



**ITU
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SPECPOL

STUDY GUIDE

- Improving and ensuring the safety of atomic energy production
- Violent Extremism in the Sahel

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1.0 Letter from Secretary-General

Most esteemed participants of ITUMUN24,

I, as the Secretary General of ITUMUN24, welcome you all to the 7th edition of Istanbul Technical University Model United Nations. It is an honor and a pleasure to be able to present to you what we have been preparing for months and dreaming for years. My team has worked tirelessly to bring the best you have ever seen, starting with our organization to our academics.

Our objective is to facilitate proficient and elevated diplomatic deliberations, fostering valuable and constructive solutions throughout the four-day duration of ITUMUN, enriched by the collective contributions of all participants. As a delegate, your journey begins here, with the study guide prepared by our dedicated members; your most honorable chairboard.

I advise you to read this study guide thoroughly and expand your research on different perspectives; focusing on your allocated country. It is essential to bear in mind that each nation and every perspective holds significance if you are adequately prepared to engage with the agenda at hand.

You have my best wishes for success and enriching discussions during these four days of enjoyment. I eagerly anticipate witnessing the valuable contributions you'll make to our conference.

Best regards,

Zehra Akçay

Secretary General of ITUMUN24



2.0 Letter from Board Members

Dear delegates of the SPECPOL,

As your committee board, we're honoured to welcome all participants. In a world grappling with uncertainty, discrimination, and violations, our agenda is vast and intricate, requiring active engagement from each participant. The direction of our committee is yours to shape. We encourage you to review the study guide provided to gain a deep understanding of the issue. We look forward to your valuable contributions and fruitful collaboration in addressing the complex challenges ahead.

Lastly, we would like to thank the academic and organisation team of the ITUMUN'24 for their invitation and efforts to this wonderful conference.

Sincerely,
Naz ÇOBAN & Doğa İNCE
Board Members of the SPECPOL



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3.0 Introduction to the United Nations and GA-4 SPECPOL

Established in the aftermath of World War II on October 24, 1945, the United Nations is an international institution dedicated to the ideals of global peace, international security, and the resurgence of development. Over the subsequent decades, the UN has expanded its mission, taking on diverse responsibilities, implementing significant initiatives, and making strides in safeguarding various fundamental rights. Today, the UN's significance surpasses a mere designation as the "centre of international relations"; its true importance lies in its dedication to advancing the welfare of humanity. In essence, it embodies our historical evolution

The Fourth Committee is one of the six principal committees of the United Nations General Assembly, focusing on a broad range of political issues, including peaceful uses of space, UN peacekeeping, and, prominently, matters related to the Middle East and decolonization. Initially responsible for trusteeship and decolonization, its role evolved after the independence of all UN trust territories and the abolition of the trusteeship system. The Fourth Committee and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, initially established separately, were later combined. Currently, the Fourth Committee addresses issues such as decolonization, atomic radiation effects, information-related concerns, peacekeeping operations, special political missions, and international cooperation in the peaceful uses of space.

4.0 Introduction to the Agenda Item A : Improving and Ensuring the Safety of Atomic Energy Production

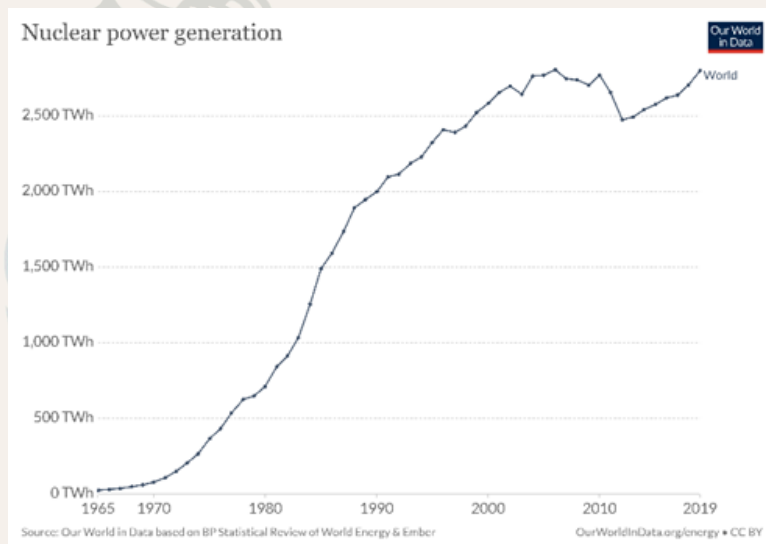
Since the dawn of humanity in nature, there has always been a consumeristic tendency, and at the peak of this consumption has consistently been energy. From the discovery of fire, humans have gradually explored ways to produce and use energy more efficiently, shaping themselves through self-driven innovation. The utilisation of energy resources, starting with the domestication of fire and continuing today with the leadership of oil, is in a constant evolution. This cycle of energy production and consumption significantly impacts human life, particularly in economic and political domains. Perhaps the most intensively debated energy source in the present era is atomic energy, which is arguably one of humanity's most controversial products. The use of this energy type, for some, is seen as positive, while for others, it raises concerns. The utilisation of atomic energy begins with the discovery of Uranium and has triggered heated discussions regarding its use.

Nuclear energy was discovered by the French physicist Henri Becquerel in 1896 accidentally when uranium material was placed next to photographic plates, and the detection of radioactively emitted rays in the dark occurred. Physicist Enrico Fermi, in 1934, observed that the atoms resulting from bombarding uranium atoms with neutrons were much smaller than uranium atoms and recognized the potential of the nuclear fission reaction. In 1942, he established the first controlled, self-sustaining nuclear energy production system using uranium and control rods in a manner similar to today's nuclear power plants. After the realisation of the power and potential of this new technology, the United States, initiating the



Manhattan Project in 1942, intensified nuclear energy research with the goal of producing nuclear weapons before the Germans. As a result, along with the dream team led by Robert J. Oppenheimer, the United States conducted the first nuclear weapon tests in July 1945 near Alamogordo, New Mexico, under the project name Trinity Test. In response to the prolonged Japanese surrender during World War II, President Truman authorised the deployment of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 29, 1949, the Soviet Union joined the atomic arms race with its Atom Bomb test, officially known as RDS-1 or Izdeliye 501, conducted at the Semipalatinsk Test Site in Semey, Kazakhstan.

Although the effects of atomic bombs, especially those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are intensely debated and sometimes condemned, Harry Truman became the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. The post-war economic boom, coupled with developments in the arms race, marked the rapid increase of nuclear energy and nuclear power plants in the 1950s and 1960s.



The Oil Crisis of 1973, which resulted from the reductions initially imposed by Arab countries in OPEC on the oil they offered to the market and eventually implemented embargoes, led to a significant increase in the price of a barrel of oil, rising from \$2.9 to \$11.65. Similarly, the Natural Gas Crisis triggered by the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022, where Russia responded to economic embargoes

imposed by the European Union and other countries, by reducing natural gas supply through the Nord Stream pipeline, contributed to a global surge in inflation. These events have highlighted the significant problem of energy dependence for countries. As a result, countries have increasingly recognized the importance of reducing external dependency in energy, especially leading to a growing demand for nuclear energy.

The fact that the amount of energy produced as a result of the fission of a single uranium atom is nearly 10 times greater than the energy generated by burning a unit of coal, and at the same time, the energy obtainable from only half a kilogram of uranium surpasses what could be produced by millions of litres of oil, has shifted the perspective on nuclear energy towards a more positive direction. These factors, including the ability to reduce the import ratio in energy and decrease external dependency, highlight the potential advantages of nuclear energy.

However, this positive perspective has rapidly undergone changes due to various factors such

as accidents, the nuclear arms race brought about by the Cold War, tensions created in societies and states, considerations about the disposal of used fuels, and the ecosystemic and health-related damages caused by nuclear power plants. Yet, in the present era, factors such as the impacts of CO₂ emissions on climate change, technological advancements leading to safer methods, and nuclear disarmament facilitated by international treaties have transformed nuclear energy into a rising star in the world of energy, alongside other renewable sources. Despite factors portraying a positive outlook on nuclear energy, such as Sweden meeting 45% of its energy needs, Switzerland 55%, Canada 58%, France 77%, and even Norway nearly 99% from nuclear power plants (5), the perspective on nuclear energy remains a subject of curiosity due to the rapid increase in the vote percentages of parties representing green politics, like Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (6), Australian Greens, and the Greens/European Free Alliance. Their entry into European parliaments and the increasing awareness of current climate and environmental issues raise questions about what societies will do regarding nuclear energy.

4.1 Importance of Atomic Energy Production

4.1.1 Understanding the Atomic Energy Production and its Utilisation Purposes

In order to create a better understanding regarding the atomic and nuclear energy, first the concept of energy production process with atoms should be understood. Nuclear energy is simply a form of energy released from the nucleus, the core of atoms, made up of protons and neutrons. This type of energy can be acquired in two different

ways: fission – when nuclei of atoms split into several parts – or fusion – when nuclei fuse together.

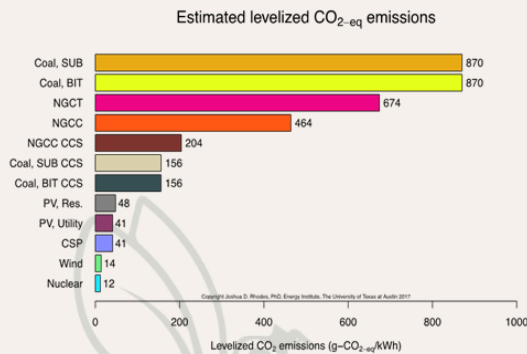
Inside nuclear power plants, nuclear reactors and their equipment contain and control the chain reactions, most commonly fuelled by uranium-235, to produce heat through fission. The heat warms the reactor's cooling agent, usually water, to produce steam. The steam is then channelled to spin turbines, activating an electric generator to create low-carbon electricity. With this way, energy is generated by utilisation of atomic energy and transformed to the other forms of energy.

Advantages of Atomic Energy Production

a) *Sustainable and consistent load without fluctuations;*



In nuclear energy production, the generation of electricity remains relatively constant over time, ensuring a consistent and sustainable power supply, unlike some other forms of energy that can be subject to variations in weather. Nuclear power plants can maintain a continuous and reliable load without significant fluctuations. This feature contributes to the stability of the electrical grid and ensures a steady supply of energy to meet demand.



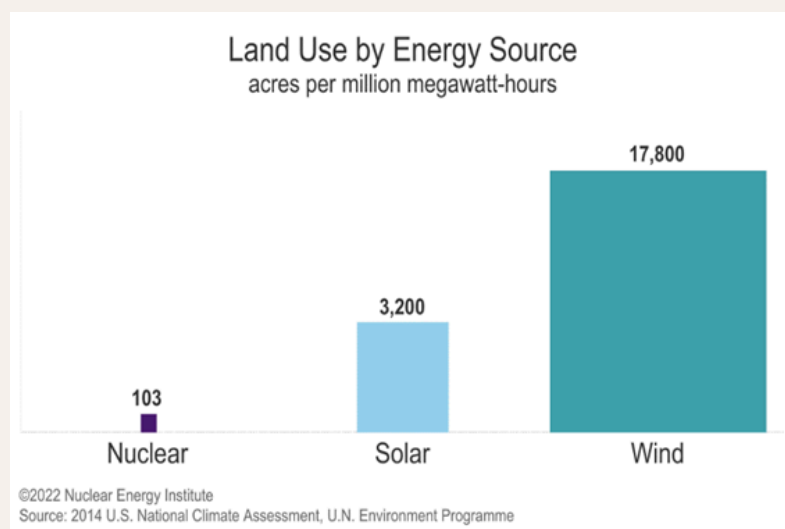
b) Generation of lower emissions of greenhouses gases, such as CO₂, compared with other nonrenewable and renewable energy types

Nuclear power plants produce no greenhouse gas emissions during operation, and over the course of its life-cycle, nuclear produces about the same amount of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions per unit of electricity as wind, and one-third of the emissions per unit of electricity when compared with solar. Nuclear energy has shown that it has the potential to be the catalyst for delivering sustainable energy transitions, long before climate change was on the agenda. With the generation of low harmful gas emissions, nuclear energy can help the member states for SDGs.

c) Utilisation of significantly less land compared to alternative renewable energy sources.

Nuclear energy pairs perfectly with renewables such as wind and solar to create a reliable, clean energy system. It provides carbon-free, around-the-clock power to fill the gaps when the sun isn't shining or the wind isn't blowing. Nuclear also complements renewables because it generates more power with less land—31 times less than solar facilities and 173 times less than wind farms.

Wind and solar farms are located where wind and sunlight are abundantly available and require sprawling amounts of land for turbines and panels,



whereas nuclear energy is contained to nuclear power plants. A nuclear energy facility has a small area footprint, requiring about 1.3 square miles per 1,000 megawatts of energy.

Disadvantages of Atomic Energy Production

a) Past Nuclear Incidents' Impacts and Effects

Historical occurrences such as the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident and the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident demonstrate the substantial and persistent risk of catastrophic calamities to the environment and public health. These disasters show how strict safety protocols and ongoing monitoring are crucial to the management and control of nuclear power stations in order to prevent and lessen the effects of such tragedies.

b) Dangers of Radioactive Waste

The generation of radioactive waste, encompassing spent nuclear fuel and various by-products, necessitates meticulous and secure disposal methods. Addressing the long-lived nature of certain radioactive materials further introduces challenges in developing robust storage and management strategies. The persistence of these challenges emphasises the imperative for ongoing research and innovation to ensure the safe, long-term containment and eventual disposal of radioactive waste without adverse environmental or public health consequences.

c) Nuclear Proliferation

Nuclear proliferation, a pressing global concern, involves the dissemination of nuclear technology, sparking apprehensions primarily centred on the potential diversion of such advancements for military purposes, including the development of nuclear weapons. As countries harness nuclear power capabilities for peaceful energy generation, there looms a delicate balance between fostering civilian applications and preventing the clandestine misuse of nuclear technology for military endeavours.

Although nuclear proliferation is not like in the age of the Cold War right now, it is still a major problem for society. For example, North Korea resulted in heightened international tensions and concerns because of their nuclear proliferation. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, North Korea launched ballistic missiles 31 times in total in 2022. This underscores the intricate challenge of managing the dual-use nature of nuclear technology and the critical need for robust international non-proliferation efforts to monitor, regulate, and curb the unauthorised militarization of nuclear advancements. As the global community grapples with this complex issue, diplomatic dialogue, strengthened safeguards, and cooperative agreements remain essential to mitigate the risks associated with nuclear proliferation.

4.2 Previous International Agreements and Conventions

4.2.1 International Agreements



Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) stands as the linchpin of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, serving as a foundational pillar for the advancement of nuclear disarmament. Its overarching objectives are multifaceted: firstly, to curb the dissemination of nuclear weapons; secondly, to actively contribute to the broader objectives of nuclear disarmament and, more broadly, general and complete disarmament; and thirdly, to foster collaboration in the constructive and peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

In its commitment to the cause of non-proliferation and as a measure to instil confidence among State parties, the Treaty establishes a rigorous safeguards system entrusted to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This system utilises inspections conducted by the IAEA to verify adherence to the Treaty's stipulations. By engaging in these safeguards, the Treaty not only ensures compliance but also serves as a vital tool in preventing the diversion of fissile material for potential weapons applications.

Crucially, the NPT champions cooperation in the realm of peaceful nuclear technology, advocating equal access to such technology for all States parties. This cooperative framework aims to facilitate the responsible use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes while mitigating the risk of proliferation. Under the provisions of the 1968 NPT, the IAEA undertakes on-site inspections to ascertain that nuclear materials are exclusively employed for peaceful endeavours. A poignant example of the IAEA's impactful role unfolded in the prelude to the 2003 Iraq war when its inspectors played a pivotal part in revealing and dismantling Iraq's prohibited weapons programs and capabilities.

In recognition of the tireless efforts to prevent the militarization of nuclear energy and to ensure its safe and peaceful utilisation, the Agency, along with its Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. This accolade underscored the importance of their commitment to steering nuclear energy away from military purposes and ensuring its application in the safest manner possible for peaceful pursuits.

Nuclear Free Zones



The establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZ) is a regional approach to enhance global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms, fostering international efforts for peace and security. According to Article VII of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), states have the right to form regional treaties ensuring the

complete absence of nuclear weapons in their territories.

Defined by General Assembly resolution 3472 B, a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone is recognized by the UN General Assembly and established by a treaty among states in the region. The zone commits to the total absence of nuclear weapons, defines delimitation procedures, and establishes an international system for verification and control to ensure compliance.

In "Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament," the Secretary-General emphasises the importance of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in preparing for a nuclear-free world. To implement the agenda, the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs will collaborate with member states to strengthen existing zones, encourage adherence to relevant protocols by nuclear-weapon states, and support the establishment of new zones, including in the Middle East.

The UN Disarmament Commission's 1999 guidelines for NWFZ emphasise that such zones should be established through arrangements freely made by states in the region. The initiative must come exclusively from states within the region, with consultation of nuclear-weapon states during treaty negotiations. NWFZs should not hinder the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology, and provisions for cooperation in nuclear energy for socio-economic development should be considered in the treaties establishing these zones.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

In response to General Assembly resolution 71/258, a United Nations conference was convened in 2017 with the objective of negotiating a legally binding instrument for the prohibition of nuclear weapons and their eventual elimination. The resulting Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which took effect on January 22, 2021, encompasses a comprehensive set of prohibitions, including commitments to refrain from developing, testing, producing, acquiring, possessing, stockpiling, using, or threatening to use nuclear weapons.

The first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW occurred in Vienna in June 2022. During this meeting, a pivotal Declaration titled "Our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons" was adopted, along with the Vienna Action Plan to guide further implementation of the Treaty. Significant decisions, such as establishing deadlines for nuclear weapon removal and destruction, were made in alignment with Article 4 of the Treaty.

To facilitate informed decision-making, the first Meeting of States Parties established a Scientific Advisory Group in 2023, composed of up to 15 members, with a broad mandate to inform states on scientific and technical developments relevant to the Treaty. This includes considerations of humanitarian consequences, risks associated with nuclear weapons, and wider issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation.



The role of the United Nations in this context is crucial, as outlined in resolution 72/31, where the Secretary-General is designated as the depository of the TPNW. The Secretary-General is tasked with providing necessary assistance, transmitting declarations received under Article 2 of the Treaty, and convening Meetings of States Parties and Review Conferences.

The genesis of this initiative lies in the growing awareness of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, as highlighted in the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The subsequent series of conferences in 2013 and 2014, exploring the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, played a pivotal role in building global momentum and support for urgent action toward nuclear disarmament. The second Meeting of States Parties, scheduled for November 2023 in New York, represents a continued effort to advance the goals outlined in the TPNW.

4.2.2 IAEA

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) operates collaboratively with its Member States and diverse global partners to advance the responsible application of nuclear technologies, emphasising safety, security, and peaceful purposes. The IAEA's association with the United Nations is rooted in a foundational agreement dating back to 1957. This agreement articulates a commitment that binds the IAEA to conduct its activities in alignment with the Purposes and Principles outlined in the United Nations Charter. The IAEA operates as a specialised agency of the United Nations, providing expertise and support in the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Specifically, the IAEA pledges to foster peace and international cooperation while adhering to United Nations policies that support the pursuit of worldwide disarmament under safeguards. This commitment extends to conforming with any international agreements entered into as part of these overarching policies. In essence, the IAEA's mission is intricately tied to the broader objectives of the United Nations, emphasising a symbiotic relationship in pursuit of global peace, cooperation, and the promotion of responsible nuclear technology use.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) holds a pivotal role in aligning its efforts with the United Nations (UN) towards crucial objectives. This collaboration is prominently evident in the IAEA's dedication to supporting UN initiatives related to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. By implementing rigorous safeguards, the agency actively verifies that nuclear materials are exclusively utilised for peaceful purposes, preventing any potential diversion for weapons development. This integral role significantly contributes to the overarching goal of global security.

Moreover, the IAEA extends its collaboration with the UN beyond non-proliferation efforts. The agency takes a proactive stance in providing technical assistance and capacity-building support to its member states, aiding them in harnessing nuclear technology for peaceful applications.



The joint initiatives between the IAEA and the UN manifest in diverse projects that leverage the collective expertise of both organisations. These collaborative efforts extend across various domains, including nuclear safety, environmental protection, and the application of nuclear technology in sectors like agriculture and water resource management. This synergistic approach ensures a comprehensive and effective utilisation of resources for the betterment of global well-being and sustainability.

Furthermore, the IAEA's contributions to UN initiatives are particularly pronounced in the realm of health and human welfare. The agency plays a vital role in supporting UN endeavours to enhance healthcare outcomes through the application of nuclear technology. This involvement encompasses critical areas such as cancer treatment, disease diagnosis, and addressing health challenges in developing countries. By actively engaging in these initiatives, the IAEA underscores its commitment to advancing global health and well-being through the responsible use of nuclear technology in collaboration with the United Nations.

4.2.3 UN Tech Bank

The United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries (UN Technology Bank) is an entity established by the United Nations to support the world's least developed countries (LDCs) in harnessing technology for sustainable development. It was created in response to the recognition that LDCs face particular challenges in accessing and utilizing technology for their development needs. The UN Technology Bank was officially launched in 2018 and is headquartered in Gebze, Turkey.

The UN Technology Bank plays a pivotal role in advancing atomic energy safety in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Through a comprehensive approach, it facilitates capacity building by providing training and educational resources. Additionally, it acts as a conduit for technology transfer from more advanced nations, ensuring LDCs can improve and develop their atomic energy capabilities. The Bank actively supports the implementation of safety standards, offers crucial assistance in research and development, and contributes to emergency response preparedness.

Furthermore, the Technology Bank focuses on enhancing regulatory frameworks, crucial for the safe operation of nuclear facilities. Public awareness initiatives contribute to fostering understanding and acceptance, while collaboration with organisations like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) ensures access to specialised knowledge and technical assistance. Serving as an innovation hub, it promotes sustainable practices in atomic energy production and facilitates the exchange of valuable information among LDCs. This holistic and integrated strategy not only enables LDCs to acquire secure atomic energy capabilities but also ensures the long-term sustainability of these advancements, aligning with global goals for safe and responsible nuclear technology utilisation.

4.3 Major Incidents

4.3.1 The Chernobyl Disaster

On April 25, 1986, routine maintenance was scheduled at V.I. Lenin Nuclear Power Station's fourth reactor, and workers planned to use the downtime to test whether the reactor could still be cooled if the plant lost power. During the test, however, workers violated safety protocols and power surged inside the plant. Despite attempts to shut down the reactor entirely, another power surge caused a chain reaction of explosions inside. Finally, the nuclear core itself was exposed, spewing radioactive material into the atmosphere.

Firefighters attempted to put out a series of blazes at the plant, and eventually helicopters dumped sand and other materials in an attempt to squelch the fires and contain the contamination. Despite the death of two people in the explosions, the hospitalisation of workers and firefighters, and the danger from fallout and fire, no one in the surrounding areas—including the nearby city of Pripyat, which was built in the 1970s to house workers at the plant—was evacuated until about 36 hours after the disaster began.

Up to 30 percent of Chernobyl's 190 metric tons of uranium was now in the atmosphere, and the Soviet Union eventually evacuated 335,000 people, establishing a 19-mile-wide "exclusion zone" around the reactor. At least 28 people initially died as a result of the accident, while more than 100 were injured. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation has reported that more than 6,000 children and adolescents developed thyroid cancer after being exposed to radiation from the incident, although some experts have challenged that claim.

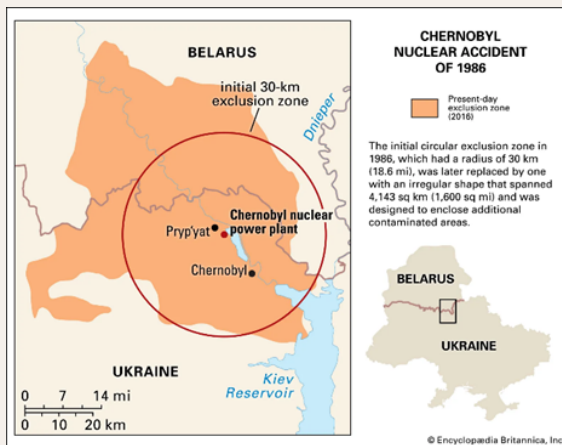


International researchers have predicted that ultimately, around 4,000 people exposed to high levels of radiation could succumb to radiation-related cancer, while about 5,000 people exposed to lower levels of radiation may suffer the same fate. Yet the full consequences of the accident, including impacts on mental health and even subsequent generations, remain highly debated and under study.

What remains of the reactor is now inside a massive steel containment structure deployed in late 2016. Containment efforts and monitoring continue and cleanup is expected to last until at least 2065.

Long Term Impacts of The Chernobyl Disaster

The impact of the disaster on the surrounding forest and wildlife also remains an area of active research. In the immediate aftermath of the accident, an area of about four square miles became known as the “Red Forest” because so many trees turned reddish-brown and died after absorbing high levels of radiation.



The Chernobyl disaster had other fallout: The economic and political toll hastened the end of the USSR and fueled a global anti-nuclear movement. The disaster has been estimated to cost some \$235 billion in damages. What is now Belarus, which saw 23 percent of its territory contaminated by the accident, lost about a fifth of its agricultural land. At the height of disaster response efforts, in 1991,

Belarus spent 22 percent of its total budget dealing with Chernobyl.

Today, Chernobyl beckons to tourists who are intrigued by its history and its danger. But though Chernobyl symbolises the potential devastation of nuclear power, Russia never quite moved beyond its legacy—or its technology. As of 2019, there are still 11 operational RBMK reactors in Russia.

4.3.2 Fukushima

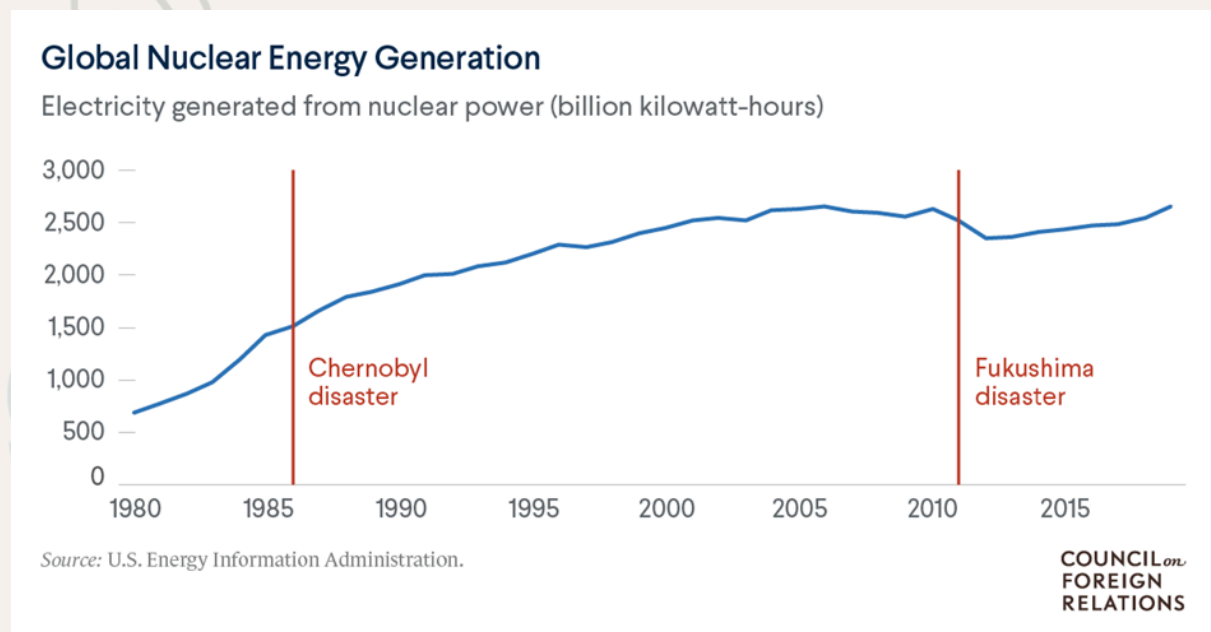
On March 11, 2011, the largest earthquake ever recorded in Japan causes massive devastation, and the ensuing tsunami decimates the Tōhoku region of northeastern Honshu. On top of the already-horrific destruction and loss of life, the natural disaster also gives rise to a nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. The Fukushima disaster is considered the second-worst nuclear disaster in history, forcing the relocation of over 100,000 people.

During the emergency, each of the three operational nuclear reactors at the Fukushima plant shut down successfully, but the backup power and cooling systems failed. As a result, residual heat caused fuel rods in all three reactors to partially melt down. As crews searched the rubble for survivors and the nation reeled from the earthquake and ensuing tsunami, the nuclear disaster unfolded over the course of several days. The facilities where Reactors 1 and 3 were located exploded on March 12 and 14, respectively, prompting the government to evacuate everyone within a 20km radius. Another explosion in the building housing Reactor 2 on March 15 released even more radiation, and thousands of people left their homes as workers used helicopters, water cannons and seawater pumps to try to cool the overheating facility.

The full extent of the fallout became apparent over the ensuing months, with the government eventually evacuating all residents within a 30km radius of the plant. No deaths were initially

attributed to the incident, although this was of little comfort to the 154,000 who were evacuated or the loved ones of the more than 18,000 people who lost their lives as a result of the earthquake and tsunami. Some have suggested that such a large evacuation was not necessary, as radiation levels appear to have dropped below what was expected in the immediate wake of the accident.

Though many were able to return to their homes, a 371-square-kilometre “difficult-to-return zone” remains evacuated as of 2021, and the true toll may not be known for decades. In 2018, the government announced that former plant worker who had served during the meltdown was the first death officially attributed to radiation from the disaster, which today is considered second only to Chernobyl in the ranking of infamous nuclear incidents.



4.4 Obstacles and Challenges

4.4.1 Politic and Economic Challenges

The establishment of common international safety standards for atomic energy faces intricate challenges arising from the divergence in national interests, priorities, and regulatory frameworks. With nations employing distinct approaches to risk assessment, emergency preparedness, and safety protocols, achieving harmonisation becomes a complex task. Resolving these differences necessitates sustained dialogue and collaboration to identify common ground and construct universally accepted standards. Effective enforcement of these international standards demands robust mechanisms that hinge on cooperation between nations and their regulatory bodies. Diplomatic negotiations and mutual agreements play a pivotal role in cultivating a culture of compliance. The creation of monitoring bodies and the exchange of best practices contribute to the success of enforcement efforts, requiring continuous international engagement to ensure a collective commitment to safety.

In addressing public opposition rooted in concerns about nuclear energy safety and environmental impacts, political leaders face the challenge of navigating public perception and acceptance. Transparent communication, robust education efforts, and community engagement are vital. Building trust requires demonstrating a steadfast commitment to safety measures, emergency preparedness, and responsible waste management. Public participation in decision-making processes contributes to inclusivity and can mitigate opposition.

Recognizing nuclear facilities as potential targets for terrorism or sabotage underlines the critical need for international collaboration on security measures. Essential components include information sharing, joint training exercises, and coordinated response strategies. Geopolitical tensions should be separated from security discussions to ensure a focused commitment to safeguarding nuclear facilities. The long-term commitment required for nuclear projects, spanning decades, demands unwavering political support across different administrations. Maintaining policy consistency and funding commitments proves challenging, especially in democracies where political landscapes evolve. Establishing bipartisan or cross-party consensus on the significance of nuclear energy safety ensures continuous support for projects, irrespective of changes in leadership.

4.4.2 Public Perception and Opposition

Public perception and opposition wield considerable influence in shaping discussions on atomic energy safety, particularly within the framework of green politics. Parties like Bündis 90 / Grüne in Germany or the Green Party in various countries exemplify how green political movements strategically leverage public concerns to underscore the perceived risks and environmental consequences associated with nuclear energy.

Green political movements are finely attuned to public sentiments regarding nuclear energy safety. Heightened awareness of the potential long-term impact of nuclear accidents, anxieties surrounding the management of radioactive waste, and fears of catastrophic events have become focal points in public discourse. Parties like Bündis 90 / Grüne actively channel these concerns into demands for heightened transparency, accountability, and the implementation of stringent safety measures within the nuclear industry. The emphasis is not merely on opposing nuclear energy but on advocating for responsible practices and comprehensive safety protocols.

Public opposition, marshalled by green political groups, takes various forms, including organised protests, advocacy campaigns, and active participation in public discourse. Historical incidents such as Chernobyl and Fukushima, with their enduring environmental ramifications, serve as rallying points for opposition. Green politics often calls for a fundamental reevaluation of energy priorities, advocating for a phased-out approach to nuclear power in favour of embracing renewable and inherently safer alternatives. The Green Party, for instance, has consistently championed policies that prioritise investments in wind, solar, and other sustainable energy sources.

This organised public opposition, when amplified by green political movements, has a tangible impact on decision-making processes. Political leaders, cognizant of the power of public opinion, frequently respond to these concerns by reconsidering or even halting nuclear projects. In response to heightened opposition, decision-makers may implement additional safety measures, redirect investments towards alternative and greener energy sources, or craft policies that align more closely with the values and concerns raised by green politics. The influence of public perception, channelled through green political movements, becomes a pivotal factor in the formulation and implementation of policies related to atomic energy safety.

In summary, the nexus between public perception, opposition, and green politics contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on atomic energy safety. By strategically amplifying public concerns and advocating for responsible energy practices, green political movements play a crucial role in shaping policy decisions, fostering transparency, and steering the trajectory toward a more sustainable and accountable nuclear industry.

5. Questions to be Addressed for Agenda Item A:

- 1. Which collaborations between organisations or member states can be established or enhanced regarding improving and ensuring the safety of atomic energy production?*
- 2. What measures can be taken to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and prevent the misuse of atomic energy technology?*
- 3. How can support be provided to developing countries to enhance their capacity for safe atomic energy production?*
- 4. What measures can be taken to address public concerns and build confidence in the safety of nuclear energy?*
- 5. What reforms or improvements could be suggested to enhance the effectiveness of existing international bodies or treaties in this context?*

6. References for Agenda Item A:

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Agenda Item 2: Violent Extremism in the Sahel Region

7.0 Introduction to the Agenda Item B: Violent Extremism in the Sahel Region

The Sahel region, which stretches from Senegal to Eritrea and is situated between the Sahara and the African tropics, has long faced humanitarian and security issues. These countries have experienced extreme levels of violence ever since they gained independence in the 1960s due to poor government, problems with the economy, and climate change. Crime, violence, and altercations have increased dramatically during the last 10 years, posing serious challenges to nations inside and outside of the region. Out of all of Africa, the Sahel has seen the fastest increase in militant Islamist group activity in recent years.

Because of the continuous fighting in the region between armed groups and troops, a large number of people have been forced to leave their homes in numerous Sahelian countries. Each Sahelian battle has a unique history and cast of characters. Respect for international humanitarian law is essential when it comes to helping people during times of war, regardless of how complicated these situations may be. These laws are obligations rather than merely declarations of purpose.

Since 2015, the number of violent incidents in the region involving extremist groups has increased on an annual basis. There have been roughly 700 violent events in 2019. The number of fatalities linked with these incidences grew from 225 to 2,000 within the same time span. Over 900,000 people have been displaced as a result of the uptick in violence, with 500,000 of them in Burkina Faso alone in 2019. Ansaroul Islam, the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), and the Macina Liberation Front (FLM) are responsible for over two-thirds of the central Sahel's extremist violence. The majority of their attacks are concentrated in western Niger, northern and eastern Burkina Faso, and central Mali. To address this situation, numerous development and security measures have been implemented. While some progress has been realized, the continued escalation of extremist violence underscores that more needs to be done.



7.1 Abbreviations and Major Parties Involved:

Sahel Region: Sahel, semiarid region of western and north-central Africa extending from Senegal eastward to Sudan. It forms a transitional zone between the arid Sahara (desert) to the north and the belt of humid savannas to the south. The Sahel stretches from the Atlantic Ocean eastward through northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, the great bend of the Niger River in Mali, Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), southern Niger, northeastern Nigeria, south-central Chad, and into Sudan.



Al Qaeda: Al-Qaeda is a broad-based militant Islamist movement created in the late 1980s by Osama bin Laden that became one of the world's most well-known terrorist organisations after carrying out the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Islamic State (ISIS): The Islamic State (IS) is both a defunct state and a global Salafi jihadist movement. In Arabic, it is also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Daesh. Its origins can be traced back to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi's 2004 organisation Jai'sh al-Taifa al-Mansurah, which fought with al-Qaeda in Iraq during the insurgency.

The group gained its prominence in 2014, when its militants, supported by the Syrian civil war, took control of wide swaths of territory in northern Iraq and eastern Syria. By the end of 2015, it dominated a region with an estimated population of twelve million people, enforcing its own version of Islamic law, managing an annual budget of more than \$1 billion, and commanding over 30,000 fighters. After years of intense and grinding combat with American, Iraqi, and Kurdish forces, it had lost all of its Middle Eastern territories by 2019, and had reverted to insurgency tactics in the areas it had previously controlled, operating from remote hideouts and continuing its propaganda efforts, which had earned it a strong following in northern and Sahelian Africa.

Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS): Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (IS-GS), is an Islamist militant group adhering to the ideology of Salafi Jihadism. IS-GS was formed on 15 May 2015 as the result of a split within the militant group Al-Mourabitoun. The rift was a

reaction to the adherence of one of its leaders, Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui, to the Islamic State. From March 2019 to 2022, IS-GS was formally part of the Islamic State – West Africa Province (ISWAP); when it was also called "ISWAP-Greater Sahara". In March 2022, IS declared the province autonomous, separating it from its West Africa Province and naming it Islamic State – Sahil Province (ISSP).

Ansaroul Islam: Ansaroul Islam is a militant Islamic organisation and the first native jihadi group in Burkina Faso. Prior to the establishment of Ansaroul Islam, Burkina Faso had not experienced significant violence from militant jihadists. The group officially announced its establishment after launching its first attack, on a joint Burkinabe-French military camp, in December 2016. Ansaroul Islam has its origins in the religious network established by radical Djibo imam Boureima Dicko in 2012, which advocated brotherhood and equality among Burkina Faso's various social and ethnic groups. The group purportedly seeks to rebuild the ancient Djeelgodji empire that disappeared after French colonisation in the 19th century. Ansaroul Islam operates primarily in Burkina Faso and Mali. It attacks civilian targets, Burkinabe security forces, and French counterterrorism forces.

Boko Haram: In 2002, Mohammad Yusuf formed Boko Haram as a Sunni Islamist sect to oppose Western education and establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. The group has carried out numerous attacks since 2009, including the 2011 bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Abuja, but is best known for the 2014 Chibok schoolgirl kidnapping, when the group abducted over 300 young Nigerian girls. Its primary base of operation is northeastern Nigeria, but it has conducted limited operations in Cameroon and Niger. In March 2015, Boko Haram became an affiliate of the Islamic State (IS). In August 2016, leadership struggles led to a split within Boko Haram, pitting the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) against Jama'atu Ahl al-Sunnah lil-Dawa wal-Jihad (JAS).

Macina Liberation Front (FLM): The Macina Liberation Front (MLF), a.k.a. Katiba Macina, is an al-Qa'ida-aligned armed group that seeks to expel western influence and establish an Islamic state in the Sahel. A radical Fulani preacher, Amadou Kouffa, founded the MLF in 2015 in an attempt to resurrect the 19th century Peuhl Empire of Macina. In 2017, the MLF merged with three other extremist groups to form Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). The MLF is a key component in JNIM, accounting for a plurality of violent events observed in the Sahel in 2021.

National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA): The movement is mostly made up of ethnic Tuareg, some of whom are believed to have fought in the Libyan army during the 2011 Libyan Civil War (though other Tuareg MNLA fighters were on the side of the National Transitional Council and returned to Mali after that war). The movement was founded in October 2011 and had stated that it includes other Saharan peoples. The Malian government has accused the movement of having links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. The MNLA denies this claim. By 1 April 2012 the MNLA and Ansar Dine were in control of virtually all of northern Mali, including its three largest cities of Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu. Tensions between the MNLA and Ansar Dine culminated in the Battle of Gao, in

which the MNLA lost control of northern Malian cities to Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa.

Songhay Community: The Songhai people (also Ayneha, Songhay or Sonrai) are an ethnolinguistic group in West Africa who speak the various Songhai languages. Their history and lingua franca is linked to the Songhai Empire which dominated the western Sahel in the 15th and 16th century. Predominantly adherents of Islam, the Songhai are primarily located in Niger and Mali within the Western Sudanic region (not the country).

Fulani Community: The Fulani people is an ethnic group in Sahara, Sahel and West Africa, widely dispersed across the region. Inhabiting many countries, they live mainly in West Africa and northern parts of Central Africa, South Sudan, Darfur, and regions near the Red Sea coast in Sudan. The approximate number of Fulani people is unknown, due to clashing definitions regarding Fula ethnicity. Various estimates put the figure between 25 and 40 million people worldwide.

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA): The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established by Security Council resolution 2100 of 25 April 2013 to support political processes in that country and carry out a number of security-related tasks. The Mission was asked to support the transitional authorities of Mali in the stabilisation of the country and implementation of the transitional roadmap.

By unanimously adopting resolution 2164 of 25 June 2014, the Council further decided that the Mission should focus on duties, such as ensuring security, stabilisation and protection of civilians; supporting national political dialogue and reconciliation; and assisting the reestablishment of State authority, the rebuilding of the security sector, and the promotion and protection of human rights in that country.

Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs): This term refers to a non-state party to an international or non-international armed conflict. Humanitarian law uses the term “armed forces” to designate and define the combatants fighting within a State party to the conflict.

Non-state armed groups play a major role in contemporary international and non-international armed conflicts. When a non-state armed group acts in fact under the control or on behalf of a foreign State, international courts consider that such State will be held responsible for those acts and that the conflict will be internationalised.

Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): AQIM, originally known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), splintered from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), a key participant in the Algerian Civil War, in 1998. In 2006, the GSPC became a formal affiliate of Al Qaeda (AQ) and changed its name to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The group is famous for kidnapping Westerners for ransom in North Africa and is active in the drug, arms and human trafficking trade. AQIM is one of the wealthiest terrorist organisations in the world. In March 2017, AQIM’s Sahara branch merged with Al Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine, and the Macina

Liberation Front (MLF) to form Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), a hierarchical militant alliance principally led by AQIM.

Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO): MUJAO split from AQIM in October 2011, following accusations that AQIM was too dominated by Arab commanders and criticisms of its methods of jihad. From the beginning, MUJAO had a clearly Sahelian orientation, framing its fight in terms of historical jihads fought in the region in the nineteenth century and openly promoting its recruitment of Sahelian and sub-Saharan Africans. MUJAO controlled Gao during the occupation, but still maintained contact with AQIM and Ansar al-Din. In August 2013, MUJAO and its military command under the Gao Arab Ahmed Ould Amer (Ahmed al-Tilemsi, since killed by French forces) joined Mokhtar Belmokhtar's Katibat al-Mulathimeen and Katibat Mouwaqun bi dima ("those who sign in their blood") to form al-Mourabitoun, a reference to the Almoravid empire that burst forth from the Sahara in the mediaeval period and eventually conquered much of north Africa and Spain.

MUJAO split in 2015, with part of the group's fighters becoming the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara under Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui, and the rest remaining with al-Mourabitoun and eventually joining JNIM. One al-Mourabitoun leader was part of JNIM's founding group, Hassan al-Ansari, an Arab fighter from the Tilemsi valley north of Gao. He was killed near the Algerian border by French forces in February 2018, along with a few other important figures from JNIM. Al-Mourabitoun has carried out some of AQIM's and subsequently JNIM's larger-scale attacks. The group specialises in complex attacks on 'soft' targets, such as the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako in November 2015, the Cappuccino Café and HOTEL TK in Ouagadougou in January 2016, and at Grand Bassam in Côte d'Ivoire in March 2016. But it has also attacked hardened military bases such as the attack on the Mécanisme Opérationnel de Coordination (MOC) in Gao in January 2017 that killed dozens of people.

Ansar Dine: Ansar Dine, translated as "Defenders of the Faith," was an Islamic Tuareg group founded in December 2011 by Iyad Ag Ghali. The group aimed to establish Shariah law across Mali and targeted western civilians and peacekeepers. Ansar Dine's ideology closely mirrored that of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); it was reportedly a domestic front group and affiliate for AQIM, though it was never publicly recognized by AQIM as an official affiliate. Ansar Dine was best known for its takeover of northern Mali with the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), AQIM, and the Mouvement pour l'Unification et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) after the Malian coup of 2012. Ansar Dine occupied and implemented Shariah law in Timbuktu and its environs from June 2012 until January 2013, when the French military intervened. In early July 2012, Ansar Dine made national headlines when it destroyed seven mausoleums in Timbuktu, which were part of a United Nations World Heritage site. In March 2017, Ansar Dine merged with Al Mourabitoun, local jihad group Macina Liberation Front, and AQIM's Sahara branch to form Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM). AQIM and AQ Central approved the merger and accepted the new JNIM's oath of allegiance.

Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM): JNIM is an al-Qa'ida aligned Salafi-Jihadist organisation that strives to build a Salafi-Islamist state in West Africa. The organisation is primarily based in Mali but active across much of West Africa, including Burkina Faso, Niger, and Togo. JNIM was formed on 2 March 2017, when a coalition of jihadist groups operating in the Sahel region of West Africa – Ansar al-Din, the Macina Liberation Front (FLM), al-Murabitun and the Sahara Emirate subgroup of al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) – announced they had merged into one entity under one Emir, formalising the longstanding alliance between the member groups. JNIM's goal to eliminate Western influences in the region has brought the organisation into conflict with the United Nations (UN) Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and partner states – predominantly France, through its regional counter-terrorism effort Operation Barkhane, which concluded in August 2022. Over the past decade, more than 300 peacekeepers associated with MINUSMA have been killed as a result of targeted insurgent attacks. The danger posed to UN personnel by JNIM, combined with tensions between MINUSMA and host country authorities, has resulted in a security situation described as 'dire' by a UN Security Council report.

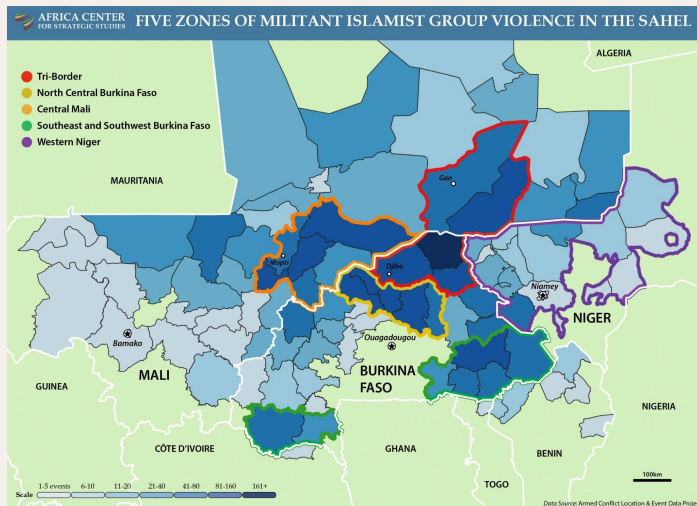
JNIM's activities in West Africa have also brought the organisation into competition with Islamic State (IS) affiliates operating in the region. Between 2017 and 2019 engagements between JNIM and IS were largely cooperative, and were reported as a "Sahelian exception" to the wider conflict between al-Qa'ida affiliates and IS. Since 2019 this relationship has degraded, as JNIM and IS have repeatedly come into violent conflict over territory. Since fighting first broke out in mid-2019 there have been reports of nearly 200 clashes between the groups, resulting in the deaths of more than 1100 combatants.

Operation Barkhane: Operation Barkhane was a counterinsurgency operation that started on 1 August 2014 and formally ended on 9 November 2022. It was led by the French military against Islamist groups in Africa's Sahel region and consisted of a roughly 3,000-strong French force, which was permanently headquartered in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. The operation was led in co-operation with five countries, all of which are former French colonies that span the Sahel: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. Mali was a part of the operation until August 2022. The countries are collectively referred to as the "G5 Sahel". The operation was named after a crescent-shaped dune type that is common in the Sahara desert.

Wagner Group: Wagner Group, Russian mercenary group that has conducted military operations around the world on behalf of the Russian government. Although private military companies are illegal in Russia, extensive ties between Wagner and Russian military and intelligence structures have long been assumed. In June 2023 these links were confirmed by Russian Pres. Vladimir Putin when he stated that "maintenance of the entire Wagner Group was fully provided for by the state."

7.2 Contextualising Violent Extremism: Examining the Dynamics in the Sahel Region

Each conflict situation in Sahel is different. So, dealing with the challenges in Sahel needs many approaches, considering all the different factors. The international community must commit to following humanitarian laws to reduce the big impacts of these conflicts, promote stability, and help Sahel develop in a good way.



The highest rates of violence and issues are found in the Liptako-Gourma and Lake Chad Basin regions. Conflict and radicalism have turned the Liptako-Gourma region—which links Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger—into a deadly area. Meanwhile, the Sahel faces more difficulties from the Lake Chad Basin, which includes portions of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. The reappearance of Boko Haram in

Nigeria is one such issue. Realising that these crises have historical roots and are not brand-new is crucial.

Liptako-Gourma is located in the heart of the Sahel, close to the borders of Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The current instability in this region is a result of the proliferation of armed combatants and the easy access to weaponry following the fall of the Libyan state in 2011. The Tuareg revolt smouldered in 1963, 1990, and 2006 before erupting again in 2012 with the advent of radicals in northern Mali.

The Tuareg people, who make up only 10% of Malians, formed the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) with the goal of creating an independent state. To force government forces out of the northern areas, they formed alliances with a number of Islamist organisations, including as Ansar Dine, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The army overthrew then-President Amadou Toumani Touré in a coup in March 2012 because they didn't think the government could put an end to the uprising. The MNLA took over the regional capitals of Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu after the coup, when official institutions in the north collapsed. The organisation proclaimed Azawad to be an independent state by April in northern Mali. However, internal strife resulted in the MNLA's split from al-Qaeda and other like Islamist groups in June. Their attempts to establish Islamic law and an Islamic caliphate over the northern region were met with resistance, which led to their separation.

In January 2013, after a spell of relative calm, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, and AQIM moved their operations even further south in an attempt to take Konna, in central Mali. This worsened the circumstances. By August of that same year, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta's civilian-led

administration had regained power in Mali. The following peace deal, which was struck in 2015 between the government and several Tuareg independence parties, including the MNLA, served as a sign of this change. It is important to remember, meanwhile, that Islamist organisations were purposefully left out of this coalition. These tribes perceived a chance to benefit from the accord, which granted them more authority over central Mali and the neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso and Niger, because of their remoteness. As a result, Liptako-Gourma has grown into one of the Sahelian region's principal centres for violent extremism.



The scale of the Islamist danger in the Sahel and West Africa was made evident by notable attacks on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Mali, the Splendid Hotel in Burkina Faso, and the L'Etoule du Sud Hotel in Ivory Coast in 2015 and 2016. The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) asserted its rule in Burkina Faso in September 2016 with a major attack on a border checkpoint at Markoye. Several al-Qaeda factions united to establish Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) in 2017. The often antagonistic, sometimes cooperative relationship between ISGS and JNIM has been blamed for the rising violence in the Sahel.

These groups have expanded their influence further south in Liptako-Gourma, posing a threat to the security of West Africa's comparatively stable coastal states. JNIM has recently gained control over territories in northern and central Mali, while ISGS has been limited to northern Burkina Faso and western Niger due to clashes with JNIM that commenced in 2020.

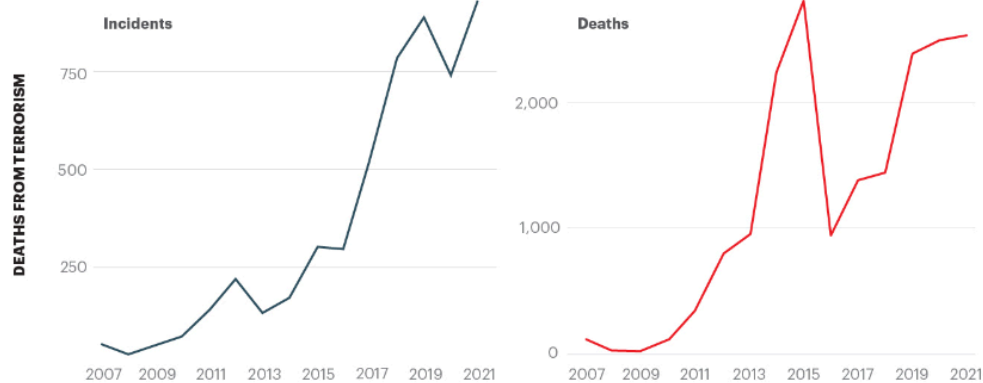
Violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin, encompassing Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, persisted during the same period when Boko Haram resurfaced in northern Nigeria. Established by Muhammed Yusuf in northeastern Nigeria in 2002, Boko Haram went underground in 2009 following a Nigerian police operation that resulted in the death of over seven hundred members, including Yusuf. The remaining members scattered to various locations such as Afghanistan, Algeria, Chad, northern Mali, Niger, and Somalia.

When Boko Haram carried out suicide attacks against police and UN headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, in June and August 2011, it revealed a more aggressive and expansive approach. The Bring Back Our Girls campaign was started in April 2014 in response to the group's abduction of 276 girls from the Nigerian hamlet of Chibok, which attracted attention from all

around the world. In 2015, Boko Haram announced its allegiance to the self-proclaimed Islamic State and changed its name to the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). A breakaway faction of the original Boko Haram continued until 2021, when ISWAP overthrew its leader, seized control of its territory, and sent its members to remote islands in Lake Chad. From then on, ISWAP became the leading force in northeastern Nigeria and parts of Niger.

Experts link the growth of violent extremism in the Sahel to the region's chronically inadequate governance, which is marked by violations of human rights, a regressive attitude towards democratic norms, corruption, and a lack of credibility. Similar internal dynamics of inequality exist in many of the region's nations: state power is typically concentrated in urban, southern regions, while rural, northern areas continue to be underdeveloped and vulnerable to extremist groups. As a result, the Fragile State Index frequently indicates that the Sahel nations—especially Nigeria, Mali, and Chad—are doing well. Another issue is the frequent changes of government; in Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, there were 25 successful coups d'état between 1960 and 2022, the majority of which led to the military toppling democratically elected civilian governments.

Incidents and deaths from terrorism in the Sahel, 2007–2021



Source: Dragonfly TerrorismTracker, IEP calculations



The current military junta regime in Mali was established through a series of military coups that occurred in 2020 and 2021, sparking the most recent "coup epidemic" in the area. Similar incidents also took place in Niger, Chad, and Burkina Faso.

The passing of Chadian President Idriss Déby on April 20, 2021, led to a crisis in leadership for regional counterterrorism initiatives. During Déby's tenure, Chad played a pivotal role in security collaborations in both the Liptako-Gourma and the Lake Chad Basin. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), consisting of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, was established in 2014 to address the threats posed by Boko Haram, organised crime, and banditry in the Lake Chad Basin. In February 2017, France and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5) countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger—introduced the G5 Sahel Force, a counterterrorism force comprising five thousand troops, with an



extended mandate to operate across borders in the Sahel region. The rise in civilian casualties and severe human rights violations by security forces in Chad, Mali, and Nigeria has further hindered regional and national efforts.

In 2013, the French military was allowed entry into Mali by the Malian government, which sparked international interest in the country. Operation Barkhane was the new name for Operation Serval, which had its original headquarters in N'Djamena, Chad. The goal was to assemble 3,000 soldiers to combat radicals who were violent in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Funding for this operation, which was carried out in cooperation with local authorities, came from Mauritania and Chad. In 2015, Operation Barkhane's jurisdiction was increased to better assist the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in their battle against Boko Haram.

Subsequently, Operation Barkhane was followed by the establishment of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and, in 2020, support from the European Union–led Task Force Takuba. By 2020, France had deployed 5,100 troops, backed by 15,000 UN peacekeepers from various countries. The United States contributed logistical and advisory support to both the MNJTF and G5 Sahel Force. Moreover, the U.S. military increased its presence in the Sahel, deploying around 1,500 troops and establishing a drone base in Niger for strikes against groups across West and North Africa. Despite the relatively small U.S. contingent, American service members faced direct combat. On October 4, 2017, members of the U.S. Special Operations Task Force were ambushed by an Islamic State–affiliate group in Tongo Tongo, Niger, resulting in the deaths of four servicemen.

The war on terror has unwittingly helped the insurgency develop throughout the Sahelian states, despite increased international involvement. According to a statement released by French President Emmanuel Macron on July 13, 2021, in response to this defeat and the growing tensions and dissatisfaction with France in its former colonies, Barkhane will cease operations in the first quarter of 2022. Exploiting this security hole, violent extremists intensified their attacks throughout the Sahel. Attacks were launched against MINUSMA, which is regarded as the riskiest peacekeeping mission in UN history. The Malian military junta, lacking French assistance, approached the Russian mercenary group Wagner, which operates in other risky places such as the Central African Republic, Libya, Mozambique, Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine. Since its founding in December 2021, the Wagner Group has dispatched 1,000 mercenaries to Mali, where they are presently stationed in fifteen outposts, some of which were originally governed by France.

Temperatures in the Sahel are increasing 1.5 times faster than the global average, directly impacting the livelihoods of millions dependent on natural resources. Diminishing land and water resources have escalated clashes between herding, farming, and fishing communities. Violent extremist organisations, aside from exacerbating humanitarian conditions by targeting aid workers, have exploited the insecure environment to recruit and control populations in the Sahel. Additionally, weakened economies and the proliferation of violent extremists have heightened illicit activities and criminal organisations in the region, further contributing to instability.



7.3 Concerns Regarding Violent Extremism in the Sahel Region

The persistent and escalating strength of violent extremist organisations in the Sahel region poses a looming threat that could worsen the humanitarian crisis and spread instability across Africa, presenting substantial security and financial risks to both the United States and Europe. The imminent decline of international support for counterterrorism, coupled with a weakening of leadership in regional initiatives, has created a void in which violent extremism is poised to expand. This vacuum has already been exploited by the Wagner Group, which has entered Mali and initiated indiscriminate operations against Malian civilians. The potential convergence of security threats, marked by increased collaboration among terrorist organisations, particularly ISGS and ISWAP, as well as alliances between terrorist and criminal entities, could heighten the peril posed by these groups within the region and potentially beyond.

Moreover, the Sahel serves as a key transit hub for migrants journeying from sub-Saharan Africa to northern coastal states and onward to Europe. An escalation in violence has the potential to significantly augment the levels of displacement and migration from the region, adding to the challenges faced by northern and coastal African states, as well as Europe. The deteriorating humanitarian conditions would place additional strain on U.S. and international aid endeavours, especially given the enduring development and security commitments of the United States in the region. As a leading contributor of humanitarian assistance, the United States not only offers military training through programs like Flintlock but has also facilitated substantial arms sales, amounting to millions of dollars, to address the complex challenges in the Sahel.

7.4 Strategic Measures: Formulating Responses and Actions Against Violent Extremism in the Sahel Region

7.4.1 Looking More Deeply to Security Responses

The governments of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have mobilised their security structures in an effort to respond to the rise in militant Islamist group violence. The budgets dedicated to the armed forces in the three affected countries have doubled since 2013 – from 5.4 percent of government spending, on average, to 10.6 percent. This equates to an increase of nearly \$600 million in military expenditures for these three countries. The increase in security expenditures has been coupled with bolstered troop levels. Burkina Faso's Minister of Defense announced a 50-percent increase in the number of annual recruits in August 2019. As part of an overhaul of its security sector, the Malian armed forces and gendarmerie have sought to add 5,000 and 1,500 new recruits (increases of around 30 percent and 18 percent), respectively. Nigerien troop levels have remained at around 10,000 soldiers in recent years, but increases in military spending have augmented troop salaries and equipment procurements.

In 2017, the Malian armed forces launched Operation Dambé deploying 4,000 soldiers to 8 zones covering northern and central Mali in an effort to counter the activities of violent

extremist groups. The mission, updated in 2019, is to establish a population-centric posture in Mali and along the border with Burkina Faso and Niger. These efforts are complemented by mobile units deployed to disrupt militant Islamist group activities through increased patrols. While threats posed by FLM in central Mali continue, the increased presence of security forces has undoubtedly curbed the extremist group's influence in key population centres in the region. The Burkinabe armed forces launched Operation Otapuanu in March 2019 to counter the jihadist insurgency in the eastern part of the country and Operation Ndogou in May 2019 for the Nord, Centre-Nord, and Sahel Regions. The Burkinabe government also declared a state of emergency in December 2018 covering 14 of the country's 45 provinces. Operation Otapuanu has enjoyed some success by limiting ISGS's ability to traverse the territory easily.

On the other hand, Operation Ndogou has struggled to reinstate security in the north where militants are familiar with the environment and easily cross the border into Mali taking advantage of the terrain. In Niger, the military has led several joint special forces operations with the French-led Operation Barkhane targeting the leaders of militant Islamist groups. Niger has repeatedly placed the 10 departments bordering Mali and Burkina Faso under a state of emergency. In April 2019, Niger provided air support and increased the troops committed to active military operations in the western regions of the country— Dongo, Saki 2, and the joint Dongo-Barkhane missions. Saki 2 targets armed bandits, Dongo provides increased protection for communities, and Dongo's joint operations with Barkhane aim to dismantle violent extremist organisations by going after high value targets. (Similar joint operations with Barkhane are periodically conducted by Malian and Burkinabe armed forces.)

Significant regional security efforts have also aimed to improve the armed forces' capacity with increased access to resources, training, and equipment.⁶ This takes place through the G5 Sahel Joint Force (aimed at enhancing cooperation in the shared border areas), the European Union training missions in Mali and Niger, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and other capacity building programs. From 2015 to 2019, Operation Barkhane neutralised over 600 terrorists. Similarly, Barkhane's ability to quickly deploy and reinforce regional forces enhances their counterterrorism capabilities. While these deployments have demonstrated noteworthy progress, the threat posed by militant Islamist groups remains a serious concern. Furthermore, the groups have adapted their tactics by laying improvised explosive devices (IEDs) as well as ambushing security forces after monitoring their patrol routes.

7.4.2 Actions Should be Taken

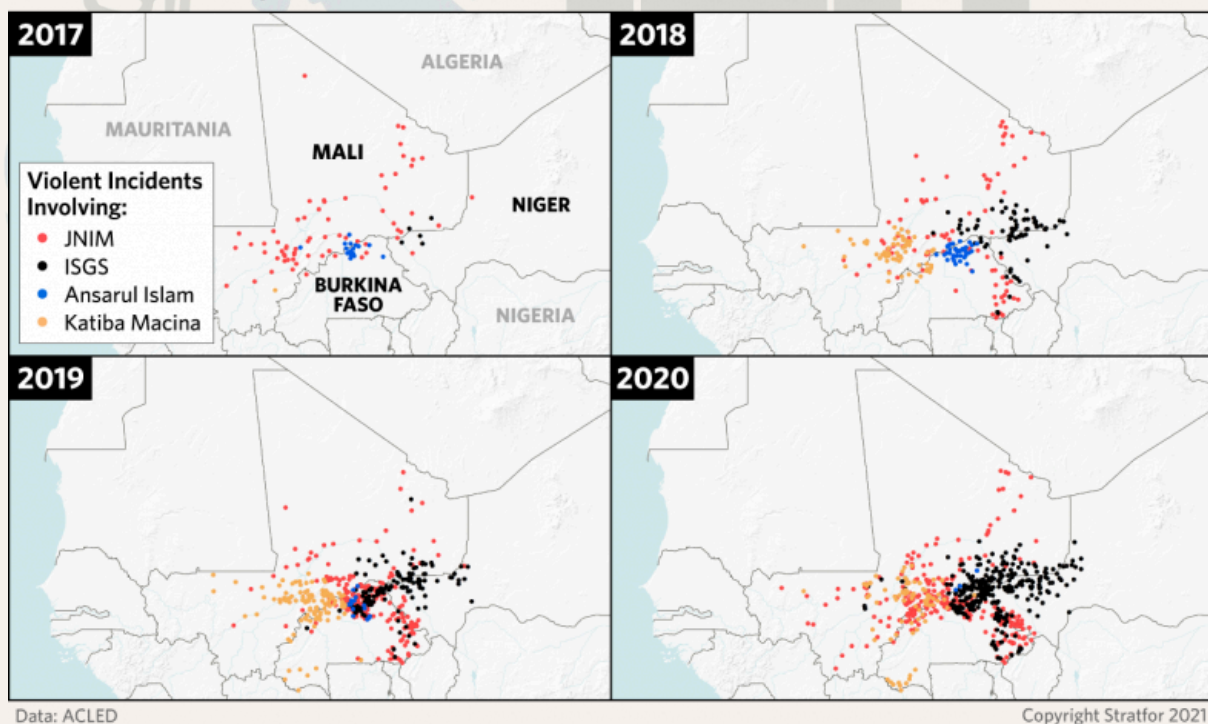
a) Sustained Security Presence in Marginalised Areas

Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have taken some encouraging steps to counter FLM, ISGS, and Ansaroul Islam through military operations Dambé, Dongo, Otapuanu, Ndogou, and Saki 2. These operations need continued support if they are to degrade militant Islamist group

capabilities. Supplementing these operations with quick reaction forces by enhancing the mobility of select units to reinforce positions and target militant Islamist groups as intelligence comes in will be crucial to defeating them. For troops already deployed to protect communities in the zones covered by these operations, greater effort is needed to integrate community leaders and representatives in security planning. Establishing liaison teams between communities and battalions could create a point of contact between the different parties helping to ensure that lines of communication are clear and open. Improving coordination in this manner would bolster the ability of troops to respond to communities' security needs.

To sustain a higher level of security presence in marginalised areas, community leaders and those who deal with law enforcement and security agencies need to feel more protected. Getting rid of the worry that violent radicals will exact revenge on them is part of this. People need to be convinced by security professionals that they will be safe. It is especially important to combat FLM, which is widespread in many of the communities in central Mali.

Jihadist Activity in the Sahel



b) Enhancement of Security in Border Regions

The vast and poorly guarded borders of the Sahelian countries provide a haven for radical Islamists. These groups also gain access to rich revenue streams and a sizable area for setting up community protection programmes by connecting them with networks that deal in drugs, weapons, and people. Specifically, 12 ISGS has strategically benefited from this situation, building its contacts with other extremist groups operating in the Sahel and increasing its funding, communications, and equipment linkages. Supporting border regions and providing

a platform for coordinating and enhancing collaboration in regional security puts the G5 Sahel Joint Force in a unique position.

The national armed forces of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and the G5 Sahel ought to consider forming unconventional formations, such as rapid deployment forces, to respond to threats emanating from vast land areas beyond national borders. Governments will need to think about restructuring their armed forces if they want to effectively combat the dangers posed by asymmetric warfare and highly mobile adversaries. For this, there will be a greater need for cross-border coordination and cooperation, including intelligence sharing.

c) Bolster government engagement with local communities.

A consistent lesson from NGOs in Niger and Burkina Faso is that engaged governmental presence in local communities can allow governments to regain support from communities where their authority has been challenged by militant Islamist groups. This means that in Mali and Burkina Faso, improving relations between civilians and security forces must be a priority, and in Niger these relations should be deepened. Supporting a more professional armed forces directly contributes to the success of military operations on the ground and the trust that local communities place in the defence and security forces.

By responding to FLM, ISGS, and Ansaroul Islam in ways that have sometimes violated human rights and abused local populations, Malian, Burkinabe—and to a lesser extent, Nigerien—armed forces may have pushed some vulnerable individuals to join these groups for protection or revenge. To prevent the reiteration of such damaging actions, it is critical that security responses be implemented in ways where armed forces show the highest level of professionalism and where civilian authorities ensure a constant and close oversight of the security forces' engagement. Similarly, for any peacebuilding initiative to be effective, security forces must be trusted to ensure the safety of actors involved in peace and intercommunal talks.

d) Improve the capacity of authorities to deliver justice.

Reinforcing the perception that justice is possible will help to restore trust between communities and their governments. Effective and equitable application of justice signals to citizens that violent extremist groups will face repercussions for the instability that they have caused in society. Justice also entails accountability for corrupt government officials and security actors who commit human rights abuses (even if in the name of combating terrorism). Very few of the massacres committed in central Sahel have been thoroughly investigated. Even fewer perpetrators have been brought to justice. In different ways, FLM, ISGS, and Ansaroul Islam have leveraged this narrative to convince some individuals that the best solution is to exact justice on their own terms. Strengthening the investigative capacities of the judiciary and security forces in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger is therefore crucial. Injustice and the state's alleged lack of impartiality are essential aspects of the narratives

promoting violent extremism. Delivering justice through proper sentences and legal decisions will reduce support for militant groups.

Creating a gendarmerie prévôtale (military judicial police) or equivalent service would establish the authority for enforcing judicial processes within the armed forces deployed in conflict-affected zones. The gendarmerie and police should be equipped with the necessary staff and resources to address complaints of human rights violations. Performing these functions will strengthen institutional legitimacy and provide evidence of governments' commitment to rule of law. Specified troops might be designated "human rights referents," prior to and during any operation. Such a designation would provide those troops with the responsibility of ensuring that the provisions of armed conflict and international humanitarian law are observed. Members of the gendarmerie prévôtale should also be responsible for gathering evidence and pursuing the investigation of suspects, including those arrested on terrorism charges by the armed forces. This would help guarantee that suspected individuals face due process and, if necessary, proper sentencing and thus limit the chance that terrorists go free due to lack of incriminating evidence.

e) Counter radical narratives that exacerbate social tensions.

FLM, ISGS, and Ansaroul Islam have used various media platforms to promote a radical discourse and to spread an extremist interpretation of Islam that advocates for violence. Amadou Koufa is believed to have been radicalised by the Pakistani Dawa sect, a group which funded mosques and madrasas in Mali during the 2000s and adheres to an anachronistic-vision of Islam.

To tackle the ideological component of militant Islamists' approach, therefore, will require working with religious leaders to establish and implement guidelines regulating the funding of religious education and activities. This should be complemented by efforts to amplify voices of nonviolence, which have long been the norm in the Sahel. Tracking external funding and, where necessary, banning funding that supports groups, schools, or religious institutes that promote violence would help prevent the diffusion of extremist narratives. Such actions would help convey messages of peaceful coexistence within and across religious communities and prevent disaffected members of society from feeling that violence is their best means of expression.

8. Questions to be Addressed regarding Agenda Item B

1. *What actions should be taken in order to decrease the instability and extremism movements in the Sahel Region?*
2. *Which collaborations made with UN Bodies and NGOs can be impactful regarding solving the issue?*

3. *What are the economic and political concerns of violent extremism in the Sahel region?*
4. *What are the potential lasting impacts of the violent extremism in the Sahel Region, on the entire Africa Continent, and how can the region effectively manage security challenges while upholding the principles of the rule of law and human rights?*
5. *What role do external actors have in the violent extremism in the Sahel Region, and how does their involvement impact the situation on the field?*

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