is truly an unique experience, which has the potential to train multiple abilities simultaneously: research, public speaking, debating, writing skills, in addition to critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership; all of these skills will come forward during a conference. But most importantly, we hope to help support your personal enthusiasm and interest by providing you with the opportunity to delve deeper in international politics and sharing it with other like-minded students.

See you all very soon,

Jaqueline Wendel & Mathieu Alderson
Chairs of the BerlInMUN 2018 United Nations Security Council

Committee Overview

Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN) and was thus founded in 1945 with the signing of the Charter of the United Nations.[1] In the light of the recent history, the international community referred the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security"[2] to the UNSC. Since then the Council has played an increasing role in dealing with international conflicts and the resolution of such for example by providing technical assistance, overseeing and promoting peace negotiations or employing peacekeeping missions.

Membership

When the Security Council had its first meeting in January 1946 it consisted of 11 members. Being the victors of the Second World War the Republic of China, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the United States of America, the United Kingdom as well as the French Republic were granted permanent membership by the Charter.[3] The only changes in their membership took place in 1971, when the Peoples Republic of China was officially recognized as the only representative of China at the UN taking over the seat of the Republic of China[4], and in 1991, when the Russian Federation succeeded the USSR. The other members, six in 1946, were non-permanent members elected for a two-year term. Their number was enhanced in 1965 from six to ten non-permanent members and a regional pattern was established ensuring three seats to African countries, respectively two seats to Asian, Latin-American and Western European (and rest of the world) countries as well as one seat to Eastern European

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[1] Cf Charter of the United Nations, Article 7.
[2] Charter of the United Nations, Article 24.1.
[3] Cf Charter of the United Nations, Article 23.1.
[4] Cf A/RES/2578 (XXVI).

countries.[5] Until today the number of members has not been changed again leaving the total number of members at 15.

The ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term. Every year half of the committee, meaning five members, change, giving the UNSC a new composition annually. Although each Member State of the UN is eligible to becoming a non-permanent member there are over 60 countries which have never been in the Council.[6] The current non-permanent members are Bolivia, Côte d'Ivorie, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland and Sweden.

Being a permanent member gives the five countries holding this privilege further rights in the procedures of the Council. For any document to be adopted it needs a two-thirds majority of votes, including the so called concurring votes of all permanent members meaning that the five countries have to either vote in favor or abstain from voting.[7] If any of them votes against the draft document it automatically fails, granting the permanent member a veto on all matters.

The veto right has been heavily criticized as it still represents the power relations of 1945 which have changed significantly since. However, a reform of the Security Council which either aims to expand the number of permanent members or restrict the veto rights is very unlikely since all members of the UNSC would have to agree to it.

Mandate

The Mandate of the UNSC is outlined within Article 24 of the Charter which also refers to Chapters VI, VII, VII and XII. While fulling the mandate as stated in these parts of the Charter the Council also at all times has to act in accord with Chapter I outlining the purposes and principles of the UN.[8] By signing the Charter the Member States of the UN agree that they "accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council"[9] making the UNSC the only body creating resolutions which are legally binding for all Member States.

As stated in Article 34 it is upon the UNSC to determine if a dispute constitutes a threat to international peace and security and if so act accordingly.[10] The possibilities for such a reaction

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[5] Cf A/RES/1991 (XVIII).
[6] Cf http://www.un.org/en/sc/members/
[7] Cf Charter of the United Nations, Article 27.3.
[8] Cf Charter of the United Nations, Article 24.2.
[9] Cf Charter oft he United Nations, Article 25.
[10] Cf Charter of the United Nations, Article 34.

have a wide range starting from calling upon the parties involved to find a peaceful solution over issuing ceasefire directives to sending (military) observers or peacekeeping missions.[11]

If a breach of international peace and security is identified and the pacific settlement of the conflict cannot be reached through the measures authorized under Chapter VI, the UNSC can act under Chapter VII of the Charter. By doing so the Council is able to enforce its decisions by means such as imposing sanctions or authorizing peacekeeping troops to use force to fulfill their mandate. While other bodies of the UN such as the General Assembly (GA) are allowed to act under Chapter VI the UNSC is the only one to be able to invoke Articles of Chapter VII making it the only entity to be legally allowed to authorize the use of force.

While at the time of the establishment of the United Nations conflicts mainly took the form of interstate disputes, a shift has been taking place since the end of the Cold War to more intrastate conflicts. This change also required a change in the response of the international community and thus the UNSC, with parties involved in a dispute not only being state actors. The increasing complexity of conflicts has brought before multidimensional approaches including peacekeeping efforts, the increasing involvement of regional actors as well as the support of state building.

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[11] Cf United Nations Public Department of Public Information, *Basic Facts about the United Nations,* 2017, p. 58.

Topic A: The Post-Daesh Syrian Question

Introduction

The Syrian Civil War has been a recurrent headline in international news for the past few years. Its multiple participants have committed extreme actions and its repercussions have been so wide-spread that some might have forgotten that the roots of the conflict already go back to the Arab Spring of 2011. This wave of attempts at democratization fueled Syrian activists to publicly speak out against the ruling Ba'athist government. This was met with a harsh crackdown by the forces of President Bashar al-Assad, which has been holding office since 2000 following the death of his father. The increasing use of violence motivated the initial formation of the Free Syrian Army, a coalition of military defectors aiming to overthrow al-Assad. Criticism against the government was not only limited to the domestic theatre, as Syria also had its Arab League membership suspended and was targeted by Western economic sanctions.[12]

From the start, the United Nations actively attempted to address the rising violence in Syria but the March 2012 peace plan of UN Special Envoy Kofi Annan quickly devolved into failure during the April-May timeframe. Furthermore, several resolutions of the Security Council accusing the Assad-government were met with vetoes from the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. This was followed by an escalation in the conflict which now truly turned into a full-fledged civil war. The summer of 2013 led to renewed international attention caused by the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian theatre, ostensibly by government forces, which led Russia and the USA to agree on a framework of chemical disarmament (S/RES/2118).[13]

2014 marked the definitive breakthrough of the organization of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which is often referred to as Daesh in the Arabic world and Western governments. Daesh is the acronym for the Arabic name of ISIL but also prevents the linkage between the Muslim faith and the organization.[14] Originally connected to the al-Nusra front (itself a branch of al-Qaeda), Daesh split from said organization to establish a fundamentalist

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[12] Al Jazeera News, *Syria's civil war explained from the beginning*, 2018.
[13] CNN Library, *Syrian Civil War Fast Facts*, 2018.
[14] Beauchamp, Zack & Yglesias, Matthew, *Why John Kerry and the French president are calling ISIS "Daesh"*, 2015.

state. Making use of the power vacuum, its armed militants quickly conquered an important territory spanning over Iraq and Syria. It further gained international prominence due to atrocious acts in the warzone including beheadings and its sponsoring of foreign terrorist attacks such as in France and Turkey. This rise to power, however, prompted broad international response, such as its placement on the UN sanction list as testified by S/RES/2170 (2014).[15]

Concurrently, international involvement in the Syrian conflict dramatically increased from 2014 on, most notably through the September 2015 decision of Russia to base aircraft in Syria to support the Assad government and the Western coalition led by the US against Daesh. The Trump administration also delivered on the chemical 'red line' narrative by launching strikes in April 2017 & 2018, hereby directly targeting the Assad government for the first time. However the input of regional actors such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Turkey and several Gulf countries should also be highlighted. All of these foreign actors have different motivations to side with a specific conflict party hereby leading to a complex web of relations. The division of international support, especially between P5 members have ensured the impossibility to agree upon UN-sanctioned interventions on the basis of Chapter VII or through R2P.[16]

As of March 2018, the Syrian conflict has entered its eighth year with a rising death toll: 465 000 casualties, 1 million wounded and half of the Syrian population is displaced inside the country or abroad.[17] Daesh has also suffered critical losses and cannot claim to be the most influential actor in the conflict anymore: It has lost all its territory in Iraq and is close to the same situation in Syria. If the conflict was to cease today, other belligerents would have a more important say at the negotiation table, and hereby indirectly also their foreign backers aiming to further their own (mutually exclusive) interests in the wider Middle East.

With the effective destruction of a common enemy to all involved parties, the question rises if an effective peace-process can take root. Since 2012, multiple discussions between the Syria government and opposition have taken place under the supervision of the UN (the so-called 'Geneva talks'), but these have failed to deliver conclusive results. Concurrently Iran, Russia and Turkey have hosted their own peace negotiations in Astana and Sochi. The millions of

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[15] Glenn, Cameron, *Timeline: the Rise, Spread and Fall of the Islamic State*, 2016.
[16] CNN Library, *Syrian Civil War Fast Facts*, 2018.
[17] Al Jazeera News, *Syria's civil war explained from the beginning*, 2018.

displaced Syrians, the majority of them currently being hosted by Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, are anxiously looking towards a possible diplomatic breakthrough. Military efforts such as those by Turkey in the Afrin region have, however, already proven to be successful in enabling the return of some Syrian refugees.

The United Nations Security Council can approach this topic of a post-Daesh Syria in multiple ways: it may choose to focalize upon upgrading and facilitating the negotiations taking place in Geneva. Is an agreement regarding a transition period possibly in reach? It might also wish to look into the cases of the foreign fighters currently active in Syria which might move to other fragile countries. Moreover the critical situation of war refugees also needs further attention. It is up to the UNSC Member States to find common ground on how to proceed and possibly establish a future framework of cooperation.

The current actors on the ground

The Syrian Civil War is marred with complexity due to the multitude of military and political actors which are active in it. These parties are often opposed to each other due to their radically differing objectives while also simultaneously engaging in uneasy alliances in order to counter common adversaries. Some organizations have very limited influence while others occupy large territories and can count on significant foreign support. Furthermore these foreign allies often disagree with their Syrian proxies with regards to the objectives that need to be accomplished.

The void left by retreating Daesh forces has quickly been filled in with the other pretenders for domestic control, which for the sake of clarity will be limited to three main parties: The official Syrian government (al-Assad), the Syrian opposition and the Kurdish forces.[18] Simplification will be employed so it is crucial to understand that these actors do not form homogeneous groups, as internal oppositions are very recurrent. A main driver in this are the wide amount of ethnic and sectarian differences, which have been a decisive theme in the evolution of Syrian Civil War, as the country is home to a varied demography. Furthermore this diversity often overlaps only adding additional complexity to possible solutions.[19]

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[18] Laub, Zachary, *Who's Who in Syria's Civil War*, 2017.
[19] BBC, *Syria war: A brief guide to who's fighting whom*, 2017.

When Bashar al-Assad succeeded his father Hafez as president in 2000, it also implied the continuation of the dominant role for the Alawite minority in Syria, of which he himself is part of. Alawites represent around 10% of the Syrian population and are most recurrent in the coastal regions bordering the Mediterranean with cities such as Latakia and Tartus. The religious group is the second largest sectarian minority in Syria (the largest group are the Sunnis with around 75%), with it being connected to the Shia branch of Islam.[20]

While there were some initial hopes that the accession to power of Bashar al-Assad would lead to significant reforms in the country, intimidation and censorship remained dominant in the country. The government has also proven to be particularly ruthless in its repression, as proven by the repeated attacks on population centers with heavy military weaponry and its reported use of chemical weapons, including nerve gas. More recent chemical attacks in 2017 and April 2018 in Ghouta have also been attributed to the Syrian government but uncertainty remains regarding the validity of these claims.[21]

Despite its negative record on democracy and human rights, it is crucial to acknowledge the fact that multiple Syrian communities still support the Assad Government, as it is perceived by said people as a capable defender of minority rights. Besides his own Alawite minority, Christian communities have also spoken in support of Assad. While many Syrian Alawites and Christians are also ethnic Arabs, these religious minorities fear the spread of Sunni Salafism. This sentiment is also shared with other Syrian religious minorities such as the Druzes, Ismailis and Yazidis, which have limited adherents. Moreover many central figures of the pre-war Syrian economy are connected to Assad, which could form an extra complication in an eventual reconstruction scenario.[22]

Foreign support to the Syrian government has mainly come from the Islamic Republic of Iran, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. The PRC has mainly framed its support as the consequence of respecting national sovereignty and has thus far held a limited role in the conflict. However it has been the subject of fallouts of the Syrian conflict through increased radical activities of its Muslim Uyghur minority, which could encourage further

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[20] Khalifa, Mustafa, *The impossible partition of Syria*, 2013.
[21] BBC, *Syria war: What we know about Douma 'chemical attack'*, 2018.
[22] Hu, Zoe, *Why Bashar al-Assad is still in power*, 2016.

involvement.[23] The support of the two other states are much more geopolitical in nature: The Assad government dominated by Shia Alawites has a religious link with Tehran. Furthermore Syria provides a lifeline corridor to the Lebanon-based Hezbollah, hereby rendering it crucial in Iranian efforts to expand its influence. Therefore the Hezbollah have also fought alongside the Syrian government in order to counter Sunni extremism. For Moscow, Syria represents an ally in the Orient region and its sole direct access point to the Mediterranean. From this perspective, both Iran and Russia consider other foreign involvement as attempts aimed at removing their influence in the region.

As of 2018, the Syrian government is currently the party controlling the largest amount of Syrian territory, estimated around 60%. The continuous Russian aerial support has enabled it to reconquer large swaths of land formerly owned by Daesh and the Syrian opposition. It has reconquered the largest city of Aleppo after a four-year battle and controls the capital Damascus and the three other most populous cities, with over 75% of the remaining Syrian population under its authority.[24] This has strengthened the position of President Assad who might have become unreplaceable in a future peace settlement, despite accusations of war crimes. However government critics stipulate that much power in the territories is actually held by local warlords which are prone to defending their own interests.

The Syrian opposition

The Syrian opposition is probably the most diverse of the three remaining parties as it is a collection of different organizations which often strive for different outcomes to the conflict, ranging from establishing a liberal democracy to a theocracy. While exceptions and (ethnic) variations do exist this opposition contains two overarching attributes: Opposition to the Assad government and the adherence to Sunni Islam.

The original main actor of the Syrian opposition was the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which aimed for the establishment of a democratic and pluralistic Syria. However this 'moderate' actor quickly disintegrated due to the lack of centralization and foreign backing, with Western actors fearing the provision of armament to the FSA as it might end up in jihadist hands (see below). Concurrently the civil Syrian National Coalition was recognized by the Arab League and several Western countries to be the sole "legitimate representative of the Syrian People",

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[23] Clarke, Michael, *Is China's Uyghur Challenge Changing Its Calculus on Syria?*, 2017.
[24] Syrian Civil War Map, *Area under control or influence of each major faction in Syria*, 2018.

inhering the membership to the Arab League that had been suspended back in 2011. However the Coalition has also become marginalized due to the limited recognition it received from armed opposition groups. This fragmentation has led to the existence of many active oppositions groups being restricted to local operations in Syria and diplomatic actors with no actual representative power.

These setbacks in developing an unified opposition has led to a linking up between the 'moderate' and Salafist opposition in order to cooperate in their struggle against Assad. Many of these Salafists had been freed by Assad in 2011 in order to help the latter frame the uprisings as sectarian violence in order to bolster his own support and divide the opposition. As a result, the opposition umbrella currently includes Salafist organizations such as Tahrir al-Sham, which was founded in January 2017 and which is an organization assembling multiple smaller Jihadist factions such as the al-Nusra front. The objective of Tahrir al-Sham is to unify all Syrian opposition groups under one broad Islamic banner and has already encountered success in that regard. Meanwhile remaining Salafist groups are in conflict between each other as proven by the conflict between Tahrir al-Sham and the fundamentalist Syrian Liberation Front at the start of this year.[25]

Currently the majority of the support given to the Syrian opposition originates from Jordan, Turkey (see Kurdish section) and Gulf countries such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The latter ones have followed a double agenda in the theatre by supporting Sunni groups (including Salafist ones) to overthrow the Iran-backed Assad government, while also combatting Daesh but only in a secondary role. The primary concern of the Gulf states remains the containment of Iranian expansion in the Middle East. On the other hand, Western powers are wary of arming jihadi forces limiting the amount of given support. This apparent divergence in interests was also clear in other domains, as up until April 2017 all the attacks carried out by the Western coalition had been directed towards Daesh, as this was considered the more important target for the US-led force (and not the Assad Government).[26]

As of 2018, the Syrian opposition has been steadily on the losing side: Its different organizations currently only own around 10% of the Syrian territory which is mainly spread over the Idlib and Daraa provinces.[27] The initial extensive support it enjoyed through

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[25] Lister, Charles, *Al Qaeda Is Starting to Swallow the Syrian Opposition*, 2017.
[26] Lund, Aron, *How Assad's Enemies Gave Up on the Syrian Opposition*, 2017.
[27] Syrian Civil War Map, *Area under control or influence of each major faction in Syria*, 2018.

frameworks such as 'Friends of Syria' has heavily declined, while Assad has been empowered by the undivided support from Iran and Russia. Moreover the opposition faces internal power struggles which affect her overall capacity and performance. Faced with these setbacks the moderate opposition has shown to be willing to negotiate a solution, but still expect many of their demands to be met.

The Kurdish forces

The Kurds are the largest ethnic minority in Syria accounting for around 10% of its pre-war population which equals to approximately 1,6 million persons. The majority of their settlements are concentrated in the northern part of the country, in which they share territory with Arabs and Turkmens, another ethnic minority. However, it is only in the eastern Hasakah governorate that the Kurds represent a majority (60%) of the population, while remaining a minority in the western Afrin and Kobane regions. Furthermore the Kurds themselves also experience religious divisions with the majority adhering to Sunni Islam.[28]

Syrian Kurds only form a fraction of a larger ethnic group containing at least 25 million people spread over the countries of Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. It has historically been marginalized in said countries leading to multiple activist campaigns to acquire linguistic and political rights or even autonomy. The power vacuum enabled by the Syrian conflict and the loss of control by central authorities allowed Kurdish activism to enter into a whole new area with the emergence of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS), also known as Rojava. This proto-state has been actively involved in the battle against Daesh advances through its military organizations, of which the Kurdish YPG is the most important one. The YPG itself is part of the larger Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which acts as the armed branch of the DFNS. While the SDF is portrayed as a multi-ethnic alliance, it is mainly dominated by the YPG Kurds.[29]

Since 2012, the Kurdish-led forces have been able to secure a territory which not only includes Kurdish settlements but also Arab ones with other ethnic groups being co-opted in their political structures. The Rojava state is split up in three districts namely Afrin, Euphrates and Jazira. The political leadership of Rojava is formed by the Syrian Democratic Council, which competes with the earlier mentioned Syrian National Coalition for the role of opposition

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[28] Khalifa, Mustafa, *The impossible partition of Syria*, 2013.
[29] Al Jazeera, *Who are the Kurds?*, 2017.

representative. The largest political party of the Council is the Kurdish PYD, highlighting once again the dominant role of the Kurds.

Rojava has received much media attention due to the democratic experiment it has undertaken with its policies containing elements of direct democracy, secularism and feminism; items that remain thinly spread through the Middle East. However, opponents fear the supposed separatist objectives of the Kurds in which they view Rojava as part of larger plan towards an independent Kurdistan. This view could have been enforced with the (non-binding) September 2017 referendum which took place in Iraqi Kurdistan and resulted in a clear majority in favor of secession. On the other hand the Rojava leadership claims it is not advocating for a separation of the country but campaigning for a decentralized Syrian state.[30]

The international support for Kurdish forces has mainly come from the Western coalition, with the US in a leading role, with the help officially being framed as being given to the SDF. The support is translated in various forms such as air strikes but also the arming and training of its militias. The Western reasoning behind specifically helping the Kurds is that is has proven to be one of the few effective local actors in the battle against Daesh, the prioritized enemy of the occidental coalition. Moreover the Kurds/SDF also have the added benefit of not containing radical Islamist elements in its ranks or being linked to the Assad government, as is the case with many parts of the Syrian opposition.[31]

One country which has openly been critical of the support given to the SDF is Turkey, a NATO-ally of the Western powers. Its hostility is linked to its historical opposition with nationalist Kurds. In fact, it considers the Syrian YPG to be an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The organization is considered a terrorist group by Turkey (but also the EU and NATO) due to the decades-long history of attacks it has committed in order to achieve its independence objective. In this light it considers the development of a Kurdish Rojava state a critical danger for Turkish national stability as it could inspire renewed secessionist attempts on its territory. Such sentiments are also shared by the governments of Iran and Iraq, whose territories also contain Kurdish minorities.

The perceived threat led Turkey to launched two "self-defense" military operations on Syrian territory, the first being 'Euphrates Shield' in August 2016, officially targeting Daesh but

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[30] Sheppard, Si, *What the Syrian Kurds Have Wrought*, 2016.
[31] Barnard, Anne & Hubbard, Ben, *Allies or Terrorists: Who Are the Kurdish Fighters in Syria?*, 2018.

hereby also preventing the linking up of the DFNS districts of Afrin and Euphrates. This was followed up by Operation 'Olive Branch' in January 2018 which aimed at ousting the SDF/YPG from the Afrin region itself, which mostly succeeded. During these operations Turkey makes use of its proxy the FSA (of the Syrian opposition), which is technically also opposed to the Assad government but clashes with it have remained limited. Turkish President Erdogan has also repeatedly heckled the support given to this so-called Kurdish "terror army", which from his standpoint only replaces Daesh.[32] This only complicates Western policies which need to reconcile the operations of the SDF against Daesh and Turkish/Iraqi concerns. This division logically reinforces the position of the Syrian government.[33]

Foreign fighters

Another standing question regarding the Syrian conflict covers the status of foreign fighters: Thousands of these have joined fighting groups active in Syria, with Daesh already containing 40 000 of them in their ranks. With the group close to defeat, many of its adherents could possibly move to other territories and resume their militancy. These do not only include the widely mediatized Western terror attacks, but also possible insurgencies in Northern Africa (especially Libya), the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Taking note of the issue, Resolution 2178 (2014) already addressed multiple facets of the foreign fighter threat including the judicial prosecution. However it left the necessary flexibility to the states by only stressing the need for regulations with regards to terrorism. Moreover many states in the MENA region lack the administrative capacities to follow up returning fighters or have not implemented any de-radicalization or re-integration programs. This is problematic as the majority of foreign fighters in Syria come from other MENA countries.[34]

However the existence of a legal framework might not answer all questions related to the topic. Captured Daesh foreign fighters have already been sentenced to death in Iraq hereby causing dilemmas for their home countries which might have abolished the death penalty but are also opposed to the return of said fighters.[35] Furthermore many leftist Westerners have also joined

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[32] Osborne, Samuel & Stevenson, Chris, *Recep Tayip Erdogan vows to 'drown' Syrian Kurdish force set up by US*, 2018.
[33] Iddon, Paul, *The convoluted geopolitics of the battle for Afrin*, 2018.
[34] Watanabe, Lisa, *The Next Steps of North Africa's Foreign Fighters*, 2018.
[35] The New Indian Express, *Iraq court sentences Belgian jihadist Tarik Jadaoun to death for IS membership*, 2018.

the International Freedom Battalion in support of the Kurdish YPG units in Rojava, hereby paralleling the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s. Should they expect different treatments than their jihadi counterparts?[36]

Refugees

The eight years of continuous war have led to a dire humanitarian situation in Syria: As of 2018 5,6 million Syrians have fled the country, with an additional 6 million being displaced inside its borders. Of the latter more than 2,5 million live in areas with difficult access, including besieged settlements. Despite successive resolutions of the Security Council, humanitarian resources continue to have difficulties in their distribution phase, hereby threatening the life of innocent civilians.[37]

This item is particularly relevant for the countries neighboring Syria as they host the majority of war refugees. Lebanon provides shelter for over 1 million Syrians, while Jordan has registered around 660 000 refugees. Turkey, which according to the UNHCR is the largest host of refugees worldwide, tops the list with 2,9 million Syrians.[38] Connected to this is the controversial agreement that the European Union and Turkey agreed upon in March 2016 in order to reduce the amount of migrants transiting to Europe.[39]

Diplomatic efforts

The United Nations has been a watchful actor with regards to Syria and is actively involved in the development of a peace process for the country. By nominating former Secretary-General Kofi Annan as a Special Envoy to Syria hopes were high for finding a solution, but the March 2012 Peace Plan could not prevent the development of a full-scale civil war.

This was followed by the start of the UN-led Geneva Process in June 2012, where the P5, Arab League and EU agreed upon the Geneva Communiqué which called upon cessation of hostilities, the guaranteeing of human rights but also laid out a plan for a transitional political settlement. The initial Geneva tasks where mainly framed around the demand of the resignation of Assad and a transition agreement, with Geneva II (early 2014) or III (early 2016)

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[36] Leduc, Sarah, *Far left on the front lines: The Westerners joining the Kurds' fight in Syria (Part 1 of 2)*, 2018.
[37] UN Security Council Resolution 2401 (2018).
[38] United Nations, *Refugees*, 2018.
[39] Deutsche Welle, *The EU-Turkey refugee agreement: A review*, 2018.

highlighting the impossibility of reaching a compromise with signs of unconstructive behavior from both the government and opposition.[40]

However the role of base document of peace negotiations has gradually been taken over by the UNSC Resolution 2254 (2015), hereby replacing the Geneva communiqué. The document makes use of broader terms and allows for a more flexible interpretation of a future transition period, which is framed as a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process. Remarkable in this discourse evolution is the limited pressure on the Assad government, including the US, which could imply possibilities for a prolonged political role. The most recent Geneva round (VIII) took place in December 2017, with no progress achieved as government and opposition still refuse to meet face-to-face.[41]

Having significantly weakened the opposition forces, Russia has sought to develop a peace process of its own with negotiations taking place in Astana (since January 2017) and Sochi. These talks are also supported by Iran and Turkey and give more emphasis to the Syrian opposition that is effectively conducting military operations. While reaching a political settlement is the main aim of the Geneva talks, Astana has focused upon agreeing on a military ceasefire. A major achievement was reached during the fourth meeting in May 2017 when participants agreed upon the establishment of four 'de-escalation zones'. These are presented as a step towards a nation-wide ceasefire as territories mainly held by the opposition should not be affected anymore by hostilities.[42] However critics have stated that this agreement has only helped Assad in achieving more territory gains in territories not considered as 'de-escalation zones'.[43] Moreover the validity of 'de-escalation zones' themselves came into question when the Syrian Army launched an offensive in the Daraa governorate in June 2018, one of the last pockets held by the Syrian opposition.[44]

The last round of talks in Astana (the ninth already; Geneva has had eight) took place in March 2018 with also limited to no results.[45] The next major diplomatic meeting will take place in Sochi at the end of July and will concern the status of detainees which proved to be one of the

[40] Al Jazeera, *Syria diplomatic talks: A timeline*, 2017.
[41] Wintour, Patrick, *'Golden opportunity' lost as Syrian peace talks collapse*, 2017.
[42] Al Jazeera, *Final de-escalation zones agreed on in Astana*, 2017.
[43] Osseiran, Hashem, *How De-Escalation Zones in Syria Became a War Management Strategy*, 2018.
[44] Ahmado, Nisan, *Syria Moves Troops Ahead of New Offensive*, 2018.
[45] Agencia EFE, *Astana-9 round on Syria ends without progress*, 2018.

few topics where parties agreed to talk of.[46] It is therefore recommended for delegates themselves to keep track of the proceedings of said meeting.

However the existence of two diplomatic tracks also form some question marks for the international community: Is it not counterproductive to hold two separate venues? At this moment both processes are accepted, with UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura attending some of the Astana talks.

Questions a Resolution should address

This study guide should have shown ample examples on which discussions could be held by the Security Council. Below you will find some additional suggestions. Keep in mind that the Syrian conflict is a very complex one in which diplomatic solutions need to be balanced and well-founded. It might therefore be recommendable to limit the scope of an eventual document and not attempt to solve the conflict in its entirety.

- (SECURITY) Is there a primordiality to achieve a clear military victory in order   to allow political reforms to take place?

- (POLITICAL) The future Syrian political class and the actors of which it will be composed

- (POLITICAL) The status of the Syrian ethnic groups, with the Kurdish minority   in particular

- (POLITICAL) The status of the two co-existing diplomatic efforts regarding Syria

- (HUMANITARIAN) The future prospects of Syrian war refugees

- (ECONOMIC) Capacity-building

- (JURIDICAL) The status of foreign fighters

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[46] The Financial Tribune, *Syria Peace Talks Slated for Sochi in July*, 2018.

Recommended reading

If you wish to estimate the Syrian Civil War for yourself, multiple live interactive maps cover the ongoing offensives in the warzone. I can recommend the user-friendly **https://syriancivilwarmap.com/** although more detailed ones exist.

To get a detailed overview of the ethnic and sectarian cleavages present in the Syrian landscape: **https://www.arab-reform.net/en/node/510**

Images

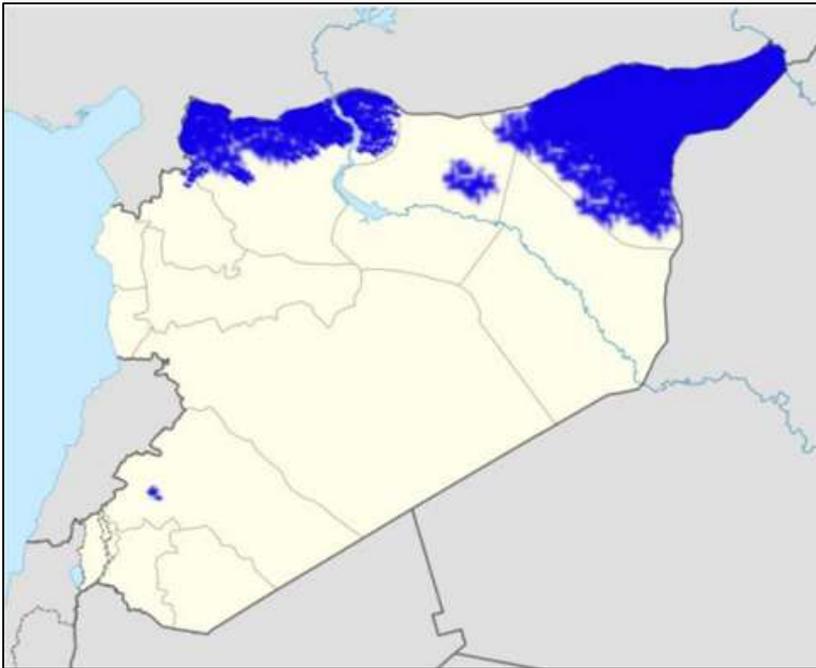Image 1: Main cities of the Syrian Arab Republic
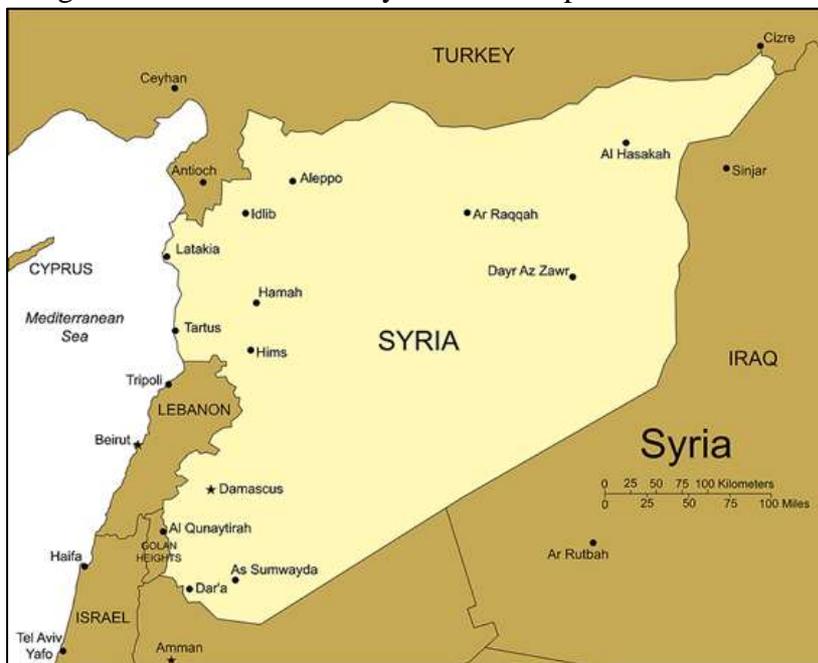
Image 2: Spread of the Kurdish minority through Syria

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TOPIC B: The situation in the Central African Republic

Introduction

Being situated in a region full of conflict, the ongoing problems in the Central African Republic (CAR) are often overlooked by the international community. The almost 60 years of history of the independent CAR are full of violent conflicts, forced changes of governments and repeated international interventions.

Since 2013 outbreaks of violence between different armed militias related to the two major religious groups, Christians and Muslims, are destabilizing the country. The government only controls parts of its territory and large parts of the population have left their homes and livelihood behind fleeing from the conflict. In August 2017 UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien even spoke of "the early warning signs of a genocide"[47] being present in CAR.

The presence of the United Nations peacekeeping mission MINUSCA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic) has not yet been able to provide relief to the country which is again and again shaken by waves of religious and intercommunal violence. However, the causes for the crisis lie deeper than the superficial conflict between the religions.

Historical Background

Gaining its independence from France on August 13th 1960, the Central African Republic already found itself in a rather difficult situation. During the over 60 years of colonial rule the French Republic paid little attention to the territory of today's CAR and barely invested into the area. Thus, there was little to no infrastructure built on which the newly founded state could

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[47] O'Brien *Statement to the Member States,* 2017, p. 5.

rely on.[48] From the very beginning, politics in the CAR was characterized by the banning of political parties and political changes not brought through democratic process but by coups with the first one taking place in late 1965.

Jean-Bédel Bokassa

Taking over power on New Year's Eve 1965 Colonel Jean-Bédel Bokassa initially enjoyed popularity amongst the people within his own country. The partial success of economic recovery programs pleased people at home while his strong attachment to France made the former colonial power accept some of Bokassa's political steps such as proclaiming himself President for life in 1972 and crowning himself emperor in 1977.[49]

Nevertheless, over the years Bokassa became a more unreliable partner to the international community, especially France, and within the borders of the CAR practiced a more and more arbitrary rule.[50] The situation escalated in early 1979 when student protests were met with violence and imprisonment in inhumane conditions.[51] As a reaction to reports of the events in the CAR France broke all ties with Bokassa. In September 1979 the French military Operation Barracuda landed in Bangui and replaced Bokassa, without bloodshed, with David Dacko who had been President between 1960 and 1965. Besides leading the mission to replace Bokassa France also placed a member of its secret service, Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Claude Mantion, in the center of power who for the next years would be the "de facto leader of CAR"[52].

André Kolingba

Presidential elections in 1981 brought another change to the CAR leadership. Although David Dacko won the election, he decided to hand over power to General André Kolingba, as the margin of his victory was very small (about 90 000 votes).[53]

The following years were characterized by Colonel Mantion, who kept his position beside the change in power, taking care of the working of state and government and President Kolingba putting his family and kin in favorable positions in state and military. Never before had

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[48] Cf Smith, *CAR's History*, 2015, p. 21.
[49] Cf ibid, p. 25ff.
[50] Cf ibid, p. 26ff.
[51] Cf New York Times *Survivors Describe Massacre in Bangui*, 1979.
[52] Smith, *CAR's History*, 2015, p. 29.
[53] Cf ibid, p. 26ff.

ethnicity been the basis of decision making in CAR and by using it as such Kolingba turned it into a factor in politics.[54]

The early years of the 1990's brought pressure from France on Kolingba to deliver democratic progress in the country, conditioning further aid to it. To underline this idea France also withdrew Colonel Mantion from the country. In 1993 CAR saw its first free democratic elections with Ange-Félix Patassé being the victor.[55]

Ange-Félix Patassé

Like his predecessor Patassé practiced favoritism over his own ethnic group, replacing the kin of Kolingba with his own especially in the Presidential Guard. The former was transferred into the Central African Armed Forced (FACA). As he had a strong Presidential Guard the President paid little attention to the increasing dissatisfaction within the armed forces.

Social tensions caused by the favored treatment of certain groups caused outbreaks of violence especially in 1996/1997, leading to the deployment of the first UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic in 1998. In 2001, an attempted assassination of Patassé made the President turn increasingly paranoid. He dismissed several members of his government and the military who he suspected to be behind the coup including General François Bozizé who fled first to Chad and then to France.[56]

In the next months, violence broke out in large parts of the country between supporters of Bozizé and those of the President. On March 15th 2003 Bozizé returned to the capital with the support of French and Chadian troops as well as the support of many other regional leaders (including those of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo and Gabon).[57]

François Bozizé

After the takeover of power by Bozizé especially Bangui drowned in chaos, being plundered by the Chadian forces and the population responding to it violently. Bozizé again relied on Chadian President Idriss Déby to help him stabilize the situation by sending troops.[58]

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[54] Cf ibid, p. 30.
[55] Cf ibid, p. 30f.
[56] Cf ibid, p. 34f.
[57] Cf ibid, p. 36.
[58] Cf ibid, 2015, p. 37.

Following the presidential elections of 2005, new violence broke out in the north of the country with three armed opposition groups being mainly responsible. Bozizé sent his Presidential Guard, however they did not ease the conflict.[59] The situation caused France to once again intervene in CAR in 2007 after Bozizé was unable to take back a town concurred by rebels.[60]

In December 2012, one of the rebel groups under the leadership of Michel Djotobia rebranded itself as Séléka and started to seize the country from the north east of CAR. The group was a heterogenous alliance of "predominantly Muslim anti-government militias"[61] from the north-east of the country who were unified by their common goal – to remove Bozizé from power. They almost reached the capital Bangui but were stopped by a new regional peacekeeping mission, the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX) by the Economic Community of Central African States. An agreement was negotiated in Libreville including a program for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) but the parties did not comply.[62]

Séléka rule

In March 2013 Séléka rebels seized the capital and Michel Djotobia proclaimed himself president. Similar to the situation after Bozizé's power seizure those who took over the city plundered it and sought revenge for their treatment in the past. With the main similarities of the rebels being their religion, the Islam, and their origin from the north-east of the country the former soon became the feature differentiating them from the mostly Christian population in the country. One third of CARs population was displaced and the number of killed civilians cannot be estimated.[63]

As a reaction to the violence committed by the Séléka fighters a second coalition emerged. The so called Anti-Balaka was created as an alliance of self-defense fighters and clashes between the two militias led to further civilian casualties. As Séléka, Anti-Balaka was soon associated with a religious group, the Christians, though neither group is officially supported by the official representatives of either religious community in CAR.[64]

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[59] Cf ibid, 2015, p. 38.
[60] Cf ibid, 2015, p. 40.
[61] Welz *Briefing: Crisis in the Central African Republic,* 2014, p. 603.
[62] Cf Smith *CAR's History*, 2015, p. 42.
[63] Cf ibid, p. 42f.
[64] Cf Isaacs-Martin *Political and Ethnic Identity in violent conflict: The Case of the Central African Republic,* 2016, p. 36.

Although Michel Djotobia officially resolved Séléka in September 2013 many of the fighters refused to turn in their arms and stop the fighting, instead this caused Djotobia losing all control over the militants.[65] The increasing violence and displacement of civilians led the UNSC in December 2013 with its Resolution 2127 to authorize the African Union to deploy the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) as well as allowing the deployment of French Operation Sangaris to Bangui to reinstall peace and order.[66]

Key Concepts

CAR as part of a region

As it can be seen in the history of the Central African Republic regional actors have played an important role in the way the country has evolved. But it is not only the direct involvement of the politicians in the events in the country but also the events in the neighboring states which have had effects.

Over the years CAR has been host to refugees especially from Chad e.g. during the Chadian Civil War in the late 1970's. Cultural and ethnic proximity as well as a joint dissatisfaction with their respective regimes created the idea of creating an independent Logone Republic covering parts of southern Chad and northern CAR. [67] The notion of declaring such a state first came up in the 1970's during unrests in Chad and was picked up again by the Séléka in 2015 when they declared the independence of parts of the northeast as a home for the Muslims. Besides some common interests in regard to the Logone Republic the Chadian community played a role in the political events especially of those of the 2000's.[68]

The interest that local stakeholders have in the CAR becomes especially visible when looking at their role in overthrowing Ange-Félix Patassé in 2003. However, they also played a role in the events leading up to coup in 2013. First of all, for a long time it was Chadian soldiers who kept Bozizé in power until he decided to send them back home in October 2012.[69] The overthrow of Bozizé was only possible because the forces of MICOPAX did not stop the Séléka fighters in early 2013 as they had done in 2012 as the leaders of the Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC) which initiated MICOPAX no longer supported Bozizé.[70]

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[65] Cf Smith *Unspeakable Horrors in a country on the verge of genocide*, 2013.
[66] Cf S/RES/2127 (2013).
[67] Cf Marchal *CAR and the Regional (Dis)Order,* 2015, p. 173f.
[68] Cf ibid, p. 176.
[69] Cf ibid, p. 181.
[70] Cf ibid, p. 186.

After the overthrow of Bozizé the neighboring countries turned to supporting different armed groups in the conflict preventing a stabilization of the situation.[71]

Religion as a political factor

Today about half of the population are Christians, 15% are Muslim and 35% follow indigenous belief.[72] The French colonial time lead to Christian majority whilst the Muslim community has evolved because of migrants from neighboring countries. This is one of the reasons why even before the events of 2013 there was a suspicion regarding the Muslim population who were seen as 'foreigners'.[73] Throughout large parts of CAR's history religion only played a minor role in its politics and conflicts. In the early years, little attention was paid to the religious groups as they barely caused concerns. The "politicization of religion"[74] happened mainly under Bozizé who blamed the (Chadian) Muslims for being responsible for the situation of CAR.[75] The two religions, Islam and Christianity are affiliated with a militia whose actions are driven by "self-interest, self-preservation and material gain"[76] of a specific group which raises the suspicion of other groups. This suspicion is then utilized to justify further violence. It needs to be taken into account that the origins of the main opposing groups do not lie in a religious but a political agenda. For instance, violence by Séléka fighters in 2013 was not exclusively directed against Christians but against all civilians.[77]

Recent developments and current challenges

The deployment of MISCA and the resolution of the Séléka alliance did not manage to ease the situation in CAR in 2014. By April more than 760,000 people were displaced within CAR and an additional 300,000 fled to the neighboring countries.[78] The conflict between the Anti-Balaka and the Séléka continued, although the later were now referred to as ex-Séléka or former elements of Séléka. This development showed the restricted influence Djotobia, who was seen

[71] Cf International Crisis Group *Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic,* 2017, p. 8.
[72] WorldFactbook *Central African Republic*, 2018.
[73] Cf Carayannis, Lombardi *A Concluding Note on the Failure and Future of Peacebuilding in CAR,* 2015, p. 322.
[74] Cf ibid, p. 322.
[75] Cf Carayannis, Lombardi *Making Sense of CAR. An Introduction,* 2015, p. 8.
[76] Isaacs-Martin *Political and Ethnic Identity in violent conflict: The Case of the Central African Republic,* 2016, p. 35.
[77] Cf ibid, p. 31-34.
[78] S/RES/2149 (2014)

as the leader of the coalition by many, actually had and underlined the fact that Séléka was merely a loose coalition of interest groups without a strong internal organization.[79]

Even the resignation of Michel Djotobia as President in January 2014 after international pressure, which was widely celebrated by the local population, could not bring relieve to the situation.[80] The Transitional Government under the new President Catherine Samba-Panza could do little to decrease tensions between the different groups.

In April 2014 the UNSC decided to transfer the African Union mission MISCA into an UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which became operational in September 2014 with an initial strength of 11,800 uniformed personnel.[81]

The signature of a ceasefire agreement between the ex-Séléka and Anti-Balaka in Brazzaville in July 2014 was more a symbolic than an effective step as violence continued.[82] Most of the

A map showing zones of influence of main armed groups, key mining areas, and smuggling points

country was, and continues to be, under the control of the Anti-Balaka (pink area in the map) and the ex-Séléka (yellow area) and the government has only little power outside the capital Bangui.[83] Nevertheless, the situation in the country was eased a little through different mediation processes and violence decreased. Still, there are parts of the country in which violence continues to be part of the daily life as neither group has been able to completely seize power there (red area).

Presidential and Legislative elections in 2015/2016 marked the end of the transitional period and made Faustin-Archange Touadéra the second democratically elected president in the history of CAR. Although the elections were seen as an important step especially by the international community, the enthusiasm that arose with the elections soon vanished showing

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[79] Cf Welz, *Briefing: Crisis in the Central African Republic and the International Response,* 2014, p. 603.
[80] Cf BBC *CAR Interim President Michel Djotobia Resigns,* 2014.
[81] Cf S/RES/2149 (2014).
[82] Cf BBC *Central African Republic factions announce ceasefire,* 2014.
[83] McCormick *‚One Day, We will Start a Big War',* 2015.

that the newly elected government would have to deal with the same problems as its transitional predecessor.[84]

The decision of the French Republic to end its Operation Sangaris as well as the declining support of Touadéra amongst the population are just two factors which lead to a deterioration of the security situation since late 2016.[85] Waves of violence between the Anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka alternate with periods of relative calm. However, assessments need to be made from region to region as the situation differs greatly. While there has been progress in Bangui most other regions are still haunted by criminality and frequent killings.[86] The government is still unable to control large parts of the country and impunity remains a major problem in fighting the armed groups as the judicial system is only on the verge of being established with the Special Criminal Court commencing its work in June 2018.[87]

Current initiatives trying to negotiate a coherent and lasting agreement between the government and the different armed groups are facing well known problems. Although a roadmap for the peace process in CAR has been created at a meeting in Libreville in July 2017, which has also been accepted by the UN as the framework for the future of the CAR, there are still major issues.[88] The heterogenous structure of the armed groups makes negotiations difficult as different parts of the groups have different interests and negotiations are mostly focusing on the disarmament of the groups. However, actors such as the International Crisis Group suggest that actions against the war economy or creating a new relationship between the government of CAR and its population, especially in the more peripheral regions, are also necessary.[89]

As the security situation in CAR has not improved but rather deteriorated since the deployment of MINUSCA in September 2016 and the work of the mission has been overshadowed by accusations of abuse and being biased, the support of the peacekeepers in the country is decreasing.[90] The deployment is turning more and more dangerous for the soldiers as they are frequently targeted by the armed groups leading to the death of two peacekeepers in April and May 2018.[91] Even though the mandate of the mission was renewed and the mission was

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[84] Cf International Crisis Group *Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic,* 2017, p. 1.
[85] Cf ibid, p. 2f.
[86] Cf International Crisis Group *Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic,* 2017, p. 4f.
[87] Cf Reuters *Central African Republic approves War Crimes Court,* 2018.
[88] Cf S/RES/2387, clause 3.
[89] Cf International Crisis Group *Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic,* 2017, p. 24-29.
[90] Cf McCormick ‚*One Day, We will Start a Big War‘,* 2015.
[91] Cf Security Council Report *June 2018 Monthly Foresight*, 2018.

expanded in November 2017 through Resolution 2387 there are major concerns that MINUSCA lacks in implementing its strategy for the protection of civilians, one of the priorities of the mandate.[92]

A situation which is already dangerous for the peacekeeping mission makes the CAR "one of the most dangerous countries in the world for humanitarian actors"[93] as they are targeted by armed groups, making it increasingly difficult for them to deliver the much-needed aid. As of January 2018, almost 700,000 people are internally displaced and 550,000 have fled to neighboring countries.[94] 2.5 million people, almost half of the population, are in need of humanitarian aid and 1.6 million people are severely food insecure, a number that is expected to rise in the next months.[95]

Finding a solution which will provide lasting peace and stability to the Central African Republic has proven to be an increasingly difficult task. The variety of interests and actors create a dangerous environment for peacekeepers as well as humanitarian organizations and most of all civilians. Years of conflict have left their marks on the country and creating new relationships of peace and trust amongst the different communities as well as between them and the government appears to be a task for the next years, if not the next decade.

Questions a Resolution should address

How can the humanitarian situation in the country be improved?

How can MINUSCAs ability to fulfill its mandate be improved?

How can the situation for humanitarians and the UN personnel be made safer?

What can be done to regain the trust of the people in the government and MINUSCA?

How can an effective implementation of the Road Map for the peace be supported and fostered?

Are there any steps the international community can take to increase the rebel groups willingness to negotiate?

Recommended reading

Report of the International Crisis Group: Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic:

[92] Cf What's in Blue *Central African Republic: Briefing and Consultations,* 2018.
[93] International Crisis Group *Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic,* 2017, p. 5.
[94] UNHRC *Regional Situation Update: Central African Republic Situation,* 2018.
[95] FAO *Central African Republic Situation Report,* 2018.

https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/253-avoiding-worst-central-african-republic

Feature: Foreign Policy: One Day We Will Start a Big War

https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/28/one-day-we-will-start-a-big-war-central-african-republic-un-violence/

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