

**Committee:** Historical Security Council (HSC)

**Issue:** Addressing the Coup d’Etat in Somalia

**Student Officer:** Harry Ioannou

**Position:** President

---

## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Harry Ioannou and I have the immense honour to serve as the President of the Historical Security Council of the 4th ACGMUN Conference. I am currently an A Levels student in Ekpedetiki Anagennisi, and I am interested in studying Politics and International Relations. I have always been a firm believer of MUN’s ability to combine an educational session with a fun and enjoyable experience, therefore I am particularly looking forward to working with all of you this March. I am confident that our cooperation, and the quality of the committee’s debate will be excellent.

I hope that this guide will prove to be useful during your research on the Somali coup d’etat of 1969, however if you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me via email ([harryioannou23@yahoo.com](mailto:harryioannou23@yahoo.com)).

Kind regards,

Harry Ioannou

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

In the years following Somalia's independence from Great Britain and Italy, it experienced its longest period of stability and democracy. Regardless, Somalia remained a deeply divided country, particularly in the world of politics, with not only the former Italian and British parts contradicting each other, but also the various tribes and ethnic groups of the country trying to promote their agendas.

The first major act of unity in the country was the 1961 Constitutional Referendum, in which the people were called to approve a new Constitution based on the former Italian and British Somaliland ones. In fact, 90% of Somalis approved it, thus the referendum is considered to have significantly contributed to Somalia's stability in the 1960s.

However, Somalia remained divided, something showcased by the large number of candidate parties in the 1969 Legislative Elections - namely 64. As a result of these divides, and the subsequent claims of corruption, a coup d'état, led by the Supreme Revolutionary Council and the Somalian National Armed Forces and triggered by the assassination of President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, ended this period of democracy and created the situation the Council is expected to address.

As claims of involvement on behalf of the Soviet Union arose, the situation in Somalia, an otherwise off-radar state in the 60s, was starting to become one of major international significance, for both the USSR and the USA. The extent to which a military junta could be established, as well as the prospect of Somalia becoming another Soviet satellite state, peaked the West's interest in the region, however it remained unclear what the best response to the situation was.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### **Coup d'Etat**

The forceful overtaking of a government's power.

### **British Somaliland**

The northern part of modern day Somalia, which used to be occupied by the British until 1960.

### **Italian Somaliland**

The southern part of modern day Somalia, and the biggest as far as landmass is concerned, which used to be occupied by Italy until 1960.

### **Somali Youth League (SYL)**

Somalia's first political party and a major player in the years leading up to its independence, as well as the following years, as it gained the majority of seats in the Parliament in 1964 and 1969.

### **Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC)**

The political party which orchestrated the coup d'état and assumed control over the Somali government after 1969.

### **Military Junta**

Similar to a dictatorship, a military junta occurs when an authoritarian government exercises its power over its people with excessive military and police force, usually after assuming power via a coup.

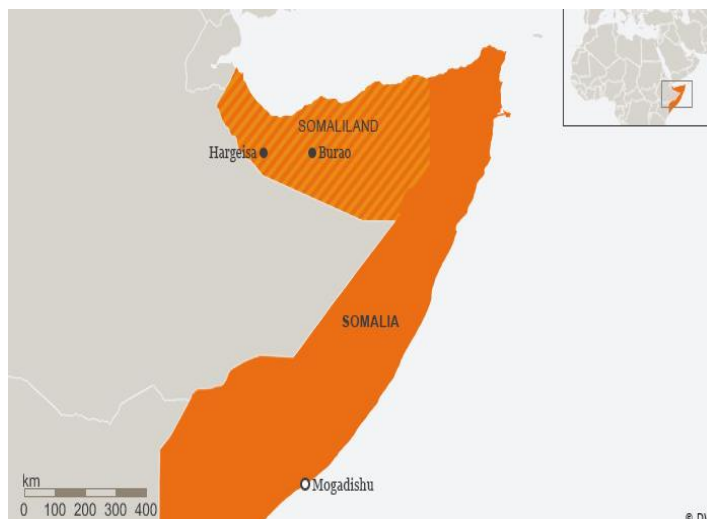
### **Satellite State**

In the context of the Cold War, this refers to a sovereign state that is susceptible to excessive political influence by another major country, such as the USSR or the USA.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Post-independence**

In order to understand the events and the subsequent impact of the coup, one must first examine the events leading up to it, starting from the country's independence on July 1st 1960.



1. Map of Somalia in 1960, picturing British Somaliland in the North and Italian Somaliland (or simply Somalia) in the South.

The two former colonial states, British and Italian Somaliland, united after an effort of almost 30 years, spearheaded by the Somali Youth League (SYL), whereas a government consisting of the former heads of the British and Somali Protectorates was established for the first few years. A system based on the traditional clan divisions of Somali culture was established, drawing inspiration from customary (internationally commonly accepted) legal principles and practices.

A year later, as Somalia's first Constitution was being drafted, a referendum took place, in which 90% of the population approved the clauses and mandates proposed by the government, in an unprecedented act of unity. Unfortunately, this did not automatically render Somalia a socially and politically cohesive country. Three years later, in 1964, the country's first legislative elections gave 69 out of 123 Parliament Seats to the SYL, while the rest had to be divided among 11 different parties, with vastly different views and policies.

This meant two things for Somali politics: Firstly, SYL had a supermajority in the parliament, and thus virtually ruled the country independently, and secondly the rest of the parliament could only pose minimal opposing power to the SYL, as it was too divided among parties to work as a united force.

A few years later, in 1967, Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke was elected as the country's President.

### **1969 Legislative Elections**

A record number of 64 parties from all across Somalia took part in the 1969 Legislative Elections, however SYL was the only one with candidates in all of the country's administrative districts, as well as the one with the most support. Subsequently, it won the majority of Parliamentary Seats once more.

In the following days, the supporters of the various other parties claimed that the SYL committed fraud in order to win the election, thus further deepening the already existing divide in Somali politics. In the peak of these tensions, 25 people lost their lives in anti-fraud demonstrations and related clashes with the police and supporters of other parties.

The government itself however, remained indifferent and took very minimal action to prevent clashes or address the claims or the post-electoral violence, further creating a sense of the SYL having become more authoritarian and corrupt, which was spreading amongst the masses.

## Coup d'Etat

On October 15th 1969, President Sharmarke was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards, for unclear reasons, while on a visit to the Northern Somali city of Las Anod. With the Prime Minister being abroad at the time, uncertainty was prevalent in the country.

His funeral was held on the 20th of October, while the man responsible for his assassination was arrested. However, the next day, the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF), directed by the Supreme Revolutionary Council occupied the Parliament building, Mogadishu's biggest radio station, multiple police departments, the Ministry of Information and the Prime Minister's house.

Sharmarke's assassination has not been proven to have been related to the coup, as his bodyguard never admitted any association with the SRC, thus it is more likely that the SRC saw it as an opportunity to step in and assume control of the country, without necessarily having orchestrated it in order to disorient the government. In fact, there have been claims that the bodyguard assassinated Sharmarke as a result of a personal or family feud, especially likely if one considers how recently the SRC had been formed at the time, thus having limited power, outreach and support. Nonetheless, the sudden absence of a head of state and the uncertainty that was felt throughout the Somali government, combined with the recent electoral unrest, presented a perfect opportunity for them to step in.

After the SNAF occupation of Mogadishu, the former Prime Minister and President were imprisoned, while the current Prime Minister was held hostage in his house. The coup was met with cooperation by the police, while some civilians claimed to view it as a liberation from the SYL's corrupt rule. Radio Mogadishu soon started playing propaganda and military marching songs, while the Parliament and the Supreme Court of Somalia were dissolved by the SRC.

The SRC appointed Siad Barre as its head, and virtual President of Somalia and suspended the Constitution indefinitely. Barre was a Vice Commander in the Somali Army, and had been trained in the USSR, while he was often an advocate for a Marxist-Leninist approach to politics in Somalia. A doctrine of Marxist ideology, as implemented by Vladimir Lenin in the early years of the Soviet Union, and the most popular branch of Marxism followed in the 20th century. This would entail the recognition of the class struggle, the rejection of capitalism and the introduction of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which seeks to overthrow the concept of social class and create a communist state.

One of his first statements as President of the country was that the SRC was trying to rid Somalia off of the SYL's corruption and its unfair rule. He also claimed

that the previously established clan system, as well as Somalia's lack of unity as a result of political and tribal diversity, are facilitators of corruption and authoritarianism.

### **Aftermath and Crisis at hand**

In the 9 years of Somalia's independence, the Soviet Union had been increasingly involved with the country's military, as they offered training to Somali military officers and they stationed a big part of their Naval Fleet in Somalia. Their potential support of the SRC and involvement in the coup has raised questions with regards to the extent to which Somalia could become a Communist State<sup>1</sup>, or a Soviet satellite state.

This further piqued the United States' interest in the situation, as they would try to prevent another country from entering the USSR's sphere of influence. In addition, Somali democracy was significantly jeopardized, along with the safety of its people, while the country's potential role as a puppet state could have detrimental effects on its stability, future and citizens, especially in the case of a US-USSR proxy conflict.

Therefore, it is important to both ensure that Somalia returns to stability and that there are no international insurgencies arising from the crisis in Somalia. In an era where more and more countries plummet into authoritarian regimes and oppressive governments, as a result of the Cold War, ensuring that Somalia does not follow a similar fate should be the key.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED**

### **Soviet Union (USSR)**

Prior to the coup, the USSR provided military aid to Somalia, in the form of soldier and military officer training. As aforementioned, part of the Soviet navy was stationed in Somalia for a prolonged period of time, which further sparked claims that Somalia was slowly shifting towards the USSR's sphere of influence.

However, it is important to note that the USSR's potential with the coup has never been sufficiently proven or admitted by their officials, therefore these claims remain allegations by the West. In the following years, one of the Somali coup'd key figures, Salaad Gabeyre Kediye proved to be a KGB agent, which further incited these allegations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Siad Barre declared a Socialist State in Somalia in 1970

As a consequence, the United States and their allies remained cautious with regards to the situation, and they were particularly eager to prevent the creation of another socialist state in Africa, where the West's influence was starting to decrease.

### **United States (USA)**

Despite their aforementioned suspicions and their condemnation of the coup, the USA took minimal action to address the issue, and were not directly involved in the situation. It should be noted however, that their stance on the matter is fairly straightforward, as they view the coup to be another threat posed by the Soviets.

### **Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC)**

The Supreme Revolutionary Council was founded shortly prior to the coup itself, and was not as well-established in Somali politics as the SYL was. However it was efficient in orchestrating it, and taking over Somalia as its de facto government. The limitations it imposed on the Constitution and the function of Somalia's Parliament and Supreme Court started raising questions on whether or not it would establish a dictatorship. As aforementioned, the leader of the SRC, Siad Barre, had shown a favourable stance towards Marxism-Leninism, therefore further inciting the West's fear of another socialist state being established.

### **Somali Government**

The former government of Somalia either had to flee the country, cooperate with the SRC, or be incarcerated. Their ability to fight back against the coup was limited, as the SNAF and the police were on the SRC's side, whereas there was limited outsider support, by the USA and the West, or even the USSR, which used to cooperate with it.

### **BLOCS EXPECTED (OPTIONAL)**

It goes without saying that the expected alliances on this topic rely on the divisions of the Cold War, much like most issues in 1969. It should be noted that the USSR and its allies would be eager to establish a socialist state in Somalia, or at least prevent any further involvement that may prevent that and violate Somalia's sovereignty. Contrastingly, the USA could go as far as to militarily intervene in order to prevent another puppet state from being created.

**TIMELINE OF EVENTS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
1st July 1960	Somalian Independence
20th June 1961	Constitutional Referendum
30th March 1964	First Elections
6th July 1967	Sharmarke is elected as the country's President
26th March 1969	Legislative Elections
15 October 1969	Sharmarke Assassination in Las Anod
21 October 1969	Coup d'Etat begins

**RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS**

It is important to note that the UN Security Council in 1969 did not pass any resolutions relating to the issue of the Somali coup d'etat, and there was very limited support by the West, or even the Soviet-allied world. Thus, the country was not effectively stabilized, and the coup was not stopped in any way. However, certain events leading up to the coup need to be considered by the delegates in order to understand its nature and the way it must be approached.

**Somali Constitutional Referendum (1961)**

This has been viewed as an early attempt to unite Somalia, which was deeply divided on multiple grounds. It also played a major role in establishing the institutions that the SRC later questioned, thus in order to comprehend what the SRC stood against, one must understand how all inclusive, pro-tribal elements of the Constitution were not in keeping with Marxist values.

**USSR Military Aid**

Multiple economic and trade treaties were signed between the USSR and Somalia, which led to friendly diplomatic relations between the two. At the height of this cooperation, as mentioned before, Somali military officers were trained in the USSR, in a similar manner to the Soviet military and the Soviet Union offered military aid to the African state. The direct impact of these relations could not only be felt via the excessive influence that the USSR exercised on Somali politics, but also the shaping of the ideologies of the SNAF, and the SRC's leader, Siad Barre who had been trained in the USSR and held socialist views.



## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Similarly, there were not many attempts to address and perhaps restore the Somali government's power in 1969, therefore it is highly crucial for the delegates of the Historical Security Council to draft clauses that will efficiently protect the people of Somalia and support the side of the conflict supported by their country. Perhaps the only attempt to address the issue, were Britain and USA's condemnation of the coup, or the USSR's continued cooperation with the SRC, after the coup.

The reasons for this aforementioned lack of action could vary. Perhaps the UN was still too hesitant to become involved with the sovereignty of individual nations, in the context of the Cold War, especially newly independent and unstable democracies. Another explanation would be that both the US and USSR avoided intervening so as to not escalate tensions with each other, or the US simply believed that Somalia was already under USSR's influence, and did not consider it an important enough loss to intervene.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Due to the complexity of the issue, delegates are expected to take a multidimensional approach. Like most Cold War era related issues, it is important for each delegate to evaluate their country's policy and how they could fit in the debate dynamics of the committee.

Firstly, supporting the legitimate government of Somalia, either financially or militarily, so as to allow them to restore their rule and democracy in Somalia, as well as to protect the rights and freedoms of the people of Somalia under the Constitution's provisions, would be a good start. However, doing so is a much more complicated procedure than it would seem.

Assessing the rising influence of the USSR on Somalia and Africa on a wider scale should also be an issue in the committee, as the clashing interests of the present delegations would further raise the question of which sphere of influence Somalia should join. The USA and its allies would seek to avoid the USSR's influence in Africa, whereas the USSR itself would dismiss any claims of intentional expansion, and claim that much like the USA, it is their sovereign right to establish diplomatic relations.

Preventing the rising tensions between the two countries should also be one of the Council's priorities. Perhaps removing the Soviet fleet from Somalia would be a fair compromise, however it remains unclear to what extent the USSR would be willing to do so. In any case, avoiding a proxy conflict in Somalia is highly crucial, as in

1969 the Vietnam War and multiple other such conflicts had already led to severe human rights violations and losses.

Similarly, in its hopes to protect the people of Somalia, the UNSC should do its best to prevent the establishment of a dictatorship in Somalia, perhaps via international pressure. Protecting the freedom of information, as well as the rights of certain tribes and minorities in Somalia (which Barre claimed were the key reason Somalia could not be cohesive) are also of high significance.

Finally, ensuring that Somalia will not act as a destabilizer of the rest of Africa, in such a crucial time, should be one of the Council's key responsibilities. Countries such as Ethiopia could become victims to similar incidents, Therefore, strengthening flawed democracies and protecting bordering states would help.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

"University of Central Arkansas: UCA." *Political Science*, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/somalia-1960-present/>

(www.dw.com), Deutsche Welle. "Somalia's Tumultuous 60-Year Journey after Independence: DW: 30.06.2020." *DW.COM*, [www.dw.com/en/somalias-tumultuous-60-year-journey-after-independence/a-53977180](http://www.dw.com/en/somalias-tumultuous-60-year-journey-after-independence/a-53977180).

"British Somaliland." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., [www.britannica.com/place/British-Somaliland](http://www.britannica.com/place/British-Somaliland).

"Italian Somaliland." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., [www.britannica.com/place/Italian-Somaliland](http://www.britannica.com/place/Italian-Somaliland).

(www.dw.com), Deutsche Welle. "25 Years on, Somaliland Struggles for Recognition: DW: 19.08.2016." *DW.COM*, [www.dw.com/en/25-years-on-somaliland-struggles-for-recognition/a-19488683](http://www.dw.com/en/25-years-on-somaliland-struggles-for-recognition/a-19488683).

"POLICEMAN SLAYS SOMALI PRESIDENT; Assassin Seized After Shot Kills Shermarke Instantly -- Curfew in Mogadiscio President of Somalia Is Slain; Policeman Seized as Assassin." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 16 Oct. 1969, [www.nytimes.com/1969/10/16/archives/policeman-slays-somali-president-assassin-seized-after-shot-kills.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1969/10/16/archives/policeman-slays-somali-president-assassin-seized-after-shot-kills.html).

“US Strategic Interest in Somalia” *Mohamed A. Mohamed*, Buffalo State University, 01 June 2009, [https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/5/1926/files/2018/06/US\\_STRATEGIC\\_INTEREST\\_IN\\_SOMALIA-22fbj8j.pdf](https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/5/1926/files/2018/06/US_STRATEGIC_INTEREST_IN_SOMALIA-22fbj8j.pdf)

“The Politics of the 1969 Somali Coup” *I.M. Lewis*, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Cambridge University Press, October 1972, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/160127?seq=1>

“The Somali Coup of 1969: The Case of Soviet Complicity” *Gary D. Payton*, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Cambridge University Press, September 1980, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/160366?seq=1>

“1961 Referendum Summary” *Somaliland Law*, June 2012, [http://www.somalilandlaw.com/The\\_1961\\_Referendum\\_Table\\_1.pdf](http://www.somalilandlaw.com/The_1961_Referendum_Table_1.pdf)