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From Democracy to Dictatorship: The Economic Impact of Guinea's 2021 Coup

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Abstract

The central thesis of this paper is the examination of economic management within the period of Alpha Conde and Colonel Mamady Doumbouya in Guinea. To achieve this objective, the scope of this paper was limited to the Guinea coup of 2021 which was incidental to the promulgation permitting Alpha Conde to seek two more terms in office even though he just won his third reelection bid. The paper adopted the content analysis of secondary materials such as journal articles, magazines, the internet, etcetera using the desk research methodology. The purposive technique was adopted for sample (document) selection. The presentation and discussion of data were done in prose. As demonstrated, there is indeed a relationship between political institutions and economic performance. While Guinea's coup d'état provided the Guinean people with hope that their political and economic conditions may improve, the military's assumption of power potentially made things worse for the Guinean people as can be seen with the GDP rate for 2020 and 2021. Aside from international disapproval of an unconstitutional takeover, Guinea's economy suffered as a result of crippling sanctions. Regardless of regime type, there should be limited state intervention in the economy, leaders should eschew clientelist tendencies, and the promotion of bureaucratic capacities as measures to ensure effective economic management.

Keywords: Military coup; Autocratic civilian regime; Democracy; Economic management; GDP

1. Introduction

The effects of political institutions on the economy cannot be overemphasized. This importance of institutions accounts for the scholarly attention paid to the subject of political economy. Within context, the governance systems—autocracy and democracy, are unarguably different in their operations. To illustrate, David and Krishan (2012) alluded that the revealing nature of autocratic and democratic regimes is often associated with the sizes of their respective electorate. This factor according to David and Krishan is due to the relative demand for electoral support within both systems. More compelling also, is the characteristic nature of institutional functioning of either system of governance. To some, while autocratic regimes can enforce standards that would result in economic growth, democracies, on the other hand, lend themselves to popular demands (Hristos & Mehmet, 2006). This, however, continues to elicit debates within academia.

Notably, while democracy and autocracy are the common delineations of governance systems, autocracy has further been reduced to subtypes which include military and autocratic civilian regimes. This classification, notwithstanding, this paper distinguishes foremost between democracy and autocracy. Distinguishing between democracy and autocracy, Lipset (2013) defined democracy as a political system that supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing government officials and a social mechanism that permits the larger possible part of the population to influence decisions by choosing among contenders for political office. Autocracies are political regimes where competitive political participation is sharply restricted or suppressed and the power-holders reserve a right to

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determine the rights and freedoms everyone else enjoys while being largely free from institutional constraints themselves (Gurr, Jagers, & Moore, 1993). Juxtaposing these definitions, one would see that the regimes being examined are opposite ends of a spectrum.

In essence, while democracy provides the opportunity to constantly change governments which its symbolic feature-elections, autocracy disallows open contest thus, reducing political leadership to a privileged few. Within context, this paper notes that various data sets on authoritarian regimes have been constructed. The three most prominent are by Geddes, Joseph, and Erica (2014b; 2014a); Hadenius, Jan, and Michael (2012); and Cheibub, Jennifer, and James (2010). Although they resemble each other, they differ in their conceptualization of authoritarian regimes as well as in the subtypes they recognize (i.e., in the criteria they identify for definition, as well as in the number of subtypes and the definition itself). "Military," "royal," and "civilian" are the autocratic subtypes in Cheibub, Jennifer, and James (2010), whereas "military," "monarchical," "party-based," and "personal" are those of Geddes, Joseph, and Erica (2014a). Hadenius, Jan, and Michael (2012) use a different theoretical underpinning of subtypes by not following the identity of incumbents but rather types of underlying institutions, yet the subtypes they arrive at ("military," "monarchy," "one-party authoritarian," "multi-party authoritarian," and "no-party authoritarian," plus "other") come very close to those of the other data sets.

Overall, there seems to be a consensus on authoritarian regime subtypes but for little variations. This paper adopts the categorization offered by Cheibub, Jennifer, and James (2010) which delineates between autocracy subtypes as military, monarchy, and civilian. This is due to the variables contained in it being military coups and autocratic civilian regimes. Nevertheless, Schlumberger (2017) explained that economic factors are often seen as an independent variable that explains regime outcomes. According to Schlumberger (2017), the argument links economic structures to nondemocratic political rule and is made by the rentier state approach. Since rentier states allocate resources to society, incentives to comply with regime restrictions are high as long as individual benefits are realized from such distributional politics. Waldner and Smith (2015) allude that such benefits are usually extended through informal, pyramidal patron-client relations that are also at the heart of a growing political economy literature on cronyism in autocracies. In this context, an amalgamation of regime-business interests underpins economic management in autocratic regimes.

In a nutshell, underlying the autocratic subtypes of military and civilian regimes is the fact that the domestic distribution of external revenues is both to privilege strategically important elites and to alimnet the population at large. Based on this, it is pertinent to mention the reasons adduced by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya-led military junta in Guinea. To Smith (2021), Doumbouya claimed the army was forced into action amid rampant corruption, human rights abuses and economic mismanagement under Conde. In confirmation, France 24 (2022, November 4th) Guinea's justice Minister ordered legal proceedings against former President Alpha Conde and more than 180 officials from his deposed regime for alleged corruption and embezzlement of public funds, according to a public document. Drawing from the feature of autocracy which emboldens cronyism and the allegations of misconduct on Col. Mamady Doumbouya and the past autocratic civilian regime of Alpha Conde, there was the need for this paper to examine economic mismanagement within both eras.

2. Methodology

The desk research methodology was adopted in the examination of economic mismanagement in Guinea focusing on the autocratic civilian regime of Alpha Conde and the military era of Colonel Mamady Doumbouya. The scope was limited to the Guinea coup of 2021 which was incidental to the promulgation permitting Alpha Conde to seek two more terms in office even though he just won his third reelection bid. The choice of geography is premised on the seeming resurgence of coups in the West African sub-region and the ensuing accusation of corruption and economic mismanagement against Col. Mamady's regime which is in contrast to the reasons adduced for the coup in 2021. To achieve the set objective, the paper adopted the content analysis of secondary materials such as journal articles, magazines, the internet, etcetera. The purposive technique was adopted for sample (document) selection and data presentation done in prose.

3. Theoretical framework

This paper adopted the political development theory. Political development theory is the model or theory that is often employed or adopted by scholars or students of developmental studies, democratic studies, etc. Ayeni (2018) posits that political development theory relates the level of political development of a country to its development as a whole. Often than not, the theory is being adopted to explain the developmental process in a democracy. Indeed, Somjee (1992)

opines that political development is the growth of people's ability to hold their rulers accountable for their political actions. The political development theory is the theory whose contents are in line with the tenets of democracy. Contributors to the political development theory are scholars like Pye (1966), Huntington (1971), Finer (1988) and others.

The major postulations of political development theory originated from its earliest proponents. For instance, according to Finer (1988), the level of political culture determines the level of political development. Finer believes that the level of political development will eventually determine the level of development. Similarly, Huntington (1965, p. 393) sees political development as "the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures". Huntington says that the institutions of political organizations must be strengthened for there to be development. On his part, Pye (1966, pp. 45-46) contends that "Political development does involve mass participation and popular involvement in political activities". Pye holds that for there to be development in a country, the majority of her citizens must participate in political activities.

Theories and models were postulated or propounded by people and these people live in an environment. The environment scholars live in influences their writing and the way they perceive things at the time. Theories have over the years helped governments, scholars, and development stakeholders of their various home countries to explain why certain things happen the way they did. The postulations of political development theory have been able to explain why there has not been development varied between countries. Ayeni (2018), however, reasoned that certain theories failed to apply in other countries where a similar system of government is in operation. On the other hand, Ayeni opined that some theories have also been helpful to researchers in explaining the social phenomenon in other countries other than the environment of people that propounded those theories.

The foregoing has in a way been a hindrance to the application of the theory in contemporary public administration and development issues in Africa, and Guinea in particular. The foregoing is on the premise that most theories and models adopted in Africa are of foreign origin. The scholars are mostly of American origin or other European countries, and the environmental factors of those countries are quite different from that of Africa. Without a doubt, political development theory was imported into Africa hence, applicative hiccups. Therefore, following the trajectory of this paper, it is necessary to note that the political development theory is renowned for its manifest weak institutions as against strong institutions, low political culture as against political culture, mass participation and political involvement, rule of the leaders as against the rule of law, drive towards professionalism as against favoritism and nepotism.

No doubt, vital lessons can be drawn from the political development theory in the case of economic mismanagement in Guinea resulting from military and autocratic civilian regimes. To this end, the political development theory was adopted due to the evident weak institutions, low political culture, rule of leaders, and clientelism in Guinea. Al already established, several allegations of corruption against the past administration of Alpha Conde and the present point to the poorly developed nature of institutions in Africa, a relatively weak political culture which in fact promotes clientelism, and leadership denoted by the rule of leaders as opposed to the rule of law, among others. Instructively, this situation explains economic management in Guinea over the period and rightly, accounts for a reduction in the Gross Domestic Product from 4.6% in 2020 to 3.1% in 2021 (World Bank, 2022). Although the GDP figure for 2021 may be attributed to crippling sanctions against the junta, it, however, gives an insight into the issue of political development defined within the context of both autocratic regime subtypes.

4. Discussion of Findings

As already stated, two broad governance systems-autocracy and democracy are utilized in the organization of modern government. In fact, the military and autocratic civilian regimes are subtypes of autocracy. Therefore, comparing these fundamental systems of governance also reignites age-long debate on their respective economic impacts. Specifically, there has been some debate as to the relationship between autocracy, democracy, and economic performance. The potential impact of politics on economic performance inspires these debates (Faust, 2007). On this note, Faust alludes that there is a consensus that political institutions (the rules that guide political interactions) explain differences in economic performance. Significantly, Keefer/Knack (as cited in Faust, 2007) opined that political institutions have an important implication for poor societies because only if these countries achieve an improvement in political institutions they will be able to escape economic misery and realize their potential of catching up to rich countries. Based on this, the debate on the impact of autocratic regimes and democratic administrations on economic performance becomes justified.

According to Faust (2007), the qualities inherent in autocracy and democracy have varying economic implications. Indeed, Faust reasoned that democratic governments will provide more public goods to the citizenry than autocracies

which disproportionately satisfy its smaller set of support groups with economic privileges. Therefore, citizens of democracies are, on average, better equipped with public goods such as access to education, justice, or health care. Furthermore, the competitive inclusiveness of democracies also leads to different growth trajectories. As autocratic governments tend to distribute comparably more economic privileges to their narrow coalition, their economic policies will be more competition adverse compared to those of democracies. Competition-adverse policies, in turn, are unfavorable for economic productivity. Consequently, while autocracies might achieve growth through resource mobilization (factor accumulation), productivity growth will be higher in democracies than in autocracies (Faust, 2007). In autocracies, a well-established small distribution coalition enriches itself at the cost of collective development. In contrast, the institutional setting of democracy substantially smoothens the tensions between individual and collective rationality by increasing the responsiveness of decision-makers to the encompassing interests of society.

Although the foregoing appears to have focused mainly on the relevance of political institutions on economic development in democratic and autocratic systems, the following, however, outlines the economic mismanagement arising from military coups and autocratic civilian regimes in Guinea in 2021 which are inherently autocratic regime subtypes. For emphasis, the coup no doubt imperiled minerals and mining endeavors which are crucial to the country's economy and global supply chains. The decline in Guinea's Gross Domestic Product from 4.6% in 2020 to 3.1% in 2021 (World Bank, 2022) provides a basis for comparing the economic management during the autocratic civilian regime of Alpha Conde and the military rule of Mamady Doumbouya. Consequently, I note that although Alpha Conde's rule is civilian but autocratic in organization, it deferred and defined economic management in contrast to Col. Mamady's regime in the following ways:

4.1. The predictability of succession

The air of unpredictability surrounds the regime of Col. Mamady Doumbouya which is inimical to the investment climate. Mostly, mediators reckon only his promise to relinquish power in Two years. However, with a known succession plan which hallmarked Conde's era, investors are encouraged to do so thereby resulting in positive economic performance. The prospect of succession predictability is elusive in military regimes as there is always a case of coup d'état among the rank and file. This compounds the economic woes and impacts performance negatively.

4.2. Efficient bureaucracy

David and Krishan (2012) implied this with their idea of the "selectorate". In contrast to the autocratic civilian regime of Alpha Conde, the administration of Col. Mamady Doumbouya pursue agendas because of its relatively small-sized military selectorate. This means that since there is no electoral base to appeal to, the regime to preserve itself considers recruitment into bureaucratic setups on primordial grounds which results in an inefficient bureaucracy. Although, the question of bureaucratic efficiency applies to both sides, however, institutional norms which guided the regime of Alpha Conde provide a basis for an institutionalized bureaucracy that is predominant with autocratic civilian regimes. Without a doubt, an efficient bureaucracy is a critical success factor for economic development. Indeed, bureaucrats are the managers of the economy. Succinctly, due to the size of the selectorate in the military regime of Col. Mamady Doumbouya, the efficiency of the bureaucracy is doubtful.

4.3. Preferences of political decision-makers

Just as regimes are characterized by different actors, their preferences are also inherently different. These preferences are often driven by political expediencies. As rightly observed by Mansfield, Milner, and Rosendorff (2000), either the actors in Guinea try to maximize its utility by obtaining the greatest possible level of support. That support depends on the trade policy chosen. Every actor wants to enact the level of trade barriers that will maximize its political support (i.e., its ideal point). Actors receive political support from a variety of domestic groups. Some groups prefer that the home country lowers trade barriers (e.g., consumers, exporters, users of imported inputs, owners of relatively abundant factors), and others prefer that it raises barriers (e.g., import-competing firms, owners of scarce factors). All trade groups, however, prefer that their country's barriers be as low as possible. Other things being equal, all domestic groups will increase their electoral support for policymakers in the home country if these officials negotiate very low levels of protection abroad.

The preferences expressed by decision-makers that shape the trade policies are also delineated along the line of selectorate espoused by David and Krishan (2012). The distinguishing feature between both autocratic regime subtypes in Guinea is depicted by their respective allegiance to the citizens-selectorate hence, regime preservation is uppermost. Explicitly, in contrast to the supposed large "selectorate" of the Alpha Conde regime despite the allegations of corruption, Col. Mamady's regime owes allegiance to a relatively small-sized military "selectorate"-probably the military top brass.

4.4. Secure individual rights

Economic and social rights are defined as the rights that people have to live in dignity and participate in society fully (May Tree, 2021). Indeed, economic, social, and cultural rights are those human rights relating to the workplace, social security, family life, participation in cultural life, and access to housing, food, water, healthcare, and education. These rights include the right to equal pay, fair wages, protection in the event of sickness or unemployment, and the right to a standard of living. These rights apply to everyone, including those with special needs and conditions, and are outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Within context, the regime of Col. Mamady is more likely to disregard human and associated rights compared to the autocratic civilian regime of Alpha Conde. Economically, this may have accounted for the GDP decline from 4.6% in 2020 to 3.1% in 2021 because of the disposition of investors as well as crippling sanctions.

5. Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, there is indeed a relationship between political institutions and economic performance. While Guinea's coup d'état provided the Guinean people with hope that their political and economic conditions may improve, the military's assumption of power potentially made things worse for the Guinean people as can be seen with the GDP rate for 2020 and 2021. Aside from international disapproval of an unconstitutional takeover, because Guinea no longer has a legitimate head of state, its economy suffered as a result of crippling sanctions. Exemplarily, the United States of America, limited aid to Guinea. Foreign companies and investors also reconsidered their presence in a country rife with political uncertainties and instability. Guinea's mining industry already suffered extensively from the COVID-19 pandemic. The withdrawal of foreign companies from the nation resulted in a compounded, negative effect on the nation's economy.

Also to note is that, another implication of Guinea's coup d'état is political. The coup's seizure of power decreased Guinean trust in democratic elections to deliver the leaders that citizens desire and grant ordinary people the authority to remove leaders who fail to deliver on their commitments. To buttress this, the leader of the regime-Col. Mamady Doumbouya assured the Economic Community of West African State mediators of handing over power to a democratically elected leader after two years. In the sub-region, this is not the first of such promise as Col. Asimi Goita overthrew Transition in Mali led by Bah Ndaw. Nevertheless, I conclude that regardless of regime type, there should be limited state intervention in the economy, leaders should eschew clientelist tendencies, and the promotion of bureaucratic capacities as measures to ensure effective economic management.

Recommendations

The following are recommended for implementation.

- Limited state intervention in the economy

The autocratic regime subtypes of civilian autocracy and military regime differ in their intervention in the economy. Guinea during the time of Alpha Conde, for instance, is a supposed constitutional democracy-relishing in the supremacy of the constitution. This having being said, the constitution as the supreme law lays out specific roles of the branches of government and their agencies. Given this delineation of governmental powers, the respective arms function within set bounds for the good governance of the country. Implicitly, the supremacy of the constitutions, as well as other attendant laws, ensures the seamless administration of the economic affairs of the state devoid of needless intervention by the state. Conversely, economic policies may be argued to be inspired by clientelist ideals in the military regime of Col. Mamady Doumbouya given the size of its political base is likely to interfere in the administration of the economy in favour of his supporters.

- Eschewing clientelist tendencies

Given the large selectorate base and the need to appeal to citizens' political support during Conde's regime, Col. Mamady should try to exude qualities appealing to a larger section of the polity although this feature is averse to autocratic regimes. This appeal becomes necessary in the face of recent agitations for equality and fairness in the conduct of state affairs by different groups. Therefore, government actions should be driven by popular opinion and not at the whims and caprices of a few powerful individuals who encourage such acts for their selfish interests. In fact, the scope of the activities of government should be focused on the benefits derivable from such actions by the citizens.

- Enhancing the bureaucratic capacity of agencies saddled with economic affairs

The presence of a relatively efficient bureaucracy during Alpha Conde's era underscores the need for Col. Mmady Doumbouya to pursue the objective of enhancing the bureaucracy which is central to economic performance. To achieve this, the incumbent regime should seek to enlarge its bureaucracy away from its small "selectorate". Although there is no measure of the effectiveness of bureaucracies between Alpha Conde and Col. Mamady Doumbouya's regimes, the former's dedication to the laid down rules in a supreme law (the constitution) connotes that its bureaucratic machinery may likely be administered in obedience to the constitution. It must be stated on this note that emphasis should be on the human capital development of the critical agencies responsible for modeling or administering the country's economic policies. This is as it would help in no small measure in bringing such personnel to par with their global contemporaries.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

All of the authors declare that we have all participated in the design, execution, and analysis of the paper, and that we have approved the final version. Additionally, there are no conflicts of interest in connection with this paper, and the material described is not under publication or consideration for publication elsewhere.

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