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**A Week of Mayhem: The July 30 Insurgency in the Gambia<sup>1</sup>**

**Bir Kargaşa Haftası: Gambiya’da 30 Temmuz Ayaklanması**

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**Akpojevbe Omasanjuwa**

University of the Gambia, Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences, Gambia

**Email:** masapele@yahoo.com

**Orcid Number:** 0000-0002-8005-3924

**Modu Lamın Tarro**

University of the Gambia., Kanifing, The Gambia.

**Email:** mltarro@utg.edu.gm

**Orcid Number:** 0000-0002-4973-4334

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<sup>1</sup> This article is analyzed by two reviewers and it is screened for the resemblance rate by the editor/ Bu makale iki hakem tarafından incelenmiş ve editör tarafından benzerlik oranı taramasından geçirilmiştir.

\* In this article, the principles of scientific research and publication ethics were followed/ Bu makalede bilimsel araştırma ve yayın etiği ilkelerine uyulmuştur.

\* The co-author composed part III which is an account of his experience “The July 30 Mayhem: An Eye Witness Explanation Eye Witness Account” based on his experience of what transpired in the Field Force Barracks (where he was born and raised) during the uprising.

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### **Abstract**

The paper explains the emergence of political parties in The Gambia before and after independence and how they fared during presidential and parliamentary elections till an insurgency nearly toppled the regime. It also examines the causes of different types of coups, and relates it to the Gambian situation, thereafter a detailed eyewitness account of the insurgency followed. The role played by invading Senegalese forces in quelling the uprising and restoring law and order received attention. The findings show that economic problems, corruption, and carefree attitude of the ruling oligarchy were among the causes of the attempted overthrow.

**Keywords:** The Gambia, Military Coup D'état, Corruption, Democracy, Rebellion.

### **Öz**

Bu çalışma bağımsızlık öncesi ve sonrasında Gambiya'daki siyasi partilerin birleşmesini ve neredeyse rejimi deviren bir isyana kadar başkanlık ve parlamento seçimleri boyunca onların nasıl yola çıktığını açıklar. Çalışma aynı zamanda askeri darbelerin farklı çeşitlerinin sebeplerini ve Gambiya'daki durumla alakasını, sonrasında takip eden ayaklanmanın detaylı görgü tanıklığını inceler. Senegal güçlerinin istilasıyla ayaklanmayı bastırma ve teslim alınmış esas vaziyetle kanun ve nizamı yeniden kurma rolü oynandı. Bulgular ekonomik problemler, yolsuzluk ve oligarşi yönetiminin kayıtsız tavrı hükümeti devirme teşebbüsü sebeplerinin arasında gösterir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Gambiya, Askeri Darbe, Yolsuzluk, Demokrasi, Ayaklanma.

## Introduction

The 1963 census report shows the ethnic composition of The Gambia at independence consisted of Mandinkas (42 percent), Fula (18 percent), Wollof (16 percent), Jola (10 percent), Sarahuli (9 percent), others (4 percent). Non-Gambians constituted (1 percent). Eighty five percent of the population is Muslim while the remaining practices either traditional beliefs or Christianity. During colonial rule, the country was in two administrative segments namely the colony that was predominantly Wollofs and Akus while the Mandinka, Jolas, and Fula dominated the rural areas called the protectorate (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. 261). Additionally, the rural areas have some concentrations of Wollofs.

The territory became a British colony in 1843 until independence in 1965 (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. XXXV and XXII )<sup>2</sup> From 1880 until 1960, educated Africans had limited franchise in a legislative council (Hughes and Perfect 2008, p. XXIII).<sup>3</sup> This facilitated the emergence of political parties after the W.W.2. The Rev. J. C. Faye established the Democratic Party in June 1951 while Garba M. I. Jahumpa followed suite with the Muslim Congress before P.S. Njie founded the United Party (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. XLVII). On February 14, 1959, the Peoples' Protectorate Party (PPP) came into existence followed by the Gambia Congress Party (GCP) in October 1962 but later dissolved and merged with PPP on March 7, 1968 (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. XLIX and 48). These organizations operated only in the colony, an apparent colonial ploy of divide and rule, designed to pacify the vociferous urban elites while rural dwellers remained disenfranchised. The People's Progressive Alliance (PPA) came into being in October 1968 (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. 114 and xxvii). In 1972, the Gambian Vice President Sheriff M. Dibba resigned his position due to an affair involving his brother (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. 53).<sup>4</sup> Garaba I.M. Jahumpa replaced him as Minister of Finance on October 9, 1972. (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. 87). Dibba formed the National Convention Party on September 7, 1975 after leaving office (Hughes and Perfect 2008, p153). On March 29, 1986, the Gambia People's Party joined the fold while on September 28, 1991 People's Democratic Party was born. (Hughes and Perfect 2008, p. 206 and XXVIII) The People's Organization for Independence and Socialism PDOIS came into existence on August 19, 1986 (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. 112).

The 1960 pre-independence constitution extended voting privilege to the protectorate dwellers hence the founding of the Protectorate Peoples Party appealed to the predominantly Mandinka population that has all along been marginalized by the urban-based parties. However, for it to favourably compete with the urban based parties, in December 1959, the party had a change of name to Peoples Progressive Party (Hughes and Perfect 2008, p. XXV).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "In 1821, the administration of The Gambia was taken from the Company of Merchants and vested in the governor of Sierra Leone. Affairs in the new Crown Colony of the Gambia were handled directly by the commandant of the garrison until 1829 and thereafter by a lieutenant governor subordinate to the governor of Sierra Leone. In 1843, the administrative link with Sierra Leone was broken and the Gambia was granted its own governor." **June:** Gambia becomes a separate colony under Governor H.F. Seagram.

<sup>3</sup> January 23, 1883 J. D. Richards was appointed as first African member of the Legislative Council.

<sup>4</sup> "His downfall was in part the result of the "*butut* scandal"; his brother, Kutubo, had been arrested smuggling Gambian currency and other contraband goods into Senegal in August and was found to have been working out of No. 1 Marina Parade [State House], Sheriff Dibba's official residence."

<sup>5</sup> The political parties attest to the democratic tradition of the prevailing political order. All the parties, apart from The People's Organization for Independence and Socialism PDOIS, are virtually owned by the founders, one-man parties. The history of the country shows the ease with which their members cross carpet to the winning party (PPP) immediately after either parliamentary or presidential elections. A country with less than one million inhabitants witnessing a proliferation of parties after colonial rule, most of which fizzle out within a short time, indicates that the politicians were self-seeking individuals with no concrete agenda for the masses. That,

During the 1962 general election spiced with ethno-religious flavour, the PPP mobilized the Mandinka, and Jola voters to confront the colony-based parties to secure victory. The PPP's firm grip on political power until July 22, 1994 made the electoral process a mere formality. Independence was within the British Commonwealth with the Queen as Head of Government, but from 18-26 November 1965 government organized a referendum to assert complete independence and attained republican status. The required two third majority was short, however a repeat of the exercise on April 24, 1970 was successful.<sup>6</sup> The country became a republic within the Commonwealth. Thus, the Queen ceased to be the Head of Government, and the Privy Council equally ceased to be the final appellate court. The designation of Prime Minister became President and Commander-in-Chief with a new constitution replacing the independence constitution.

The ruling party the PPP, won three consecutive presidential elections conducted in 1982, 1987, and 1992. During the 1982 election, the party secured victory with 72.51 percent of vote cast while the closest contender the NCP had 27.56 percent (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. 255). The next election was in 1987. PPP had 59.18 percent followed by the NCP with 27.51 percent, and GPP had 31.31 percent (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p.255). The last preceding the military takeover on July 22, 1994 was in 1992. The PPP had 58.48 percent of the vote cast, NCP. 22.1 percent while GPP secured 8.10 percent. PDIOS came last with 5.24 percent. The PPP outclassed the other parties in all parliamentary elections from 1966 until 1992 (Arnold and Perfect, 2008, p. 255).

Notwithstanding the democratic culture in place, on July 30, 1981, the Gambian government had cause to invite Senegalese forces to put down an attempted coup. The development alarmed pro-democracy observers to the extent that some had cause to question the unprecedented action against an ostensibly enviable fledgling democracy in Africa (Camara Amadou, 1982, p. 1) reported that "the news of the overthrow was supposedly hailed with overwhelming jubilation. Many saw it as a deliverance from their economic quagmire. Such sentiments have perplexed many politicians that if the public welcomed the event, how had Jawara and his party won the past election with a landslide victory?" Diverse opinions are in circulation concerning the motives of the conspirators; however, no publication has justified the rebellion. This write-up explains how the coup proof strategies in place resulted in a regime failure which mixed-up a paramilitary force with civilians who attempted an overthrow of the elected government.

The write which is in five parts begins with the introduction that explains the demographic composition of the country and the emergence of political parties prior to independence and their effects on election results till the democratic dispensation came under attack, it exposes the ethnic undertones of the country. Part II concerns types of coups and how they are caused by any or a combination of military involvement in politics, popular demand, and dwindling support for the government in power and economic problems. Part III is a composition based largely on an eyewitness account of unfolding background events and what transpired during the insurgency. As researched accounts of the detail events are scanty in print, the oral eyewitness account is of importance as virtually all the principal actors in the mayhem are known to the narrator who was born and raised in the Field Force barracks. The account explains the discontent among the Force members, and their unprofessional interactions with civilians, especially politicians. It also shows the

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fundamentally, is among the remote causes of the 1981 uprising.

<sup>6</sup> At the first referendum in 1965, 61,568 voted for while 31,921 voted against. At the second in April 1970, 84, 968 voted in favour while 35, 638 voted against. Source: The Historical Dictionary of The Gambia Arnold Hughes and David Perfect.

quasi-military features which added impetus to the activities of the rebels. It concluded by a narration of how the intervention of foreign forces restored law and order. Part IV is an account of several factors which triggered the cataclysm overtime. Simmering ethnic tension, economic distress amid extravagant lifestyle of politicians sustained by blossoming corruption are explained. Others are the totalitarian grip of the ruling party on power under the cloak of democracy, coupled with inadequate coup proof strategy and weak trade unionism. Part V encompasses concluding remarks.

### **Coup Typology in Africa**

Iren Omo-bare (1990, p. 1-23) advanced reasons precipitating military coups in Africa. These include political factors, economic factors, failed civilian leadership, inadequacy and weaknesses of political institutions, inability of the existing regime to gain legitimacy, cultural pluralism, personal factors, and foreign influences. Samuel Huntington and S. E. Finer are of the opinion that “coup d’état is most likely to occur in states lacking institutionalised political cultures, which also suffers economic hardship and social division,” (Thompson Alex, 2010, p. 259). The organisational ability and the character of the military is another school of thought propounded by Morris Janowitz (Ibid 138). Morris explained that the patriotism, discipline, professionalism, and cohesion at the heart of military service in time compel soldiers to intervene in order to rid the state of inept and corrupt civilian governments. Alex Thompson (2010, p.137-138) further categorised coups as guardian, veto, and breakthrough coups.

Guardian coups are undertaken to salvage a state from collapse due to bad governance, while veto coup concerns those whose causes are linked with the deteriorating conditions of military institutions. This was the type that instigated the United States in collaboration with six Caribbean states at the dawn of 25 October 1983 to invade Grenada during the Regan administration (Nguyen Phuong, 2009). Another example is the 1992 coup in Algeria staged to stop the Islamic Salvation Front from assuming power. The Islamic organisation was on the verge of winning an election when the military seized power as the service men were not sure of their position in the unfolding scheme of things (Alex Thompson 2010, p. 138). Breakthrough coups sweeps away traditional or autocratic administrations, like the creeping coup which overthrew the monarchy in Ethiopia ending the 44 years reign of Hale Selassie in 1974.

The opinions of Samuel Huntington and that of S. E. Finer and Morris Janowitz cited above summed up that of Omo-bare. Fundamentally, what made the Gambian situation exceptional is that the prime movers of the insurgency were civilians who co-opted paramilitary force men into their ranks. In other instances, in Africa, it is unconventional for civilians to play major roles in executing a coup plot let alone being the instigators. Also, in all cases of either attempted or successful overthrow of regimes, the execution stage is strictly a military affair.

Taeko Hirori and Omori Sawa (2013, p. 40) observed that “leaders in democracies are not immune to coups and coup threats either. Coups have also been attempted, often successfully; in many young and transitional democracies... indeed, coups have occurred in all sorts of political regimes, albeit to varying degrees.”, “Despite the wave of global democratization that began in the late twentieth century, seizure of government by means of a coup has remained a viable strategy for political actors in much of the developing world. They are particularly rife in non-democracies.”, “Scholars,” continued Hirori Taeko and Omori Sawa (2013 p. 40), “have argued that poverty, inequality, modernization, and political fractionalization, inter alia, are primary structural conditions that make societies susceptible to such illegal seizures of governments. Others

have examined economic performance. In addition, some recent research focuses on political leaders' coup-proofing strategies." Notwithstanding the ostensibly prevailing democratic process in vogue in The Gambia of 1981, observers anticipated the coup although none could predict its exact date, which took many unawares.

Observers were conscious of the significant dwindling support base of the ruling party and its contribution to the attempted overthrow. This can be inferred from <sup>7</sup> its steady decline at the presidential polls, 1982 (72.51%), 1987 (59.18%) and 1992 (58.48%), (Arnold Hughes and David Perfect, 2008). The country was, to all intents and purposes, a one-party state as all the political parties were of the same stamp ideologically, if they had any ideology besides having no manifestos (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, Lii, p. 153).<sup>8</sup> Carpet crossing from one party to another after elections proves they are of the same stamp. These culminated in abuse of power which was strenuously sustained by all available means. The weak apparatus of state brought the claim to legitimacy to question. In addition, the coupists, some of whom have been dealing with local problems and election related disputes, are conversant with the weaknesses of the politicians and the intrigues they utilise in gaining undue advantages over rivals. One of which was cross border voting; during elections citizens of neighbouring countries were allegedly recruited to vote for the ruling party as the peoples are morphologically indistinguishable. (Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group, Commonwealth Secretariat. 2006, p. 15). Also, post-election discussions among voters shows that the electoral register contains names of long deceased and emigrated voters which the electoral commission fail to update. These and other practices indicate that the government lack the requisite support base to lay claim to legitimacy. Under these conditions, elections might seem to be free on polling day, but they were far from fair. Hence, deeds of this nature reinforced the desire of the newly politically organized members of society to cause a regime change. However, due to the poor educational background of most Field Force personnel,<sup>9</sup> coupled with their lack of exposure, and requisite experience to address the procedural nitty-gritties of organising and staging coups, they could not coordinate their efforts adequately to successfully effect an overthrow (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. LIV). However, the Force men have been executing civil assignments which enabled them to develop interest in the plight of the masses.

Examples are bound in Africa of leaders using the military for civil assignments such as quelling riots and demonstrations, a habit imbibed from the colonial era when law enforcement agents persecute those clamouring for independence. Reinforcement of the practice after independence made it to be much in vogue during the reign of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (Liebenow, 1968, p. 247-248). Other instances include Dahomey (1963), Zaire (1965), Nigeria (1966), Upper Volta (1966) and many more. The PPP government on certain occasions had cause to use the Field Force to quell riots and demonstrations. Their involvement in crowd control exposed the inadequacies of the regime thereby reinforcing the resolve of the newly organised members of society to cause a regime change. During a January 1961 workers strike, for a 25 percent increase in wages, the striking workers were forcibly dispersed by the Field Force and their leader M. E. Jallow was

<sup>7</sup> At the first national election in 1960, PPP won 9 of the 19 seats while at the second, on May 22-31, 1962, it secured 18 out of 32 seats.

<sup>8</sup> What the parties refer to as manifestos existed only on paper as programmes, policies and activities do not reflect whatever manifestos the claim to own. The National Convention Party "Farafenni Declaration" (published in 1976), the NCP differed little in substance from the PPP and its manifesto was little more than a rewriting of the original PPP policy. Consequently, it failed to make more than limited inroads into the governing party's popular support. The party manifesto offered little that was not already PPP policy,<sup>8</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "The Gambian army, such as it was, was abolished as an economy measure in 1958, when the Gambia Regiment of the old Royal West African Frontier Force was replaced by a smaller and cheaper Gambia Field Force. A paramilitary force of a few hundred men, was deployed periodically to deal with urban disorder and to police elections, but it was not considered as having any political aspirations or capacity to overthrow the state"

charged with incitement to riot (Hughes and Perfect , 2008, p. 83). Other popular incidence includes another staged by members of the Kent Street *Vhoo* against the Senegalese president while on a state visit to The Gambia on February 6, 1969 (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. 210). Also, in 1978, a student's riot was forcefully quelled by the Field Force.

Instances of overthrows that have garnered popular approval in other African states include that of the Nigerian Head of State Muhammadu Buhari in 1985 whose iron fist policies the public denounced. That was a repeat of what happened when he toppled the civilian dispensation of his immediate successor, Alhaji Shehu Shagari in December 1983 a regime most Nigerians felt lost focus in unbridled corruption. In addition, the overthrow of Nkrumah of Ghana (1966), the assassination and the overthrow of William Tolbert of Liberia (April 12, 1980) and the failed attempts to unseat Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia (1980, 1988, and 1990) like others were cause for joy among the populace. In the last three cases, the populace felt, inter alia, that the leaders had outlived their usefulness. Similarly, The Gambian uprising against the PPP received widespread support.

### **The July 30 Mayhem: An Eyewitness Account.**

In 1968, gossips were abounding of the intention of some Field Force personnel plotting to topple the government. The development caused shudder in government as that was an era of coup d'états in West Africa. Countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Togo,<sup>10</sup> and Sierra Leone had experienced the violence at various times. However, internal meticulous investigations conducted by the Inspector General of Police, Mr Harry Evans, could not substantiate the rumour. Hence, as sleeping dogs lay, the authorities kept an ear to the ground.

Going by the eyewitness account of the co-author of this article, rumours of likely insurrection were again rife in the 1970s. The Field Force Depot and the authorities took measures to ward off likely imminent danger. News circulated about Gambian dissidents receiving training in Libya to topple the PPP led government. A Gambian national, Zakaria Conteh, travelled to Libya to work in a factory. Instead, he ended up in a military training camp. Disappointed and frustrated with developments, Zakaria defied orders to participate in trainings. He suffered torture and degradations and, in the process, sustained a fractured arm. After his escape from Libya, he alerted the Gambian authorities of the situation on his return. For his act of patriotism, he enlisted in the Field Force in 1979. Following his first-hand information, the authorities became convinced of a looming threat. Consequently, series of night standby became the order of the day. On many occasions, the Bugler will blow the emergency tune for the men to fall-in. Force personnel positioned themselves in battle formation throughout the length and breadth of the Barracks in the mornings. After a day or two, the standby disbands. Many a time, those with suspected loyalty suffered discharge, dismissal, or banishment to faraway postings. Corporal Malang Sambou was a victim as well as Lamin Sailykhan alias "Jarra Boy." Other Non-commissioned Officers (NCOs) including Jarra Boy, accused of providing sensitive information to the enemy got dismissal notices. His specific charge was that he pressed the key to the armoury on moistened soap with the intention of reproducing the key for clandestine purposes. In 1980, following a tip-off, the Field Force High Command recalled an entire contingent that was on live firing exercise at the Brikama firing range. Rumours circulated in the Barracks that the contingent commander intended to use the

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<sup>10</sup> Master sergeant Emmanuel Bodjolle staged the first successful coup in West Africa, which occurred in Togo, in 1963 while the first attempted coup in West Africa was that against Ashmund Jehudi of Liberia in 1823.

occasion to stage a coup.

The dismissal of Deputy Commander Ousman Bojang resulted from rumours, allegations, and counter allegations in circulation. Commander Bojang hailed from Guinea Bissau and belonged to the Mansuwankeh ethnic group. His last official residence was at the Officers' quarters outside the Fajara Barracks, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. When the period elapsed for him to vacate the quarters, those responsible could not serve him the quit notice out of fear. Instead, a fellow received it for onward delivery to a family relation. Nevertheless, Commander Bojang defied the quit notice. The Stores and Quartermaster Officer of the Field Force could not summon courage to de-kit him either. The Public Works Department (PWD) wrote to Bojang requesting him to vacate the house before he acceded, after which he then took up residence in Bakau New Town.

For unspecified reasons, on a Sunday morning in 1981, a Field Force Sergeant Major who took a walk to Town was physically confronted by Bojang for infringing on his privacy. Those who witnessed the fight spoke of a fierce encounter, which tattered the Sergeant Major's clothes. Eyewitness accounts confirmed the pummelling of the Sergeant Major, with scars and bruises on his face. The police could neither arrest nor prosecute Commander Bojang.

The Depot during this period was polarized along party lines; supporters of the ruling Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) and the opposition National Convention Party (NCP). The PPP Women's wing of the Depot staged a grand rally in 1981. During that meeting, the wife of former Mayor Malick Lowe, Yaa Bata, became the "Mother of the Depot PPP Women's Wing." Yaa Galajo, Yaa Isatou Bandeh and Yaa Awa Sarr were the women leaders "Yai Compins" others call them "Mammy Queens." On the other hand, the NCP elements operated underground. Occasionally, a fracas erupts amongst the women and they would tongue lash each other with obscenities.

The polarization aggravated when officers and some NCOs organized themselves into "*vhoous* with restricted membership."<sup>11</sup> Commander Bojang headed one where they convene in the evenings playing different indoor games while brewing and drinking "*attaya*."<sup>12</sup> Amid these security threats and the apparent inability of the PPP government to bring Commander Bojang to order, Mustapha Danso gunned down Deputy Commander Ekundayo Mahoney in October 1980 (Sarr Samsudeen, 2020).<sup>13</sup>

On October 27, 1980, Mustapha Danso was standing in "Order Arm" position inside the Sentry Post with his SLR (Self Loading Rifle), the standard Field Force rifle. Deputy Field Force Commander Ekundayo Mahoney was driving towards the junction from his residential quarters to negotiate a bend to the Depot when bystanders heard gunshots in rapid succession. Some ascribed the shots to the Sergeant assigned to shooting stray dogs to curb the incidence of rabies ravaging the country. As events unfolded, some Field Force Personnel scaled over the wire fences in search of sanctuary following the fatal shooting. As the men broke the news to waiting passengers and passers-by, pandemonium ensued. No sentry manned the main entrance and the Guard Room area. Within the Band Line and Training School area, a crowd congregated around the corpse of Commander Mahoney. Field Force officers took to their heels in search of sanctuary while Corporal Burama Jammeh (later RSM) disarmed Danso, making the former a hero. For his gallantry, the PPP Government later decorated him with a medal during a ceremonial occasion.

<sup>11</sup> Social clubs usually composed by men of the same age group.

<sup>12</sup> Chinese tea.

<sup>13</sup><http://www.executedtoday.com/2013/09/30/1981>

The mood in the Depot on that day was sombre. Evidently, most of the men did not spend the night in the Barracks. Dozens of Field Force personnel reported for work the following morning. Fearing that the incident might lead to uprising, the then Government called on Senegal for assistance. On October 31, 1980, military assistance arrived coinciding with the funeral of Commander Mahoney. Under Operation *Fode Kaba I*, the Senegalese troops comprising a Parachutists company and a platoon of Gendarmeries, restored order. These Parachutists descended at Bijilo and Yundum and fanned out for the Barracks. To people's amazement, men dressed in camouflage uniforms entered the Barracks from all directions. However, nerves were calm when it became evident that the troops were not hostile Forces. The Senegalese troops stayed in the Barracks for one week before leaving.

Apathy among the Force men persisted after the departure of the Senegalese intervention troops. Iren Omo-bare (1990, p. 10) asserted that newly mobilised members of society often engineer political violence when their demands are not met. As the Field Force grappled with internal their squabbles, the PPP government was under attack on all fronts by Gambian political organizations rooted in Marxist ideology. The political, economic, and social malaise pervading the society at that time set the stage for an upheaval. Some political organizations including the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) and the Gambia Revolutionary Socialist Party (GRSP) emerged in 1979/1980. The former had Ousman Manjang and Koro Sallah as its leader while Gibril Pengu George led the latter. Other organizations include Black Panthers, Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Foundation, Black Brotherhood, and so on. However, their scanty adherents and lack of acceptance by the unlettered populace, enabled government to ignore their presence and activities. MOJA had played an important part in the destabilization of the Tolbert Regime in neighbouring Liberia and gave support to the Doe's coup of 1980 against the administration. The MOJA-Gambia became a stern critic of the PPP government advocating a policy of raising the political consciousness of workers and farmers. Of the two, MOJA was intellectually inclined and popular among discontented youths, helped perhaps by Koro Sallah's reputation as an amateur sportsman (Arnold and Perfect 2008, p. 149-150 and Arnold Hughes, p. 991). They operated underground with pro-MOJA graffiti displayed on walls in Banjul and environs.<sup>14</sup> The PPP government on October 30, 1980 proscribed MOJA and GRSP.

July 30, 1981, marked an unprecedented uprising championed by some members of the proscribed Gambia Socialist Revolutionary Party, headed by Dominic Kukoi Samba Sanyang who, in the past, unsuccessfully ran for 1977 general election as a National Convention Party candidate in Kombo East constituency, having received 14 percent of the vote cast (Hughes and Perfect 2008, p. 202). Also co-opted were some Field Force personnel and a few of the Peoples Progressive Party. Others include the National Liberation Party leader, Pap Cheyassin Secka who contested elections with abysmal failure. With the

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<sup>14</sup> The 1980 mutiny by the hotheads in the Field Force elicited a series of radical Gambian movements for the removal of the administration by force. These include The Movement for Justice in Africa (M.O.J.A.) Gambia Chapter, an offshoot of Master Sargent Doe's effort in toppling William Tolbert in Liberia that year; and Jerry Rawlings's military takeover in Ghana in 1979. The Movement founded in Liberia in the year 1973, as a radical political organization by Togba Nah Tipoteh. Right from its inception, it actively enlightened the rural and urban downtrodden in the Liberian Armed Forces for the emancipation of the underprivileged, and the country at large, through social justice and democracy. Prior to its founding, there has been a widespread discontent throughout Liberia against the mindless domination of the indigenous citizens by the Americo-Liberian freed slaves for over one hundred years. A situation that was akin to colonialism. Prominent members of the group include Henry B. Fahnbulleh, Dew Tuan-Wreh Manson (Ambassador), Comany B. Wesseh (one time minister) Amos Sawyer (Future President of Liberia under the interim government for national unity), and Dominic Kukoi Sanyang, a Gambian Politician who was a candidate for the Roman Catholic Church priesthood and leader of the 1981 attempted coup in the Gambia. The formation of The Movement for Justice in Africa had significant influence on The Gambia's desire for a radical removal of Jawara from government as it introduced into the body politic.

assistance of Senegalese forces, government repressed the rebellion that temporarily overthrew the state. The intervention of the foreign forces was stoutly resisted by the populace which constituted an emergency ragtag armed force; a confirmation of the Machiavellian axiom that ‘a Republic trusting to her own forces presents greater difficulties to the would-be conqueror than one which relies on foreign arms brought to yield obedience to a single citizen.’ The attempted takeover caught the government unawares. Partly because of the hedonistic conviction among the authorities, that the lack of a standing army was enough coup-proof measure to shield the country from any likely military coup d’état. The solution the politicians fashioned to inhibit the coup virus that was ravaging Africa weaken the security forces, a ploy that seem to have boomerang.

Ironically, Field Force personnel collaborated with Gibril Pengu George’s Gambia underground Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party to hatch the coup plot with Kukoi Samba Sanyang who implemented it. The execution of the coup would have been extraordinary difficult without the complicity of the Force personnel. Thirty-six Field Force men took an oath on the holy Quran in the house of Pengu George during the planning stages never to betray the cause.<sup>15</sup> Evidently, the assassination of Commander Mahoney in October 1980 set the stage for the invasion of the military Depot and the July 30, 1981 attempted coup. One of the measures taken by the Gambia Government to avert a recurrence was the prohibition of Field Force personnel from carrying ammunition while on guard duties. On July 30, 1981, Kukoi and his conspirators armed themselves with five hunting guns and a revolver and marched on the Depot in Bakau, a distance of 5 miles, cut through the wire fence, and over-powered the Sentry and the other guards on duty. To ward off counter attacks, the insurgents fired sporadic shots within the Guard Room and Armory zone.

Most Field Force personnel were calm when the Supreme Council of The Revolution (SCR) announced the overthrow on radio. Four members of the SCR were their members namely Kantong Fatty, Dembo Jammeh, Jerreh Kolley and Junkung Saho. Kantong Fatty and Junkung Saho hailed from Baddibu (a predominantly Mandinka region) while Jerreh Kolley and Dembo Jammeh hailed from Foni and Tujereng. Kantong Fatty at the material time was the Sergeant Major Clerk, and before him was Dembo Jammeh. Jerreh Kolley was the Orderly in the Administration Office and was seen dispatching mail and other documents within the Depot. The role of the Sergeant Major Clerk was to prepare the roster for guard duties. It follows that some Force personnel in the different guard posts had foreknowledge of the insurgency. In the wee hours of that fateful morning, ASP Kikala Bandeh got assassinated at the front of his house; Orderly Sergeant, Sergeant Alagie Jobe met his premature death, a Police Officer, Karamo Kargbo, from Brikama likewise lost his life at the Bakau Police Station. Throughout that morning, the search for senior Officers continued unabated. Some Force men in the Guard Room area, wielding batons, and truncheons, came under gunfire and fled. Others including Ousainou Nyang and Sergeant Samba Kanteh made it to the Guard Room. Sergeant Samba Kanteh received order from the Sergeant Major to find out what was happening at the Guard Room. One wonders often why the Sergeant Major did not go to the Guard Room himself being the interface between the NCOs and the Officers. In such situations, he should have been the first to reach the Guard Room area.

The captured men were under detention in the Non-Commissioned Officer’s Mess (NCOs Mess) adjacent to the Guardroom throughout the insurgency. Major Sheikh Tijan Tarro and Sub Inspector Kabba

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<sup>15</sup> Some of these men included Kantong Fatty, Dembo Jammeh, Junkung Saho, Jerreh Colley, Ebrima Ceesay, Metta Camara, Komfi Camara, Modou Sonko, Modou Banda alias “Katchang Boy”, Nyonkoling and others.

Tunkara rushed to the Signals and Telecommunication Centre to Radio the Police Headquarters in Banjul. At the centre, they found two signallers, Musa Kinteh and Modou Ceesay. Prior to operating the Communication gadgets, the two signallers advised that their over coats be used to shield the blinkers from the view of the enemy. However, a rattle of gunfire in the immediate vicinity interrupted their efforts and they took cover. Sheikh Tijan Tarro had to scale the fence that night to New town, to surface again on August 7, 1981.

The recruit personnel on picket duties put up a commendable effort. At the sight of the attackers, the young recruit took to his heels and headed towards the direction of Sergeant Line. He used his baton to knock on the doors of the men asking them to wake up as the camp was under attack. The first person the recruit contacted was Sergeant Wally Faye, Chief Armorer. Without wasting time, Sergeant Faye scaled over the perimeter fence to report the matter to Acting field Commander Nicol at his Fajara residence. They drove in Nicol's car and parked at the front of Bakau Police Station. As they could not make any headway, the two men disappeared until the day the Senegalese Forces liberated the Depot Barracks.

The Inspector General, Alhagie Ablie Mboob rushed to State House to procure ammunition. The men at the Quadrangle (the government secretariat), and the State House at Number One Marina Parade received arms and ammunitions to defend their Guard posts. Some who obeyed orders put up a fight, and paid the supreme price while others fled. One, Bakary Jarju from Kartong died defending State House. At the break of dawn, the pounding of the Armory metal door was loud and ominous. Modou Sonko, a Field Force conspirator broke the strong Armory metal doors on instructions. Indeed FF 610 Sonko was equal to the task given his sheer size and masculinity. Balfour Beaty Construction Company built the Armory in 1977. It was unimaginable that the boxes of arms and ammunition fell into rebel hands to topple the PPP government. For whatever reason, the Russian (USSR) donated Kalashnikov Rifles (AK47) were kept from the Field Force. It was a goldmine for Kukoi and his men.<sup>16</sup>

While the insurgency was raging the president, Sir Dawda Jawara, was in England attending the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. The rebels held his wife and children hostage while some Field force members maintained neutrality. The Vice President, Assan Musa Camara, acting as President in Jawara's absence requested Senegal's intervention based on a 1965 defence agreement (Hughes and Perfect, 2008, p. XXVI).<sup>17</sup>

By the dawn of July 31, Operation *Fode Kaba II* was underway. Senegalese airborne paratroopers dropped in Jambur village and Yundum and advanced towards enemy positions. Those that came by land entered through Seleti, Basse, Soma and Amdalaye. However, the Senegalese soldiers were not in it alone. The Inspector General, Abdoulie Mboob, had mobilized a handful of loyalists to defend the Police Headquarters, a centre of resistance. On July 31, Field Force Pioneer Unit Platoon (FFPU) reinforcement from Farafenni arrived under the command of Sub Inspector Modou Njie. Modou Njie is the younger brother of Ex Colonel Ndow Njie who at the time was the ADC to President Jawara. The FFPU Platoon drove in a blue Bedford Truck and manoeuvred its way to the Police Headquarters. Other private citizens joined the fray

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<sup>16</sup> "The Soviet tanks used by the rebels were from a consignment that had been stored in the armory of the Field Force depot in Bakau after their delivery in The Gambia via Shy ben Madi, a Lebanese businessman. About 66 of these recently imported Ladas were seized, some being placed in the destructive hands of released prisoners and looters, who were given free license to resist the intervening Senegalese soldiers" (Sallah 1990, 636-637).

<sup>17</sup> 11 July 1964: "The Gambia and Senegal reach agreement on foreign policy, security, and defense issues, promising to support each other in the case of external attack (these come into force in February 1965)."

to defend constitutional order. One such person was Sergeant Ousman Jallow, a retired World War II veteran working as a security guard at the Ministry of Education. He joined the loyal forces and his skills and experience in warfare helped fortified the Police Headquarters. At the Airport and Brikama, the Senegalese forces met stiff resistance that gradually fizzled out as they fan across the country.

The Field Force Depot was the last rebel stronghold to fall. As news of men dressed in camouflage filtered, it was certain that action would ensue. Along Garba Jahumpa Highway Junction, a column of VLRA Trucks and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) loaded with Senegalese troops heading towards the direction of the Bakau Police Station. As the vehicles approached the Station, the VLRA military vehicles slowed down and the Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) moved in front and took a bend heading towards the Depot. Advancing Senegalese troops warned passers-by to stay clear of Club 98 Hotel (now African Village Hotel). As the Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) entered the Depot and secured key positions, the column of troops started advancing into the Depot. The capture of the Guard Room and Armory and the liberation of hostages followed. The next action was a house-to-house search for rebels and weapons during which few rebels were captured as Prisoners of War (POW).

On Thursday August 6, 1981, the Senegalese troop accomplished their mission. Thirty-three Senegalese soldiers died in the combat. On the Gambian side, the causality was within the range of 500 and 1000, but most of who were looters and armed prisoners freed by the rebels. Three thousand Senegalese troops partook in quelling the insurgency. The reinstated PPP government doled one Million US Dollars to the Senegalese Military (Hughes and Perfect, 1991).

The news of Senegalese intervention in the formative days of the coup paralyzed the organizational strategy of the rebels. They never factored foreign intervention into their plan. Their response to this development was ill planned and shabby. Kukoi in a Radio broadcast immediately ordered the instantaneous formation of the National Liberation Army (NLA) and Citizens exchanged their passports and voters card for Kalashnikovs and other light weapons to fight back the invasion of the Senegalese forces called upon by the ousted regime to restore constitutional order (Sallah, 1990, p. 633 and 634).

Lacking any coordinated plan for dealing with the consequences of their action, Kukoi and his fellow conspirators lost control. The coup degenerated into localized initiatives, confusion, and widespread looting, robbery, and killings. Divisions within the rebel ranks appeared. Pengu George died of bullet wounds at the Depot when a Field Force sub-inspector shot him for alleged looting and robbery. Others believed that he was a turncoat with questionable loyalty to the course.

As the command and control of the insurgents crumbled, the conspirators fled to Guinea Bissau. Diplomatic flurry between Banjul and Bissau for their extradition ended in futility. The Bissau authorities allegedly issued them documents to travel to Cuba. After a brief stint in Cuba, they relocated to Libya.<sup>18</sup>

As the dust settled and normalcy returned, the Depot inhabitants began returning. Enormous destruction resulted and the Depot was upside down. Band Master Nicol the Acting Commander of the Field Force at the time of the insurgency resumed his position assisted by other officers in reviving the administration. Within a week, structures were in place and work started in earnest. Ndow Njie received

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<sup>18</sup> "Eventually, after a week of fierce and bloody fighting, the rebel leaders, facing imminent defeat from Senegalese reinforcements and the virtual capture of their last stronghold at the Field Force depot in Bakau, fled to Guinea-Bissau via Casamance, some of them eventually going to Cuba." Also see The Point Newspaper. <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/kukoi-samba-sanyang-reported-dead> and Standard Newspaper. July 31, 2014. <https://standard.gm/jawara-recollects-the-30th-july-1981-abortive-coup/>

promotion as the new Field Force Commander and Band Master Nicol reverted to his old position as Director of Music before proceeding on retirement.

The first three days of the recapture of the Depot witnessed some unconventional moves. On August 7, 1981 the Sentry Man, instead of being a private, was a Corporal and the Guard Commander instead of being a Corporal, was sheikh Tijan Tarro, an Inspector. The “Blende” Battalion occupied the front row Bachelor quarters facing the Parade grounds and the “Bra” Battalion from Tambacounda occupied the Band Line quarters. Paratroopers occupied the two storey buildings close to the perimeter fence with Bakau New Town. Senegalese Army medics staffed The Training School Buildings that served as the Field Hospital, from where they provide free medical services to the public before relocating to Mile 7.

As the administration started functioning, the Field Force personnel returned to the Barracks and resume work while the arrests and detentions of real and perceived rebels were in progress at the Depot. Many detainees died at the Motor Transport Unit hanger, a major detention centre, of unsanitary conditions and exhaustion. The Field Force subjected suspects who denied active participation in the uprising to maltreatment during sessions dubbed “Operation Talk True.”

As the mopping up operations and arrests of suspects continued, information reached the Depot that, a tall, dark, and sturdy individual was roaming the Sting Corner area on the way to Banjul, the capital city. Following a tip off from some women oyster harvesters, the Senegalese and Gambian security forces laid siege on the area and succeeded in apprehending the suspect identified as Mustapha Danso. Danso was in detention at the Depot’s Carpentry Workshop and guarded by two sentry Senegalese paratroopers before his relocation to Mile 2 prison yard. After his conviction by the High Court, he allegedly faced a firing squad for his previous conviction in connection with the murder of Ekudayo Mahoney.

To expedite the trial of the suspected rebels, the PPP government got judges from Nigeria and other Commonwealth countries. A good number of the Field Force suspects received the death sentence while others got long jail terms. For lack of evidence, some others regained freedom after over five months in detention. All the condemned prisoners later gained presidential reprieve.

The 1981 uprising decimated the Field Force as many died, incarcerated, or dismissed. Sixty-six out of a total strength of 500 men received a clean bill of health.<sup>19</sup>

While the guilty received punishment, those who fought to restore constitutional order got some monetary compensation and elevations in rank. The twenty-three young men from the Field Force Pioneer Unit and other loyalists each received five thousand *Dalasi* as compensation. It was the talk of the Barracks. At the Depot, Sub Inspector Ousainou Nyang received accelerated promotion to the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) as well as Inspector Saidou Fatty. Saidou Fatty was the duty Officer on the day of the insurgency at State House and the Guard Commander at Number One Marina Parade was

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<sup>19</sup> Assistant Superintendent of Police Kikala Bandeh was the first casualty of the uprising; killed in front of his compound in Bakau Sanchaba. Sub Inspector Kabba Tunkara was convicted and later granted pardon. Chief Inspector Bailor Jallow, Sub Inspector Ansu Saho, and Sergeant Danso Jatta died in prison. Those convicted and granted amnesty include Sub Inspectors Momodou Jallow, and Noah Johnson, Sergeants Kaikai Manneh, Sajor Jawara, Sambanding Camara, Kajali Jarju, Bully Sanneh, Ebrima Ceesay, and Jalika Manneh, Corporals Chokomeh, Saul Faye, Juldeh Jallow, and Mass Corr, FF610 Modou Sonko. Sub Inspector Komfi Camara and Sergeant Metta Camara fled to Guinea Bissau with Kukoi. Officer Cadet Juwara, Officer Modupeh Grant, and Inspector Abdou Shyllon were detained and subsequently discharged from the Field Force. Corporal Sajor Jallow was declared missing in action while Sub Inspector Omar Njie, Corporal Lamin Kambi and Corporal Musa Camara died in action.

Corporal Sainey Sanyang alias Sainey Kantora. They both fled when the need arose. (Arnold Hughes, 1991, [b]) (Also See Camara, 1982, pp. 1-6).

### **What Prompted The Cataclysm**

Hatched in Somita, a settlement in Kombo East of The Gambia, the 1981 plot which preceded the mayhem was set in motion in Tallinding Kunjang, Serre Kunda metropolis. Intelligence reports and swift assistance from Senegal had prevented a coup from taking place on October 29, 1980 after Constable Danso murdered the Deputy Commander Ekundayo Mahoney, twelve years after the investigation conducted by the Inspector General of Police Mr. Harry Evans. That was the impression of a plot to unseat the first republican politicians. Government's swift reaction in beckoning 150 Senegalese forces thwarted the attempt.

It connotes much that within a few hours, the scanty Field Force loyalists to the coup leader, Dominic Kukoi Samba Sanyang, armed with just five village hunting guns and a revolver overrun the international airport, the State House, the parliament building, the radio station, and police barracks. The walkover exposed the inadequate nature of the security forces to quell insurgency and allied activities of grave magnitude. Government was ignorant of what lurked ahead (Arnold Hughes, 1991).

The radio announcement of the takeover by the self-styled revolutionary forces received an ecstatic welcome from the jubilant public. On Wellington and other adjoining streets, massive and unparalleled looting of shops owned by non-indigenes occurred as the Field Force personnel that would have maintain order was in unprecedented disarray. Prominent amongst the affected shops were Barthez, Maurel Prom, Shybean Madi, K. C. Chellerams, C.F.A.O., and other Levantine owned business concerns, most of which never recovered from the pillage. However, from eyewitness accounts, The Methodist Bookshop, the only book sales outlet in the country as well as state properties remained intact throughout the mayhem. The motive for staging the coup is important in analysing an incident of this nature.

Collier Paul (2005, p. 8) argued that the likely best approach to removing authoritarian dictators is through coups. History has replicate instances of authoritarian regimes toppled by either military action or popular uprisings or a combination of both. Richard K. Taylor (2011, p. 8) explains that "The phrase "coup d'état" is from the French, "blow against the state." It refers to the sudden, forcible overthrow by conspirators. Governments have been shaken or forcibly brought down since time immemorial." The definition also encompasses "the sudden, unconstitutional deposition<sup>20</sup> of a legitimate government, by a small group of the State Establishment -usually the military- to replace the deposed government with another, either civil or military. A coup d'état succeeds when the usurpers establish their legitimacy if the attacked government fail to thwart them, by allowing their (strategic, tactical, political) consolidation and then receiving the deposed government's surrender; or the acquiescence of the populace and the non-participant military forces.

Judging by the radio broadcast, a glaring manifestation of the scenario is the deplorable status and maltreatment meted out on certain members of the Gambian society. Tijan M. Sallah reasoned that some blame must be attached to the elites within both the ruling PPP and the opposition NCP, which had nurtured and exploited ethnic tensions to serve their narrow political agenda (Tijan Sallah, 1990, p. 635).

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<sup>20</sup> In history, sudden dethronement of governments is nothing new. The overthrow of King James II of England in 1688 (The Glorious Revolution) is noteworthy. Others are the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, Brumaire overthrow of the French Directory by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1799, and the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 in China. Also included are Czechoslovakia coup d'état of 1948, The Cuban Revolution of 1959, The Egyptian Revolution of 1952, The Iranian Revolution of 1979, The orange Revolution of November 2004 to January 2005 in Ukraine, The Nazi takeover of power in Germany following the rise of Adolf Hitler, etc.

Resentments against government failure to improve living conditions as promised at independence in 1965 were among the prevailing order. From the people's perspective the PPP led government had made their lives miserable than it was during colonial rule. Meanwhile, the PPP ruling élites and the opposition NCP had 'nurtured and exploited ethnic tension to enhance private political agenda.' It therefore came as no surprise when the announcers of the coup denounced the president on grounds of corruption and tribalism (Tijan Sallah 1990, p. 635-636). Also, state induced marginalization policy affected all rural dwellers since the colonial times, argued Sallah. Moreover, school leavers, had no hope of actualizing their aspirations.

The force at play is what Iren Omo-bare (1990) referred to as cultural pluralism. Some radio listeners concurred when the plotters accused the temporarily ousted president of prejudice among other accusations, (Tijan Sallah 1990, pp. 621-624). The situation was out rightly bad that certain marginalised ethnic groups had to pass for others to circumvent maltreatment. Among the Jola ethnic group for instance, three decades after independence, only thirteen received university education, all through Christian missions,<sup>21</sup> while the first Manjago cabinet minister took office after same period. Also, within the period, no female Jola received university education. Meanwhile, the total Jola population was 95,262 (10.6%) of the 617,239-country population. Contending with such deprivation connotes much for the fourth largest ethnic group of a country (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013, p. 12).

Welch and Smith (1974, pp. 26-30) posits that "The likelihood of military intervention as the intensification of conflicts among ethnic class cleavages threatens the state and power base of the dominant group or class. Wiking (1983, 119) cited instances of coup leaders accusing governments of tribalism, these include Somalia (1969) when Jaafar el Nimeiri and Babaka Awadallah accused prime minister Muhamad Mahgoub and his fellow politician of their inability to resolve the ethnic dispute with the south of the country. Wiking (1983, pp. 93-119) asserted that tribalism also featured in the coups in Uganda (1971), Chad (1975), Nigeria (1966), Togo (1967), Dahomey (1972), Rwanda (1973), and Mauritania (1978). Sallah's view point adds credence to those of Hiroi Taeko and Omori Sawa that "Poverty and social backwardness increase a society's coup risk, while political pluralism measured by party fractionalization does not affect a country's coup vulnerability" (Tijan Sallah 1990, p. 42).

Findings have shown that attempted takeovers of governments by force of arms are likely when either the economy or regime is in distress (Thyne and Powell, 2014). This was among the reasons for the attempted coup. Two years after the uprising, the US State Department reported that "Africa is the only area in the world where national growth rate are often negative and where food production is declining (Bureau of Public Affair, 1983, p. 1). Ailing economy has always been among reasons cited by coup leaders. Nelkin (1967, p. 231) concluded that the issues which best account for the ease of military takeover relates to the social consequences of economic circumstances. "Poverty and social backwardness increase a society's coup risk, while political pluralism measured by party fractionalization does not affect a country's coup vulnerability (Tijan Sallah 1990, p. 42)."

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<sup>21</sup> Dr. Ebrima Badjie, erstwhile Gambian Ambassador to India. John Jammeh, Late Lawrence Sanneh a French teacher, Emily Kujabi Director of Catholic Schools, Sotino Colley, Malang Jarju Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (A.P.R.C.) mobilizer, Magistrate Kebba Sanyang, Edrisa Jarjou I.T. Department of National Water and Electricity Corporation (N.A.W.E.C.), Mustapha Colley former Director of G.P.M.B, Lamin Bojang erstwhile Minister of Works, Muhammed Lamin Gibba erstwhile Director of Gambia Ports Authority, Dickson Colley a Chemistry teacher, and William Kujabi, all male.

In Dahomey, the causes of six coups were linked to declining economy. Also linked to it were the coups that overthrow Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (1966) which coincided with a sharp decline in cocoa price on the world market, Siad Barre in Somalia (1972), Mali (1968), Congo Brazzaville August (1968), Nigeria (1975 and 1983). Wiking buttressed the fact when he asserted that “The poorest countries are more susceptible to coup attempts than the relatively affluent countries, on the other hand, only six of the "richest" fifteen had experienced military intervention” (Wiking, 1983 p.74-77) The economy of The Gambia as of 1981 was clearly not in form. Sallah (1990, p. 635) affirms that a sizeable number of groundnut farmers earned an annual income of £20 (British Pounds) from their sales. While cost of living went up by as much as 8.8 percent unemployment rate was about 10 percent (Sallah, 1983, p. 635).

A significant oversight or rather imprudence on the part of the PPP-led government was its failure to learn from previous incidences. Besides, after the assassination of Mahoney, the security situations of the country remained neglected. Secondly, security remained lax countrywide after the bloody April 12, 1980 Liberian coup, that assassinated President William Tolbert. These events were also trailed by the execution of other thirteen top ranking public figures. It is plausible to argue that this was an era of coup d'état all over Africa.<sup>22</sup>

The ruling party, through its manipulative tactics, shut the electoral process from the citizenry, which was another factor that instigated the uprising. The pecuniary benefits of office and the desire to cling on to power at all cost intoxicated the PPP stalwarts. Thyne and Powell (2014, p. 8) observed that:

*“While opening the political process will likely put a leader’s political survival in peril, it affords him the opportunity to negotiate a privileged position in the government, retire with his life and livelihood, or at least survive in exile. Historical trends show that leaders might expect exile to actually be a fortunate outcome. When forcibly removed, leaders face exile about 40% of the time, jail 23% of the time, and a 17% likelihood of being killed. Only 20% of leaders are free from any of these punishments, suggesting leaders should rationally prefer a poll over the continued threat of a coup.”*

Thirteen years after the 1981 attempt, a successful military coup ousted the regime, confiscated properties, and a few party loyalists and other elites suffered precipitous decline in living standard. On humanitarian ground, the State later granted the deposed president reprieve to return from exile in Britain.<sup>23</sup>

The ousted politicians had all along manipulated the electoral process and mortgaged the integrity of the state by conniving with foreign troops to invade the country to quell the 1981 uprising. The invitation exposed the inadequacies of the state security apparatus to the invading forces. Ordinarily, in common law, the legitimacy of an incumbent political dispensation should not be determined by foreign states.

The Estrada doctrine ensures that no state has the *locus standi* to determine the legitimacy of another government by withholding recognition even if the administration is unconstitutional. Ironically, four decades after the invasion, no one seems to have questioned the constitutionality of invoking a treaty designed to protect the country against external aggression to suppress an internal insurrection. The success of a military

<sup>22</sup> The 1981 insurgency was a preventable incident had adequate precautionary measures were put in place. There were abundant warning signals in diverse parts of Africa most of which, like the assassination of Mahony, the infiltration of MOJA into The Gambia, the Liberia executions etc. They were lethal enough to enable the PPP and other parties put the country in order.

<sup>23</sup> “However, after several years of self-imposed exile in England Jawara finally came to terms with Jammeh, who gave him a presidential “pardon” in December 2001 and restored his house and other property in The Gambia” (Tijan Sallah 1990, p 116).

coup d'état raises questions as the issues bothers on legitimacy and sovereignty (Jessup C. Philip, 1931; Tayyab Mahmud, 1994; Sweet and A. Stone, 2007).

Another cause of the botched attempt is the nonchalant posture of the Gambia Trade Union that would have mobilized workers to mount resistance to thwart the attempted unconstitutional change. Gambia trade unionism commenced with Edward Francis Small, publisher of the *Gambia News Echo* who led the first workers strike in 1929 during the colonial period. His concerted effort contributed towards dismantling colonial rule through passive resistance. Notwithstanding the escalating deplorable living conditions of Black South Africans, trade unions have helped in both obstructing and averting unconstitutional changes. The tripartite alliance of the African National Congress, The Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Union is propping democratic rule. However, that contrasts the Gambian situation

Germany's Weimer Republic came after the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919. Due to the harsh terms of the treaty on the people who had just suffered a devastating defeat, and whose living conditions were deplorable. Consequently, an extreme Right-Wing nationalist Dr Wolfgang Kaap in collaboration with Lt. General Walter Von Luttwitz staged a coup to unseat the new republic. However, the Social Democratic Party called on the workers to embark on a general strike. The civil service and qualified personals looked up to by the plotters refused to collaborate. Newspapers joined in the defiance and some strikers died of bullet wounds. As the conspirators could not command the support of the people, "Berlin Security Police demand Kapp's resignation. Kapp resigns and flees to Sweden. Many of his co-conspirators flee Berlin in civilian clothing (Taylor Richard, 2011, p.36)."

Another instance was France. Army generals staged the celebrated General's coup in 1961 when General Charles de Gaulle made public his desire to give up keeping Algeria French as the Algerian war of independence seems intractable. This led to an attempted overthrow of the French government. Through people's action, the attempt failed. A similar incident happened in Russia in 1991. The coup failed due to defiance of the military to obey illegal orders.

The 1981 uprising is analogous to a 1917 coup that marked a turning point in the history of Russia. Kornilov the coup leader attempted to gain control of the Russian Provincial Government headed by Alexander Kerensky. When Kerensky realized the attempt was materializing, he sought assistance from Petrograd Soviet to forestall the impending takeover. Government appealed to the workers and soldiers, demanding them to protect the revolution. They reacted by closing all rail traffic in the city of Petrograd. Unfortunately, for Kornilov, he and his men were on the train approaching the city. The Soviets dispatched men to the trains and persuaded the soldiers that Kornilov's actions were against the revolution. The persuasion of the soldiers foiled the coup before it took off the ground.

However, Gambian trade unionism became moribund at independence through government overt and covert designs. Due to repeated strikes organised by its members, particularly one staged by the Gambia Utilities Corporation (electricity and water) in the Banjul area, government fall back on a colonial legislation to ban the union in January 1977 for failing to file in annual financial returns. In 1982, the ban was partially lifted following the useful role played by union leader Mr M. E. Jallow during the 1981 uprising. Afterward, the recognition was withheld when more radical GWU leaders sanctioned an industrial dispute at the Jahally-Pacharr rice project in McCarthy Island Division (Arnold Hughes and David Perfect 2008. P. xxvii and 84). Hence, during annual Labour Day celebrations on May 1, workers reminiscence the fiery speeches and

efforts of Edward Francis Small agitating, inter alia, for improved work conditions. Rather than clamouring for better work conditions, Gambian workers engage themselves in fanfares such as sports competitions and entertainment on Workers' Day.

Hence, it is glaring that the 1981 coup plotters capitalized on workers inaction, caused by general apathy towards government. In addition, with eight high schools serving the entire country, 62 percent of the populace could neither read nor write. There was less than 500 kilometres of tarred road nationwide. Access to pipe borne water and electricity were luxury in most provincial settlements. Deplorable was the press situation, while civil awareness was abysmal due to mass illiteracy.

The president bore the nickname 'the champion of human rights in Africa' in a country where necessities like education were in short supply, as only enlightened literate populace know what rights infringement entails. Another coup attempt staged thirteen years later toppled the regime and a commission of inquiry instituted unveiled that for ten consecutive years the Auditor General did not present audited accounts to Parliament, despite being a constitutional injunction, an indictment that speaks volumes (Barata Kimberly et al 1999, p. 18). The appalling commission findings was no surprise as

*...the issue of economic crimes or white-collar crimes is a widespread phenomenon in Africa. Various public officers acquire wealth by illegal or dishonest means. In The Gambia, the lack of record keeping was deliberately chaotic and was done in order to prevent anyone from following the trail. Although the financial instructions were clear, managers overrode controls to achieve personal financial gains. The thefts, which effectively disenfranchised the people of The Gambia, covered the whole spectrum of public sector finance (Barata Kimberly et al, 1999, p. 7).*

Notwithstanding the infractions which characterized the administration, it maintained excellent relationship with leading democracies. The foiled coup was a response to a failed regime, an answer to the endemic corruption ravaging the country. To save the state from the unfettered corrupt and irresponsible actions of politicians the coupists considered the action inevitable, an action Alex Thompson classed as Guardian coup. This is akin to what happened in Somalia (1969) where the coupists felt that to salvage the state from destruction, there was need for political change, (Wiking 1983, p. 30). Welch (1970) also share the same opinion that regime failure could trigger a coup.

What complicated the Gambian situation was that "failed coups ought to be an eye opener to those operating failed democracies." The Gambia was a glaring exception to the rule as the political elites refused to turn a new leaf despite the tragedy which the insurgency wrecked on the country. In spite of the enormous goodwilled financial and other forms of assistance the country received immediately after the uprising, the state of development and infrastructures remained unchanged. "The Gambia received immediate assistance from various international sympathizers, mainly in the form of cash, food, medical supplies, and technical aid. Saudi Arabia was reported to have given the most money, \$10 million, followed by £600,000 from Britain, but help was also received from Japan, Nigeria, and a number of other Middle Eastern, African, and Western countries" (Sallah, 1990, p. 639: citing Arnold Hughes, 'The Gambia After the Coup Attempt', in *West Africa*, 2 November 1981, pp. 2570-3).

The avoidable coup was welcome by the populace who understood their political leaders enough, besides, they considered the western (British) imposed democracy very costly with regard to human

sufferings and deprivations the politicians have wrecked on them since independence.

“The experience of the Republic of The Gambia” reasoned Barata Kimberly et al. (1999, p. 7), over a decade later, “makes the case for evidence as the basis for state accountability starkly clear.” After the botched attempt, formidable assistance from friendly countries showered on the country to the tune of \$30 million to assist government in its national reconstruction effort (Arnold Hughes, 1991). However, the ruling party could not turn a new leaf as the activities of corrupt politicians held sway while having unfettered access to state resources. In spite of the windfall, the state of the physical development of the nation left so much to be desired; so much so that thirteen years after the attempted coup, nothing changed hence the causes of the botched attempt paved a leeway for yet another but successful attempt that swept the regime into oblivion. The obscenities and horrendous financial and administrative infractions that characterized the administration constitute the findings of the Justice Alghali Commission Report (Barata Kimberly et al., 1999).

*“The Commission investigated the former President’s expenditures on foreign travel for the period of 1989 to 1994 during which he embarked on 40 overseas trips along with enormous delegations. It was able to recover an amount equivalent to US \$1,813,446 from the evidence contained in available records. However, this excludes the cost of 610 primarily first-class airfares. Without the documentary evidence, it is impossible to prove whether these tickets were ever issued and, if so, ever used.”*

*“The investigation revealed that the records regarding airfare costs had not been kept. The Ministry of Finance claimed not to have responsibility for documenting these costs and referred the investigators to the PMO. The PMO also claimed not have responsibility for these records and subsequently suggested that the team check with the Accountant General’s Department, which also denied responsibility. Even the office of the Secretary General (Head of Civil Service) could not provide these records despite its responsibility for generating all information and instructions on Presidential visits.”*

*“In addition, in an impoverished country as The Gambia, the records showed that in some cases 80% more was spent on the President’s travel than on education for a whole year. The expenditure on the President’s household was approximately 60% more than the expenditure on drugs and dressings for the Ministry of Health for an entire year. In total, the expenditure on foreign travels was more than health and education combined for a full year. This reveals a situation where the little revenue brought in through customs and internal revenue by means of taxation is dissipated through foreign travel.”*

Furthermore, the report disclosed that the ports authority was not spared of corruption either. Both businessmen and public officials devised ways of defrauding the state. The modus operandi includes mis-description of imported goods, misclassification, non-inspection, non-examination, under declaration of the quantity of imported goods, and misquotation of prices of items. On the other hand, to evade duties, importers habitually submit forged invoices, under quoting freight charges, and classifying goods destined for the local market as good in transit to other countries to evade duties. “Issuing cheques in settlement of duties levied but intentionally mis-signing their signatures, deliberately mis-stating the figures or deliberately writing the face value so as not to correspond with the figures quoted on cheques” (Barata Kimberly et al, 1999, pp. 18-21).

Therefore, the uprising whose failure did not serve a lesson to the ruling class was a design by the

coupists to save the state from further destruction. In line with the opinion of Samuel Huntington and S. E. Finer, the guardian coup insurgency was undertaken to salvage the state from mismanagement induced collapse (Thompson Alex, 2010, p. 259).

In Nigeria, the rapid Nigerianization of the military enabled inexperienced indigenous military officers to replace long serving British personnel within a span of few years after independence. Consequently, officers shouldered responsibilities they were neither trained for nor able to bear. Politicians subsequently infiltrated the ranks of the military to the extent that serving officers could not distinguish professionalism from political affiliations. The outcome was an unmitigated disaster that contributed to plunging the nation into a civil war from 1967-1969 (Luckham Robin, 1971).

In the same vein, the polarization of the Field Force along party lines in early 1981 enabled the PPP women's wing to stage a grand rally while the NCP supporters operated underground. This explains the unprofessional trait of the Field Force which permitted housewives (most of whom unlettered) to socialize with state security apparatus. Another abnormality tolerated by the authorities that turned out to be a recipe for trouble is the polarization of the Depot through the formation of *Vhoos*<sup>24</sup> where N.C.O's play indoor games and drink *attaya*<sup>25</sup> with commissioned officers. Similar practices remotely caused the Nigeria Civil War (Luckham Robin, 1971). Luckham (1971) further explained how membership of ethnic unions in the military was initially permissible in the Nigeria Army, prior to the outbreak of hostilities. This however dichotomised the establishment and promoted tribal allegiance among members of the military. Ultimately, the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War which was tribal raved the country. In British military tradition, there are precise limits of socialization between different categories of military officers, particularly the commissioned and non-commissioned; the Gambian situation is a negation.<sup>26</sup>

Rather than addressing the security concerns of the country, the ruling class leaned heavily, if not solely on a July 11, 1964 pact with Senegal. It is an agreement on foreign policy, security, and defence issues, promising to support each other in the event of external attack thereby relegating the responsibility of securing the territorial integrity of the nation to a foreign power. On April 19, 1967, The Gambia and Senegal signed a Treaty of Association in Bathurst (now known as Banjul). In addition, on January 8, 1991, another treaty bothering on friendship and corporation reinforced the existing ones (Hughes and Perfect, p. xxiv) '...a Prince must lay solid foundations; otherwise he will inevitably be destroyed. Now the main foundations of all States, whether new, old, or mixed, are good laws and good arms,' says Machiavelli in *The Prince* (Machiavelli, 1532, p. 56)

The motive behind the signing of the pacts remains murky for two reasons. First, African countries seldom declare war on each other as the benefit of such venture is insignificant compared to the financial and human cost (Bamfo Napoleon, 2013, p. 14). Both countries maintain identical ethnic composition, a people with no distinguishable external morphology. All Gambian families have ancestral links in Senegal. Hence, notwithstanding the agreement, it is unlikely that they will go to war each other. Therefore, it is unjustifiable that the motive of the treaty was to avert war between the two neighbours. Second, with the agreement in place, Gambian government felt secure and therefore found it unnecessary to hone its security apparatus after

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<sup>24</sup> Social fraternities

<sup>25</sup> Chinese Tea

<sup>26</sup> Intrinsically, The Gambia Field Force was not a military institution however, a wing oversaw quasi military affairs, while another was responsible for civil matters. Most of the former received training in fine military institutions such as West Point and Annapolis in the USA, Aldershot and Sandhurst in the United Kingdom, Teshi and Nigeria Defense Academy in Ghana and Nigeria, respectively.

the abolition of the colonial army. That explains why the insurgents had an easy ride in confronting the establishment, as the already antiquated security arrangements in place could no longer stand the test of time. In addition, the July 11, 1964 treaty was concerned principally with external threat. The motive of the beleaguered Gambian president and his Senegalese counterpart to invoke it to justify the invasion remain questionable.

As the interests of the PPP and those of the government and the Field Force are indistinguishable, professional service personnel perceived to be against the government suffered victimization. In addition, the Force was doubtlessly decimated as many a time, those with suspected loyalty suffered dismissal, or banishment to faraway posts, as a coup-proof measure. A case in point is that of the dismissed Deputy Field Force Commander Ousman Bojang. Consequently, the material interests of the Force personnel were shabbily addressed. Also neglected was the autonomy of the institution. Instances have shown that excessive interference in military affairs by the ruling class has been among the causes for military coups in most African states, (Nordlinger, 1977, pp. 64-76; Liebenow, 1968, pp. 240-250; Welsh and Smith 1974). The removal of General Ankrah as the army commander was among the reasons advanced for the 1966 Ghana coup that toppled Kwame Nkrumah. Also, the 1972 coup that dethroned General Kofi Busia was partly attributed to his manipulations of promotion within the military, (Wilking, 1983, pp. 86-87; pp. 786-796). Eventually, the removal of General Ankrah was partly caused by the declining welfare of the military personnel. Theses Alex Thompson categorised as Veto coup.

The Gambian coup-proof strategy of decimating the military personnel has some striking resemblance with a situation in Uganda. "Ugandan President Idi Amin's coup-proofing strategies of purging, appointing illiterate officers, and relying on mercenaries scuttled his military capabilities, leaving his regime virtually helpless against an eventual Tanzanian invasion," (Thyne and Powell, 2014, p. 8). It is therefore not perplexing that the strategies adopted by the Gambian government to incapacitate the military weakened the institution to the extent of being incapable of repelling a wishy-washy attack on constitutional order without foreign assistance.

Coup plotters must view an illegal overthrow of government as the least costly option to improving a country. This decision is a serious affair. Leaders quickly purge military leadership after discovering a coup plot, and the consequences for perpetrating a failed coup attempt are most frequently exile, imprisonment, or even death (Svolik, 2009, p. 481).<sup>27</sup> In Ghana, internal grievances within the military partly caused an aborted coup against General Joseph Ankrah in April 16-17, 1967. Lieutenants Samuel B. Arthur and Moses Yeboah spearheaded the move in collaboration with Second Lieutenant Osi-Poku. Their discontent centres on government unwillingness to promote certain army officers from the rank of Lieutenant to Captain after they have sat and passed the requisite examination. They complained of corruption among the military members seating on the National Liberation Council, the highest governing body. During interrogations, Arthur asserted that he wished to be the first army Lieutenant in the country to stage a successful coup. Arthur and Yeboah subsequently faced a firing squad, while Osi Poku received a thirty-year prison sentence. He received reprieve

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<sup>27</sup>In Nigeria, the failed military coup of February 13, 1976 resulted in the assassination of the Head of state General Murtala Muhammed. Consequently, thirty-two military officers including the serving minister of defense, and an employee of Radio Nigeria, Lagos faced a firing squad and later an additional seven military officers including a military governor suffered the same fate. On July 27, 1990 after secret trials by a military tribunal, 42 military officers faced a firing squad on another occasion in Nigeria while nine others including three civilians received various prison terms for attempting to overthrow the General Babangida's military administration.

after a successful 1972 coup that brought General Ignatus Achampong to power.

Although coup leaders often cite verity of reasons to justify their action, personal ambition, and desire to enhance their status should be paramount (Decalo Samuel, 1976, p. 15-22). "Soldiers," asserted Alex Thomson, "also rebel to further their own corporate and personal interests." To add credence to the assertion, from 1975 to 1979, and from 1983 to 1999, six army generals governed Nigeria. Generals Murtala Muhammed (1975-1976), Olushegu Obasanjo (1976-1979), Muhamadu Buhari (1983-1985), Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), Sani Abacha (1993-1998), and Abdulsalaam Abubakar (1998-1999). They all advanced virtually the same reasons for overthrowing successive military regimes in which they previously partook in toppling. Also, in Central African Republic, Decalo Samuel (1976, p. 17) referenced Jean Bedel Bokassa's personal desire to lead the country having on a previous occasion declared himself the war minister. It demonstrates that personal ambition could supersede the reasons coupists press forward to justify their actions. In the same vein, the instigators of the 1981 uprising could be pursuing personal ambition and even grievance against those of the ruling class. Pap Cheyassin Secka ran for elective office and failed. In the same fashion, Dominic Kukoi Samba Sanyang the coup leader ran for 1977 general election as a National Convention Party candidate in Kombo East constituency with abysmal failure. This brings to question if they are credible to effect changes in the political system in view of their outright rejection at the polls.

The appalling neglect of the Force personnel continued long after the insurgency was put down. Ironically, the reasons that fuelled the eventual overthrow of the PPP regime in 1994 were among the prevailing conditions of 1980 namely feeding and accommodation difficulties in the barracks, non-payment of service allowances of military personnel on a peace keeping mission in Liberia, and the presence of seconded Nigerian military officers to The Gambia as they wish to run their show by themselves, (Alex Thompson, 2010, p. 140).

Another glaring example is the case of 1984 Liberia where "excessive rigging of the elections triggered an abortive coup by the ex-commander of the army, a former Doe ally. The failure of the coup resulted in a bloody orgy of revenge by Doe's forces," (Sawyer, 1999, p. 297). Clayton L. Thyne and Jonathan M. Powell recalled that coup perpetrators must come from either the military or other elites in the state apparatus, people who enjoy a privileged status in society. Thus, leaders seeking regime change are likely to exhaust other legal channels before perpetrating a coup and are most likely to do so only when they expect their leadership to cause a significant improvement in the status quo (Thyne and Powell, 2014, p. 5)

For the above reasons, enlightened Gambians became vociferous in condemning the ruling class whom they perceived as homogeneously corrupt. Hence, the coalition of diverse actors from different walks of life gave the 1981 uprising a national outlook. Paradoxically, members of the ruling PPP, opposition NCP, the National Liberation Party, and the proscribed Gambian Socialist Revolutionary Party all participated in the insurgency. Others include four members of the ill-fated Supreme Council of the Revolution namely, Kantong Fatty and Junkung Saho both from Baddibu District, while Jerreh Kolley and Dembo Jammeh hailed from Foni and Tujereng. The composition of the conspirators which transcends ethnic lines is an indication that public resentments against the Gambian ruling class cut across geographical roots.

Another formidable problem that precipitated the uprising is the draconian grip of the PPP on power.

*"Ghana and Guinea, two of sub-Saharan Africa countries to get independence early; also*

*became the first to outlaw multiparty governance by adopting single-party systems. Ghana's ruling Convention People's Party (CPP) passed the Preventive Detention Act in 1958 and the Republican Constitution of 1960 restricted political parties other than the CPP from operating. Guinea passed its own Preventive Detention Act in 1959, followed by a ban on the activities of political parties other than the Parti démocratique de Guinée (PGI). Other countries in the sub region such as Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, and Liberia followed suit by passing single-party laws or making the ruling party so strong it emasculated minor parties from competing. One-party control was associated not only with dictatorial but also with quasi or full totalitarian rule" (Bamfo Napoleon, 2013, p.14).*

Indeed, the PPP rule was quasi-authoritarian hence only favoured members and their cronies benefited from the system, similar to the True Whig Party which ruled Liberia for over a century on strict party loyalty basis and membership of the Masonic Lodge (Omasanjuwa and Junisa, 2020, p. 10). Under PPP rule, there was virtually no room for dissent. The state-controlled radio station advertised nigh on only the ruling party's jingles. As government was not receptive to enlightening the masses, there was no television house in the country until after the demise of the regime. Journalists like those of the PDOIS party newspaper *Foroyaa* were harassed when cases of corruption and those considered embarrassing to government get to public attention. In the case of a journalist Sana Manneh, the state filed proceedings against him for alleging that some ministers were involved in unethical practices. During the trial, Radio Gambia, the government mouthpiece, stopped covering the proceedings after the first week. The trial magistrate Wallace Grant discharge and acquitted the defendant on the ground that some of the personalities named in the indictment were not libelled. The state appealed the judgement and obtained an order to have it retried however; the defendant got an interlocutory order from The Gambia Appeal Court which made the retrial impossible.<sup>28</sup> Irregularly mimeographed newsheets served as newspapers while official information outlets exercise restraints in running information critical to the establishment. "The country's deteriorating economic climate was exacerbated by an ostentatious display of wealth by the elites and was compounded by the regime's inability or unwillingness to punish those who had enriched themselves at the Public's expense (Tijan Sallah, 1990, p. 637).

Blossoming corruption among public officials and businessmen was so conspicuous that the participants were widely referred to as members of 'The Banjul Mafia', a label that captures the 'means' employed by those who control a substantial portion of the country's wealth in their pursuit of various private sinecures (Tijan Sallah 1990, p. 643-644). "The leadership's role did not help significantly because dwindling discipline among public servants allowed them to make a number of public choices designed to promote their private interests (Tijan Sallah, 1990, p. 648)." Similar to pre 1980 Liberia where "By the time of Tolbert's assassination and the overthrow of the ruling oligarchy, seven percent (Americo Liberian families) of the population-controlled sixty percent of the GDP, the nation's wealth was concentrated in few hands (The Republic of Liberia TRC, p. 112).

Rather than concentrating on the task of nation building, PPP stalwarts were engaging themselves

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<sup>28</sup> Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Report Submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives and Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate by the Department of State in Accordance with Sections 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended, Volume 1991.

in ferocious infighting. Long before the insurgency there have been serious contests for leadership positions within the party. Divisions within the ranks contested the leadership of Jawara and this ultimately led to breakaway factions like The People's Progressive Alliance, the National Convention Party (NCP), and the Gambia People's Party (GPP), but all failed to dislodge the PPP from power (Arnold Hughes and David Perfect, 2008, p. 182).

The PPP was in actuality serving a section of the country, namely the elites.<sup>29</sup> This is comparable to how the True Whig Party of Liberia served the Americo Liberian elites, and the National Liberation Council of Kofi Busia served the Ashanti ethnic group in Ghana, (Liebenow, 1968, p. 241; and Omasanjuwa and Junisa, 2020).

The Gambia was a *de facto* one-party state, a prevailing condition in most of Africa of the eighties. Gambian politicians contested elections with the sole aim of controlling political power, not necessarily to serve. When rulers are insensitive to the demands of the populace, other means of addressing their wants will be fashioned. An example was in Ethiopia where the land reform programme in 1967-1969 failed, and the devastating drought of the 1980s coupled with the war with Eritrea complicated the situation thereby necessitating a military intervention, (Schwab, 1979, p. 125-135). The PPP waxed so strong and formidable to the extent of being in firm control of all apparatus of government, parliament, justice, and finances. The alleged practice of cross border voting orchestrated by the ruling party contributed immensely towards making its defeat at elections impossible. Besides, the chief electoral officer was the Minister of Local Government, a member of the ruling party, an appointee of the president of the republic who also heads the ruling party concurrently. Opposition parties existed but they were unable to compete favourably as the play field was not level to tolerate genuine political competition, a situation that rendered them quiescent, besides being of the same stamp as the PPP loyalists.

### Concluding Remarks

It goes against the grain for the PPP to vent their anger on Field Force personnel suspected of disloyalty, as a coup proof strategy. The 1981 rebels calculate reasonably well going by the massive public support they received amid the weak resistance of the Field Force personnel. It is incomprehensible why the PPP led government downplayed the activities of radical politicians for so long in view of the unfolding events in other parts of Africa. Besides, all the independent candidates who contested the 1992 Gambian General elections who vied against PPP candidates were radical youths. As part of government nonchalant attitude to security matters, it was after the assassination of Deputy Commander Mahoney the PPP led regime thought it wise to adopt corrective measures, while the Field Force remained politicized. The writeup shows that several factors worked concurrently to cause the insurgency.

The government failed to open-up the country, through development, to outside influence hence the populace was virtually isolated from the outworld world. The political parties were of the same stamp as they were not ideologically based besides being the personal bequest of their founders. Going by the high rate of cross carpeting among members of different parties, it stands to reason that nothing would have changed had

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<sup>29</sup> The lead author is aware of instances of high school graduates who could not proceed beyond sixth form in their educational carrier due to lack of study opportunities; whereas the wards and children of the ruling class had ample privileges of securing places in overseas educational institutions on fully funded foreign scholarships by institution like The British Commonwealth, regional bodies like ECOWAS, and the UNDP. On its part, the Gambian Government refused to establish a university. The ultimate fall of the regime in 1994 ultimately gave birth to a university extension programme in 1995 that was eventually upgraded to The University of The Gambia in 1999.

the PPP lost the presidency to another party. Both ruling and opposition party members, like most Field Force personnel, failed to defend the constitutional order during the mayhem. Additionally, lack of awareness caused by the weak educational base of the country prevented most citizens from comprehending the implication of the unfolding events. Non corporation on the part of the public would have complicated matters for the rebels. Rather, the divided loyalty of most Field Force members resulted in wait and see attitude among several of them, just like most members of the public. The provincial dwellers remained aloof as unfolding events mesmerised them.

Kingsley C. Anyanwu's opinion of the basis of political instability in Nigeria fits the Gambian situation. The scanty educated people in The Gambia at the time of the coup were confused. During their primary and high school days, they recited the country's national anthem off head and pledged allegiance to the national flag. However, what their teachers thought at school, what their parents thought them at home, what they personally observed in the society are conflicting and contradictory. At school, they praise the moral goodness of their "political heroes." At home, the young learn from their parents about the "real politics": corrupt politics and politicians, financial embezzlement by public officials, the ostentatious lives of politicians, ineffective government, ethnic allegiance, rather than patriotism to the nation and so on. Their religious leaders remind them of traditional ways of life: respect for elders, leadership, moral integrity, and the like. However, the young do not see the embodiment of these values in most of their leaders. Therefore, they turn their backs on politics and politicians, and become indifferent to idealism. Only a few of them in higher institutions show some interest in politics. Having been indifferent to or shielded from political events for years, one finds that as adults they are ill prepared to play adult roles in politics. They would have to unlearn the basic orientations acquired during their youth for the purpose of national integration. This is why most adults have the political orientations of the young. (Kingsley Anyanwu, 1982, p. 107) Sometime in the past, the President of the Republic challenged educated Gambians to join the fold of partisan politics rather than engaging themselves in side-line criticisms. The call went unheeded partly because of their ill-prepared nature for the challenge, and partly because of the moral bankruptcy of the system. The consequences include the cabinet of ill-literate ministers running the country.

The democratic system derailed hence it was unable to respond to the day-to-day realities confronting the people. Government on its part remained aloof over the flouting of laws and ingrained traditional values such as honesty, truth and sincerity were desecrated with brazen impunity while politicians' pecuniary desires supersedes the common good. Absence of effective opposition to either discuss the fate of the country meaningfully or constructively confront the ruling party contributed to the desolation. A one-party oligarchy existed in place of the western democracy that the colonial government imposed on the people. In conclusion, the coupists rebelled against the state, the unconstitutional constitutional arrangement, and the regime that has polluted the system.

Kukoi Sanyang and his confederates were brave. However, they were not cautious enough while concocting the plot, as sufficient adequate precautionary measures did not precede the lethal venture. Government loyalists in the Field Force and the ruling class could not muster sufficient support to thwart the insurgency as the unpopularity of government was overwhelming and besides, the insurgents ensured that the means of mass communication, Radio Gambia, was under their control. The attempt failed for not factoring the reaction of Senegal into the equation. Kukoi Sanyang and his confederates might be sorry for the devastation that resulted from the exercise, but they are not likely to regret the action that they considered

inevitable.

Quantson Kofi Bentum's account of the 1967 Ghana coup attempt has some parallel with Kukoi's effort. Lt. Samuel Arthur in collaboration with 120 military personnel left their military base at Ho, in the Volta Region of Ghana (a predominantly Ewe Region) to Accra the capital with the intension of toppling the government. They seized key installations such as the Castle (State House), Flagstaff House, the airport, and the Radio Station. The operation disorganized the military establishment in Accra. Service personnel either refused or were unable to defend their Commander-In-Chief. As details of the whole operation became clearer, the populace was enlightened. The three ringleaders of the coup were of the Akan ethnic group. While the principal casualties Lt. General Kotoka, Captains Borkloe and Avevor were Ewes. However, the officer who announced the operation over the radio, Captain Sowu, was an Ewe. Hence, it was difficult to ascertain if the motive of the plotters was ethnic based. For a while, ethnic resentments swept across the country (Quantson, 2008, p. 12).

Kukoi's hatched the attempt at Somita in Kombo East, a predominantly Jola district. The plotters relocated to Tallinding Kunjang, also a Jola dominated neighbourhood in the Serrekunda metropolis for its lunch. Sallah think that the leaders felt strongly about the mistreatment and disenfranchisement of the Jola. He explained that:

*"The members of this ethnic group have unquestionably (though, perhaps, by no deliberate official design) been a 'permanent underclass'. Certainly, many of their womenfolk work for meagre pay in Mandinka and Wolof homes as ajangas or housemaids, cooking, washing, and cleaning for their employers. It is, in fact, not unreasonable to speculate that growing up in such a servant/master environment may have created the cumulative frustration that helps to explain the force of the eruption that took place in 1981."* (Quantson 2008, p. 635).

For this reason, radio listeners concurred when the plotters accused the President of tribalism among other infractions. However, an insignificant number of the Force received a clean bill of health, 66 out of 500, at the close of investigations. This indicates that, like the Ghana situation, several them were of doubtful loyalty to their Commander-in-Chief and the constitution. As the composition of the Force is ethnically balanced, it makes sense to assume that the issues at stake transcend ethnicity. Judging from the composition of the plotters it is difficult to ascertain if their motive was ethnic based or if ethnicity happens to be an accidental factor in the equation. However, if the grievances against the PPP led government include ethnic bias, the ailment is worth addressing despite some of the actors belonged to disadvantaged ethnic groups. As mentioned previously, Kantong Fatty and Junkung Saho hail from Baddibu District while Jerreh Colley hails from Foni, an allegedly disadvantaged region, and Dembo Jammeh from Tujereng. Their diverse geographic root is an indication that ethnicity could be an accidental factor. Other key players like Koro Sillah, Pengu George, and Pap Cheyassin Secka were of Banjul extraction, a geographic root different from the previously disadvantaged communities. However, the Jola problem could be an integral component of the general malaise that plagued the PPP government. "If the coup had succeeded" as Quantson reasoned, "there was no doubt whatsoever that the military command [and the populace] would have pledged support" as only an insignificant number of the Field Force defended the constitutional order (Quantson, 2008, p. 12). That is precisely what happened in 1994 when a Jola military officer seized power through a military coup.

The history of a desire for a coup began in 1968 when the Inspector General of Police investigated whispers of conspiracy to topple the regime. In 1980, the assassination of the Field Force Deputy

Commander, Ekundayo Mahoney and the 1981 uprising were links in the continuum of efforts to effect the change which eventually took place in 1994. Although the coup proof mechanism sustained the PPP amid rampant corruption and mismanagement, however after 26 years, the regime fell on July 22, 1994 leaving a ramshackle country for the incoming administration.

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