



APQA: Advisory Panel on the Question of Africa

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Issue: Managing the peaceful transition to democracy for Niger's Syndicate Regime

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Committee:	The Advisory Panel on the Question of Middle Africa
Issue:	Managing the peaceful transition to democracy for Niger's Syndicate Regime
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I. Introduction

When it comes to examining the geopolitical landscape of Middle Africa, one would easily notice - by simply looking at data like the “Economist Democracy Index” - that the region is considerably weak in its democratic institutions. Over the last few years, many countries in the region have experienced political turmoil, and some have even experienced great obstructions to human rights and democracy through coups and other forms of political overthrows. One of these countries that took the headlines for most of 2023 and today is Niger. Niger is a landlocked country situated at the crossroads of the Sahara Desert and the fertile lands adjacent to the Gulf of Guinea.

This unfortunate prestige of Niger mostly comes from the coup d'état of 2023 that shook the political stability of the already unstable region of Middle Africa. To better understand the historical connection of the coup to the modern day, it is particularly important to grasp the knowledge concerning the position of Niger before the coup occurred in 2023. Gaining independence from France in 1960, Niger was one of the many countries that suffered political and economic instability following independence. Between 1960 and 2023, the country suffered from 6 different successful coup attempts, with there also being multiple

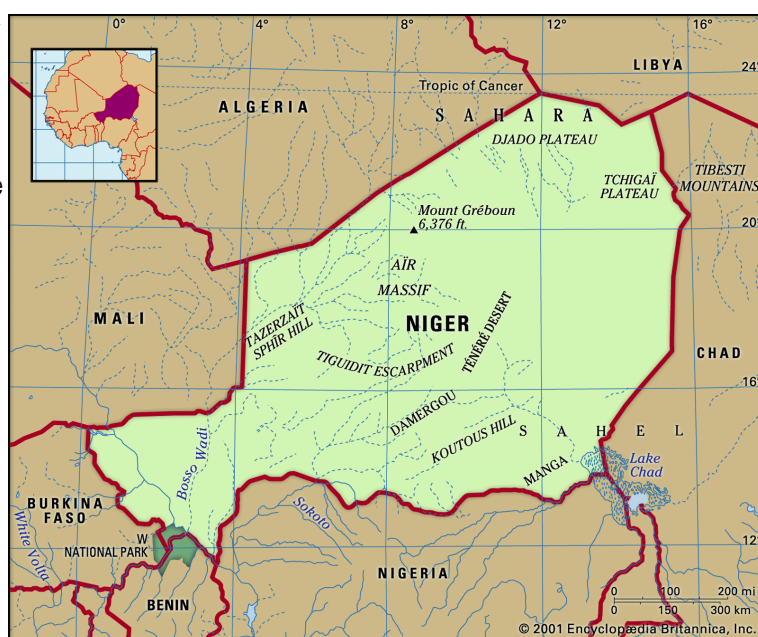


Image 1: Map of Niger and Neighboring States

failed attempts that shook the country, even if they didn't succeed. In addition, Niger was also subject to terrorist movements that damaged civil stability, particularly from organisations like Boko Haram, ISIS - West Africa (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Al Qaeda Affiliates, and Jama'at Nasr Al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (a different extension of Al Qaeda). At the time of the coup, the country was led by Mohamed Bazoum, a democratically elected official who supported political and economic alignment with the West and advocated for the integration of Niger into the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In 2023, following similar coup patterns in neighbouring states like Burkina Faso,



Sudan, and Mali, his government was overthrown by an air force colonel named Amadou Abdramane, who, with the support of most of the Niger Military, established a military junta named the “National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland.” The motivation behind the coup was that Bazoum’s regime was allowing for international meddling in internal affairs and that he had failed to take control of the terrorist activity in the country.

The coup had several short and long-term impacts. Many international companies, like the French company “Orano”, were expelled, causing decreases in international investment. The authoritarian leaning of the new government strained relations between Niger with its western allies, and the obstruction to the trade of uranium, which Niger is a key supplier of, hindered international trade. Similarly, there have been unconfirmed reports of police brutality, military oppression, minority oppression, and use of violence against the public by the Junta regime, all leading to potential enactment of crimes against humanity. The particular importance of Niger makes it essential for the United Nations or the Advisory Panel to determine feasible ways to reorient Niger’s political landscape from authoritarianism to democracy once more.

II. Key Vocabulary

Coup d’état: The sudden, often illegal/illegitimate, overthrow of a government through the use of force, often by forces of military or revolutionary forces. Although coup d’état does not entail a lean towards authoritarianism by definition, all instances of the agenda item involve such changes.

Military Junta: A type of government that involves the power of leadership being shared across a group of military executives. They are typically formed after a coup and occur through a suspension of democracy.

Al Qaeda: A Pan-Islamist (calling for the union of all muslim states) terrorist organisation that was primarily active in the 2010s but now extends its influence across the Middle East and Africa through military jihadists and terrorist activities to weaken democratic institutions.

ISIS-West Africa: Another Pan-Islamist terrorist organisation that was also primarily active in the 2010s but now works behind most scenes to destabilise regimes in an effort to establish control, particularly in West Africa.

Jama’at Nasr Al-Islam Wal-Muslimin: An extension of Al-Qaeda that is primarily active in West Africa, particularly Niger.

ECOWAS: An economic and political organisation standing for the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS seeks to build diplomatic relations between West African countries in order to facilitate

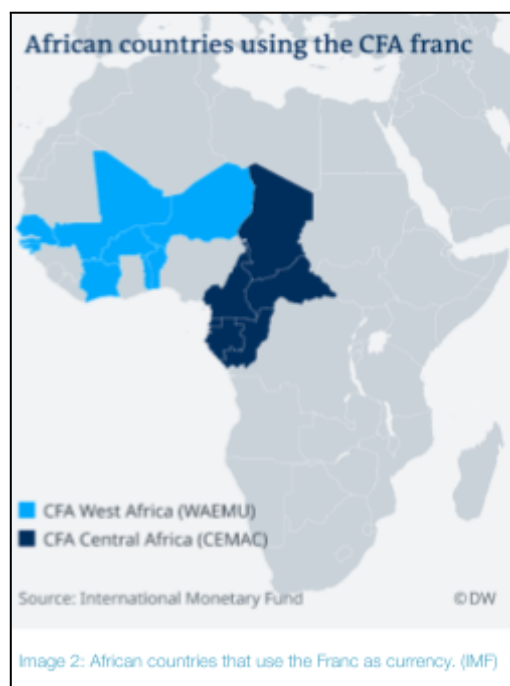


transition into a global economy and democratic institutions. The organ is highly endorsed by the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU).

III. Involved Countries and Organisations

Niger

Currently, Niger is ruled by the military junta under the regime of Amadou Abdramane, who has shown a desire to continue ruling through a centralised and consolidated political system in which violence enacted by the Junta and the military loyalists will continue to act as the force of stability in the country. They have shown desires to eliminate terrorism and consider the enactment of martial law essential in providing political stability. The current government has strong ties with neighbouring states like Burkina Faso, which have also experienced coups in the recent past. Recognising the potential decline in relations after consolidation, the current government has shown increased alignment with Putin's Russia and the paramilitary organisation known as the Wagner Group. Due to its critical involvement in the trade of uranium, Niger has neither completely shut down relations with the West nor has it allowed them to mend. It is highly likely that the current government will continue the military junta rule unless an international intervention or mediation occurs.



France

As the previous coloniser of most of West Africa, including Niger, France still plays a particularly important role in the diplomatic dialogue between the European Union (EU) and the new Junta regime. For most of West Africa, France originally pursued a goal of economically binding the newly independent states to itself through a policy known as "Françafrique." This policy, also including Niger for a rather long period of time, bound countries in West Africa economically to France by employing the use of the Franc as the national currency, and providing mutual trade agreements that were reportedly unfair and a form of "neo-colonialism." The current regime in Niger has explicitly stated that such meddling in national affairs by outside powers, often directly referring to France, is unacceptable.



In response, France currently recognises Bazoum's government as the rightful government of Niger. France has withdrawn its ambassadors and other diplomatic agents from Niger following the coup, establishing a deep reduction in formal relations. The best example of this is when the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs explicitly stated in 2023: "France reiterates its strong condemnation of the coup attempt under way in Niger and of the detention of President Bazoum and his family."

Russia

Russia has a relatively pragmatic position on the issue altogether. Although Russia has not recognised the Junta regime in any official way, they have made strong announcements that display its stance on the issue. Historically, Russia has always been interested in undermining Western (French and American mostly) intervention in Western Africa to formulate alliances that can supply Russia with the mineral resources that are required to supplement the Russian army in its efforts to expand into Ukraine since 2021. Consequently, Russia does not necessarily have to align itself with the new Junta regime, as its instability or lack of recognition by the United Nations could alienate Russia from the rest of the world; however, Russia already benefits massively from the nationalistic stance of the Junta regime, as their actions have reduced American and French involvement in the region.

China

China's stance on the issue is highly similar to that of Russia, but for different reasons. Firstly, China, in contrast to Russia, has already recognised the new regime of the Junta. The background behind this decision is fundamental in understanding why this was the case. China, since its economic boom in economy, is seeking to increase economic trade with African countries in order to tackle US dominance in international trade. China has been mostly successful in these efforts so far. In this example, the fact that the United States of America and the European Union are slowly cutting ties with the new regime implies an opportunity for China to develop economic ties that can bolster trade and Chinese dominance in Middle Africa altogether.





United States of America

The United States holds a very similar position to France in the matter. The US has not recognised the new Junta regime and has directly called for a restoration of democracy in Niger. The US has also suspended military aid that was being supplied to the previous government and has demonstrated that this will remain the case until democracy is restored. Since the start of the Trump administration, there have been divergences in international policy in many regions, but Niger has not yet been a topic of debate in the Senate. Consequently, the future of the American stance is not yet fully determined.

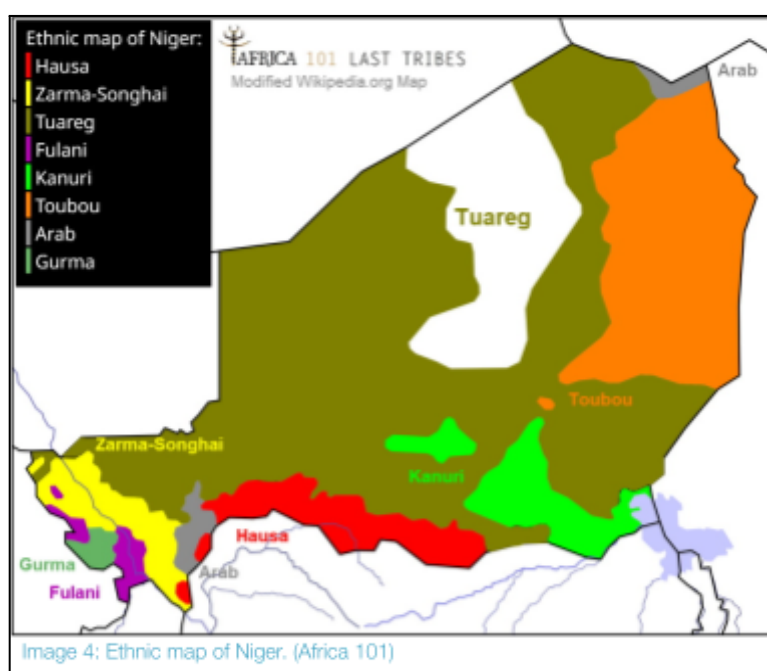
IV. Focused Overview of the Issue

Before delving deep into the focused background of the issue, I would like to make it clear to the experts that the agenda item is not too complex and does not require lengthy paragraphs explaining the history and geographical background of the topic. Consequently, it is instead advised for experts to realise the fact that debate will revolve mostly around the social, economic, and political position of Niger both internally and externally. For that reason, the subtopics will be divided accordingly. Although further research is highly encouraged for those seeking advanced knowledge of the history of coups or the geography of Niger, it is by no means critical for understanding the topic.

1. Social Aspects

Niger, like most other West African countries, is truly diverse in its social background, which also makes itself highly apparent when the background of the coup and the political regimes is uncovered. Niger is predominantly a Hausa majority nation since although the Hausa group make up a minority of the area when it comes to the map of Niger, they occupy a large portion of the urban areas. Contrastingly, the Tuareg people are the most prominent ethnic group in the rural areas of Niger, and they play a very small role in the political landscape of Niger, as they don't occupy a majority in most major urban centres.

The Hausa group is known for, and this is also true for the Nigerian subpopulation as well, seeking greater





autonomy and political involvement since the establishment of the state of Niger in 1960. Contrastingly, most of the leaders of Niger, including the pre-coup leader Bazoum, have been of Arabic Sunni origin. This has been known for sparking a topic of social division where no leader, whether military or democratic, has been able to gather full support from the other ethnic group. This was also the case for Bazoum, who had previously failed to secure support from the Hausa population despite winning the election. Some interpret this as the foundational reason as to why the Hausa origin Amadou Abdramane decided to overthrow the regime with little fear for public outcry.

A similar case can also be made about religion. Most Nigeriens are of Muslim origin, but a large percentage of the population is also of Native origin. All of this, with the added fact that about 31% of the population is unable to read or write, the establishment of democratic institutions requires foundational support for there to be communication and trust between the various ethnic and religious groups. Similarly, due to a low level of development, some rural population, mostly of Tuareg origin, tend to be highly disassociated with centralised political endeavours and pursue a rural lifestyle.

Although the United Nations always advocates for democracy and the establishment of republics, a republic is only efficient if it can appeal to the entire population and cannot be corrupted. Similarly, such discrepancies also allow for paramilitary and terrorist organisations to gain support from the uneducated public in certain circumstances. Consequently, any effort made to achieve a democratic transition must keep this in mind, as a lack of recognition of these factors could easily lead to failure of clauses and breakdown of efforts.

2. Economic Aspects

Although Niger indeed has a very weak economy, it still plays a critical role in its potential transition to a democracy again. First of all, Niger is a landlocked country, which in turn means that the country is highly dependent on electricity from Nigeria, and the trade routes across West Africa, as well as international aid. Until the coup, the Nigerien economy highly relied on aid from the EU, particularly France, and most of the corporate international investment came from French companies.

This came as a result of how Niger is the 7th largest producer of Uranium, an element that is key for supplying the nuclear-based energy economy of France. As one would expect, the souring of relations hindered this trade deal, and now, Niger is still unable to find an alternative partner other than the skeptic China to sell its Uranium resources. Similarly, due to the low level of infrastructure development, any economic collapse could potentially directly lead to mass famines and internal displacement of thousands of people from the rural areas, where, without central aid, any desertification or drought could force mass displacement.



Consequently, although France and the US, key economic partners from the past, are hesitant to continue this trade, the supply of aid, both humanitarian and economic, is necessary for the survival of Niger's economy. Similarly, in recent years, ECOWAS officially sanctioned the existing reserves of Niger's wealth in parallel to the sanctions employed by the EU.

The decision by the current Junta government to instead ally with China and Russia as trading partners is slower than what is required for Niger to function and perform well economically. This brings about the idea that bringing democracy through economic isolation or any other method could easily cause a humanitarian crisis, and that experts must be mindful of this instability in their clauses to prevent objections.

3. Political Aspects

Since details regarding the coup itself have already been discussed. This section will instead explore the nature of regional alignment, threats to political security, and international legitimacy. Currently, to survive politically, the military junta must either accept democratisation or formulate some sort of international legitimacy by establishing strong alliances with major powers worldwide. This can be achieved in many ways from the perspective of the military junta. They must either fulfil their promises and deliver actual security to the unstable landscape of Niger, or get recognition from major powers like the AU, the US, or Russia.

It is also important to recognise that the inclusion of Niger into the United Nations would surrender any kind of backup support for the Bazoum regime. At that point, a return to democracy would not be possible in any way, as the government would have their recognition. Keeping this in mind, a proper solution would therefore require the integration of Niger into the rest of the global or regional economy to avoid humanitarian collapse while also making sure not to give the government the legitimacy it seeks.

This again is particularly important, considering how the junta has been previously accused of conducting abuses of human rights and employing unnecessary force against the public. Similarly, the restoration of economic ties with the rest of the previous partners would at least allow the circulation of trade, which would in turn facilitate financial supply that can help defeat terrorist groups or bring about humanitarian supply.

Lastly, it is also important to look at the landscape from a regional perspective. Niger is actively allying with countries like Burkina Faso in an effort to oppose the democratic requirements of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The political aspects of the Nigerien post-coup landscape are indeed highly complex, but it is this complexity that makes it highly essential to formulate a solution, which otherwise would simply result in possible total or partial humanitarian collapse.



V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
26/07/2023	President Bazoum is officially overthrown
26/07/2023	The National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) is established by the junta to assume power
30/07/2023	The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) applies sanctions on Niger
07-08/2023	ECOWAS threatens possible military intervention if constitutional order is not restored
08/2023	Junta blocks supply of Uranium to France
08/2023	Niger signs a mutual defense pact with Mali and Burkina Faso in response to ECOWAS pressure
09/2023	French troops and administration officially withdrew from Niger altogether
11-12/2023	EU+US suspend economic aid and supply to Niger, financial crisis erupts in Niger



01/2024	The African Union suspends Niger until a return to democracy
01-03/2024	Junta allies itself with China and Russia / Wagner
08/2024	Niger aligns with Burkina Faso in opposing the decisions of ECOWAS

VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

Due to the extremely novel nature of the event. There has only been official action taken by the United Nations until now. This is mainly due to how there have been similar coups in the region at the same time and how the P5 countries had very different interests and could not agree on how they should approach the coup.

This sole action was a press statement by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in August 2023 that called out the Nigerien coup government for being illegitimate and demanded the release of Bazoum and his family, who were being held captive.

Though direct action on Niger has been limited, there are several past resolutions and conventions that show how the international community has previously attempted to regulate mercenarism and unconstitutional changes of the government:

- [Organization of African Unity \(OAU\) Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa \(1977\):](#) This is a regional convention on mercenaries as a serious crime against peace and security. It is directed against persons, not corporate entities, limiting its applicability to modern-day PMSCs. Many states in Africa and West are parties to it, however its enforcement has been inconsistent. Resulting in a continuation of foreign mercenary influences in Niger despite its ratification.
- [United Nations Security Council Resolution 2690 \(2023\):](#) This resolution terminated MINUSMA in Mali. Although the resolution does not directly target Niger, the withdrawal demonstrated the Security Council's reduced role in Sahel's stabilization. For Niger, this meant fewer multilateral mechanisms to contain mercenarism or coup related instability.
- [African Union Constitutive Act, Article 30 \(2000\):](#) The African Union (AU) has the power to suspend governments that come to power through unconstitutional means. Following Niger's 2023 coup, the



African Union Peace and Security Council applied this principle and suspended Niger's membership. While symbolic, enforcement is limited and depends on cooperation from neighboring states.

- [International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries \(1989\)](#): This Convention was endorsed by Resolution 44/34 on 4 December 1989, and became effective on 20 October 2001. The Convention criminalises mercenary activity, including recruitment and financing, and obliges states to bring perpetrators to justice. It has 37 signatories and parties, including most African states such as Cameroon and Mali. However, major military powers have not ratified it, limiting its scope. For Niger and neighboring states in the region, this has created enforcement gaps that external actors can exploit.
- [The Montreux Document \(2008\)](#): It was developed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Switzerland, as an informal code outlining present legal obligations and best practice for states about PMSCs operating in armed conflicts. Although it is currently endorsed by 59 Member States, Niger and its neighbors have not formally endorsed it, and oversight of private contractors in the Sahel remains weak, which has allowed foreign groups to operate in the grey zone between legality and illegality.
- [ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance](#): This regional policy outlaws unconstitutional changes of government and allows the organization to suspend its Member States as was the case with Niger in 2023. However, Member States have been unable to reach a unified decision that would back up the enforcement, leading to reluctant support for sanctions and other measures.

VII. Failed Solution Attempts

As said, there have been close to no actions taken by the United Nations to solve the issue yet. So, the main reasons as to why this has been the case are: discrepancies between P5 interests, local instability, and a lack of a platform to discuss the topic without recognising the state as legitimate by the United Nations.

Attempts made at the regional and international level have also shown their limitations. ECOWAS was quick to impose sanctions and even threatened military intervention, but these measures were not followed by a unified decision among its members. Some countries in the group opposed escalation, which weakened the credibility of ECOWAS and reduced the total pressure on the junta. The African Union also suspended Niger under Article 30 of its Constitutive Act, yet this step remained largely symbolic and did not create any prominent pathway back to civilian rule.

International legal frameworks, such as the 1989 UN Mercenary Convention, provide a basis against unconstitutional changes of government and mercenary activity; however, their enforcement is uneven.



Major powers have not ratified the UN Convention, and in the Sahel region, domestic courts lack the capacity or willingness to prosecute violations. Similarly, non-binding documents like the Montreux Document have never been implemented in Niger or its neighbors, which leaves oversight gaps in practice.

Lastly, the sanctions that were applied by the European Union and the United States in late 2023 had a limited effect on the junta but created additional strain on Niger's already fragile economy. This had a deepening effect on the financial crisis without producing meaningful political concessions. Together, these failures show that existing approaches have either been too divided, too symbolic, or too indirect to guide Niger toward a democratic and peaceful transition.

VIII. Possible Solutions

Many possible details that have to be kept in mind have been explicitly mentioned across the report, so if any experts have passed them, it is highly recommended for them to review these before formulating clauses.

Before everything, it is important to recognise that whatever decision is employed by the United Nations/Advisory Panel could directly or indirectly lead to a financial or humanitarian crisis in Niger, as the economy is already on the brink of collapse, and a lapse in support would directly result in the already unstable infrastructure failing to supply fundamental rations like food, water, or electricity to the populations living in rural regions. Therefore, all actions must be mindful of this risk and ensure that humanitarian supply is provided to prevent this from happening if the risk is to be taken.

On a similar but different note, the United Nations should consider recognising the Junta government as a last resort, and consequently could potentially use mediators or third parties to explore options of trade or diplomacy. The reason for this was already explained above. Another method in approaching this could potentially be through aiming to solve the fundamental security threats that “forced” the Junta to take charge to begin with, like the terrorist organisations alike.

Additionally, experts should remember that each day that no trade connections are established, both the West and Niger experience only further economic decline, and a solution to this must ensure that no official powerful organisation like the United Nations or any major powers like the United States of America recognises the coup regime to avoid consolidation of power without opposition.

For this reason, stronger coordination between ECOWAS, the African Union, and the United Nations is necessary. A joint framework on border control, intelligence sharing, and targeted sanctions could help reduce the space for mercenary activity and transnational arms flows that destabilise Niger's transition. Humanitarian aid corridors under UN monitoring could ensure that food and medical supplies reach rural



communities without empowering the junta, while conditional economic incentives, such as the gradual lifting of sanctions in return for clear steps toward elections, would give the regime incentives to compromise.

Finally, Niger's external alignments with France, the US, Russia, and China must be managed carefully. Foreign partnerships should be tied directly to democratic benchmarks and human rights monitoring, ensuring that trade and investment support a peaceful transition rather than prolonging authoritarian rule.

IX. Useful Links

- [The Tumultuous History of Niger: A Nation Plagued By Coups](#)
 - A history of Niger for those interested.
- [Geography Now! NIGER](#)
 - A geographical overview of Niger.
- [Russia Expands Nuclear Ambitions in Africa With Niger Power Plant Deal - The Moscow Times](#)
 - An article explaining Russia's expanding nuclear cooperation with Niger and its implications for Africa's geopolitical landscape.
- [Coup in Niger explained](#)
 - A video documentary about the recent events in Niger, explaining the coup.
- [Niger | International Crisis Group](#)
 - A research based overview by the International Crisis Group analyzing Niger's security challenges, including insurgencies and regional instability.
- [How Niger's Coup Might Lead to War](#)
 - A video explaining the unstable nature of Niger's political landscape and its potential applications.
- [Constitutive Act | African Union](#)
 - A document outlining the foundational principles of the African Union and its stance on unconstitutional changes of government.



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