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AS: Topic #1 - The Rise of Coups and Political Instability in Africa

YUNMUN XXXVI

Over the past few years, Africa has seen a concerning rise in military coups and changes of government. Since 2020, several countries including Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Sudan, Chad, Madagascar, and Guinea have experienced sudden military takeovers or prolonged political transitions. These events have reversed much of the democratic progress made across the continent and have created widespread uncertainty about the future of governance in Africa.

The African Union (AU) was founded on the ideals of unity, peace, and democracy.¹² Through documents such as the Lomé Declaration (2000) the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007; ratified 2014), the AU firmly rejects any undemocratic change of government.³⁴ Yet despite these frameworks, the number of coups have increased. The questions of why people in many countries have lost faith in their governments, and why militaries are once again stepping in to take power, must be addressed.

In many cases, coup leaders justify their actions by pointing to issues within the prior government such as corruption, insecurity, and terrorism, claiming that they act in the interest of national stability. However, coups often create new problems: economic sanctions, suspension from the AU or ECOWAS, and worsening humanitarian crises. Ordinary citizens suffer the most as aid is cut off, inflation rises, and regional trade slows down. Moreover, the growing involvement of foreign powers and private military groups has complicated the political landscape and it has made it harder for African nations to maintain full sovereignty and independence.

The African Summit Committee is being asked to find practical long-term solutions that promote peaceful transfers of power, strengthen democratic institutions, and improve regional stability. Delegates should think deeply about how to tackle not just the immediate triggers of coups, but also their deeper causes, such as inequality, insecurity, and the loss of public trust in government.

¹ [Home | African Union](#)

² [OAU CHARTER](#)

³ [Microsoft Word - Charter on Democracy.doc](#)

⁴ [AHG 221 Decl 2 XXXVI_E.pdf](#)

In preparing for this discussion, delegates should consider the following questions:

1. What steps can the African Summit and regional organizations take to prevent coups before they happen?
2. Should the African Union work with military governments to help guide them back toward civilian rule, or should they refrain from involvement until democracy is fully restored?
3. What economic and social reforms could reduce the frustration and instability that often lead to military revolution?
4. How can African nations work together to theorize and implement solutions to political instability?
5. What can be done to facilitate public trust in African democratic governments?

While coups are not a new challenge for Africa, the current wave presents both a danger and an opportunity: a danger of democratic backsliding, yet an opportunity to rethink how African unity and governance can evolve. The hope is that through African-led dialogue, and creative problem solving, the continent can build a more democratic and peaceful future.

Just as a reminder, please make sure to carefully review all your position papers. Plagiarism as well as the use of AI will lead to disqualification from receiving any awards (even the shtick award). As always, everyone should feel free to email me at efish1@mail.yu.edu if you have any questions or points of clarification. While this is an ongoing issue, I truly believe that if we can come together as countries then we can take steps to conquer this problem.

Best of luck,

Ean Fish

Chair, United Nations African Summit

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