

# Reconsidering Africa's Leadership Crisis and Endemic Civil Conflicts

Abel Holla, Linnet Hamasi

*Chuka University, Kenya*

**Abstract:** In the last hundred years, Africa has remained the axiom for coups d'état and civil conflicts. The insistence of democratically elected leaders to hold on to power has, in some instances, hugely influenced this trend. This article will analyze cases of constitutional violations by African presidents. It attempts to examine the motivation for this prevalent trend. It shall also analyze civil conflicts in African states, examine its possible causes, and identify the linkage between constitutional violations and coups d'état.

**Keywords:** Afro-pessimism, Coup d'état, Incumbent, Resurgence, Civil Conflict

## I. INTRODUCTION

The push for democratization in Africa gained momentum in the 1990s (Bowd & Chikwanha, 2010). By the end of that decade, several countries had started on the African experiment with democracy. Influenced by internal and external pressure, many countries had great hopes for the future. More than twenty years down the line, the situation in an increasing number of African countries is characterized by feelings of dispossession and increased alienation by the public. Such disillusionment is occasioned by the treatment of the public as clients or consumers of democracy rather than its primary stakeholders. The upshot to this is the perversion by dominant political actors of democratic oversight bodies such as the legislature, electoral management bodies, and political parties. Such perversion threatens to reverse the democratic steps taken at the expense of great physical and material sacrifices at the beginning of democratic clamour. The situation is worsened by the seeming helplessness of the international community, partly because of the international principle of non-interference and lack of intervention when there are no risks to core interests (Shannon, Thyne, Hayden, & Dugan, 2015).

Inevitably, attempts at regaining and retaining control by various stakeholders have been witnessed across Africa. In a stark case of dejavu, the turn of the millennium has seen an increase in military coups against democratic governments; 2008 Mauritania and Guinea, 2009 Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar, 2009 & 2010 Niger. On the other side, there have been witnessed attempts at the refusal by incumbents to relinquish power, as was witnessed in Cote d'Ivoire by President Laurent Gbagbo, and endeavours in changing presidential constitutional terms. In addition, Africa has for long experienced civil wars, which have torn at the social, cultural, economic, and political fabric of many nations. Civil

wars have permeated most African countries from the nascent days of African independence (Asiligwa, 2018). The causes of such catastrophic upheavals can be political and economic. Underlying these reasons is the need to control and even monopolize power in a given political entity.

## II. CONSTITUTIONAL VIOLATIONS BY PRESIDENTS

It would be prudent to posit that democratic stability in Africa, as is worldwide, faces its most significant existential threat to unconstitutional government changes. In a concurrent explanation, unconstitutional changes are caused by failures to consolidate democracy (often by the same leaders who propagate and suffer unconstitutional government changes). This suffering is because democracy is tasked with ensuring that rise to power is through regular, all-inclusive, competitive and authentic elections (Wiebusch & Murray, 2019). If democracy will not be upheld and its processes guaranteed, it is reasonably expected that military coups d'état will continue to be experienced. Unfortunately, many African countries are characterized by the weak institutionalization of democracy. Fragile democracy ensures that there are weak electoral rules to aid in the proper running of elections and the compliance to these rules by all electoral players.

One of the effects of weak democratic institutions is the growing incidences of incumbents manipulating their political systems to push either for the extension of presidential terms or remove them altogether. Such incidences can be attributed to the institutionalization of power, placing power in an institution through constitutional or cultural means. While this removes ability from the individual (as in a monarchy) or group of individuals (as in an oligarchy), it can make the attainment, and retention, of that office the only means of accessing and expressing power (Beetham, 1991). Such incidences have been seen in countries where winning (presidential) elections have been the singular guarantee of ascendancy to power. Despite the elections being marred by claims of them being undemocratic, such victory has brought about chaos, destruction of property, economic downturn, and even death; Kenya in 2007, Nigeria in 2007, and Zimbabwe in 2008.

The frequency of elections has been used to assuage a discontent public that a country is democratic and that ascension to power should be regarded as legitimate. However, it takes more than periodic elections, irrespective of their predictability, to confirm democracy and assure

legitimacy. Over time, three factors have been used as determinants of legitimate ascension to power: the ascension is as per existing rules; the rules can be vindicated through shared beliefs (of the nation's inhabitants); if the realization of the rules was based on freewill accord of the populace (Beetham, 1991). Unfortunately, in the spirit of adherence to these requirements, some African leaders are resorting to influencing legislators and sometimes a considerable part of the general electorate. Such influence is aimed at changing the laws on term limits to ensure that their reign of power can not only be extended but that it has the semblance of constitutional, hence, democratic involvement.

Though supported by some as having been realized through democratic means, such removal of term limits is fraught with several inconsistencies. Firstly, the step is informed by a fear of losing (the upcoming) elections, thus necessitating a circumvention of the law. Secondly, the attempt, fruitful as it may be, exposes the country to unconventional means of intervention, such as coups d'état. Lastly, there is the wanton diversion of funds to the project, much to the loss of crucial areas such as health, agriculture and education (Besenyo & Viktor, 2018).

To create a scenario that the initiative is people-centred, the hiring of crowds to populate political gatherings is quickly gaining currency. Led by a singular individual, or group of vocal persons, the movement galvanizes vast crowds, which drum support for the extension of term or removal of terms well-together; the paid crowds paint the picture of the initiative having permission from the grassroots (Fombad & Nwauche, 2012). This ploy, nonetheless, serves to exploit the public.

Between 2000 and 2010, 13 attempts at prolonging presidential terms in Africa: ten were successful, with three failing (Omotola, 2011). The constant factor in the successful bids was the incumbent's capacity to control national resources towards the initiative, both fiscal and human, to drum up support for the proposal and silence any opposition. Such control was especially in those countries where the ruling party did not have a majority in the legislative body that would make the changes; this was the case in Uganda in 2002 when President Museveni successfully removed presidential term limits.

One telling characteristic of the attempts to change the constitution to remove term limits was the huge approval margins in the concerned legislative bodies; in Djibouti, the motion garnered 59 out of 63 votes (Reuters, 2011). This move demonstrates the strong influence exerted by the executive and helps in reinforcing the perception that the African legislative houses are weak. With the perception of this weakness comes the equally public solid opinion that members of these houses are seemingly corruptible and thus susceptible to the intrigue of the executive. On the other hand, those countries where a change in the constitution was attempted by the presidency but failed are also worth analysis.

In Zambia, Nigeria and Malawi, an attempt to change the constitution to allow a third presidential term was defeated for various reasons.

In Nigeria and Zambia, public opposition to the planned change was uncharacteristically overwhelming. Championed by civil society movements, academia, mass media, and democracy activists raise public awareness on the plan and the attendant ills should it go through. This public opposition caused a self-implosion of the ruling party, and it would not raise the requisite majority to pass the changes. The other aspect was the refusal by the vice presidents of both countries refusing to support the move; this signalled severe rifts in the ruling party, further weakening any cohesiveness with other parties, which could have guaranteed success in the proposed changes (Omotola, 2011).

In Malawi, the dissenting voice came from the church, which provided the singular and most vocal voice against the tenure prolongation initiative. Due to its long history of consistency in the Malawian political climate, the church could galvanize support from the whole country. With the help from other civil society groups, the government push for term tenure changes was defeated.

### III. REFUSAL TO CONCEDE POWER TO WINNING PARTIES

In some countries, incumbents have reportedly lost elections but have conveniently refused defeat and concede to the opposition. In some cases, violence has been engineered to ensure retention of power by the incumbents and has eventually led to 'power-sharing agreements (Human Rights Watch, 2009). This approach was tried in 2007 and 2008 in Kenya and Zimbabwe, respectively; a later attempt by Ivory Coast failed after French/UN, and republican forces intervened and removed Laurent Gbagbo from office.

When incumbents have refused to concede, the trend was for the international community to find a consensus in the form of a 'government of national unity' where executive power would be shared between the incumbent and the opposition.

In 2007, Kenya went into a general election that was highly divisive in its campaign stage; when they were announced, the results showed that the incumbent, Mwai Kibaki, had won. Within a short time of being declared winner, Mwai Kibaki was sworn in and began his second term. This spawned violence which led to the deaths of more than 1,000 people, the destruction of property and disruption of services in the ensuing one month. The international community sent a delegation of leaders led by a Committee of Eminent persons who convinced the president and leader of opposition and runner-up to the elections, Mr Raila Odinga, to sit and dialogue. At the end of the discussions chaired by Koffi Annan, a Grand Coalition government was formed with Raila Odinga as the Prime Minister and two deputies and a sharing of the cabinet on a 'portfolio balance': each party receiving a share of ministerial positions commensurate with the

percentage of elected members of parliament. A particular bill was passed in parliament, giving life to the agreement and providing for the dissolution of the grand coalition government (Omotola, 2011).

From an election season filled with abuse and culminated in bloodshed came a post-election peacebuilding process that curtailed the violence and, later on, a new constitution. With the promulgation of the constitution, there was an expectation that land reforms, economic inequalities, and inter-ethnic tensions could cause chaos in the name of political differences. Without the necessary political and administrative changes that the new constitution brought in, the grand coalition was seen as a delay, rather than cure, of post-electoral violence.

In 2008, Zimbabwe went into a general election; the opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai won the first round but failed to garner the requisite 50%. This situation necessitated a run-off with the incumbent Robert Mugabe. However, Tsvangirai withdrew from the run-off citing violence on himself and his supporters (Human Rights Watch, 2009). The president's party refused to concede defeat in the first round. In the ensuing violence against opposition supporters and the independent press, the country headed into an unprecedented orgy of violence.

Regional leaders came to intervene, leading to a Global Political Agreement between the ruling party ZANU-PF, MDC led by Tsvangirai and a breakaway faction of MDC. The GPA called upon parties to 'build a society free of violence, fear, intimidation, hatred, patronage, corruption and founded on justice, fairness, openness, transparency, dignity and equality' (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

In analyzing both countries' scenarios, several issues were noticed (Omotola, 2011). In Zimbabwe, the desirability of the coalition was instantly questioned. The agreement seemed based on shaky ground owing to the track record of the long-serving president. The other issue was the centrality and potential of the contract to the salvaging of Zimbabweans from total economic and political collapse, which inevitably came to pass. The common consensus among analysts was that the agreement had been necessitated by Mugabe's and ZANU-PF's desire to secure their self-interests as opposed to lifting the country to greater ideals.

On the Kenyan side, analysts questioned the country's capacity to solve post-election violence's perennial problem. Though the Grand Coalition government promised this, and as came to be realized, it required a paradigm shift for this to be discovered; this came in a constitution that decentralized the executive office from the national arena to devolved units. Moreover, there lacked formal institutions which would be depended upon to implement the spirit and letter of the unity government. This need came to unravel as the deep-seated political differences created faults along the lines of the different constituent parties in the grand coalition. As was espoused by the Kenyan and Zimbabwean narrative, the

experiment with coalition governments was that the mode of power-sharing adapted by the two nations was not aimed at realizing effective reform. It was instead of a means of postponing conflict rather than resolving it.

The third country to try out the shared-power arrangement was Ivory Coast. Elections were held in October 2010 after months of peace talks: there was no outright winner, and a run-off ensued between President Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Quattara. Quattara was declared the winner by the country's independent electoral commission, and in a surprising turn of events, the president challenged the outcome at the constitutional court.

The court cancelled the declared Gbagbo winner after cancelling some of the votes from Quattara's stronghold, citing rigging. Gbagbo refused to concede defeat despite the international community, including France, the US, EU, UN and the IMF, recognizing Quattara. This refusal to admit defeat led to the country having two parallel governments. Forceful removal of Gbagbo ensued, after which he was charged at the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity due to the post-election deaths, which were attributed to a group allied to and in control of him (Besenyó & Viktor, 2018). It can be seen that power-hungry heads of state are coming up with ingenious ways of clinging to power, from seeking to extend their mandate by having the cap on term limits removed to seeking power-sharing agreements after losing elections.

As was discussed earlier, the fact that democracy was introduced to African countries does not make it wholly acceptable nor fully practised in the continent. The intent of bringing good governance and accountability through the introduction and fostering of democracy has suffered defeat at the hands of unconstitutional changes fostered mainly by incumbent presidents.

As will be discussed earlier, military coups, which had been absent from the African scenario for a long time, have started making a comeback. Together with the human suffering that accompanies such an occurrence is the fuel it provides to Afro-pessimists who contend that nothing good can come from Africa. They are positing that Africa is backward but incapable of building strong, stable, and effective democratic systems that gain more traction as this phenomenon is witnessed. The rate at which African issues dominate the UN agenda, and for the wrong reasons, is a matter that does not need another negative marker (Shannon, Thyne, Hayden, & Dugan, 2015).

Not only are traditional coups having a resurgence, but a new mode of extra-constitutional power grabs is on the rise. Instead of a bullet, ballots from legislators who do not have a semblance of the democratic ideals they claim to espouse are rising. There has been an increase in the number of countries whose legislations are keen on removing term caps for the presidential aspirations of some individuals in power (Asiligwa, 2018). There have also been instances where

transfer of (executive) power from father to son is encouraged. This transfer spells doom for democracy trying to spread its roots within the African youth; it also negates the African dream of stability and development when every election cycle comes with apprehension and sometimes bloodshed. The other downside to these coups is that it affects Africa's aspirations of gaining enough credence among its peers to command enough trust to achieve office in an enlarged Security Council. If internal politics cannot be mastered, there remains enough scepticism on their capacity at the international table.

The other effect of extra-constitutional means of getting into power is that the equilibrium of political systems is put at risk. It cannot be gainsaid the importance of a stable political process in the development of any country. With the erosion of such, the development paradigm of many countries stands frozen: this affects the concerned government and its neighbours, which have to contend with the influx of refugees when internal conflict arises and the diminishing of prospects of joint development projects. The resultant loss of lives, destruction of property and displacement of people makes for human suffering to increase (Bowd & Chikwanha, 2010).

The institutionalization of power in Africa also suffers when unconstitutional changes occur. This institutionalization is especially true of attempts to prolong stay in control by incumbents. Since they are fraught with abuse of state power in buying off legislators in support of these unconstitutional endeavours, the funds diverted in such a manner mean that specific budgets go without requisite funding. The people's sovereignty is also severely compromised; this is true whether the attempt is successful or fails. With the failure of the effort, democratic institutions and processes are severely unhinged, with often a crisis ensuing; this, in turn, brings about the diversion of funds from development and social sectors to security to stabilize the country (Omotola, 2011).

In addition to the above, tenure prolongation also negatively affects the internal democracy of an incumbent party or coalition of parties. These adverse effects are due to factionalism and indiscipline taking root and often morph into violence. In Nigeria, the stance taken by the vice president in openly and decisively opposing the president's plans bred electoral malaise among the people. Things couldn't be helped when the vice president shifted sides after the ruling party became hostile to his presidential ambitions. The battle for supremacy between the erstwhile party comrades led to flawed elections in 2007 (Omotola, 2011).

The other disadvantage of unconstitutional changes is that it occasions economic dislocation and stress to the economy and country in general (Fombad & Nwauche, 2012). To take Zimbabwe as an example, changing the constitutional cap on presidential terms led to severe hyperinflation, which topped at 231 million per cent; the country eventually ceased using its currency and adopted the US dollar as its currency. Like the plagues of biblical times, Zimbabwe was hit by a cholera

outbreak that killed more than 3,000 people and affected upwards of 64,000 others. The downward spiral of the country's economy and resultant dislocation of the health sector could be directly attributed to the many sanctions imposed on the land in lieu of a resolution to the constitutional and political crisis. In Uganda, aid in the form of budget aid worth more than US\$ 9.5 million was withheld by Britain when the country removed its cap on presidential terms. The direct and immediate consequence of such withholding of financial aid is the country's impoverishment and stagnating of the economy, which leads to hardships facing the populace.

When faced with such unpopular and unconstitutional interventions, the populace develops apathy for democracy and, more often than not, retreats into identity politics. With the erosion of their capacity to choose who governs them due to the various and excessive changes to the constitution, pessimism towards democracy develops and its relevance to their everyday lives diminishes. The potential inherent in democracy to change people's lives pushes them to embrace it; with this gone, the society questions the rationale of having it in their practice of leadership (Tull & Simons, 2017).

#### IV. CIVIL CONFLICTS IN AFRICA IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Civil conflict, or civil war, is a violent conflict pitting a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state's territory (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). They are distinguishable from interstate conflict, violent conflicts or riots involving states, and state repression against individuals who are generally not considered organized; the latter group includes genocide, terrorism and other violent crime.

Civil conflict can be characterized through the various forms they take civil wars where insurgents seek territorial secession and civil wars that aim for control of the central government. Secondly, others have their origin within the established order, as in the case with military coups, while others originate external to the government. The third group is civil wars which are of ethnic extraction; the insurgents controlling the war and also the government are of different ethnicity: on the other hand, there are revolutionary civil wars which fight for major social transformation (Arthur, 2015). Despite the above differentiation, civil wars tend to morph and take the nature of two or more of the types.

From the time communities organized themselves as countries or states, there have always been civil wars; the action of armies or armed groups rising against established leadership has always been with humanity. It, however, not until after 1945 that empirical data on civil conflicts were gathered.

The longevity of civil wars contrasts sharply to interstate wars; civil wars tend to be longer, costlier, more brutal to settle through formal agreements, and consequently, tend to recur (Barka & Ncube, 2012).

Though civil wars have lesser human casualties than interstate wars, they are more frequent in occurrence and lengthier. This

frequency can be evidenced by the fact that with the end of the Cold War, most deaths in conflict are directly ascribed to civil wars.

Contrary to popular belief, the direct loss of life is not the only impact that (civil war) has on human welfare. It has been noted that countries that have experienced civil war have a pronounced decline in their GDP and, even after the end of the war, can never revert to their earlier growth rate. Civil wars also disenfranchise the survivors because they lack employment due to the disruption of trade and investment by the war; a good example is Somalia which is struggling to remodel itself after more than two decades of inter-clan fighting. It is not only the state in the civil war that suffers; its neighbours also experience negative economic impact and are also susceptible to the spillover of violence (Besenyo & Viktor, 2018).

Civil wars have been caused by one or a combination of two factors; economic and political reasons (Couttenier & Soubeyran, 2015).

When economic reasons cause civil wars, it is essential to note that most countries experiencing civil conflicts are more often than not on the lower economic scale. This finding correlates to earlier studies in violence, positing that it was closely related to deprivation and (unresolved) grievances. It has also been asserted that if either side of the economic spectrum think that they would be better off without the current administration or government, there is an excellent likelihood of rebellion (and eventually civil war). However, those in the lower-income bracket are quickly recruited into insurgencies; they have already lost any potential income and are desirous of a better life. This influence is especially so when there is the allure of looting and thus enriching oneself, or the promise of a better life through better management of the available natural resources with the ouster of the present government. Conflict in Africa often takes the route offered by better natural resource management.

On the other hand, political deprivation, which can take the form of colonialism, or subjugation of political expression, provides another facet for the emergence of civil wars (Gassebner, Gutmann, & Voigt, 2016). After 1945 many conflicts were borne of the need for independence and self-rule. The successes of the Indochina wars of 1946-1975, for instance, were a real lesson to other countries that sustained violent campaigns that would bring down oppressive regimes. The same can be seen in the current armed struggles of Ethiopia, where the Tigray peoples have continued sporadic attacks against the central government in their calls for independence. After its secessionist war with Ethiopia, the success of Eritrea is another example of the possible victory for civil war crusaders. The other reason for political agitation is the suppression by autocratic regimes. The denial of political engagement by these regimes provides for motivation to dissenting voices to wage civil wars. The brutal and deadly repression exercised by the autocratic regimes to the

protesters is usually the beginning point for the civil wars; a good example is the rise of the military wing of political parties in South Africa under the apartheid regime. Political rights, and the need for the wider populace to enjoy them, have constantly fed the rhetoric by insurgent groups in launching a war against the central government. However, this rhetoric is no guarantee that the same is exercised once ascension to power is realized; the twin cases of Djibouti and Eritrea are apt examples.

Despite the propensity to attract dissent, the repressive nature of autocratic regimes makes them less susceptible to the emergence and growth of armed resistance. It is, however, the regimes that combine democratic and authoritarian features that easily attract civil wars. This is because the lack of freedom present in these regimes is mixed with enough opportunities for protest, thus giving the populace a taste of what freedom of expression is like, the very thing they are demanding (Roessler, 2011).

In addition to the above, the influence of external actors in civil wars cannot be gainsaid. It will be noted that the participants in many civil wars are not necessarily confined to the state they are fighting. The fact that ethnic communities exist spanning international borders always provides for support or even support to the insurgents across the frontier. This support can be attributed to the fact that international borders are merely lines on a map; they came to provide a delineation primarily for the colonialists and enhance the status of the republics thus created. In a strictly military manner, borders offer no difficulty crossing (Barka & Ncube, 2012). The ease of crossing borders makes it harder for countries to combat insurgencies as the porosity of the borders offers immense policing challenges: the ability and swiftness of rebels in crossing the borders to launch attacks and quickly return to their hideouts across the border is testament to this. The fact that borders delineate the reaches of a country's sovereignty makes it difficult for a state to combat insurgents in another country, even when the said rebels have launched an attack outside their country. The other factor that cannot be escaped is that there is a risk of insurgency fomenting at home with successful rebellion in a neighbouring country. The success of the uprising or the importation of arms and combatants from the neighbouring country places the state in a precarious situation (Besenyo & Viktor, 2018). Finally, poor relations between states can motivate governments to support rebels in rival countries; this can lead to interstate conflict, as was witnessed between Uganda and Burundi when rebels from Burundi were said to be supported and armed by the Ugandan army.

When discussing civil wars, it would be amiss if the topic of coups d'état were not addressed. This is because, in many cases, the success or failure of a coup is directly related to civil conflict in a country and vice versa (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). In many African countries where coups have taken place successfully, it is almost certain that civil war either was a precursor or followed later on.

In like manner to civil wars, above, an attempt will be made at analyzing coups and their causative factors.

Between 1960 and 1970, Africa experienced a massive turnover of coups compared to any other region and any other time. In West Africa, for example, the nations of Togo, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Benin and Mali all had coups between 1960 and 1963. By the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, only five African countries had held regular competitive elections; the rest were in the throes of military coups or the threats of one. Among the reasons that have been posited for coups are corruption, social, economic, religious, psychological, and political challenges, and dictatorships (Gassebner, Gutmann, & Voigt, 2016).

In Togo, which was the first African country to experience a coup, the 1963 takeover by Sergeant Etienne Eyadema was blamed on the ethnic imbalance in the Togolese military where preference was given to the Ewe people of the north of the country where the president Sylvanus Olympio hailed from. Other countries which claimed tribal divisions include Benin, Burkina Faso and the Central Africa Republic. In addition, the coup plotters also claimed that huge debts, frequent strikes and unemployment prompted them to overthrow the government of the day. However, one issue was prominent; the unrelenting striving for power amongst rival political leaders in the said countries (Omotola, 2011).

However, though this is the norm, a few others whose aim of overthrowing a government is to bring a sense of sanity, introduce the rule of law, prevent or stop genocide, and uphold human rights (Couttenier & Soubeyran, 2015). This scenario was aptly captured by Colonel Christopher Soglo of Benin, who in 1965 intervened to prevent civil war, protect the peace and restore calm in a restive country. He is commended in that after establishing a universally recognized provisional government led by former premier Sourou-Migan Apithy, he gave up power, and the land returned to civilian rule. It can also be said that some coups were done with the consent of the people; the coups by Soglo in Benin, Lamizana in Upper Volta, Jerry Rawlings in Ghana and Lieutenant Colonel Zida in Burkina Faso had a semblance of democratic governance. Recently, demonstrators in Egypt implored the military to overthrow President Morsi, which led to the present leadership of General Sisi.

The other factor is the alignment of countries into supporters of capitalism and communism/socialism (Bowd & Chikwanha, 2010). The Cold War can be accredited with the upstaging by the military of democratic presidents and heads of state. In Zanzibar in 1964, the sultan was forced to flee by the revolutionary council, which quickly called for support from the (then) USSR, China and East Germany. As a consequence of the overwhelming support from these countries, the US and Britain and their western allies ensured that capitalism gained traction in East Africa and that the other countries were relatively stable.

Concomitantly, challenges to a country's economy also contributed to the risk of a coup occurring. The coup by Jerry Rawlings in Ghana can be attributed to the policies by Nkurumah, which left the country practically bankrupt by 1965. In an attempt at rescuing the country, Rawlings engineered a coup in 1966.

The tendency by some African leaders to develop dictatorship, totalitarian or imperialistic regimes led to dissatisfaction and coups (Gassebner, Gutmann, & Voigt, 2016). The toppling of Haile Selassie in 1975 was based on his totalitarian rule and his intention of leaving his son as successor. Coupled with strikes and demonstration in Addis Ababa's capital, discontentment of the army over pay led to his ouster and death. Similar coups to rescue the country were witnessed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire), Uganda and in 2018, Zimbabwe.

In recent years, the threats of Islamists and jihadists, especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the US on 9/11, saw a coup organized in Mauritania in 2008. In a subsequent election a year later, President Abdel Aziz continued in his rule. Similarly, in Guinea, Captain Mousa Dadis Camara promised that elections would soon occur in which he would not contest. Despite his promises, his behaviour prompted another coup to be staged, where he barely survived an attempt at his life. A two-round election in 2010 saw the country's return to civilian rule under Alpha Conde. Still, in West Africa, the Niger military staged a coup which saw them organizing an election and swift return to civilian rule in 2011, with President Mahamadou Issoufou leading the country.

As discussed earlier, a country's waning leadership can be a precursor of a military takeover. However, a deep-rooted democratic heritage, national apathy to coups, and a sense of civility may work together to rid a country of military revolt. The ability of political leaders to resolve their differences and the country's ability to weather economic and socio-political storms augur well to the continuance of civilian leadership (Besenyo & Viktor, 2018). With the absence of such, an increase in corruption, maladministration, and political squabbling may lead the military to an engineer takeover, as was witnessed in Zimbabwe in 2018 when the then President Robert Mugabe was overthrown bloodless revolt with the installation of Emerson Mnangagwa as president taking place immediately.

## V. CONCLUSION

It can be discerned that with an increasing number of African presidents seeking to retain power in extra-constitutional means, the return of coups d'état, a seemingly forgotten plague on the face of Africa, might start making a comeback. With the increase in maladministration that comes with authoritarian rule comes a push from the populace that not only seeks an economic and governance upheaval but one that will be willing to bear with the excesses of the military rule if only normalcy would return.

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