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The African Union Commission

Advanced Committee

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AUC: Mandate and History of The African Union and The African Union Commission

On July 9th, 2002, the last papers were signed in Durban, South Africa, officially launching the African Union (AU). A pan-African organization made up of 55 member states, the AU was formed following a decision in September 1999 by its predecessor, The Organization of African Unity (OAU), to create a new continental organization to build upon its work. The creation of the AU marked a seismic shift in the core values and mandate of the African continent. The OAU was formed in 1963 with the main objective of ridding the continent of the remaining holdouts of colonization and apartheid that plagued the land of Africa for centuries. It was founded upon the ideals of freedom, equality, justice, and dignity with a guiding philosophy that promoted the foundation of African unity in common heritage. The AU, while maintaining the same ideals, focuses on increased cooperation and integration of African states in order to realize Africa's full potential, economically and politically. The AU is guided by its vision of "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and

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representing a dynamic force in the global arena.” (African Union, 2024). In 2015, the AU laid down its strategic framework agenda for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. Agenda 2063 is a blueprint of 5, 10, 30, and 40 year plans and desired achievements in order to shape “The Africa we want”. Critically it highlights some flagship goals of the organization. Goals such as ending all wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence, violent conflicts, and genocide in the continent by 2020 were all outlined in the plan. The African Union Commission (AUC) is a sub organ of the AU and serves as the AU’s secretariat, undertaking the day-to-day activities of the Union. It is currently based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It deals with matters that threaten the African vision through a process similar to the United Nations (UN). The AU and the AUC together act as one to enable Africa to play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic, and political problems presented by globalization.

Topic 1: Peacekeeping During the Ethiopian Civil War

Introduction

The Ethiopian civil conflict (2018-present) has drawn international attention to the country and paralyzed their economy. This war is considered to be the deadliest ongoing conflict in Africa, leaving over 600,000 civilians murdered. Due to the tensions between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, thousands of Ethiopians have been abused, arrested, ethnically cleansed, displaced and murdered, resulting in a major humanitarian crisis. Although the AU has the goal of having a more peaceful and well-developed continent by

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having stable governments in all countries by 2063, it is being held back by the political instability in Ethiopia. Additionally, this conflict is taking place in the same country where the AUC is based, projecting an unwanted image regarding the competency of the organization. The AU and the Ethiopian government must resolve this conflict and stabilize the Ethiopian government in order to achieve their 2063 goals.

History

The Ethiopian government fought in the northern region of Tigray from 2020 to 2022, which was under the control of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). This war is considered to be one of the worst ongoing humanitarian crisis/conflicts. Ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and human rights abuses were common. By the end of the war in November 2022, the majority of the region of Tigray was destroyed, and its capital, Mekelle, was controlled by the federal government. Prior to the war, the TPLF was a powerful political force in Ethiopia. Meles Zenawi, a Tigrayan politician and soldier, governed Ethiopia from 1991 to his death in 2012. After his death, the TPLF continued to govern the country until civilians, mainly the Oromo population, protested the TPLF rule and promoted Abiy Ahmed from Oromia to be appointed as the Prime Minister. Once Ahmed became Prime Minister, he promised his country that he would resolve conflicts between ethnic groups in Ethiopia. As promised, Ahmed negotiated with Eritrea to end their 20-year war that caused a paralysis in both countries politically and economically. On November 4, 2020, Ahmed accused the Tigrayans of raiding a federal military camp in

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Mekelle and sent Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) troops to Tigray, which escalated quickly and turned into a civil war. During the war, the Amhara and Afar states allied with the federal government while the Oromo region allied with the Tigrayans. In May 2022, 4,000 citizens were arrested in Amhara to weaken a militia that helped the government repel the TPLF. In April 2022, the government did not stop the killing of the hundreds of Amhara people in Oromia.

Current Situation

During the majority of 2023, the ENDF fought against dominant non-state militias in Amhara, namely the Fano and the Amhara Regional Special Forces, as both groups refused to join the national army. In August 2023, Ethiopia declared a 6-month regional state of emergency because a senior Ethiopian official arraigned the Fano of an attempt to overthrow the regional and federal governments. In Oromia, local militants attacked Amhara enclaves in the region in March 2021. Although the federal government sent troops to fight against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), they were unable to put an end to the violence. In June 2022, Oromia conducted a fatal attack on an Amhara enclave, killing about 200 civilians. Attacks on Amhara-majority areas of Oromia continued until the next month. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed condemned the OLA for their attacks, even though he was born in Oromia. In April 2023, the government began to negotiate for peace with the OLA in Tanzania. With two other negotiations failing, a third one in November 2023 was also unsuccessful due to the OLA's unrealistic demands and the government's failure to resolve issues that are causing national unrest.

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Questions to Consider

1. What strategies can the AUC employ to demonstrate its commitment to resolving conflicts within member states and maintaining a stable political environment?
2. Should the AUC consider deploying a peacekeeping mission in Ethiopia, and if so, what would be the mandate and scope of such a mission?
3. How can the AUC and the government work together to end ethnic cleansing and violence?
4. Should the TPLF or Ahmed cabinet control government to ensure safety in Ethiopia?
Why?
5. What measures can be taken to attract international investment and support rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of the conflict?
6. How can the AU contribute to the economic recovery of Ethiopia post-conflict, considering the significant impact of the war on the country's economy?
7. How can the AUC address concerns of regional destabilization and prevent spill-over of the conflict into neighboring countries?

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Topic 2 Combatting Cultural Violence in The Democratic Republic of Congo.

Introduction

The ongoing humanitarian crisis and cultural violence taking place within the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) truly tells a heartbreaking story of post-colonial Africa. In recent months, the DRC has experienced a spike in violence. Clashes between militant groups over territory and natural resources, extrajudicial killings by security forces, political violence, and rising tensions with neighboring Rwanda regarding its alleged support for militia groups in the Congo have all contributed to the deadly conflict. In addition, the country has recently come out of another fraudulent election. The conflict has resulted in mounting combatant and civilian deaths as well as 6.9 million people internally displaced in the DRC. The situation seems to also be rapidly deteriorating as UN troops dwindle and the insurgent-militias grow, rendering an expanding part of the country unsafe for civilians. The conflict poses a real diplomatic and humanitarian issue for the AU, as the DRC is considered the richest mineral nation in the world with huge supplies of untapped cobalt, uranium, and copper mines. Additionally, one of the greatest mistakes of the OAU and AU was failure to act in the last Congolese conflict, leaving seeds of hate still buried deep within the Congo.

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History

The ongoing violence in eastern DRC can be traced back to Rwanda's important role in the history of the DRC. In 1994, the Rwanda experienced a genocide when Hutu extremists persecuted and ethnically cleansed the Tutsi population and moderate Hutu. The AU and the world stood by and did nothing, fueling mistrust among many. During the genocide, nearly two million Tutsis and moderate Hutus fled into the Kivu provinces of the DRC (then called the Republic of Zaire). A small subset of those Rwandan refugees were Hutu extremists who began organizing militias within the Congo. Pressure intensified as Tutsi militias organized against the Hutu groups and foreign powers took sides. After the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) coup of the genocidal Rwandan government, the new Tutsi-led government began its involvement in DRC. Zaire, which was ruled at the time by dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, was invaded by Rwandan troops led by President Paul Kagame and Tutsi militias based in the Congo with support from Rwanda. Kigali justified these initiatives by claiming that Hutu extremists who had fled across the border were being harbored by the Mobutu regime and that Hutu groups in the eastern DRC remained a threat to their Tutsi population. Rwanda fought the First Congo War alongside other African states, most notably Uganda, Angola, and Burundi. The Rwandan coalition's invasion was coordinated and ultimately successful in 1997 with the help of Zaire's then-opposition leader Laurent Kabila. Kabila was installed as president and changed the country's name to the DRC. Many thousands of people died in the First

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Congo War. Some of these were military; however, a heavy burden was placed on the civilian populations of the Kivu provinces. This is largely due to the brutal methods of warfare employed by each side. The tactics used by the Rwandan soldiers and Tutsi groups were largely accepted as blatant violations of the Geneva Convention and all rules of war. In 1998, the Second Congo War broke out. Also known as the Great African War because it involves many more nation-states. The Second Congo War stemmed from a reversal of alliances. Kabila ordered all foreign troops out of the Congo and allowed Hutu armed groups to organize at the border once again. Kabila also began removing ethnic Tutsis from his government and took measures to weaken Rwanda's military presence in the eastern DRC. An outraged Rwanda responded by invading once again. Kigali's official aim was to create a buffer zone in the Kivu mineral-rich provinces. The militaries of Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, as well as several rebel groups backed by Kigali and Kampala, were opposed by Congolese forces backed by Angola (which also reversed alliances after Laurent Kabila's ascent), Namibia, and Zimbabwe. Laurent Kabila was killed in a coup attempt in 2001 by his own guards amid the chaos of war. Joseph Kabila, Kabila's son, assumed leadership of the country. Shortly afterwards, the war ended in 2002. It, with the accompanying humanitarian crisis, took an estimated total death toll of over three million people. Rwanda, Uganda, and the DRC started carrying out a series of peace accords in 2002 and 2003 that approved Joseph Kabila's transitional administration in Kinshasa. The eastern DRC continued to see turbulence and open confrontations despite these accords and the deployment of a fresh UN peacekeeping force. The March

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M23 Movement (M23), a notable rebel organization comprised mainly of ethnic Tutsis, rose to prominence in the early 2000s. Kinshasa accused Kigali of supporting the M23, a militia that gained unquestionable power in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo between 2012 and 2013. To assist the Congolese army in its conflict with M23, the UN Security Council approved a rare offensive brigade in 2013 under the guidance of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO). MONUSCO was successful in providing the Congolese army with help, and in 2013, M23 canceled their first campaign. A mere year after, it captured Goma, the capital of the Kivu provinces. Additionally, evidence of Rwanda's backing for the M23 permanently harmed relations between Kigali and Kinshasa. In the 21st century, peace pursuits in the DRC clash with a new hurdle: a boom in mining. With vast deposits of metals and rare earths vital for advanced technology, the world's growing need for cobalt, copper, and zinc fuels more conflict in Congo, drawing both local and foreign players such as the US and China into the fray. Both superpowers are massive arms suppliers to the continent, and this vested interest poses a threat to the region.

Current Situation

The unrest seemed to show signs of improvement. In 2019, Félix Tshisekedi was declared the winner of the DRC's federal elections. The transfer of power from President Joseph Kabila marked the first peaceful transfer of power in the DRC's history. However, some polling data suggests that a different candidate may have actually won. In 2022,

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M23 rebels resurfaced and gained control of large swaths of the Kivu provinces by the end of 2023. Kinshasa accused Kigali of supporting the M23 rebels. The AU, EU, and UN backed this claim. In a similar fashion as last time, Rwanda accused the DRC of supporting Hutu militias. Currently, it is also important to note that both Rwanda and Uganda (and their constituent groups) have semi-legitimate financial stakes in mines in the Congo. The situation worsened in December when Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi compared Rwandan President Paul Kagame to Adolf Hitler. Later that month, the White House announced that it had brokered a ceasefire; however, this was quite short-lived. In late February 2024, there was mass public unrest in Kinshasa, Goma, and other popular areas of the DRC. The crowds burned Western, UN, and EU flags and staged mass protests. In this demonstration, protesters said the West supports neighboring Rwanda and that they do not want western hypocrites in their country. Espoir Muhinuka, an activist of the Lucha citizen movement, told the press “We are saying that at the beginning, we are going to do everything so that our authorities withdraw from the European Union, so that our authorities can ally themselves with people who love our country. As you know, these French and these Americans are hypocrites. We want serious partners like BRICS. We tell our authorities to leave the hypocrites and ally themselves with serious people. We understand that the West has caused great suffering to Africa for more than 60 years, and Africa does not move forward. For more than 60 years, they have been stealing from us; they are killing us; they say that they are there for human rights; yet when we are killed at home, they cross their arms. When the Israelis

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kill innocent Palestinians, they say nothing, but they force us to dialogue with those who killed our mothers, our sisters, and those who killed our compatriots. It's impossible." This comes at a time of growing panic in the city as fighting moves closer to Goma, sparking fears of 2012 all over again. These sentiments over the years have led to Kinshasa ordering international and regional contingents to leave the country. Including the critical MONUSCO sparking fear that the power vacuum may be filled by M23 or any of the other combating groups, including but not limited to, the Islamic-linked Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Lundu majority CODECO, the Congolese government-backed Hutu Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FLDR), or any of the other 95+ militias active in the region. The Congolese government is not now alone in this fight, as in May, the South African Development Community (SADC) agreed to deploy troops to eastern Congo to assist with an expected 2,900 troops to arrive in the region this spring (African autumn).

Questions to Consider

1. What strategies can the AUC employ to demonstrate its commitment to resolving conflicts within member states and maintaining a stable political environment?
2. Other peacekeeping efforts in the past have not yet proved effective in maintaining peace. What makes this South African force different?

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3. How can the AUC and AU work to stop non-African nations from meddling in the conflict in retrospect to the mines and over militarization while still promoting positive investment in Africa?
4. The DRC is the resource-richest nation in the world and has a population of over 100 million people. How can the AU help it reach its fullest potential?
5. How can the AU contribute to a peaceful resolution between ethnic Hutus and Tutsis to prevent genocides in the future?
6. How can the AUC address concerns about regional destabilization and prevent the spillover of the conflict into neighboring countries?
7. What steps can the AUC take to facilitate the disarmament and demobilization of armed groups in the DRC, ensuring a comprehensive approach to post-conflict stability?
8. How can the AUC address the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in the DRC, including issues related to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees?

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