

# Military coups in africa



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Military coups were a common occurrence all over the world especially in the 1930's till 1990's (Ken and David, 8). This was the most common form of change in regime. Some of the military coups were successful while others were not. Some were led by the military while others were initiated by civilians. Most of the past military coups were bloody and resulted to loss of lives. Only a limited number of them were bloodless. Today, most military coups are bloodless as they are well executed.

History has it that earlier military coups were as a result of power. Those who led the violent attacks were mainly focused on gaining control and power (authority) of the nation. This is why most of the military coups then were bloody and resulted to lose of life. The focus of the military coups has changed today. Due to human civilization and development, military coups today are mainly driven by the need to improve the livelihood of people. The usurpers do so not for personal gain, but for the benefit of many.

The purpose of this case study is to look at the public opinion after military coups. Public opinion involves the citizens' acceptance or rejection of the new regime. It may also include passive or active participant in the affairs of the new regime.

The objectives of the study are to determine the extent to which citizens of a nation approve or disapprove military coups. From the objectives of the study, the paper came up with three hypotheses:

- There will be significant public approval of the new regimes after the military coup.
- The public will be happier with the new regimes after the military coup.

- The public will openly accept the new regimes after the military coup.

It should be noted at some point in the lives of citizens of a nation they feel like their leaders are not considerate of their basic needs. This case study will try and express such disparities and how the occurrence of a military coup may be a blessing to citizens of a nation. Although some military coups have negative short term effects, the long term effects are beneficial and may overwrite these negative ones.

In the first phase, it is assumed the nation has just participated in democratic elections. As a result of the elections, they got a new government. The new regime performs well until phase two when its performance stagnates. Due to bad governance and corruption, the performance of government starts to depreciate as shown in phase three. The depreciation continues till the nation reaches where it was before it got the new government.

Phase four is the initiation of a military coup. The main reason for the given by the usurpers will be widespread corruption and bad governance. Although the military coup is meant to rectify the situation, it ends up making the situation a little bit bad as shown in phase four. Phase five depicts the nation is now trying to overcome the effects of the military coup.

### **Literature review:**

Ken and David define a coup is the unexpected and unlawful deposition of a regime, usually done by a group of the existing state organs to replace the ousted regime with another. The replacing regimes can be a civil or a military one. A military coup, on the other hand, is a planned action by the military of a nation meant to bring down and replace its administration.

Military coups can be successful (the former regime is replaced by a new one) or not (the regime stays in power). Military coups succeed when the usurpers ascertain their legality, if the attacked regime fails to prevent them by permitting their consolidation and then receiving the ousted regime's surrender. It can also be said to be successful if the usurpers get the backing of the public and the non-participant armed forces.

Military coups can also be temporary (the usurpers hand over power quickly) or permanent (the usurpers remain in control for long period of time). They may be temporary where the purpose of the military coup was to rectify a prevailing situation. They may also be permanent in nations where civil order may have been non-existent hence the need of the military to restore it. Some military coups are bloody while others are bloodless.

Military coups are different from revolutions and civil wars since they are a top-down action, initiated and controlled from an existing formation of the state against another. Revolutions are a bottom-up action of revolt against the whole regime originating from non-government actors. A civil war is where two factions (usually a governmental and non-governmental) battle for power in a bloody war for lengthy periods of time.

### **History of coups:**

#### **Military coups in America:**

North America has not experienced any significant military coups in the recent past. The same cannot be said for the south and Latin America.

Military coups are a common occurrence in these nations. Honduras is the latest nation to experience a military coup. The Honduran military staged a

military coup against President Manuel Zelaya in 2009. The leader of the parliament was appointed as transitional head of the nation.

Venezuela, Haiti, Fiji, Ecuador, Trinidad & Tobago and Panama have also experienced military coups in their history. Some of the military coups were successful while others were not.

### **Military coups in Europe:**

Military coups in Europe have been very minimal as compared to other continents. Some of the examples of military coups in Europe include the 1981 attempted military coup in Spain. The budding democracy of Spain nearly came to a shuddering halt. This occurred when rebellious civil guards stormed the congress of the nation and held assistants at gunpoint for almost 24 hours. The attempted military coup only ended when King Juan Carlos said he would not support it. Another military coup in Europe occurred in turkey. It was led by Kenan Evren, who later became the president. The military coup was in the year 1980. Other nations include Germany, France, Portugal and Poland.

### **Military coups in Asia:**

Military coups are common in Asia. Not a year will go by without the occurrence of a military coup. Of special mention include Pakistan which has experiences several military coups. It is worth noting that the nation of Pakistan usually shifts its leadership from civilian to military regimes. Another nation that has experienced a military coup is Bangladesh. Other nations which have followed in the same path include Thailand, Korea, the Philippine, Indonesia and Burma.

**Military coups in Africa:**

From the time of the Egyptian revolution in 1950's, Africa has experienced over ninety military coups, though a number of them have been unsuccessful. This number is not inclusive of the numerous occurrences where individual administration leaders were removed by force without a change in regime. Cases in point include the killing of General Mohammed in Nigeria resulting in General Obasanjo succeeding him. Vice-President Mubarak succeeded Egypt's President Sadat after his assassination. More than thirty prime ministers and presidents have lost their lives in successful and unsuccessful military coups and various types of power struggles. Nevertheless, most of the military coups were relatively bloodless affairs.

In the rest of Mediterranean and in sub-Sahara Africa, the first military coups occurred a few years after previous protectorates had become independent, namely in Togo, Sudan, Congo and Benin. One regime has been overthrown every year in Africa ever since. The years 1966 and 1979 saw the most military coups, six in both years. All successful violent change in regime and armed revolts were staged by military officers and armed rebels. Only in Seychelles and in Sudan were civilian leaders behind the power grabs. The Sudan case was from military regime while the Seychelles one was from a civilian regime. In Lesotho and Uganda, civilian presidents launched pre-emptive military coups in order to hold on to power and stay in office. Recent military coups in Africa include coups in Mauritania, Madagascar, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Central African Republic and Togo.

**Military coups in Australia:**

Over two hundred years ago, the first and only military coup to rock Australia was experienced. Members of the NSW Corps walked up Sydney's Bridge Street to the then government domicile, detained and deposed Captain William Bligh. Captain William Bligh was the governor by then. This event was nicknamed as the Rum Rebellion. Apart from this event, no other attempted military coup has ever been reported in Australia.

It should be noted, however, that military coups as a change-of-government method incidences have declined globally. This is because the threat of one is sufficient to produce the change of regime. In cases of military coups, the armed forces do not usually assume power, but they inaugurate a civil leader acceptable to them.

**Reasons why military coups occur:**

A common explanation for the occurrence of a military coup is the economic backwardness made by the leaders of these nations. Thus the people comply with military regimes expecting it would steer them to economic progress quickly. Corruption led by politicians had become so extensive that the citizens were willing to substitute democracy for military rule. The military coup is seen as a way to end the corrupted ways of the leaders.

Another reason why military coups take place is the fact that the institutions of democracy of these nations have been abused, misused and exploited by the leaders of the nation.

There is also the misuse of the processes of the law in courts of justice by prominent persons to defeat justice. Those in authority indulge in shameful acts of unabashed abuse of power.

Leaders of the nation usually engage in tribalism and nepotism. These acts, at the expense of other citizens, can be a determining factor in the occurrence of a military coup.

### **Types of coups:**

A military coup is categorized according to the armed forces' rank of the lead usurper. Some are lead by the army's commanding officers while others are lead by junior officers (colonels or lower rank) or non-commissioned officers (sergeants). If the junior officers or non-commissioned officers take hold of power, the military coup is seen as a rebellion with severe implications for the organizational and professional integrity of the military. The three categories of military coups are breakthrough coups, guardian coups and veto coups.

### **Breakthrough military coups:**

This is where radical armed forces remove from power a traditional regime and creates new bureaucratic elite. These types of military coups are usually led by junior officers or non-commissioned officers. Examples of such military coups that have occurred in the past include the 1980 military coup in Liberia, the 1944 military coup in Bulgaria and the 1967 military coup in Greece.

The main reason for the breakthrough military coup is where the senior military officers apply authoritarian/dictatorship management style. The



junior officers will usually feel offended hence the rebellions to show their seniors that the juniors can even rule the nation. This type of military coup usually ends up being bloody because the senior military officers will try to defend themselves and the government.

**Guardian coups:**

They are usually referred to as the musical chairs coups. This is because their main aim is to improve public order, squashing corruption and demanding efficiency in government. They are initiated by the army's commanding officers. The power structure of the regime is changed a little bit or left untouched. The leaders of the coup depict their actions as a temporary and unfortunate obligation.

An example includes a recent instance in which General Pervez Musharraf deposed Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on grounds of widespread civil disorder and impending civil war in the nation. Another example is in 1977 when Chief of Army Staff General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq overthrew Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's on the same grounds as above. Other nations that have experienced this type of coup include Thailand, Argentina and Turkey.

From the guardian coup usually arise bloodless coups. Nations with guardian coups can repeatedly shift back and forth between civilian and military regimes.

**Veto coups:**

They are also initiated by the army's commanding officers. Veto coups occur when the armed forces prohibits the people's collective participation and

social mobilization in governing themselves. In such a case, the armed forces confront and stifle large-scale, broad-based civil opposition, tending to oppression and killings.

A famous example is the 1973 Chile coup by the Chilean armed forces against President Salvador Allende Gossens. An example of a failed veto coup was against Adolf Hitler in Germany by a section of the German armed forces.

### **Post coup regimes:**

The armed forces are usually faced with the issue of what type of regime to set up after the coup. In Latin America, it was widespread for the post-coup regimes to be led by a junta. A junta is defined as a committee of the chiefs of staff of the armed forces. In the African context, the common form of post-coup regime was the revolutionary assembly. This was a quasi-legislative institution elected by the armed forces. In Asia and in particular Pakistan, the armed forces' leader normally assumes the title of chief martial law administrator.

Most coup leaders act under the concept of right orders. It is their belief that the best resolution of the nation's problems is merely to issue correct orders. This view of administration underrates the difficulty of putting into practice regime policy and the extent of political resistance to certain correct orders. It assumes that each person who matters in the nation shares a single, common interest and that the only query is how to pursue that single, common interest.

**Military coups and the economies of these nations:**

In the wake of a military coup, many businessmen and foreign investors ask themselves whether they should be alarmed of the new administrative intrusions into their business interests. Even if the answer is that they should not fear, we know it will be without success to calm down those who already packed and booked tickets to fly out.

When the military takes power each person is usually scared. Military regimes are closely associated with deliberate arrests, human and constitutional rights abuses and missing without trace people. So it is understandable why everyone wants to get out of a nation experiencing a military coup. It is not just an issue of personal disgusting seeing vicious force taking power, it is also a basic trepidation for own life. This trepidation is the one that tells people to go away as soon as possible until the dust settles down.

Because of this fear, businessmen and investors will tend to close their establishments. Some might even sell them because they do not know what will happen next. This fear of the unknown will make them dispose the businesses at throw away prices. Investors will hold their investments or invest them somewhere else. This will have a negative effect on the economy of the nation. Many of the citizens will loose their source of lives. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the nation will definitely go down. Other nations will not want to be associated with the military regime. The cross border trade between the nation and its neighbors will also be affected. Nations which are landlocked will be more affected in terms of trade. If

situations do not change quickly enough, the nation and its citizens will suffer.

**Research design:**

As stated above, the research design to be used is a case study. A case study is an in-depth investigation of an individual, group, institution or phenomenon. Most case studies are based on the premise that a case can be located that is typical of many other cases. The case under study is viewed as an example of class of events or a group of individuals.

Case studies involve qualitative analysis of data. Qualitative analysis of data refers to non-empirical analysis. Several case studies will be applied to this study. The case studies will be from all over the global with references to different locations (continents).

The case studies will consider both the latest and earlier occurrences of military coups. It will also take examples from different nations and continents. The nations will be considered in terms of population, economic status, location (land locked or have a port) and government structures and policies. This will help in coming up with a conclusive conclusion that will be a representative sample of similar situations.

The sampling technique to be used is that of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of his or her study. Cases of subjects are therefore hand picked because they are informative or they possess the required characteristics.

The required data (the case studies) will be collected mainly from books, journals, newspaper articles, magazine articles, documentaries, cinema clips and the internet. The data collected will be analyzed and presented mainly in form of slides (Microsoft power point application).

**References:**

Connor, Ken, and Hebditch David. How to Stage a military Coup: From Planning to Execution. Chicago: Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2008.