

African Union Must Implement Strategies to Reverse Military Coups

Instability and economic uncertainty are following a wave of undemocratic interventions by elements aligned with western states

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In the aftermath of the military coup in the Republic of Sudan, the 55 member-state African Union (AU) has suspended the putsch regime from participation in its diplomatic activities.

Yet will this largely symbolic move have a concrete impact on the behavior of those who are behind the seizure of power in this oil-rich state?

Over the last 14 months, several African governments have been subjected to numerous attempts and actual military usurpations of political authority. In Niger, which is one of the world’s largest producers of uranium, it was reported that elements within the defense forces were thwarted in efforts to take control of the government on March 31 of 2021.

Of course, in Mali, there have been two major shifts in power since August 2020 that were carried out by military officers trained and supported by the United States through its Africa Command (AFRICOM). Bamako and other areas of the large state were open for access by the Pentagon which has sought to penetrate the military and administrative structures of the AU member-states.

These collaborative efforts by the Malian, Guinean, Chadian and Sudanese governments with AFRICOM did not create greater security and stability. In fact, quite the opposite is the case since the founding of AFRICOM nearly 14 years ago. Several thousand AFRICOM troops are stationed in Djibouti and other regions of the African continent. Nonetheless, the advent of Islamic insurgencies in Nigeria, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Cameroon and Niger has occurred under the military presence of the Pentagon along with France, Britain and other allied NATO forces.

The political and economic ambitions of the military in Sudan have been a source of acrimony for many years. In April of 2019, it was the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the

Rapid Support Forces (RSF) which overthrew former President Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Although the Transitional Military Council (TMC), as they named themselves, claimed the removal and detention of al-Bashir was carried out in order to implement the demands of the “Glorious December Revolution”, a subsequent crack down on democracy protesters resulted in the massacre of June 3 of the same year. Several months later due to the intervention of the AU, the formation of a transitional Sovereign Council was initiated.

This transitional process was endorsed by the AU, the United Nations as well as several western imperialist states including the U.S. Just prior to the forced dissolution of the Sovereign Council, U.S. Envoy to the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman, visited Khartoum and met with military and political leaders of the interim administration. The State Department has stated that it had no forewarning or inclination that a coup plot was underway. Such an assertion has been viewed with skepticism inside and outside of the country. The open cooperation between the Sudanese interim regime and the U.S. in all likelihood would involve intelligence penetration of the state and society. Why would Feltman visit the country if there was not an awareness of the critical situation prevailing among the various factions of the Sovereign Council?

Just hours after the coup on October 25, [the AU issued](#) the following statement:

“The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, has learned with deep dismay of the serious development of the current situation in Sudan, which has resulted, among other things, in the arrest of Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok and other civilian officials. The Chairperson calls for the immediate resumption of consultations between civilians and military within the framework of the Political Declaration and the Constitutional Decree. The Chairperson reaffirms that dialogue and consensus is the only relevant path to save the country and its democratic transition. The Chairperson further calls for the release of all arrested political leaders and the necessary strict respect of human rights.”

However, what will be the repercussions for the military leaders of Sudan? Does the AU have the political capacity to impose sanctions that would cripple the ability of the junta to continue its suppression of the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese workers, youth, women, farmers, intellectuals and professional associations?

Demonstrations have continued since the October 25 coup. A call for a “March of Millions” went out aimed at mobilizing the people for actions throughout the country on October 30.

Most of those filling the streets of Khartoum and other cities are demanding a return to civilian rule in the country. Obviously, the military leadership is committed to maintaining its hegemony over the bureaucratic levers of the state. The military has economic interests in the state apparatus and in the private sectors. In order to ensure any semblance of democratic rule, it will be necessary to divest the military from its holdings.

The Role of the AU in Resolving the Crisis

This political quagmire and deteriorating economic situation are not limited to Sudan and other states within West and Central Africa where coups and attempted military seizures of power are taking place. The class position of the military within post-independence African society is a manifestation of the legacy of colonial rule. These military and police institutions were inherited from the imperialist dictators of Europe and are reinforced by their

contemporary neo-colonial descendants.

In order to create an atmosphere of revolutionary democratic transformation, it would require a complete break with the colonial past. This is almost an impossible process absent of a severing and reconfiguring of economic links to international finance capital.

Sudan has substantial petroleum resources although the partition of 2011 lessened its status in regard to exploration and exporting of this valuable commodity. Other natural resources found in Sudan include natural gas, chromium ore, copper, iron ore, mica, silver, gold, tungsten, zinc, among others. The Blue and White Nile which originates in Ethiopia's highlands and the Central African lakes, both join in the capital of Khartoum to constitute the Nile River proper which flows into Egypt.

Port Sudan is in the east of the country in the Red Sea state. This municipality has its own oil refinery and is the hub for most of the international trade. The city of Port Sudan has been the scene of mass demonstrations resulting from disagreements with the transitional administration which has now been overthrown.

Therefore, the country would be in an excellent position economically with the proper political leadership and governance. Sudan is not alone in its representation of such social contradictions. Africa as a whole cannot effectively benefit from its own resources without a program for political rectification. The AU, which is a reflection of this continental dilemma exhibited through the governments which dominate the organization, would inevitably be a critical factor in reforming the political culture within the entire region.

Moreover, in the immediate term, the increasing proliferation of military coups and the attempts to take power through force of arms, has to be addressed swiftly and firmly in order to halt the further erosion of the authority of the AU Executive Council along with the Peace and Security Council. AU founding documents and protocols categorically prohibit military coups. It is up to the leadership of the AU to develop means to implement these regulations.

Such a position being taken by the AU would indeed involve a direct political confrontation with the U.S., France and its allies operating on the continent. The previous U.S. administration of Donald Trump forced the interim Sovereign Council to commit to paying hundreds of millions of dollars to survivors of the victims of terrorist attacks which were carried out in other countries more than two decades before. As part of this package, the Sovereign Council was compelled to violate its own Israel Boycott Act of 1958 by recognizing Tel Aviv. These agreements were signed without any national debate since there was no legislative body within the Sovereign Council. The Gulf monarchies such as the UAE through the Trump administration's "Abraham Accords" have sought to recognize Israel openly and to collaborate with its intelligence and military apparatus against the Islamic Republic of Iran and other states and organizations resisting imperialism in West Asia. The "Abraham Accords" are designed to enhance U.S. hegemony in Africa and West Asia as well as undermining the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for national liberation and statehood. This was the price that the interim Sudanese regime paid to be taken off the U.S. so-called "list of state sponsors of terrorism."

In the aftermath of the military coup of April 2019, Saudi Arabia and the UAE pledged up to \$3 billion to the Sudanese coup makers. Such overtures to non-democratic structures only fuels the sense of impunity under which they operate.

Until these questions are debated and resolved inside the AU Executive Council and within member-states, the efforts to halt the renewed epidemic of military coups will remain elusive. Effectively finding solutions to the present crises is essential in fostering political stability, continental unity, sustainable development and genuine sovereignty in the years and decades to come.

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Featured image: Sudan youth demonstrate against coup, Oct. 25, 2021 (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

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