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IS KHAKISTOCRACY BACK TO AFRICA? THE RESURGE OF COUP D'ÉTAT AND THE VITIATION OF DEMOCRATIC ETHOS IN AFRICA

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Abstract

There is an increasing concern among researchers and professionals about the resurge of coups in Africa. The reason(s) some countries experienced more than a coup d'etat in the last decade is a question yet to be answered, hence this study. The qualitative method was employed in harvesting data for the study, and the data were analyzed descriptively. The findings showed that complex issues such as the roles of actors and politico-security and socioeconomic issues were the triggers for the coups. These overlapping complex issues are impacting regional and continental security; as well as forestalling attempts at deepening democracy within the region. This study therefore recommends that the trigger points of the coups, which are noticeable in other countries within the continent should be quickly addressed so as to forestall the spiraling of coup across the whole of Africa.

Keywords: Coup d'état, Military Regimes, Democracy, Authoritarianism, *Khakistocracy*, Resurgence.

Introduction

Recently, some African states reverted to military rule in a manner suggestive of a relapse to military incursion into the political architecture of these nation-states in Africa. This re-occurrence forced discussions on whether military rule is returning as 'the new normal' to the African-scape or that the coups d'état in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso are meant for the liberation of each of these countries, which previously were governed by incompetent people (Onunaiju, 2022).At a time, particularly in the decades that followed flag independence in the 1960s, coup d'état became a perennial event in Africa that it was expected for it to happen at some intervals. Thus, of the 54 countries that constitute the continent, 44 experienced military

putsches. Of the 44 states that experienced military rule however, Bagg (n.d.) explained that coups d'état were regular happenings in only 13 serial coup states.

However, between 2012 and 2022, there were11 successful coups d'état and 26 abortive ones. This signal that some African states are replete with issues of bad-governance which posed as encouraging the gradual resurgence of 'khakistocracy' within the continent is not entirely misplaced. Another point of view suggests that the recent putsches might be the manifestations of some selfish ambition of the military echelon. Yet, another point of view maintains that such torpedoes of civil rule have external motivations. All perspectives have gained traction in the ensuing 'drama of the absurd' which is playing out in the continent. Flowing from this is the fact that military takeover vitiates ethos of democracy in Africa with the attendant consequence of subverting the flowering and deepening of such system of governance which is a preferred system of governance on a near global scale.

In order to situate the thrust of this paper properly, this research seeks to unearth the justifications for the new rounds of military takeover in Africa. Specifically, the paper seeks to identify the complex issues involved in the recent revert to military rule in some of the African states where coups d'état has happened, and examine the fallouts for regional and global security. In addition, the study investigates how the resurge of coup d'état within the continent would impede the deepening of democratic ethos and the tenets of governance across the continent. Following these objectives, the questions that nudge the mind are: What factors are responsible for the resurge of military coup d'état in Africa? Another is what implications do the military takeover in Africa portend for the continent and the international society? How would the resurge of military takeover stultify the democratization processes already ongoing within African-scape?

Conceptual Clarifications

The study will embrace the following definitions for the purposes of clarity and understanding of the issues under discourse.

Conflict

The term conflict has met several arguments, debates and critics, and it has been categorized under two broad categories – violent and non-violent conflicts and this article focuses on violent conflict. Singers and Mall's initiated Correlates-of-War-Project (COW) defines conflicts as violent disputes in which at least one of the combatant parties is a state, and there are at least 100 battle-deaths. This definition covers exclusively soldiers and other military staff. Civilian victims are however not considered (Singer and Small, 1972:8). Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), on the other hand defines an armed conflict as a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one has to be the government of a state (Dwan and Holmqvist, 2005). This article embraces Dwan and Holmqvist (2005) definition of conflict.

Democracy

The definition of the term has met several arguments based on the practice and interpretation of its tenets in real life. While Alvarez et al. (1966) define democracy as a regime in which some governmental offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections. They asserted

that there is no regime where all governmental offices are filled by elections eg. Greece. Munck (2014) on the other hand has argued that the current literature failed to assess the quality of democracy, as a major requirement for the classification of democracy thereby limiting the current definition of the term. For the purpose of this article, we adopt Dahl (1971) and Przeworski (2000) definition of Democracy, Dahl (1971) largely equates democracy with the institutions and processes of democratic government. He identified eight criteria in defining democracy – right to vote, the right to be elected, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, elections that are free and fair, freedom of association, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information and institutions that depend on votes and other expressions of preference. Przeworski et al. (2000) shares Dahl (1971) view of democracy and further focuses on the electoral Process by expecting citizens to identify democracy with the institutions and processes of democratic governance.

Political Regime

Researchers have approached this term from various angles, which have led to various outcomes. This article adopts Skaaning (2006) definition of Political Regimes as he asserts that a political regime designates the institutionalized set of fundamental formal and informal rules identifying the political power holders (character of the possessor(s) of ultimate decisional sovereignty) and it also regulates the appointments to the main political posts (extension and character of political rights) as well as the vertical limitations (extension and character of civil liberties) and horizontal limitations on the exercise of political power (extension and character of division of powers – control and autonomy) (Skaaning, 2006).

Coup d'état:

Coup d'état is one term that has assumed several definitions based on the disparities that has been observed in the numerous coup's since the inception of military takeover. This article adopts the definition of Barka and Ncube (2012) of coups as a coup d'état as a sudden (lasting from a few hours to at least one week), often violent overthrow of a government by a small group of military, police, or security forces. It results in the illegal replacement of the existing government personnel or constitutional relationships, and may radically alter the state's fundamental social and economic policies.

Theoretical Framework

Between 1974 and 1990, the military did bow a bit and allowed the replacement of military rulership with democracy in 30 countries across the world, many of them in Africa. This informed Huntington's democracy's third wave analysis (Huntington, 1991). Subsequently, military rule became so incongruous with the trend that sanctions were meted against states that were yet to yield to the breeze of democracy. Presently, a reverse wave seems to be building in Africa. It may portend traumatic times ahead for political freedom, civil liberties and human rights within the continent. To answer the questions nudging several African minds, and those elsewhere, regime vulnerability theory is adopted as one of the necessary theoretical formats for presenting appropriate nuance of the return of military coup d'état in Africa.

The basic assumption of regime vulnerability is that governmental institutions and leadership in the states that witnessed domestic military intervention are weak and therefore vulnerable to such intervention (Thompson, 1975: 459). But what factors are responsible for the

weaknesses inherent in the governmental institutions that became weak? And why do the military attack weak institutions? Whereas extant narratives on regime weaknesses are focused on legacies; the failure of democracy; the filling of the void; the middle-class spear carriers; and the disjointed system (Thompson, 1975: 460); Criticisms against these issues discredited them as relevant basis for validating regime vulnerability. Several Africanist, for instance, have failed to forget colonial experiences as the underlining factor in the explanation of the underdevelopment that African states are contending with. It's being a ramification of legacy (the pull of the past) renders it irrelevant to any analysis of the unfurling military putsches.

Thompson's critiques notwithstanding, the failure of democracy, particularly the irresponsibleness that certain political elites and their cronies brought upon the structures of the state is one of the factors responsible for the resurge of military takeover in Africa. The anomies of electoral corruption and financial perversion perpetrated by government officials across territorial bounds during 'democratic' dispensation, as Adesanya and Aboyade (2020: 58) remark, serve to hand a *carte blanche* to the military; hence the gradual descent of African-scape into military takeover. Such 'misdemeanor' or disposition hollows the state and its institutions of capacity for effective performance that is expected of the state and its agents. In Burkina Faso for instance, Mr. Kabore's removal was triggered by growing discontent among security forces over his alleged failure to adequately support them against militants linked to both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group (Ochieng, 2022). In Mali, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and his Prime Minister Boubou Cisse were ousted for the failing law and order, and mismanagement of the economy (Isilow&Tih, 2020). This situation had led to nationwide protests for several months. Riding on this, the military found relevance for their relative power, as Emerson (1960: 272-292) argued; hence, permitting elements in the [military] to seize power under the guise of serious weaknesses in civilian government.

The great and chief end of men putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property, which in the state of nature is very unsafe, very unsecure (Locke, 1972: 406-407). In anticipation of the future, the African political elites seemingly create a future 'state of nature'. In the bid to satisfy their urge for selfish aggrandizement, they most often engage in acts that weaken the institutions of their respective states. By so doing, they mostly engage in 'back-to-future' processes that are coterminous with the features of Thomas Hobbes society (1998) in which man's existence is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Thus, reversing the essence of state, established because of peoples' desire for defense from the invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another. The state is meant to secure them in such sort as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly.

This let-down reveals that across Africa, there is hardly any state that passes as a minimal entity. Rather, all the units operate maximally. True to its tag, the minimal state regards itself as the sum of all its citizens. And that the foundations of the state rest on the consent of its citizens (Buzan, 1983:21). On the contrary, the maximal state sees itself as considerably more than the sum of its parts, or something different from them, and definitely has its own interests (Buzan, 1983: 22). Arising from this is the fact that the ruling elites in Africa, as elsewhere around the world, uses the state to satisfy their own aspirations.

In view of this, the African elites allow the intentions of the self to corrode, subverted/or undermine the institutions of the state; hence trampling on the citizens till they (citizens) agitate or search for regime change. In all, it is the weaknesses of the institutions of the state that are (in part) responsible for the recent resurge of military take putsches in Africa.

Another theoretical platform from which the thesis of this study spring is Political Regime Transition by Rustow (1970).Rustow argues that in political regime transitions, the key actors in the transition process are political elites, whether in the government or opposition, not interest groups, mass organizations, social movements, or classes. Second, actors are typically defined in terms of their orientation toward regime change (hardliners-soft-liners, moderates-extremists) rather than by interests rooted in economic structures and conditions or institutional roles. Third, actors behave strategically; their actions are influenced by expectations concerning the behavior of allies and rivals. Finally, democratization is the outcome of explicit or implicit negotiation; new institutions are bargains among self-interested politicians.

Factors Exacerbating Coups in Africa

The combination of the roles of the actors in Sudan's coup of 2021 contributed to the complexity of the coup thus fermenting the regime vulnerabilities in the country. Thompson (1975) had argued that regimes that are not purely democratic or autocratic are prune to coups. The CPI result of Sudan shows that since 2012, the corruption in the country has been a steady increase and since 2020 the country has been the most corrupt amongst all the countries in the world. Elamin (2018) found that the absence of the rule of law, collectivist nature of Sudanese society, in addition to the low pay cheque of civil servants contributed to the spread of petty corruption in the country.

Elamin (2018), Gupta etal. (2001),Kursany (1985), Transparency International (2012) amongst other researchers further expatiated on the triggers of corruption in Sudan to include Political corruption, a dependent Judiciary system, bribery, poorly managed government budget, lack of transparency, violations of human rights and the controlling of the press. These factors served as an underlying grievance of the populace and further fermented their acceptance of a coup by the military with the hope of change to the decay the country had been experiencing (BBC, 2022).

Corruption in Mali as a trigger for a coup

Mali has been ranked 136 out of 180 countries, from the CPI rating. there was a sharp dive in the country's corruption level in 2013 which is traceable to the rise in corruption the country faced owing to several factors and especially the coup of 2012. From 2019 till date, the country has witnessed an increase in the corruption levels of the country which is attributive to the plight of the citizens.

Mali on the other hand has dealt with Grand corruption as Jain (2001) define it to include corrupt politicians and legislators (in parliament) who aim to maximize their own interests. It also includes corruption in the justice system. This type of corruption may have the most serious consequences on a society; the corrupt political elite can change either the national policies or the implementation of national policies to serve its own interests at some cost to the populace. Takács et al., (2011) further buttressed this argument by highlighting the effect

of corruption as he argues that Political corruption affects everyone directly or indirectly. Elected politicians and political parties are expected to act in the public interest, thus their greed can cause enormous damage.

Security Issues

A notable issue in Sudan that triggered the coup was the ravaging security issues in the country. The country which is mostly landlocked, had series of insurgencies in the northern part of the region. These have ranged from party oppositions that have led to exchange gunfire, ethnic conflicts (between the Dinka and Nuer) outright violation of human rights, insurgences, lack of proper maintenance of cantonments for troops etc (Dermawan et al., 2019). These security issues were undertones for an outbreak of a civil war as the grievance and long battle between the polarized factions grew into a monster that appeared through a coup.

Mali, has witnessed numerous, everlasting and religious conflicts between communities, coupled with the inherent conflicts between customary/traditional and modern/state legal practice and also social crisis from the professional organizations with pressing demand (Kornio, 2004). Alongside these conflicts, the region has been a major market for the supply and proliferation of small arms and small caliber weapons hence fermenting and prolonging the conflicts in the region. The security issue has been entrenched by the Actors in the region and a massive influence of the economic situation in the region (Moulaye, 2016).

Extremist attacks in Mali have also necessitated the coup because of the government's failure to provide security for the region (BBC, 2022). A previous coup in 2012 led to militant Islamists exploiting the chaos and seizing the north of the country. French troops helped regain territory, but attacks continue as the insurgents have capitalized on the persistent political instability in the region (Aljazeera, 2022). This has all led to public confidence waning over the army leaders' ability to tackle the Islamist insurgency that has spilled into neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger (BBC, 2022).

Whilst the international community frowns at the failures of the Government of Mali, France, the former colonial power, has threatened EU sanctions against the perpetrators, with President Emmanuel Macron describing it as a "coup within a coup", Reuters news, (2021).

The complexity of the security issues in these countries are so mingled that other countries are profiting from the violence that ravages these countries at the expense of human lives and the progress of those lives. The complexities of the security challenges in the countries has had a diverse effect on the Economies of the countries as all production activities have been stopped and peoples livelihoods destroyed making the citizens of these countries live below the poverty line and further ferment the underdevelopment of these sub-regions of Africa.

Economic Issues

The economic issues Sudan experienced over the decade are linked to the security issues the country has been bedeviled with over the years. It is interesting to note that the military and civilians blamed themselves for the current economic situation of the country (BBC, 2022).A BBC respondent when interviewed affirmed that economic issue was the main basis of recent protests in the country. Even before the coup, unemployment had been incredibly high and

food shortages were rising at an alarming rate. The situation was exacerbated by the recent Covid-19 lockdowns and severe floods, which affected food production (Aljazeera, 2022). Dessalegn (2017) in his finding affirmed that the war in the newborn country in 2011 then caused thousands of causalities and other problems such as poverty, hunger and increasing numbers of refugees.

The broad causal thrust of O'Donnell's (1973) argument was clear: economic change generated social conflict, political polarization, and incentives for both militaries and key social groups to abandon democracy. Flowing from the rot and corruption democracy bred in the country, there was a need for social change, which necessitated a coup and the economic decline of the country further exacerbated the outbreak of a coup.

It is logical to argue that Sudan being a country which has spent the last decay fighting and destroying itself is much expected to be bankrupt, in debt and running on no reserves at all, hence making economic issues a major trigger for the outbreak of the coup in the country.

In Mali, the economic challenges the country faced is intertwined by the roles of actors and the insecurities the country has been bedeviled with. Mali wasn't exempted from the effects and scourge of the epidemic and pandemic, which further had an adverse effect on their economy. This is not to overlook the adverse effect of the pandemic across all countries of the world, the brunt of the pandemic was severely felt in Mali because of the enormous illegal economic and financial activities prevalent in the country as seen in the printing and circulation offake money, heightened money laundering, illicit trafficking of artifacts and fake medicines, printing of fake documents, cyber-crime etc. (Moulaye, 2016). The combinations of all the aforementioned internal triggers, led to a gigantic monument of economic issues, leading to a major springboard for a coup.

The three factors – *actor's role, security issues and economic issues* discussed above played a significant role in the weakening of the resilience of Mali and Sudan to a coup and also contributed to the breakdown of democracy, consequently leading to the occurrence of military coups. The combination of the roles of actors, had a massive impact on the economies of Sudan and Mali, coupled with the internal insecurities the countries faced, thereby led fermenting Thompson and Rustow's (1970) argument that regimes transitions and regimes which are not purely democratic or autocratic are prune to coups.

The Fallouts of the Recent Coups D'état for Regional and Global Security

West Africa and Northern Africa have been volatile for over a decade now. Security issues have ranged from civil wars, to insurgences, increased cybercrimes, kidnapping, robberies and killings. Nigeria is bedeviled with lots of insecurities ranging from the Boko Haram surging killings in the northern part of the country to kidnapping ravaging every part of the current and the IPOB continuous pressure for secession (Aljazeera, 2022).

The fallouts of the coups in Western and Northern Africa is a subtle message been sent to other countries in the region that coups might just be the next best route to take to combat the internal pressures these countries face.

Studies have shown that events that occur in at least two countries with a region in Africa, has a high propensity to spiral into other parts of the region. The implication of this is that the tendencies of coups to spread into other regions of Africa is very high as about 70% of these other countries suffer the same foundational issues that served as triggers for the outbreak of a coup d'état in Mali and Sudan. Hence like a wave, coups are likely to spread across all countries in the region. It is plausible to argue that if there is an outbreak of a coup in Ghana, then Nigeria is likely to be next.

If Nigeria being the giant of Africa, experiences an outbreak of a coup d'état, the is a high propensity that other countries in the region will follow suit, there by leading to an increased level of underdevelopment, poverty and a heightened threat of the multiple coups.

The outbreak of the recent coup d'état also highlighted the inability of regional organizations and the international organization (UN) to quell and abate its outbreak. Consequently revealing to the world that the bodies are not as influential as they are perceived to be, which will inadvertently reveal to other fragile national that the global peace and stability once kept by these bodies are also threatened and at the point of breakdown.

The Effects of the Coups on the Deepening of Democratic Ethos in Africa

The outbreak of the coups in Mali and Sudan were draw backs towards the democratization of these countries let alone the deepening of the democratic ethos in Africa. Whilst no country wants to be seen as undemocratic, as the third wave of democracy spirals throughout the globe, in reality democracy is in distress in Africa as there have been gross violation of its tenets, leading to a quasi-style of democracy in the region.

Amtaika (2017) argued that there are preconditions for the continued sustenance of democracy which includes – *development and ardent adherence to the tenets of diplomacy.* Amtaika(2017) had argued that development preceded democracy as democracy thrives on its wings. Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) in their *Communist Manifesto* published in 1848 reminds us very clearly that "man had to eat first before he could build a civilization". Seeing that people do not eat democracy and politics in most African Nations is about addressing hunger and poverty, development is a precondition for democracy. In the case of Mali and Sudan, the coups had led to gigantic levels of underdevelopment through the destructions of all traces of gains of the activities towards development. The high levels of destructions of properties led to severe food crisis and poverty in the countries, thereby eroding the basis upon which democracy could thrive. Also, the immediate months and days leading up to the military takeover, to the months after the takeover was majorly categorized by lots of backwardness, stagnancy and a lack of vision. This state, which is mostly characterized by series of uncertainty, insecurity and a heightened fear in the minds and hearts of the citizens, which often incapacitate them, is no breading ground Democracy.

Secondly, the coups witnessed in both countries were visibly laden with activities such as the killing of peaceful protester, an abysmal power sharing structure and several violations of human rights leading to an outright disregard for the tenets of Democracy. This goes to show that the failures of the leaders who purportedly claim to be ruling with the democratic tenet do not either understand its tenets as some researchers have argued that it is a white man's culture or they are simply tired of being stuffed with a western culture and idea of ruling.

The ignoring of the military leaders of the ECOWAS and UN pleas has brought about a questionable stance and ability of the regional organization to indeed wield influence in the region, consequently fermenting the questionable stance of Democracy in the region.

Sadly, the sit-tight syndrome and the politics of exclusion and primitive accumulation by African leaders have made democracy incapable of uplifting the standard of living of the masses, which accounts for the street jubilation that followed some of the coups (leadership, 2022).

Flowing from the above arguments, it is conclusive to affirm that unless the giant of underdevelopment, poverty, hunger and conflict are dealt with, the deepening and democratization of Africa is still a dream to be actualized not in the nearest future.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the first objective which is to identify the complex issues involved in the recent revert to military rule in the states that witnessed the crisis, we used a cross-sub-regional comparison and analysis, our finding shows that if the roles of actors are combine with economic issues and insecurities, there is a high tendency for an outbreak of coups. The implication of this is that countries in western and northern Africa are ridden with these issues, hence the spread of coups within this region is highly plausible.

On the basis of the second objective which is to examine the fallouts of the recent coups d'état for regional and global security, we used a qualitative method of data collection to gather and analyzed the data gathered and our findings shows that there is an even higher consequence for regional and international security owing to the outbreak of the recent coups.

On the basis of the third objective which is to *investigate how the resurge of coups d'état will impede the deepening of democratic ethos and the tenets of governance across Africa,* we used, Amtaika (2017) arguments of the sustainability of democracy in Africa and our findings shows that the deepening and democratization of Africa is farfetched and unless the issues of development are dealt with, the future remains very bleak for Africa.

Flowing from our findings, the following recommendations were proffered;

A. Countries in the Western and Northern parts of Africa should pay particular attention to those who are chosen to lead the countries as their actions and inactions have the propensity to ferment economic challenges and insecurities, with the power to dissuade or embolden the occurrence of a coup.
B. The Regional and International Organizations should increase and strengthen their abilities to impede the occurrence of military coups.
C. Development and the eradication of poverty and hunger should be focused on as they contribute an increased quota to the receding of the deepening of democracy in Africa.

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