

WHY MILITARY COUPS ARE BACK IN AFRICA

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Introduction

During the 76th Annual General Assembly of the United Nations in New York in September 2021, the United Nations Secretary General raised alarm on the return of coups across the world. This concern is of utmost relevance in Africa, where the revival of democracy was highly celebrated, and the outbreak of the Arab Spring was seen as the last straw on authoritarianism, and the ascendancy of democracy in the hitherto authoritarian enclaves of the Maghreb region. The success of the transition to democratic rule in Egypt and Tunisia, as were done in the third wave of democracy in many sub-Saharan Africa, were seen as the changing of narratives on unconstitutional change of government and consolidation of democratic governance across the continent.

The celebration of seeming democratic density on the continent is understood against the background of the recent historical past where almost all the states in Africa were under the grip of either a military ruler, or an authoritarian one party despot. At the dawn of the new millennium, military coups and totalitarianism were releasing their grip on the continent as multi-party elections and electoral turnover gained momentum. Indeed, many regional organizations within the continent subscribed to the elimination of military coup and other means of grabbing political power, except the ballot boxes, as well as the full embrace of democratic norms and practices; therefore, there are clauses in regional governance and protocol affirming the primacy of democracy over any other form of government as signed by regional blocs on the continent.

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The birth of the African Union in 2002 gave additional boost to democratic consolidation, since liberal values and principles were entrenched into its Constitutive Act. In addition, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was designed to encourage the promotion of democracy and the review of those internal factors which hitherto led to dissidence and political tension – the precursor of military coups and political instability.

Howbeit, numerous military coups have been recorded on the continent in the past ten years and include the Egyptian coup, which overthrow Mohammed Morsi in 2013; the overthrow of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe in 2017; Madagascar attempted coup of 2021; the Malian coups of 2012, 2020 and 2021; the coup in Guinea Bissau in 2012 and the attempted coup in January 2022; the Chadian coup after the death of late President Idris Derby in 2021; the Guinean coup of 2021, which recently overthrew Alpha Conde; an attempted coup at the eve of inauguration of new government in Niger in 2021; the Burkina Faso coup, which ousted President Kabore in January 2022; and the military coups in Sudan, which ended the authoritarian regime of Omar Al Bashir in 2019, and consolidated military grip on power in 2021.

The ascendancy of coup making on the continent is the central objective of this study and seeks to answer the question: why are military coups back on the continent? This paper is divided into introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, discussion, and conclusion.

Literature review

Several scholars have defined and conceptualized military coups across divides, but there is a consensus among them that military coups involve the forceful takeover of political power by members of the Armed Forces of the country; it refers to an intervention, subsequent overthrow and replacement of civilian rulers/politicians by military men. It could also involve the replacement of one set of military rulers by others. Military coups are sometimes associated with social change and political revolution, but the two are sometimes complementary and mutually exclusive (First 1970, 6). Coup making is common in the ousting of civilian administration by military men. However, members of the Armed Forces do overthrow the military regime and this is seen as a counter-coup; and when a coup is executed by a deputy or members of the inner caucus of a ruling junta, it is seen as a palace coup. Thus, a counter-coup is exemplified by the second military coup in Nigeria in July 1966, while Blaise Compaore in Burkina Faso led a palace coup against Thomas Sankara in 1987. We also have a phantom coup, whereby a coup in

stage managed by agents of an incumbent government in order to implicate members of the Armed Forces; this manifested in the purported coup of General Oladipo Diya and others against the government of General Sani Abacha in June 1998 (Adefaka 2016; ICG 2021; Nyang'oro 1993).

Military coup is globally seen as a symptom of political decay and crises and these were common during the Cold War era in Third World countries. Latin American countries were the hot bed of military coups before the emergence of African states in the 1960s. However, by 1985, Africa became the epicenter of military coups, where soldiers easily got keys to the armory, mobilized a few hundred personnel in the barracks, took over radio stations, post offices, airports, telecommunication facilities and arrested the president. These took place in more than half of the about 50 countries on the continent, but some experienced counter-coups within eight to twelve months (Japhet 1978; Welch 1987; First 1970; McGowan and Johnson 1984).

Several scholars have outlined reasons for the recurrence of coups in Africa and in Third World Countries in the past. The domineering themes centered on socio-political and economic systems and the military subsystem (Finer 1962; Acemoglu et al. 2010; Thompson 1976; Huntington 1981; Nordlinger 1977). After a decade or two of democratic transition, similar occurrences and narratives are coming back to the continent, especially between 2012 and 2022.

Theoretical framework

The chosen framework for this study is the Human Security Theory. Proponents of this theory include the United Nations Development Program (1994), Thakur (2006), and von Tigerstrom (2006). Human security is a post-Cold War security framework which seeks to expand the reference object of security beyond the state-centric paradigm of the preceding era. According to the UNDP, “the concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust” (UNDP 1994, 2). The global community considered the Cold War framework unfit for the new era, since threats to lives emanate from internal dynamics within the states, especially in Third World Countries. Human security centers on the promotion of the fundamental human rights of the citizenry and aggressive pursuit of sustainable development, as strategies against social discontentment and political instability. Human security therefore focuses on the welfare and safety of individuals and groups within states, and protects them from the tyranny of the state and other anthropo-

genic factors that threaten their existence (Thakur 2006; von Tigerstrom 2006). To this end, human security are: economic security – availability of decent unemployment and poverty eradication; political security – freedom of political view and association, political inclusion, and participation; food security – access to balance diet and three square meals daily; and health security – availability of adequate health personnel, citizens' access to health care facilities, basic drugs, protection from communicable and non-communicable diseases. Others are community security – freedom of association and conscience, racial, ethnic and religious tolerance, and effective policing of neighborhood; environmental security – control of environmental pollution, enforcement of laws and regulations that enhance the protection of environment, protection of natural resources, and sustainable exploitation of natural resources; and personal security – freedom from threat and fear of physical violence, and states/governments coercion, and freedom of decisions and actions (Thakur 2006; UNDP 1994; von Tigerstrom 2006).

The relevance of human security to this study lies in its capacity to explain various variables accounting for the return of military coups in Africa since 2012. Specifically, human security theory gives insight into the systemic inadequacies in African countries which generate social discontentment, political tension, and eventually, a military coup. It also explains the moderating role of the international community in African coups, since military coup and human security are topical issues on global agenda.

Why military coups are back in Africa

The return of military coups in post millennium Africa, especially from the second decade of the millennium, is a great concern to scholars, international community, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other actors. This section seeks to identify those variables which promote coup plotting and execution in Africa.

Relics of authoritarianism and sit-tight syndrome

At independence, most African leaders inherited forms of authoritarian structures and normative imperatives that sustained colonialism, and adopted them in the governance of their respective states. Colonialism and colonial governments across the continent were not democratic. Indeed, all the colonial states were conquered by force and administered with all forms of cruelty against any opposition (Okon and Ojabor 2018). The state's structures,

with arbitrary boundaries, were constructed by forces without consultation with the indigenous people. These laid the foundation for authoritarianism at macro-scale on the continent, since competition between contending ethno-religious groups and nations within the states are seen as zero-sum and required a despot to regulate them (Joseph 1984; Nyang'oro 1989).

The net impacts of these dynamics include the emergence of strong men with the capacity to manipulate the state in a manner that promotes future conflicts; instances abound to support this and its aftermath. Cecil Rhodes led the British South Africa Company in the late 19th century to acquire and eventually colonize Zimbabwe and other parts of Southern Africa as a commercial empire. It was managed with profit maximization as the mantra, without consultation with the indigenous people, and the latter was not represented in the management of the company and the government. Subsequent administrations had a hallmark of totalitarianism. Ian Smith spent fourteen years as the prime minister of the Republic between 1965 and 1979, after which minority whites unilaterally declared Rhodesia an independent state.

The political intrigue and guerilla warfare by Black majority led to formal independence in April, 1980, with Robert Mugabe as the President. Mugabe therefore inherited the contradicted socio-economic and political structures and normative imperatives. Firstly, the black majority had minimal access to land and the productive sector. Mugabe, thus invented a new land governance framework for the redistribution of land to black community. Widespread opposition to the land policy and the perceived need to stabilize black holding on the land increased Mugabe's grip on power, until he became the life-President of Zimbabwe, with enormous power to manipulate the political system and processes. Attempts by Mugabe to project his wife, Mrs. Grace Mugabe, as his successor to Zimbabwe Presidency could only be stopped by the military, which did so in 2017, since every other institution was too weak to check the excesses of the aged President (Asuelime 2018; Tendi 2019).

Similarly, Sudan is a product of European colonialism and authoritarianism. The ancient Kingdom of Kush around 1070 BC became an Anglo-Egyptian condominium in 1899 and was ruled by the British until the Egyptian Revolution of the early 1950s and subsequent independence in 1956. Ethno-religious difference between Muslim North and Christianity in the new state, and the control of oil resources in the southern part of the country led to a long Civil War between southern region and Sudanese central government. The Civil War ended with the succession of South Sudan in 2011.

Howbeit, united Sudan lasted on the strength of Omar Bashir and other dictators who forcefully kept the country together through iron-fist, and as such abhorred political competition. The weakening of opposition

and personalization of political institutions made military intervention the only option of leadership change, and this took place in 2019. However, the failed coup of Gen. Abdel Fattahal Burman in 2021, were attempt at consolidation of power by the new leadership, since the protest which justified the ousting of Omar Bashir brought actors with diverse thoughts on critical national issues, but common interest of ending the strongman grip to power (Hoffman 2021; Lowings 2021).

The Egyptian coup, which ended decades of Hosni Mubarak dictatorial regime in 2011 and the overthrow of Mohammed Morsi regime in 2013, were in the same class with the coups in Zimbabwe and Sudan. The Arab Republic of Egypt has a long history, which is dated back to 3000 Century BC. However, the history of Egypt is synonymous with authoritarianism. From the Mamluks, to Ottoman's rule and Mohammed Ali Dynasty between 11th century and 20th century, Egypt has been a center of authoritarianism, which was interrupted by seven years of British 'protectorate' authoritarianism between 1915 and 1922.

The Mohammed Ali Dynasty ended with the Egyptian Revolution of 1952. The Arab Republic of Egypt was subsequently ruled by strongmen: Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1970); Anwar Sadat (1970-1981); and Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011). During the Mubarak era, elections were held periodically as an instrument of legitimation of the President, since electorates were asked to mark yes or no on their ballot papers and there was no alternative candidate or party in them (HRW 2010; Vatikiotis 1991). The momentarily democratic experiment after the ousting of Mubarak in 2012 was counter-productive, as Morsi reactionary and Islamic extremism threatened the secularity of the state, as well as the delicate peace in the Middle East; Morsi was toppled by a military coup in 2013.

Thus, relics of authoritarianism and tight leadership account for some of the coups in post millennium Africa, since it becomes the only instrument for socio-political change in weak states with authoritarian leaders. The global community should not be surprised if the military takes over power in Cameroon, Uganda and Republic of Togo, where relics of authoritarianism and sit-tight leadership are entrenched (Igwe 2011; Siegle 2006).

Weak democratic structures, values and norms

The distinctive hallmarks of democracy include political parties, legislature, electoral umpire, vibrant civil society organizations and elected executive arms of government. These structures are always affected or banned as soon as military coups succeed in African states. Besides, these structures,

in collaboration with the judiciary, are essential in upholding democratic values and norms, such as: the Rule of Law; protection of basic rights of the people; periodic, competitive, free, fair and credible elections; constitutionalism; accountable and transparent leadership; socio-political and economic inclusiveness and participation of the citizenry; as well as separation of power, and checks and balances (Agnew 2002; Chakravarty 2018).

Unfortunately, most of these structures are weak in African states. This is attributed to primordial imperatives such as ethnicity and religion in secular states. For instance, political parties reflect the aggregation of interest and ideology of people with a common interest of ascending to political power and implementing a set out agenda preferred by electoral victory in the polls. This is hardly obtained in Africa, except in selected countries, such as Ghana, Botswana and South Africa in the new millennium.

At the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the Alliance for Democracy emerged as a South West Party in Nigeria, but was later displaced by the then Peoples Democratic Party, principally due to the political weight of former President Olusegun Obasanjo. Egyptian political landscape of 2012 was dominated by Mohammed Morsi's Islamic Brotherhood, a party dedicated to Islamist dominance and possible enthronement of an Islamist state in lieu of the secular state. In Burundi 2005-2015 elections, National Council for Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), led by late President Pierre Nkurunziza, was considered a Hutu party, meant to defend Hutu interest against the threatening Tutsi minority hegemon. Similarly, in Kenya, the Kikuyu had the Jubilee Party led by Uhuru Kenyatta against the Luos, dominated Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) of Ryla Odinka in 2017, a reminiscent of Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) in the early independence era, even when the constitution forbids outright ethnic-based parties. ZANU-PF party was dedicated to the cause of Blacks in Zimbabwe.

The dominance of these parties in their respective parliaments translates into the marginalization of issues of national concern in favor of primordial issues. The net impact of these realities amongst others is the lopsided decision and legislation in parliaments which weakens national consensus on national issues, such as land governance, redistribution of national resources, justice, equity and fairness in the allocation and distribution of public goods, and government appointments and patronages. Besides, primordial parties weaken parliamentary capacity to hold the executive accountable to the people and reduce the parliament to an appendage of the executive. The accumulation effect of these include weakening the parliament as a very important structure of democracy and the alignment of marginalized populations with any entity

capable of liberating them from the shackles of the dominant primordial party and its parliament (Arieff 2015; Kisaka and Nyadera 2019).

Worst still is the emergence and prominence of primordial civil society organizations in African states with enormous influence on national discourses. In Nigeria, for instance, they include: Afenifere, Odua Peoples' Congress, Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) and others from the South West. The South-South of the country boasts of Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF); the South East has Ohaneze-Ndigbo; Northern Nigeria boasts of Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), and coalition of Northern Groups (CNG). The danger of their prominence in national discourse is the dearth of CSOs community with national agenda on issues, such as accountable and inclusive government, corruption, socio-political, environmental, economic and security sector reforms, as well as emerging threats to peace and security in the country.

These primordial CSOs have indeed become part of the centrifugal forces that weaken other democratic structures in African states. Another structure worth evaluating is the electoral umpire across the continent, in terms of their capacity to conduct free, fair and credible elections on the continents. According to Teffo (2018), the evaluation of the performances of electoral umpires in the last fifteen years on the continent revealed cases of fraud, gerrymandering, abuse and sometimes collusion of the incumbent with Independent Electoral Commission/Electoral Management Body (IEC/EMB) to ensure a predetermined outcome.

Besides, consensus on the accepted rules and modalities for the conduct of elections by all stakeholders has also emerged as a challenge. Many stakeholders in some countries boycott elections on this basis, while others resort to electoral violence (Hounkpe and Fall 2011, 2). Moreso, it is common for detailed elections results to disappear while the electoral body announces the winners and losers, with their respective percentage of the national vote (Fridy 2009, 88).

Jinaldu (1997, 2) traces the shallow foundation of electoral umpire to the colonial past and independence era, whereby the inherited electoral machinery was an easy prey to manipulation and control of successive administrations to the colonialist, who in a bid for self-perpetuation in power and dominance of political space refused to build strong and independent electoral commission with the capacity to subvert their hegemonic ambition. These dynamics of the historical past continue to affect the integrity of electoral umpires across Africa; there is very little trust between electorate and the umpire. This resulted in voter apathy across the continent, as many voters believe that electoral outcomes are pre-determined and their votes do not count. Voter's apathy and withdrawal de-legitimate electoral outcome and subsequent governments formed after the elections. Under these political scenarios, citizens see democratic leaders as

illegitimate entities foisted on them by incumbent power brokers that control the electoral machinery and the state (Mataka and Nkandu 2020; Ogwuchi and Jooji 2020). In sum, ethno-regional and religious polarized political parties and parliament, primordial CSOs and manipulated electoral umpires form the bedrock of weak democratic structures, which alienate governments in African states from the governed and increase regime vulnerability of these governments and subsequent military take over.

Failures of democracy in Africa

Towards the end of the Cold War and the currency of the Bretton Woods Institutions' orchestrated Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), liberal democracy was presented to African states as a one-stop solution to their socio-political and economic woes, using Asian Tigers as prototypes (Kim 1998; Paul and Tan 2003). There was a rising expectation among Africans that transition to democratic governance from military rule was the best solution to their diverse challenges, but such euphoria has been replaced by pessimism due to the worsening in every index of societal development and growth.

Instances abound to substantiate these, African economies are still depending on extractive and agricultural resources with little value add services to improve their value in the global market; the economy has remained a market not just for the traditional Western countries, but also for China and other emerging economies. Poverty and inflation indices are increasing every year; unemployment is on the rise due to population explosion, arising from the effectiveness of early childhood immunization; crop failure and drought exponentially increase food insecurity; national currency are intermittently devalued; and the real sector of the economy is in moribund; as the dream of industrialization is a still-born. Worse still, infrastructural facilities are grossly inadequate and hardly sustain small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The net implication of these, amongst others, is that a greater percentage of Africans are poorer today than they were at the beginning of the millennium (World Bank 2013; AfDB 2021).

Related here is the stratospherically level of social inequality between individuals, groups and regions. Political class in Nigeria, for instance, earns higher than any other groups in the country. They also have access to government contracts, patronages and state's treasuries. In Mali, the infrastructural and development gap between the South and Northern Mali is phenomenal, which accounted for the series of Tuareg rebellions. This is also replicated in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa where access to education, health and social services are unevenly distributed both in quality and quantity.

Moreso, there is a huge disparity in access to social services between rural and urban areas, as well as uneven distribution of public goods across geopolitical districts; these are seen as failures of democracy in the new millennium. Also worrisome is the level of institutional corruption and rapacious stealing of public funds in African States. Transparent International consistently placed African states at the lowest rank of the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Furthermore, nepotism and other parochial sentiment characterize appointment in government institution; merit and competence are sacrificed as purported in the perceived nepotism in Nigeria since 2015 (Akadiri and Akadiri 2018; Abdul-Korah 2010; Hope 2017; Shimeles and Nabassaga 2017).

The narratives on political marginalization and exclusion is a recurring decimal in Africa: the Igbos in Nigeria, the Luos in Kenya, the Tuaregs in Mali and its neighbors, Tutsis in Burundi, the list is endless. Beyond the ethno-regional marginalization and exclusion lies class exclusion, whereby electoral processes make it very difficult for average citizens to stand for an elective position, this is common in Nigeria where the cost of contesting for elective position is beyond the reach of average salary earners. Consequently, many aspirants turned to influential individuals for support and sponsorship. The net outcome of this process is the emergence of political godfathers who bank-rolled elections for aspirants and sought patronage in return. Thus, clientelism becomes a common feature of African democracy; this reinforces corruption in African states.

Moreso, political contests are hardly fair and their outcome is zero sum and most of the time favors money bags. Political marginalization and exclusion by ethno-regional and class manipulation in democratic dispensation is a failure of democracy to ensure equity, justice and fairness to all (Onah and Nwali 2018; Joseph 1984).

Another tragedy of democracy is the failure at state and nation building in Africa. Divisive lines between ethnic and religious groups become more pronounced as politicians lobby for support from parochial constituencies and correspondingly canvass for public goods for these constituencies without fairness and national spread. Besides, governments in African states hardly embark on a genuine integration project which would submerge ethno-religious fervor and promote national consciousness. Hence, more than 60 years after independence and 20 years unbroken democratic governance, many Africans identify themselves with their ethnic groups first, before their country, as done by Igbos, Yoruba, Tiv, Ijaws, Efiks and others in Nigeria, as well as Kikiyus, Luos, Kalcenins, Maasai and Luhyas in Kenya. Indeed, the relevance of states to an average African is superficial, except such identity is needed for personal or groups' advantages, but hardly out of patriotism (Kisaka and Nyadera 2019; Ugoh 2008).

Democracy has also failed to contain the security challenges of the post-Cold War era, which are remarkably different from the state-centric security of the preceding eras. Specifically, the ascendancy of centrifugal forces within African states and explosion of civil wars on the continent as experienced in Cote d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Cameroon and Ethiopia. The security challenges were reinforced by the sacking of Gaddafi in Libya and looting of the armory of Libyan state and compounded by the global rise in Islamic extremism with Jihadist agenda.

The outcome of these interplay are the proliferation or wide circulation of illicit arms stole from Libyan's armory and the rise in terrorism and Islamist insurgency across the continent, especially the Sahel region. Indeed, eighty percent of recent coups on the continent took place in the Sahel region. The unfolding security threats are challenging to African armed forces, which were hitherto trained on conventional warfare and trench battles. This is complicated by dearth of specialist in counter-terrorism, poor training and obsolete equipment and platforms needed to contain these threats. Consequently, African states, such as Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Cameroon record massive casualties from threats. The perceived failure of democratic governments to meet the operational requirements of the soldiers at the battlefield of these wars and the need for unity of command emanating from battle tested Commander In-Chief may as well explain the ousting of democratic governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Chad. Indeed, democracy has failed in most indices of human security on the continent, and therefore accounts for the attraction of military rules to the people (AfDB 2021; Abdul Korah 2010; Akadiri and Akadiri 2018).

Weak regional and global governance on the continent

The post-Cold War era heralds globalization and increased interdependence between states, especially those in common regions. This led to heightening of regional integration and sharing of common norms and values for ease of interactions and attending to common threats and challenges in the regional domain. These realities led to regional governance in diverse areas of regional concern. The European Union, for instance, has embraced liberal democracy, respect for human rights and free market economy as the instruments of regional governance in its domain (Micossi 2008; Mayoral 2011).

Democratic regional governance is grossly inadequate in Africa. Attempts at forging an African Governance Architecture (AGA) with a continental wide regulation of democratic practices and good governance on the

continent remain ineffective since its establishment in 2011. According to the European Center for Development Policy Management, AGA has a broad mandate but lacks the administrative and operational capabilities and resources to monitor, coordinate or otherwise stimulate or enforce compliance with the AU's agreed governance positions (ECDPM 2017, 1). The import of this amongst others is that states on the continent define governance according to the whims and caprices of their political leaders and hardly keep to the minimal global practices of liberal democracy which they claim to practice. Even the African Peer Review Mechanism, constructed to enhance periodic review of governmental policies by member states, looks good on paper. Most of the evaluation reports are politically tilted to support and endorse incumbent governments since collated data on the issues so evaluated contradicts the realities in the states so evaluated (Bing-Pappoe 2010; Grudz 2009).

The AU Constitutive Acts rejects unconstitutional change of government, but very little is done to enforce it by the AU itself. At sub-regional level, anchored on the AU subsidiarity principle, the five recognized regional groups – North African Regional Capability, Economic Community of West African States, Eastern African Community, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) – have variously projected democratic governance in rhetoric, without corresponding concerted effort to promote democratic practices beyond symbolic elections. Thus, democracy has an empty shell on the continent.

For instance, in the Maghreb, individual states set standards for what it is considered as democratic governance. Indeed, the dominance of Islamic culture in the sub-region and hegemonic competition between states have made it difficult for member states to construct a common value on governance and other realms. ECCAS is the home of sit-tight leaderships as exemplified by Cameroon, Republic of Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, amongst others. Therefore, manipulated elections are done periodically to legitimate incumbent regimes, hence the low electoral turnover of regime in the region and totalitarian democracy in the sub-region. According to International IDEA (2021), there are no democracies among the seven countries of Central Africa.

Similarly, the Eastern African Community has very little democratic credentials apart from Kenya. Poor democratic showing within the sub-region has made it difficult to construct sub-regional democratic governance capable of checking tenure elongation of incumbents through frivolous constitution amendments, as witnessed in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. Eritrea does not pretend about its authoritarian governance and disdain for democracy and its inherent value. Thus, without pressure from immediate neighbors on shared democratic norms and practices, democratic decline is bound to degenerate and indeed lead to military coups in Eastern Africa.

Southern African Development Community (SADC), on the hand, has ratified Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Defense, Politics and Security (SIPO) and the Harmonized Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPOII) as integral instruments for the implementation of the SADC Treaty of 1999. The main emphasis of these regional instruments is on the promotion of democracy, rule of law, human security, and the rejection of chaotic and unconstitutional change of government. These aptly explained its mediating role in the coup which ousted President Robert Mugabe in 2017 (SADC 2004; Van Neuwkerk 2012; Asuelime 2018).

ECOWAS is said to have the best democratic credentials among sub-regional groupings in Africa. Defining democracy in relation to representative government, impartial administration, participatory engagement, fundamental rights and checks on government, as captured in International IDEA'S Global State of Democracy (GSoD) conceptual framework, ECOWAS was said to be the most democratic sub-region on the continent, with 50 percent of the continent's democracies (International IDEA 2021, 5). This may not be unconnected with the operationalization of the protocol on Democracy and Good Governance ratified in 2001 as part of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) (Atuobi 2010; Ekiyor 2008). These justified ECOWAS involvement in the restoration of democratic mandates across the sub-regional, as illustrated in The Gambian electoral crisis of 2017, Cote d'Ivoire electoral impasse in 2011, and involvement in the transition from Abdullahi Wade's regime in Senegal, as well as continuous engagements with military juntas in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso within the last six month.

In spite of these remarkable efforts by ECOWAS, there are remarkable gaps in ECOWAS responses to democratic decline and unconstitutional change of government, and these include: poor evaluation of early warning signals; inability to stop tenure elongation of incumbent leader through constitutional manipulation, poor management of security challenges in member states and the French interest in the sub-region. Principally ECOWAS always watches the position of France on issues in Francophone countries. This explains the delay of ECOWAS in making pronouncements on issues in former French colonies, as the recent constitutional amendment in Cote d'Ivoire may not scale through in Anglophone West African countries to give President Ouattara a nod for third term. Moreso, French tacit acceptance of Asimi Goita first coup in August 2020 influenced ECOWAS mild disposition towards the junta. The weakness of ECOWAS in the Mali case really strengthened the junta's hold on power and generated the contagious ripples in Guinea, Burkina Faso, as well as threatened Guinea Bissau. Indeed, apart from low capacity within ECOWAS to mobilize resources and funds needed

for regional democratic governance projects, neocolonialism arising from French interest weakens regional governance in West Africa and elsewhere on the continent, and account for recalcitrant behavior of member states which hitherto ratified regional democratic governance instruments in their respective domain (Okon 2021; Zambakari 2021).

Furthermore, the dearth of global consensus on an ideal democracy, as well as Great Power politics on the authoritarian and unconstitutional change of government buoyed coup plotters on the continent. The United Nations itself has not set a standard for an ideal democracy, except for its encouragement of periodic elections and rhetoric on human rights, as echoed by Western countries. Thus, even North Korea passes as a democratic enclave in a manner Uganda, Cameroon and Togo pride themselves (Igwe 2011; Sakai 2013; Siegle 2006). The relics of the Cold War divides continue to hinder global consensus on unconstitutional change of government and the appropriate punishment for military juntas. Recently, ECOWAS, French and EU jointly sanctioned Mali on the extension of military rule till 2025; these sanctions were criticized by some members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) (ECOWAS 2022; AFP 2022). This and similar divisive decisions of the UNSC and indeed international community on authoritarianism encourage impunity of democratic leadership on the continent as well as coup plotting, since there is no moderating entity to check excesses of the twin evil, and the imminent reecho of the contraption of sovereignty by the beneficiaries of these criminal government.

Thus, in the absence of deterrence against authoritarianism and coup plotting, the latter is bound to follow the former, as soon as there is an opportunity, such as mass protest of opposition and groups over government policies or perceived failure of governments.

The anatomy of African military and coup plotting

The African military is caught in a web of contradictions inherent in African States themselves, as most of the Armed Forces on the continent are caricatures of ideal military by global standard (Decalo 1977). The description captures the basic feature of most of the Armed Forces on the continent, whereby recruitment into these services are done to ensure ethnic hegemony and balancing. In these scenarios, the beneficiaries of the policies owe their loyalty to some political godfather or their ethno-regional symbol. The implication is that most of these militaries are a bunch of unpatriotic folds gathered together to satisfy the desire of power brokers, without any zeal or patriotism for

their nations or states. Consequently, most of them find it difficult to keep to the constitutional roles of the Armed Forces and submission to civilian authorities in their respective states, especially, when there are perceived threats to the constituencies that facilitate their recruitment into the Armed Services. This leads to the prevalence of counter-coup as a phenomenon in African states over the years, and the Guinea Bissau coup in 2012, the recent failed coup in Niger Republic in 2021 and the inheritance coup in Chad in 2021, at the demise of late Idris Derby (Ilorah 2009; Ouedraogo 2014).

Another deficit in African Armed forces is the dearth of required logistics required of the modern military. African militaries are not well equipped due to neocolonial defense pacts, which make African states rely on their erstwhile colonial masters and Cold War allies for military support. The new wars of the post-Cold War era have indeed exposed these inadequacies since the theaters of the conflicts are within the domestic domain, and the defense pact against external threats to states' sovereignty and security may not be useful in such types of conflicts.

Neethling (1999, 5) observed that, apart from Nigeria, South Africa, Angola and Egypt, five out of twenty African armies do not have any Logistics base, eight had logistics network that could not even support company level units beyond their barracks and six (small) states had limited battalion level capabilities to perform within their home state. This reveals that only a fraction of militaries in African states participate in coup plotting and execution, since only this fraction have the required platform and equipment for military operations in their states. The low logistics capacity makes it difficult for other military formations to repel coup attempts or check the ambition of military officers with access to the limited equipment and platforms available in the country. This was confirmed by First (1970, 4) recorded that late Mobutu overthrew Beatrice Lumumba with 200 men; General Soglo took power in Dahomey (now Togo) with sixty paratroopers in 1967; and Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown by 500 men.

Thus, military coups in Africa are done by a small group of soldiers with access to a few conventional weapons, with which they hold the entire country to ransom. Besides, most African States spend very little on their military and defense. This affects the training of the members of the Armed forces and leads to lack of professionalism in the military services. In most cases, the majority of the troops are trained in trench battles and general duties. Poor training and lack of professionalism expose military officers to national politics and make political patronage a veritable path to promotion and career advancement in patrimonial enclaves (Howe 2001; Ouedraogo 2014). African militaries and indeed the political systems are not bold enough

to prescribe a consistent punishment for coup plotters, especially the successful coups. Coup is a treasonable offense against the state in subverting the popular will of the people. Rather than criminalizing the act in its entirety, primordial civil society organizations (CSOs) widely support the criminality and the masses celebrate the crimes.

Subsequently, the Junta are persuaded to release politicians and others captured and a new broad base government is formed. The paucity of corresponding punishment for coupists irrespective of time and space make coup plotting attractive, especially in the enclaves where many join the military not because of patriotism, but as a means to earn decent living and escape the shackles of poverty and joblessness. Besides, a successful coup and military leadership of an African state gives the junta unrestricted access to the national treasury, which they loot with impunity. The import of this reality is that coup making is a lucrative venture and a means of acquiring both political and financial assets for societal influence. Instances abound to support this. In Nigeria, ex-military juntas are among the wealthiest and influential in the country. Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia, Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, late Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, are among ex-juntas who enjoy the gains of coup plotting and play significant roles in the political space of their respective countries. The successes of the ex-junta serve as inspiration to modern coupists, since coup making is a short route to wealth, influence and fame in the society, it is even more rewarding than long and meritorious services in the military, where most military veterans in Africa are neglected by their respective states and left to die in penury, sickness and wants (Heinencken and Bwalya 2013; Runesu 2016).

Conclusion

This paper set out to explain why military coups are back in Africa in the new millennium. It identifies relics of authoritarianism and sit-tight leadership syndrome; weak democratic structures, norms and values; failures of democracy; the dearth of consensus in regional and global governance on democratic beyond symbolic elections; and dissected the anatomy of African military as a caricature of global best in terms of training, equipment, discipline and patriotism amongst others as the reasons for the recurring coups in Africa. The paper also highlights the roles of Islamic extremists, climate change, the fall of Gaddafi and subsequent looting of Libya's armory as the facilitators of terrorism in Sahel and other security challenges in Sahelian states, which accounts for about eighty percent of military coups in Africa

within the last decade. The study reveals that the glorification of military institutions by civil military relations scholars boost the psyche of the military and encourages them to intervene in politics on the continent. Besides, the dearth of deterrence punishment for coupists and the enormous benefits accruing to military rulers would continue to remain as incentives to coupists.

It is concluded that military coups arise from the human security deficits on the continent and are routine activities of which the armed forces is a potential and willing offender. African states are targets due politico-historical, social and economic factors, and there are no counter measures to deter the military both within and beyond African States.

The study therefore recommends the promotion of human security on the continent through:

- Industrialization and investment in infrastructural facilities that supports small and medium scale enterprises. These measures are central to employment creation and poverty reduction.
- Promotion of credible elections, political freedom, participation and inclusion beyond the electioneering process.
- Protection of the basic rights of the citizenry and adherence to Rule of Law.
- Enactment and enforcement of resource governance laws that promote fair redistribution of earned revenue, and the protection of the environment in resource rich regions across the continent.
- Massive investment in the health sector, and provision of health insurance for the citizenry.
- Enhancement of ethnic and religious harmony, and effective community policing on the continent
- Continent wide investment in agriculture, and adaptation of new technology in the sector to the needs of the continent.
- Criminalization of coup plotting globally with deterrence punitive measures, such as life imprisonment and seizure of all property of coupists.
- institutionalization of two term limits for presidents across the continent.
- the ratification of the African Governance Architecture in the manner that will exclude a sitting President from benefitting from a constitutional amendment in tenure extension.
- Continuous investment in the security sector reforms and strengthening of sub-regional counter terrorism mechanisms.

Above all, the promotion of broad base CSOs capable of setting national agenda and holding governments accountable to the people is an urgent imperative that would promote good governance and protest against any coup attempt on the continent.

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to explain the variables which promote military coups in Africa in the new millennium. The study adopts historical research design and is grounded on the theory of Human Security. Data are sourced from secondary sources and presented qualitatively. These data are analyzed with content analysis techniques. This study identifies relics of authoritarianism, weak democratic structures, failure of democracy, and poor regional and global democratic governance, as well as indiscipline in the armed forces as reasons for recurrence of military coups in Africa. It therefore concludes that coup making could be checked and recommends the criminalization of coup plotting globally with deterrence punitive measures. Besides, African states need to address the socio-political and economic factors, as well as other human security variables which justify military intervention in their respective domains.

KEYWORDS:

Military Coup. Africa. Authoritarianism. Democracy. African military.

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