DEMOCRACY AND RESURGENCE OF MILITARY COUPS IN WEST AFRICA (2010–2023)
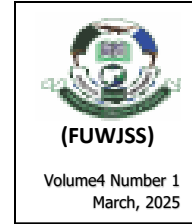
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Abstract

The resurgence of military coups in West Africa has become a major challenge to democratic consolidation in the region. This study examines the underlying causes, implications, and responses to these military interventions, with a focus on governance, economic instability, and security threats. The study adopts a qualitative approach, relying on secondary data sources such as books, journal articles, and reports to analyze the interplay between democracy and military rule. The study is anchored on Fragility Theory, which explains how weak state institutions, economic hardship, and political instability create conditions that encourage military interventions. The findings reveal that military coups in West Africa are primarily driven by weak governance structures, corruption, economic hardship, ethnic divisions, and security challenges. Although regional organizations such as ECOWAS and the AU have implemented sanctions and diplomatic interventions, their effectiveness remains debatable due to inconsistent enforcement and lack of political will. The study concludes that strengthening democratic institutions, promoting socio-economic development, enhancing regional cooperation, and empowering civil society organizations are critical steps toward preventing military takeovers and fostering long-term democratic stability in West Africa.

Keywords: Democracy, ECOWAS, governance, military coups, political instability, West Africa

Introduction

Democracy is being tried out in Africa. Although Africa made great strides toward democracy in the early 1990s as a result of internal and external pressures, the continent now appears to be experiencing a new wave of democratic backsliding. As military coups have decreased (though not disappeared), elected leaders undermining their own constitutions to remain in power has emerged as the greatest threat to democratic governance in Africa. Numerous African countries' elected leaders, including those in Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Burundi, have tried

to undo democratic gains by amending their constitutions in order to stay in power (Durotoye, 2016).

Many societies, particularly those in the Third World, experience the presence of the military in politics in the form of military rule, also known as military government or military regime (Badie et al., 2011). Military involvement in politics is not a recent phenomenon; it dates back to the time of Roman praetorianism and was widespread during the feudal era and the periodic interregnum in the constitutional conflicts of many societies, including those in Africa and other Third World nations, particularly after they attained political independence (Igwe, 2015).

Africa has seen more coups or military interventions in polity than any other continent in the world both in the 20th and 21st centuries (Falola, 2022). Historically, coups in Africa began almost immediately after independence in the 1960s. And so far, the continent has experienced over 200 coups – both successful and failed coups. Hence, one can describe Africa as a continent of frequent coups with about 41 states in the continent experiencing either failed or successful coups (Barka & Ncube, 2012). The general manifestations of coups in Africa in recent times have been attributed to several issues such as the absence of democratic practice, leadership failure, economic crisis, the greed of military officers, youth and citizens' discontents, etc. (Isilow, 2022).

In Africa, West Africa has been the epicentre of military coups on the continent (Suleiman, 2021). The region accounts for 51.3 per cent of coups in the early period of Africa's post-colonial phase between 1960 and 1969, 49.5 percent from 1970 to 1989, and a shocking 53.7 per cent from 1990 to 2010. Recent data from 2011 to 2023 indicates a continuation of this trend, with West Africa witnessing around 20 coups or attempted coups, representing about 50% of the total coups recorded in Africa during this timeframe (Chin & Kirkpatrick, 2023). This suggests that the region remains a focal point for political instability and military interventions. The factors contributing to the high incidence of coups in West Africa are multifaceted. Political instability, characterized by endemic corruption, weak governance, and socio-economic challenges, has created an environment conducive to military takeovers (Bell, 2016; Mngutyo, 2021). The legacy of colonialism, which often left behind weak state institutions and deep-seated ethnic divisions, further exacerbates these issues (Thusi et al., 2022; "Regional coups undermine French military strategy", 2022). Moreover, the recent resurgence of coups, particularly since 2020, can be attributed to a combination of deteriorating democratic norms and the perceived failure of civilian governments to address pressing issues such as security and economic hardship (Chin & Kirkpatrick, 2023; "Democracy's Discontent and the Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa", 2023). The African Union

and ECOWAS have made efforts to curb these coups through normative frameworks; however, their effectiveness has been questioned due to inconsistent enforcement (Sr., 2023; Pryce & Time, 2023).

Based on this backdrop, this research tackles the resurgence of military coups in West Africa by exploring the underlying causes, assessing their impacts on democratic governance, and evaluating the effectiveness of regional and international responses to the phenomenon.

Causes of the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa

The resurgence of military coups in West Africa can be attributed to a complex interplay of socio-political factors that have persisted despite efforts towards democratization and stability in the region. Key among these factors are weak state institutions, ethnic and religious divisions, economic challenges, external influences, democratic deficits, security threats, and regional dynamics. Recent local scholarly works provide a nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

Weak State Institutions and Governance Failures: Many West African countries suffer from weak state institutions and governance failures, often rooted in their colonial pasts. These weak institutions are characterized by corruption, nepotism, and ineffective public service delivery. According to Fomunyoh (2019), the persistence of these governance issues creates opportunities for military intervention, as military leaders perceive themselves as capable of restoring order and addressing systemic failures that civilian governments have struggled to manage. This is particularly evident in Guinea, where chronic governance failures and public discontent created a conducive environment for the 2021 coup (Diallo, 2021).

Unfulfilled Democratic Promises: Democracy is widely associated with promises of freedom, prosperity, and improved quality of life. However, the practice of democracy in West Africa has largely failed to deliver these promises. At the time these countries fought against military rule, proponents of democracy mobilized popular support by promising a better life under civilian governments. However, democratic governments that took over from the military have failed to deliver on such promises. In some cases, life under civilian rule deteriorated even further, exacerbating poverty, inequality, and corruption. This failure has made populations increasingly disillusioned with democratic governance, creating a sense of nostalgia for military regimes that were perceived to be more disciplined and efficient. The widespread disappointment with civilian governments' performance has created a conducive atmosphere for military coups, as citizens view the military as an alternative force capable of addressing their socio-economic grievances (Adeoye, 2021; Ouedraogo, 2022).

Ethnic and Religious Divisions: Ethnic and religious divisions significantly contribute to the resurgence of military coups in West Africa. These divisions can be manipulated by political elites or military factions to mobilize support or justify intervention. For instance, the 1966 military coup, led by Igbo officers, was framed as an attempt to address political corruption and ethnic favoritism by the northern Hausa-Fulani elites. However, it quickly sparked ethnic resentment, leading to a counter-coup by northern military officers, including Murtala Mohammed, and eventually the Nigerian Civil War (Biafran War) from 1967 to 1970, driven by secessionist ambitions of the Igbo-dominated Eastern Region. Another example is the 1983 coup in Nigeria, led by General Muhammadu Buhari, which was partly influenced by allegations of ethnic favoritism under President Shehu Shagari's government. Buhari's regime focused on maintaining order amid ethnic tensions, but his rule was short-lived, leading to another coup in 1985. Beyond Nigeria, ethnic tensions also contributed to military coups in other West African countries like Sierra Leone and Ghana, where factionalism and ethnic politics destabilized civilian governments. In Ghana, the ethnic divisions between the Ewe people (perceived supporters of Kwame Nkrumah) and others, like the Akan, contributed to tensions that fueled military takeovers, such as the coup against Nkrumah in 1966.

Economic Challenges: Economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and resource inequality exacerbate the vulnerability of West African countries to military coups. Persistent economic hardships fuel social discontent and weaken trust in civilian governments, making populations more susceptible to military promises of stability and economic improvement. Economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality have made West African countries particularly vulnerable to military coups by exacerbating public dissatisfaction with civilian governments. For instance, Mali has a poverty rate of 42.7% and a GDP per capita of around $900, while Burkina Faso's poverty rate is 40.1%, with a GDP per capita of $794 (World Bank, 2021). Youth unemployment in Guinea stands at 17.6%, contributing to the public discontent that preceded the 2021 coup. Similarly, Nigeria's unemployment rate reached 33.3% in 2021, making it one of the highest in the world. These economic hardships, alongside resource mismanagement and inequality, create fertile ground for military interventions, as seen in the recent coups in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, where promises of stability and economic reform often accompany military takeovers (Adeoye, 2021; Ouedraogo, 2022).

External Influences: External actors also play a crucial role in the resurgence of military coups in West Africa. External actors have significantly influenced the resurgence of military coups in West Africa. Foreign powers and international organizations, sometimes in pursuit of

their own strategic interests, contribute to political instability by backing authoritarian regimes or prioritizing security over democracy. For example, Russia's growing influence in countries like Mali and the Central African Republic through the Wagner Group has provided military leaders with external backing, emboldening them to seize power under the pretext of fighting terrorism and jihadist groups. Similarly, France's long-standing military presence in Francophone West Africa, particularly its anti-terrorism operations in the Sahel, has often overshadowed efforts to promote democratic governance. In Mali, international focus on combating jihadist insurgencies has led to support for military juntas, with limited pressure on democratic reforms (Traoré, 2021). Furthermore, external actors like Russia, with their involvement in Africa's security landscape, contribute to military leaders' perception that they have geopolitical support in their quests for power, as seen with recent coups in Burkina Faso and Niger (Akokpari, 2018).

Democratic Deficits: The erosion of democratic norms and institutions facilitates the resurgence of military coups. Despite initial progress towards democratization in the 1990s and early 2000s, many West African countries have struggled to consolidate democratic governance. Issues such as electoral fraud, constitutional manipulation, and weak rule of law undermine public trust in democratic processes. In Côte d'Ivoire, the 2020 electoral crisis, characterized by allegations of electoral fraud and exclusion of opposition candidates, led to political instability and increased the risk of military intervention (Konaté, 2021).

Security Challenges: Security challenges, including armed conflicts and terrorism, further complicate the socio-political landscape in West Africa and contribute to justifications for military coups. Countries like Mali and Burkina Faso have faced significant threats from jihadist groups, leading to military interventions that promise to restore stability and address security concerns. However, as noted by Sanogo (2021), military-led governments often prioritize security over democratic freedoms, raising concerns about long-term governance and stability in these countries.

Regional Dynamics: Regional dynamics within West Africa also influence the resurgence of military coups. Inter-state rivalries, border disputes, and regional power struggles can spill over into domestic politics, destabilizing countries and creating opportunities for military factions to intervene. According to Asante (2019), the lack of effective regional mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution exacerbates tensions and contributes to the normalization of military interventions as a means of political change.

Implications of Military Coups on Democratic Governance

The resurgence of military coups in West Africa not only undermines democratic governance but also exposes how the practice of democracy in the region creates the very conditions that invite such interventions. The interplay between democratic practice (X variable) and military coups (Y variable) reveals a cyclical pattern where democratic deficits, poor governance, and socio-economic hardship erode public confidence in civilian governments, making military interventions more acceptable to the populace.

Disruption of Constitutional Order: One of the immediate impacts of military coups is the suspension or abrogation of constitutions, which undermines the legal and institutional framework necessary for democratic governance. Military regimes often dissolve parliaments and dismiss elected officials, creating a governance vacuum. For instance, the 2021 coup in Guinea led to the suspension of the constitution and the dissolution of the National Assembly, severely disrupting the country's legislative processes (Diallo, 2021). The failure of democratic governments to uphold constitutionalism and deliver on their promises reinforces public disillusionment and creates a perception that military intervention is a necessary corrective measure.

Interruption of Electoral Processes: Military coups frequently halt or delay electoral processes, which are central to democratic governance. In many cases, planned elections are postponed indefinitely, and the military junta may establish a transitional government with no clear timeline for a return to civilian rule. The 2020 coup in Mali, for example, led to the postponement of parliamentary elections and created uncertainty about the future political landscape (Coulibaly, 2021). This interruption is often justified by the military as a response to flawed electoral systems that have failed to deliver transparent and credible elections.

Concentration of Power: Coups often result in the concentration of power in the hands of a few military leaders, leading to authoritarian rule. This centralization of power weakens democratic institutions such as the legislature and the executive, reducing checks and balances essential for good governance. In Burkina Faso, following the 2022 coup, power was concentrated in the hands of the military junta led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, sidelining democratic processes and institutions (Ouedraogo, 2022). The failure of civilian governments to promote inclusive governance and decentralize power contributes to this cycle, making authoritarian alternatives more appealing.

Erosion of Judicial Independence: The judiciary, which is vital for upholding the rule of law and protecting human rights, is often compromised following military coups. Coup leaders may interfere with judicial

appointments, dismiss independent judges, and manipulate the judiciary to legitimize their rule and suppress dissent. In Mali, the military regime's influence over the judiciary has undermined its independence, affecting its ability to function impartially and uphold democratic norms (Sanogo, 2021). This erosion of judicial independence often stems from the failure of democratic governments to build strong and independent judicial institutions.

Suppression of Civil Society: Civil society organizations, including the media, non-governmental organizations, and advocacy groups, often face severe restrictions under military regimes. These organizations play a critical role in promoting democratic values and holding governments accountable. After the 2021 coup in Guinea, the military junta imposed strict limitations on freedom of speech, assembly, and the press, significantly weakening civil society's ability to operate (Amadou, 2021). The failure of democratic governments to create an enabling environment for civil society contributes to the suppression of civic engagement under military regimes.

Economic Consequences: Military coups typically have adverse economic impacts, including international sanctions, suspension of aid, and reduced foreign investment, all of which exacerbate economic hardships. For example, the economic sanctions imposed on Mali following the 2020 coup deepened the country's economic crisis, increasing public discontent and complicating efforts to restore democratic governance (Coulibaly, 2021). However, the inability of democratic governments to address economic grievances often makes military interventions appear as viable alternatives for economic reform.

Distortion of Political Culture: The recurrence of military coups distorts political culture by creating a precedent for resolving political disputes through force rather than democratic means. This fosters a cycle of instability and violence, as military intervention becomes normalized. In Nigeria, the history of repeated military coups has contributed to a political culture where power transitions are often contested, and the military is seen as an arbiter of political disputes (Fagbadebo, 2020). The failure of democratic governments to promote participatory governance and address social inequalities perpetuates this distortion.

By clearly defining democratic practice as the X variable and military coups as the Y variable, this section demonstrates that the failure of democratic institutions to deliver on their promises not only creates a conducive atmosphere for military interventions but actively invites them as perceived solutions to governance crises.

Theoretical Framework: Relative Deprivation Theory

The Relative Deprivation Theory, first introduced by Samuel Stouffer and his colleagues in the 1940s, provides a compelling framework for understanding the resurgence of military coups in West Africa. Initially developed to explain social dissatisfaction among American soldiers during World War II, the theory was later expanded by scholars such as Ted Robert Gurr in his seminal work "Why Men Rebel" (1970). The theory posits that individuals or groups experience relative deprivation when there is a perceived gap between their expectations of certain entitlements and the reality of their socio-economic conditions.

In the context of West Africa, the theory helps explain how popular discontent with civilian governments creates an environment conducive to military interventions. Democratic transitions in the region were accompanied by promises of freedom, prosperity, and improved livelihoods. However, the failure of democratic governments to fulfill these promises has left many citizens feeling deprived of their expected democratic dividends. This perceived deprivation is exacerbated by widespread poverty, corruption, unemployment, and insecurity, leading to mass frustration and disillusionment.

Relative Deprivation Theory is particularly relevant to understanding why military coups gain popular support. As citizens experience widening gaps between their socio-economic expectations and the harsh realities of daily life, they may view military interventions as a means of addressing their grievances and restoring social justice. The theory underscores that coups are not merely the result of power struggles among elites but are often rooted in broader socio-economic discontent among the population. By applying the Relative Deprivation Theory, this study highlights the role of unmet democratic promises in fueling the resurgence of military coups. This perspective shifts the focus from solely blaming military actors to examining the underlying socio-economic factors that make coups an attractive alternative in the eyes of many West Africans.

Research Methodology

Research Design: This study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the resurgence of military coups in West Africa. The qualitative aspect involves a review of existing literature, public statements, and interviews, while the quantitative component gathers primary data through online polling and structured questionnaires. The population of this study consists of citizens from selected West African countries that have recently experienced military coups, including Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger and Mali. The sample size comprises 300 participants,

drawn from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including civil society members, academics, youth groups, and professionals. A purposive sampling technique is used to select participants who are knowledgeable about the political and socio-economic conditions in their countries.

Primary data is collected through structured questionnaires administered via online polling platforms, allowing respondents to anonymously share their opinions on the relationship between democratic governance and military coups. Additionally, key informant interviews are conducted with political analysts, civil society leaders, and journalists to gain deeper insights into the public's expectations of democratic governments. Secondary data is sourced from journal articles, books, and newspaper reports to provide context and support for the primary findings. The data is analyzed using both qualitative content analysis and descriptive statistical methods. Thematic analysis is employed to interpret qualitative data from interviews and public statements by coup leaders, while descriptive statistics are used to summarize survey responses. The study compares the tenets of democracy—such as accountability, transparency, economic prosperity, and security—with the actual outcomes experienced by citizens. This comparative analysis helps to establish whether unmet democratic promises significantly contributed to the resurgence of military coups. To further substantiate the study's claims, the research examines public statements, interviews, and press releases by coup leaders to determine their motivations. Special attention is given to instances where coup leaders explicitly cite poor democratic governance, corruption, and socio-economic deprivation as justifications for their actions. By integrating both primary and secondary data sources, this methodology provides a balanced and empirical approach to analyzing the link between democratic practice and the resurgence of military coups in West Africa.

Regional and International responses to Military Coups in West Africa

The regional and international responses to military coups in West Africa are multifaceted, involving diplomatic interventions, economic sanctions, and efforts to restore democratic governance. Organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), and various international actors have played significant roles in responding to these coups. Recent local scholarly works provide a detailed analysis of these responses and their effectiveness.

ECOWAS Responses: ECOWAS has been a pivotal regional actor in responding to military coups in West Africa. The organization typically responds swiftly with condemnations, sanctions, and efforts to mediate conflicts. For example, after the 2021 coup in Guinea, ECOWAS immediately suspended Guinea's membership and imposed travel bans and

financial sanctions on the coup leaders (Diallo, 2021). These actions are part of ECOWAS's broader strategy to uphold democratic norms and deter unconstitutional changes in government. ECOWAS also plays a crucial role in mediation and facilitating dialogue. Following the 2020 coup in Mali, ECOWAS sent a high-level delegation to negotiate with the military junta and the ousted government. This led to the establishment of a transitional government with a timeline for returning to civilian rule (Coulibaly, 2021). Such diplomatic efforts are aimed at stabilizing the political situation and ensuring a path back to democratic governance.

African Union Responses: The AU's Peace and Security Council also plays a significant role in responding to military coups. The AU typically suspends the membership of countries experiencing coups and calls for the restoration of constitutional order. For instance, after the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso, the AU suspended Burkina Faso's membership and coordinated with ECOWAS to address the political crisis (Amadou, 2022). The AU's consistent stance against unconstitutional changes of government is rooted in its commitment to promoting peace, security, and democratic governance across Africa. The AU often supports regional initiatives and provides a platform for broader continental dialogue. In the case of Mali, the AU worked closely with ECOWAS to support the transition process and address the underlying causes of instability (Sanogo, 2021). These collaborative efforts are essential for building a cohesive response to military coups and enhancing the legitimacy of regional interventions. Despite the African Union's (AU) active role in addressing military coups, it faces several shortcomings that hinder its overall effectiveness. One major issue is the inconsistent implementation of its policies against unconstitutional changes in government, with responses often delayed, as seen in the aftermath of the 2021 Sudan coup (Elhadi, 2021). Additionally, the AU.

United Nations Responses: The United Nations (UN) often condemns military coups and supports regional efforts to restore democratic governance. The UN Security Council issues statements expressing concern and backing regional initiatives. In Mali, for example, the UN supported ECOWAS's mediation efforts and deployed peacekeeping forces to help stabilize the country and protect civilians (United Nations, 2020). The involvement of the UN adds an international dimension to the response, emphasizing the global consensus against military takeovers. The UN also provides technical and financial support for democratic transitions. In Guinea, the UN worked with ECOWAS and other international partners to facilitate dialogue between the military junta and civilian stakeholders, aiming to ensure a smooth transition to democratic governance (Konaté, 2021). This support is crucial for building institutional capacity and promoting sustainable peace.

European Union Responses: The European Union (EU) aligns with regional bodies like ECOWAS and the AU in responding to military coups. The EU often imposes targeted sanctions, suspends development aid, and calls for the restoration of democratic processes. Following the 2021 coup in Guinea, the EU condemned the military takeover and imposed sanctions on the coup leaders while advocating for a return to constitutional order (European Union, 2021). These actions are designed to exert pressure on coup leaders and support regional efforts to resolve the crisis. The EU also provides substantial financial and technical assistance to support democratic transitions and economic recovery. In Burkina Faso, after the 2022 coup, the EU coordinated with regional partners to provide humanitarian aid and support efforts to stabilize the political situation (Ouedraogo, 2022). Such assistance is vital for addressing the immediate needs of affected populations and supporting long-term democratic governance.

United States Responses: The United States often responds to military coups by condemning the actions, suspending military aid, and supporting regional mediation efforts. In Mali, after the 2020 coup, the U.S. suspended security assistance and urged for a swift return to civilian rule (U.S. Department of State, 2020). These measures are aimed at discouraging military interventions and supporting democratic governance. The U.S. also engages in diplomatic efforts to support regional initiatives. In Guinea, the U.S. worked with ECOWAS and other international partners to facilitate dialogue and support the transition process (Traoré, 2021). This involvement underscores the importance of international cooperation in responding to military coups and promoting stability.

Based on the first objective of this study it was revealed that Military coups have profoundly influenced West Africa's political landscape, especially after independence when newly sovereign states faced political instability, ethnic conflicts, and economic hardships. Independence in the 1960s left these nations with weak institutions and artificial boundaries from colonial rule, exacerbating instability. The first wave of coups in the 1960s and 1970s saw leaders like Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and Nigeria's government overthrown, often justified by the military as necessary to combat corruption and mismanagement. Economic downturns in the 1970s further weakened civilian governments, exemplified by Ghana's coups led by Jerry Rawlings. The Cold War era added complexity, with superpowers backing military regimes for geopolitical gains, such as the U.S. support for Samuel Doe's 1980 coup in Liberia. Despite democratization efforts in the 1980s and 1990s, coups persisted due to weak institutions and governance issues, seen in Mali (2012) and Burkina Faso (2014). Ethnic and regional divisions also played a significant role, as in Nigeria's coups and subsequent civil war. International bodies and ECOWAS have increasingly opposed

coups, aiming to promote stability and democracy. While military regimes occasionally brought temporary stability, they often resulted in human rights abuses and economic decline, impacting democratic institution development. Addressing governance, economic development, and ethnic tensions is crucial for the future of West Africa.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The resurgence of military coups in West Africa presents a significant challenge to democratic governance and regional stability. The study's findings reveal that the primary drivers of these coups are rooted in the failure of democratic governments to deliver on their promises of improved socio-economic conditions, accountability, and security. Citizens in countries like Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger have experienced persistent poverty, corruption, and insecurity despite the advent of democratic governance, leading to widespread disillusionment. The study further demonstrates that unmet democratic promises have heightened public frustrations, creating a fertile ground for military interventions.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthening Democratic Institutions: Governments must prioritize the establishment of strong, independent institutions that promote accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. This can be achieved by reinforcing anti-corruption agencies, enhancing judicial independence, and depoliticizing security forces.

Addressing Socio-Economic Inequalities: Sustainable economic development programs that target poverty alleviation, youth unemployment, and equitable resource distribution should be implemented. Governments must create inclusive economic policies that ensure marginalized communities benefit from national resources.

Enhancing Public Participation in Governance: Civil society organizations, youth groups, and marginalized communities should be actively engaged in the decision-making process. This will foster a sense of ownership and accountability, reducing public discontent.

Political Reforms and Electoral Integrity: Governments should implement constitutional reforms to prevent the manipulation of term limits and ensure free, fair, and transparent electoral processes. Independent electoral commissions must be empowered to uphold electoral integrity.

Regional Cooperation and Mediation Efforts: ECOWAS, the AU, and other regional bodies should enhance their conflict prevention mechanisms by addressing the socio-economic and political root causes of coups. Regional mediation efforts should focus on ensuring democratic dividends reach the citizens, not just securing political transitions.

Public Accountability Mechanisms: Governments should establish independent public accountability institutions to regularly assess and report on the performance of democratic administrations, ensuring that citizens' expectations align with government actions. By addressing these critical areas, West African countries can rebuild public trust in democratic governance, reduce vulnerabilities to military interventions, and promote long-term political stability.

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