

The Military and Political Corruption In Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract:

The study's hypothesis—that there is a connection between military institutions and levels of corruption in African nations—is supported by research. By examining two key points, it becomes evident how credible this theory is. The first is the role of armies in containing corruption and attempting to stop its spread by toppling the regime that harbors it and the individuals who support corrupt behaviour. The second is how the military contributes to the spread of corruption by abusing jobs and using public resources for personal gain and the advancement of personal interests. As a result, when their terms came to an end, corruption levels were frequently higher than when they had taken office.

Keywords: Africa; Civil-military relations; Military; Political corruption

1. INTRODUCTION

According to reports released on a regular basis by organizations with expertise in measuring the level of corruption, African nations perform poorly on the Transparency International Index. We can note that the chaos and political instability that has persisted in African countries since independence played a key role in the spread of corruption due to the nature of their political systems, the practices of non-transfer of power, and the absence of fair and transparent electoral mechanisms, despite the multiplicity and diversity of factors that contributed to the emergence and spread of corruption at its levels. All of this created an environment where the armies could intervene in politics, and their justifications for doing so were to stop the corruption of the overthrown regimes.

It should be noted that there are two trends in this analysis of the army's potential to reduce or spread corruption, as shown by the African experience. The first discusses the army's role in reducing corruption by toppling corrupt regimes and fighting corrupt people, while the second discusses the army's role in escalating corruption in African nations.

In order to understand the reality of the army's impact on the phenomenon of corruption—whether it reduces it or spreads it—this study will analyze the army's role in Sub-Saharan Africa. The following question will be asked to attain an answer: Does the intervention of African armies contribute to a decrease in corruption or does it increase the extent to which it is spread?

A number of questions arise from this problem, the most important of which are:

- How is political corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa a motive for the intervention of the army?
- What are the practices of the armies that increase the spread of political corruption?

Study Hypotheses:

The study seeks to verify the following hypotheses:

- Corruption of government systems is among the important reasons for the army's intervention in African countries.

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-Participation in corrupt practices and the use of public resources for personal enrichment by the military has exacerbated the spread of corruption Sub-Saharan in Africa.

Study axes:

First: the concept of political corruption

- 1- the definition of political corruption
- 2- patterns of political corruption

Second: Corruption as a reason for the intervention of armies in the political process in Sub-Saharan Africa

- 1- the reasons for the intervention of armies in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 2- Military coups as a means to curb political corruption Sub-Saharan in Africa

Third: Military regimes and the spread of corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa

- 1- the political performance of military regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 2- the appearances of political corruption of military governments in Sub-Saharan Africa

2. The Concept of Political Corruption:

2.1 The Definition of Political Corruption:

Different definitions of corruption exist, and this is due to the concept's complexity, changing trends, diversity of values and cultures among societies and nations, and the various political, economic, social, and administrative lenses through which scholars approach it. These factors all contribute to the difficulty of accurately defining corruption.

Corruption is generally understood to be "the misuse of public power for personal gain."¹ The United Nations Convention against Corruption has identified several of its manifestations, including the following:

- Bribery of local public officials.
- Bribery of foreign employees.
- Embezzlement.
- Trading in influence.

- Abuse of public office and its powers.
- Illicit enrichment.
- Bribery in the private sector.
- The embezzlement of property in the private sector.
- Laundering money resulting from criminal proceeds.
- Hiding criminal proceeds.
- Obstructing the course of justice.²

As for political corruption, it is defined as "the arbitrary use of the powers granted to any party of the political system to achieve goals and interests that differ from the purpose on which the regime granted this power."³ As another definition puts it, it is "behavior that deviates from the principles of law and the rules of justice, issued by the holder of a position or position from one of the parties to the political process, or one of the parties affecting it, or otherwise, aimed at achieving a private interest".⁴

Political corruption is based on the following:

- Abuse of public authority (governmental) for illegitimate purposes.⁵
- Deprivation of liberties, non-participation in decision-making, exclusivity of authority, disrespect for other opinions, and violence in confronting situations.
- Financial deviations and violations of the rules and provisions that regulate the work of the political system (political institutions in the state).⁶
- A public job or position in the government sector is the means to achieve personal or group interests.
- Achieving narrow private or factional interests often contradicts the general interest of the state.
- Secrecy is the basic principle of any corruption operation.

Political corruption, in general, refers to the class of politicians, rulers, party leaders, and government officials who engage in corruption, regardless of their roles or political allegiances through:

- Collusion in exploiting political influence to direct decisions, policies and legislation to achieve their own interests or those of one of their loyalists.

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- Obtaining illegal funds to increase financial and social influence or to finance their electoral campaigns.
- Facilitate obtaining and legalizing bribes in return for granting the use or ownership of state lands, contracts, concessions, licenses or commercial approvals.⁷
- Smuggling of public funds to banks or foreign investments.
- Participating in or condoning corrupt practices.

Governments that practice authoritarianism often employ a wide range of tactics to enact corruption, including charm, threats, coercion, violence, homicide, and other ploys. In order to stop the growth of popular participation, the practice of corruption also takes on more complicated forms, such as one-party rule, a combination of powers, holding formal elections, containing opponents, and assimilation into the system.⁸

2.2 Patterns of Political Corruption:

Corruption is closely related to the nature of political systems, including their institutions, laws, and the policies they set in various fields,⁹ according to cases of corruption in many nations and political entities. even more so if these systems:

- Do not resort to the popular will in managing public affairs, which puts the public interest in danger and enhances the chances of attacking it.
- Many of the rules and laws regulating the relationship between the private and public spheres are vague and confusing, which means enabling the political system and its enforcers to attack rights and freedoms without real deterrents.

The heavy reliance of the political regimes on the saying of an exceptional circumstance doubles the possibility of these regimes' delinquency toward corruption and increases their susceptibility and ability to harm the public interest.¹⁰

As a result, corruption spreads throughout society at different political and administrative levels, and it is possible to distinguish between electoral, presidential, and bureaucratic corruption.

In order to obtain material or moral advantages and benefits, regardless of the needs of the public interest, the head of state and the upper echelons of the

ruling political and administrative elite engage in a variety of behavior patterns known as "top heavy corruption".¹¹

Regarding bureaucratic corruption, Gold makes a distinction between two fundamental types, namely institutional corruption and corruption associated with the implementation of significant government programs.¹² Institutional corruption refers to the corruption of state institutions like the ministry, parliament, and military institutions. Here, members of these bodies turn to abusing their power and the benefits of parliamentary immunity by accepting bribes or commissions from beneficiaries to hasten the issuance of legislative decisions that serve their interests, prevent the issuance of certain decisions that would restrict their work, or support legislative proposals that serve a specific political party without considering their own interests.

In nations where elections determine the political future of different political parties and elites as well as their access to power, electoral corruption is rife. Vote buying,¹³ along with electoral fraud, illegal campaign financing, and the purchase of allegiances between individuals and groups, is one of the most significant electoral corruption issues.¹⁴

3. Corruption as a Reason for Military Intervention in the Political Process in Sub-Saharan Africa:

3.1 Reasons for the intervention of armies in Sub-Saharan Africa:

One of the most notable aspects of the development of African nations beginning in the 1960s is the phenomenon of military coups, the subsequent military rule, and their interventions, where the military institution becomes involved in one way or another to occupy a significant space in political life. This sparked a number of inquiries about the reasons behind military coups and the army's involvement in African nations.

1-The internal organization of the military institution serves as the primary justification for military intervention in politics. It refers to the sum of qualities that the military institution possesses in the nation and that enable its involvement in domestic politics.¹⁵

2-The government's efforts to regulate the military establishment by controlling the hiring and promotion procedures or reducing military spending.¹⁶

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3-The government's effort to undermine military institutions like the Special Guard and the special intelligence services by creating a second, rival military apparatus.¹⁷

4- The general weakness of Africa's state institutions is a factor that encourages military intervention. For instance, Huntington claims that military intervention occurs not because the military institutions naturally tend to intervene but rather because there aren't enough strong institutions in society.¹⁸

5-Economic factors, military interventions in Africa were due to the austerity policies followed by the rulers with the decline of the economy and the disruption of development programs.

6- The role of tribal, social, and ethnic tendencies in many military coups as well as counter-coups.

7- International involvement in the process of political transition through the military establishment in Africa, which is the involvement that takes a permanent form, like Western military installations in several African nations, or short-term intervention to support one political party over another.¹⁹

3.2 Military Coups as a Means to Curb Political Corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa:

Despite the fact that there are many factors that can motivate armies to participate directly in politics, the political factors that reflect the institutional and political environment of society—rather than the social or organizational traits of the military institution—are the most crucial ones for military intervention in governance. The spread of corruption in government and administration in many African nations is the cause of their direct control of power.²⁰ Due to the monopoly of political power held by a select few, restrictions on the participation of the African masses, and in some cases, the inability to change the government democratically due to the lack of alternative political parties, military coups frequently occurred in Africa, and the army emerged as a significant political force in the continent. For instance, the army and police were cited as the only tools at their disposal to overthrow the dictator during the 1966 military coup in Ghana.²¹

Thomas Sankara also criticized the Sai Zerbo government's "tyrannical and dictatorial power" and proclaimed that the People's Safety Council had seized control in order to "free the nation from humiliating dependence and exploitation

and to give the people confidence in their own abilities to change their circumstances...as well as to provide food, clean drinking water, clothing, housing, and schools, and people's health".²²

The military regimes often build their legitimacy on the corruption of the previous political regimes that overthrew them, and claim that the reason for their intervention is only to rid society of corruption. In Ghana, General Ingrah emphasized in his justification for the coup that overthrew President Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, "This bold step was taken due to the lack of other means to restore to the Ghanaian people the blessings of freedom, justice, and prosperity, which we have fought for so long. The armed forces and police in Ghana acted according to an ancient tradition believed by the Ghanaian people, and that tradition holds that a leader who loses the trust and support of his people and resorts to the arbitrary use of power should be overthrown".²³

Moreover, both the coups that took place against the first and second republics in Nigeria accused civilians of excessive bribery and political corruption, as it was stated in the military statement of the first coup in January 1966: "Our enemies are the political opportunists and fraudsters in high and low positions in the government who are drowning in bribery, the demanders of 10 % of everything."²⁴

The military in the same nation believed that the overthrow of Jacob Gowon's regime in 1975 was really caused by poor management following the end of the civil war and the spread of corruption by the former military rulers who ran their states as though they were their own provinces.²⁵

Despite the opulence of the Yamyogo regime in Côte d'Ivoire, harsh austerity measures were implemented, which sparked significant protests from the nation's labor and trade unions. These unrests were sufficient to summon the army, who then intervened and complied with the populace's demands to topple the dictatorship of the nation's first democratically elected president. In fact, Colonel Sanguile Lamizana became the nation's first military president after independence on the evening of January 3, 1966, when he dismissed the president and put him under house arrest in response to the people's cries.²⁶

Also, the military intervention carried out by the military establishment in Togo (January 1963) was due to the austerity policy pursued by President Silvanos Olympio, and the army was one of its victims, despite its wealth.²⁷

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In Uganda, the army intervened because of the tensions experienced by civilian political institutions since 1964, which turned Uganda into a de-institutionalized state whose groups ignored the established rules and aimed to impose new rules of the game specific to each group separately.²⁸

Captain Valentin Strasser, who led the military takeover against President Joseph Mwemoh in Sierra Leone in April 1992, declared that the goal of the military intervention was to purge the nation of the corruption that had engulfed it. Based on this, the military government issued a decree "freezing funds and real estate for the year 1992," which had the effect of freezing the assets of former politicians and ministers who were thought to have amassed wealth at the expense of the general welfare.²⁹ Additionally, three committees were set up to investigate the financial dealings of former ministries, major corporations, government agencies, and employees.³⁰

Following the overthrow of Bashir's government, the Sudanese Armed Forces claimed that the Supreme Security Committee had long investigated the corruption and poor management occurring in the institutions of power, and that security service personnel shared the same level of poverty as the Sudanese people, and that the Sudanese people's patience far outstripped that of human beings.³¹

4. Military Regimes and the Spread of Corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa:

4.1 The Political Performance of Military Regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa:

Some studies measured the political performance of military regimes, and one of those studies concluded that the performance of military governments is significantly weaker and poorer than the performance of civilian governments according to four indicators: the level of legitimacy of the regime, the absence of coercive rule, the reduction of violence, and response to popular desires. Others have attempted to quantify the degree to which military rule and tyranny are related through applied studies, such as the 1991 Viner study, which relied on Freedom House data and found that 34 of the 36 military governments, or 94% of them, are categorized as tyrannical regimes lacking even the most basic civil liberties.³²

In general, the experience of the military regimes in Africa demonstrates that these regimes have been unable to effect genuine development and have not been able to move the populace into a state of national construction.³³ All the data pertaining to the post-military coup period did not provide any indication that the

military rule had improved the political, economic, or social issues that served as the main justification for the military coup. Many military governments have not made any clear improvement to the economic and social structure of the state, and the achievements of military systems in terms of confronting and resolving problems have not been much better than those achieved by civil systems. Indeed, Professor Ali Mazrouei reaches far beyond that, as he asserts that the military is more traditional than the civilians, and he confirmed this point of view through an extensive study of the Ugandan experience during the era of Aidi Amin.³⁴

4.2 Appearances of Political Corruption in African Military Governments:

Corruption has increased in African military governments and this is shown by:

First: concentrating power in the hands of military leaders, suspending political freedoms, outlawing political parties, unions, and other institutions, placing severe restrictions on political activities, and shutting down or censoring newspapers are all examples of such measures.³⁵ Additionally, different cleaning techniques were used, within the army and society at large, to the extent of forming special execution squads to physically eliminate opponents and political dissidents, utilizing all means of repression at their disposal. These actions have led to widespread discontent and dissatisfaction, prompting opposition groups to resort to illegitimate channels to express their demands to the ruling regime.³⁶

Zaire under the Mobutu regime presents the best example of the concentration of power in the hands of the military elite and the elimination of the opposition. The state is under his direct supervision.³⁷ In Nigeria, one of the features of the extended period of military rule is first the increasing concentration of power in the federal government and then gradually the identification of power in the military ruler.³⁸ In Uganda, Idi Amin concentrated all power in his hands using the means of physical force and purges in the army and police, which led to a state of instability and chaos in Uganda.³⁹

Second: Due to the fact that the military's successful economic and social initiatives were confined to a small number of oil-producing nations, the military's rule failed in national construction and development initiatives.

Although the worsening economic conditions in Africa were one of the initial justifications for the military's involvement in politics and the installation of military regimes, these economic conditions only got worse under military rule,

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which spread an atmosphere of unrest and instability and led to the involvement of many African nations in a series of coups and coup-related activities.⁴⁰

Samuel Decale showed how the military was unable to advance the economy because their actions were always seen as a continuation of the corrupt and fraudulent policies of the overthrown civilian government or a kind of return to colonialism. The academics' hopes for a rise in patriotism under military rule were not realized. Instead, the military's ties to the "Metropol" were stronger than those to its people.

Third: Illicit enrichment of military rulers and obtaining material or moral advantages and benefits.

Following the coup's success, the military works to advance its own objectives and increase its financial resources. A World Bank bulletin claims that corruption played a role in the \$400 billion transfer of African funds to accounts and properties abroad, of which \$100 billion came from Nigeria alone. The bulletin also revealed that Sani Abacha, a former military president of Nigeria, stole about \$2.2 billion along with the ruling clique, in a nation where 70% of people make less than one dollar per day on average.⁴¹ At the expense of the country, President Baba Najida, some of his family members, and senior army officers also engaged in an unchecked accumulation of private wealth. Baba N'geda was said to have had a fortune of 30 billion French francs, not including the wealth and property he amassed in Nigeria. His wife, Miriam, was said to have an estimated fortune of about 8 billion US dollars.⁴²

In Liberia, former President Samuel Doe (1980-1990), who came to power after a violent coup against President Tolbert, prioritized enriching himself, his tribe, and his inner circle to ensure their loyalty and his continued rule, and he did not invest money in projects with social goals.⁴³

President Mobutu of Zaire, who owned villas in the Swiss Alps, Portugal, and the French Riviera, as well as numerous residences in Brussels, did the same thing. He also had presidential palaces in every significant Zairean city.⁴⁴ A few hundred people made up the "Mobutu League," the inner circle of the Mobutu clan. Only tribesmen were eligible for the lucrative positions in the state, the diplomatic corps, the military, the secret police, and the presidency. The association directly reaped nearly 20 percent of the national budget, and its members supplemented their incomes by smuggling (diamonds and gold) and private sales of copper. Mobutu himself had a personal stake in all foreign

enterprises operating in Zaire, and his family controlled 60 percent of the local net trade.⁴⁵

Fourth: enlisting the aid of civilians the military has turned against or transferring power to them when they are unable to run the government. The military in Africa has experience that resembles that of Kemal Ataturk in that it must give civilians more room within the authority while maintaining its position at the top of the pyramid.⁴⁶ The cause of this is that some coup planners lack a comprehensive plan for running the nation after seizing control, which has left them almost entirely dependent on bureaucrats and technocrats who previously handled many aspects of government management and planning.⁴⁷ This caused the change to take place at the top rather than in the government's institutions or policies. The situation in Uganda in 1985, when President Tito Okello relied on Abbottian regime ministers who later turned against him as the ousted vice president assumed control of the new ministry,⁴⁸ may serve as a witness in this case. Additionally, some political figures from all military and civilian governments, including Blue Buba Migri in Cameroon and Dr. Abu Saleh in Sudan, participate in this framework.⁴⁹

Fifth: Corruption in the armed forces is rampant, and military leaders are encouraged to use public resources for personal enrichment. This is evidenced by Transparency International in the following:

-Profiting from purchases (eg buying from friends and acquaintances; non-compliance with the rules of competitive bidding; taking bribes and commissions).

—Profiting from the soldiers' salaries (example: taking a percentage of the salaries; collecting salaries for fictitious soldiers; adding close people to the secret salary list).

-Profiting from state-owned assets (example: selling state property at cheap prices; selling excess equipment; privatizing at low prices).

-Using the budget and resources for personal interests. (Example: collecting undue consulting fees personally or for close ones; using or renting cars, apartments, or equipment for personal interests).

-Obtaining personal benefits from the private sector companies that deal with it.

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-Abuse of rewards, promotion, and disciplinary processes. (Examples: nepotism; favoritism; blackmail or persecution of subordinates to achieve private interests).⁵⁰

This was evident. in Sierra Leone after the 1992 military coup, complaints were repeated that soldiers were involved in theft and looting, especially during the night during curfew periods. In addition to reports about soldiers harassing people at checkpoints on public roads, and about extortions they carry out.⁵¹

High levels of corruption in the FARDC have, in some cases, directly helped the rebels they are supposed to fight.. Moreover, ex-FDLR combatants confirmed that nearly 95% of the weapons they used were supplied by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁵² According to one study, military personnel deployed near mining areas extort about 50% of miners' income through illegal means. The reported military intervention in at least 265 mines in 2013 yielded generous benefits while enjoying near-immunity.⁵³ Senior officers of the Guinea-Bissau army also began selling weapons and landmines to the Casamance rebels before resorting to drug smuggling.⁵⁴

5. CONCLUSION

- It is obvious that the political realities of these nations have continued to be dominated by the patterns of political corruption that have spread throughout African nations, and that these patterns have grown to be a significant aspect of them. The spread of corruption was not restricted to one form of government over others; rather, it was accelerated to a similar extent by both civil and military systems.

- Corruption and the extent and scope of its spread are in some ways reflected in the nature of the military regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa and the decisions and policies they make and put in place.

- After taking over, the military passed a wide range of laws and created committees to investigate and convict corrupt officials. However, these actions remained merely a front put up by the military rulers to intimidate political rivals or win over the populace.

- If corruption is a major factor in armies intervening and changing regimes, a study of the experiences of African nations that have seen military intervention in the political process and in which the military has used corruption in

governance and administration to justify their intervention suggests that the army is a major factor in the high levels of political corruption in Africa. By concentrating power in the hands of the military rulers, advancing their shared interests, increasing their financial allocations by utilizing public resources for personal enrichment, as well as the proliferation of corruption at the level of the army forces and the corrupt behaviors of its elements.

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