



DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA AND RESURGENCE OF MILITARY INTERVENTION: A HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The advent of democracy in Africa was thought to be a solution to the problems of governance in the continent. As such, many Scholars argued that liberal democracy is effective, secure, transparent, fair, inclusive, and people oriented. Yet, the recent but increasing resurgence of military intervention in some parts of Africa appears to be pointing at liberal democracy as a collapsing political system in the continent. This is as there are now successful military coups and unconstitutional change of government (UCG) in Sudan, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger and Gabo. Spectacular in some of these countries were the massive jubilation and celebration that accompanied these military interventions. These excitements indeed appear to be masses' approval of the counter triumph of military juntas over liberal democracy. Adding to these are the social media comments of many other Africans in Nigeria, Senegal, Cameroon, Ghana, Uganda, Gambia, Togo, etc., wishing the military could conduct similar interventions in their own countries. What then is the bitter pill in liberal democracy that makes military interventions in the continent attractive in contemporary times? Could it be that liberal democracy is a western model and unsuited Africans? This paper examines democracy in Africa; unravelling its pseudo contents, consequences, propelling rationale and functionalists' apologetic arguments that are in dissonance with peoples' expectations of democracy in Africa. The study finds that democracy in Africa is largely neither service driven nor wholly masses oriented; but rather an imperial and predatory system that has become irresponsible and inimical to the wellbeing of the large population. This condition is often the outstanding reason behind the resurgence of military interventions in Africa despite the efforts of United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and ECOWAS to check unconstitutional changes of Government (UCG) among member States.

Key Words: Africa; *Coup d'etat*; Democracy; Military; Intervention; UCG.

Introduction

The realities of stable economies and quality human condition in America, Europe, and other parts of the world are attributed to democratic practices (Ekwenze, 2009). It is based on this that some scholars argue that liberal democracy is universally effective, secure, transparent, free, fair, inclusive, masses oriented and suitable for every human society. (Fukuyama, 1992, Galston & Kamarck, 2022, Wallace,). This understanding made the expansion of democracy in Africa to be viewed with high expectations of socio-political and economic development. This expectation is now low as present political reality largely reflects manipulation of constitutional orders and authoritarianism. Envisaging this situation, the American philosopher Sydney Hook (1949) reveals that the most curious phenomena of our time is the manner in which totalitarian regimes sought to wrap themselves in the language of democracy. Democracy has therefore become the most



promiscuous practice in African political affairs. This is evident in the diverse interpretations and political practices that are now dressed in democratic garb in African States. As such, authoritarian and semi-authoritarian governments in mindful of foreign opinion now dress their regimes with the outer forms of democracy (Campbell & Quinn, 2021). Hence, elections are frequently rigged by these so called democratic regimes, and Presidential term limits are often circumvented through constitutional coups.

This reality recalls the fact that collapse of authoritarian regimes of long undemocratic states merely constitutes first step towards democratization process. Hence, the triumph of democracy in African states does not imply automatic consolidation of true democratic institutions and practices. The consolidation of democracy in human societies rather resides with the full conformity and compliance of a country's citizenry, political and military leaders with the demands and principles of democracy. This is as nations devoid of substantial attitudinal changes, support and behavioural compliance with democratic institutions and principles experience an elusive democracy, and eventually unconstitutional change of government (UCG) and military junta. Hence, a lasting democracy depends heavily on its quality and quality of the democrats; without which, the political scenario remains like before (Karabelias, 1998).

In the absence democratic qualities therefore, African democracy has remained transactional, predatory and inimical to the wellbeing of the populace. Hence it is best described as pseudo democracy and a futile political exercise devoid of forms that propel the growth of common good and commonwealth (Aghamelu & Ani, 2011). As such, many African states now accept democracy in theory; but not as it is currently practiced in the continent. This position is propelled by the long years of poor politics and governance; driven by unaccountable access to public treasury, undemocratic inimical policies, neglect of rule of law, transparent elections, equity and justice.

Visibly therefore, democracy have not proved its worth in African continent. It has rather made human life "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes, 1985:186). This is as it is neither inclusive and nor driving production, industry, agriculture and market economy. As such, many African states now run a consumer economy encompassed by insecurity, predatory politics/governance, mass poverty and poor human living conditions. Along with these, African economies have not been largely open and transparent or fared better, while just social order and equity that also characterize democracy has remained elusive in diverse states of the continent. These are coupled with periodic elections that are consistently manipulated and rigged to the emergence of the highest bidders and illegitimate governments that undauntedly run undemocratic and unaccountable



governance, respects no rule of law, human right, equity and justice. This exposes the helplessness of the African masses whose votes do not often count; hence they could not even remove undemocratic governments through the ballots at the polls. The result has been poor human conditions, hindrance of initiatives, talents, ambitions, investments, inventions, innovations and weakening of human expectations among the greater African population. Cheeseman (2021) holds that this manipulation of democratic principles as seen today in Africa brings a daisy situation and worrying times for democracy, in which its resultant violent protests, growing criminality and insecurity appear to signal the end of democracy in the continent. These indeed raises the question of what becomes the option of Africans and stirs the memories of military regimes which is now appears to be considered plausible and attractive (Barracca, 2007).

With the failing democracy acting as situational catalyst in Africa, the resurgent military interventions and unconstitutional change of government (UCG) have been viewed by the masses as patriotic liberation forces (PLF). This image is the catalyst of the massive jubilations and celebration of the masses on the streets of Sudan, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon in support of military takeovers. The masses support also emerges from their comparative similarity that finds military juntas better than pseudo democrats that stifle masses' interest, survival, growth of common good and entrenches western stooges in diverse African governments.

Skeptical of the drivers of democracy and not the appropriateness and suitability of liberal democracy in the continent, many Africans have consistently protested in Sudan, Mali, etc calling for return to democratic rule. Thus, the rising undemocratic practices, authoritarianism and political instability in the continent do not mean as in the interpretations of Afro pessimists that democracy is unsuited to Africa. The results of the Afro barometer representative survey conducted by Cheeseman (2021) in 34 African countries between 1999 and 2021 on public perceptions of democracy shows that majority of African citizens are only dissatisfied with the drivers of democracy in 26 (76%) of the 34 countries. As such, the worry of African citizenry bothers more on the irresponsible and unpatriotic governance of drivers of democracy in different parts of the continent which encourages corruption, insecurity, poverty and poor human condition. These African pseudo democrats constitute the bitter pill that now makes military interventions and UCG attractive in Africa.

Democracy, military junta and unconstitutional change of government (UCG)

The word “democracy” was coined from the Greek words “demo” and “krates” meaning people and rule. This makes the practice appear to have originated from Greece. Yet, democracy as a socio-political practice was practiced in some parts of Africa prior to the



knowledge of Greek democracy in the continent. The Igbos in present eastern Nigeria were for instance popular for their republicanism and democratic practices prior to the advent of colonialism, western education and culture (Achebe, 1998). Based on documentation however, democracy is said to have originated from Greek city states; where it was custom for mature male citizens to gather, deliberate and take decisions that affect their society. With this practice, democracy came to be understood as rule by the people. Because eligible members of the society were involved unlike in monarchy and other systems of governance, the Athenian statesman Pericles refers to democracy as the greatest Greek legacy and prospective popular polity to be practiced in the world (Thucydides, 1991, Udebunu, 2008).

The Greek sense of democracy was indeed less noble as it lacked universal suffrage; excludes mature women, labourers and foreigners from political rights and dividends (Mbaegbu, 2008). Worst still, it was predatory as it accorded less 'human' status to slaves and greatly exploits them. Despite these historical characters, many countries embraced democracy as the best system of governance; but in a renewed universal form that accommodated all eligible citizens. This universal form incorporated by English, French and American (US) political revolution is now the global standard of democracy in the world. Thus, democracy became understood as a system of governance in which eligible qualified citizens exercise their civic rights and governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves (Appadorai, 2004). This makes democracy a political governance emerging from social contract and hinging on principles of equality, public opinion, social justice, rule of law, transparent elections, exercise of civic rights/duties and promotion of good life (Stumpf, 1994, Onah, 2006). It as well purports democracy as governance that operates on the basis of the general and popular will of the people, implementation of collective purpose and opinions of the citizens (Childs 2010). Yet, democracy is not just purported as only a majority rule but "a governing system based on the will and consent of the governed, institutions that are accountable to all citizens, adherence to the rule of law and respect for human rights" (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022: 3). It is a network of structures in which those exercising power are subject to checks and balances from independent courts, Press and civil society within and outside the State. Based on this global standard and popular understanding, the one-time US President, Abraham Lincoln defines democracy as government of the people by the people and for the people.

Meanwhile, unconstitutional change of government (UCG) is a situation where a duly elected government is toppled and replaced in an unconstitutional way. This political change can happen through military *coup d'état* as evident in Mauritania, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon. In this direction, members of the army usually depose the



incumbent elected government and replace it with a military led government popularly called military junta (Dersso, 2016). Unconstitutional change of government can also happen in a situation where masses' protests facilitated a military backed change of government. This scenario played out in Madagascar, Egypt and Sudan military where the military ousted the incumbent leadership following long weeks of protest. UCG can as well happen when the military, politicians or both get involved in violation of constitutional process for the emergence of a particular leader.

The result of unconstitutional change of government (UCG) is often military junta. Military junta depicts a group of armed military officers who rule a country after seizing state power by force. It is an illegitimate rule which happens through unconstitutional removal of government. Based on its illegitimate character, Edeh and Ugwueze (2014) explain military juntas as a military government or "an institution of governance that is derived unconstitutionally" (2048). Since the term 'junta' is a Spanish word meaning committee or meeting, military junta is an illegal committee or administrative council mainly comprising soldiers who rule a country after a *coup d'état*. Epistemologically therefore, this means that military junta derives not from the ballot papers but through the barrels of guns. As such, it is a government without the people's consent. With this brute fashion, military junta is a rule devoid of people oriented constitution but characterized by decrees, edicts, promulgations and pronouncements. As such, military junta is understood as an authoritarian government characterized by oligarchic and autocratic military dictatorship.

Military junta could also be understood as a coercive military organization that operates and governs with regimented rules designed to compel docility and obedience from the rest of the citizenry through promulgation of draconian laws, decrees, edicts, martial laws and pronouncements. From this empirical stance, military junta exists in two different forms. There is the disguised military junta visible post President Mohammed Morsi's government of Egypt which wields and exercises indirect but binding power on the citizens. In this case, the disguised military junta stays behind the curtain but dominantly controls a nominally, feeble and puppet civilian government. Then there is open military junta as seen in Mali, Guinea, etc., which formally seizes power as a country's governing body and directly rules the people.

Democracy in Africa

The major reason for the resurgence of military intervention in Africa is the failure of democracy. Considering the unfolding political realities in many African states, it is glaring that many African governments operate pseudo democracy. Pseudo democracy is a "political system that parades itself as democratic but offers no true elements of democracy for the citizens" (Akinfenwa, 2022:1). Pseudo democracy is not people or service driven,



but rather suppressive, oppressive, coercive and incapable of delivering the expected public good (Onuigbo, 2005). As practiced in most African states, governance is applied in ways suitable to the whims and caprices of the ruling class, and to the discontent of the larger African population. In pseudo democracy, the rule of law is hardly regarded and the judiciary is visibly compromised. Worst still, leaders unleash authoritarian tendencies and are alienated from the masses as they drive with intimidating security personnel, in expensive convoys, and access the best healthcare and education system abroad for their family while ignoring the daily deteriorating conditions of the masses.

Being a pseudo democracy, governance in Africa is financially attractive with humongous salaries, unchecked access to public coffers and unaccountable condition of service. This is coupled with consumer economy which anchors more on severe taxation of the masses, importation of goods and services rather than indigenous production and exportation. These make democracy in many African states a rogue and predatory system in which resources or economic rents extracted from the public are often diverted to private uses (Evans, 1989; Fukuyama, 2012). Forsyth (1982) describes this type of governance as spoil system revealing that in many African states;

political power means success and prosperity, not only for the man who holds it but for his family, his birth place and even his region of origin. As a result, there are many who will go any length to get it, will surpass themselves in order to get it (15).

Consequently, larger African masses have been impoverished within the few decades of democracy in the continent. This is as the system deprives the talented of stable environment and adequate incentives necessary in pursuing and actualizing genuine projects.

Truly, the fear of Plato and Aristotle that democracy often turns to oligarchy, plutocracy and tyranny have manifested in Africa (Aghamelu & Ani, 2011). And because of the power and access it gives to illegitimate wealth, leadership positions in African democracy are monetised by political parties for the highest bidders. The emerged plutocrats then enter the transactional race of bribing the parties' delegates in order to acquire the highest vote casts in the parties' primary elections and emerge as the party flag bearer which guarantees one to contest elective position. It is actually the parties' internal structures and mechanisms that deprive the masses of the choice of best candidates in many African elections. Thus, the masses are merely at the polls to formalize any of the preferred candidates projected by political parties. Since such governments do not truly emerge from



means popular and acceptable to the masses, they are not considered as popular will of the people. This is why many people consider winners of elections in many African states as usurpers lacking legitimacy. These notwithstanding, greater population of Africans believe that democracy supposes to enthrone accountability and representation, yet this population exhibits no confidence in the democracy practiced in the continent because of its pseudo nature.

Exacerbating this non confidence of the masses in African democracy is neglect of purported ideology by the so called winners of elections and incessant defections from one political party to another. In all these pseudo democratic practices, critics are not spared, and opposing views are ignored as non concomitant with the mission of government. Along this lane, democratic practices like public opinion, referendum and restructuring are totally neglected. Yet, in grand military style, some African elected leaders even extend their constitutional terms in office and rig elections to hold on to power. Some others as in the cases of former President Alpha Conde of Equatorial Guinea and Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta of Mali changed the constitution to elongate their tenure in office. These portray democracy in many African states as non practical and sub standard.

Also manifesting in pseudo democracy of many African countries is an inimical ethical subjectivism that conflicts with objective political morality. Projecting this subjective moral order are stakeholders of ruling parties who have formed cabals and “gangster clubs” rigging elections by all means, hijacking party and national machineries, and consolidating political positions for their selfish end. In subjective moral order seen in African politics therefore, the rule of law and other principles of democracy are supplanted by the ruling party (Areji, 2005). This Machiavellian moral order predicates on holding political power and governing the state by all means. Thus,

this morality states that whatever action the government takes which is not detrimental to the people in government irrespective of the drastic consequences on the governed is moral, good and just. This is the only morality that will ensure uninterrupted succession, corruption and disregard for accountability, nepotism and despotism, eventual extinction of opposition (individual, group and political party) and finally the emergence of one party state (Areji, 2005:56).

Sequel to these incessant poor political situations in many African countries, the social contract binding the state and individual is constantly reneged. This is why the late Nigerian



despot Sani Abacha describes the pseudo democracy in Africa as “home-made democracy” Arua, 2009: 79. Odey (2002) depicts it as government not by the people, but by an organized clique, cabal, political jobbers, looters and robbery consortium that collaborate with imperialists and convert leadership into breeding ground for unemployment, insecurity, hunger and hopelessness.

Democracy in Africa therefore undermines the citizenry; their inalienable rights, privileges, freedom and efforts. This is as it excludes them from governance, ignores public opinion, persecutes and represses the activists, critics and anyone whose loyalty is in doubt (Chinweuba, 2019). This is as it surrounds the people with harsh living condition and extort them through states actors such as law enforcement agents, government officials, and non state actors such as touts which government often use to exact taxation from the public (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013).

Generally therefore, larger population of Africans appears not to have fared better in the decades of democracy in the continent. This is as functional basic amenities are inadequate, and insecurity triggered by menace of robbers and terrorists are gaining momentum in the continent. Amidst these, Africa has largely become a political theatre of human right abuses, subversion of democratic principles and political and economic exploitation of the masses. Along this lane, justice as conceived by Trasymachus manifests in the interest of the strong who are often those in government (Plato, 1997). And with relationship tilting into “might is right”, the larger African population now show loyalty by coercion or dim of favour (Stumpf, 1994). These conundrums have become fertile grounds for resurgence of military juntas in the continent.

Propelling rationale and functionalists’ apologetic arguments to African pseudo democracy vis-à-vis universal democratic principles

The propelling rationale behind African sham democracy constitutes the challenges of democratizing African states. Among these rationale or challenges are the driving forces of poverty and greed. These forces breed every kind of social dysfunction in African politicians and ruling class; such as the feeling of financial insecurity and irrational pursuit of wealth (Fukuyama, 2012). Since most Africans have trailing history of poverty, coupled with increasing poor masses in the continent, the tendency is always to live above this deplorable condition. Some politicians could not however control their greed hence they view political offices as means of looting common wealth. And to get political mandate in order to service their greed and concupiscence for illegitimate wealth, these politicians employ every machination to disrupt the democratization of African states.



Propelling pseudo democracy in Africa is also poor systems and structures already in place prior to the advent of liberal democracy. These include classic and juicy offices, humongous salaries, allowances, entitlements and benefits, windfalls, kick backs, immunity of some state actors, enormous power of the state actors, etc., which were spill over from colonial, monarchical and military practices. Haven been incorporated into the present democracy, these structures made political offices in Africa attractive to non service driven candidates and the military. Consequently, these non service driven candidates indulge in all huge and illegal expenses at the party and campaign levels in order to galvanize supports to win electoral or buy political positions (Akubue, 2010). Along this lane are electioneering campaigns that revolve on “god-fatherism”, bribing the electorates, party members, party delegates, electoral bodies and stakeholders, who will aid the manipulation of ballot papers, boxes, electoral processes and post election tribunals. Coupled with these, politics in Africa is largely viewed as a financial investment, and governance is seen as viable means of compensation, actualizing returns and maximum profits. Sham democracy is too viewed by many African political office holders and public wealth profiteers as means of impoverishing, intimidating and subduing the masses in order to render them susceptible to constant control. Consequently, democratic principles are not fully hearkened to in many successive regimes in African continent.

Nevertheless, the sham democracy in Africa is as well propelled by challenges of social expectations in most indigenous cultures. These cultural expectations are part of the normal traditional family, kinship and community ties, obligations, loyalties, reciprocity and relations (Ogugua, 2003). Commenting on the influence of these cultural expectations, Gyekye (1997) attests that;

in the extended family system of African societies, an individual bears a dual responsibility: for himself and for the members of the group. These responsibilities are naturally onerous. To be able to shoulder them success-fully requires an adequate personal economic position. An individual public official who has access to public resources may, in the process of striving to achieve that adequate economic position, take advantage of his official status and commits acts of official corruption. Second, the extended family system with its web of relatives-far and near-gives rise to patronage: the public official is expected to find jobs for some members of the extended family either in his organization or elsewhere. This often leads to nepotism, which is an act of corruption (196).



In most of these African indigenous cultures still, one's social status, worth and recognition are measured and recognized based on the amount of his/her accumulated wealth (Ani, 2009). Being relevant in politics and holding on to power in Africa however give access to this type of wealth and riches that guarantee one immediate honour, recognition and social domination without much ado or consequence. As such, the tendency is there in democratic leaders to subvert democratic principles and plunder the commonwealth to satisfy these cultural demands.

In cognizance of these propelling socio-political and cultural realities, there are many arguments to poor democratic governance in Africa. The interesting of these arguments is the functionalists' apologetic perspectives which hinge on justifying the notion: *the worst democratic rule is better than the best military rule*. The functionalists' arguments therefore revolve on the purported beneficial aspects of poor democratic governance in Africa visible in the docility and relative peace it has created. The functionalists maintain that although a sham, democracy as it is in Africa have largely created a docile society that is not only nonchalant to poor governance, but is ready to accommodate all forms of poor leadership. Consequently, the functionalists argue that African countries are largely devoid of civil disobedience and conflicts visible in other continents where people are intolerantly conscious of pseudo democracy. Apologetically, the functionalists further claim that African democracy is growing hence it will in time acquire more experiences in democratic acculturation, improve on people's expectations and shed off the factors responsible for military interventions. As such, the functionalists argue that African democracy will in time advance to expected stage and maturity where human freedom, rights, privileges, government responsiveness and accountability will be guaranteed.

Moreover, the functionalists affirm that the present sham democracy in the continent is inadequate in provision of dividend; hence it has encouraged mass migration of African citizenry in search of 'greener pastures'. Most of these migrants, the functionalists argue, get exposed to modern economic systems and technology that enhances economic growth more than those in Africa (Ajaegbu, 1976). Consequently, the apologists hold that most of these migrants return with new ideas; initiates and generates production of goods and services in Africa, enhance employment and pay taxes and levies to their different governments. These notwithstanding, the functionalists further aver that most of these African migrants even send money home which strengthens their relationship with their relatives and increase government externally generated revenue.

Furthermore, the functionalist school of thought argues that the pseudo democracy prevalent in Africa has encouraged 'home based' citizens to concentrate more on their abilities for survival rather than depending on government. This attitude, according to



functionalist apologists, is the catalyst behind the massive economic struggle among Africans. This struggle now results to resounding entrepreneurial initiatives, skills, ambition, competitions, enterprises and hard work which drive economic reliance and improved quality human life (Chinweuba & Ezeugwu, 2017). The functionalists however reveal that sham democracy in the continent have on the other hand created (corrupt) millionaires and Billionaires whose influences has put Africa on the global map. As interesting as these functionalist arguments sound, they are not concomitant with universal democratic principles. More so, the excruciating pain of pseudo democracy in Africa outweighs its few advantages. For greater African population hardly find the financial means to migrate or engage in any meaningful entrepreneurial endeavour that will guarantee human survival. As such, many are dying of poverty on daily basis. Worst still, the pseudo democracy advances political activities that complicate the existing poor human condition in the continent as it militates against legitimate enterprise and investment. It therefore stands that pseudo democracy in Africa has done more harm than good, and a situation where the greater population in the continent is wallowing in poverty and on the verge of extinction is not desirable.

Resurgence of military Intervention as consequence of pseudo democracy in Africa

The resurgence of military intervention and unconstitutional change of government (UCG) in Africa began about two decades ago. It first manifested in Mauritania with the August 2005 military coup in which President Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya was ousted from office by the military junta led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall. The junta promised transition to democratic rule within two years in which none of its members would contest in the elections. Indeed, a presidential election took place in March 2007 in which Mr. Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi emerged as President. Yet, another military *coup d'état* in August 2008 led by high ranking Generals ousted President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi from office and governed the country through a military junta led by General Mohamed Ould Aziz. Similarly, President Mamadou Tandja of Niger republic was unconstitutionally removed from office by the military in February 2010. Detained with some members of his cabinet members, the coup plotters formed a military junta; Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (SCRD) in the capital Niamey which was headed by the Squadron Chief Salou Djibo. The junta suspended the constitution, dissolved all state institutions and installed former cabinet minister Mahamadou Danda as the prime minister. However, July 2023 witnessed another *coup d'état* in Niger in which General Abdourahmane Tchiani ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, installed Ali Mahamane Lamine Zeine as transitional Prime Minister and himself as head of state and national council for the safeguard of the homeland (NCSH).



The allegation of plotting to overthrow the government of Central African Republic (CAR) levelled against the Army Chief of Staff, General Francois Bozize in 2003 led to his sack by President Ange-Felix Patasse. The sacked Chief of Staff fled to Chad where he organised a rebel group. With the help of the Chadian government and CAR military, the former Chief of Staff overthrew the government of President Ange-Felix Patasse in March 2013 and headed a military junta that dissolved the constitution and jettisoned every constitutional procedure in governance (Marawako, Sixpence and Mapuvire, 2022, 69). Later, in March 2013, the Seleka Rebel Movement (SRM) overthrew the military junta of General Francois Bozize and replaced it with another. With these, analysts warned that *coup d'état* is contagious, and could spread to other countries in Africa. This manifested in Egypt in July 2013 when General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi deposed President Mohamed Morsi and installed a disguised junta as interim government led by Adly Mansour. The interim government had the mandate of transiting Egypt to civilian rule. This was shortly done and the leader of the coup plotters who also doubled as the disguised controller of the interim government; General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was purportedly declared winner of the presidential election and installed as the new president.

“November 2017 saw the Zimbabwean Defense Forces (ZDF) executing a military coup against President Robert Mugabe” and placed him in house arrest (Mkhululi & Matshobana, 2020:1). In defiance of the constitution, the military installed as President the former Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa whose sack by President Robert Mugabe triggered the *coup d'état*. General Constantino Chiwenga who led the coup as commander of ZDF became the Vice President. This arrangement became a military junta as Zimbabwean constitution was suspended and constitutional procedures regarding change of government were violated. The junta however claimed it is stepping in to protect the gains of the liberation struggle from President Mugabe's faction of Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) ruling party.

Following Zimbabwean November 2020 military takeover was the April 2019 military *coup d'état* in Sudan. The Transitional Military Council (TMC) toppled the three decades Dictator of Sudan, President Omar Bashir at the unfolding of Sudanese revolution caused by hike in the price of baking flour. The result of this military intervention was a junta headed by the Inspector of the Armed forces Abdel Fattah al-Burham after Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf resignation a day after the coup. Sudan again experienced another military resurgence in October 2021. This was as the military officers led by the junta leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan deposed their earlier installed Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and took total control of the country. Military intervention also resurged in Mali in August 2020. The junta led by Colonel Assimi Goïta toppled President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta's government. The junta proposed to remain in power for three years



before transition to civilian rule. In defiance of domestic and international condemnation, the junta in September 2020 produced an Interim Governing Transitional Charter (IGTC) in which it maintains its subsequent role in Mali's political affairs. The junta then installed retired Colonel Major Bah N'Daw as interim President, Moctar Ouanne as Prime Minister and junta leader Colonel Assimi Goïta as interim Vice President. Again in Mali, there was what can best be described as 'a coup within a coup' in May 2021 (Akinfenwa, 2022). This was based on the arrest and toppling of the transitional President Bah Ndaw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouanne by the same military junta led by Colonel Assimi Goïta that installed them as part of the transitional government.

Following the sudden death of President Idris Debby in the battle with *Boko Haram* terrorists at the border with Nigeria in April 2021, the Chadian military embarked in an unusual *coup d'état*. The coup plotters disregarded and abrogated the national constitution, dissolved parliament and government, and hurriedly installed Mohamat Debby as President and leader of the Transitional Military Council (TMC). The new leader of the military junta is a soldier that happened to be the son of the late President Idris Debby who led a military junta for three decades in which he transformed into a civilian leader after overthrowing the military junta of Hissene Habre in 1990.

Nevertheless, Equatorial Guinea experienced a resurgence of military junta in September 2021. President Alpha Conde was toppled in the capital Conakry by the special armed forces under the command of Colonel Mamady Doumbouya. The junta dissolved the constitution, government and its institutions, and announced thirty nine month transition to civil rule.

January 2022 saw another military intervention in Burkina Faso which forced President Roch Marc Christina Kabore out of office. This was following public outrage over government handling of bloody Jihadist insurgents linked to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The junta was led by the forty one year old Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba who immediately dissolved the government, parliament, government institutions and constitutional procedures. September 2022 however witnessed another military coup in Burkina Faso led by Captain Ibrahim Traore. The leader of this latest junta has been installed the new head of state and transitional president by Burkina Faso's military officials, political parties and civil society in defiance of the sanctions of UN, AU and ECOWAS meant to see the return of Burkina Faso to civilian rule. The most recent *coup d'état* led by General Brice Oligui Nguema has now taken place in Gabon on August 30, 2023 after a fraudulent election four days ago, in which the incumbent President Ali Bongo Ondimba was declared winner. Colouring these military juntas in Africa were series of failed *coup d'état* which has happened in Madagascar, etc. All these juntas are



characterised by claims of transition to civilian rule, yet the past military experiences in Africa make manifestations of these claims bleak. Worst still, the persistent pseudo democracy in other countries of Africa is heightening concern that subsequent years could be dramatically a harvest of military interventions and juntas in the continent.

Africans and the resurgence of military intervention in the continent

Despite foreign governments, United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and regional blocs like Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) condemnation of the wave of military interventions and efforts towards restoring civilian rules, the reactions of the masses were unprecedentedly different. In Sudan, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Niger for instance, thousands of people took to the streets to welcome the military junta; jubilating and celebrating with soldiers for overthrowing and imprisoning their Presidents. From some of the placards showing the feelings of the masses, UN, AU, ECOWAS, etc were even rebuked by the people for sanctioning the military leaders whom they believe are serving their interests. The massive celebration of military juntas in some countries of Africa indeed obscures the detrimental performance of pre-democratic military juntas. The rationale behind such massive jubilatory reactions however hinges on people's total disappointment that their so-called democratic leaders whose rules have worsened their living conditions.

Yet, a critical look into the past military juntas reveals rosy beginning that never delivers the basic needs of the masses. Most worrisome aspect is the military antecedent for *sit-tight in office*. As such, the military's usual promise of transiting to democratic rule within shortest possible time hardly materializes without their extending grip on power for much longer. The contextual instance here is the current Malian military junta that promised to hold elections in February 2022 but have requested five more years to remain in power before returning their country to democratic rule.

Curbing military interventions and advancing democracy in Africa

The present wave of military intervention and unconstitutional change of government (UCG) in Africa predicates on the pseudo democracy in the continent. This condition is exacerbated by the inability of international communities; UN AU, ECOWAS, and other regional blocs to address the poor democratic practices in the continent. Unfortunately, members of these bodies are often quick to congratulate illegitimate governments after known fraudulent elections. They also quick to voice displeasure against UCG and to impose sanctions and never condemns the undemocratic practices of their colleagues. This brings to fore the strong argument that international communities should be more concerned about fostering key ingredients of democracy; freedom of the press, equity, accountability, rule of law, etc in Africa. They should find viable means of making those



in government embark on practical democracy rather than on mere periodic elections which are in many cases rigged. Only then will greater African population trust their elected governments and cease considering military intervention and junta as viable alternatives to liberal democracy.

Thus, curbing military interventions and advancing democracy in Africa warrants that UN, AU, ECOWAS, etc., **has to change tactics; as it has become obvious that sanctions as a means of pressuring a regime have minimal effect. Such sanctions even bring more hardship on already traumatized and pauperized citizens rather than those in government. It has therefore become imperative for UN, AU, ECOWAS, etc., to** cover the gaps in their norms on coups and UCG. Among these gaps is the disconnection between norms on UCG and the background context; governance and democratic deficits and breaches of human rights and freedom that cause UGC and coups. Another gap in the norms of these bodies is the absence of mechanisms for dealing with manipulation of election results, term limits and age limits of Presidents which stand as constitutional coups. Another gap is the absence of clarity in the application of norms banning UCG in cases of popular uprising and the military's involvement to contain the impasse. Along with these, UN, AU, ECOWAS, etc has to clarify the required conditions that exactly certify establishment or restoration of constitutional order in a country affected by coup or UCG that warrants removal sanctions.

Fostering democracy and curbing military junta however requires servant leaders in all African states. These are leaders that do not confuse public office with sources of making personal wealth nor neglect human rights, nation building, sustainable development and economic emancipation of the masses. Indeed, African states need governments with dynamic capacity to employ epistemic and metaphysical choices towards surmounting national challenges. These are leaders with enough sagacity to create hybrid ideas that will help Africa overcome poverty, political instability and other human conditions that fan the ember of military resurgence in the continent.

Conclusion

Although people go to the polls and leaders emerge, political practices in many African countries are not truly democratic. The sham called democracy in many parts of Africa is rather more of a spectre devoid of the fundamental democratic principles; accountability, transparency, rule of law, respect for human right, participation of the citizenry in governance, open and market economy, and just and equitable social order. This is why the so called democracy in Africa has neither improved the quality of human life nor guarantee sustainable development in the continent. Sadly, the undemocratic manner many governments emerge in Africa dampens their legitimacy and reflects the rareness of



conviction that they possess the requisite capabilities, integrity, vision, commitment, sound morality and will power to lead the continent to greater level. The political cracks emanating from pseudo democracy in the continent indeed paves way for military intervention in the politics of African countries. And the contempt for this avoidable crack in African politics has become reflected in masses' jubilations that welcome these resurging military interventions and juntas.

These notwithstanding, Africans view democracy as the most beneficial form of governance in the world. This is because of the societal advancement associated with it, as well as its tenets which are universally understood as solutions to the problem of governance in human societies. These signify that democracy is suited for Africa as it is in other parts of the world. Yet, its present failure in Africa is the failure of the vanguards of democracy. Until each country in Africa purge herself of these enemies of democracy, military interventions, coups and juntas will continue to resurge in the continent despite the efforts of UN, AU, ECOWAS and other bodies to foster democratic processes and check UCG among member States.

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