


International Journal of **Conflict Management** (IJCM)

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Constitutional Democracy?**



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Journals

Africa's Rampant 'Coup d' tats': "Power Grabs" or a Reversal of Constitutional Democracy?

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Accepted: 18th Mar 2024 Received in Revised Form: 2nd Apr 2024 Published: 16th Apr 2024

Abstract

Purpose: Since the year 2021, sub-Saharan Africa has been revisiting a decade-old problem: a flare of military coup d'états in close proximity to each other. These occurrences are happening in parallel to four broad trends in the study of international relations: first, is the surge of foreign interest in Africa, dubbed the 'New Scramble for Africa' for mineral resources and influence; second, is the democratic 'deficit' in sub-Saharan Africa occasioned by weak democratic institutions and civil society; third, is the negative impacts of globalization on Africa; and fourth, is the 'new and crocket ways' of overturning or extending constitutionally-mandated presidential term limits. Is Africa witnessing the emergence of "Latter Days Saints" to save the masses? Or are these coups "power grabs" conducted by unscrupulous criminals disguised as soldiers?

Methodology: This research employs a qualitative approach involving the collecting and analysing of non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences of military takeovers. The common approaches used include *grounded theory* – the collection of rich data on a topic of interest and to develop theories inductively; *ethnography* – researching into the military network to understand their cultures; *action research* - linking theory to practice to drive social change; *phenomenological research* – investigating a phenomenon or event by describing and interpreting participants' lived experiences; and *narrative research* – examining how stories are told to understand how participants perceive and make sense of their experiences. Even though these approaches share some similarities, they emphasize different aims and perspectives.

Findings: The findings in this study are that the motivation for 'old coups' in Africa are present in national politics today. The assessment from the article details how foreign powers use 'coup de tats' as new ways of illegally 'grabbing' Africa's resources. China's strategy in Africa is about its commercial interests rather than political interference in the domestic politics of African countries. But China is heavily involved in the *new scramble for Africa* because it seeks for reliable sources of oil supply because of its growing domestic consumption and not to politically malign anyone; manipulate local politicians or interrupt in the internal affairs of African countries. Indeed, the 'real scramblers' in Africa for mineral resources are France, Russia, Britain and the Unites States of America; whose energy resource-bases are depleting, but still make huge profits at the expense of developing countries, particularly in Africa.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: This study offer qualitative insights of how *the scramble for mineral resources in Africa* will continue to disrupt democratic governance in Africa. Of particular importance, is the 'new and crocket ways' by politicians to loot national coffers of their countries by overturning or extending constitutionally-mandated presidential term limits, as well as the use of coup d' tats by rogue military officers to overthrow constitutional elected governments in Africa.

Keywords: 'Coup de tats'; 'Scramble for Africa'; 'Power Grabs' in Africa; Presidential term limits; Democratic Institutions; Fraudulent/rigged elections; Soldiers in Military Uniform; Democratic 'deficit'.

1.0 Introduction

Since 2021, African countries; and particularly, those south of the Sahara have been witnessing numerous, unexpected and unlawful overthrow of constitutionally-elected governments bordering each other. Coup de tats are forceful military takeovers from well-constituted civilian governments of countries. Indeed, Africa's experience with coup de tats started with the Egyptian revolution in the 1950s with other take-overs spreading to the Republics of the Sudan, the Congo, Benin and others thereafter. Between 1956 to 2001, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a total of 80 successful coups and 108 unsuccessful or failed coup attempts – an average of four coup de tats per year. (Bell, 1968; Andreski, 1968; Feaver, 1999). But from 2021 to 2023, two successful coup de tats have awoken political scholars: the one in 2020 in the Republic of Mali and another in May 2021, making their occurrence a nuisance in the realm of democratic governance (BBC News (2022)). The Malian take-over led to the suspension of Mali from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) in June of 2021. In the same year (September) of 2021, the Guinean government, led by erstwhile President Alpha Conde, was overthrown by Mamady Doumbouya, the current (2023 interim President of Guinea. Before these incidents, in November 2017, erstwhile Zimbabwe constitutionally-elected president, President Robert Mugabe was placed under house arrest, impeached, and eventually removed as President and Leader of Zimbabwe – The African National Union–Patriotic Front (SANU-PF), by elements of the Zimbabwean Defense Forces (ZDF). In just two days before the swearing-in of President-elect Mohamed Bazoum, an unsuccessful coup attempt took place in Niger Republic. In short, three major states in the West African sub-region – Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali – are now led by officers who came to power using force. These coups have confirmed that military coups are now the norm and confronting the West African political stage, pointing to the failure of its democratically elected governments (Ibrahim, 2022). With these occurrences, there has been nothing yet, in terms of policy directives to stem these coups by the ECOWAS or the AU. More so, international partners, in particular, France, the United States and the European Union (EU) among others have so far, not been able to deal with these 'coup-makers' since they have very little influence to avert the coups. Are these coup de tats suggesting the latest chapter in the plunder of the continent: (i) the new and crocket ways of overturning constitutionally mandated presidential term limits in Africa; or (ii) that we are witnessing the emergence of 'power grabbers' in their attempts to defraud these countries or (iii) are the soldiers, the "latter-day saints" whose intentions are to restore economic mismanagement or instill political ethics into these countries. Or is Africa witnessing a surge in foreign interference by egoistic pundits seeking to steal mineral resources of the continent.

2.0. Statement of the Problem – Coups d' tats

Coup de tats are usually the forced misbehavior of soldiers to seize the authority of a state's political, social and economic affairs from civilians, who have been constitutionally elected and mandated by the people of that country to stir such affairs (Feaver, 1999). When soldiers of a country seize such power, they know that they have usurped laid down rules of the county –

meaning, the actions are not deemed constitutional and are a violation of laws of that country. Every coup de 'tat' is accompanied by a set of reasons, infested in the minds of civilians as the common explanations for such military coups. Among the excuses usually given is (i) that the coup is as a result of economic mismanagement of the elected leaders of that country; (ii) that the civilian leaders have abused or misused state funds or abused power through the mismanagement of state institutions; (iii) or the civilian leaders have misused the processes of the law in courts of justice to defeat justice; (iv) or the civilians have engaged in shameful acts of unabashed abuse of power by authorities of the state and to a large extent; that (v) the civilian government has engaged in tribalism and nepotism. All these acts are not by far the determining factors in the occurrence of military coups in Africa; as there are others not related to the above. But the problem with such coups by soldiers is that unsuspecting people comply with such military regimes expecting that the coup will steer the country in the right direction and as well, restore the country's economic fortunes. Unfortunately, there is no backed evidence that military coups in Africa have improved the living standards of civilians by scholars (Bell, 1968; Andreski, 1968; Feaver, 1999; Ibrahim, 2022). In the immediate past coup de 'tats' have occurred in all parts of Africa – from East to West and – from North and Central to the South. In the recent past, the phenomena has been blamed on foreign intervention due to ideological divide at the time between the 'west' and 'east,' which of course extended to the end of the Cold War in 1989. However, such unconstitutional regime changes reduced at the end of the Cold War when many African states embraced democracy, organized elections and acceded to international human rights laws and other international norms and principles. But suddenly in 2021, there seem to be a rise in the unconstitutional regime changes, resulting in 'constitutional crises,' in 2021 in Madagascar, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and in (2022), Burkina Faso seem to go on unabated (Nile Post, 2021). The over-riding questions are: since unconstitutional regime changes can no longer be blamed on solely external actors and external interests, what accounts for this recent surge in military coups in Africa? What makes the military think of themselves as the protectors of the constitution? What accounts for the abuse of African Union's principle of rejecting unconstitutional changes of governments, as stipulated in Article 4(P) of the Constitutive Act of 2000?

3.0 Conceptualizing a coup d' tat'

A coup d'état is usually conducted by a group or organs of the state to replace the ousted regime with another. The replacing regime (s) can be a civil or a military one. A military coup, on the other hand, is a planned action by the military of a nation intended to bring down and replace their elected civilian administrations – who were elected in a free and fair election organized by a constitutional mandated organ of state. Military coups vary: some are successful and the former regime is replaced by a new one or the regime remains in power when the take-over is not successful. When the regime so targeted remains in power, then it is termed as an unsuccessful coup attempt. The unsuccessful usurpers become targets of arrest, as they are now termed 'criminals' or 'coup plotters.' In successful military coups the usurpers ascertain their legality if the attacked regime is unable to prevent them by permitting their consolidation and obtains the

ousted regime's unconditional surrender. Indeed, success of a military coup deepens when the usurpers get the backing of the public and the non-participant armed forces (soldiers). The Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) have protocols that address the symptoms and root causes of these military coups rather than imposing sanctions when coups occur. In addition, ECOWAS leaders have respect for members' constitutional process, which restricts the military to the barracks. Indeed, the protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of 1999, and the Supplementary Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy of 2001, has always been ECOWAS' commitment, which enjoins that "every accession to power must be made through free, fair and transparent election." With this particular provision, 'takeovers' or coup de 'tats,' in whatever form is a violation of that ECOWAS' or AU's zero tolerance policy for power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means."()

4.0 Theoretical Framework

In post-colonial past in Africa, coups d'états have occurred in all parts of Africa, from east to west and north and central to the south from 1950 until 2010 (Luckham et al 2001). This period accounted for 36.5% of all coups globally. The report lists the first coup in Togo in 1963 and over 200 attempted coups in Africa, describing where they often occur (West Africa), as a "coup belt" (Ntomba, Reginald, 2015). This phenomenon had earlier on been blamed on foreign interventions due to ideological divide in the world at the time between the 'west' and 'east,' which of course extended to the end of the Cold War in 1989. During that time, the two global powers, the Soviet Union (now Russia) and the United States (the U.S.) raced against each other for space and resources on the continent. African political leaders were appropriated into a kind of politics, which required them to do 'political bidding' for global powers like France, Britain, United States, the then Soviet Union, among others. The outcome resulted in assisted coups from these global powers, in which they protected 'glorified dictators' as presidents of these countries on the African continent. However, such unconstitutional regime changes seemed to have reduced at the end of the Cold War when many African states embraced democracy, organized democratic elections and acceded to international human rights laws and other international norms and principles (Ntomba, 2015). But of recent, there have been rampant unconstitutional regime changes and 'constitutional crises' creeping back into the African political sphere – occurring in Madagascar, Mali, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania in just one-year, 2021. In fact, African regional and sub-regional organizations have been confounded by this renewed trend. How do we theorize this new trend in African politics; where military coups are returning; where there is a new scramble by foreign interests like the Wagner Group from Russia for mineral resources, and where crooked politicians are overturning constitutionally-mandated presidential term limits to stay longer in power? The overriding question is: since unconstitutional regime change can no longer be blamed on external actors and external interest, through sponsored coup d tats in Africa in the past, what accounts for this recent trend?

5.0 Methodology/design

This research is a qualitative case study using secondary sources of information on coup d'états and military takeovers in Africa as a whole. By definition, a qualitative research focuses on examining subjective data, with the intention of gaining insight and knowledge about the subject studied. It is interpretive or responsive and usually inductive to formulate an idea(s) using observations. As such, it seeks to describe the situation, creating better understanding of the phenomena, which could result in improvements and sees truth as bound by the context (Bethlehem University 2013). Qualitative research data focuses on observations as opposed to numbers. These observations require analysis and interpretation to make them meaningful and understandable and this calls for creativity, discipline and a systematic approach. There are several ways of going about this. Our method chosen is dependent on the questions that we wanted to answer, the needs of the intended audience and the resources we employed in conducting the research (Taylor-Powell and Renner 2003).

5. 1 Explaining the Coups in Africa

Alan Well (1979 (4), 871-887) has attempted to explain coups d tats employing macro social and economic variables, structural features of the military in general, and more commonly, of military elites, or by reference to the individual psychological qualities of the coup participants. The theories employed are the *colonial background theory*, the *contagion theory* and the *temporal theory*; which are mutually exclusive and competing. Using the theories that are rather loose pertaining to coups d tats, earlier theoreticians have concentrated on the mechanism of the coups rather than on social conditions. For instance, Bienen (1968b) contend that “when civilian governments are discredited, the military are able to intervene without force because they retain legitimacy untainted by civilian failures” (p. 28). But Janowitz (1968), Bienen (1968b), LeVine (1967), Andreski (1968), and many others have specified some of the social and economic factors that lead to these civilian failures.

For Janowitz (1968), “military in the new nations of Africa and Asia is often reactive or have been unanticipated because of the weakness of civilian institutions and the breakdown of parliamentary forms of government” (p. 28). According to the *colonial background theory*, African countries are prone to coup d' tats because of their different political systems – France, Britain, Belgium and Portugal (Coleman and Brice, 1962. P.364). This particular theory however, is not supportive of the evidence gathered as five out of 14 former British colonies had successful coups compared to six out of 15 former French colonies by 1969. When a score on a coup activity index was used in the multiple-regression analysis, eight of the 14 former British territories were rated high as against nine of the 15 of the French. *The contagion theory* claim that a coup de tat in one country invites other neighboring countries to also stage theirs. This line of thinking is evident in the work of Bell (1968) who describes a series of coup occurrences in African political affairs. Even though the contagion theory was much the truth based on the rapid manner in which the military in newly independent African countries were staging coup d tats, the contagion thesis was insufficient to explain all coup behavior on the African continent. The theory could either predict, when and where a coup was going to happen and which countries

were next. *The temporal theory* is with the assumption that most newly independent African countries are equally vulnerable to coups (Nile Post, 2021). According this theory, once a country gained independence in Africa, it was just a matter of time that the country's newly civilian constituted government is taken out of office by the military establishment. As concluded then, civilian rule, was only then an interlude separating independence and military intervention. In this paper therefore, the colonial background, contagion and temporal hypotheses do not explain the differences and purposes of these recent coup activity in particularly, West Africa. However, an explanation of coup activities that integrates the three levels, which is usually the norm by social scientists is suggested. The three-level assessment takes into account societal conditions to coups, the dominance of military institutions, and for residual variance, the personal characteristics of military offices and external influence on them.

Besides these theses, several commentators on civil-military relations in less developed countries attribute coups to the modern characteristics of military organizations. Unlike civilian institutions in such counties, the military are usually national in scope and for these reasons, Gutteridge (1965) avers that they may be “the only group with the know-how to run an advanced society” (p.10); hence their ability to take over underperforming governments or stage such coups for personal gains. Another important way of looking at military coups in Africa is triggered by external influence. Past history, for example shows a tolerance of military intervention by the United States in the affairs of African countries. According to Bienen (1968a), “many American government officials, military leaders and academicians believe that the military in the developing areas are the best counterforce against both internal and external disruptions. The rationale behind this kind of thinking is that a coup amounts to a guarantee against the sort of chaos which would ultimately make development harder for the continent as it is now, “almost impossible”, in Africa without coups.

6.0 A Review of Relevant Literature

Most research work on why there are such many military coups and takeovers in Africa, attribute them to three broad reasons from 1960-1975. The first reason cited is social mobilization or “modernization”; the second is that of cultural pluralism; and the third are political factors (i.e. political party system and mass participation). According to Jackman (1978), both social mobilization and the presence of a prominent ethnic group have destabilizing consequences for newly established states in sub-Sahara Africa. Jackman argues that a multiplicity of political parties can be destabilizing, whereas single-party dominance has a stabilizing effect on post-independence governments in Africa. Arguing in favor of Jackman's analysis, Johnson, Slater and McGowan (1984) found out that “states with relatively dynamic economies whose societies were not very socially mobilized before independence and which have maintained restored some degree of political participation and political pluralism have experienced fewer military coups, attempted coups, and coup plots than those that have the opposite set of characteristics.” Framing it another way, Johnson et al concluded that some measures of positive economic performance are highly stabilizing, such as a high level of productive employment, robust economic growth,

south export performance (ratio of export-imports to GNP), and diversified commodity exports. Luckham (2001) and Coleman and Brice (1962) have also argued in favor of this theory; while Well (1974) and Tardoff (1993) claim that the evidence espoused does not support this thesis. In a similar work on military coups, McBride avers that soldiers take over power from civilian for no reason other than for personal greed; For McBridrige, the military take-over is motivated by the “rents” they hope to extract once they gain power to control the state. Other theories focus on the colonial heritage of African countries, as reason for coups due to disparate political systems inherited from Britain, France, and Portugal. According to Souare (2006) the two West African countries most prone to successful coups – Nigeria and Niger – have in fact very different colonial pasts. For example, Cape Verde has been coup-free, but Guinea-Bissau, and the only Portuguese colony in West Africa, has experienced three successful coups. In here, Souare was arguing in support of countries like Liberia and Ethiopia, who were non-colonies but had been subjected to coups in the past. Another tangent to the discussions on the causes of military coups in Africa is centered on countries’ internal factors and actors; but they underestimate the important role of foreign entities. But while the external factors such as colonial heritage and the Cold War between the United States and the then Soviet Union, have been included in the causes of military coups in Africa, such discussions have not been convincingly presented. Therefore, to address these and other limitations in the literature, we argue that military coups in Africa can best be understood through the lens of neocolonialism. We also claim that even though military take overs in African are not desirable; they serve as ‘a continuation of politics by other means’. As well as the indication towards an analysis of this paper which draws a link between neocolonialism and military coups and how coups in Africa are also politics by other means.

6.1 Towards an analysis

Africa is recurrently characterized by political instability and described as a ‘hot bed’ for coup d’états, civil wars and also, in the last few years, terrorism - the very general kind of Islamic matrix. More so, Africa has experienced 40 successful coup d’états (not attempted) since 2010; and each one, has led that country towards a rapid political transformation or change. Alongside these drawbacks is the growing decay and crisis of democracy in Africa, occasioned by the lack of credible democratic institutions, such as the peaceful transition of power or free and fair elections, or the violation of individual rights that underpin democracy, especially freedom of expression (Luckham, et al 2001). In the current scenario very typical of the post-independence era, it is crucial to approach the current reality with an analysis focusing on domestic factors in Africa. Besides, it is impossible today in African to study coup de tat, civil conflicts, and the appearance of terrorist groups in African without a deep knowledge of each region or sub-region involvement in such episodes. As this paper earlier enumerated, the recent coups d’ tats and other growing instability and attempts of coups in the last few years and general of Islamic matrix are happening in parallel to four broad trends in the study of international relations: a surge of foreign interest in Africa, dubbed the ‘*New Scramble for Africa*,’ for oil, gold, diamonds, bauxite and other valuable minerals. The other three trends are related to the democratic ‘deficit’ in sub-Saharan Africa occasioned by weak democratic institutions and civil society; the negative

impacts of globalization on African economic indicators; and finally, the ‘new and crooked ways’ of overturning or extending constitutionally-mandated presidential term limits. In the following assessment on these four thematic areas, all African countries and regions are included as case-studies (a single country) or area-studies (i.e. sub-Sahara Africa, the Sahel, West Africa, North Africa), and various determinants can be considered by the authors, international influence, domestic factors (religious, ethnicity, economic and political conditions; as well as historical elements. The studies here is presented with a soled empirical basis, developed preferentially through a qualitative approach, and giving an interpretative and theoretical framework of the specific case analyzed, beyond the mainstreaming of the condemnation of military takeover or attempted coup d tats as the case may be.

7.0. What is up with the rampant coup d’états in Africa?

Coup d tats have been a visible and recurrent characteristic of the African political landscape for decades (Mwai, 2021; Barka, el al, 2012; Seigler, 2021; Wells, 1974). Beginning from 1963, when the first coup d’ etat took hold in Togo, Africa and particularly, countries, south of the Sahara have experienced a string of successive military coups between the 1980s and into the 1990s (Uzoigwe, 2019). Using reasons of poverty, mismanagement, and endemic corruption as fundamental justifications for organizing coups, soldiers in their latest moves have been seizing power in a haphazard manner. In (Mali August 2020), following a controversial unrest after parliamentary elections, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was ousted by the Malian military. The charges – alleged government corruption, government’s mismanagement of insurgencies, the impact of the then COVID-19 pandemic and other reasons associated with foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Mali. In Chad (April 2020), while visiting his troops fighting the rebel group ‘Front for Change and Concord in Chad,’ President Idriss Deby was assassinated in northern Chad. In a blatant power grab, his son, Army Genral Mahamat Idriss Deby was hurriedly sworn-in as his successor in violation of the Chadian constitution. In Guinea (September, 2021), a United States trained Special Forces commander sized a coup against a sitting President Alpha Conde. Charges – ‘he acted in the public interest’. The soldiers also cited years of poverty, endemic corruption and their refusal to understand a controversial constitutional amendment introduced by Alpha Conde, which allowed him to run for a third term. In Sudan (October 2021), Led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the Sudanese military seized power, tearing up a power-sharing deal with former Prime Minister Andala Hamdok, that was meant to lead Sudan to its first free and fair election in decades. In Burkina Faso (January 2022), the former president of the country Roch Kabore was detained by soldiers and had his government overthrown and dissolved by Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. The charge against the government was – the failure to contain the growing Islamist insurgency and also not paying attention to citizens’ protests in the country. But Kabore’s legitimacy and leadership was cut short by yet, an attack by armed groups in June at Solhan, where 130 civilians were killed. The mutiny demanded better means and support to fight the militants and the removal of defense chiefs of the country’s army. In the aftermath, French flags were burned and Burkina Faso suspended from ECOWAS and the African Union (AU). In Guinea-Bissau (February 2022), there was a failed coup, which

the president Umaro Sissoco Embaló described as an unsuccessful attack against democracy.” In all these occurrences, coups seem seriously to be on the rise in Africa or ‘dangerously back in fashion.’ In these coups, there are no tangible reasons, but ‘latter-day saints’, who are frustrated at democratic governance by civilians. Also in these take-overs, we are witnessing the outright violation of the ECOWAS’ protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of 1999, and the Supplementary Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy of 2001. Besides, these soldiers are ‘power grabbers’ and by unscrupulous criminals disguised as soldiers. And since their reasons do not meet the ‘litmus test’ of the abuse of power by the civilian governments, the actions of the said soldiers amount to usurping the rules of the country; which are deemed ‘unconstitutional’ and a violation of law of those countries. This research paper looks at these rampant coups particularly in the last few years, as well as typing in the three broad trends for an analysis that pin-points solutions and ways forward.

7. 1 Are coups happening because of ‘democratic deficit’?

Africa entered the 20th century with over 30 member countries with a good track record of holding multiple free and fair elections. Describing economic indexes over this period, McKinsey, in his yearly report cites Africa’s GDP to have risen by 4.9 % a year from 2000 through 2008, more than twice the rate of growth in the 1980s and 1990s (Barka et al, 2004). In more than 50 years of independence, African countries have undergone radical political transformations; as many of them have transformed themselves into democracies; chucked economic successes and have become some of the fastest-growing regions of the world. But due to rampant military takeover in Africa, many of these countries have fallen back into the traps of political instability characterized by the mismanagement of the economies of such countries. Example abound: as most of the countries, particularly Ghana (2023), Nigeria (2023), Sudan (2022) have become fertile grounds for ‘new coup d’états’ and have their economies sliding into recession because of corruption, economic malfeasance and misrule by the governments in power. *Neoliberal democracy* states (like Ghana: 2004-2016), made a forward ‘democratic leap,’ in the first instance during the reign of the Kufour’s NPP (2004-2008) era and that of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) (2009-2016) – a move significant enough to have taken out the prevalence of ‘coup d’états’ in Ghana. But governance in its current dispensation (autocratic-style) in the Akuffo-Addo era in Ghana is faltering in the midst of many corrupt-ridden variables. As rightly emphasized by Chomsky, Noam in *Who Rules the World*, “we still live in the same ugly world punctuated by one historical movement after another” (Chomsky, 2014). According to Chomsky (2014), there are imperial and corporate interests which largely survive across these moments, as well as recurrent. And in spite of these movements or time span - from the Cold War era through post-Cold War, the Post-911 in the United States; the 2019 Corona Pandemic politics, as well as the ongoing ‘new Cold War’ between the *West* and Russia over Ukraine - not much has changed in Africa’s domestic and international relations too. Indeed, the rampant coup d’ tats that Africa is experiencing is as a result of ‘democratic deficits,’ where countries who have made progress in democratic governance have their priorities shifted to the quality of electoral

processes, the value of term limits, and legitimacy, performance and accountability in political and economic governance. So coup d'états are rampant in Africa because of the social discontent, which are largely expressed through protests, amidst corruption and culminate in the varying degrees of suppression, co-option and consolidation of the status quo.

Secondly, there are rampant coup d' etats in Africa because of governance issues, in which regional organizations remain silent, despite the deployment of an African Governance architecture (AGA) in 2011. In the first place, AGA lacks values of decentralization, local governance and local development, in which only ink-service is paid to core values like transparency, accountability, responsiveness and civic responsibility by African governments. More so, the recent events (coup d'etats), where soldiers still run amok in Mali (2020), Chad (2021), Guinea (2021), Sudan (2021), and similar skirmishes and destabilization in Burkina Faso (2020) and Guinea Bissau (2022) are a reflection of the complete failure of the AU's African Peer Review Mechanism. Despite being employed for the past two decades, its impact is rarely felt or its evolution of governance is hardly visible in African countries. Besides, the quality of elections in Africa are recurrent trigger points, as was the case of the 2020 general elections in Ghana, where the militias and the national security apparatus are 'illegally,' engaged by the incumbent government to rig elections. Indeed, without political commitment to conflict prevention, improvement of countries' democratic systems through 'the peer review system', the Africa Union (AU) and regional organizations will increasingly react rather than pre-empt crisis or coups on the African continent. No wonder, the only recourse or power that regional and continental bodies have, (in terms of political mandate), is to condemn a coup rather than take bold actions to address (or avert) the causes of coups d'états in Africa.

7.2. The impacts of Globalization on Africa

The attempt or the drive to globalize can be cited as one of the problems, which inhibited development in newly independent countries in Africa from the 1960s. What need to be taken into account in the following analysis are the causative factors behind military coups and their underlying determinants. Among the determinants that prompted the first 'Scramble for Africa' stem from (i) poor governance (ii) institutional inefficiencies (iii) political factionalism and (iv) the widespread corruption in the country. These determinants are still present today resulting in the deep-rooted fragile state of African economies. As a result of the pressures from civil-society and the general public, it offers opportunities for the military to use such excuses for military coups. Apart from the aforesaid, the end of the Cold War and the rise of the United States as the major hegemonic power significantly reduced the flows of credits and loans to African governments. Another is the failure of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF and IBRD, the World Bank), in the 1980s; as well as the recalling of the loans granted, which further indebted African governments and states and placed undue economic and financial pressures. The failure from these flows and credits from international financial institutions ran up chronic balance of payment deficits and resulted in the crippling of patron-client networks. These attributes caused rampant unemployment, collapsing

infrastructure, deteriorating economic situations, and an erosion of political stability. Therefore, as social movements start to challenge the state hegemony in the midst of all these crises, the military takes advantage of the situation and seeks for political power; hence the numerous coup d'états in Africa. And as Johnson et al avers, we can deduce that linkage between per capita GDP growth and the incidence of military coups in Africa. In also linking Jackman's (1978) model of the structural determinants of coup d'état in sub-Saharan Africa, it was also found out that apart from political pluralism, there were other important explanatory variables – domestic and international economic performance – which explains why there are rampant coup d'états in Africa. Having drawn linkages between coups and factors related to nationalism and the Cold War, political instability, and economic performance due to 'democratic deficits, we now know that the prevalence of military coups increased significantly during the 1970s and 1980s; the coups faded considerably between the mid-1990s and 2000s and have emerged forcibly. Is it the crooked ways of politicians trying to hold on to power or due to (still) foreign interests in Africa; termed the new scramble for Africa.

7.3. The 'new and crooked ways' of overturning/extending constitutionally-mandated presidential term limits

We may not conclude from the spate of coup d'états in Africa (particularly, in West Africa), that there is an 'epidemic.' But a tale of contagious coups springing in close proximity to each other, especially when other countries' would-be coup aspirants are watching in the 'neck-of-the-woods'. Besides, since the first coup in Togo in 1963, there have been over 200 coups and attempted coups in Africa (Binen, 1968a and 1968b). Between 1958 and 2008, West Africa has had the highest number of coups on the continent, accounting for 44.4% of the entire coups in Africa. To this end, West Africa is the continent's "coup-belt"- as there is on record - an average of two coups per year since 2019, indicating (fortunately), a decline from 1960 to 2000 (Feaver, 1999). But the Mali coup in September 2020; the Malian in 2021, and another in Niger in March 2021 and Burkina Faso serve as military takeovers that serve as "present danger" and require an assessment. First, these recent coups have the DNA of old coups; and are cases of "coups that are not actually coups" but referred to as "soft coups"; like the one that happened in Zimbabwe, when former (the late Zimbabwean president was ousted in 2017. They are also reminiscent of "dynastic coups", like the one in Chad and the so-called "constitutional coups". There are also other means by which soldiers take over duly constituted governments. Referred to as 'negotiating one's way to power', it involves sitting presidents manipulating their way to power, including legal means, collaborations with soldiers to topple such presidents, but with a negotiated way of returning to power; elongating constitutional term limits (like the one in Mali by former President Conde); and the collaborations by the highest courts in those countries to extend the term limits of presidents. As Jibrin Ibrahim avers, ECOWAS is a culprit in these respects from its failure to act quickly to these 'constitutional coups', as well as infamous for only responding to military coups with threats of border shutdowns, the setting of deadlines that are never adhered to, because of the prevalence of informal trade among Africa states in intra-trade. This new trend on the African continent is raising unanswered questions in which

democracy requires a reassessment of its qualitative indicators - like popular participation and universal suffrage within a country - as against quantitative benchmarks like regular elections and voter turnouts or the number of public institutions in a country (Mwai, 2021; Seigler, 2021). Therefore, this research believes on the most part that there is a renewed external imposition from world powers, in yet another “world war for mineral resources” in Africa. Where (China, America, Russia (using Wagner Group, Malaysia etc..)) are scrambling for mineral resources in Africa.

7. 4 Is there a ‘new scramble for African resources?’

In fact, from the research so far, we have found out that the motivation for ‘old coups’ in Africa are present in national politics today. Another correct assessment of the new scramble for Africa’s resources is that of Jonathan Holslag’s assertion that China’s strategy in Africa is about its commercial interests rather than political interference in the domestic politics of African countries. He backs that assertion with Africa-China statistics, where trade with Africa has increased 40-fold over the past two decades. But China is heavily involved in the new scramble for Africa because it seeks for reliable sources of oil supply because of its growing domestic consumption but not to political malign itself, manipulate local politicians or interrupt in the internal affairs of African countries like France, Russia Britain and the Unites States of America. Besides, China’s oil consumption has doubled in a single decade, and oil imports now comprise more than 40 per cent of its total oil consumption (Holslag, 2009); so China’s presence in Africa is to seek new oil fields and other sensitive minerals for its domestic use. Therefore, China as a significant player in African politics does not hurt the interests of France like it does the United States of America because of their (China and the U.S.A) quest for ‘world influence’, as well as ‘the sphere of influence’ they want to command in international relations. However, part of what can destroy the grip of France and America in Africa stem from the destructive Cold War politics between the two global powers, the then Soviet Union (now Russia) and the United States, who are still in the twenty-first century, battling for space and mineral resources on the African continent. It is these kinds of politics by China, Russia and the Unites States (with the strong support of Western Europe) that African elites are appropriated by, hence the reoccurrence of coups and the continuous influence of ‘glorified dictators’ in African politics. Besides, with the current situation where the West is clearly supportive of the war effort in Ukraine against Russia, any geopolitical achievements by Russia in Africa is a loss to the West, owing to particularly, France’s former colonial ties in Africa and its dwindling influence on the continent. Indeed, there is an intensifying global competition for control of oil and gas production and supply in Africa because the dependence by the United States, China, Europe and other advance countries continue to increase rather than decrease. Besides, conflicts and tensions in countries like Iraq, Iran, and Venezuela is loosening the West’s grip as there is a new scramble of mainly state-owned companies, like China’s CNPC, Saudi Arabia’s Aramco, Russia’s Gazprom, Venezuela’s PDVSA, and Iran’s NIOC, who have taken control of one-third of the world’s oil and gas reserves and production. On the other side are the major Western companies – Chevron, BP, Royal Dutch, ExxonMobil and Shell who now control just one-tenth of production and only 3

percent of reserves; but remain conglomerates due to their long presence and their capability to both produce and refine their oils in its entirety (Holslag, 2009). There is, indeed a new scramble in Africa for mineral resources; but the fight is between major industrial powers, whose new energy resource-base are depleting, but still make huge profits at the expense of developing countries, even though they control fewer resources themselves. With the neo-neo colonialism on the rise, former colonizers – France, Britain and Portugal; including America and Russia, and to a lesser extent Iran, Malaysia are undermining Africa’s political stability through these recent coup d’états. To stem these rampant coups therefore, the challenges confronting the African Union is to operationalize the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The problems confronting democracies all over Africa are staggering, and the prospect for building consolidated democratic regimes is imperative for a future ‘united Africa.’ Therefore, should existing African democracies, who have achieved some level of success, directly intervene in countries that are non-democratic to establish democracy there?

8.0 Conclusion

This research paper is about the occurrence of rampant coup d’états in Africa, which are the illegal attempts by the country’s military or in cohort with its civilians, to unseat sitting leaders of constitutionally mandated governments. The analysis point to hard and soft coups – whether within incumbent regimes and governments or not – and whether they stem from a position of power or not – in the attempt to unseat a leader or take power in a condition of a political vacuum.

Findings: The findings in this study are that the motivation for ‘old coups’ in Africa are present in national politics today. The assessment from the article details how foreign powers use ‘*coup de tats*’ as new ways of illegally ‘grabbing’ Africa’s resources. China’s strategy in Africa is about its commercial interests rather than political interference in the domestic politics of African countries. But China is heavily involved in the *new scramble for Africa* because it seeks for reliable sources of oil supply because of its growing domestic consumption and not to politically malign anyone; manipulate local politicians or interrupt in the internal affairs of African countries. Indeed, the ‘*real scramblers*’ in Africa for mineral resources are France, Russia, Britain and the United States of America; whose energy resource-bases are depleting, but still make huge profits at the expense of developing countries, particularly in Africa.

Recommendations:

The military in Africa must first and foremost be professional soldiers, who are dedicated to the defense of their countries against aggression. Secondly, As rightly placed by Alice Apley in the African lost-wax casting narrative; rampant or attempted coups in the last years has ‘reduced African agency into lump of soft wax for external actors to mold into shape’ (Apley, 2001). That narrative must stop as the frequent overthrow of civilian governments by soldiers is unconstitutional and are ‘things of the past’. Lastly, the African Union (AU) must strengthen the performance of the African Peer Review Mechanism to monitor and help share experiences, so as to reinforce best practices, identify deficiencies and assess capacity-biding, in order to foster

policies, standards and practices that will eventually lead to polity stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental integration

8.0. References

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