

55MUNVII

DISEC



STUDY GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Agenda A: External Military Support to De Facto Authorities: The Legitimisation of Coups through Security Assistance

Mandate

Introduction to the Agenda

- 1) Historical Background
- 2) Key terms and definitions
- 3) The root causes of coup legitimisation through external military support
 - a) 3.1 Geostrategic Competition and Resource Access
 - b) 3.2 Fragmentation of International Anti-Coup Norms
 - c) 3.3 Counter-Terrorism Partnerships and Security Priorities
 - d) 3.4 Institutional Civil-Military Power Imbalances
 - e) 3.5 Domestic Governance Vacuums and Democratic Erosion
 - f) 3.6 Regime Survival Tactics and Strategic Concessions
- 4) Impacts
 - a) 4.1. Social Impacts (Suppression of civil liberties and human rights violations)
 - b) 4.2. Economic Impacts (Diversion of public funds to defense and resource exploitation)
 - c) 4.3. Political Impacts (Entrenchment of authoritarianism and erosion of democracy)
 - d) 4.4. Geo-Political Impacts (Regional destabilization and proxy competition)

5) Past Actions

- a) 5.1. UN Action (Security Council resolutions and regional peacekeeping constraints)
- b) 5.2. International Action (Regional bodies like ECOWAS/AU mechanisms and targeted sanctions)

6) Major Stakeholders

- a) 6.1. State Actors (De facto regimes, external backing powers, democratic coalition states)
- b) 6.2. Non-State Actors (Private military companies, regional insurgent groups, local civil society)

7) Case Studies

- a) 7.1. Mali – Wagner Group intervention and French withdrawal
- b) 7.2. Myanmar – Regional security partnerships and junta recognition
- c) 7.3. Sudan – External funding to competing military factions
- d) 7.4. Burkina Faso – Counter-terrorism assistance shifting to military rule
- e) 7.5. Niger – Changing international security footprints post-coup
- f) 7.6. Libya – Proxy military support to parallel de facto authorities

8) QARMA

9) Bibliography

Mandate:

The United Nations Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) was created as the first of six committees for the General Assembly when the UN charter was signed in 1945. Because of this DISEC is also known as the First Committee. DISEC was set up to provide countries a space to discuss issues related to peace and security. This is one of the core responsibilities of the General Assembly as enshrined in the UN charter. Article 11 reads that the General Assembly “may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security,” including disarmament and arms control. DISEC can also make recommendations to the UN members and the Security Council to consider. This committee works closely with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), which was created in 1998. The UNODA focuses on all levels of disarmament, such as nuclear weapons and conventional weapons and helps DISEC achieve its disarmament goals.

Introduction to the Agenda:

The international community operates on a foundational norm that rejects unconstitutional changes of government and promotes democratic governance. However the rise of modern de facto authorities-regimes that take and hold power through force rather than constitutional means - has exposed deep vulnerabilities in this global framework.

1. Historical Background

The relationship between external military assistance and unconstitutional changes of government has developed over decades, shaped by the Cold War, post-colonial conflicts, regional rivalries, and modern geopolitical competition.

1.1 The Cold War and Foreign Intervention (1947–1991)

- During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union competed for global influence by supporting governments, military establishments, and political movements aligned with their respective interests. Military aid, training,

intelligence cooperation, and financial assistance were frequently used to strengthen strategic partners.

- In some cases, foreign powers supported military leaders or political groups involved in unconstitutional changes of government because they considered them useful allies against rival ideologies. Such involvement contributed to the militarisation of politics in several regions and demonstrated how external strategic interests could take priority over democratic governance. This period established a lasting pattern in which security assistance could strengthen political actors whose authority did not necessarily arise from democratic elections.

1.2 Post-Cold War Developments (1991–2010)

- Following the end of the Cold War, international attention increasingly focused on democratic transitions, peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and the restoration of constitutional government.

However, military takeovers continued in several regions, particularly in states experiencing weak institutions, economic instability, and internal conflict.

- In July 2000, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union (AU), adopted the Lomé Declaration, establishing a framework for responding to unconstitutional changes of government. It explicitly identified military coups against democratically elected governments and the replacement of elected governments by mercenaries or armed groups as unacceptable developments.
- Despite these efforts, international responses remained inconsistent. Some governments condemned coups while continuing security or diplomatic cooperation with the authorities involved, particularly when cooperation served national security or regional strategic interests.

1.3 The Resurgence of Military Coups (2010–2020)

- During the 2010s, political instability, insurgencies, institutional weaknesses, and public dissatisfaction contributed to military interventions in several countries. Foreign military assistance increasingly became a subject of debate because it

could strengthen state security institutions without necessarily ensuring accountability or civilian control.

- In some conflict-affected states, external partners justified military cooperation as necessary to combat terrorism, maintain territorial integrity, or prevent state collapse. However, when military authorities gained political power through unconstitutional means, continued assistance raised concerns about whether foreign partners were indirectly helping them consolidate their rule.
- The central issue became the distinction between supporting a state's legitimate security needs and strengthening authorities whose political power lacked constitutional legitimacy.

1.4 Recent Developments and the Sahel Region (2020–Present)

- The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region of Africa, including Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, has brought renewed international attention to the relationship between external security assistance and military rule.
- Some military-led governments have sought alternative international security partnerships following disagreements with traditional partners. Russia's growing security role in parts of Africa, alongside the continued involvement of other international actors, illustrates how geopolitical competition can influence the choices available to de facto authorities.
- In March 2022, an African Union reflection forum reaffirmed the rejection of unconstitutional changes of government and raised concerns about the financing of coups, foreign fighters, and mercenaries. These developments highlight a continuing dilemma: foreign assistance may help address genuine security threats, but unconditional support can also reduce pressure on military authorities to restore constitutional governance. The international community must therefore consider whether security partnerships are contributing to long-term stability or entrenching unconstitutional political control.

1.5 Significance for the Committee

The historical evolution of this issue demonstrates three major concerns:

- **Democratic legitimacy:** External security assistance can strengthen authorities that have taken power without constitutional procedures.

- **Geopolitical competition:** Foreign states may prioritise strategic influence and security interests over the restoration of civilian government.
- **International accountability:** Inconsistent responses to coups can weaken international efforts to uphold constitutional governance.

The committee must consequently explore mechanisms for monitoring foreign military assistance, improving transparency, establishing safeguards against its misuse, and encouraging peaceful transitions to constitutional rule without unnecessarily undermining the security of civilian populations.

2. Key Terms and Definitions

- **De Facto Authority:** A governing body that exercises effective physical control over a territory and state apparatus but lacks legal or constitutional legitimacy.
- **De Jure Government:** The legally recognized government of a country, established according to its constitution and international law.
- **Unconstitutional Change of Government (UCG):** The overthrow or overthrow attempt of a democratically elected government by a military coup, armed rebellion, or unlawful means.
- **Principle of Non-Intervention:** A core UN principle (derived from Article 2(7) of the UN Charter) prohibiting states from intervening in the internal political affairs of another sovereign state.
- **Responsibility to Protect (R2P):** A global political commitment endorsed by all UN member states to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, often cited when a junta oppresses its own citizens.
- **Security Sector Assistance (SSA):** The funding, training, advising, and equipping of foreign military and security forces by an external state.
- **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT):** A multilateral treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional arms and seeks to prevent their illicit proliferation.
- **End-User Certificate (EUC):** A legal document used in international transfers of weapons to ensure that the buyer is the ultimate recipient and promises not to re-export or divert the weapons to unauthorized parties (like an illegal junta).

- **Material Diversion:** The illicit transfer of legally acquired weapons, munitions, or military technology to unauthorized actors, such as military factions launching a coup.
- **Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs):** Private businesses that provide specialized military or security services (e.g., mercenary groups, tactical advisors), often used by external states to bypass official state-to-state transparency rules.
- **Arms Embargo:** A physical or legal restriction placed by the UN Security Council or regional bodies on the export, sale, or transfer of weapons and military equipment to a specific country or regime.
- **Coup Contagion Effect:** A regional phenomenon where the success of a military coup in one nation lowers the perceived political and military costs, inspiring similar overthrows in neighboring states.
- **Security Vacuum:** A state of instability occurring when a primary security provider pulls out or a government collapses, leaving a space that violent extremist organizations (VEOs) or alternative external military actors exploit.
- **Implied Recognition:** A diplomatic reality where an external state's actions (like signing a defense pact or sending military advisors) signal legal acceptance of a de facto regime without an official declaration.

3. Root Causes:

3.1 Geostrategic Competition and Resource Access

Foreign states may prioritise strategic influence, access to natural resources, or regional security over the restoration of constitutional rule.

- **Competition for Influence:** Rival powers may support military authorities to expand their influence in strategically important regions.
- **Access to Resources:** Oil, gas, gold, uranium, and other valuable resources can influence relations between foreign governments and de facto authorities.
- **Military Access:** Foreign states may seek access to military bases, ports, transport corridors, or strategically located territory.

- **Diplomatic Leverage:** Security assistance can create long-term relationships that give an external state influence over the recipient government.

When strategic and economic interests take priority over democratic principles, the human rights situation and political freedoms of the affected population may receive less attention.

3.2 Fragmentation of International Anti-Coup Norms

International opposition to unconstitutional changes of government can become inconsistent when states apply different standards to different situations.

- **Inconsistent Responses:** Some coups may prompt sanctions or diplomatic isolation, while others receive continued military cooperation.
- **Competing National Interests:** States may disagree over whether isolating a military government will restore constitutional rule or worsen insecurity.
- **Weak Collective Enforcement:** International organisations can struggle to coordinate responses when their members disagree.
- **Selective Recognition and Engagement:** Maintaining diplomatic relations or security cooperation with a de facto authority can help it operate internationally, even when its constitutional legitimacy remains disputed.

Inconsistent responses can weaken confidence in international commitments to human rights, political participation, and democratic institutions.

3.3 Counter-Terrorism Partnerships and Security Priorities

Foreign governments may continue supporting military-led authorities because they view counter-terrorism and regional stability as urgent priorities.

- **Immediate Security Concerns:** States facing armed insurgencies or terrorist attacks may seek foreign training, funding, intelligence cooperation, and other security assistance.
- **Security over Democratic Transition:** External partners may prioritise immediate security cooperation even when the recipient government has not established a clear timetable for returning to constitutional rule.

- **Dependence On Security Partners:** Military authorities can use continued foreign cooperation to demonstrate that they remain internationally relevant.
- **Human Rights Concerns:** Security operations may raise concerns about civilian casualties, arbitrary detention, restrictions on civil liberties, or inadequate accountability where abuses occur.

Counter-terrorism efforts should be assessed alongside their effects on human rights, civilian protection, and the rule of law.

3.4 Institutional Civil-Military Power Imbalances

When military institutions possess greater organisational power than civilian institutions, armed forces may be able to seize political power and retain it.

- **Weak civilian oversight:** Parliaments and civilian ministries may lack the authority or capacity to supervise the armed forces effectively.
- **Military control of resources:** Military institutions may have significant influence over national security budgets, appointments, and state decision-making.
- **Limited accountability:** Weak judicial independence or ineffective oversight can reduce the likelihood that unlawful conduct by military officials will be investigated.
- **External reinforcement:** Foreign training, equipment, funding, or diplomatic support can strengthen the position of military authorities if assistance is not accompanied by appropriate safeguards.

The issue concerns civilian democratic control, institutional accountability, and protecting fundamental rights under military-led governments.

3.5 Domestic Governance Vacuums and Democratic Erosion

Core idea: Weak governance and declining public trust can create conditions in which military takeovers occur and subsequently gain support from external partners.

- **Corruption and poor public services:** Public dissatisfaction with corruption, unemployment, insecurity, and ineffective government can weaken confidence in civilian leadership.
- **Weak democratic institutions:** Fragile courts, electoral bodies, and legislatures may struggle to prevent unconstitutional transfers of power.
- **Public frustration with insecurity:** When elected governments fail to address persistent violence, military leaders may present themselves as an alternative capable of restoring order.
- **Erosion of democratic safeguards:** Restrictions on opposition parties, civil society, independent media, and elections can make it harder to challenge military rule.
- **External engagement despite governance failures:** Foreign partners may continue cooperation because they prioritise stability, regional influence, or security objectives.

Governance failures affect access to justice, freedom of expression, political participation, and the protection of vulnerable communities.

3.6 Regime Survival Tactics and Strategic Concessions

De facto authorities may offer strategic, economic, or security-related concessions to foreign partners in return for continued cooperation and international engagement.

- **Security agreements:** Authorities may negotiate security partnerships to obtain training, equipment, technical assistance, or other forms of support.
- **Economic agreements:** Access to natural resources, infrastructure projects, or commercial opportunities may strengthen bilateral relationships.
- **Diplomatic alignment:** Authorities may align themselves with particular foreign powers to secure political backing in international forums.
- **Control over domestic narratives:** Military-led governments may present foreign partnerships as evidence of sovereignty, national independence, or their ability to provide security.

- **Delayed political transitions:** Continued external cooperation may reduce pressure on authorities to establish an agreed timetable for restoring constitutional government.

Such arrangements raise questions about transparency, accountability, the protection of natural resources for public benefit, and whether political and economic agreements undermine human rights safeguards.

4. Impacts

4.1 Social Impacts

Suppression of civil liberties and human rights violations commonly follow.

Military authorities have restricted the press, suspended political parties, banned protests and detained critics. Where foreign security forces operate alongside national armies, serious abuses have been documented, such as the March 2022 killings at Moura in Mali. Civilians in conflict zones bear the brunt through displacement and attacks, and the reduction of international monitoring shrinks the space for accountability.

Documented patterns

- **Media and civic space:** Authorities in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger suspended French outlets such as RFI and France 24, closed or restricted local media, and in Mali dissolved political parties in 2025. Burkina Faso has been reported to conscript critics, including journalists and activists, into military service.
- **Mass-casualty incidents:** Moura (Mali, March 2022) involved the killing of hundreds of civilians in a joint operation by Malian forces and foreign personnel, according to UN investigators. Karma (Burkina Faso, April 2023) saw the killing of around 150 villagers, attributed to soldiers. In Myanmar, air strikes such as the one on Pazigy in April 2023 killed well over 100 civilians.
- **Displacement and hunger:** Sudan's war has displaced more than 10 million people, the largest displacement crisis in the world, and an IPC review confirmed famine conditions in Zamzam camp in 2024. Myanmar has several million internally displaced people.

- **Accountability gap:** Where UN missions have closed (MINUSMA, UNITAMS), there are fewer independent monitors, and juntas have restricted access for human rights investigators.
- **Gendered impacts:** Conflict-related sexual violence has been reported in Sudan, Mali, Myanmar and Libya, and women's participation in transitions is often minimal.

4.2 Economic Impacts

Public funds are diverted to defence and security procurement at the expense of health, education and development. Sanctions, suspension from regional bodies and reduced aid can damage economies, while resource concessions to security partners may reduce long-term revenue. Instability deters investment, and humanitarian crises such as Sudan's grow more costly.

Channels of economic harm

- **Opportunity cost:** Money spent on arms, contracts with foreign security providers and the military's own commercial interests is unavailable for health, education and infrastructure. In several Sahel states security spending has risen while state presence in rural areas has fallen.
- **Military business empires:** In Myanmar, military conglomerates (Myanma Economic Holdings Limited and Myanmar Economic Corporation) have been targeted by Western sanctions because they channel revenue to the armed forces. In Sudan, military and RSF-linked firms dominate gold and other sectors.
- **Resource leakage:** Gold from Sudan and parts of the Sahel is reported to be smuggled through intermediaries, often to Gulf markets, which finances armed actors and reduces state revenue. The UN Panel of Experts and independent researchers have documented such flows.
- **Financial isolation:** Regional sanctions can cut off banking and market access. In January 2022 the West African central bank froze Mali's assets after ECOWAS sanctions, and Mali struggled to pay regional debts until sanctions were lifted.
- **Arms spending:** The UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar has reported that the military imported arms and materiel worth more than a billion dollars since the coup, partly through third-country suppliers and financial institutions.

- **Aid and investment:** Cuts to development aid and investor caution compound economic stress, while humanitarian funding falls short of need.

4.3 Political Impacts

External backing allows regimes to entrench authoritarian rule: transitions are extended, constitutions rewritten and opposition marginalised. It also sends a signal to others. If a coup can be followed by comfortable partnerships, the expected cost of attempting one falls, which risks contagion across neighbouring states.

Entrenchment and contagion

- **Transitions without transition:** Repeated extensions, new charters that reset the clock, and constitutional changes allow rulers to remain beyond initial promises. Candidates from the junta may stand in later elections.
- **Weakening institutions:** Dissolving parties, suspending constitutions and sidelining courts reduce checks on the executive, and foreign backers face few demands for reform.
- **Counter-coup risk:** Juntas fear internal rivals, as shown by successive coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, which increases reliance on foreign protection and creates a self-reinforcing cycle.
- **Demonstration effects:** Research suggests that coups cluster in time and region. Studies such as Marinov and Goemans (2014) found that post-Cold War coups were more likely to be followed by elections than earlier ones, a trend the current wave puts in doubt.
- **Regional norms eroded:** When juntas avoid lasting costs, other officers and incumbents see lower risks, and regional bodies lose credibility.

4.4 Geo-Political Impacts

- Coups and the security realignments that follow can destabilise whole regions. The Sahel states that left ECOWAS formed the Alliance of Sahel States, bringing Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger together in a mutual defence arrangement and weakening regional integration. Rival external backers can turn domestic power

struggles into proxy competitions, as in Libya and Sudan, prolonging conflict and spilling over borders through arms flows, refugees and armed groups.

Regional and global spillovers

- **Terrorism and spillover:** After Western forces and the UN mission left, jihadist groups such as JNIM expanded their reach, and attacks have increasingly affected coastal West African states such as Benin and Togo.
- **Interlocking theatres:** Russian and other external networks link Libya, Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Sahel through shared logistics, personnel and mining interests, so developments in one theatre affect the others.
- **Arms and fighters:** Weapons and fighters move across the Libya-Sudan-Chad-Sahel corridor, extending conflicts beyond their original borders.
- **Red Sea and Mediterranean security:** Sudan's coast and Libya's ports matter for shipping lanes, migration routes to Europe and great-power naval access.
- **Migration and refugees:** Conflict and instability push people into neighbouring states such as Chad, Egypt and South Sudan, and toward Europe.
- **Asia-Pacific:** Myanmar's conflict affects Thailand, India, Bangladesh and China through refugees, cross-border crime such as online scam compounds, and strategic competition over ports and pipelines.
- **Institutional fragmentation:** The exit of three states from ECOWAS and their formation of a separate bloc complicates trade, free movement and counter-terrorism coordination.

5. Past Actions

5.1 UN Action

- **Charter framework:** Art. 2(4) bars the use of force against territorial integrity or political independence, and Art. 2(7) protects domestic jurisdiction except for Chapter VII measures. Neither directly regulates how governments change.
- **Precedents for Chapter VII action:** Res. 940 (Haiti, 1994) authorised a multinational force to restore the elected president, and Res. 1132 (Sierra Leone, 1997) imposed sanctions after a military coup.

- **Recent practice:** The Council has usually issued presidential or press statements after coups (for instance on Mali in 2020 and Niger in 2023) rather than binding resolutions, reflecting divisions among permanent members.
- **Peacekeeping constraints:** After Mali's junta requested withdrawal, the Council ended MINUSMA's mandate through Res. 2690 (June 2023), and the mission closed by the end of that year. The UN integrated mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) also ended in early 2024.
- **Arms embargoes and panels of experts:** Libya's embargo (Res. 1970, 2011) and Darfur's (Res. 1556 and 1591) show tools that exist but are weakly enforced, as panel reports have repeatedly recorded violations.
- **General Assembly:** Res. 75/287 (June 2021) on Myanmar called for a halt to arms flows and was adopted by a large majority. In December 2022 the Council adopted Res. 2669, its first resolution on Myanmar in decades, with Russia, China and India abstaining.

Further UN practice

- **Mali sanctions regime:** The Council's Mali sanctions framework (Res. 2374, 2017) was ended in August 2023 when Russia vetoed its renewal, removing the Panel of Experts that had monitored the regime.
- **Myanmar, Res. 2669 (Dec 2022):** Adopted 12-0-3. It demanded an end to violence, release of political prisoners and respect for human rights, with China, India and Russia abstaining. It did not impose sanctions or an arms embargo.
- **Sudan:** The Council demanded in Res. 2736 (June 2024) that the RSF halt its siege of El Fasher, adopted 14-0-1 with Russia abstaining. The existing Darfur sanctions regime and its Panel of Experts continue to report on violations, including on arms supply to parties.
- **Libya:** After Res. 1970 (2011) imposed the arms embargo and referred the situation to the ICC, Res. 2292 (2016) authorised inspection of vessels on the high seas suspected of carrying arms. Res. 2510 (2020) endorsed the Berlin process conclusions. Panel reports have recorded breaches by multiple external states.
- **Human rights machinery:** The Human Rights Council created an Independent Investigative

Mechanism for Myanmar (2018, operating under the Council's authority) and a fact-finding mission for Sudan (2023). Special Rapporteurs have published reports on arms transfers to Myanmar.

- **Preventive diplomacy:** The UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) supports mediation and early warning with the AU and ECOWAS.
- **Credentials:** The General Assembly's Credentials Committee has repeatedly deferred decisions on Myanmar, leaving the pre-coup ambassador in place.

5.2 International Action

- **African Union:** The Peace and Security Council has suspended governments after coups, including Mali, Guinea, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon. Suspension has been applied inconsistently: Chad's transition was not suspended.
- **ECOWAS:** It imposed sanctions on Mali in January 2022 (lifted in July 2022), and after Niger's coup in 2023 imposed sanctions, closed borders and threatened military intervention. The threat was not carried out, and sanctions were lifted in February 2024. The withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger from the bloc took effect in early 2025.
- **ASEAN:** The Five-Point Consensus (April 2021) called for an end to violence and dialogue, and Myanmar's junta leadership was excluded from summits at political level. Implementation has been minimal.
- **Unilateral and targeted measures:** The EU, US, UK and others have imposed targeted sanctions on junta figures, entities and arms suppliers, with limited effect on partners that do not follow them.
- **Legal frameworks:** The Montreux Document and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers address PMCs, but are voluntary and do not cover state-linked forces well.

Further regional and international practice

- **AU Malabo Declaration (2022):** Heads of state acknowledged a resurgence of unconstitutional changes and called for stronger prevention, including support to institutions and greater use of the Peace and Security Council's tools.
- **ECOWAS standby force:** In August 2023 ECOWAS defence chiefs drew up an intervention plan for Niger, and the bloc later moved to revive a standby counter-

terrorism force. The plan was not executed, which weakened the credibility of its threat.

- **Accra Initiative (2017):** A coastal-state security cooperation framework created to prevent spillover from the Sahel.
- **Other bodies:** The OAS Inter-American Democratic Charter allows suspension after a rupture of democratic order, the Commonwealth has a ministerial action group, and EU partnership agreements contain provisions allowing consultation and measures over democratic breaches.
- **United States:** Section 7008 restrictions, targeted designations of Wagner (including as a transnational criminal organisation in 2023) and sanctions on individuals and entities in Myanmar and Sudan.
- **European Union and United Kingdom:** Targeted sanctions on Myanmar's military conglomerates and on Wagner-linked actors, suspension of training missions and development cooperation, and arms embargoes on Myanmar.
- **Partner withdrawals:** France ended Operation Barkhane, withdrew from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and the United States left its Niger bases in 2024.

6. Major Stakeholders

Stakeholders are the governments, organisations, groups, and communities that influence the issue or are affected by it. For this agenda, it is important to distinguish between those who exercise power, those who provide external support, and those who experience the consequences.

6.1 State Actors

- **De facto regimes:** The juntas of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Myanmar and Sudan's army command seek recognition, security and funding, and typically frame their actions as sovereign choice.
- **External backing powers:** Russia (arms, Africa Corps, diplomatic cover), China (arms and economic ties, with a strong non-interference stance), Turkey (drones and defence exports), the UAE (alleged support to Sudan's RSF and Libya's eastern authorities, which it denies), Egypt and Iran in some cases.

- **Democratic coalition and Western states:** France, the United States, the EU and the UK have withdrawn forces, cut aid or applied sanctions, but are criticised for inconsistency when counter-terrorism interests prevail.
- **Regional states and bodies:** ECOWAS and AU members split between enforcement and engagement, with neighbours such as Algeria, Nigeria and Chad playing differing roles.

6.2 Non-State Actors

- **Private military companies:** The Wagner Group, later succeeded in Mali by the state-controlled Africa Corps, along with other commercial security firms. They give regimes protection while limiting the political cost to their sponsors.
- **Regional insurgent groups:** Jihadist groups such as JNIM and Islamic State affiliates in the Sahel, and armed groups in Myanmar and Sudan, exploit instability and are often invoked to justify military rule.
- **Local civil society:** Journalists, activists, unions and diaspora groups document abuses and press for transition timelines, and some have supported the coups.
- **International organisations and NGOs:** UN human rights bodies, the ICRC and monitoring groups provide documentation and humanitarian access.
- **Armed political and ethnic organisations:** Myanmar's ethnic armed organisations and People's Defence Forces, and in Sudan the RSF and allied militias, are both victims and drivers of the conflict, and some receive their own external support.
- **Business and financial actors:** Mining companies, traders, shipping firms, banks and arms brokers can enable or restrict flows of money and weapons, which makes them targets for regulation and sanctions.
- **Regional economic institutions:** The West African central bank and monetary union, whose decisions on assets and market access gave ECOWAS sanctions their bite in Mali.

7. Case Studies:

These case studies examine how external military assistance, diplomatic engagement, and international security partnerships interact with military takeovers and de facto authorities.

7.1 Mali: Wagner Group Intervention and French Withdrawal

Colonel Assimi Goïta led coups in August 2020 and May 2021. Relations with France deteriorated, and French forces left in 2022 as Barkhane ended. Russian Wagner personnel arrived from late 2021, and the UN accused Malian forces and foreign fighters of abuses at Moura in March 2022. Mali then asked MINUSMA to leave, and the Council ended the mission in 2023. After Wagner's leadership collapsed in 2023, Russia's Africa Corps took over, and a 2024 clash at Tinzaouaten showed the limits of that model. Relevance: A clear case of one security partner replacing another, which shields the regime from regional and Western pressure.

Key dates: Aug 2020 (first coup), May 2021 (second coup), Dec 2021 (reports of Wagner deployment), Feb 2022 (France announces exit), Mar 2022 (Moura), Aug 2022 (Barkhane ends), June 2023 (Res. 2690), Aug 2023 (Russian veto on sanctions regime), Sept 2023 (Liptako-Gourma Charter), Dec 2023 (MINUSMA closes), Jan 2024 (junta ends the 2015 Algiers peace accord), July 2024 (Tinzaouaten clashes).

7.2 Myanmar: Regional Security Partnerships and Junta Recognition

The military seized power on 1 February 2021 and violently suppressed resistance, producing a prolonged civil conflict. Russia and China have supplied significant arms, and other states have kept diplomatic engagement. ASEAN's approach has been criticised as ineffective, and the Council's response has been limited. The junta's staged elections have been widely criticised as lacking credibility. Relevance: Shows how great-power cover and arms flows can neutralise a regional body's diplomatic leverage outside Africa.

Key dates: 1 Feb 2021 (coup), Apr 2021 (ASEAN Five-Point Consensus), June 2021 (UNGA Res. 75/287), Oct 2021 (junta leader excluded from ASEAN summit), Dec 2022 (Res. 2669), Oct 2023 (major armed-group offensive in the north-east), Mar 2025 (Mandalay earthquake, with disputes over aid access), late 2025 (junta-run elections in phases).

7.3 Sudan: External Funding to Competing Military Factions

The military overthrew the transitional government in October 2021, and in April 2023 war broke out between the army (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). UN experts and others have reported external supply lines to both sides, with the UAE accused of backing the RSF (which it denies) and other states reported to supply the army. Mediation attempts have repeatedly failed, and the humanitarian crisis is among the world's worst. Relevance: Competing patrons sustain rival military factions, turning a coup into a prolonged proxy conflict.

Key dates: Oct 2021 (coup), Dec 2022 (framework agreement), Apr 2023 (war begins), May 2023 (Jeddah talks), Aug 2024 (famine confirmed in Zamzam), June 2024 (Res. 2736), Oct 2025 (reports of RSF capture of El Fasher and mass atrocities). The RSF has also reportedly announced a rival government, adding a parallel authority to the conflict.

7.4 Burkina Faso: Counter-Terrorism Assistance Shifting to Military Rule

Captain Ibrahim Traoré took power in September 2022, following Lt. Col. Damiba's coup in January. The junta asked French forces to leave in early 2023 and has deepened ties with Russia and Turkey, including drones and security cooperation. The security situation has worsened, and large parts of territory are outside state control. Relevance: Counter-terrorism assistance has been redirected from Western partners to new ones without democratic conditions.

Key dates: Jan 2022 (first coup), Sept 2022 (second coup), Jan 2023 (French military presence ends), Apr 2023 (Karma killings), Jan 2024 (reported arrival of Russian personnel), May 2024 (charter extends transition by 60 months).

7.5 Niger: Changing International Security Footprints after the Coup

General Abdourahamane Tchiani's July 2023 coup ended Niger's role as a key Western security partner. ECOWAS imposed sanctions and threatened intervention, but backed down. French troops left by the end of 2023, and the United States completed its withdrawal in 2024, including from the Agadez drone base. Russian personnel have since arrived. Relevance: Tests whether regional threats of force are credible, and shows how quickly a security footprint can be reconfigured.

Key dates: 26 July 2023 (coup), Aug 2023 (ECOWAS ultimatum and standby-force plan), Oct 2023 (US coup determination), Dec 2023 (French troops leave), Feb 2024 (ECOWAS sanctions lifted), Mar 2024 (US ends military cooperation), Apr 2024 (reported Russian instructors arrive), Sept 2024 (US withdrawal completed), Jan 2025 (exit from ECOWAS takes effect).

7.6 Libya: Proxy Military Support to Parallel De Facto Authorities

Following the 2011 intervention, Libya split in 2014 between rival authorities. Khalifa Haftar's eastern forces have received support from Russia (including Wagner), the UAE and Egypt, while Turkey backed the Tripoli-based government. The UN arms embargo has been widely breached, as repeated panel reports show. The 2020 ceasefire and the Berlin process reduced fighting but did not unify institutions. Relevance: A model of how external backing can sustain parallel authorities and block a political settlement.

Key dates: Feb to Mar 2011 (Res. 1970 and 1973), May 2014 (Haftar's Operation Dignity, followed by a split between Tobruk and Tripoli), Dec 2015 (Libyan Political Agreement), Apr 2019 (offensive on Tripoli), Jan 2020 (Berlin Conference), Oct 2020 (ceasefire), Mar 2021 (unity government), 2022 (rival government in the east and Tripoli clashes).

8. QARMA (Questions a Resolution Must Answer)

1. How should the international community distinguish legitimate security cooperation with a state from assistance that legitimises an unconstitutional seizure of power?
2. What role should the Security Council play when permanent members are among the external backers, and can the General Assembly or regional bodies fill the gap?
3. Should states and companies providing arms, training or personnel to coup regimes bear legal responsibility under the law of state responsibility?
4. How can regional mechanisms such as the AU and ECOWAS be strengthened so that suspension and sanctions are applied consistently?
5. What measures can regulate private military companies and state-linked forces, and who should enforce them?
6. How can counter-terrorism cooperation continue without rewarding unconstitutional rule or abuses?
7. What incentives and safeguards can support credible and time-bound transitions to civilian government?
8. How can the protection of civilians and humanitarian access be guaranteed where foreign forces operate alongside de facto authorities?
9. How should sovereignty and non-intervention be balanced against prevention of regional destabilisation and proxy competition?
10. What monitoring and reporting mechanisms are needed to track arms transfers and external military support to de facto authorities?

Elements a strong resolution might consider

- A definition or set of indicators for external assistance that amounts to legitimising an unconstitutional seizure of power, drawn from existing state responsibility rules.
- A transparency mechanism: voluntary reporting on arms, training and PMC contracts with de facto authorities, perhaps under the Secretary-General or a Panel of Experts.

- Conditionality principles for counter-terrorism assistance, with humanitarian and civilian-protection carve-outs.
- Support for regional bodies, including consistent suspension criteria, clearer sanctions steps and cooperation between the AU, ECOWAS and the UN.
- Guidelines for PMC accountability, including state responsibility for hired forces and links to the Montreux Document.
- Roadmaps for transitions with benchmarks, monitoring and election support.
- Safeguards against harm to civilians from sanctions and mission closures.

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Agenda B: Militarisation of Separatist Territories along the Black Sea Littoral

Introduction to the Agenda

1) Historical Background

2) Key terms and definitions

3) The root causes of militarisation of separatist territories

a) 3.1 The collapse of the Soviet Union and Unresolved Territorial Disputes

b) 3.2 Ethnic, linguistic and National identity tensions

c) 3.3 Russian Military intervention and support for separatists authorities

d) 3.4 Strategic importance of the Black Sea

e) 3.5 Strategic rivalry Between Russia and NATO

f) 3.6 The use of separatist territories as strategic buffer zones

4) Impacts

4.1 Social Impacts (Displacement of Civilians and Refugee Crises. Loss of life and Civilian insecurity. Ethnic Tensions and Community Polarisation.)

4.2 Economic impacts (Destruction of infrastructure and Public Services.

Destruction of Black

Sea Trade and Maritime Transport . Rising government expenditure)

4.3 Political impacts (Weakening of National Sovereignty and Territorial integrity. Political instability in affected States. Entrenchment of separatist authorities and De Facto administrations)

4.4 Geopolitical impacts (Escalation of Russia and NATO strategic rivalry. Expansion of foreign military presence in the region. Destabilisation of Black Sea Regional security)

5) Past Actions

5.1 United Nations involvement conflict resolution and peace building

5.2 The OSCE Mediation Efforts in the Transnistrian conflict

5.3 The UN General Assembly resolutions on the territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine

6) Major Stakeholders

6.1 State Actors (De Facto Regimes in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. External Backing Powers, Particularly the Russian Federation. Territorial States,

Including Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine Democratic Coalition States, Including the United States and European Countries. Regional Powers, Particularly Türkiye)

6.2. Non-State Actors (Private Military Companies and Foreign Military Contractors . Regional Separatist Armed Groups and Local Militias. Local Civil Society Organisations and Community Groups. Humanitarian Organisations and Displacement Support Networks Independent Media and Human Rights Organisations)

7) Case Studies

7.1. Georgia – Russian Military Presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

7.2. Moldova – Russian Military Presence and the Transnistrian Conflict

7.3. Ukraine – Crimea’s Annexation and Militarisation of Occupied Territories

7.4. Russia – Strategic Military Positioning and Influence Along the Black Sea Littoral

7.5. Türkiye – The Montreux Convention and Black Sea Maritime Security

7.6. Romania and Bulgaria – NATO’s Eastern Flank and Regional Deterrence

8) QARMA

9) Bibliography

1) History And Background:

- The militarisation of separatist territories along the Black Sea littoral has its origins in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which created newly independent states and intensified disputes over territorial sovereignty, ethnic identity, and political self-determination. Several separatist movements emerged within the former Soviet republics, most notably in Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and Crimea in Ukraine. These territories subsequently became focal points of regional geopolitical competition, as external powers became involved in local conflicts through military deployments, security assistance, and political support.

- The Transnistrian conflict escalated into armed hostilities in 1992, ending in a ceasefire without a comprehensive political settlement. Similarly, armed conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the early 1990s left both territories outside the effective control of the Georgian government. These unresolved disputes entrenched de facto authorities and created long-term security challenges. In August 2008, hostilities between Georgia, South Ossetian forces, and Russia escalated into the Russo-Georgian War. Following the conflict, Russia recognised

Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, a decision rejected by Georgia and most members of the international community.

- The regional security environment deteriorated further in 2014, when Russia took control of Crimea and subsequently annexed the peninsula. Ukraine and the majority of the international community rejected the annexation, reaffirming Ukraine's territorial integrity. Crimea's strategic position and the presence of Russia's Black Sea Fleet made the peninsula central to regional military competition. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 further intensified militarisation, maritime insecurity, and geopolitical tensions throughout the Black Sea region.
- Historically, these developments demonstrate how unresolved separatist conflicts can become prolonged through external military involvement and competing geopolitical interests. The continued presence of foreign forces, military assistance to de facto authorities, and the absence of comprehensive political settlements have complicated efforts to achieve lasting peace. Consequently, the militarisation of separatist territories along the Black Sea littoral remains a significant international security concern, raising fundamental questions about territorial integrity, self-determination, non-intervention, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

2.) Key Terms and Definitions

Militarisation: The expansion of military presence, infrastructure, weapons, personnel, and military influence within a territory or region.

Separatism: A political movement seeking to separate a territory or population from an existing state, often to establish an independent state or join another country.

Separatist territories: Territories where authorities seek or exercise separation from the internationally recognised state, often without broad international recognition.

De facto authorities: Authorities that exercise practical control over a territory without necessarily possessing internationally recognised sovereign status.

Territorial integrity: The principle that a state's territory and borders should be respected by other states.

National sovereignty: The authority of a state to govern its territory and conduct its affairs independently, subject to its international obligations.

Self-determination: The right of peoples to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

Foreign military intervention: The involvement of a foreign state's armed forces in another state's affairs or territory.

Proxy conflict: A conflict in which external powers support local armed groups or political factions to pursue their strategic interests.

Frozen conflict: A conflict in which large-scale fighting has largely stopped but the underlying political dispute remains unresolved.

Strategic buffer zone: A territory perceived by a state as providing geographical separation from potential rivals or threats.

Geopolitical rivalry: Competition between states for strategic influence, security, territory, or access to important regions.

Demilitarisation: The reduction or removal of military forces, weapons, and military infrastructure from a specified area.

Black Sea Littoral: The coastal region surrounding the Black Sea, including the coastlines of countries such as Türkiye, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, and Russia.

3.) Root Causes of Militarisation of Separatist Territories

3.1. The Collapse of the Soviet Union and Unresolved Territorial Disputes

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 created newly independent states, including Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. However, the dissolution left behind unresolved territorial disputes and disagreements over political authority, borders, and regional autonomy. Some territories sought independence or closer ties with Russia, while the newly independent governments attempted to preserve their territorial integrity.

These competing objectives contributed to armed conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria.

Ceasefires reduced fighting in some areas but did not settle the underlying political disputes. Consequently, foreign military deployments and separatist security structures remained in place, contributing to prolonged militarisation.

3.2. Ethnic, Linguistic, and National Identity Tensions

Ethnic, linguistic, and national identity differences contributed to tensions in several post-Soviet territories. In Georgia, disagreements involving Georgian, Abkhaz, and Ossetian communities became intertwined with disputes over autonomy, political representation, and independence. In Moldova, tensions between the central government and authorities in Transnistria contributed to armed conflict in 1992. As political disagreements escalated, communities increasingly feared losing their cultural identity, political rights, or influence over local governance. These concerns contributed to the mobilisation of armed groups and demands for territorial separation. However, identity differences alone do not explain the conflicts; political decisions, historical grievances, and external involvement also played important roles.

3.3. Russian Military Intervention and Support for Separatist Authorities

Russia's military involvement in the region has been a major factor in the continued militarisation of several disputed territories. Russian forces became involved in the conflicts surrounding Georgia and Moldova during the early 1990s, while subsequent developments established a continuing Russian military presence in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. Following the 2008 war with Georgia, Russia recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and expanded its military presence there. Georgia and many other countries continue to regard these territories as part of Georgia's internationally recognised territory. Russia describes its role in terms of security and support for the territories, while Georgia and other critics argue that its military presence undermines Georgian sovereignty. This disagreement has made negotiations and demilitarisation more difficult.

3.4. Strategic Importance of the Black Sea

The Black Sea is strategically important because it connects Eastern Europe with the Caucasus and provides maritime routes for international trade, energy transportation, and access to wider international waters through the Turkish Straits. Countries bordering the sea have important economic and security interests in maintaining access to these routes. Control of coastal territory, ports, and maritime approaches can therefore influence a state's regional position. Crimea, for example, has considerable strategic significance because of its location and the presence of major naval facilities. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the subsequent war in Ukraine intensified competition over maritime security and access. As a result, territorial disputes around the Black Sea have consequences beyond the territories themselves, affecting regional trade, defence planning, and international security.

3.5. Strategic Rivalry Between Russia and NATO

Strategic rivalry between Russia and NATO has contributed to growing military tensions around the Black Sea. NATO has strengthened its collective defence and eastern-flank security measures, while

Russia has sought to maintain its military influence and strategic position in the region. Countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Türkiye are NATO members, whereas Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova have different security relationships with the alliance. Russia has repeatedly expressed opposition to NATO's expansion, while NATO describes its military posture as defensive and aimed at protecting its members. These competing security priorities contribute to mutual suspicion, increased defence preparations, and difficulties in regional cooperation. Separatist territories become particularly significant in this rivalry because their location and political status can affect neighbouring states' security calculations.

3.6. The Use of Separatist Territories as Strategic Buffer Zones

Separatist territories can acquire strategic importance when external powers view them as providing geographical separation from rival states or as helping preserve regional influence. A continuing military presence in a disputed territory can give an external power leverage over the government whose territory is contested, influence neighbouring states' security decisions, and complicate their efforts to strengthen ties with other alliances. Analysts have argued that Russia's involvement in conflicts in Georgia and Moldova has helped preserve its influence in the wider Black Sea region. However, the motivations and circumstances differ between territories, and the buffer-zone explanation should not be treated as the sole cause of each conflict. The continued presence of foreign forces and unresolved political arrangements can make withdrawals, peace negotiations, and lasting settlements more difficult.

4. Impacts of Militarisation of Separatist Territories along the Black Sea Littoral

4.1. Social Impacts

a) Displacement of Civilians and Refugee Crises

Militarisation and armed conflict in separatist territories have forced large numbers of civilians to leave their homes in search of safety. Conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Ukraine have caused displacement, family separation, and difficulties accessing housing, education, and healthcare.

Displaced populations may face obstacles returning home because of insecurity, damaged infrastructure, or restrictions on movement. Prolonged displacement can also weaken community ties and place pressure on the public services of host communities. These consequences make civilian protection and safe, voluntary, and dignified return important considerations in peace negotiations.

b) Loss of Life and Civilian Insecurity

The presence of armed forces, military installations, weapons, and fortified positions increases the risks faced by civilians when tensions escalate into fighting. In the Black Sea region, armed conflicts have resulted in civilian casualties, damage to residential areas, and disruption of essential services. The continued presence of military forces near populated areas can create fear and uncertainty, even during periods without major fighting. Civilians may also face risks from unexploded ordnance and restricted access to essential facilities. These conditions demonstrate the importance of protecting civilians under international humanitarian law and establishing effective mechanisms to prevent renewed hostilities.

c) Ethnic Tensions and Community Polarisation

Militarisation can deepen divisions between ethnic and linguistic communities, particularly when political disputes become linked to questions of national identity and territorial control. In Georgia and Moldova, conflicts over separatist territories have contributed to mistrust between communities and the authorities of internationally recognised states. Population displacement, competing historical narratives, and restrictions on movement can make reconciliation more difficult. External political and military involvement may further intensify divisions when communities are perceived as supporting opposing sides. Over time, these tensions can undermine social cohesion and make peaceful negotiations more challenging.

4.2. Economic Impacts

a) Destruction of Infrastructure and Public Services

Armed conflict and militarisation can damage roads, bridges, ports, electricity networks, schools, hospitals, and water supplies. When infrastructure is damaged or access is restricted, businesses struggle to operate and residents may lose access to essential services. Governments must divert funds towards emergency assistance, repairs, and reconstruction instead of long-term development. In Ukraine, the wider war has caused extensive damage to infrastructure, while unresolved conflicts elsewhere have discouraged investment and complicated development planning. Rebuilding affected areas can take years and requires significant financial and technical resources.

b) Disruption of Black Sea Trade and Maritime Transport

The Black Sea is an important route for international shipping, agricultural exports, energy transportation, and commercial exchange. Military confrontation, naval operations, mines, and threats to ports and vessels can increase shipping costs, disrupt supply chains, and reduce confidence among international traders. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated how insecurity in the Black Sea can interrupt grain exports and affect global food markets, particularly in countries that depend on imported agricultural commodities. These disruptions can also affect insurance premiums, port operations, and the movement of essential goods, extending the economic consequences well beyond the immediate conflict zone.

c) Rising Government Expenditure

Governments affected by territorial disputes may increase spending on defence, border security, military infrastructure, and emergency preparedness. Although some security expenditure may be considered necessary for national defence, sustained increases can reduce the funds available for education, healthcare, housing, and economic development. States must also finance humanitarian assistance for displaced people and the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure. External military assistance and sanctions may create additional financial and administrative pressures. As a result, prolonged militarisation can impose substantial opportunity costs on national budgets and hinder long-term economic growth.

4.3. Political Impacts

a) Weakening of National Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity

The militarisation of separatist territories challenges the authority of internationally recognised governments over their own territory. When separatist administrations exercise control over a region with external military support, the central government may be unable to enforce its laws or exercise effective authority there. For example, Georgia continues to regard Abkhazia and South Ossetia as parts of its sovereign territory, while Russia recognises them as independent states. Similarly, Moldova maintains its claim to Transnistria. These disputes complicate diplomatic negotiations and raise questions about sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the role of external powers in territorial conflicts.

b) Political Instability in Affected States

The presence of militarised separatist territories can create long-term political instability by placing pressure on governments to defend their territorial integrity while pursuing diplomatic solutions. Disagreements over military policy, relations with neighbouring states, and approaches to conflict resolution can divide political parties and influence elections. Governments may also face difficulties attracting investment, implementing national policies, and maintaining public confidence. Furthermore, unresolved territorial disputes can complicate a state's foreign policy choices and relationships with international organisations. As a result, militarisation can become a persistent obstacle to political stability and effective governance.

c) Entrenchment of Separatist Authorities and De Facto Administrations

Prolonged militarisation can strengthen the institutions of de facto authorities by enabling them to maintain control over territory, establish security structures, and operate separate administrative systems. Over time, these authorities may develop their own political institutions and external relationships, making reintegration or a mutually agreed settlement more complicated. In Transnistria, for example, a separate administration has continued to operate despite

Moldova's internationally recognised sovereignty over the territory. Such arrangements can create a prolonged separation between the disputed territory and the internationally recognised state. This makes negotiations over political status, security arrangements, and governance more difficult.

4.4. Geopolitical Impacts

a) Escalation of Russia–NATO Strategic Rivalry

Militarisation of disputed territories contributes to broader strategic competition between Russia and NATO. Russia seeks to maintain its influence and security position in the Black Sea region, while NATO members emphasise collective defence and regional stability. Military developments in Ukraine and Georgia have intensified disagreements over regional security, alliance expansion, and the balance of power. These competing interests can encourage additional defence measures and increase mistrust between the parties. Consequently, local territorial disputes may become connected to wider international tensions, making diplomatic compromise more challenging.

b) Expansion of Foreign Military Presence in the Region

Foreign military deployments in or near disputed territories can increase the strategic importance of local conflicts. Russia maintains military forces in several disputed territories, including Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, although the circumstances and legal disputes differ in each case. Meanwhile, NATO members bordering the Black Sea have undertaken measures to strengthen regional defence and deterrence. These developments can lead to increased military activity, greater security concerns among neighbouring states, and difficulties establishing mutually acceptable limits on military deployments. The continued presence of external forces can also complicate negotiations over withdrawal and long-term security guarantees.

c) Destabilisation of Black Sea Regional Security

The militarisation of separatist territories can undermine security across the Black Sea region by increasing the risk of armed escalation, disrupting maritime activities, and weakening cooperation between neighbouring countries. Military

confrontation in and around Ukraine has demonstrated how regional hostilities can affect shipping, port operations, trade, and civilian safety. Disagreements over territorial control and foreign military deployments also make it more difficult for regional states to cooperate on shared security challenges. Without effective diplomatic communication, confidence-building measures, and arrangements to prevent accidental escalation, local disputes can have consequences for the wider regional security environment.

5. Past Actions and International Initiatives

5.1 United Nations Involvement in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

The United Nations has supported international peace and security through diplomacy, mediation, humanitarian assistance, and resolutions addressing territorial disputes. In the aftermath of the conflicts in Georgia, the UN was involved in efforts concerning Abkhazia, including the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), which operated from 1993 until 2009. Its mandate included monitoring the ceasefire and contributing to efforts to prevent renewed hostilities. However, the mission ended after the Security Council could not agree on an extension following the 2008 Russia–Georgia war.

The UN has also addressed the consequences of conflict in Ukraine through humanitarian initiatives and General Assembly resolutions. Its work has included supporting displaced populations, documenting humanitarian needs, and calling attention to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. These initiatives have provided international forums for diplomatic engagement, although they have not resolved all the underlying territorial disputes.

5.2. OSCE Mediation Efforts in the Transnistrian Conflict

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has played a central role in facilitating negotiations between Moldova and the de facto authorities in Transnistria. Following the 1992 armed conflict, a ceasefire was agreed in July of that year, and negotiations began to seek a peaceful settlement.

Since 2005, the main negotiations have operated through the 5+2 format. It includes Moldova and Transnistria as the parties, the OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine as mediators, and the European Union and United States as observers. The process aims to achieve a comprehensive settlement that respects Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity while considering a special status for Transnistria.

The OSCE has also supported practical confidence-building measures involving transport, education, telecommunications, trade, and freedom of movement. For example, agreements have helped restore certain transport connections and improve cooperation between communities on both sides of the Dniester River. However, the final political settlement remains unresolved, illustrating the limitations of mediation when the parties have competing political and security interests.

5.3. UN General Assembly Resolutions on the Territorial Integrity of Georgia and Ukraine

The UN General Assembly has adopted resolutions addressing the territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia, reaffirming principles of international law and expressing international positions on disputed territories.

Ukraine: On 27 March 2014, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 68/262, titled Territorial Integrity of Ukraine. It affirmed Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and stated that the 2014 referendum in Crimea could not serve as the basis for altering Crimea's status. The resolution received 100 votes in favour, 11 against, and 58 abstentions. In October 2022, Resolution ES-11/4 addressed Ukraine's territorial integrity following Russia's attempted annexation of additional Ukrainian regions.

Georgia: The General Assembly has repeatedly addressed the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These resolutions have emphasised the right of displaced populations to return to their homes in safety and dignity, in accordance with applicable international law. They have also kept the humanitarian consequences of the conflicts on the

international agenda. Despite these efforts, significant obstacles to safe and voluntary return remain.

These resolutions establish an international diplomatic record concerning territorial integrity and displacement. However, General Assembly resolutions are generally recommendations rather than directly enforceable orders, so their practical impact depends on state cooperation, diplomatic pressure, and implementation.

Major Stakeholders

Understanding the major stakeholders is essential to analysing the militarisation of separatist territories along the Black Sea Littoral. Different actors have different objectives concerning territorial integrity, regional security, military influence, and conflict resolution.

6.1. State Actors

6.1.1. De Facto Regimes in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria

The de facto authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and Transnistria in Moldova, exercise varying degrees of control over their respective territories despite lacking broad international recognition as independent states. Their primary interests include maintaining their political institutions, security arrangements, and existing territorial control. Their relationships with Russia differ, but Russian political, economic, or military support has been particularly important in sustaining the authorities in these territories. Their status remains a major obstacle to negotiations over sovereignty, territorial integrity, and future political arrangements.

6.1.2. External Backing Powers, Particularly the Russian Federation

Russia is a major external actor in the region because of its military presence, political influence, and strategic interests in the Black Sea. It recognises Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and maintains military forces in both territories. Russia also maintains a military presence in Transnistria, where its role remains contested by Moldova. Moscow presents its involvement in terms of regional security and the protection of its interests, while Georgia,

Moldova, Ukraine, and many other states view aspects of Russian involvement as challenges to their sovereignty and territorial integrity. These competing positions complicate diplomatic negotiations and efforts to reduce military tensions.

6.1.3. Territorial States, Including Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine

Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine seek to preserve their internationally recognised territorial integrity and maintain authority over territories they consider occupied or separatist-controlled. Georgia opposes Russia's military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while Moldova supports a peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict that preserves its sovereignty. Ukraine seeks the restoration of its territorial integrity following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its subsequent invasion of Ukraine in 2022. These governments pursue different combinations of diplomacy, international legal action, defence measures, and international partnerships to address their respective conflicts.

6.1.4. Democratic Coalition States, Including the United States and European Countries

The United States and several European countries support the territorial integrity of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, although their policies and levels of involvement vary. They have used diplomatic initiatives, economic assistance, sanctions, and security cooperation to respond to developments in the region. European countries also support humanitarian assistance and initiatives aimed at strengthening the resilience of affected states. Their involvement reflects concerns about international law, regional stability, and the wider European security environment. Differences between these countries over the appropriate balance between deterrence, diplomacy, and negotiation can nevertheless affect the coordination of their policies.

6.1.5. Regional Powers, Particularly Türkiye

Türkiye occupies a strategically important position because it controls access between the Mediterranean and Black Sea through the Turkish Straits under the Montreux Convention of 1936. It maintains diplomatic and economic relationships with countries across the region and is a NATO member. Türkiye

has supported Ukraine's territorial integrity while also maintaining relations with Russia and pursuing diplomatic engagement on Black Sea security. Its implementation of the Montreux Convention has affected the passage of warships during the Russia–Ukraine war. Consequently, Türkiye plays an important role in maritime security, diplomatic communication, and efforts to manage regional escalation.

6.2. Non-State Actors

6.2.1. Private Military Companies and Foreign Military Contractors

Private military companies (PMCs) and foreign military contractors can influence conflict environments by providing security services, logistical support, training, or other military-related assistance. Their involvement may complicate accountability when their activities are linked to armed conflicts or external political interests. In the wider Black Sea security context, the activities of Russian-linked private military networks have attracted international scrutiny. However, their role should be distinguished from that of regular armed forces, and their specific involvement must be assessed separately in each territory.

6.2.2. Regional Separatist Armed Groups and Local Militias

Separatist armed groups and local militias have played significant roles in the conflicts surrounding Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. These groups emerged within particular political and historical contexts and have contributed to the establishment or maintenance of local security structures. Their relationship with de facto authorities and external supporters varies. Their continued presence can complicate disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration efforts, particularly when parties disagree over the future political status of a territory or the security arrangements required for a settlement.

6.2.3. Local Civil Society Organisations and Community Groups

Civil society organisations and community groups help document the effects of militarisation on local populations. They may support displaced families, promote dialogue between communities, monitor human rights concerns, and advocate for freedom of movement across dividing lines. Such organisations can

also help reduce misinformation and build confidence between communities affected by prolonged conflict. Their work is particularly important where political negotiations have made limited progress and residents continue to face practical difficulties accessing public services or maintaining family and community connections.

6.2.4. Humanitarian Organisations and Displacement Support Networks

Humanitarian organisations provide assistance to people affected by armed conflict, including internally displaced persons, refugees, and vulnerable communities. Their activities may include emergency relief, healthcare, shelter, food assistance, and protection services. Organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) work to protect people affected by armed conflict and promote respect for international humanitarian law. These organisations do not determine territorial status; instead, their primary focus is humanitarian protection and assistance according to their mandates.

6.2.5. Independent Media and Human Rights Organisations

Independent media and human rights organisations document conflict-related developments, investigate alleged abuses, and raise awareness of the consequences of militarisation. Their reporting can help the international community assess conditions affecting civilians, including displacement, restrictions on movement, and access to basic services. Independent monitoring is particularly important in areas where access for international observers is limited. However, information from conflict zones must be assessed carefully because propaganda, censorship, and competing political narratives can affect the reliability of available reports.

7. Case Studies

7.1. Georgia – Russian Military Presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Background

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, armed conflicts developed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the early 1990s. Both territories established

de facto administrations separate from Georgia's central government. The conflicts remained unresolved, despite ceasefires and international mediation.

In August 2008, a war between Russia and Georgia escalated following years of growing tensions and military incidents. An EU-mediated Six-Point Agreement helped bring the fighting to an end. Russia subsequently recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, while Georgia and most countries continue to regard them as parts of Georgia's internationally recognised territory.

Militarisation and External Involvement

Russia maintains military forces and security infrastructure in both territories. Georgia considers the Russian presence a violation of its sovereignty, while Russia maintains that its presence is based on agreements with the local authorities. The dispute remains a major obstacle to normalising relations between Russia and Georgia.

International Response

The European Union established the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) in September 2008. The unarmed civilian mission monitors developments near the administrative boundary lines, reports security incidents, and works to prevent renewed hostilities. However, the de facto authorities have denied the mission access to the territories under their control, limiting its monitoring coverage.

7.2. Moldova – Russian Military Presence and the Transnistrian Conflict

Background

Transnistria is a territory along Moldova's eastern border that declared separation from Moldova as the Soviet Union was collapsing. Armed fighting between Moldovan forces and Transnistrian forces occurred in 1992 and ended with a ceasefire agreement. Since then, Transnistria has maintained a separate de facto administration, although it is internationally recognised as part of Moldova.

Militarisation and External Involvement

Russian military personnel remain in Transnistria, including forces associated with the peacekeeping arrangement and a separate Russian military contingent. Moldova has repeatedly called for the withdrawal of Russian forces and supports a peaceful settlement that respects its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's military presence and its relationship with the de facto authorities remain important obstacles in negotiations.

International Response

The OSCE has facilitated negotiations between Moldova and Transnistria. The 5+2 negotiation format brings together the two sides, the OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine as mediators, with the European Union and United States participating as observers. The process has supported dialogue and practical confidence-building measures, although a comprehensive political settlement has not been reached.

7.3. Ukraine – Crimea's Annexation and Militarisation of Occupied Territories

Background

Crimea became the focus of a major international crisis in 2014, when Russia took control of the peninsula and subsequently annexed it. Ukraine and most states do not recognise the annexation. On 27 March 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 68/262, affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and calling on states not to recognise changes to Crimea's status.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 further intensified militarisation across the region. The war has involved extensive military activity and has affected other Ukrainian territories, civilian populations, infrastructure, and maritime transport.

Militarisation and Strategic Importance

Crimea's location in the Black Sea gives it significant military and maritime importance. Its ports and naval facilities contribute to its strategic value, while control of surrounding waters affects shipping and regional defence planning.

The war has increased risks to civilian shipping and contributed to disruption of agricultural exports and commercial routes.

International Response

The international response has included UN General Assembly resolutions, sanctions imposed by various states, diplomatic efforts, humanitarian assistance, and security support for Ukraine. These measures have not resolved the conflict, and Russia's annexation claims remain widely rejected internationally.

7.4. Russia – Strategic Military Positioning and Influence Along the Black Sea Littoral

Background

Russia has longstanding military, economic, and strategic interests in the Black Sea region. The Black Sea provides access to maritime trade routes and connects Russia with the Mediterranean through the Turkish Straits. Its regional position is also affected by relationships with neighbouring states and competition with NATO.

Military and Political Involvement

Russia's military presence in Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria has become an important element of regional security debates. The circumstances differ between these territories, but Russia's role has been a central issue in disputes over sovereignty, military deployments, and regional influence. Russia presents its policies as serving national security and regional interests; neighbouring governments and other states have challenged aspects of its actions, particularly where they consider them violations of territorial integrity.

International Response

NATO has strengthened its eastern-flank defence posture following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. NATO describes these measures as defensive and intended to protect its

members. At the same time, diplomatic initiatives and international forums continue to address the consequences of regional tensions.

7.5. Türkiye – The Montreux Convention and Black Sea Maritime Security

Background

Türkiye occupies a strategically important position between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits, signed in 1936, regulates the passage of merchant vessels and warships through the Turkish Straits. Its provisions place particular restrictions on warships belonging to states that do not border the Black Sea.

Role in Regional Security

Türkiye is a NATO member but also maintains diplomatic and economic relations with Russia and Ukraine. Its approach involves balancing alliance commitments, maritime security, and regional diplomacy. During the Russia–Ukraine war, Türkiye's implementation of the Montreux Convention became particularly significant for the movement of warships through the Straits.

Türkiye has also participated in regional maritime cooperation. For example, Türkiye, Romania, and Bulgaria have cooperated on Black Sea mine-countermeasure activities to address maritime risks and support safer navigation.

7.6. Romania and Bulgaria – NATO's Eastern Flank and Regional Deterrence

Background

Romania and Bulgaria are Black Sea littoral states and members of NATO. Their geographical position places them close to Ukraine and the wider security challenges created by the Russia–Ukraine war. Both countries have an interest in protecting their territory, maritime routes, infrastructure, and economic connections.

NATO's Regional Presence

NATO has reinforced its eastern-flank defence measures following Russia's annexation of Crimea and its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Romania hosts a NATO multinational battlegroup, while Bulgaria also hosts a multinational battlegroup. NATO describes its forward land forces as defensive measures intended to deter aggression and strengthen collective defence.

Maritime Cooperation

Romania and Bulgaria have also worked with Türkiye on Black Sea maritime security, including mine-countermeasure cooperation. Such initiatives aim to address dangers to shipping and improve coordination among the regional states. They illustrate that military and security cooperation can involve both deterrence and practical measures to protect civilian maritime activity.

8) QARMA

The militarisation of separatist territories along the Black Sea littoral raises critical questions regarding territorial integrity, international security, and geopolitical stability.

- Delegates must consider how the international community can prevent external military interference, regulate the transfer of weapons to armed groups, and address the presence of foreign military forces in disputed territories. Furthermore, they must examine how the United Nations and regional organisations can strengthen ceasefire-monitoring mechanisms, promote diplomatic negotiations, and prevent territorial disputes from escalating into wider armed conflicts. Any proposed solutions should balance the principles of state sovereignty and self-determination while upholding international law and protecting civilian populations. Delegates should ultimately seek sustainable strategies for reducing militarisation, building regional trust, and achieving peaceful resolutions to long-standing territorial disputes

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