The Resurgence of Military Dictatorship in African Politics: Implication for Democratic Consolidation

Igiebor God'stime Osariyekemwen[*] **and Iyase Ambrose Osariyekemwen**

University of Benin, Department of Political Science, Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract: The paper examines the resurgence of the military coup d'état in Africa and its implication for democratic consolidation. It took a historical voyage of incidences of military coups from the independence of African States in the 1950s- 2003, linking them with recent incidences of military coups d'état in 2019 and 2020. It attempts to justify or otherwise the reasons for the occurrences of military coups d'état from both perspectives. The aim is to find out why military coups have resurfaced after the wave of democratization that has swept through the African continent from the 1980s. The paper adopts the historical and descriptive approaches in a chronological narrative and analysis of the extant literature to ensure a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The paper posits that the recent incidences of coups d'état in 2019 and 2020 are indications of the resurgence of military incursions in African politics since the usual reasons given by the military for interventions or interruptions still abound. To stem the tide and discourage military incursions into politics, the paper thus recommends that the various governments of African States should ensure that they deliver good governance, reduce corruption, strengthen political and electoral institutions to engender free, fair and credible elections, as well as fair electoral participation. The sit-tight-to power syndrome by incumbents African leaders should be discouraged amongst others.

*Corresponding author. E-mail: osariyekemwen.igiebor@uniben.edu

1. Introduction

Military involvement in politics either through military rule at times referred to as military government or military regime is a political phenomenon that has been characteristic of many societies especially the Third World countries. While it is regarded as a political aberration across the globe, it has continued to threaten the consolidation of democracy for many African States (Badie, Berg-Schlosser, and Morlino, 2011). Indeed, military rule is not a recent phenomenon; it pre-dated even the praetorian's rule of Roman times. It was rampant during the feudal era as well as regular interregnum in the constitutional struggles of many societies, including Africa and other Third World countries especially after their political independence (Igwe, 2005).

However, the separation of military and civilian powers and the development of professional and bureaucratic armed forces in European states in the 18th and 19th centuries gave birth to the contemporary understanding of military rule (Badie *et al.*, 2011). Consequently, military interventions in politics are very common both in democratic and totalitarian regimes. The "national guard" function of the military makes it very powerful and sometimes unquestionable when it begins to exert an almost unrestrained influence in government; the height of which may involve the direct takeover of the institutions of governance. Even in developed countries, although the military is restricted to national defence and obedience to the civil authority, it still exerts a significant influence on government policies (Onder, 2010). It has been argued that even in the United States, the military poses a unique set of challenges for Presidents in terms of ensuring fair treatment, adequate remuneration and budgetary allocation for defence as any form of mutiny can result in the issue of national security. Thus, adequate care must be taken to integrate their interest in policy output and the budget to ensure loyalty and full cooperation with the government in power (Halperin, 1975; O'Hanlon and Miller, 2019). However, the distinguishing factor between the military of developed societies (such as in the Western Countries) and those of developing nations (especially in Africa) is the strict adherence of the former to military professionalism imbued with national protection and the inability of the latter to curtail its gluttonous political adventure and concentrate on the assigned function of national protection (Fourney, 1977).

The military dictatorship has played a key role in African political systems since independence from the 1950s. African states have witnessed several interruptions in their political system process by the military junta through a military coup d'état. They have usurped political power based on various premises; it is either to check corrupt political officers, to check misgovernance, or to forestall political instability and possible breakdown of law and order. Thus, the military has often combined their traditional role of defending the integrity of African states with political leadership in the history of most African states (Giles, 2019). Across the world, military interruption or rule is regarded as an aberration or a misnomer. However, they have dominated political power and leadership in Africa for over four decades (Edeh, and Ugwueze, 2014). Military rule in Africa has not been without support from public commentators and critics who usually criticize the civilians for poor governance, sometimes calling for or preferring military rule. Moreover, the citizens usually heave a sigh of relief and open support sometimes when the military usurps power from the democratically elected civilian government because of seemingly bad leadership and corrupt practices. This assertion is corroborated by the recent military coup in Mali in August 2020 when the citizens openly celebrated the coup d'état and expressed support for the Junta (Cserkits, 2020; BBC, 2020). This position is also reinforced by the afro-barometer survey carried out by Massa Coulibaly and Michael Bratton in Mali, where 82 per cent of the sample population supported the military take-over of political power and requested the military to reorganize the political system in Mali (Wing, 2013). The military in developing societies has sought for environmental, social, and political justification to take over the political governance of the states. According to Achebe (1983), military intervention is an attempt by military officers to get involved in the political process to improve upon what they assumed to be the major problem associated with it. This explains why each time a set of military officers take over power, the major justification they give to legitimize their intervention are problems such as political

instability, official corruption, violent political crisis associated with elections and partisan politics. From the 1990s the spate of military regimes reduced drastically and became almost a foregone issue from the late-year 2000 as against the height of military regimes from the 1960s to the 1990s.

However, almost no incidences of military intervention have begun to wear away as there have been instances of a military takeover in some African states like Algeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Mali (United State Institute of Peace, 2020). Despite the disapproval of coups by international bodies and the African Union, military coups d'état still subsist. This call for concern; especially as the reasons or justification for military interruption of the political processes of African states (such as environmental, socio-economic, political factors, etc.) is still prevalent. This paper aims to critically analyze the reasons for past military interventions; evaluate the status of the African nations as regards these factors (as it affects democratic consolidation); juxtaposing them with the resurgence of military intervention or interruption to proffer lasting suggestions to keeping the African military within the confines of their constitutional and professional role. The paper adopts the historical and analytical approach in the examination of the phenomenon in a manner that yields adequate comprehension.

A conceptual framework of military coup d'état in Africa

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (January 31, 2020: 1):

> Coup d'état, also called a coup, (is) the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. The chief prerequisite for a coup is control of all or part of the armed forces, the police, and other military elements. Unlike a revolution, which is usually achieved by large numbers of people working for basic social, economic, and political change, a coup is a change in power from the top that merely results in the abrupt replacement of leading government personnel. A coup rarely alters a nation's fundamental social and economic policies, nor does it significantly redistribute power among competing political groups.

In addition to this, McGowan and Johnson (1984) defined a military coup d'état as a sudden illegal/unconstitutional displacement of government in which members of the security forces play a prominent role. Coups can be reactionary or revolutionary, bloody, or bloodless; however, they must be sudden, lasting for a matter of hours or day rather than weeks. Powell and Thyne (2011) views a successful coup d'état as an illegal and overt act perpetrated by the military or other elites within the political apparatus of the state to remove by force the sitting executive, whereby the perpetrators seize and hold power for at least seven days. A coup d'état according to First (1970) is a sudden action directed at the top (involving senior government officials like the President and Vice President), that ultimately involves predetermined violence even if not used. She argues that only a group that is supported by some sections of the armed forces can carry out a coup and that the secret of its success is the act of conspiracy.

From the submissions of the above definitions, we can decipher several points. The first is that all the definitions agree that a military coup d'état is illegal which can be differentiated from the seizure of power through constitutional means like impeachment. The second point is that the affected officials by the coup have to be topmost leaders such as the President and Vice President in a presidential system and the executive Prime Minister in a parliamentary system of government. The third point is that the coup plotters should consist of a very limited number of persons and it should be sudden and covert or conspiratorial.

It is also important to explain that the term military intervention as used in this work connotes the unconstitutional seizure and use of state power by the armed forces which include, the army, the navy, the air force, the secret police, and other sabotaging law enforcement agencies (Acemoglu, Ticchi, and Vindigni, 2010).

The concept of democratic consolidation

The consolidation of democracy represents an enduring process of achieving fairness of opportunities by the citizens in participating in the political process and having the capacity to affect the outcomes.

Therefore, a democratic system signifies an equal opportunity for the citizenry of a country to take part in the political system. From this standpoint, the constitutional authority is derived from the people. The supremacy of common or national interest which supersedes personal interest is a key attribute of the democratic system (Ibagere and Omoera, 2010). According to Jude and Gambo (2013: 5), "democratization simply means a conscious, deliberate and committed attempt at entrenching enduring democratic values and ideas in political actors and the entire citizenry to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the democratic system." The notion of democratic consolidation includes various issues such as the stability of electoral procedures, achieving popular legitimacy, eliminating traces of authoritarianism, decentralizing the powers of the state, strengthening political parties, etc. O'Donnell (1996) posits that "democratic consolidation" is regarded to have taken place when the following variables are said to be in place- a durable democratic process, observance of the rule of law, a Judiciary that is independent, open and competitive elections, a developed civil society, etc.

From the conception of democratic consolidation above, it is apparent that the consolidation of democracy requires a conscious, continuous and deliberate effort at entrenching the values and ideals of democracy in the citizenry and the polity. The notion of the consolidation of democracy is dependent on the rule of law, an independent judiciary, an active civil society and open and competitive elections; military dictatorship is adverse to all of them. It can thus be argued that the notion of a consolidated democracy is adverse to military interruptions or interventions in the African political space. The concept of democratic consolidation cannot be concluded without acknowledging the role of the media.

The media is a relevant stakeholder and envisioned as primary machinery in the process of democratic consolidation. The democratic principles advocate the unfettered participation of the citizenry in the democratic process. The political environment must accommodate dialogue, consensus and free choice among the citizens. However, these essentials cannot be realized without the instrumentality and institutionalism of the media. The institutionalism of a vibrant free and, objective media is essential to the sustenance and consolidation of democracy. It is the responsibility of the media to access, process and provide necessary information to the public to help them make informed choices in the electoral system practice and governance. This position is collaborated by Gambo (2013) who aver that the liberal democratic process centres on the capability of the mass media to access and disseminates information to the citizenry to enable them to make rational choices.

The mass media (electronic, print) plays a vital role in the consolidation of democracy through their reportage and agenda-setting roles, in terms of protecting the political, economic, and, social rights of the citizens. It is also involved in anti-corruption crusades, respect for the rule of law, helping to define and cultivate the culture and obligation of the citizens' political participation and social inquiry, including mobilizing them for national development. To be able to play the above roles effectively, the media need to display certain characteristics which include the ability to accommodate both its commercial interest and its professional responsibilities to the public. It also includes being conscious of its obligations in terms of providing objective reportage that is in the public interest and being able to oppose the State when its activities are anti to the public interest. Since the second wave of the democratization process in Africa in the 1980s, there have been significant contributions from the media. These include public political enlightenment, organizing the public debate, engaging in civic and political education and projecting governance issues to engender transparency (Uzodike and Whetto 2006; Sesanti, 2015). However, as averred by Baker (2000), the media in Africa faces the challenges of partisan reporting, partial representation of public views and limited number of private media.

2. Research Methods

This paper adopted the position of Merriam (1988) also supported by Marshall and Rossman (1989) that the collection of data and analysis in qualitative research is a simultaneous process. As

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) contended, data analysis in qualitative research entails the classification of things, persons and events as well as the properties which characterizes them. Furthermore, patterns and themes are identified and described (Agar, 1996). As such, data analysis in this paper was organized categorically and chronologically. The aim was to find out the interplay of interests lending credence to military coups d'état in the African political system and this approach provides a useful way of understanding the phenomena. Therefore, the major sources of data were obtained through a literature survey of books, journals, and reports of dailies amongst others. Descriptive analysis which was presented in a narrative structure was employed to analyze the data gathered.

3. Results and Discussions
3.1. Historical Analysis of Military Intervention and Interruption of African Politics
The majority of the African states that gained independence from their colonial masters embraced the democratic system of government with competitive elections. The democratic system of government of an independent state requires subjection of all institutions that act solely in the interest of the society. The military is an integral part of any government and the legal-rational democratic rules require political neutrality and subordination to the civilian government.

Despite the military's professional ethics, of non-intervention or interference in the political system, the military has breached these ethics by several coup d'état, from time to time in the history of democracy in Africa, spanning decades of military dictatorship. Thompson (2004) avers that between 1952 and 1990 Africa recorded 71 military coup d'état, which led to the overthrow of 60% of governments in Africa. Accordingly, countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Cape Verde experienced very few incidences of military interruptions while countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and the Benin Republic had several experiences of military intervention in their political history. Consequently, military interruption and rule almost became a norm rather than an exception for the latter (Ibid.). A reprieve to these incessant interventions by the military came only in the 1990s when this coup d'état significantly reduced.

While we are talking about the military coup d'état in Africa, it is worthy to note that some African states (from the post-colonial period) like Tanzania, Kenya, and most countries from southern African have remained under civilian regimes (Thompson, 2004). Thus, while we have portrayed Africa as characterized by incessant military interruptions up till the 1990s, some countries as mentioned above have no experience of such a phenomenon.

Below is a tabular representation of military incursions into African politics right from independence in the 1950s to 2003. These years are depicted because they mark an all-time high in the incidences of military incursions into the African political space.

Table 1. African military coups since independence

State	Date of independence	1950s/1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total
Algeria	1962	1965			1992		2
Angola	1975						0
Benin (Dahomey)	1960	1963, 1965, 1965, 1967, 1969	1972				6
Botswana	1966						0
Burkina Faso (Upper Volta)	1960	1966	1974	1980, 1982, 1983,			6

Country				1987			
Burundi	1962	1966	1976	1987	1996		4
Cameroon	1960						0
Cape Verde	1975						0
Central African Republic	1960	1965	1979	1981		2003	4
Chad	1960		1975				1
The Comoros	1975		1975, 1978	1989	1999	2001	5
Congo, DRC (Kinshasa) (Zaire)	1960	1965					1
Congo, REP (Brazzaville)	1960	1963, 1968	1977, 1979				4
Cote d' Ivoire	1960						0
Djibouti	1977						0
Egypt	1922	1952, 1954					2
Equatorial Guinea	1968		1979				1
Eritrea	1993						0
Ethiopia	-		1974				1
Gabon	1960	1964					1
The Gambia	1965				1994		1
Ghana	1957	1966	1972, 1978, 1979	1981			5
Guinea	1958			1984			1
Guinea Bissau	1974			1980		2003	2
Kenya	1963						0
Lesotho	1966			1986	1991, 1993		3
Liberia	1847			1980			1
Libya	1951	1969					1
Madagascar	1960		1972				1
Malawi	1964						0
Mali	1960	1968			1991		2
Mauritania	1960		1978	1980, 1984			3
Mauritius	1968						0
Morocco	1956						0
Mozambique	1975						0
Namibia	1990						0
Niger	1960		1974		1996, 1999		3
Nigeria	1960	1966, 1966	1975	1983, 1985	1993		6
Rwanda	1962		1973				1
Sao Tome and Principe	1975				1995		1
Senegal	1960						0
Seychelles	1976		1977				1
Sierra Leone	1961	1967, 1968			1992, 1996, 1997		5

Country	Independence						Total
Somalia	1960	1969					1
South Africa	1910						0
Sudan	1956	1958, 1964, 1969		1985, 1989			5
Swaziland	1968						0
Tanzania	1964						0
Togo	1960	1963, 1967, 1967					3
Tunisia	1956						0
Uganda	1962		1971, 1979	1980, 1985			4
Zambia	1964						0
Zimbabwe	1980						0
Total		29	22	20	14	3	88

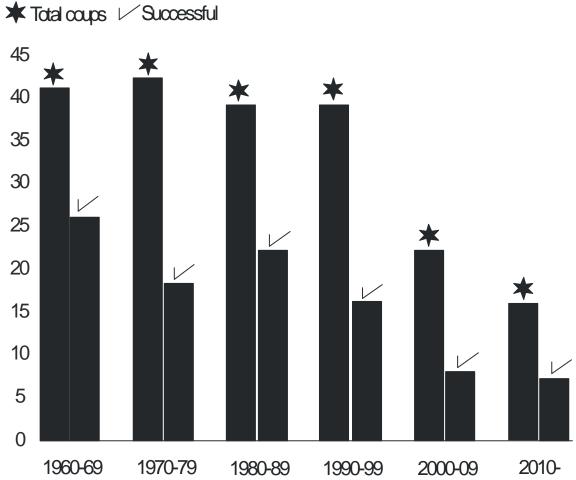Source: Thompson, 2004: 132-133

Figure 1: Military coups in Africa

Source: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46783600

Figure 1 shows that the coup attempts between 1960 and 1999 are consistent around 40 in each decade. There was a significant reduction from the 2000s, which stands at 22, and there are just 17 attempts in this present decade.

3.2. Explaining the Justification for Military Interruptions in Africa

The military undoubtedly is a strong, loyal, disciplined, cohesive, hierarchical, and highly organized body. Additionally, it has direct access to and control of the instrument of state violence; and of course, the organizational ability and technology to engage any group within the state. Thus, if the military personnel decide to employ violence in achieving political goals, they become unstoppable. Military interruptions affect all types of government, whether democratic or non-democratic, even existing military administrations. These intermissions can take place for several reasons ranging from ideological, altruistic nationalism to self-seeking interest or motives. Military interruptions in Africa have taken various forms, however, the opportunity or the stage for these incidences are usually created by the activities of the existing government and the society. To locate the factors common to these displacements, Huntington (1968), proposed three typologies of military coup d'état;- the guardian coup, the veto coup, and the breakthrough coup.

  A guardian coup occurs when the army intervenes in the political system to save the state from mismanagement by elected political officials. On assuming power, the military tackles corrupt officials and inefficiency and seeks to purge these malaises from society. In most instances, the military keeps to their promise of returning the country to civil rule when they are satisfied with the restored discipline. From the above scenario, one can say that Nigeria is an example of an African country with a series of guardian coups in the post-colonial period (Wiseman, 1996; Ayam, 2004; Thompson, 2004).

  Veto coups are occasioned when the vested interest of the military and its allies are threatened. Rather than allow a new regime in which they are unsure of their position to capture political power, they instead assume power themselves. Thus, one can say that the 1992 coup d'état in Algeria, is an example of a veto coup. The military intervened in Algeria because they feared that the results of the multi-party elections in which an Islamic movement party was set to win would not serve their interest (Wiseman, 1996; Barka and Ncube, 2012). Certainly, the military cannot sit by and watch when other socio-political groups are seeking to maximize their share of state power. Thus, the military has to manoeuver to protect its interest. Issues that may be considered as a threat for the military include a reduction in the defence budget and an attempt to undermine the military's organizational autonomy. For instance, the Gambian coup of 1994 occurred as a result of accommodation and food problems in the barracks (Wiseman, 1996). Another major problem was the objection by the Gambian military to the continuous presence and domination of the Nigerian military personnel seconded as commanding officers. They wanted to run their military; this goal was achieved by the overthrow of the 29-year-old government of President Dauda Jawara. The 1968 military coup in Mali is another example of military veto coup d'état. President Modibo Keita established a special force (a presidential guard separate from the regular military) to counteract the military. The military foresaw this development as a weakening of their position within the structure of the state, thus, a coup d'état was their response (Wiseman, 1996; Barka and Ncube, 2012).

  The third typology, the breakthrough coup refers to the ouster of an outdated authoritarian regime by the military in the quest to secure a total change to society. Thus, this type of coup d'état serves as the revolutionary mechanism intended to bring about social change (Huntington, 1968). According to Wiseman (1996), Ethiopia experienced a breakthrough coup in 1974 when the military allied with other social movements to topple the 44-year-old rule of Emperor Haile Selassie and established a socialist state.

  Further efforts by political scientists to attempt a deeper explanation of the incidences of military coups in Africa have led to the development of two major schools of thought. The first school emphasizes on the socio-political environment of the state as responsible for military interruption in African politics. Huntington (1968) and Finer (1988) belong to this school of thought. They argued that states with economic hardship, social divisions, and weak institutional political cultures are prone to military coup d'état. Thyne (2010) agrees with the above assertion. The second school emphasized on the motivational inclination, ability, and character of the military as a well-organized group to

carry out coup d'état to their advantage. Scholars such as Janowitz (1977), Powell (2012), Bell and Sudduth (2017) identified cohesion, discipline professionalism, and patriotism as essential features of the military structure which compels or propels the army to oust purported civilian regimes. These two factors or schools of thought cannot, however, be isolated; it can be argued that military coup d'état, results from the nature and structure of the socio-political environment while there is the existence of a well-organized military with enough motivation to intervene and disrupt the political climate of African states.

   From the above analysis, the proposition of the first school of thought seems more relevant, in explaining military interruptions in the African democratic settings. The socio-political environment plagued with social unrest, political instability, challenges of economic development and bad governance that are often the reasons for public protests, are most of the times the premise on which the military overthrow elected civilian regimes supported and legitimized by the citizens. For example, the recent coups in Algeria and Sudan in 2019 and Mali 2020, were the results of political instability, sit- tight politics and bad governance that the citizens massively protested (Walsh, 2019; Lowings, 2019). That is not to say that the second school of thought- military cohesion, discipline and professionalism- is not a determinant of coup d'état, however, it can be argued that the socio-political and economic environment of a state serves as a major factor in facilitating military organized coup d'état.

3.3. Consequences of Military Interruption on African Consolidation of Democracy

Military interruptions in politics have been conceived as a misnomer and an aberration all over the world. The military personnel are professionally trained to ensure security and defend the national territorial integrity of the state. In this light, their responsibility is not to take up the art of governance and political administration. When they come to power, they normally set aside the political structures such as the constitution and the political system, and administer the state via the promulgation of decrees. Consequently, the type of political leadership and administration that would evolve will not be tailored to the will and legitimacy of the people but the rule of force and unchallenged decisions and actions. The most frequent outcome of military dictatorship has thus resulted in increased military budgets to take care of adequate pay packages, improved work environment, and military equipment possibly to appease their colleagues and avert counter- coups. For example, defence spending by Ghana's military increased by 22% after the coup of 1966 despite the prevalent economic hardship that cut social services by 28% (Decalo, 1990). Furthermore, military coups in Africa have witnessed a resultant stalemate between the military and civilian administration. The military kept sacking the civilian governments and taking overpower. They found out however that they could not rule effectively without the civilians. Thus, they were forced to close ranks with the civilians from the old administration by co-opting them to maintain control and sustain political power. However, it is worthy to note that the political and administrative performances of the junta have not proved more successful than the civilian regimes they subverted (Thompson, 2004).

   Military interruptions in the African political systems have always produced outcomes that are inimical to democratic consolidation and political stability. Such outcomes include the suspension of political activities that affect political party activities, political participation, and electoral process development. It also includes the suspension of the constitution and rule by decrees which violate the fundamental human rights of the society; lack of respect for judicial review and the rule of law, the dictatorship of the juntas that cannot be challenged by any court of law; as well as intolerance and hostility to criticism and critical public opinion. They at times establish military tribunals to muffle opposition groups from participating in the political arena. To corroborate the above assertions, Decalo (1990) argued that military incursions into politics play a retrogressive role in Africa by derailing the political process. The military junta according to him, cannot by itself, engender any economic development or improve social conditions because; they are trained to protect or defend the

territorial integrity of the State and not to interfere in political governance (Decalo, 1976, 1990). Thus, by meddling in politics, the military has contributed to Africa's underdevelopment.

3.4. A Theoretical Exposition of Military Interruptions of African Politics

Three out of the four prevailing theories of military interventions in politics are adopted to explain military interruption of African politics. These are the socio-economic development theory, the centrality of military theory, and the Contagion theory. The fourth theory, the conflict theory, which borders on cultural diversities of groups as reasons for military coups, does not synthesize with the focus and thoughts of the paper.

3.4.1. Socio-economic development

One of the most common arguments relates to the propensity of military intervention with socio-economic development. Finer (1988), cited in Onder (2010), argues that the intensity of military interventions is more likely to decrease with increased socio-economic development status. Nations with high socio-economic situations have higher urbanization, industrialization, and literacy rate, and so have increased mass participation in social activities. Socio-economic development creates awareness of political events and capacities for political actions. In other words, it increases the number of potential political actors and diffuses increased political resources to these actors who would be willing and able to sustain civilian institutions. In other words, industrialization diminishes the propensity for military interventions since the increased socio-economic complexity puts public administration beyond the skills of armed forces (Onder, 2010). Gorman (1967) and Thyne (2010) maintained that military interventions generally take place in countries of lower-income groups, weak institutions, and economic development problems. These institutional and economic development challenges are the premises upon which the military justify the takeover of power and seek to legitimize their illegitimate rule.

   The socio-economic development perspective is plausible for explaining military incursions and their resurgence in democratic African states since most of these societies are plagued with socio-economic development challenges. For example, the recent military coups in Algeria, Sudan and Mali were influenced by public protests against institutional and development problems occasioned by bad governance. In the case of Sudan, the protest escalated to a military coup as a result of the ailing economy and its impact on the living condition of the people (Walsh, 2019). This theory is however limited in explaining military coup d'état in the African political settings to the extent that it neglected the structural characteristics and capacity of the military to organize coup d'état as well as the influence that a successful coup in one African state can have on other African states. To make up for this limitation, other perspectives have thus been examined.

3.4.2. The centrality of the military

This approach hinges its argument on the cohesive ability and resources available to the military which puts them at an advantage in terms of capturing state power by violent means (Finer, 1988; Ball and Guy-Peters, 2000). The stronger the military's resources, either as a per cent of state resource or relative to the national economy, the weaker the institution of civil society, and thereby the greater the probability of military interventions (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2010). Several studies have found that larger armies and those with greater claims to government revenues have been more coups prone. A second view argues that a centralized chain of command, military discipline, and extensive communication make military officers a cohesive group, capable of organizing effective seizure (Finer, 1988).

   The centrality of the military theory is congruent in explaining the structural configurations, strategy and capacity of the military to organize coups d'état in African states. From the independence of the various African states, most of them (Nigeria, Ghana, Sudan, Algeria, Ethiopia, Mali, etc.) were taken over by the military spanning decades. This situation gave the military the impetus to build strong military institutions capable not only of defending the state but also oriented towards adopting a self-

imposed guardian role to the African societies. This orientation has always seen the military interrupting civil regimes in democratic African states. The theory is however limited for its narrow focus on the military and its capacity to overthrow civilian regimes without taking into cognizance other socio-structural and development variables.

3.4.3. Contagion theory

The contagion theory can also be used to explain the history of military coups d'état and the recent incidences of coups in some African States. Dare (1989) argues that the Contagion theory explains that military coups are infectious. A coup occurring in one country can trigger a similar occurrence in another country. There seems to be a linkage amongst the different military formations in the continent. This link developed from the fact that the African army officers had legitimate opportunities to meet and became acquainted. This arose from their shared educational and training experiences overseas as many of these officers had been course mates in overseas military schools. According to Agbebaku (2003), this linkage and influence can be depicted in the January 1966 coup in Nigeria and February 1966 in Ghana and also the 1993 coups in Togo and Liberia.

In the contemporary African setting, the Algerian and Sudanese coups of 2019 and the Malian coup of 2020 are also examples of the contagion effect of coup d'état. These coups were encouraged by the people because of the seeming insensitivity of the incumbent civilian regimes. However, the contagion theoretical perspective is limited due to its narrow focus only on contagion effects as the determinant of coup d'état. Coups d'état are not only determined by contagion effects, other variables also come into effect in the overview of military interruptions in African politics.

The above analyzed theoretical perspectives- the socio-economic development, centrality of the military, contagion- are a proper mix for explaining the insurgence and resurgence of military interruptions and dictatorship in Africa since the inadequacy of one theory is made up for by the others. Each one of the theory provides a plausible explanation of the military coup d'état but none is exclusive on its own. Put together, they test and complement each other. Thus, the socio-economic and development problems encountered by the African states gives the premise to the military which is one of the strongest and disciplined institutions in the various African states to usurp political power. As the coup d'état become more successful, established and tolerated, it becomes a contagion on other African states.

Another angle to the contagion effect of a coup is the explanation of external factors or foreign involvement or rather foreign influence in motivating coup d'état in Africa. Scholars such as Luard (1971) and Elischer (2015) have canvassed factors such as the need for foreign nations to access a steady supply of cheap raw materials for their industrial needs and the international balance of power as probable reasons for foreign inducement of coups in Africa. Such scholars have opined that external powers seeking a political change in a country to further its interest may encourage or influence a coup in that country. Other scholars like Huntington (1968), Edward (1969) and Welch (1970) asserted that such a claim cannot hold since it lacks empirical justification. We (the authors of this paper) align with the latter submission since; there is no known research by scholars that has established this assertion. Thus, the claim can best be regarded as speculation that cannot be substantiated or verified empirically. Furthermore, the sovereign nature of states implies that no country is expected to interfere in another's domestic affairs. This position is corroborated by Edward Luttwak who aver that one of the preconditions for a coup d'état is that of non-interference by external bodies (Edward, 1969). With this position, it cannot be contended that external or foreign powers induce coups that may result in contagion effects in African nations. This position does not however imply that the authors of this paper are oblivious of the fact that there is the possibility of external involvement in coups in Africa even if it is not accepted. However, we will not acknowledge such inference unless it can be empirically verified.

3.5. Coups D'état and Its Implication for Contemporary African Democracy

In the past half-decade, there has been a resurgence of military intervention in Africa politics. Some African democratic nations have been dethroned through military coup d'état or and militarily organized transitional government. Several international organizations such as the news media (Aljazeera, BBC, France24, etc.) have the conscious construction that military intervention in African politics is on the rise. This was demonstrated when major news outlets in the United Kingdom and the United States began to headline military takeovers in African states, like-"Sudan coup: are military takeovers on the rise?" (Giles, 2019: online); 'Zimbabwe coup: the world's strangest military takeover" (BBC, 2019: online). The coups in recent years have re-ignited the debate of military resurgence in African politics. Egypt and Burkina Faso coup of 2013 and 2015 can be seen as a bit far off but the 2017 coup in Zimbabwe, the 2019 Algerian, Sudanese coups as well as the recent 2020 coup in Mali have begun to sound worrisome notes suggesting the birth of another probable era of military incursions into African politics.

The various military coups and attempted coups incidences in Africa have seemingly thrived on the failure of governance. This paper viewed the various military coups and the 2020 Mali's coup as an offshoot of a bad and undemocratic system of governance. A democratic government must adhere to the Rule of Law and good governance. These ingredients cannot be constructed overnight but must be enshrined in both policy and political norms of the country. It is difficult to construct a social contract when the government is in crisis. These are evident from the massive protests by the citizens that usually snowball into military takeovers of the political apparatus. Thus, bad governance and the failure of African democratic governments to adopt corrective measures to address the political and economic challenges as well as the people's tolerant attitudes towards military coups as a check on civilian governments have always influenced military coups d'état in Africa. For example, the Egyptian coup d'état of 2013 was influenced by the people's protests against economic mismanagement and bad governance by President Morsi's administration. The government failed to address these problems and the military capitalized on the situation and played their self-imposed guardian role to restore peace and order in the state. Also, the Zimbabwean coup of 2017 and the Algerian and Sudanese coups of 2019, as well as the Malian coup of 2020 are all examples of military interruptions influenced by the failure of governance. Even though institutions such as the United Nations Organizations (UNO) and the African Union (AU) have put in place stringent measures to discourage military coups, they continue to occur seemingly because of the premise of bad governance and sit-tight politics painted by most African leaders as well as the people's tolerant attitude towards military coup d'état.

The above scenarios have pervaded the African society since the independence of the various states. Thus, the panacea for consolidating democracy in Africa and keeping the military in the barracks is to institute good governance to remove the premise and impetus for military coups d'état in Africa. On the contrary, it can be argued that the fact that African states are plagued with numerous political, economic and social problems should not necessitate an interruption or intervention by the military in a democratic setting. Such problems should be resolved through the various mechanisms that exist in a democracy, such as the forced resignation from the office of political officials, voting out a non-performing government or political officials, etc. However, it is noteworthy to stress that when democratic institutions fail to adhere to democratic principles or manipulate the same to their advantage, the people have no option than to accommodate the unconstitutional intervention and regime change by military juntas.

From the above analysis, it can be contended that military interruptions in the African states would subsist as long as constitutional means for addressing civil regime changes are continually compromised, because of sit- tight politics. The military interruptions of African politics are gathering momentum again in this late 21st century as the countries of Europe and America are busy strengthening their democratic institutions for good governance and development consolidation. In 2019 alone, African countries like Sudan and Algeria, and Mali in 2020, have witnessed military

coups d'état. These occurrences are reminiscent of the military interventions that took place in quick successions in three African countries (Benin, Central African Republic, Congo, DRC) in 1965 and four African countries (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ghana, Nigeria) in 1966. These coups can be described as contagious; the occurrence of one influencing the occurrence of others. The coups were necessitated by bad political leadership and governance that are the same reasons given for the resurgence of military coups in today's 21st century. The incidences of these coups (of 1965 and 1966) spark off the numerous military coups that Africa experienced especially, up until the 1990s, and can be seen in table 1 above.

The recent occurrence of coups d'état in 2019 and 2020 in some African States is indicative of a possible retrogression from the trending democratic settings to the historical antecedent of interruptions, dislocations and disorientations of African political systems and their current state of development. The various reasons given as the premise for military interventions in these recent coups include corruption of political officers, mismanagement of economic resources, and political instability. The argument is that these socio-economic, cultural, and political problems still abound in Africa. It thus means that except these problems are attended to by the various African states (which of course are problematic) or except the junta decides to restrict themselves to their professional roles as in the Western countries, military coups and their interruptions would continue to pervade the African political and democratic space. Africa is bedeviled by governance problems attributable to fragile democratic structures, high corruption, and clientele's rate, political instability, and weak state capability (Levitsky and Way, 2005; Rakner, Menocal, and Fritz, 2007). The electoral process is also chaotic in many African states.

> …democratization in Africa is a paradox. The democratic experiment remains fragile and susceptible to instability and violent conflict. In several countries, Presidents faced with constitutional term limits have refused to leave power gracefully, opting to change the constitution to extend their stay in office. In recent times, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Burundi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have amended the law, appealed to the Judiciary or refused to call elections. …Holding on to power has caused instability and violence in Burundi and Burkina Faso, and undermined the quality of democracy elsewhere (Maendeleo Policy Forum, 2016: 6-7).

The renewed coups if sustained could plunge the African States into further socio-economic and political problems since the military has neither the training nor the capacity to midwife or lead democratic institutions. The continent of Africa is already encumbered with the problem of consolidating its democratic institutions. Institutions like the political parties, the electoral systems, and governance- legislative and executive- can barely find their feet in most African countries in terms of ensuring equity in resource distribution, credibility, and good governance. If this current trend of military incursions continues, African states would further nose dive into political and socio-economic despondency.

3.6. The African Union and Unconstitutional Changes of Government

The African Union (AU) in line with its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) instituted and adopted the concept of "Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG)", which include military coup d'état. The AU's position on UCG is contained in three major policy instruments- the Lomé "Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government", adopted in Lome, Togo in July 2020 (OAU, 2000), the "Constitutive Act of the AU "(2002), and the "African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance", adopted in January 2007 in Addis Ababa which became effective on February 15, 2012 (AU 2007). These declarations show that the AU adopts a zero-tolerance to military coups. In addition to the public condemnation of coups, the AU prohibits the coup plotters from participating in holding elections or holding any democratic responsibility in the political structure of their state (Harsch, 2010). The decision of the AU also includes the demand for a return to civil rule and the suspension for six months of the country concerned from all the AU decision- making organs. Thereafter, a range of

limited sanctions is then targeted at the regime that refused to restore constitutional governance after the expiration of the suspension (Souaré, 2009b; Witt, 2012).

The AU has made efforts to discourage coup d'état in Africa by applying the relevant sanctions to erring nations even from its period as the OAU. For example, the AU condemned the coups in Mauritania, 2009, Guinea, 2008, Madagascar, 2009, and imposed sanctions as well as monitored the restoration of civil rule in these countries. From 2003 to 2017, the AU is said to have suspended an estimated 90% of States where coups occurred and have imposed sanctions on more than 70% of them. It also suspended Mali from its membership as a result of the recent coup in August 2020 (Appiah-Mensah, 2020). The challenge is, however, daunting.

The sequence of the occurrence of coups has become a trend and phenomena in recent times in Africa (Egypt in 2013, Burkina Faso in 2015, Zimbabwe in 2017, Sudan in 2019 and Mali in 2020). These coups took place amid several protests, demonstrations against bad governance by the citizens of these states (The Guardian, 2017; Aljazeera, 2019). The juntas took advantage of these protests to overthrow democratically elected governments and presented themselves as the military wing of the protests and the guardian and executor of the peoples' wishes. From these scenarios, some new exercise of power arrangements which may include a transitional period are negotiated between the AU and the coup plotters. However, the coup plotters always hold positions of influence. For example, the 2019 Sudanese coup was condemned by the AU and followed up with suspension and sanctions (Appiah-Mensah, 2020). However, the AU bearing in mind that the coup resulted from months of serious protests and demonstrations and arguably prevented the country from degenerating into anarchy had to engage the issue tactically to prevent further chaos and a deeper instability. Thus, despite the actions against the coup, the AU was constrained to work with the military Juntas. This position of compromise may motivate and embolden other military personnel following closely from other countries to overthrow democratic governments. Moreover, some coup d'états may have become idealized. From the Egyptian coup to that of Mali (See United States Institute of Peace, 2020), the mutineers were considered as necessary representatives in the face of bad leadership and poor administration. Although the coup may have helped to avoid more chaos, this line of thinking aids the promotion and institution of unconstitutional governments by removing a democratically elected regime with a dictatorship. Thus, the occurrence of coups creates problems for the AU and other regional bodies since it has been asserted that instability, insecurity and conflicts are usually the products of unconstitutional regime changes in Africa. Unless the AU strictly enforces it's zero tolerant levels to coups, these scenarios may continue to occur irrespective of the efforts of the AU and other regional bodies to discourage it. It is also to be noted that while it is laudable for the AU to discourage unconstitutional changes of governments, it is pertinent for the body to also discourage bad governance in Africa which is always a prelude to coup d'état.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper examined the history of African coups in the 1950s and the reasons given for these interruptions in the African political systems. It also discussed the incidences of recent coups especially in 2019 and 2020 in Africa as a possible indicators of the military coups d'état resurgence in Africa since the reasons given for these interventions in the past still abound and stands as the reasons for necessitating the recent coups. The reasons given by the juntas for seizing political power across the African States include bad governance, corruption, electoral fraud, insecurity and a sit-tight-to-power by African leaders. As analyzed in the text, these factors are prevalent in many political systems across Africa. The citizens in many African countries are dissatisfied with the leadership and performance of elected officials. This dissatisfaction has now resort to protests and support for military coups d'état, like the ones in Sudan and Mali. This expression of support for the military takeover of political power is the legitimacy the juntas need to establish their regimes. This development if not reversed through people-oriented governance could embolden the juntas and result in more coups d'état in the African continent.

The African leadership of various countries is thus faced with the task of building, maintaining, and sustaining credible institutions that would ensure good governance and thus, eradicate or in the least mitigate the premises upon which the juntas usually interrupt the democratic process. The AU also has a daunting role to play in discouraging coups and encouraging good governance in Africa. The continental body should ensure that its sanctions and the enforcements are applied stringently to mitigate coup d'états.

It is also imperative to reiterate that the military should accept the fact and reality that their intervention and rule is a misnomer across the world. They should thus, restrict themselves to their barracks professional roles to allow the growth and development of Africa's political and democratic institutions under the civilian arrangement. Military interruptions into the political system slow the pace of political development and impinge on democratic consolidation. There is no perfect political governance system anywhere in the world; the advanced political systems across the world today, took time to develop. The African political systems should not only be allowed to consolidate but also make use of democratic means and measures to address political and governance issues.

Steps Africa should take to stop military interventions into politics
The quest to ensure that the military stays in the barracks and be restricted to performing their professional and constitutional role is a daunting one. To begin with, the premises on which the military usually base their interventions must be removed. That is, the political and socio-economic reasons often cited as causes for intervention by the junta should be addressed to limit the chances and occurrences of military interruptions (as discussed above).

Furthermore, efforts should be made to reposition the military to strictly perform their professional role. They should be sensitized, trained, and educated on the need to realize that their role lies outside the sphere of political leadership and governance. They should thus, allow the political and democratic institutions to grow and solve the problems of the state under the guidance and leadership of democratically elected civilian representatives. The governance and political problems should be addressed politically through the various instruments of political engagements such as elections, opinion polls, demonstrations, etc.

Thus, to forestall military interventions in African politics, the following suggestions are put forward for adoption by the African States.

- Ensure good governance through purposeful and accountable leadership;
- Reduce corruption by punishing offenders to serve as a deterrent to others;
- Strengthen political institutions such as the political parties to ensure internal democracy to engender and engage in fair electoral participation;
- The electoral systems should be strengthened to ensure free, fair and credible elections by granting more autonomy to Electoral Management Bodies;
- The sit-tight-to-power and win at all cost syndromes by incumbents should be discouraged to avoid political instability, violence, and military attention in the political space.
- The AU, apart from strengthening its mechanism to discourage coups in Africa should also, discourage bad governance and political misrule.
- The AU should ensure that coup plotters and in essence, military personnel are not allowed to be part of any political governance to discourage them from instituting coup d'états.

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