Africa's Fledgling Democratization Process Once More at the Crossroads: Continental Security and International Relations Implications

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Abstract

Africa has had a chequered constitutional history, and current happenings have further dented the continent's democratic credentials as the military are forcefully terminating fledgling democracies. The consequences have been anything but damming, regarding the socio-politico-economic development of such countries and adjoining neighboring countries. Moreover, under the circumstances, continental security is once more under threat with dire international relations implications for countries that involve in constitutional interruptions. This work investigates the factors that account for the current upsurge of Coup D'états in some African countries and their impact on continental security. The study adopts a sequential exploratory mixed method approach involving 30 participants (qualitative) in Ghana and 433 respondents (quantitative) across the continent of Africa administered through goggle. The findings on the main showed that, bad governance among a mirage of factors such as economic challenges, have often precipitated violent coups in Africa. The paper argues that coups can be averted when constitutional leaders practice good governance and adhere to human rights, *inter alia*.

Keywords: Africa, Continental Security, Crossroads, Fledgling Democracy, and international relations implication

Introduction

Globally, democratic rule has come to have lasting effects on the political economies of countries in a positive sense. Whereas countries such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) have seen massive and constant socio-politico-economic growth from experiences of constitutional rule in centuries, short-lived democracies that experience frequent interruptions mostly within Africa, have nothing to show for in similar terms. To that end, there appears to be a very strong bond between democratic rule and the socio-politico-economic development of nations, which relationship this author attributes to that of Siamese twins--inseparable and interdependent.

Democracy as a term stems from two Greek words, 'demos' meaning people and 'kratein' meaning to rule. In full, the term refers to the rule of the people, a government in which, supreme power is vested in the people and exercised either directly by themselves or indirectly through their representatives who are elected periodically (Khan 2005). Kahn et al. (2021) label such a political arrangement as the government of the people or the government of the majority. Diamond and Morlino (2005) on their part, aver that democracy stands for freedom, political equality, and control over public policies that legitimize the functioning of stable state institutions. Abraham Lincoln gives the simplest of definitions when he stated that democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Wilentz 2015). In its broadest meaning, however, the term refers to a system of governance in which rulers within the public space are held accountable for their actions through the indirect actions and cooperation of citizens in whom the power is vested (Dahl 2008).

Democracy has been embraced by both capitalist and socialist systems over the years, in particular from the latter part of the 20th Century until date. As observed by Zindela and Oguunibi (2017), democratic processes that have since taken several paths are practised differently across the globe within the context of varied prospects as well as challenges. On the main though, two categories namely, parliamentary and presidential systems dominate the political governance structure. The differentiation is premised on the level of distribution of power between the executive and legislative realms of the state (Benson and Ngaaso 2021). Within this context, extensive power is vested in the executive as against the legislature within presidential democracies, while more power is vested in the legislature as against the executive within parliamentary democracies (Benson 2020). In rare cases, however, a few countries such as Ghana run a hybrid system where administrative power is shared unequally between the two arms of the state.

That stated, democratic governance structures tend to be anchored on basic principles namely; political pluralism and tolerance, political leadership, participation, representation, elections, rule of law, and the promotion and protection of human rights, *inter alia* (Boafo-Arthur 2007). To that extent, long-striving

democracies such as Canada, the USA, and the UK are said to be living within these tenets, while short-lived or frequently interrupted democracies as manifested in Africa, are often missing out in that regard (Dahl 2008; Fukuyama 2013).

The Commission on Global Neighborhood (1995) posits that the sustenance of every democracy amongst other factors is also linked to issues of good governance and accountability, which are not substantially different from the democratic pillars as spelt out by Boafo-Arthur (2007) above. It lists features of good governance as equity and effective participation of citizens in state governance, adherence to the rule of law and the promotion of human rights, transparency, and the fight against corruption by the political leadership. Benson and Ngaaso (2021) also noted responsiveness on the part of state institutions, consensus building among political parties, accountability from both rulers and the ruled, deepening of democratic credentials of states, and strategic visions by political leadership, as some of the features of good governance.

Khan (2004) suggests that governance is a model that is used to compare ineffective economies of weak national political entities with viable economies of strong political bodies. The relevance of democratic governance in all forms of political systems cannot be underestimated as they make room for political pluralism, put checks and balances to guide national governance, ensure the judiciary's independence, protect minorities, promote fundamental human rights, and protect constitutions (Heywood 2011). It therefore stands to say that, most Global North democracies have come to be firmly established on this basis, where their economic systems (national economies) and political systems (law, institutions, and government) are synchronized effectively and producing the desired results (Rausser et al. 2011). Be that as it may, democratic governance is not the panacea for every aspect of economic development and social transformation, even though the content of democracy and how it is organized have developmental implications, as it can create favorable environments for socioeconomic development (Adejumobi 2000).

The current political instability as witnessed in some parts of Africa tempts this author to suggest that, most current Coup D'états in Africa are precipitated by the lack of good governance on the part of the political elite. Military coups in Africa as corroborated by Post (2021), Barka and Ncube (2012), and Seigler (2021) are on the rise again in Africa and in style, on accounts of continuation of politics by other means; following decades of progress in the political economies of African countries, as owed to gains from the constitutional rule. Earlier, Nkrumah (1965), North et al. (2009), and Langan (2018) who have a contrary view, have alluded to the fact that the phenomenon of military takeovers in Africa is attributable to neocolonialist activities that tend to weaken political and economic structures. The consequences of such occurrences have had devastating effects on the politico-economic development of the countries involved with spillover effects on adjoining neighbors, while at the same time impacting continental security and cohesion negatively (Post 2021). This study evaluates this assertion from data that are drawn from both exploratory qualitative sources and the context analysis of secondary and tertiary sources.

Democratic Governance in Africa—A Tortuous Route

Both historical and anthropological pieces of evidence prove that before the advent of colonialism, African societies had unimpeded democratic experiences only truncated by interruptions of the European colonizers, in the latter part of the 19th Century. To date, some traditional African settings still manifest unique forms of democracy in their governance processes, thus dismissing the long-held belief that democracy is alien to Africa. Nonetheless, Africa's democratic experiences are a park of awful challenges and failures under notable instances, as spread throughout its history in both colonial and post-colonial eras.

Democracy and Governance in Africa: Pre-colonial, Colonial and Post-colonial Eras
Pre-colonial Traditional Political Settings

Before the African colonization phenomenon, many great African kingdoms and nations such as ancient Egypt, Songhai, Benin, Sokoto, Mali, Ashanti, Yoruba, and the Zulu exited within the continental space (Ajayi and Espie 1972). In the same vein, there existed a significant heterogeneity of political entities across African societies (Mazrui 2002). Three such political settings have extensive scholarly reportage---segmental, hierarchical, and pyramidal. Segmental systems are stateless decentralized societies, in which diffused power is shared among the people along the lines of kinship (Benson et al. 2021). The system which is devoid of a single powerful political figurehead, has elders, age sets, and community councils (elected from a configuration of different lineages that make up the society), to oversee the affairs of the society (Hallett 1974). Representatives from every village of the community constitute the Council that takes decisions based on consensus, in keeping with the essence and dictates of the African kinship principle (Lamb 1984).

Hierarchical societies, on the other hand, are highly centralized political systems that have powerful Kings as the political figurehead and authority of the society, assisted by occupants of efficient bureaucratic and military machinery (Lamb 1984; Lloyd 1965). Within this system, the king rather than the citizenry has an exclusive stamp on decision-making processes as he arrogates to himself legislative, judiciary, and executive

functions (Benson 2021; Uchendu 1965). Examples of such kingdoms many of which still exist include the Ashanti Kingdom of Ghana, the Buganda Kingdom of Uganda, the Benin Kingdom of Nigeria, the Kingdom of Morocco, and the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Pyramidal political systems consist of the union of less autonomous segmental units as bed-rocked on the structure of kinship, where minor chiefs led by a common paramount chief (overlord) are the political figureheads and traditional authority who make laws for the society (Boahen 1987). Examples of such systems include the Yoruba of Nigeria and the Talensi of Ghana.

Another structural political formation consisted of acephalous societies that never had political organizations beyond the village level. Such societies include the Nuer of Sudan and the Konkomba of Ghana and Togo. This structure, however, was not distinct as it shared some commonalities with the segmental political system, which occasionally entered into loose alliances that had effective conflict resolution mechanisms and somewhat centralized decision-making processes (Diamond and Morlino 2005).

It was therefore a daunting experience as the European colonialization of the continent had huge disintegrating effects on these systems that were based on tribal authority and institutions, eventually making them obsolete integral parts of the social and political life of the African people (Mazrui 2002; Wiredu 2000). Nonetheless, many of these kingdom and state formations survived this period in the like of the Ashanti (Ghana) and Benin (Nigeria) kingdoms, though without political autonomy of their own. However, three countries in Africa namely, the Kingdoms of Morocco, Eswatini, and Lesotho retain their monarchical status in their governance structures. While two of them, Morocco and Lesotho are constitutional monarchies, in which laws and customs bind the sovereign King in the exercise of their powers, Eswatini is an absolute monarchy in which the sovereign King rules without bounds or constitutional restrictions (Middleton 2015). In addition, there are also sub-national monarchies that are not sovereign, as they only exist within larger political associations that include the Cuito of Angola, Ahouannonzoun of Benin, Boussouma of Burkina Faso, Loango of Congo and Gonja of Ghana (Soszynski 2011).

All three political structures in pre-colonial Africa exhibited reputable democratic practices that come in many forms in both their unique African nature and a mixture of their African-Western democratic features (Benson 2020; Benson et al. 2021; Wani and Suwirta 2015). Pre-colonial African democracy was bed-rocked mainly on traditional institutions, with a rulership style that revolved around 'consensus-building' that still affirms validity in modern times in a majority of African countries; notably Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Morocco, South Africa, and Eswatini where there still exist chiefdom and Kingship systems (Ayeilley 1991). Two political systems namely, chiefdoms (where power and authority were based on kinship) and kingdoms or empires (that had centralized systems of government in which participation by identified officialdom was common), were firmly established in Africa before the colonial era (Apter 1965). Kingdom states very like many modern states had structurally organized bureaucratic systems that performed such functions as tax and levy collection, defence and security, enactment and implementation of laws, execution of the protocol, and diplomatic relations, amongst others (Boahen 1987). In a similar vein, stateless and decentralized systems that lacked bureaucratic structures still played consequential roles in the maintenance of law and order and the harmonization of community resources for the overall development of society (Benson 2020).

First, within segmental systems, a Council with vested authority over the people, comprised representatives (mostly elders) from each of the clusters of villages that formed the political structure, to take decisions that bound the fraternity. The venue for council meetings was mostly the village squares, marketplaces, and shrine sites, where important decisions affecting society were taken. In addition, village political structures were composed of a legislative assembly that held open-air meetings (town-hall meetings) as was done in New England and the United States, to deliberate on matters affecting the society, in which all members of the society were free to contribute to the debate. Regrettably, however, women were excluded from participating in such meetings in patriarchal societies. In circumstances where no consensus was reached on a matter placed before the council, elders who formed the assembly retreated to a separate meeting and after considering all shades of opinion, arrived at decisions in the best interest of the society through consensus. Consensus-building processes reflect the importance of the people attached to blood kinship. Seldom did they resort to voting where the council fails to reach a consensus on an issue as noted above (Lamb 1984). Decisions at such town hall meetings became the law as long as they are in keeping with the customs and traditions of the society, having received ritual sanctification. The channel of information regarding the implementation of laws was the compound heads. Governance and the exercise of authority by leadership within the Kikuyu society, for instance, was guarded by a drawn constitution that firmly guaranteed the freedom of citizens. Whilst amongst the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria, autonomous villages were segmented into lineages, sub-lineages, compounds, and households political units, where politics and government at the village level was a direct exercise of democracy (Uchendu 1965).

Second, hierarchical societies with powerful figurehead kings had highly centralized political systems that operated under efficient bureaucratic and military machinery, where occupants of such structures exercised the authority of the political figurehead at his behest (Lloyd 1965). In this instance, citizens, clan, and family heads

played no significant role in decision-making processes since legislative, judiciary, and executive powers were all confined to the sovereign king. However, these powerful kings were (are) assisted by sub-chiefs who helped them maintain law and order, collected taxes on their behalf, and provided social amenities for the people.

Third, pyramidal political systems consisted of varied segmental units that are not fully autonomous as in the case of segmental systems, where rulership is based on hierarchies of higher-level chiefs who intervened in the affairs of those below them. Under this system, councils of senior chiefs who are empowered to make executive decisions assist traditional heads (the overlords) (Boahen 1987). Once the higher-level chief assents to decisions by the council, they become law. In these societies just as in hierarchical societies, citizens do not make direct inputs in decision-making.

Indeed, several examples of traditional democratic practices in pre-colonial Africa go to evidence basic democratic elements notably; pluralism, representation, participation, nominations and elections, and to some extent, exhibit a loose form of separation of powers among stakeholders (depending upon the social and cultural values of the people in question). One can find such semblances in pre-colonial Botswana that consisted of clan and group societies. The Tswana of Botswana had democratic civil societies that nominated or elected their chiefs (kgotla) and community leaders to handle security, land, law and order, and welfare matters in neutral settings with inputs from community members, though (Cook and Sarkin 2010; Maundeni 2012; Vengroff 1977). These early democratic practices gradually transitioned into statehood, within the spirit of participatory and representative traditional democracy where leaders were elected (Gunderson 1970). This democratic history based on solidarity and rich cultural values strived throughout its pre-colonial and colonial eras, having a deep and rich cultural influence within communities for centuries (Gunderson 1970; Nyamanjoh 2003). In Zimbabwe, the San culture provided the platform for equality among the people to work and make decisions based on consensus all in the spirit of collectivism; evidencing that long before democracy had a title, the San society by 1040 AD had practiced a democracy that was bed-rocked on the chieftaincy institution as in most African societies (Afful 2015; Mlambo 2014). In Ghana the Ashanti Kingdom represents a hierarchical system, had the 'aman mmu' and 'aman bre' constitution propelling its governance as it set out orders and customs in stone, outlining the duties, functions, and responsibilities of the King, chiefs, and their subjects (McKissack and McKissack 1994). Within this traditional and cultural concept, chiefs as custodians of the land and the spirit world, performed executive, legislative and judicial functions within a semi-autonomous context; mediating, negotiating, arbitrating, adjudicating, and making laws on behalf of the citizens they represent (Ajayi and Espie 1972). In terms of judiciary functions, the courts were preceded by chiefs and queen mothers who were the authorities of the court system and adjudicated justice to their people. Ghana is culturally multifaceted, exhibiting varied democratic practices over time. The Sissalas of Ghana those days, elected their leaders as the electorate stood behind their preferred candidates who once elected performed mainly executive and legislative functions as replicated in liberal western democracies (Benson 2020). It is also reported that among the Sissalas and Talensis of Ghana, there are still pieces of evidence of the practices of the separation of powers concept— where chiefs perform executive and legislative functions, while clan heads and spiritual leaders known among the Sissalas as 'Kunbelle', adjudicate justice (Benson 2021; Stoeltje 2007). Among some Akan ethnic groups such as the Fantes, participants will vote by the show of hands in town-hall meetings when decisions based on consensus are unreachable, as also observed in liberal democracies across the globe (Crowder and Ikime 1970). All these pieces of evidence give credence to participatory traditional African democratic practices, thus dispelling the notion that African societies were unorganized, uncivilized, and undemocratic (Agyeman-Duah and Awedoba 2007; Crowder and Ikime 1970).

Colonial African Democratic Experiences
Indeed, the colonization of the continent of Africa by the Europeans in the latter part of the 19th Century took place in discrete processes and stages and was only illegitimately legalized at the 1884/1885 Berlin Conference. The Conference, which was spearheaded by Belgium's King Leopold II, had Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden-Norway, Turkey, and the United States in attendance (Agyeman-Duah and Awedoba 2007). It was at that point that Africa was rudely partitioned and shared among seven participating countries, without any consideration of African core values and ethnic ties. These countries are Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Italy (Benson 2021).

The European colonizers did not only impose upon the Africans their lifestyles, education, and culture but also their democratic systems and values (Mazrui 1969). Through deliberate acts, the colonial masters from the very onset never involved the colonized in the decision-making processes (**Hallett 1974;** Mazrui 1978). In the Gold Coast (later Ghana) for instance, the British colonizers implemented the indirect rule policy to counter the popular traditional system of the rule of chiefdoms (Boahen 1987; Busia 1967). Somehow, traditional African democratic systems operated during the colonial era, albeit remotely. In large part, however, only minor decisions in respect of traditions, customs, and averagely insignificant policy decisions were the preserve of

traditional governance settings, as the rest of administrative processes were exclusively moderated by the colonial administrators during that era (Lloyd 1965). To that extent, only decisions on basic traditional issues came within the purview of the chiefs.

It was only by the middle of the 20th century that some Africans were selectively nominated by the colonial masters to sit in legislative organs, adjudicate at colonial benches, and to a very small extent, participate as members of the executive. For example in the Gold Coast, the British regime created a system of governance where the British Crown who exercised authority over the colony, chiefs, and the people, appointed a Governor as his/her representative. Chiefs who failed to perform to the dictates of the colonial powers were stripped of their powers and replaced by their own choice of leaders who sometimes were outside the kinship linage, thus generating intra-ethnic conflicts (Ajayi and Espie 1972; Stoeltje 2007). Traditional councils that constituted democratic structures were disassembled, disengaging the hallmark of traditional democratic practices within traditional African settings. George Padmore (1969: 315), aptly described the policy and the situation thus: "*a system of governing Blacks through their own marionettes Chiefs and political institutions, which came under the control of European officials with the minimum of interference; while the Whites held on to the real political, financial, and military powers*".

Before long however, the colonialists came to introduce features of liberal western democracy into the continent; where willing African indigenes came to be co-opted into the Legislative Council in the 1940s, most of whom were chiefs (Gifford 1998; Boahen 1987; Busia 1967). To give an instance, Gold Coasters who had western education became progressively acknowledged in the political affairs of the colony. Not long, elites who aspired to be part of the governance structure came to form the strong pan-African movement that propelled African liberation and independence under the abled leadership of W.E.B. Du Bois (Abrahamsen, 2020). The movement also sought to unite peoples of African descent across the globe (Oloruntoba-Oju 2012). The actions of the movement were later decentralized for implementation purposes.

In the Gold Coast, the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) was formed with the main aim of promoting African interests and holding the British colonizers to account. Subsequently, beginning in 1947, grassroots political organizations such as the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and the Convention People's Party were founded, craving for self-rule where Africans would form their government without western interference and influence (Afull 2015; Herbst 2000; Nti 2002). Consequent to this, the enactment of the 1951 constitution that implemented a Legislative Assembly, saw the election of Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party who served in the colonial government as 'Leader of Government Business'. This system gradually transformed into a parliamentary form of government when in 1952, the position of Prime Minster was formerly created with Nkrumah as the first occupant (**Hallett 1974**). Again, in 1954, a new Constitution was promulgated that replaced the election of members of the Assembly by tribal councils, introducing direct elections of members through universal adult suffrage among designated constituencies. Two years after, in 1956, Great Britain agreed to grant independence to the colony if so requested by a 'reasonable' majority of the new legislature (Boahen 1987). On the new Assembly on 3 August 1956 passed a motion that requested independence within the British Commonwealth. In accepting the motion, the British government on 18 September 18 1956 set aside March 6, 1957, as Independence Day. The Legislative Assembly became the National Assembly with Kwame Nkrumah as Prime Minster, Charles Noble Arden-Clarke as governor general, and Queen Elizabeth II as Monarchical Head of State until July 1, 1960, when Ghana became a republic (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1994).

There were similar occurrences and agitations across the continent, leading to the liberation and independence of African nations that spread out through the early 1960s to the late 1980s, with Ghana as the first country of Sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence in 1957 (Manungo 1999; Vengroff 1977). Certainly, not after several distortions were brought to bear on traditional African democratic structures (where traditional rulers came to play minimal roles), following the imposition of western democratic values on the continent (Benson, et al. 2021; Martin 2012).

Post-Colonial African Democratic Experiences
The democratization process in post-colonial Africa can be divided into two phases. The first represents the mirror adoption of colonial democratic systems in the 1960s. Using the Ghanaian example again, the country adopted the parliamentary democratic system of Britain after independence from 1957 to 1960, where executive power was still exercised by Queen Elizabeth II through her representative, the Governor-General. Similarly within the West African sub-region, countries such as Togo, Benin, and Cote D'Ivoire amongst others, adopted the democratic system of their French colonial master, wholesomely (Robert 2001).

The second stage took place from the 1990s to the 2000s, following a long period of the military rule involving most African countries. During this period, western donors, development partners, and multilateral aid agencies, which at the time influenced policymaking within the continent, insisted that they could only continue to give out aid to countries that were committed and sufficiently demonstrated the desire to return to

constitutional rule (Boahen 1987). The new world order led by western states, had a huge impact on the governance of the continent, following economic, social, and political policy changes that were brought to bear on African governments that were mostly military (Benson 2020). Notable political reforms and human rights adherence as linked to economic assistance from the Western world began to take shape in countries such as Ghana and Namibia, eventually inspiring many African countries to join the 'wagon'.

Consequently, many African leaders came to acknowledge that the sustainable development of the continent could only strive under the constitutional space. This realization was revamped during the Arusha Conference of 'Putting the People First' in 1990, as organized under the auspices of the United Nations where over 500 participants consisting of governments, the United Nations, local civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations met (Robert 2001). The conference adopted The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, which traced Africa's challenges to the absence of democracy. This conference and other international conferences on Africa's democratization process, as well as, domestic unrest that was mostly led by student unions against dictatorial regimes, triggered Africa's democratization process again (Benson 2020). The transition process from authoritarian regimes to democratic rule was, however, not without challenges. For instance, the cult of personality played a negative role where the African political culture was agile with the elimination of opponents as precipitated by zero-sum politics or winner-takes-all practice. These transitional challenges resulting from the different experiences of African states go to confirm the assertion that the processes of democratization have had challenges because of inherent contradictions in the processes themselves (Zindela and Oguunibi 2017).

That stated, many African countries returned to constitutional rule after tortuous military rule experiences. At the time of this study, almost all African states practice one form of democracy or the other, explaining why the continent is replete with several political systems including stable and competitive multi-party democracies, single-party democracies, and constitutional monarchies. The democracies that are either electoral or non-electoral, have both unicameral (as in Benin, Cape Verde, and Ghana) and bicameral (as in Nigeria, Burundi, and Botswana) legislative bodies. Each one of these countries has underscored gains in their socio-politico-economic development after embracing democratic rule once more (Benson and Ngaaso, 1919; Carbone 2011; Lindberg 2010). While countries that still gamble under military and dictatorial rule, languish in hardships and underdevelopment (Ibrahim and Cherie 2013). Wani and Suwirta (2015) did classify this period as the era of intense democratization and good governance, anchored on the people's desire for freedom and justice. Finally, the current democratic process as experienced across the continent was also a result of many years of fierce and determined struggles by many. They include the civil society, students, academicians, and professional and political groups, many of whom were imprisoned, either killed, dismissed from work or studies, or maimed when authorities reacted to the agitations (Agreement 2006; Benson 2021; Cook and Sarkin 2010).

Coup D'états in Africa: Reflections

Africa has since 2020 experienced seven military coups and several coup attempts, revealing a pattern of increasingly politicized military adventurism in the continent. This spate of unconstitutional takeovers risks a return to the onetime era of impunity, misgovernance, mismanagement, truncated socio-politico-economic development, instability, human rights aberrations, and seizure of diplomatic relations, amongst others, characteristic of the 'lost decades of Africa' that spanned from the 1960s to the 1990s when 82 coups occurred (Handy et al. 2020). During this period, coups were a regular occurrence in Africa, especially following the days of independence. In the data provided by Powell and Thyne (2011), of the 486 attempted and successful coups carried out across the globe since 1950, almost half of them, 214 (106 successful and 108 failings) took place in Africa resulting from the fact that Africa tends to have many of the conditions that are normally associated with coups. Out of the 54 African countries, 45 of them have experienced coups since 1950. Of these, Sudan tops the record with 6 successful and 17 attempted coups and followed closely by Burkina Faso with 8 successful and 9 attempted coups. The daunting image of Africa notwithstanding, some African countries including Seychelles, Kenya, Cameroon, Eswatini, Senegal, Morocco, and Mozambique have never experienced coups.

Powell et al. (2019) aver that the success rate of coup attempts in the past decade are far higher than those of previous decades, even though coups are becoming less frequent in recent times. To this end, the African Union in May 2022 held an extraordinary summit to discuss the way forward in ending coups in the continent, and so did leaders of the Economic Community of West African States convened, all to end the cycle of unconstitutional replacement of governments.

A Coup D'état or coup as simply put is an illegal and overt attempt by military officials on one hand or civilian elites within the state apparatus to unseat a constitutionally elected government (Powell and Thyne 2011). Powell and Thyne (2011) in determining that a successful coup could at least last for one week or beyond, emphasized that the target is always a sitting executive while the perpetrators are those with formal ties to the national government in question. The Lome Declaration of 2000 and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance of 2007 both defined unconstitutional change of governments in objective terms.

According to the declarations, a coup includes the following actions: a military coup against a democratically elected government; mercenary intervention to replace a democratically elected government; replacing a democratically elected government by dissident armed groups and rebel movements; or refusal of the ongoing government to relinquish power following defeat in free, fair and regular elections. The spirit and context of the two declarations in their systematic mention of 'democratically elected government' has to do with the protection of the authority of civilian political institutions from military interruptions, as well as, the promotion of constitutionalism in Africa.

Derpanopoulos et al. (2016) disaggregated coups into four categories namely; failed coups, coups that launch adverse changes, democratizing coups, and coups that merely reshuffle leaders causing no regime change. However extensive or brief a coup is, they usually come with negative manifestations. In the words of Derpanopoulos et al. (2016), coups are bad for democracies as the socio-politico-economic development of nations involved in coups is more often than not, stalled with associated repressive tendencies. In a similar vein, Powell and Thyne (2011) did explain that coups do not only disrupt the economic growth of countries involved but have always had rippling effects on adjoining countries, thereby having security and diplomatic implications.

There are depths of scholarly writings on the causes of coups. Suleiman (2022) has categorized the causes into inward-looking (emanating from challenges of national governance) and outward-looking (emanating from global dynamics that affect governance and security) factors. He noted the inward factors as governance deficits, non-fulfilment of entitlements of citizenship, frustrated masses, and growing insecurity. Outward factors he concluded include persistent causes that spark coups, unimpressive democratic conditions in countries, and consistency of foreign influence and strategic competition in African countries. To buttress this point of foreign interference, it is alleged that Assimi Goita the Malian coup leader, received training and assistance from the United States (US), while Mahamat Deby's covert coup in Chad, had the endorsement of France. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) in 2014 listed the major causes of military coups in Africa as having originated from deficiencies in governance, greed, selfishness, mismanagement of diversity, dubious legitimacy, failure to seize opportunities, marginalization, human rights aberrations, unwillingness to accept electoral defeat, manipulation of constitutions through unconstitutional means to serve parochial interests and corruption. Other causes as suggested by Belkin and Schofer (2016) such as the strength of a country's civil society, the legitimacy conferred on a government by its population, and a nation's coup history, form strong predictors of coups. On his part, UN Secretary-General, Guterres 2021 cited strong geopolitical divides between nations, the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on countries, and the UN Security Council's inability to take strong measures in response to coups as reasons for the increasing spate of coups across the globe.

Indeed, Africa has experienced increases in coups in the last two years where military figures have successfully carried out unconstitutional changes to the governments of Burkina Faso, Sudan, Guinea, Chad, and Mali. The latest successful West African coups in the example of Burkina Faso (October 2022), have renewed unease about coups returning to the continent where democracies stand to die (Suleiman 2022). This led Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to describe the phenomenon as 'an epidemic' of coups where the military overthrew constitutional governments with impunity in the belief that "…nothing will happen to them". Hitherto in the last two decades, there had been a decline in the spate of coups in Africa. For instance, there is no record of coups in 10 years before 2021 (Powell and Thyne 2011). This scenario raises genuine concerns that Africa is once more set on the path of backsliding from its progress of democratization and good governance where the rule of law and adherence to fundamental human rights are upheld, to one of uncertainty.

Coup plotters in recent years have given varied reasons for overthrowing civilian regimes. For example, the leader of the 2020 Mali coup, Assimi Goita cited widespread popular dissatisfaction toward the government he overthrew. On his part, the 2021 coup leaders in Guinea spearheaded by Doumbouya said they were motivated by issues of corruption, human rights abuses, lack of freedom, and a failing economy to stage the takeover as messiahs of the oppressed.

As a stopgap measure, there are clarions calls from members of the academia, politicians, professionals, civil society, and African citizens on the African Union, other regional organizations, and governments to address conditions under which coups strive, as a matter of urgency. Suleiman (2022) avers that conditions under which coups happen are dynamic, thereby requiring a radical change of direction if future coups are to be averted while current ones are stopped. First, there is an urgent need of stepping up professionalism in members of the armed forces through the instillation of core societal values to enhance force cohesion, unification, and effectiveness (Barany 2012). According to Quedraogo (2014), these values entail a standard of conduct by members of the armed forces to commit to values of service to the public, subordination to democratic civilian authority, allegiance to the constitution, political neutrality, and respect for the rule of law and adherence to human rights. Second, democracy has been reduced in Africa to the holding of elections and selective respect for term limits, without any attachment to the quality of electoral processes that continue to be recurrent trigger points. This trend and norm need to be changed and the focus should go on improving and protecting electoral processes from the manipulation of individuals and institutions (Suleiman and Onapajo 2022). Third, the African

Union and other Sub-regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) must address issues of government inertia on inequality, the rule of law, and unfair electoral processes (Handy et al. 2020). Lastly, Suleiman (2022) suggests that international avenues for the sanctioning and punishing of coupists must get the full support of global powers such as the US and Russia.

Table 1 is the list of coups and coup attempts in Africa since 2010

Snr.	Event	Date	Status	Country
1.	Nigerien Coup d'état	18/02/2010	Coup	Niger
2.	Guinea-Bissau unrest	01/04/2010	Attempt	Guinea-Bissau
3.	Madagascar coup attempt	17-18/11/10	Attempt	Madagascar
4.	DR Congo coup attempt	27/02/11	Attempt	DR Congo
5.	Nigerien coup attempt	26/07/11	Attempt	Niger
6.	Guinea-Bissau coup attempt	26/12/11	Attempt	Guinea-Bissau
7.	Malian coup	22/03/12	Coup	Mali
8.	Malawian const. crisis	05/04/12	Attempt	Malawi
9.	Guinea-Bissau coup	12/04/12	Coup	Guinea-Bissau
10.	Malian counter coup attempt	30/04-01/05/12	Attempt	Mali
11.	Ivorian coup attempt	13/06/12	Attempt	Ivory Coast
12.	Sudanese coup attempt	22/11/12	Attempt	Sudan
13.	Eritrean army mutiny	21/01/13	Attempt	Eritrea
14.	Benin coup attempt	04/03/13	Attempt	Benin
15.	Central African Rep. coup	23-24/03/13	Coup	Central African Republic
16.	Libyan coup attempt	17/04/13	Attempt	Libya
17.	Comoros coup attempt	20/04/13	Attempt	Comoros
18.	Chadian coup attempt	01/05/13	Attempt	Chad
19.	Egyptian coup	03/07/13	Coup	Egypt
20.	Libyan coup attempt	10/10/13	Attempt	Libya
21.	DR Congo coup attempt	30/12/13	Attempt	DR Congo
22.	Libyan coup attempt	14/02/14	Attempt	Libya
23.	Libyan coup attempt	14/04/14	Attempt	Libya
24.	Lesotho political crisis	30/08/14	Attempt	Lesotho
25.	Gambian coup attempt	30/12/14	Attempt	Gambia
26.	Burundian coup attempt	13/05/15	Attempt	Burundi
27.	Burkina Faso coup attempt	17/09/15	Attempt	Burkina Faso
28.	Central African Rep coup attempt	26/09-3/10/15	Attempt	Central African Rep.
29.	Burkina Faso coup attempt	08/10/16	Attempt	Burkina Faso
30.	Libyan coup	14/10/16-14/11/18	Coup	Libya
31.	Gambian constitutional crisis	09/12/16-21/01/17	Attempt	Gambia
32.	Zimbabwean coup	14-21/11/17	Coup	Zimbabwe
33.	Equatoguinean coup attempt	27-28/12/17	Attempt	Equatorial Guinea
34.	Gabonese coup attempt	07/01/19	Attempt	Gabon
35.	Sudanese coup	10/04/19	Coup	Sudan
36.	Ethiopian coup attempt	22/06/19	Attempt	Ethiopia
37.	Malian coup	18-19/08/20	Coup	Mali
38.	Central African Rep. attempt	17/12/22-13/01/21	Attempt	Central African Rep.
39.	Malian coup	24/05/21	Coup	Mali
40.	Tunisian political crisis	25/07/21	Self-coup	Tunisia
41.	Guinean coup	05/09/21	Coup	Guinea
42.	Sudanese coup attempt	21/09/21	Attempt	Sudan
43.	Sudanese coup	25/10/21	Coup	Sudan
44.	Burkina Faso coup	24/01/22	Coup	Burkina Faso
45.	Guinea-Bissau attempt	01/02/22	Attempt	Guinea Bissau
46.	Malian coup attempt	16-17/05/22	Attempt	Mali
47.	Burkina Faso coup	30/09/22	Coup	Burkina Faso
48.	Sao Tome and Principe attempt	24-25/11/22	Attempt	Sao Tome and Principe
49.	*Gambian coup attempt*	*20/12/22*	*Attempt*	*Gambia*

Source: en.m.wikipedia.org (adapted)

Figure 1:

Military coups in Africa over the decades
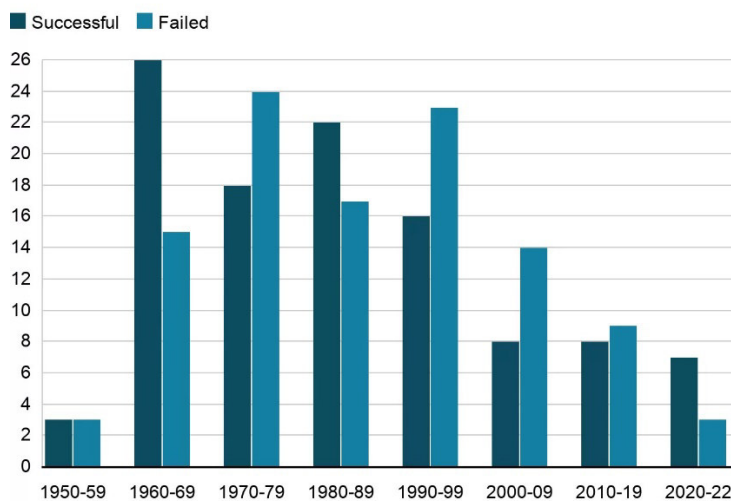
*2022 up to 3 October

Source: Research by Central Florida and Kentucky Universities

Theoretical Underpinnings

Two theoretical frameworks from two related scholarly fields namely International Relations (IR) and Political Science inspired this interdisciplinary study--Liberalism and Political and Social Violence Theories.

Liberalism Theory

For the start, Martin, et al. (2008) aver that International Relations theories aid the understanding of how international systems work, more so, how nation-states engage with each other and view the world. To that end, diplomats, experts, and policy-makers are guided by these concepts anytime they have to advise governments on measures to take regarding international political issues such as the displacement of constitutional governments; as happening in Africa of late (Carisnaes, et al. 2012; Markwica 2018). Many theories abound in IR that include realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, and feminism, *inter alia*, that underpin the conduct of international relations (Jackson and Sorensen 2015). First, the realism theory states that nation-states as principal actors in IR are always working to increase their powerbase where they can easily eclipse the achievements of less powerful international players (Antunes and Camisao 2018; Dunne and Schmidt 2004). Second, the constructivism theory while arguing that states are not the most important actors in international relations, has the notion that it is a nation's belief systems (historical, cultural, and social) that explain its foreign policy decisions (Jackson 2008). Third, as Marxism analyzes social classes, it states that societies would escape the self-destructive nature of the capitalist socioeconomic systems if only they embrace socialist theories in their internal and external policies (Sutch and Elias 2006). Fourth, feminism as an IR theory focuses on gender issues within the global political context, seeking to regulate the power derived from or denied based on one's gender by tracking the socio-politico-economic developments that hinder the achievements of female populations (Rehn and Johnson-Sirleaf 2002; Omarsdottir 2012; UN Women 2011).

That stated, the theory of liberalism guides this study, which is based on the belief that the current global system is capable of engendering a peaceful world order not through military action but through International corporations, within the context of economic and social power (Chandler 2010). The theory further holds that state preferences (cultural, economic, and political choices) rather than state capabilities, primarily determine state behavior that allows for plurality in state actions, unlike realism where the state is seen as the unitary actor (Jackson and Sorensen 2015). Hence, rather than an anarchic international system, many opportunities abound through cooperation and interdependence among states that bring absolute gains to them including an overall peaceful globe. Suffice it to say therefore that, as backed by the democratic peace theory, liberal democracies ought not to wage war on one another, and to that extent, economic cooperation and interdependence make war between trading partners less likely (Copeland 1996). However, neo-realists have criticized this viewpoint citing structural reasons for peace as opposed to the state government, arguing that economic interdependence rather promotes conflicts (Rosato 2003).

Neoliberalism or neoliberal institutionalism a more recent branch of the liberalism theory, rather than focusing on domestic or individual-level explanations, emphasizes the influence of systematic factors and the

role of international institutions in the promotion of corporations among nations in an anarchic international system (Sutch and Elias 2006). Another version of liberalism, post-liberalism slightly departing from the traditional concept, argues that within the modernized global world, states are driven to corporate to ensure security and sovereign interests (Richmond 2011). To the extent that the liberalism theory frowns at military force in the affairs of international governance, it is relevant in this study as military coup D'états are incapable of fostering and promoting the international peace that humanity ultimately desires through the corporation and interdependence of nation-states. The theory, therefore, throws more light into understanding the current implications of coup D'états in Africa, in respect of continental peace and cohesion, democratic governance, and the overall developmental agenda of Africa.

Political and Social Violence Theories (PSVT)
PSVTs posit that political and social violence is violence perpetrated to achieve political goals (Bardall et al. 2020). According to Miller (2022), this varied violence is manifested in state violence against other states (war), state violence against civilians and non-state actors (genocide, ethnic cleansing, assassinations etcetera), non-state actor violence against state and civilians (terrorism, civil war) and politically-motivated violence by violent non-state actors against a state (rebellion, treason or coup d'état. Usually, for reasons of imbalances in the power structure between state and non-state actors, political violence takes the asymmetric warfare forms where neither directly attacks the other except through such tactics as terrorism, guerilla warfare, and coup d'états (Zimmerman 2017). These occurrences have often been premised on perceptions of human rights aberrations, bad governance, exploitation, corruption, and actions perceived as challenging someone or aiding an opponent, amongst others.

In some other instances, politically-motivated militant groups and individuals such as coup plotters, are convinced that state and political systems may never respond to their demands, hence the only way to overthrow or reshape a government or state is through violence (Valentino 2014, van Prooijen and Kuijper 2020). The actions of the 11 identifiable forms of violence (interstate war, civil war, terrorism, political assassination, military coup, rebellion, inter-communal violence, organized crime/cartels, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and state repression) align with the political or religious worldview that motivates them in their bid to achieve their objectives (Cohan 2006; Kalyvas 2019; Stepanova 2008).

The consequences of the aftermath of political violence mostly bring many negative changes to bear on the state, society, and individuals that include the exploitation of resources, mass killings, destabilization of political systems, and displacement of individuals and communities, among others (Bellows and Miguel 2009; Blattman and Miguel 2010). Barely is there any political violence that evokes positive images in the fields of international politics and international relations (Blattman 2009).

Varied theories explain why individuals and groups are motivated to participate in political violence. For example, while the Macro theories outline how political, economic, and social processes cause political violence; Micro theories as represented in the Mass society theories argue that violent social movements emanate from people who are isolated socially and from political institutions (Balcells 2014). Others include social conflict, functionalism, resource mobilization, primordialism (ethno-violence), instrumentalism, constructivist, youth bulge, rational choice, relative deprivation, collective action, and greed versus grievance theories (Balcells 2014; Cohan 2006).

Two of these theories directly underpin this study namely, the social conflict theory and the greed versus grievance theory. Firstly, the social conflict theory, which is a Marxist-based concept, explains that social systems reflect the stakes of the bourgeoisie who own, control resources, and exploit the proletariats (Cohan 2006). As those in power use political and economic institutions to exploit groups with less power, the exploited will rise someday to break down the socio-economic barriers to achieve equity and social unity, through revolutions (Conteh-Morgan 2003). Indeed, many coups in Africa emanate from this viewpoint, where the masses are often exploited by the political elites they elect into office, regrettably giving room to military intervention and adventurism (Wells 1974). Secondly, the greed versus grievance theory explains that people, as motivated by greed, join conflicts to better their circumstances on one hand, and on the other, individuals are motivated by grievances to fight for the restoration of equality, political and civil rights, justice, the wellbeing of citizens, among others (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). This study as well is in keeping with the *greed versus grievances theory* in that many coups in Africa, are remotely greed and grievance-driven; where military juntas attempt to 'right' the 'wrongs' in society by overthrowing corrupt and bad civilian governments but only to be caught up in the 'political web' themselves before long (Oqueri II 1973).

Methodology
Research Design
A multiple case design was adopted in this study covering six African countries that have recently experienced military Coup D'états across five regions of the continent namely; Burkina Faso (2022), Central African

Republic (2013), Guinea (2021), Egypt (2013), Sudan (2021) and Zimbabwa (2017). The design which is exploratory and descriptive to an extent in nature, provides an in-depth comprehensive outlook of the phenomenon under study, as conclusions are usually enriched from the experiences of diverse participants and respondents (Cohen et al. 2018; Creswell 2014; Kelman et al. 2022).

Research Approach

A sequential exploratory mixed method approach was in adoption to censor the perception of Africans on the factors that have ignited the few recent coups across the continent. The survey involved 30 participants (qualitative) in Ghana with the requisite knowledge of the subject matter including the academia, diplomats, politicians, civil society, African Diaspora Communities in Ghana, and ordinary citizens (Cohen's, et al. 2018). The survey also administered an open-ended questionnaire through google across Africa, where 433 respondents (quantitative) responded. In line with Creswell's (2014) submission, qualitative data was first collected from 30 participants from which an in-depth structured interview guide instrument was designed to gather the views of the larger population. However, data was also gathered through content analysis of secondary and tertiary sources comprising textbooks, journals, and internet sources, amongst others.

Data Collection Methods/ Research Instruments

Primary data was gathered using instruments comprising in-depth interview guides, participant observation, and focused group discussions. The study took the researcher eight months to complete, spanning from 11 December 2022 to 08 August 2022. Participants were assigned unique numbers who answered 11 structured open-ended questions during the face-to-face sessions that were audio–recorded and transcribed (Maarouf 2019). A Professor in Political Science from the Department of Political Science Education, University of Education, Winneba, confirmed the content validity of the instruments that had a reliability coefficient value of 0.81 (Tavakol et al. 2008). Six focus group discussions were held for citizens of countries that are part of the multiple case studies and live in Ghana. Additionally, the researcher made handwritten notes contextualizing information that was captured through observation. Moreover, secondary data in the form of scientific literature was gathered mainly from books, journals, and internet sources.

Consequent to the interviews conducted in Ghana, a research questionnaire was developed from the qualitative study, which was administered to the larger African population involving 433 people of diverse biographical and 29 occupational backgrounds. The questionnaire was developed and deployed in a Google document form, requiring respondents to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, or disagree with the statements contained in the 14 questions-generated instrument, circulated over 60 days period.

Population, Sample Size, Sampling techniques, and Procedures

The targeted population comprised African citizens living in Ghana. The sample size of thirty (30) participants was determined using the sample size formula of $S=Z2 \times P \times (1-P) M2$, where $Z=1.960$, $P=0.5$, $M=0.05$; suggestive of Maarouf's (2019) recommendation of a small sample size of 15-30 participants in qualitative studies, taking into account data saturation points. The participants who were purposively selected comprised people and groups with information-rich disposition on the subject matter and people who were ready to participate in the survey. The socio-demographic information of participants is shown in the respective Tables below. The expertise of some professionals was also sought based on their experience and knowledge, thereby complementing the responses of non-expert participants.

The study targeted between 400 to 450 respondents for reasons of time constraints. To that end, responses from the 433 respondents over the period were adequate, forming enough basis for the researcher to draw conclusions.

Data Analysis

Data collected systematically by the research team was analyzed thematically under various themes in keeping with the research questions to get meaning from the participants' perspectives (Judd et al. 2017; Rajasekar et al. 2013). Further, to guarantee the clarity, validity, authenticity, and reliability of the data, the researcher used appropriate evaluation instruments and processes that repeatedly reflected the content with precision and consistency (Ghauri and Gronhaug 2005; Huck 2007; Tavakol et al. 2008). Moreover, the data was transcribed verbatim and coded under themes that were analyzed both inductively and deductively; subjected under version 22 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Anderson 2007; Braun and Clarke 2019; Pallant 2016).

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba (UEW-08/21-22) and other institutions including Foreign Missions and Ministries in Ghana, as well as, various communities of African citizens living in Ghana. Participants freely reported their experiences in keeping with the responsive practice

principles of safety, choice, collaboration, trust, and empowerment under strict confidentiality; as submitted by Anderson (2007) and Showkat and Parveen (2017). Throughout the survey, the strengths, weaknesses, and skills of participants were identified, highlighted, and reinforced appropriately by the research team; while at the same time, the ethical principles of consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw and feedback, were observed strictly. Findings were reported using pseudonyms as participants were designated with numbers from E1-E30.

The categories of the Thirty (30) interviewees are shown in Table 1 as follows:

      (a) Heads of African Diaspora Communities in Ghana (5);
      (b) Academia (3);
      (c) Diplomats (2);
      (d) Ghanaian Political Parties (2);
      (e) Political Office Holders in Ghana (2);
      (f) Journalists (1);
      (g) Security experts (2);
      (h) Civil Society Organizations (2);
      (i) The staff of Regional International Organizations (2);
      (j) Ghanaian and African Diaspora citizens (6); and
      (k) National Security Forces (3)

Socio-demographic Statistics of Participants: Qualitative Survey
Table 2: Categories of Participants

Category	Number interviewed	Gender	
		Male	Female
Heads of African Diaspora Communities in Ghana	5(17%)	5	0
Academia	3 (10%)	2	1
Diplomats	2 (6.6%)	1	1
Ghanaian Political Parties	2(6.6%)	1	1
Political Office Holders in Ghana	2(6.6%)	1	1
Journalist	1 (3.4%)	1	0
Security Experts	2 (6.6%)	2	0
Civil Society Organizations	2 (6.6%)	1	1
The staff of Regional International Org.	2 (6.6%)	2	0
Ghanaian and African Diaspora citizens	6 (20%)	4	2
National Security Forces	3 (10%).	3	0
Total	**30 (100%)**	**23(76.7%)**	**7(23.3%)**

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

The age categories of the participants are shown in Table 3 as follows: 20-40 (10); 41-60 (15); and 61 years and above (5).

Table 3: Age Distribution

Age	Frequency (N=20)	Percentage
20-40	10	33.3
41-60	15	50
61 and above	5	16.7
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

The gender statistics of participants as indicated in Table 4 shows that 25 (33.3%) are males, whilst 5(16.7%) are females.

Table 4: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency (N=30)	Percentage
Male	25	33.3
Female	5	16.7
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Table

Table 5 presents the educational status of participants as follows: no formal (2); basic (3); secondary (6) and Tertiary (19).

Table 5: Educational background of participants

Education	Frequency (N=15)	Percentage
No formal education	2	6.7
Basic	3	10
Secondary	6	20
Tertiary	19	63.3
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Socio-demographic Statistics of Respondents: Quantitative Survey

The age categories of the participants are shown in Table 6 as follows: 20-40=234 respondents (54.0%); 41-60= 151 respondents (34.9%); and 61 years and above=48 (11.1%).

Table 6: Age Distribution

Age	Frequency (N=433)	Percentage
20-40	234	54.0
41-60	151	34.9
61 and above	48	11.1
Total	**433**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

The gender distribution represented in Table 7 indicates that 316 of the respondents (73.0%) are males, 102 (23.5%) are females, whilst 15 (3.5%) did not disclose gender orientation.

Table 7: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency (N=443)	Percentage
Male	316	73.0
Female	102	23.5
Other	15	3.5
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Table 8 shows the varied occupational backgrounds of the 433 respondents.

Table 8: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency
Student	119
Teacher	78
Paramedic	2
Military	14
The executive arm of the state	12
The legislative arm of the state	10
Judiciary arm of the state	4
National security	10
Journalist	12
Retiree	13
Farmer	17
Public Servant	13
Clergy	15
Banker	7
Academia	21
Trade Unionist	3
Traditional rulers	8
Business/Entrepreneurs	13
Professionals	7
Diplomats	3
Politician	12
Elder statesmen/stateswomen	4
Social Worker	6
Lawyer	6
Human rights activists	13
Medical Doctor	3
Writer	5
None	1
Unemployed	2
Total	**433**

Source: Field Data, 2022

Discussion of Results

The study purposed to examine the continental security implications of coups in Africa in recent times, as well as, their impact on the international relations of countries involved in coups vis-à-vis the international community. To this end, the study pursued the following objectives:

(1) Ascertain factors that motivate Coup D'états in Africa.
(2) Determine the gains that emanate from Africa's democratization experiences and the factors that plague the processes.
(3) Examine continental security implications of Coup D'états in Africa.
(4) Analyze the international relations implications of Coup D'états among the comity of states in respect of military regimes.
(5) Explore stopgap measures to Coup D'états in Africa.

The corresponding research questions that guided the conduct of the survey are:

(1) What accounts for the recent spate of military coups in Africa?
(2) Per your estimation what are the gains and obstacles to Africa's democratization process?
(3) What are the security implications of Coup D'états to the continent of Africa?
(4) How have the occurrences of Coup D'états affected the international relations of countries under military regimes?
(5) From where you stand, what measures when adopted will illuminate or minimize Coup D'états in Africa?

Five main themes were generated in line with the research objectives and questions to analyze the results. However, under each main question, there were supporting and follow-up questions that brought comprehensiveness to the investigation.

It took the researcher 76 days to gather the qualitative data from 30 participants who had pre-knowledge in matters of Coup D'états and their effects on the continent of Africa, in respect of security implications and the overall impact on Africa's developmental efforts. For reasons of confidentiality, participants were provided with

pseudonyms and designated with numbers from E1 to E30.

Key findings
  i. Governance deficits and the non-fulfillment of electoral promises by politicians account for the major factors that bring about coups in Africa.
  ii. Coups have impacted negatively on Africa's socio-politico-economic development; the survey also safely concludes that the fundamental rights of people are most abused during coups and under military regimes.
  iii. The majority of Africans affirm coups are bad omens for continental security and cohesion.
  iv. The current spate of coups in Africa can be abated when the African Union and its sub-regional organizations resolve to take unbiased collective actions against coupists, making the staging of coups in Africa an unattractive enterprise.

Factors that motivate Coup D'états in Africa and their overall effects on the continent
What accounts for the recent spate of military coups in Africa?
The study discovered that many factors account for the recent occurrences of coups in Africa. They include deficits in governance, economic mismanagement, corruption, greed and selfishness, unprofessionalism of members of the armed forces, power struggles, human rights abuses, insecurity, and non-fulfillment of electoral promises by politicians, to mention just a few. The following were the responses of participants, mostly expressed in anger and frustration:
Indeed, these soldiers have worried Africa for far too long. They know too well that governance is not their business but because of greed, selfishness, corruption, and their desire to taste power, they force themselves on us. Their only motivation is to occupy and taste power. The greedy lot. [Interview with Participant E 3, 2022]
I wonder if these days soldiers are given the training we had those days. Today, you'll easily see a junior officer stage a mutiny, holding an entire nation and people to ransom, as happened in Ghana during the AFRC era when Rawlings was their leader. There is one reason for these occurrences as far as I am concerned—the unprofessionalism of the current members of the armed forces. The growing spate of insecurity within some countries also accounts for these coups in Africa. Many members of the armed forces are a threat to security for lack of professionalism (Quedraogo 2014).
[Interview with Participant E 13, 2022]

Why won't the soldiers take over the reins of government when our political leaders have always taken us for a ride by plundering our national treasuries to save abroad for themselves and their immediate families? Being enriched at our expense when the majority of us are wallowing in poverty and pain. Corrupt elements! I wish I had a gun myself.
[Interview with Participant E 2, 2022]
He ended up laughing at the top of his voice, only to come back to conclude that the irony of the matter is that, as soon as the soldiers takeover, they become corrupt in no time.

You see Mr. Professor. It has to do with the economic mismanagement of those we elect into power. They come throwing their degrees and wealth at us, claiming to have all the knowledge of the Anase (Spider). Based on this, the unsuspecting and vulnerable electorate will vote them into power, thinking the messiahs have arrived. However, not too long, they've mismanaged the little they came to meet. When the kitchen begins to show apparent emptiness, they then create to loot and share. Greedy, corrupt crop of leaders. Kwame Nkrumah our first President and visionary leader wasn't like this! In addition, in many countries including Zimbabwe, the constitution was tampered with to change the tenure of office to allow presidents to stay longer in power, precipitating coups at the end. To such leaders, power is inherited rather than democratically contested (Handy et al. 2020; Powell and Thyne 2011).
[Interview with Participant E 25, 2022]
Let me tell you the truth. In addition to poor governance, our leaders also abuse our rights. What is more? Occupants of institutions of the state such as the Electoral Commission are used to rig elections and impose leaders on us against our wishes and voting pattern. Electoral processes are mostly manipulated to the advantage of incumbents. Unfortunately, when one seeks redress in the courts, the judges run to the defense of those who appointed them to the bench in the first place. Examples can even be cited of the Yahya of Gambia and the Gbagbo of Cote D'Ivoire who initially refused to step down when they had lost elections. It took force to get them out. Moreover, transnational crimes and terrorist activities also account for the current coups. That said, I loathe coups and all coup plotters must face the barrel of the gun. For some reason, it is expedient that we address the conditions that breed this evil (Suleiman and Onapajo 2022).
[Interview with Participant E 21, 2022]

To a large extent, the international community especially big nations such as the United States and France have supported and endorsed coups against Civilian Presidents who they claim are 'hard nuts' for their cracking. An example that readily comes to mind is their alleged interference in the domestic affairs of Mali where a leader of a coup was once trained in the US and financially supported to prosecute a coup. In our own country Ghana, wasn't the overthrow of Nkrumah masterminded by the CIA? How about the destruction of Gaddafi of Libya, their perceived enemy, and the subsequent sponsorship of the prolonged coup in that country? The United Nations and the African Union are partly to blame, as they have always turned a blind eye when these big powers are misbehaving. These fora have equally failed to put into place, biting sanctions on coupists as a way of deterrence (Powell and Thyne 2011).
[Interview with Participant E 30, 2022]

This assertion is in keeping with Suleiman (2022) who thinks the UN and other international governmental bodies have failed to create platforms that will appropriately and adequately punish coup makers as a deterrent measure.

It is a truism that poverty-stricken countries with less stable democracies are more susceptible to coups. Take Burkina Faso for example where in just a year, two coups have erupted. My assertion is confirmed by the report of the Fragile States Index (created by the Fund for Peace). According to this report, 15 out of the top 20 countries indexed as poorest are in Africa alone, with 12 of them having experienced successful coups (Fragile States Index 2021).
[Interview with Participant E 1, 2022]

Some participants have also suggested that actions of an illegitimate government even if constitutional, are capable of precipitating coups. This falls in line with Belkin and Schofer's (2016) thinking that the legitimacy of a government and a nation's coup history, are a strong basis for the staging of coups. Despite their responses, 26 participants representing 87 percent of participants did not support coups, while only 4 participants (13 %) endorsed coups based on the causes that are majorly blamable to the ruling elite.

Just like findings under the qualitative survey, it is also revealed in the quantitative survey that factors that account for the recent coups in Africa include attempts by illegitimate governments to perpetuate their stay in governments, bad governance, corruption and the mismanagement of economies, insecurity, and non-fulfilment of electoral promises by politicians (Suleiman and Onapajo 2022). In particular, an overwhelming percentage of respondents (81.8) affirm that the non-fulfilment of electoral promises by government officials accounts for the coup D'états in Africa, currently. Furthermore, more than 71 percent also think coups are ignited under circumstances where illegitimate leaders try to extend their stay in office. As also seen in Table 9, corruption charges and complaints of mismanagement are fertile grounds for coups, according to 72.6 percent of the respondents (Powell and Thyne 2011). Constitutional dictatorship and governance deficits in Africa though considered as a factor, only a slim majority of 260 respondents representing 60 percent think it is a strong factor; whist 40 percent of respondents do not see it as a factor. Insecurity is also seen as a factor though not a strong one, as only 61 percent see it as such; whilst 39 percent think otherwise. From the revelations so far, it is easily deduced that the majority of Africans affirm that the non-fulfillment of electoral promises by people they vote into power, plays a key role in the current spate of coups within the continent.

Table 9: Factors that account for the recent spate of coups in Africa

No.	Perception	% Frequency of Responses				Total
	Do you perceive the following as factors that account for coups in Africa ?	SA	A	SD	D	
1	Perpetuation of illegitimate governments and power struggles	131 (30.2%)	178 (41.1%)	53 (12.3%)	71 (16.4%)	433 (100%)
2	Corruption and economic mismanagement	173 (40.0%)	141 (32.6%)	68 (15.7%)	51 (11.7%)	433 (100%)
3	Constitutional dictatorship and governance deficits	108 (25.0%)	152 (35.1%)	40 (9.2%)	133 (30.7%)	433 (100%)
4	Insecurity	153 (35.3%)	111 (25.7%)	78 (18.0%)	91 (21.0%)	433 (100%)
5	Non-fulfilment of electoral promises	257 (59.4%)	97 (22.4%)	20 (4.6%)	59 (13.6%)	433 (100%)

Source: Field Data, 2022

What effects have coups brought to bear on African countries?
Views gathered from the participants indicate that Coup D'états in Africa have had devastating effects on the

continent, both in the past and present. According to the participants, almost every facet of the continent's development has been bruised by the activities of coup plotters. This was how participant E 11 who has an economic background commented:

The countries that have experienced coups have always had issues with their socio-economic development. The economic indicators of such countries have always shown negative signs, with such countries encountering huge debt profiles, making the people poorer than ever. Coup plotters have always tended plundering scarce state resources, further driving countries into deeper economic tranches. The reason is simple coup plotters mostly lack the skills and know-how to turn things around. In effect, they end up mismanaging the economy to a point worse than they met it. There is always a drawback to the development of such countries, and sometimes with spillover effects of neighboring counties and trading partners. Coups are bad and should be condemned in no uncertain terms, he ended by saying.

Derpanopoulos et al. (2016), in agreeing with these sentiments expressed by E 11, said coups are bad for democracies as the socio-politico-economic development of nations involved in coups is more often than not, stalled with associated repressive tendencies; drawing the hands of the clock of advancement backward.

Participant E 11 further noted that such actions have influencing effects on adjoining states that might want to go down the same path, citing the trend during the immediate post-independence era in the 1960s and 1970s when countries copied coupists blindly, leading to a surge of coups across the continent (Powell and Thyne 2011).

Another Participant E 29, in bemoaning the return of coups in Africa said, *"The displacing effects of coups have dire consequences on the people, many of whom end up in deep poverty. The homeless are most times forced into deviant activities such as prostitution, drug abuse, and armed robbery. Innocent blood is always shed and many more are maimed in the process. Moreover, diseases are easily spread among people by both internal and external refugees. Let me also mention that, neighboring countries tend to share the cost and burdens of refugees, depriving their citizens of needed services such as healthcare.* Post (2021) did express the same sentiment when he said coups more often than not, have spillover effects on adjoining states.

Table 10 depicts the major effects of coups on the African continent that include the retardation of Africa's socio-politico-economic development (63.5%), creation of refugee statuses among the vulnerable (52.7%), increases in transnational crimes and terrorist activities (62.1%), dents Africa's international image regarding constitutional rule (51.3%), and deepens human rights abuses (71.4%) (Derpanopoulos et al., 2016). This goes to confirm findings under the qualitative survey that list the same effects. From the results, it can be safely concluded that the fundamental rights of people are abused during coups and under military regimes (Benson, 2020). It is also observed that the issue of image denting is not of great significance among respondents.

Table 10: Effects of coups on the continental overall development

No.	Factor	% Frequency of Responses				Total
	Do you confirm the following as factors that hamper Africa's development as a result of coups	SA	A	SD	D	
1	Retards Africa's socio-politico-economic development	138 (31.9%)	137 (31.6%)	58 (13.4%)	100 (23.1%)	433 (100%)
2	Causes both internal and external displacement of populations	112 (25.9%)	116 (26.8%)	97 (22.4%)	108 (24.9%)	433 (100%)
3	Increases the spate of transnational crime and mercenary and terrorist activities	102 (23.5%)	167 (38.6%)	38 (9.8%)	126 (29.1%)	433 (100%)
4	Dents Africa's image in terms of democratic practices	98 (22.7%)	124 (28.6%)	75 (17.3%)	136 (31.4%)	433 (100%)
5	Influence abhorring human rights aberrations	73 (16.9%)	236 (54.5%)	74 (17.1%)	50 (11.5%)	433 (100%)

Source: Field Data, 2022

Gains and obstacles in respect of Africa's democratization experiences
Per your estimation what are the gains and obstacles to Africa's democratization process?
This question attracted varied responses. In terms of the gains, participants made the following observations:
Participant E 2 said, *"Democracy has always been the preferred choice of governance as the gains are normally multifaceted. First, it brings freedom to the ordinary people, where adherence to fundamental rights by governments and their institutions is guaranteed. Second, the independence of the judiciary in itself promotes the rule of law. Third, democracy inspires equitable development of nations. Fourth, the constitutional rule is the bedrock for principles such as the rule of law, good governance, effective separation of powers, and its attendant checks and balances on excesses of other arms of the state including the judiciary. Fifth, countries that practiced constitutional rule in Africa for some time now, have stable economies, strong institutions, enhanced rule of law, press freedom, and improved human security. "*

Democratization inspires confidence and a sense of belonging in citizens. It instills patriotism and a sense of nation-building in people, serving as an eye-opener to many people. It is the only system of governance that brings lasting peace to nations where citizens are assured of their future, knowing when the tenure of office of even a bad leader will come to an end. Under a democratic rule, the people have security and can depend on the stable governments that are elected to serve them. Among the comity of states, Ghana has a good reputation been one of the most successful democracies in Africa. Indeed the icon of democracy in Africa. What else is more than this? He asked rhetorically.
[Interview with Participant E 20, 2022]

Under the constitutional rule as being experienced in Ghana since 7 January 1993, the socio-politico-economic development of Ghana has seen a giant leap as we look back at the yesteryears when the country was torn apart by military adventurism. My cousin, who returned last week from the US after three decades of sojourn, testifies to what I am saying. In his wild amazement when I drove him to our hometown in the north on a tarred road, he screamed saying Ghana's development has been monumental thanks to constitutional rule. Hitherto, the road to the north was in such bad shape it took two days to do the journey that now takes just 12 hours. His amazement was further heightened when along the road, he saw state-of-the-art buildings including, schools, hospitals, and government offices, with every little village being connected to the national grid that provides electricity.
[Interview with Participant E 19, 2022]

Benson and Ngaaso (2021) affirm this finding when they attributed Ghana's current development to the Fourth Republican constitutional practice.

On the issue of the obstacles to Africa's democratization process, responses gathered at two of the four group discussions the researcher held with Participants E 18, E 28, E 16, E 24, E 17, and E 5, summed up as follows:
1. *Non-adherence to term limits by some African leaders as they change constitutions illegitimately to perpetuate their long stay in office, tending to frustrate democratic participation.*
2. *Bad electoral processes coupled with manipulative tendencies of electoral institutions and officers are a threat to African democratic advancement* (Handy et al. 2020).
3. *Lack of strong institutions and comprehensive national development plan to put the state machinery on the right pedestal towards socio-economic growth.*
4. *An extreme display of partisan politics by political parties has the capacity of creating sharp divisions within the body politics, thereby forestalling democratic growth.*
5. *Bureaucratic hitches and the inability of governments to fund relevant constitutional institutions are obstacles to democracies as these bodies are unable to function efficiently and effectively.*
6. *Corruption among state institutions such as the judiciary, the police, and politicians, is a disservice to constitutional stability as such institutions and individuals fail to defend the tenets of democracy as ought to be the case* (Benson 2022).
7. *Low literacy rates of many African citizens and the fear of intimidation, hold them back from seeking accountability from political officeholders who take delight in exploiting such situations.*
8. *Interferences from the Western world are platforms for democratic stagnation in Africa* (Powell and Thyne 2011).
9. *Baseless and rude military interventions have turned the hands of the clock of advancement backward.*

An examination of the security implications of Coup D'états in Africa.
What are the security implications of Coup D'états to the continent of Africa?
During the interview, all the participants (100%) were in agreement that coups staged in Africa have security implications on the continent. The researcher, therefore, argues that the views expressed by participants reflect the thinking of Africans in that regard. Participants have posited that coups in Africa have often ignited civil ways, advanced the course of terrorist activities, displaced populations both internally and externally, caused human security and health issues, degraded environments, and heightened crime waves. In effect, these results have had destabilization impacts on the continent's security and its member-states, as well as undermining the continent's cohesion. These responses came from some of the participants:

Yes, there are security implications. Coup D'états have always had destabilizing effects on countries even outside Africa. In the 1960s when coups were the order of the day in Africa, they just didn't start in all countries at a go. A simultaneous process started in a few countries, but before long, had engulfed the whole continent. In a similar vein, the current rise of coups in just a few countries such as Mali, Guinea, Mali, and Guinea-Bissau if not immediately checked, has the potential of destabilizing African states in particular, and the continent at large.

[Interview with Participant E 21, 2022]

Of course, there are security implications here. The issues are these---coups have the potential of sparking civil wars within the continent as was seen in Liberia in particular. Another example is the Sierra Leonean Civil War that came on the back of serialized coups in the small West African country. Secondly, coups encourage dissident activities and even terrorist activities. What that means is that dissidents, terrorists, and mercenaries who have links with coup plotters, gather in those countries for training and funding to topple civilian regimes in neighboring countries (Barany 2012).

[Interview with Participant E 17, 2022. This participant has a security background]

Participant E 8, submitted that coups have security implications for the continent and individual countries regarding the displacement of populations who end up as refugees in neighboring countries. She said, "*...as a mother I know how it feels to haplessly look at your child dying out of want. That is the fate of many refugees who starve to death with no help in sight. The Somalia issue readily comes to mind. In addition, coups have human security implications in terms of food scarcity, water scarcity, and poverty. Moreover, issues of health security come with coups as diseases and pandemics strive under such conditions*.

As you know, unemployment is a tool in the hands of the youth who perpetrate crimes. So far, many studies have shown that crimes strive under conditions of lawlessness, which are usually created by coups. The impact of rising crime waves on continental and national security, can certainly not be underscored. Aside from creating physical insecurity in citizens and health insecurity, coups have created the economic crisis in coup countries that usually have spillover effects on neighboring countries. Indeed, economic crises as a result of the mismanagement of economies by coupists, are usually good grounds for conflicts as was seen in the Liberian Civil War case. Look at how the crisis in Liberia affected the security of the member-states of ECOWAS, the spillover conflict. Largely, that conflict spread over to parts of the continent, undermining continental security as several precious lives were lost and several properties destroyed (Quedraogo 2014).

[Interview with Participant E 20, 2022]

The security implications of coups on the continent cannot be farfetched. They include human insecurity, health, and food insecurity, distortions in the national security architectures of countries, increases in transnational crimes, and the creation of temporary security lapses among security agencies such as the armed forces, police, customs, and immigration services.

[Interview with Participant E 17, 2022]

On the main, these were the security issues raised by participants regarding the impact of coups on the continent of Africa. The AU and individual nations within the continent are already spending huge scarce resources on security matters alone, and it is not prudent or fitting that coups add to this problem. Moreover, coups since their inception in Africa have always undermined continental cohesion as coup countries are always isolated and sanctioned, causing disunity and dissatisfaction among AU members.

Table 11 depicts the implications of coups on continental security and the international relations of countries involved in coups on one hand, and the rest of the comity of states on the other. An overwhelming number of the respondents, 344 representing 79.4% are convinced coups to have continental and individual national security complications (Quedraogo 2014). Furthermore, more than 56% of respondents think coups are good grounds for the destabilization of African countries, a situation that will not inure continental cohesion. These revelations go to confirm the findings of the earlier qualitative survey that the researcher conducted. A slim majority of respondents (52%) think coups will affect foreign inflows concerning aid, loans, and investments; whilst 53.8% of respondents do conclude that coups usually lead to diplomatic ruptures that go a long way to affecting the relationships of countries involved in coups with some state actors (Belkin and Schofer, 2016)). Deductively, the majority of Africans affirm coups are bad omens for continental security and cohesion.

Table 11: Security and international relations implications of coups

No.	Implications	% Frequency of Responses				Total
		SA	**A**	**SD**	**D**	
1	Coups have dire implications for continental security and the individual national security of African countries.	178 (41.1%)	166 (38.3%)	31 (7.2%)	58 (13.4%)	433 (100%)
2	The prevalence of coups is capable of destabilizing African countries and as well affects continental cohesion.	114 (26.3%)	132 (30.5%)	87 (20.1%)	100 (23.1%)	433 (100%)
3	Coups are a threat to foreign inflows in terms of aid, loans, and investments.	79 (18.3%)	146 (33.7%)	145 (33.5%)	63 (14.5%)	433 (100%)
4	Coups mostly lead to diplomatic ruptures and the ignition of sanctions against coup countries.	103 (23.8%)	130 (30.0%)	85 (19.6%)	115 (26.6%)	433 (100%)

Source: Field Data, 2022

International relations implications of Coup D'états in respect of military regimes
How have the occurrences of Coup D'états affected the international relations of countries under military regimes?
From the comments made by a majority of participants, diplomatic relations are disrupted each time a civilian regime is unconstitutionally overthrown through coup d'états. This break of relationship always led to international sanctions that further deepened the problems of coup countries and their innocent and vulnerable populations. Trading and development partners withdraw their services and support from coup countries, just as investor confidence declines under military regimes. In their contribution, some participants noted:

Coups have always attracted negative responses from the international community. In notable circumstances, governments have withdrawn diplomatic relations with coup countries and have recalled senior diplomatic staff such as Heads of Missions, in their protest of coups. In many such cases, diplomatic ruptures are not mended until the country in question returns to constitutional rule. Yes, the severance of diplomatic relations and their consequences are dire and must be avoided. No country has ever strived in isolation since no country is an Island of its own. Such diplomatic ruptures bring untold hardships on the economies of coup countries and their often-vulnerable citizens since countries of the Global North where they get most of their goods and services, decline to trade with them. Therefore, coups have dire implications on even international trade, leading to reduced foreign investments (Suleiman 2022).
[Interview with Participant E 4, 2022]

Participant E 17 recognized coups constitute a threat to foreign aid and investment. She observed *coups are a threat to foreign inflows from foreign countries that disapprove of coups-- in terms of aid, loans and investments. The Western World as you know has often used the acceptance of democracy as a trump card for their support of developing countries.*

Participant E 21 admitted coups have led to the expulsion of countries from international organizations such as the UN, AU, and ECOWAS. He said, "*.The recent expulsion of Guinea from the ECOWAS sub-regional organization bears testimony to my claims. In the past, the UN and AU have expelled countries who defaulted in that regard, while the leaders of coups were severely sanctioned*".

It also emerged from the study that coup countries have the likelihood of weakening the long-standing relationship between them and their friends, within Africa and the Western World. The findings also revealed that overall; the continent's image is gradually being dinted again, with the rising spate of coups at a time when its democratic credentials are souring in international politics.

Participant E 12 expressed her fears thus: *Without an iota of doubt, coup activities come with consequences, as there will be staining of relationships between such countries and their friends in the Global North. They will put away diplomacy at some point and address the issues head-on, in their efforts to promote democracy across the globe.*

Participant 15, 2022 thought sanctions whether political, physical, military, diplomatic, or economic, are a response to misconduct that usually come with devastating effects on economies. To that extent, coup countries stand to crush under sanctions. He concluded, calling for stiffer sanctions on coup plotters in particular. "*When*

applying sanctions, the 'heat' must be turned on coup plotters but not the oppressed and vulnerable population. A system should even be put in place where coup plotters are sought and plucked out, the very moment they stage coups against civilian governments. It's long overdue! What's the world waiting for..?

Stopgap measures to Coup D'états in Africa
From where you stand, what measures when adopted will forestall or minimize Coup D'états in Africa?
Participants were unanimous on the need to curb the current unfolding events of coups. However, their responses, which were varied in content, contrasted in a few instances. For instance, when some participants thought the way to go was the forceful removal of coup plotters, others thought such actions would only exacerbate the situation leading to the uncontrollable loss of lives of citizens, as the plotters will want to fight back. Some participants also disagreed that international sanctions should be targeted at only the coup plotters. Participant E 29 in disagreeing said, *"Sanctions should be targeted at the entirety of defaulting countries including the citizens. After all, in many instances the citizens hail coup plotters, acknowledging them as the messiahs. As they feel the pinch of sanctions themselves, they will pelt stones at coup plotters whenever they come around ."*

Participant E 18 while contrasting this viewpoint noted, *"Why on earth should innocent citizens suffer for sins they never committed? International sanctions in the past have failed because the targeting is always faulty. Look at what happened in Iraq. What is needful is to isolate the perpetrators and punish them severely; as no one individual can stand the might of the world. Instead of targeting the vulnerable citizens, I think the international community to be spearheaded by the UN, should create avenues where citizens are well educated and funded to defend their respective constitutions by resisting these political adventurers. The UN Security Council must be seen enforcing these sanctions. Democracy has come to stay in Africa and must be helped to stay* (Heywood 2011)

Another participant, E12 argued that coups in Africa can be abated if and when the African Union and its sub-regional organizations would be prepared to take unbiased collective actions against coup makers and make the staging of coups in Africa an unattractive venture.

Participants made valid points regarding this question, and the researcher only pulled a stop at the saturation point since responses became repetitive. The main responses came to include the following:
The African Union and other sub-regional governmental organizations such as ECOWAS and indeed leaders of African countries should sit up to address the causes of coups, in particular, the issues of governance deficits and the socio-economic needs of citizens. African Heads of State should engage in constant peer-review exercises and be able to tell their colleagues in the face when they are seen deviating from the tenets of good governance. Factually, if our leaders are seen to be practicing the tenets of good governance, coups will seize in Africa.
[Interview with Participant E 7, 2022]

This observation is in keeping with Handy's et al. (2020) assertion that international governmental organizations must address issues of inequality, the rule of law, and unfair electoral processes.

I wonder if those coup plotters have any sense of military professionalism in them. Creating a culture of professionalism in members of the armed forces through the instillation of core societal values is needed in the circumstances; as this would enhance cohesion, unity, and effectiveness among members. Well-educated members of the armed forces would tend to safeguard human rights, rule of law, and the security of citizens other than engaging in coup plots (Boone 2007).
[Interview with Participant E 13, 2022]

This participant's observation fell in line with Quedraogo's (2014) assertion that a professional officer would learn to commit to values that allow them to serve the public, support civilian administration wholeheartedly, defend national constitutions and exhibit political neutrality.

Our electoral processes must be safeguarded from the manipulation of dictatorial constitutional leaders and officials they appoint into places of duty. They must also respect term limits. As a country, we're no longer comfortable with the way the EC handles elections in Ghana, where one cannot register for a voter's ID with one's birth certificate. Moreover, the Supreme Court had to affirm this decision. The Judiciary's conduct of late is also worrisome, as far as elections in this country and Africa are concerned. We need to create reliable electoral systems to put confidence in the electorate and by that disenabled coup plotters from taking the law into their own hands to topple constitutional governments. If they want to lead, let them do so constitutionally through elections. Our fledgling democracies can only be protected when we put in place mechanisms that would ensure free, *fair, and transparent elections (*Suleiman and Onapajo 2022).
[Interview with Participant E 13, 2022]

The AU and other regional organizations should evaluate reports from early warning systems and civil society organizations on governance failures, with all seriousness, where political commitment to the prevention of conflicts should be the preserve of these bodies rather than their usual reaction to crises. It is about time these bodies must acquire preempt-crises attitudes. The simplistic approaches to governance crises should give way to preemptive pragmatism (Handy et al. 2020).

[Interview with Participant E 15, 2022]

Countries with the help of regional and global partners must address governance deficits in the form of non-fulfillment of citizen entitlements, socio-economic frustrations, and growing insecurity, holistically. ECOWAS and other regional bodies must be firm and unbiased in their show of contempt for all coups, while the United Nations (UN) must check and wade off foreign interference in Africa. Moreover, the AU must be seen to be resisting such interferences in the domestic affairs of its member-states. Again, democratization in Africa must receive reorientation that suits local circumstances. Some Western policies will simply not work in our African circumstances. Let me end up here stating that, the most sustainable response to coups is to eliminate the adverse socio-politico-economic conditions in national and international politics that precipitate coups. For emphasis, our leaders must charter the paths of good governance, build strong independent economies, create jobs for the teeming unemployed youth, ensure equitable distribution of state resources, avoid corruption, and work at reducing the high poverty levels we find ourselves as a people.

[Interview with Participant E 1, 2022]

Most of the issues raised by this participant have been replicated in the observations of Barany (2012) and Suleiman (2022), who hold the view that African leaders can forestall coups in Africa when the causes that precipitate coups are appropriately addressed.

Conclusions

The current spate of rise in Coup D'états within the African continent has not only taken centre-stage in the deliberations of the African Union and its member-states but has also evoked international concerns and reactions as well. The current trend reminds one of the yesteryears of coups that plagued the continent, following the immediate post-independence era. The attendant difficulties such occurrences brought to bear on the continent's socio-politico-economic development and the insecurity of the people cannot easily be lost on us. To this end, the begging question stands out is Africa's democratization process once more at crossroads? In answering this question, this author says, not yet even though we're getting there every passing day. This is so because as Suleiman (2022) observed, Africa has still failed to address major causes of military coups in the continent as emanating from deficiencies in governance, greed, economic mismanagement, dubious legitimacy, corruption, and human rights aberrations, *inter alia*.

The continent has for a long time uninterruptedly embarked on the path of democratization to the administration of the democratic world, reaping huge benefits of the phenomenon amidst both challenges and prospects. However, all these gains stand to be erased if the 'evil' is not 'nipped in the bud' timeously and appropriately. Furthermore, these coups if not checked have negative security and international relations implications that are capable of not only derailing constitutional rule in Africa but also destabilizing the continent and dinting its image (Nkrumah 1965; Post 2021; Seigler 2021).

Within the given circumstances, this paper argues that the situation can only be averted when the African Union and its member-states, the international community as spearheaded by the United Nations Security Council, and African politicians and citizens take certain pragmatic measures, timeously and committedly. In summation, these include the professionalization of the armed forces by decoupling security services from politics, good governance practices by civilian governments, fighting against corruption, sanctioning coup plotters, strengthening of state institutions, and the relentless pursuit of socio-economic development of African nations to create jobs for the youth and provide for the needs of the people (Handy et al. 2020). As we remember the African dilemma and paradoxes as explained by Mazrui (2002), we should be mindful of the fact that they are not destined but rather self-inflicted.

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