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Study Guide

African Union

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COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

The African Union (AU) committee in Model United Nations (MUN) simulates the real-world African Union, a continental organization established in 2002 to promote unity, cooperation, and sustainable development among African nations. This committee addresses critical issues like conflict resolution, economic integration, human rights, and peacekeeping. Delegates in this MUN committee typically discuss contemporary challenges affecting African countries, such as political instability, climate change, and economic disparities, while seeking solutions that align with the AU's vision for a prosperous and integrated Africa.

First Topic: The question of Somaliland

Victoria Lukander

1. Introduction

The chairs of this committee, representing the African Union (AU), seek to address the complex issue of Somaliland's quest for recognition and the ensuing geopolitical and socio-economic ramifications. The African Union is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) founded in 1963 to foster cooperation and solidarity among African nations. The AU is guided by its vision of "An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena." The AU has historically dealt with issues of territorial integrity, self-determination, and conflict resolution. Previous actions by the AU on matters of secessionist movements and territorial disputes provide valuable lessons for navigating the delicate situation in Somaliland.

2. Key Terms

- **Somaliland:** A self-declared independent state in the Horn of Africa, which seceded from Somalia in 1991 but lacks international recognition. It is located in the southern coast of the Gulf of Aden and bordered by Djibouti to the northwest, Ethiopia to the south and west, and Somalia to the east. Its claimed territory has an area of 176,120 square kilometres with approximately 6.2 million people as of 2024. The capital and largest city is Hargeisa.
- **De facto independence:** Refers to a situation where a region or territory operates as if it is independent, even though it may not have official recognition from other countries.
- **Self-determination:** Denotes the legal right of people to decide their own destiny in the international order. Self-determination is a core principle of international law, arising from customary international law, but also recognized as a general principle of law, and enshrined in a number of international treaties.
- **Territorial integrity:** It is the principle under international law where sovereign states have a right to defend their borders and all territory in them from another state.
- **African Union (AU):** A continental organization consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent.

It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).

- **Organisation of African Unity (OAU):** The OAU was founded in 1963 to promote self-government, respect for territorial boundaries and social progress throughout the African Continent. Membership is open to all independent African countries.
- **Mogadishu:** Mogadishu, locally known as Xamar or Hamar, is the capital and most populous city of Somalia. The city has served as an important port connecting traders across the Indian Ocean for millennia and has an estimated urban population of 2,610,483.
- **Somali National Movement (SNM):** The Somali National Movement was one of the first and most important organized guerilla groups and Mujahideen groups that opposed the Siad Barre regime in the 1980s to the 1990s, as well as being the main anti-government faction during the Somaliland War of Independence.

3. Overview of the Topic

Somaliland is part of Somalia and the larger Horn of Africa region. It has hundreds of miles of coastline along the Gulf of Aden to the north, and it borders Ethiopia to the south and west and Djibouti to the northwest. Puntland, a semiautonomous state of Somalia that lies due east, disputes some of Somaliland's territorial claims.

Somaliland broke ties with Somalia's government in Mogadishu after declaring independence in 1991, and has sought international recognition as an independent state since then. No foreign government recognizes its sovereignty, but many effectively acknowledge the region as separate from Somalia.

It has held its own democratic elections since 2003, and in 2010 it saw a largely peaceful transfer of power to the opposition Peace, Unity, and Development Party. The United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the European Union (EU) sent delegations to observe Somaliland's 2017 presidential election. Somaliland postponed its 2022 election and extended President Muse Bihi Abdi's term by two years, citing financial constraints; its next vote is currently set for November 13, 2024.

History

Somaliland's history as a distinct region of Somalia dates back to the late nineteenth century. The territory was a British protectorate until 1960, when it unified with the rest of present-day Somalia, which had been under Italian rule. The merger faced challenges early on, with many in Somaliland rejecting the centralization of power in the country's south.

A rebel group, the Somali National Movement (SNM), emerged in Somaliland in the 1980s opposing the military junta of President Siad Barre, which seized power in 1969. In January 1991, SNM and other insurgent groups ousted Barre, whose forces had killed tens of thousands of Somalilanders and destroyed much of the region's infrastructure. SNM refused to recognize an interim government led by another militia group, and in May it declared Somaliland's independence, with the city of Hargeisa as its capital.

Delegates took a decade to thrash out a new constitution for Somaliland, which voters overwhelmingly approved in 2001. The referendum saw a transition from a power-sharing agreement among leading clans to a multiparty democracy. Although some international observers applauded the peaceful vote, no government recognized the process.

Somaliland's case for independence

The Somaliland government asserts that it meets most of the requirements of a sovereign democratic state: it holds free and fair elections, has its own currency and security forces, and issues its own passports. It also says that its independence claim is consistent with a longstanding norm of the African Union and its predecessor that colonial-era borders should be maintained. Some analysts also note that Somalilanders are predominantly from the Isaaq clan, and thus ethnically distinctive from other Somalis.

Somaliland's strategic importance

Somaliland is positioned along the Gulf of Aden near the entrance to the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, a major sea-lane through which almost one-third of the world's shipping passes. Its coastline has made it and neighboring Eritrea and Djibouti attractive partners for foreign governments looking for sea access and a maritime presence in the region. Djibouti has become a hub for foreign military bases; China, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States all have facilities in the country. Major foreign powers, including China, Russia, and the UAE, have also increasingly courted Eritrea.

However, Somaliland will likely continue to struggle to build these types of relationships without broad international recognition or a compromise with Somalia, as illustrated by its controversial port investment deals. Diplomacy is also likely to be complicated by Somalia's ongoing battle against the al-Shabaab Islamist insurgent group, as well as deteriorating security and stability in the broader Horn of Africa region. The U.S. special envoy for the Horn of Africa said that the deal has been weaponized by al-Shabaab to generate new recruits to undermine regional security.

Countries such as nearby Sudan and Ethiopia are also suffering internal conflicts with spillover effects, and the region is hammered with climate disasters, including historic droughts and torrential floods that drive severe hunger. Experts are also concerned that the pending Berbera port deal will escalate the controversy between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile River. More recently, amid war between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas, Iran-backed rebels in Yemen have launched strikes on shipping in the Red Sea, adding another layer of volatility to the region.

4. Timeline of the Topic

- **7th Century:** Islam starts to make inroads into the area of modern-day Somaliland.
- **14th Century:** The area's Islamic sultanates come under the suzerainty of the Christian Ethiopian Empire.
- **1527:** Sultanate of Adal revolts against Ethiopian rule and subsequently conquers much of Ethiopia, before being defeated with the help of the Portuguese in 1543.
- **1888:** Britain establishes the protectorate of British Somaliland through treaties with the local sultanates.
- **1899:** Islamic cleric Mohammed Abdullah rises against British rule, going on to establish the Dervish State, which survives until it is destroyed by British forces in 1920.
- **1960:** British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland become independent and merge to form the Somali Republic.
- **1988-1991:** Civil war in Somalia, leading to the collapse of the Siad Barre regime.
- **1991:** The former British Somaliland declares unilateral independence as Somaliland following the ousting of Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre, which plunges the rest of Somalia into anarchy.
- **2001:** More than 97% of the population votes to endorse the constitution adopted in 1997, in a referendum aimed at affirming Somaliland's self-declared independence.
- **2003:** First own democratic elections
- **2016:** Somaliland celebrates 25 years of self-declared independence, but remains unrecognised.
- **2024:** Ethiopia and Somaliland sign a memorandum of understanding for landlocked Ethiopia to use one of Somaliland's ports. Somalia describes the agreement as an act of "aggression".

5. Past Action

Countries and organizations have been involved in various ways in addressing Somaliland's claims for recognition, with mixed results. The AU has historically opposed changes to colonial-era borders, as outlined in its Constitutive Act. This stance is rooted in a fear of encouraging secessionist

movements across the continent. In 2005, an AU fact-finding mission visited Somaliland and produced a report acknowledging Somaliland's unique case, but no action followed. Somaliland's lack of international recognition has hampered its ability to engage in diplomatic and economic relations on a global scale, leaving it dependent on informal trade and foreign aid.

Somalia and Somaliland

Mogadishu continues to reject Somaliland's call for independence and strongly condemns its unilateral attempts to negotiate major international agreements. However, Somaliland remains steadfast in its ambitions. In December 2023, Somalia announced that the country was ready to reopen talks with Somaliland to resolve their disputes, under mediation by neighboring Djibouti. The following week, Somaliland struck its provisional deal with Ethiopia on the port of Berbera. The agreement prompted swift backlash from Somalia, which called it an illegal act of "aggression" and recalled its ambassador to Ethiopia. In the aftermath of this dispute, the timeline for resuming Somaliland-Somalia talks remains unclear, but they are likely to be delayed indefinitely, experts say.

International support for Somaliland's independence

Many countries have encouraged the breakaway state's elections and economic development, but none have recognized Somaliland. While some experts see historical and geopolitical reasons for countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya to take this step, others say the African Union (AU) would have to be the first to do so. "The United States and the UN and all of their allies have worked hard to try to build up the AU and position it as a moral authority," says Bruton. The bloc, however, has feared that formal recognition would embolden other secessionist movements on the continent, such as Nigeria's Biafra or Morocco's Western Sahara, to demand the same. Since the creation of a continental bloc in 1963, there have only been two widely recognized border changes in Africa: Eritrea's split from Ethiopia in 1993 and South Sudan's independence in 2011. In the fallout of Somaliland's January 2024 tentative port deal with Ethiopia, several countries and blocs such as the United States, Egypt, AU, and EU called for calm in the region and for Somalia's sovereignty to be respected.

6. Country Positions

Somalia: Firmly opposes Somaliland's independence and maintains that it is part of its sovereign territory. Somalia views any recognition of Somaliland as a violation of its territorial integrity. The historical roots of the relationship between Somalia and Somaliland extend back to the colonial era. The territory now known as Somaliland was a British protectorate called British Somaliland, while the rest of Somalia was an Italian colony

known as Italian Somaliland. These separate colonial administrations fostered distinct political, social, and economic systems within the two regions. On the other hand, the Federal Government of Somalia considers Somaliland an integral part of its territory. Successive Somali governments have sought to reintegrate Somaliland, arguing for the preservation of Somalia's territorial integrity. Internationally, most countries and organizations, including the United Nations and the African Union, support Somalia's stance, advocating for dialogue and reconciliation to address the issue.

Ethiopia: Although Ethiopia has not officially recognized Somaliland, it has established significant economic and strategic ties, particularly through agreements related to the use of Somaliland's ports. Ethiopia has emerged as a key player in recent years, seeking access to the Gulf of Aden through Somaliland's ports. Although Ethiopia has not recognized Somaliland as independent, its actions signal increasing engagement with the region.

Kenya: As a neighboring country, Kenya has expressed interest in maintaining stability in the region, although it has not taken an official stance on Somaliland's recognition. The Foreign Affairs Ministry of Kenya has dispatched the envoy Philip Mundia Githiora to establish a mission in the capital of Somaliland – Hargeisa. This was preceded by talks between Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Monica Juma and the new envoy of Somaliland to Kenya Omar Bashe. Bashe has stated: "We have a long history with Kenya dating back to colonial days. The move by Kenya to open a mission in Hargeisa will be a massive boost to our economic and social transactions." He had been seeking the mission's formation for about ten months and urged Kenya Airways to start direct flights between Nairobi and Hargeisa.

7. Questions a Resolution Must Answer

- How can the African Union balance the principle of territorial integrity with the right to self-determination in Somaliland's case?
- What steps can the AU take to mediate between Somalia and Somaliland, ensuring peace and stability in the region?
- Should the African Union or individual member states recognize Somaliland's independence, and what would be the geopolitical consequences of such recognition?
- How can international actors, including the UN and neighboring countries, contribute to resolving the political and economic challenges faced by Somaliland?
- What measures should be taken to prevent other secessionist movements across Africa in light of Somaliland's case?

8. Conclusion

The question of Somaliland is a complex and multifaceted issue that touches upon themes of self-determination, territorial integrity, and regional stability. While Somaliland has functioned as an independent entity for over three decades, it remains unrecognized internationally. The African Union, along with key stakeholders in the region, must weigh the competing interests of Somalia's territorial claims against Somaliland's right to self-determination. As Ethiopia increases its involvement, the geopolitical landscape surrounding Somaliland may shift, requiring a balanced and diplomatic response from the AU and the international community.

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Second topic: Controlling the development of coups d'état

Antonín Babouček

1. Introduction

The chairs of this committee, representing the African Union (AU), seek to address the complex issue of coups d'état and the ensuing geopolitical and socio-economic ramifications. The African Union is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) founded in 1963 to foster cooperation and solidarity among African nations. The AU is guided by its vision of "An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena." The AU has historically dealt with issues of territorial integrity, self-determination, and conflict resolution. Previous actions by the AU on matters of secessionist movements and territorial disputes provide valuable lessons for navigating the delicate situation in Somaliland.

2. Key Terms

- Coup d'État: A sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of government power by a small group, often involving military forces.
- Military Junta: A government led by military leaders following a coup.
- Unconstitutional Change of Government: A situation where a country's government is overthrown or changed without following the constitutional process, often through a coup.
- Sovereignty: The authority of a state to govern itself without outside interference.
- Democratic Transition: The process by which a country moves from a non-democratic regime, such as a military dictatorship, to a democratic system of governance.

3. Overview of the Topic

Africa's political history has been deeply influenced by coups d'État, with many countries undergoing frequent changes in leadership through undemocratic means. Coups have disrupted governance, contributing to economic and political instability. These coups are often justified by their perpetrators as necessary to "correct" government failures, particularly in addressing corruption, political exclusion, or mismanagement. However,

the outcomes of such coups have typically been negative, as military juntas have rarely succeeded in implementing reforms that improve the lives of citizens.

Coups d'État often lead to international condemnation, with regional and international organizations such as the African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) taking steps to prevent and address them. Despite this, coups continue to occur, highlighting the deep-rooted challenges of weak institutions, ethnic tensions, and economic instability across many African states.

3.1. History of Coups d'État in Africa

The post-independence period in Africa was marked by a surge in coups, as newly independent nations struggled to establish stable political systems. The first significant coup in Africa occurred in Egypt in 1952, when a group of military officers, led by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, overthrew King Farouk. This set the stage for a series of military takeovers in other African nations, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, as many African countries gained independence from colonial rule.

Countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Uganda experienced multiple coups during this period. These takeovers were often driven by internal political struggles, ethnic tensions, and dissatisfaction with economic conditions. For instance, Nigeria witnessed its first military coup in 1966, followed by several more in the following decades, contributing to its turbulent political history.

The 1990s saw a relative decline in coups, largely due to increased democratization efforts and international pressure. However, the 2000s and 2010s have seen a resurgence of coups, with countries such as Mali, Guinea, and Sudan experiencing military takeovers, often triggered by political corruption, economic hardship, or internal conflict.

3.2. Current Situation

In recent years, Africa has witnessed a resurgence of coups, particularly in West Africa and the Sahel region. Between 2020 and 2023, there were at least seven coups or attempted coups across the continent, with countries like Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger experiencing military takeovers. The coups have often been a response to a combination of factors, such as political corruption, election irregularities, economic mismanagement, and

security challenges, particularly the growing threat of jihadist insurgencies in the Sahel.

In Mali, a military junta has been in power since August 2020, when the government of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was overthrown. The Malian junta staged another coup in May 2021, further delaying a return to civilian rule. In Burkina Faso, the military seized power in January 2022, ousting President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, citing failures to contain the Islamist insurgency that has destabilized much of the country.

The region has been destabilized by terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), creating security vacuums that weak governments have struggled to address. Frustration with the inability of civilian governments to manage these crises has provided justification for military leaders to intervene, claiming they will restore security and order.

International organizations, including the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have condemned these coups and imposed sanctions, but the impact of these efforts has been mixed. The situation remains fluid, with many countries grappling with a cycle of instability, military rule, and weak governance structures that make a return to constitutional rule challenging.

4. Timeline of Coups d'État in Africa

- **1952:** The Egyptian coup, led by the Free Officers Movement, overthrows King Farouk and establishes a republic.
- **1963:** Togo becomes the first Sub-Saharan African country to experience a coup, where President Sylvanus Olympio is assassinated.
- **1966:** Nigeria experiences its first military coup, marking the beginning of a series of military regimes in the country.
- **1969:** Colonel Muammar Gaddafi overthrows the Libyan monarchy, beginning his long rule over Libya.
- **1971:** Idi Amin seizes power in Uganda, establishing a brutal dictatorship.
- **1983:** A coup in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) brings Captain Thomas Sankara to power, ushering in a brief period of socialist reforms.
- **1999:** A military coup in Ivory Coast marks the beginning of a long period of political instability in the country.

- **2008:** The military overthrows the government of Mauritania, leading to international condemnation.
- **2012:** A coup in Mali leads to the collapse of its government, as insurgents and extremists seize control of the northern regions.
- **2017:** Zimbabwe's long-time president, Robert Mugabe, is forced to resign following a military intervention, though this is not formally termed a coup.
- **2020-2021:** Mali experiences two coups in quick succession, further destabilizing the region.
- **2021:** A coup in Guinea removes President Alpha Condé from power, following years of political unrest.

5. Past Action

Numerous actions have been taken by African and international bodies to address coups d'État and their consequences. The African Union (AU) has established protocols and frameworks designed to discourage unconstitutional changes of government. The AU's Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government (2000) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (2007) specifically address the issue of coups, committing member states to uphold democratic principles and reject coups.

The United Nations has also played a significant role in addressing coups, often through peacekeeping missions and political interventions. In cases like Mali (2012) and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the UN has deployed peacekeeping forces to stabilize post-coup environments, protect civilians, and support democratic transitions.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been particularly active in responding to coups within its region. ECOWAS has intervened militarily in some instances, as in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the 1990s, and has imposed sanctions on coup leaders, as seen in the case of Mali in 2021.

6. Country Positions on the Topic

- 6.1.** African Union (AU): The AU has consistently condemned coups d'État and unconstitutional changes of government across Africa. Its position, articulated through the Lomé Declaration and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance, reflects a commitment to uphold democratic governance and reject coups. The AU frequently imposes sanctions and suspends membership for countries experiencing coups,

although its ability to enforce these measures varies. In cases like Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, the AU has taken a hard stance, calling for a swift return to civilian rule.

- 6.2.** ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States): ECOWAS plays a critical role in responding to coups within West Africa. The organization has imposed sanctions on coup leaders and called for the restoration of democratic governments, as seen in its responses to recent coups in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso. ECOWAS has sometimes engaged in mediation and, in rare cases, military intervention to restore constitutional order. However, its influence is limited by the willingness of military leaders to comply, as seen in the prolonged transitions in Mali and Guinea.
- 6.3.** Mali: After experiencing two coups in 2020 and 2021, Mali is currently governed by a military junta that has delayed returning the country to civilian rule. The junta has justified its hold on power by citing the need to restore security in a country plagued by jihadist insurgencies. Despite pressure from ECOWAS and international actors, the military regime remains resistant to immediate elections, asserting that the political situation needs to stabilize first.
- 6.4.** Guinea: Following the 2021 coup that ousted President Alpha Condé, Guinea is under military rule. Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, the leader of the coup, has promised a transition to civilian rule but has not provided a clear timeline. The junta has faced sanctions from ECOWAS but continues to govern, arguing that reforms are needed to stabilize the political system and combat corruption before democratic elections can be held.
- 6.5.** Burkina Faso: Burkina Faso experienced two coups in 2022, leading to political instability as the military continues to rule. The military leaders cite the worsening security situation due to jihadist insurgencies as their main justification for taking power. ECOWAS has been active in calling for a return to civilian rule, but like in Mali and Guinea, the military remains in control with a vague transition plan.
- 6.6.** France: France, a former colonial power in many African countries affected by coups, has historically played a significant role in responding to political instability in the region, particularly in the Sahel. France has condemned coups and called for the restoration of democratic governance, but its influence has waned in recent years due to rising anti-French sentiment in countries like Mali

and Burkina Faso. France's military presence in the Sahel, primarily through the anti-terrorism Operation Barkhane, has been a point of contention, and several coup leaders have sought to reduce French influence in their countries.

- 6.7.** United States: The United States has taken a firm stance against coups, emphasizing the importance of democratic governance and the rule of law. Washington has imposed targeted sanctions against

7. Questions a Resolution Must Answer

To effectively address the issue of coups d'État in Africa, any international resolution must answer several key questions:

- How can the international community better support the development of strong democratic institutions in African countries to prevent coups?
 - Solutions could involve providing technical assistance for elections, supporting judicial reforms, and fostering civil society organizations.
- What mechanisms can be implemented to ensure military accountability and discourage military intervention in politics?
 - This might include reforms to civilian control of the military, professionalization of armed forces, and international norms discouraging military interference in governance.
- How can regional organizations like the AU and ECOWAS improve their ability to prevent and respond to coups?
 - This involves strengthening early warning systems, providing rapid diplomatic responses, and ensuring that sanctions or military interventions are effective.
- What role should external powers play in responding to coups, and how can their involvement be made more consistent and principled?
 - This addresses concerns over selective intervention, as well as the need for coordinated international action to discourage unconstitutional changes of government.
- What steps can be taken to address the root causes of coups, such as poverty, corruption, and ethnic tensions?
 - Long-term solutions require addressing the structural issues that fuel political instability, such as economic inequality, corruption, and the exclusion of marginalized groups.

8. Conclusion

Coups d'État remain a significant challenge to political stability and democratic governance in Africa. While international and regional organizations have made efforts to prevent and respond to such events, the recurrence of coups highlights the deep-rooted issues facing many African states. Addressing the causes of coups requires a multifaceted approach that combines support for democratic institutions, economic development, military reform, and respect for human rights.

As the international community continues to grapple with the consequences of coups, particularly in regions like West and Central Africa, it is essential that future resolutions focus on sustainable solutions that empower African nations to build strong, democratic, and resilient political systems.

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