

The Role of the Military Institution in African Political Life: Internal Contexts and External Pressures

Bousaid Abdelhak

University Of Djelfa (Algeria), abdelhakdip@gmail.com

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Abstract: This article discusses the issue of military institution's intervention in African political life, through two main perspectives. The first one examines the structural dimensions of African states, where economic, social, political, and historical factors intersect, enabling the military institution to play a decisive central role in shaping political power, setting its priorities, imposing legitimacy conditions, and; most importantly; determining norms for accessing and relinquishing power, regardless of the views of other political forces in the state. The second perspective explores the impact of foreign aid, which puts the military institution at the center of political interactions, where various international powers competing in Africa steer and stabilize political events, serving their interests through various means, which starts by political and economic impact, up to the direct military involvement.

Keywords: Africa, international rivalry, military civilian relations, military institution

INTRODUCTION

The military institution is tasked with protecting nations from external threats throughout history. However, it can pose a threat to governments —that it was created to protect in countries with weak civilian institutions, considering the nature of military institution that has vast resources of power compared to the other institutions in the state, and also the capacity for coercive force, and potential for conflicting interests. The military elite may prioritize self-interest over national interests, undermining stability and hindering development. In response, proponents call for civilian control over the military by improving governance conditions through strengthened democratic institutions, economic development, and social progress.

In Africa, there is no doubt that the military institution has played a role in protecting countries from external threats and internal conflicts resulting from the fragility of most African states. This has launched the debate about the legitimacy of military involvement in African politics. One side argues that this intervention is a product of historical, political,

economic, and social contexts that shaped modern African countries, thus, the military institution cannot be held responsible for their critical condition. Instead, the civilian political elite, which refuses to acknowledge its failure in governing, bears the responsibility. Each time they have the opportunity to rule, they fail to address Africa's persistent complexities.

Another perspective acknowledges these pressures but adds that the African military elites seek to exploit this reality to maximize their interests, and create a situation allowing them to self-reproduce.

Military coups can be considered the most common and effective means of directly seizing power, where the army, led by a group of senior officers, assumes direct control over political power. In a military regime, the army exercises executive, legislative, and sometimes judicial powers.

What makes Africa a prominent model for seizing power by force is the high numbers of military coups compared to other regions. Out of 486 military coup attempts worldwide since 1950, Africa accounts for the majority, with 214 attempts, at least 106 of which were successful. In 2021, there were six coup attempts in Africa, four of which succeeded. In 2017, the military takeover in Zimbabwe ended Robert Mugabe's 37-year rule. Sudan holds the record for the number of coups and attempted takeovers, with 18 coups, six of which succeeded. Burkina Faso has the highest number of successful coups, with nine, and only one failed attempt.¹

The political dynamics in most African countries are influenced not only by internal power balances but also by international forces playing a central role in shaping and sometimes determining their trajectories. This situation is consolidated by the domestic instability and the legitimacy crisis undermining African regimes. Consequently, internal forces, notably the military; as the most organized and powerful institution compared to others; call upon international powers to advance their interests in the power struggle. Competing international powers work to maintain the existing power structure as long as it serves their interests or overthrow it when contrary.

These factors highlight the depth of Africa's political crisis in most African states, prompting effective political elites to address this challenge and motivating the researchers to better understand why some particular African countries make Normalization and seizing power through non-democratic means look like a normal behavior, and sometimes legitimate, claiming to end leadership infinite crisis. Especially after the failure of democratization efforts in African political regimes since the early 1990s has entrenched the military institution's role in African political equations. This raises critical questions: What factors have made the

¹¹ Ruvimbo Hazel Shayamunda And Johannes Bhanye, **From Ballots To Bullets: Exploring The Rise Of Military Regimes In Africa**, African Network Of Constitutional Lawyers, Seen In, 29/10/2025, Look, <https://2u.pw/oRaTmXJe>

military a key player in African politics? What role do competing international powers play in perpetuating this situation? How can Africa break the cycle of repetitive power takeovers?

Firstly: The Military Institution's Position within Africa's Political Interaction Map

To understand the role of military institutions in African politics, it is essential to first look at its appropriate theoretical framework, which means understanding military behavior within state institutions based on proven hypotheses. In this context, it is hard to find a state institution outside the realm of political influence in the modern political system. The army's proximity to politics in Africa stems from the ethical standard hypothesis; that civilian control over the military institution is preferable to military control. However, military rulers in these countries enjoy greater popularity than civilian rulers. In this case, the army's political role can be a good choice. But when the army loses popularity, couple days later, and civilian authority becomes prevalent, the military is considered oppressive. We can identify four levels of military intervention: influence, coercion, civilian regime subordination to the military regime, and the overthrow of civilian governments.¹ The latter is the most central and influential level of intervention, represented by the military's direct seizure of political power, or "coup d'état".

Coups represent the traditional axis of civil-military relations, dramatically symbolizing the main problem of military institutions exploiting their coercive power to overthrow civilian governments. Coups may indicate military strength, at least compared to other political actors oppressed by the army. However, they also reveal military weakness, reflecting the army's inability to achieve its goals through ordinary political processes.² History shows that military interventions stem from factors like military elite background, socialization, shared interests, class composition, religion, economic expansion and colonial legacy.

Military interventions highlighted the paradox of military involvement amidst weak political institutions and low political culture. Crucially, the military's acquired interest drives its participation in politics, representing the class it serves.³

A paradox exists where the military - that was established to protect and maintain the political order - possesses sufficient power to become a threat to it. Its mandate to counter enemies requires coercive force, yet this force often enables domination over the society that

¹ Md Masum Alam, **Military Intervention In Politics: A Third World Perspective**, Shahjalal University Of Science And Technology, Bangladesh, Seen In, 17-10-2025; Look, <https://h1.nu/1k5i6>

² Feaver, Peter D, Civil-Military Relations, **Annual Review Of Political Science**, Vol. 2, 1999, P P 17,18

³ Muhammad Dawood, The Causes Of Military Interventions In Politics: A Case Study Of Pakistan And Bangladesh, **European Scientific Journal**, Special Edition, Issn: 1857 – 7881, August 2014, P 285

created it. Direct political power seizure, which is a negative behavior, may destroy the military institution interfering with society by draining and exploitation of societal resources for self-interest. Other concerns include military involvement in conflicts contradicting societal interests or declared will and refusal to obey civilian authority orders.¹

This presentation highlights the negative side of military intervention in politics. The modern African political experience after independence is a living example of this. The issue of military intervention in politics in the African states came at the height of the struggle for democracy in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, where many academics and civil society actors claimed that democracy means political and economic development, leading to immunity against the phenomenon of seizing power by force. They argued that once democracy is achieved, African countries will automatically go for development and thus achieve the long-awaited political stability. Therefore, Africans had high hopes when the Third Wave of democratic transition began to emerge in countries during the 1990s. They believed that security and development had finally reached the continent. Unfortunately, after about three decades of pursuing democracy, nothing fundamentally changed. There was no significant progress from what could have been achieved under the dominance of the military over African political systems.²

The central position of the military institution in African political systems has driven it to intervene directly in political life, not to mention the disturbed security situation, which has greatly increased the burden on the armed forces. This explains the high rate of coups in Africa, especially in the Sahel countries, where the region has faced a wave of extreme violence since 2012 from the expansion of terrorism and the activities of armed separatist groups. The armies of these countries have been placed in a long term confrontation with a variety of anti-state organizations, leading to a decline in political support for the ruling authorities and creating a state of discontent that, for example, led to the overthrow of President "Amadou Toumani Toure "in Mali in 2012, and after that the overthrow of President "Roch Marc Christian Kabore "in Burkina Faso in 2021.

Recent military coups in Africa have received significant popular support, which can be attributed to several reasons, primarily the negative practices of elected governments, including their weak performance in addressing major national issues such as achieving stability and combating corruption.³ Corruption cases have shockingly increased in some African countries, while poverty rates continue to rise. Human rights and civil liberties have not fared better under military rule. Even with democratic appearances, the political

¹ Feaver, Peter D, op cit, p 214

² Hakeem Onapajo, **Africa's "Coup Contagion: What Is Driving The Rise In Military Intervention? Three Questions, Institute Montaigne**, Seen In, Institute Montaigne, 17/10/2025, Look, <https://H1.Nu/1pawj>

³ Ahmed Amel, **Deconstructing The Narrative : The Return Of Military Coups In Africa**, Seen In 01/11/2025, El-Ahram Center Of Strategic And Political Studies, Look, <https://2u.Pw/7iqma>

environment remained exclusive. For instance, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) recorded a decline in participation, rights, inclusion, security, and rule of law over the past decade in 2020.

The public, especially the youth, feel excluded from political discussions and increasingly disappointed with the concept of democracy. Rising conflicts threaten lives and properties, leading people to compare current conditions with past possibilities. These sentiments create a conducive environment for successful military coups, a phenomenon increasingly welcomed by civilians. This reaction reflects the public's lack of faith in political institutions governed by corrupt elites for extended periods.¹ New players have emerged, accepting and even promoting military intervention to reset the political process and eliminate negative consequences of long-serving African presidents. Best example is the Sudan's experience in 2019, where President Omar al-Bashir was ousted after three decades.² Under such circumstances, the growing number of military coups can be attributed to armies seeking to maintain the status when their entrenched privileges and authority are threatened.³

In reality, most military coups in Africa have been backed by rival political parties seeking military support. By politicizing the army, some political parties attempt to find sympathizers within the military to seize power during crises. A prime example is the 2012 military coup in Mali, which received support from numerous political parties despite international condemnation.⁴ Eight years after civilian rule, another coup occurred on August 18, 2020, with the detention of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. Malians celebrated in the streets after weeks of protests against Keïta, who faced calls for resignation after allegations of corruption and failure to suppress armed rebellion in the north by groups linked to Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The new military government vowed to handle the rebellions quickly.⁵ Similarly, in Ivory Coast, supporters of former President Laurent Gbagbo continued to mobilize military sympathizers to undermine President Alassane Ouattara's authority. These political-military tactics exemplify a common African theme, where political actors rely on the army rather than the public to support their causes.⁶

¹ Hakeem Onapajo, op cit

² Ahmed Amel, op cit

³ Abhishek Mishra And Kenan Toprak, **Africa's Coup Contagion: Factors Driving An Upsurge In Military Intervention**, Observer Research Foundation, Seen In, 01/11/2025, Look, <https://h1.nu/1paxx>

⁴ Researches 'Report 6: **Developing Military Professionalism In Africa, " Obstacles Of Military Professionalism In Africa"**, African Center Of Strategic Studies, Seen In, 08/11/2025, Look, <https://h1.nu/1paz3>

⁵ Shola Lawal, **West Africa's 'Coup Belt': Did Mali's 2020 Army Takeover Change The Region?**, Al Jazeera, Seen In, 08 /11/2025, LOOK, <https://2u.pw/et8WjqMe>

⁶ Researches 'Report 6, op ci

Another major factor often neglected, contributing to the recurrence of power seizures through force, relates to security sector reform. Following the democratic transition programs of the 1990s, the military institution was expected to be restructured to align with democratic principles. However, little effort was made to restructure and enable the military to function properly under a democratic system. In some cases, civilian leaders maintained a strong military hierarchy, enabling military regimes to govern. Civilian politicians aimed to control the political space at minimal cost, as altering the power structure could be costly and jeopardize their positions. Failure to handle fundamental issues, such as ethnic dominance, inadequate representation of diverse groups within the military, multiple command centers, and integrating semi-military units into the military's structure, led to the military's repeated intervention in politics.¹

This reality reveals the failure of modern African states to establish civil political systems, halting the endless cycle of forced power transitions, which raises the question about the real causes. Here we can distinguish the ideas that tried to explain this failure. "Kwesi Anning "from the "Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Institute" highlights the roots -not the consequences- of coups, because military coups are the result of political and economic facts, citing rulers' disregard for constitutional term limits and their grip on power, encouraging military to break the law and engage in coups. "Ethan Capstein "from Princeton University, author of "The Fate of Emerging Democracies" notes that new born democracies often collapse and surrender to military coups when failing to achieve social justice and concentrating national wealth among a small elite, leaving broad populations economically disenfranchised. "Capstein "adds that emerging democracies' inability to address internal ethnic divisions and tribal groups' politicization inside governments and parliaments drives excluded these groups to use unconstitutional means to reach power such as military coups support² "Jean-François Bayart" tried in his politics theory entitled "The Politics of the Belly" to explore African governance and the individual/collective behavior. He chose the name "The Politics of the Belly" with reference to the Cameroonian expression, to refer to the way of ruling. Bayart argues that accessing and maintaining power is the key to sharing resources due to pervasive corruption in Africa. This corruption manifests as collusion between elites and others, becoming a political slogan, as seen in a Nigerian party's campaign: "I eat, you eat." Reality shows uneven distribution of resources, because we cannot compare what senior politicians eat to what the of the people eat, knowing that senior politicians hold the secret to unlocking the slogan: the greater your power, the greater your exploitation. Those who are competing to seize power created a system led them to wealth so quickly. But if big players felt that resources are being seized by a minority, they interfere through coups to redistributing wealth among politicians. In Guinea (1975), following Ahmed Sekou

¹ Hakeem Onapajo, op cit.

² Youssef Kamel, **At The General's Helm: Why African Military Coups Are Back?**, Politics Post, Politics Post, Seen In 10/12/2025, Look, <https://cutt.us/cLS2V>

Toure's death, soldiers overturned the 25-year-old mafia-like regime. Thus, Bayart's theory connects to various fields. Politically, it illustrates radical state policies and criminal practices, shifting from ideological to military conflict, as observed in Chad, Uganda, and recently Mali.¹

Secondly :the impact of international competition on the behavior of the military institution in African political life

One of the most important objectives of external intervention in the internal affairs of states is to change the balance of power between competing groups within the state. Consequently, intervention has a modifying effect on the behavior of competing groups for power, which may increase or decrease the risk of conflict.² In the African case, the military institution is one of the most important parties at the heart of the conflict. Africa is among the areas of international competition and is one of the arenas witnessing intense economic and geopolitical competition between multiple international and regional powers. This is due to its abundance of human and natural resources, providing vast potential for rapid growth. The traditional French presence in Africa, particularly in the Sahel region, represents a model of conflict between competing powers. Some international powers have begun to threaten and reduce this influence, most notably Russia and China, and there is an expanding presence of regional actors such as Turkey. therefore, the conflicting agendas of these countries deepen the instability experienced by regional states. This situation creates a continuous competitive dynamic between international and regional powers to establish strategic footholds in areas that has geo-strategical importance. The effectiveness of this factor can be observed in the stages before and after the military institution seizes power.³ It is essential to note that African independence emerged within an international context characterized by Cold War policies. Global powers were interested in establishing affiliated states and expand their influence worldwide. These newly independent African nations were attractive to the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The Cold War contributed to the rise of military rule in Africa in two primary ways. On one hand, the United States and the Soviet Union openly sponsored and supported coups to counter each other's influence in Africa. On the other hand, military governments formed alliances with either superpower to maintain power. Marxists argued that coups resulted from imperialist expansion and economic interests. Following the Cold War, many optimistically anticipated the promotion of globalization; mainly democratic

¹ EL Hafez Ennouini, Post-Colonial State Crisis In Africa: The Case Of Failed State (Mali), **Arab Future Magazine**, Volume 36, Issue 422, Apr30th 2014, P P 61, 62

² Suleiman Abu-Bader And Elena Ianchovichina, **Polarization, Foreign Military Intervention And Civil Conflict**, Journal Of Development Economics, Seen In, 11-12-2025, Look, <https://2u.pw/KXpG3zW8>

³ Abdelkader Mohamed Ali, Military Coups In The South Of The African Sahara, Common Factors And Scenarios , **Analytic Paper, El-Djazeera Center Of Studies**, Feb 07th 2022, P P 4, 5

principles. However, foreign powers continue to play a significant role in African military coups.¹

External powers' involvement extends beyond supporting military institutions against civilian governments to protecting them from military threats as long as they ensure stability aligns with their interests. The stability of the military/ civilian relation depends on a third player who is ready to provide external help when national security is threatened. France, through its military presence in former African colonies, positions itself as a stabilizing factor, safeguarding internal and external security of these states. This means France will not permit changes to civilian governance detrimental to its interests in countries like Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, and Djibouti. The current American and Western presence in Africa, justified as combating terrorism and fostering close ties with African military leaders, significantly influences military movements regarding civilian governments. US reports indicate that "Africom "operates multiple bases and conducts intelligence operations within Africa, deploying special forces to Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad as part of Operation "Barkhane", aimed at countering jihadist threats across the Sahel region².

Most military coups in Africa occurred in former French colonies, raising questions about the reality of these colonies' transition to independence and the lingering influence of their former colonizers on the political climate. France's involvement in regional politics reveals a desire to protect its interests in its former African colonies. However, this also means France faces challenging circumstances in military interventions. For instance, following former president Idris Deby's death, France openly backed Chad's military coup, deeming it necessary for security reasons. Moreover, French military operations like Operation "Barkhane "have failed in countries like Mali, prompting Emmanuel Macron to withdraw all forces. These fluctuations in foreign intervention have allowed local military councils to exploit democratic regime collapses. This has been the case in Burkina Faso and Mali, where Russia is now considered a preferable alternative to France. Russia utilizes the "Wagner Group"; a privately-owned security company; to influence the reality in the countries that suffer from internal conflicts in order to advance Russia's interests.³ The Wagner Group supports military institutions in Africa against civilian governments. Russia maintained close ties with Sudan's military – mostly using Wagner Group- during the democratic transition, reportedly encouraging the military takeover in exchange for securing its interests. Russia sought a naval base in Port Sudan, establishing a strategic military foothold in the critical Red Sea corridor. Wagner forces continue to operate in western Sudan, facilitating gold smuggling and illicit trade through the Central African Republic. In Mali, pro-Russian disinformation

¹ Hakeem Onapajo, op cit.

² Hamdy Abderrahmane, **The Impossible State In Africa; Contradictory Paths**, Publishers And Distributors, Jordan, Amman, 2020, P 298

³ Hakeem Onapajo, op cit.

campaigns undermined democratically elected President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta's authority before the 2020 August coup.¹ Following the 2021 military coup, Russia provided security assistance, diplomatic support, and media backing to the military council. Russian military advisors arrived in Mali, and through the Wagner Group, supplied 400 mercenaries to combat jihadist groups. Mid-2022 saw Russian arms shipments. Despite this, Mali's security situation continues to deteriorate, with widespread insurgency.²

Russian propaganda fueled opposition protests against Keita, which were used as a pretext for the coup. We should mention that many military council members had previously studied in Russia. To compensate for their lack of domestic legitimacy, the coup leaders sought international approval, granting external parties more influence by surrendering power and state sovereignty. The coup in Mali, for instance, prompted the military council to invite Russian mercenaries, reshaping Mali's security and foreign policy. This decision, made by unelected military officers operating outside constitutional frameworks and lacking public accountability, unlikely benefits Malian citizens but certainly enhances Russian influence.³ Another example of Russia's support for African military regimes is its mediation to lift the UN arms embargo on the Central African Republic in 2017. Russia quickly sent arms and military trainers from the Wagner Group. Before Russia's involvement, the Central African Republic was firmly under French political and military influence for decades. Despite France's failure to significantly improve stability, security, and economic development in Bangui, Moscow exploited France's withdrawal in 2017 and armed groups stayed active and took major spaces in the country. Yet, Wagner's support has since bolstered the current government and prevented rebel groups from expanding control. Wagner's entrance to Central African Republic reveals Russian exploitation of France's failure to build new security axis and filling Africa's security voids. Building alliances with military regimes in Africa enhances Russia's long-term strength while undermining opponents like the United States, France, and regional neighbors in the Sahel.⁴ New powers such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey are seeking to bolster their influence in Africa. ⁵

This new reality raises novel issues for maintaining regional security in Africa.⁶ International relations expert, "Iman Zohran", emphasizes another crucial factor: the

¹ Joseph Seagal, **Coups In Africa And The Role Of External Factors**, Africa Center Of Strategic Studies,, Seen In 04/12/2025, Look: <https://2h.ae/FfFP>

² Paul Stronski, **Russia's Growing Footprint In Africa's Sahel Region**, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, Seen In, 14/12/2025, LOOK, <https://n9.cl/r094x2>

³ Joseph Seagal, op cit.

⁴ Paul Stronski, op cit.

⁵ Joseph Seagal, op cit

⁶ Hakeem Onapajo, op cit

recycling of international roles in Africa, also known as "neo-colonialism. Zohran cites Russia's recent activities in West Africa as an example of the shifting dynamics in the region. Russia seeks to exploit anti-Western sentiments, particularly French intervention, framing it as ongoing colonial domination and economic exploitation. Meanwhile, Russia presents itself as a key player in counter-terrorism strategies, defending aligned regimes, and ensuring regional stability. This may transform conflicts beyond military coups, transcending influence struggles and regional divisions among international actors in Africa.¹

The lack of action by major foreign powers to counter the wave of coups has encouraged the forced transfer of power. International responses have been limited to condemnations, lacking serious punitive measures against coup leaders. These coups occur in economically strategic countries, making severe repercussions unlikely.

Taking decisive action against coup masterminds could decrease military coups, but; unfortunately; major powers have begun engaging with new military regimes, 2encouraging coup forces to leverage international competition surrounding Africa, where military leaders found alternative forces and allies that can provide political, economic and military support to decrease external pressures. This indicates significant shifts in the global order and the emergence of rival powers challenging American dominance since the 1990s.

Despite the presence of international and regional institutions that condemn unconstitutional power changes, their recent performance has encouraged rather than deterred military interventions. The UN Security Council is divided between Russia, China, and the Western bloc, while the African Union's double standards on recent coups have eroded consensus against unconstitutional regime changes. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), once a staunch advocate for democracy, complicated the Guinean crisis by accepting President Alpha Conde's constitutional manipulation for a third term,³ undermining trust in the electoral system and enabling military elites to pursue political power ⁴ which led directly to a military coup . Sanctions imposed by the African Union and ECOWAS have failed to achieve desired political outcomes, instead bolstering popular support for military leaders in Mali (2020) and Guinea (2021), despite the effect of the commercial restriction and closing borders to foreign companies, military leaders still have the ruling power.⁵

¹ Mohamed Abdou Hassanine, "**The Infection Of Coups**" Is Accelerating In West Africa; Fragile Regimes, International Rivalry And Terrorism; Middle East, Seen In, 14-01-2026LOOK, <https://h1.nu/1k5er>

² Hakeem Onapajo, op cit

³ Abdelkader Mohamed Ali, op cit, P 6

⁴ Bintu Zahara Sakor, Mohammed Sacko and Vamo Soko, **Military Coups d'État and Guinea's Rocky Road To Political Stability**, Seen In, 14/01/2026, /10/7/2021, Blogs.Prio, Look, <https://2h.ae/MGjM>

⁵ Abhishek Mishra And Kenan Toprak, op cit

It is hard to separate coercive military intervention in politics lately in Africa or worldwide. This trend reflects global democratic challenges, as evidenced by declining trust in governments (Edelman Trust Index) and shrinking freedom (Freedom House Index) notably since 2015 ¹

Conclusion:

The issue of military intervention in politics and the recurrent seizure of power by force outside of constitutional frameworks is a quintessential African problem. All attempts to break out of this cycle have failed due to the deeply rooted local causes. These causes can be divided into central local reasons and external supporting factors. Local factors are tied to Africa's distorted historical political system, where communities failed to establish comprehensive solutions for accessing and exercising political power. Post-independence, African nations prioritized building comprehensive development projects and breaking colonial ties. However, experience revealed that development requires strong political systems. Thus, research shifted toward answering the bigger question, which is: how to build African political systems on new bases? even if the question is apparently clear, the answer seems to be hard and mysterious. On the other hand, the dominance of military elites over political systems, creates imbalance in African political systems, undermining African governments' ability to address complex regional challenges. Sometimes, the army uses extreme measures, such as military coups, to seize power and exclude opponents, as a result, they fuel violent resistance. Actually, the military elite bears significant responsibility for Africa's decline, while civilian elites share blame for failing to provide valuable leadership during their rule.

Foreign influences play a major role in the occurrence of military coups in Africa, but they are not decisive, unlike internal factors. The periods following African countries' independence witnessed the birth of young and ambitious nations, yet fragile and vulnerable to manipulation by great powers. The Cold War and its conflicting agendas ignited this manipulation, as the United States and the Soviet Union openly supported military coups in Africa to expand their influence and undermine their opponents.

The end of the Cold War did not significantly alter the power dynamics in Africa, despite the optimism surrounding the spread of democratic ideals in the 1990s. In reality, the military dominated political systems, backed by external support, in exchange of protecting their interests, while civilian political classes remained weak and fragmented. This fragmentation enabled military elites to manipulate public opinion.

Military coups and subsequent violence that generates political instability, requires strong will and effort to break the cycle. Military's violent seizure of power and use of force

¹ Abdelkader Mohamed Ali, op cit, p 7

or threats, manifesting as suppression and physical elimination, spark resistant and violent counter-movements, mirroring the ruling powers' tactics.

If we consider the military institution's involvement in African politics a historical phenomenon tied to the complex African reality, the solution lies in courageously addressing this reality. This battle is no less important than restoring national sovereignty and expelling colonialism.

Future discussions among African elites should focus on methods to build political systems based on merit, where efficiency and qualifications are the primary criteria for accessing and exiting power, far from violent coercion dominated by armed forces. This is a vital issue for African peoples' future; resolving it in favor of civil powers and strong, elected political institutions will ensure these nations' future. This doesn't mean excluding the military from political influence but subjecting it to legal oversight and political accountability without diminishing its members' stature.

The moral issue in the behavior of African elites is necessary and inevitable in any debate about the conditions of democratic transition, just as it was necessary and successful in overcoming colonialism. African elites should not leave the political paths determined by the balance of power in reality. The dilemma of violence linked to power and the counter-violence it generates, requires a moment of reflection that concludes that this situation is not in the interest of any party.

After this long political process, African elites must recognize the futility of continuing and the need to rely on moral values, taking lessons from past failures. This is for the benefit of all parties and, more importantly, the future of the continent's countries and peoples.

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