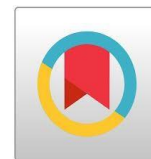


Democracy And Resurgence of Coups in Africa: The Implications For The African Union



Demokrasi dan Kebangkitan Kudeta di Afrika: Implikasi bagi Uni Afrika

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	
<p>Keywords <i>Democracy;</i> <i>Resurgence;</i> <i>Coup;</i> <i>African Union;</i></p>	<p>ABSTRACT This study explored democracy and resurgence of coups in Africa: the implications for the African Union. The major focus is on reasons why there is a sudden reoccurrence of military coups in Africa and what spurs their successes and/or failures so far in the region. Using the secondary data collection method, the study identified the major causes of occurring coups in Africa and also using the regime security theory, the reasons for the spiraling effect of military coups in Nigeria was found to be similar in most of the countries that recently engaged in coups and countercoups. Furthermore, the theory provided for mostly the successes in these countries and why they would always succeed. The study went further to account for the efforts made by the African Union and other economic organizations in the region to reduce the spread of coups in Africa. The study concludes that the African Union and other related economic organizations also end up having some form of political and economic interests in remaining in power for their own selfish gains hence the cycle of resurgence of military coups in Africa</p>
<p>Kata Kunci <i>Demokrasi;</i> <i>Kebangkitan;</i> <i>Kudeta;</i> <i>Uni Afrika;</i></p>	<p>ABSTRAK Studi ini mengkaji demokrasi dan kebangkitan kudeta militer di Afrika: implikasi bagi Uni Afrika. Fokus utama adalah pada alasan mengapa terjadi kebangkitan tiba-tiba kudeta militer di Afrika dan apa yang mendorong keberhasilan dan/atau kegagalan mereka sejauh ini di wilayah tersebut. Menggunakan metode pengumpulan data sekunder, studi ini mengidentifikasi penyebab utama terjadinya kudeta di Afrika. Dengan menggunakan teori keamanan rezim, alasan di balik efek spiral kudeta militer di Nigeria ditemukan serupa dengan kebanyakan negara yang baru-baru ini terlibat dalam kudeta dan kontra-kudeta. Selain itu, teori tersebut menjelaskan sebagian besar keberhasilan di negara-negara tersebut dan mengapa mereka selalu berhasil. Studi ini juga menganalisis upaya yang dilakukan oleh Uni Afrika dan organisasi ekonomi lain di wilayah tersebut untuk mengurangi penyebaran kudeta di Afrika. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa Uni Afrika dan organisasi ekonomi terkait lainnya juga memiliki kepentingan politik dan ekonomi untuk tetap berkuasa demi keuntungan pribadi mereka sendiri, sehingga siklus kebangkitan kudeta militer di Afrika terus berlanjut.</p>
<p>Article History Send 27th March 2025 Review 8th June 2025 Accepted 14th Sept 2025</p>	<p>Copyright ©2026 Jurnal Aristo (Social, Politic, Humaniora) This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-SA license. Akses artikel terbuka dengan model CC-BY-NC-SA sebagai lisensinya.</p>



Introduction

Most countries in Africa especially in West Africa gained political independence from their colonial powers between the 1950s and 1960s. Some of them were not ready to rule independently and suddenly found themselves ruling their people. It was a good thing to be out of the shackles of colonialism. Prior to colonial rule, the traditional society of Africa was very organized with the various age groups and their leaders, especially in the various emirates of the northern parts of Nigeria as well as others. The traditional setting experienced relative peace in their communal way of life which worked for everyone.

Europe then had to conquer the world by partitioning it and with this, Britain got Africa for colonization. It is interesting to note that while Europe embarked on the voyage of claiming territories through colonization, they discovered America which was known as the new world and it was found that it was very fertile. However, the natives were found to be fragile to till the soil and produce economic gains for the Europeans. This made the Europeans to delve into Africa to import labour into the plantations in America. This was the slave trade era which lasted for about a century in which most of the able-bodied young men and women were whisked away to the coast where they underwent harsh and inhuman conditions all for the sake of economic gains for their masters (Obiajulu & Obi, 2003). This was the beginning of Africans low self-esteem in governance and leadership. According to Obiajulu and Obi (2003), the reasons of Europe invading Africa can be categorized into:

- a. Geographical/scientific knowledge
- b. Economic
- c. Religious
- d. Humanitarian
- e. Political

At the end of the slave trade era and colonialism, the Africans who were leaders in their own small units were used to govern their people through the Europeans and this was called indirect rule. In the case of Nigeria, it was Great Britain that was the colonial power. These indigenous leaders began to agitate for self-rule having learnt governance from their colonial rulers. In this period, there were different strategies made through protests here and there until eventually, their regions were handed over to them and they gained political independence. Africans learnt leadership through democratic style of governance. Also, some parts of Africa, were ruled directly by colonial rulers.

Democracy according Abraham Lincoln is government of the people by the people and for the people. This is a general definition however, a democratic government is one

whereby the people get to choose their political leader through democratic processes of elections and the leader rules for a certain period. This is practiced in most of the developed countries. However, after most African countries gained independence and began to rule democratically, some traits/factors began to emerge; traits such as long stay in leadership as against the stipulated time given, corruption through embezzlement by high ranking political leaders amongst others. This led to agitations amongst some elites, including the military who ended up seizing political power through coup d'état which Nnoli (1986) defines as the sudden and arbitrary change of the government by a group of people. This then brings the definition of a military coup d'état as the overthrow of a government by an armed forces or by the military. It is important that there are several factors according to several scholars of reasons for military incursions in Africa however, (Dudley, 1982) in his explanation, came up with three (3) explanations for military incursions in Africa and these explanations have been adopted by several scholars. They are:

- a. Political culture
- b. Reference group
- c. Custodian theory.

In Africa, military rule took the back seat after so many years and democratic governance was welcomed and thrived as adopted from the West and colonial rulers but quite recently, in the region, there have been recorded military coups both successful and unsuccessful. Certainly, the incursion of the military in the African region has to be for strong reasons. There is no doubt likely common reasons for the military intervention in governance. In most of the West African regions, democratic rule has been truncated and put on hold due to the seemingly contagious successful military coups.

During the military rule in most of West Africa, many political activists and analysts put up a good fight against militarism in the region pointing out the brutality and terror, loss of freedom of expression and others associated with the style of governance. These struggles against militarism eventually yielded fruit as most of Africa finally caved in to the more sane style of governance, democracy.

In all of these struggles in Africa arose the formation of the African Union (A.U) an Organization founded on July 9, 2002 replacing the Organization for Africa Unity (O.A.U) established on May 25, 1963. The main function of the Union is to foster peace in the region through unity and solidarity, economic integration amongst the African States. However, the African region has been ridden with crisis after crisis in one way or the other; from struggles to gain full democracy, segregation and apartheid, coups and counter-coups. Most recently,

is the resurgence of military coups in West Africa and its spiraling effect on other African nations that seem to leave the African Union bereft of ideas other than suspending such nations from the activities of the Union. What then is the way forward to ensure that these military coups do not have a spiraling effect on African States?

This study was able to trace the leadership quality of Africans from the precolonial era which is the advent of the Western civilization and eventual colonization. The present pattern of leadership in Africa was adopted from the style of leadership of the West which was absolutely exploitative and they stayed on without a time frame not bothering about the development of the periphery or host country. The nationalists then arose to take up the reins of governance and after some negotiations and in some cases violence confrontations, the Western colonisers left Africa bereft of any other leadership style. While the African leadership adopted the new democratic style of governance of the West assuming it was the best for them, they also imbibed exploitative tendencies and long stay in power without duration which was a trait of their colonisers. This trace, from the precolonial period makes this study different in addressing the gap in other literature that were used for this study.

Furthermore, this study revealed that the African Union is not consistent in its punitive acts on countries that embark on military coups. For instance, on August 30, 2023, another military take over was experienced in Gabon which ended President Ali Bongo Ondimba's fourteen-year rule. The AU condemned the act and immediately suspended the country from the institution. The same thing was done in Burkina Faso in January 2022 and Niger in July 2023 (Lizzo, 2023). On the other hand, at the Peace and Security Council of the African Union held on 14 May, it was revealed that the AU failed to sanction Chad by suspending her from the institution rather, the Transitional Military Council (TMC) was endorsed to carry out its 18-month assignment to restore order (Peace and Security Council Report, 27 May, 2021). This act was totally at variance to the AU's adoption of the Lome Declaration in 2000 on suspending of soldiers who seized the reins of power.

Therefore, the study's objectives included to identify the major causes of coups in Africa, to examine the efforts and impacts made by the African Union to curtail the crises of coups and counter-coups in Africa and account for successes in good governance in the African region and a way to imbibe it in the region. There have been several theories in understanding the spiraling wave of coups and counter-coups in Africa and also in understanding the role of African Union and its threats of sanctions. Some of the theories include the elite theory which was propounded by Vilfredo Pareto, Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca and Jose Ortega Gassat and others, which is hinged on the fact that every

society comprises of two classes of persons. The theorists focused more on the role of the ruling class/elites who determine the fate of the rest of the society. It is believed that in Africa almost all military coups are carried out by the elites in the military or in the rank and file of the military. Military coups therefore promote and protect the interests of the elites. Other theories that have been used include the Frustration-Aggression theory as espoused by Dollard and further expanded by (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976) who said that frustration aggression is a retaliatory act targeted at the perceived source of frustration.

However, in the interest and understanding of this study, the regime security theory will be applied. Although a relatively new theory which explains the reasons for the coups in Africa and the role of the African Union in all of it. Stephen D. Krasner was a key figure in establishing the theory as a prominent topic of the study in international relations. According to (Robert Keohane, 1984) regimes respond to collective action problems that arise from the self-interest of States. This means that regimes are created to enhance the welfare of their creators. This theory propounds that regimes are created for the sole distribution of power among States.

Regime security reveals conditions where elites who are governing states try to secure their rule from violent challenges to their governments and any insecurity challenges facing their countries. Most times, such insecurities are from within the affected States than outside. All these arises from the States unwillingness to provide security within the State and the local communities. Developing countries use this theory's tenets to manage threats from within. Jackson, 2007 defined regime as the condition where governing elites are secure from violent (domestic) challenges to their rule. Democratic government that retain power through fraudulent means which is antithetical to democracy, face a high level of regime insecurities due to lack of legitimacy, political fragmentation, inadequate social cohesion and lack of consensus on fundamental political, social and economic issues, institutional deficits, and domestic sources of instability (Ayoob, 1995).

Regime security theory is a framework used to analyze the dynamics of coups and political instability within states. It focuses on how regimes, or the governments in power, seek to maintain their control and prevent challenges from various actors, including the military. Thus, authoritarian regimes ensure that they survive by frequently repressing their rivals or challengers, illegally imprison them and also involved in extrajudicial killings. These tactics employed by them is to ensure that their political rivals are neutralized so that their regimes are not usurped by coups. The strengths of the regime security theory was espoused.

Regime security theory provides a valuable lens for understanding how regimes behave in response to perceived threats to their stability. It helps in identifying the strategies and tactics that regimes employ to secure their grip on power. For example, an analysis of recent coup attempts in Africa can reveal how regimes have responded to coup threats.

Another key strength of regime security theory is its emphasis on military-civil relations. In Africa, where the military often plays a pivotal role in politics, this theory sheds light on how regimes seek to co-opt, control, or neutralize the military as a potential coup actor, either through the internal mechanisms or through regional institutions like the ECOWAS and the African Union. This is crucial in a region where military coups have been relatively common.

Lastly Regime security theory offers insights into the preventive measures that regimes might take to reduce the likelihood of coups. This includes strategies such as purging disloyal elements within the military, fostering a culture of loyalty, or providing economic benefits to military elites to maintain their support.

Africa, a vast and diverse continent, has been a focal point of international attention due to its complex political landscape, rich natural resources, oscillating social dynamics and the resurgence of military coups. The pursuit of regime security interests by African governments often intersects with, and at times contradicts, the imperative of maintaining stability within their borders and across the region. This is the increasing propensity of African government's primary goal of employing every means necessary in ensuring their own survival, often through the consolidation of power, maintaining control over resources, and suppressing dissent. In Africa, regime security interests take various forms, including:

Authoritarian Rule: In this instance many African leaders seek to maintain authoritarian regimes that concentrate power and limit political opposition. This often involves restricting political freedoms and suppressing civil society organizations.

Resource struggle: Leaders prioritizes control over valuable resources, such as oil, minerals, and land as a common regime security interest in Africa. Governments may use these resources to fund their security apparatus and maintain loyalty among key supporters. Of necessity is that Regimes that prioritize resource control over the salience of human rights may mismanage their economies, leading to inequality, poverty, and economic instability, which can be catalysts for social unrest. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) provides a key example: The DRC is rich in mineral resources, which have fueled conflict for decades. The pursuit of resource control by various armed groups and governments has led to persistent instability in the region.

Ethnic and Religious Manipulation: In ethnically diverse countries, leaders may exploit ethnic or religious cleavages to consolidate power, often exacerbating tensions and conflicts. Example is Cameroon: In Cameroon, the government's suppression of Anglophone separatist movements has escalated into a protracted conflict, demonstrating how the pursuit of regime security can exacerbate internal divisions which might trigger a military coup anytime in that country.

Electoral Manipulation: Some leaders resort to electoral fraud and manipulation to secure their position, undermining the legitimacy of democratic processes. Several examples abound in this respect. For instance Zimbabwe: The prolonged rule of Robert Mugabe and the manipulation of electoral processes led to economic collapse and political turmoil in that country leading to military coup which is a further demonstration of the consequences of regime security interests taking precedence over national stability. Another is the recent coup in Gabon under General Brice Nguema, the head of the junta, a relation of the Bongo family who started his career as a body guard to Omar Bongo, the father of the deposed President, who had earlier ruled for 42 years. It is significant because the coup occurred minutes after President Ali Bongo was declared as winner of a massively rigged presidential election (Ibrahim, 2023). Several of the coups that have occurred in these African countries from Zimbabwe in 2017 to the 2019 military coup in Sudan and the 2020 military coup in Mali and assisting power takeovers in Tunisia and Algeria in 2020 are manifestations of the continued desire for African leaders to protect their regimes and perpetuate their self-serving interest. This trend will explain the expectation that besides the suppression of the dissenting voices of the Anglophone separatist groups in Cameroon, where it is clear that 90-year old Paul Biya is too old, weak and sick to govern a military coup might be imminent (Ibrahim, 2023).

The regime security theory further explains the fact that the African Union and sub-regional Organizations are only cloaks in the hands of the self-serving leaders who now seek to rely on the instrumentality of extra-territorial powers to hold onto power in their respective domain have lost public appeals through their governance metrics. Even though there are mechanisms embedded in the AU Act, such norms codified in Article 30 of the African Union Constitutive Act, 2002 and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, 2012, have gradually lost their meanings (African Union, 2002) It is for this reason that the condemnation of military coups by the African Union or by ECOWAS now has little significance because people always ask what these Institutions did when

democratically elected leaders were messing up national constitutions, electoral systems and bent on perpetuating themselves in power.

In Africa democratic reforms was an imperative during the early 1990s to the 2000s, from Democratic Republic of Congo, Algeria and Kenya, occasioned by the breakdown of a one-party dictatorial system and military rule. Even apartheid South Africa was in need of an essential metamorphosis; there was a breakdown of segregation and white settlers had to relinquish their roles to the natives to rule themselves through a democratic process. This wave cut across Africa including Nigeria which was termed Africa's second independence, and the end of colonial projects in Africa (Ake, 1995). African countries have enormous ties with their former colonial rulers such as Britain, France and Spain in adopting and practicing democracy which has led to them not letting go of the imperialist nature. Besides, African democracy is still heavily supported by the imperialists and it is filled with challenges such as corruption, ethnicity, and nepotism.

The resurgence of coups in Africa especially West Africa is becoming worrisome and it is looking more like a spiral effect in the region. It is recorded historically, that coups became frequent in Africa in the 1960s when most of the countries in the region, gained independence and not long after that, coups began to take place (Chigozie & Oyinmiebi, 2022). However there is a worrisome resurgence.

A coup is an attempt by the military or civilian to unseat sitting rulers. It is always illegal. Within the space of the 1950s, it has been identified by (Powell & Thyne, 2011), identified over 200 attempts in Africa and about half of them have been successful. The African region has experienced a range of coups since the post-colonial era after independence with 51.3 percent of the coups between 1960 and 1969, 49.5 percent between 1970 to 1989 and 53.7 percent between 1990 to 2010. In summary, the region has documented 104 coups both failed and successful out of 200 coups experienced (Barka & Ncube, 2012; World Atlas, 2022).

The resurgence of military coups can be led to the failure of democracy in Africa with the classic indices of incessant corrupt practices by the leaders and public officers, political votes buying, thuggery, banditry, kidnapping, siphoning and looting of the federal treasury and reserves. African states that have experienced military coups recently, failed or successful have experienced welcomed jubilation from the citizenry due to the failed state of governance. This welcomed jubilation has left one wondering if democracy has failed in Africa.

Odigbo, Ezekwelu & Okeke, 2023 were able to identify that between years 2000 and 2023, a span of twenty-three years, over eleven (11) military coups have taken place in Africa. In 2022 there were four attempted and successful military coups in Mali, Burkina-Faso and Guinea-Bissau. This shows the frequency at which military coups are taking place in Africa and most are successful having Mali recording three coups in over a decade. According to (Siegle, 2021) almost 20 percent of African countries have succumbed to coups since 2013.

The military coup in Niger was led by soldiers in the presidential guard and this coup is just a recent one in the thread of recent coups in Africa but most recent is the coup in Gabon, Central Africa a month after the coup in Niger. Prior to now, there were 2 coups in Burkina Faso in 2022, failed coup attempts in Guinea Bissau, The Gambia and the island nation of Sao Tome and Principe. So far, in the African region, there were six coup attempts in Africa; of which four of them were successful. This is excluding the recent one in Niger. Over the last three years, the military took over Mali in August 2020 and May 2021, Guinea, September 2021 and Burkina Faso, January and September 2022. These countries are still under military regime and the African Union has not been able to do much to return sanity through democratic rule and it has therefore led to a series of coups and counter coups in the African region especially West Africa. There is a deep fear that the spiraling effect of military rule will spread all over Africa and the region will find itself where it was after independence in the 1960s when coups became the order of the day.

Between 1960 and 2000, an average of four coups a year have been consistent and in most cases, it is linked to poverty and poor economic policies in Africa which has led to instability in the political economy of the African state. On 19 July, 2023 a successful coup was carried out in Niger which shares border with Nigeria. The coup took place after the presidential election and the inauguration of Mohamed Bazoum of which there was an attempted military coup 48 hours before the election but it was fought off by the presidential guards. Since then the elected President has been held hostage by the junta and on 28th July, the head of the country's presidential guard, General Abdourahamane Tchiano declared himself as the head of state amidst threats of sanctions by the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is interesting to note that great jubilation was recorded in Niger amongst the people over the successful military coup due to the fact that there are a lot of meaningful reasons the citizens were tired of the democratic rule in the country.

The African region has been bedeviled with issues of rising insecurities. For instance, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau and Niger, terrorists have invaded and claimed most parts of the countries. In Burkina Faso, terrorists occupy an estimate of 40 percent of the territory which has led to the closure of 2,500 schools and a whopping one million and over, displaced persons (Baltoi, 2023). Niger on the other hand is a known terrorist zone with Islamic State and Al-Qaeda affiliates and Boko Haram being hosted there and infiltrating other African states such as Nigeria. The terrorists have terrorized the people and seized control of parts of the country thereby raining havoc through maiming, killings and displacing citizens. The rate of security in the region is both scary and alarming hence, the coup was a welcome turn of events because the citizens believe that the military would be able to bring sanity to the region and stop the spread of terrorist attacks. The military coup was welcomed by mainly the youths who were seen flying the Russian flag and they were recorded giving credit to Russia and the head of the Wagner group, a private Russian military contractor who spear-headed the Russian invasion into Ukraine before his unfortunate demise in a plane crash (Ajala, 2023).

Several scholars have argued that the military interrupt democratic governance because the civilian democratic leadership in Africa is highly flawed due to a number of reasons:

- i. Long stay in power (office). Over the years, it is recorded that the leaders in Africa stay longer than required in office and this is antithetical to democratic process which in most cases has a duration of four years in the first instance and maximum of two tenures after re-election into office. However, this process has been long discarded by leaders and it could be traced to economic gains and sabotage of due process in democratic governance through corrupt practices that have become abased and daring in the light of the public. The leadership challenges in Africa could be traced down from after independence through the dependency on the satellite countries which has led to fraud, corruption, underdeveloped infrastructure. However, the major challenge in African leadership is corruption. African leaders fight amongst themselves over the 'juicy' positions they allocate to themselves for the sole purpose of looting the continent's scarce resources for their private pockets. Therefore, this leads to political violence and conflicts among the citizens in a bid to escape poverty which eventually leads to corruption even amongst the masses (Boone, 2012).
- ii. After independence, African leaders could not sustain the infrastructure inherited by them from the former colonial powers and they could not build infrastructure on their

own. They had to rely on the West. Even the financial aid sent to African leaders to ensure they are able to sustain the existing infrastructure and to build new ones are hijacked and embezzled by the leadership. This attitude leaves the young generation no other means but to fight back to claim that which is theirs. they become violent by engaging in election violence and they are equally used by the ruling elites to propagate their dubious activities especially during elections. This attitude also has spurred the military in some of these African States to lash out by seizing political power through military coup d'état. However, there is the concern about the intention of the military because over the years, it has been studied and revealed that the military is also as corrupt as the civilian rule; amassing wealth in such a vulgar manner. Another cause for military coups in Africa can be linked to incessant protests and uprisings by the citizens. The protests are done by the citizens against the ineptitude in leadership. In Burkina Faso there were massive violent protest against the leadership style before the coup d'état on January 24th, 2022 (Fatola, 2022) which was led by Paul-Hewn Sandaogo Damiba which ousted the government of Roch Maro Christian Kabore.

- iii. Governments' inability to address the insecurities affecting the African region. The issues of kidnappings, banditry and terrorist activities perpetuated by the Boko Haram sect, Miyetti Allah and the hosts of them has rendered huge economic halt in most of the North-East in Nigeria and other parts of Niger Republic. It has led to military take-over of governance. Economic activities have been grounded and has led to low exchange rates. Farmers can no longer produce for exportation and for the locals to have enough for consumption. The governments/leadership were empowered through democratic means but democracy seems to have failed in the African region since the military take-over is celebrated by mainly the youths.

Method

The historical research design was used for the study. It focused on the African region and the role of the African Union. The research was qualitative in nature and data from journals ranging from African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research to University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy as well as facts and figures as quoted by scholars and newspaper articles were used to draw inferences. Secondary sources of data was used for this study. Data for the study which were derived from secondary sources such as books, journals, newspaper articles and the internet especially through the Google search engine and other websites were qualitatively analyzed. To ensure the validity of the study,

the qualitative evaluation framework as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which emphasizes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability was employed in the study.

Through data triangulation, by utilizing from several sources such as AU communique and reports to ascertain the consistency of events and institutional responses was ensured and cross-verified with statements from the Peace and Security Council and international think tanks. Also, to boost transferability, the study enunciated credible and robust contextual descriptions of each country examples by outlining the political history, governance failures, and regional dynamics that caused each coup. The study's dependability stems from a transparent audit trail detailing data collection procedures and analytical decisions alongside with peer reviews and consultations to enhance interpretive consistency. Finally, all AU effectiveness or failures were supported by direct references to official statements or scholarly evaluations.

Result and Discussion

Resurgence of coups in Africa and the role of the African Union

The African Union has made its mission clear on states that reneged on democracy through military take over. The Union does not condone coups and it made its declaration not long after military coups took place in Sudan, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea and most recently, Niger and Gabon joined them with the exception of Chad where the Union, did not sanction Chad rather, adopted the Transitional Military Council (TMC) to carry out its 18-month assignment to restore order (Peace and Security Council Report, 27 May, 2021).

In Chad, Mahamat Deby who was a military officer, took over leadership in August 2020 immediately after his father's death. Mali also suffered several coups in May 2021. Furthermore, the military took over Guinea in September, 2021 while, in Burkina Faso, there was a military coup in September 2021 and likewise in Burkina Faso in January 2022 (Wanjohi, 2022). Sudan has been under military rule since January 2021. The virus of military rule in Africa has been from back to back touching every part of the region.

Niger joined the cyclone of coups on July 26, 2023 when a group of soldiers assigned to guard the deposed President, Mohamed Bazoum and General Abdourahmene Tchiani, the head of the country's presidential guard announced himself as the new Head of State. Gabon recently experienced military coup a month after Niger and General Brice Oligui Nguema ended the 55 years of rule by the Bongo family in Gabon. The General promised Gabonese

a free election that would lead to a transfer of power but there is no laid out time-table yet (Mwai, 2023).

Scholars, over the years have pointed out reasons for coups and counter-coups in Africa. They include; violation of constitutional norms, retrogression in the process of democratization and lack of respect for democratic process as well as insecurity and economic degradation in the African region not forgetting the greed amongst some top military officers who also want to taste of the public pudding. African countries like South Africa, Botswana, South Sudan and Eritrea have not had military coups since independence despite their challenges which others should emulate.

As was the case in the 1970s and 1980s, military coups in Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Niger and Gabon, have seen civilians demonstrate in favour of military rule and they have been ready to collaborate with the juntas. Clearly, there is a new generation in Africa that has no memory of the terrible impacts of military rule in the continent, and thinks military rule can be a political solution to the crisis generated by poor democratic practices. The inept governance and socio-economic decay prevalent in the continent has provided the anvil for this thoughtlessness. Although the African Union and other regional bodies could do a lot but seems to have been battling a moral compass of its back seated approach to the crisis of miss-governance in Africa.

Nevertheless, the African Union has a lot on its plate. In its updated declaration in April 2022, the African Union stated that it “strongly condemns all forms of unconditional changes of government in Africa, coup perpetrators and manipulation of democratic processes to effect constitutional amendments or revisions for entrenching power of the incumbent in violation of the national democratic principles, and stipulated rules and procedures for constitutional amendment, and in this regard urge all those interested parties to address political concerns through the available national legal mechanisms with a view to finding solutions in a constructive, peaceful and constitutionally acceptable manner; emphasizes that unconstitutional changes of government, in any circumstances should not be entertained or justified”(African Union Declaration, 2022).

The African Union has imposed sanctions on the countries that are currently under a military junta and sub-regional blocs have also imposed economic and financial sanctions. For instance, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) headed by President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has suspended Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso from accessing all benefits and at some point, also imposed border closures.

ECOWAS has also condemned the coup in Niger and Gabon and has called for the restoration of constitutional order. However, it is evident that the Union and sub-regional blocs have done nothing to prevent coups from taking place in the region in the first instance having seen the deplorable state in the nation's security and economic scene without having to adequately and implicitly address the issues which has led to the juntas to seize political and economic power.

5.0 Summary

Coups negate the democratic process which the African region adopted from its former colonial rulers as a way of governance which allows for free and fair elections and installation of credible leaders. Unfortunately, the African leadership have adopted draconian qualities such as long stay in power as pointed out in this study while using the regime security to understand the rationale behind the current of coups and character of African governments.

Conclusion

The African Union is bereft of other means to ensure the region is void of the cyclone of military coups. There is a limit the Union can go with imposing sanctions by not infringing on the sovereignty of the States. Basically, the African Union maintains its efforts to convince the military rulers to set and respect a transition period to civilian rule (Wanjohn, 2023). However, the African Union leaders' sanctions on the states and ultimatums may not be adhered to because of their seeming interests; what the African Union stands to gain from a democratic governance that has been in shambles with leaders over-staying in offices and trying all means to remain in power while the African Union (the big brother of states in Africa) looks on and does nothing about it because of their interests of remaining in power. It ends up being a cycle of corruption imbedded in the African region. It is our view that while governments have a legitimate interest in maintaining their security, it is essential to strike a balance that does not undermine the stability and well-being of their nations.

International actors and organizations must engage with African States to promote democratic governance, conflict resolution, and economic development as means to address the root causes of instability and ensure a more peaceful and prosperous future for the continent. We agree with (Odigbo et al, 2023) that it is important that Africa's democracy be re-tooled by adapting Ake's features of democracy (2003) which is characterized by the following:

- i. a democracy in which people have some real decision-making power over and above the formal consent of electoral choice;
- ii. a social democracy that places emphasis on concrete political, social and economic rights, as opposed to a liberal democracy that emphasizes abstract political rights;
- iii. a democracy that puts as much emphasis on collective rights as it does on individual rights;
- iv. a democracy of incorporation

We advocate that African democratic governments should strengthen their institutional reform approach and create more employment to help in reducing the poverty rates generally, sincerely fight corruption, strengthen their constitutions and conduct free and fair elections. If all these are in place, perhaps there will be an end in sight for military interventions in Africa. A potential limitation of the study is its heavy dependence on secondary data. This approach restricts access to direct perspectives from policymakers, military personnel, and affected communities, potentially creating gaps or biases in capturing the complex, on-the ground realities that influence coups and the AU's immediate response strategies.

Future studies should compare how the African Union responds to coups with the approaches taken by other regional organisations like the European Union (EU), the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Researchers should also examine the role of socio-economic conditions such as youth unemployment, poverty, and inequality, and governance factors like corruption levels, press freedom, and judicial independence in fueling coup occurrences in Africa.

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