

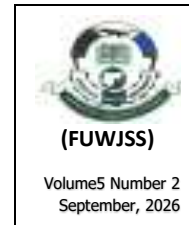
DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND RESURGENCE OF MILITARY COUPS IN WEST AFRICA

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Abstract

This paper explores the resurgence of military coup in West Africa. The quest for good governance, stability and peace remains the primary focus of every government across the globe. However, the poor state of security, economy, weak and fragile institutions leading to a series of killings of the citizens have fueled military excuses to stage a come-back in some of the African countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali among others. While many scholars have alluded to some of the implications of the military coups across African states, this study interrogates the driving force behind the military coups. To achieve this, the study relied on secondary sources of data. The study's findings revealed that deviations from democratic norms, wholesale adoption of foreign democracy and unbridled boldness of altering the constitution for tenure elongation and insecurity of the citizenry water the ground for such military grandstanding. The paper concludes that until good governance which is the barometer of measuring democratic dividend is upheld and policy pathways re-calibrated to address rising insecurity threats, military coups would always be considered as alternative and continue to receive overwhelming support of the citizens.

Keywords: Coups, democracy, governance, resurgence, military

Introduction

Developing countries in Africa like their other counterparts in other continents had in one time or the other experienced brutal, exploitation and aggressive form of colonialism that once disrupted their traditional political and economic fabrics. Though the contacts with the European overlords either as colonial masters or otherwise may have come with some positive sides but importantly given the pangs or pains and magnitudes of exploitation that come with it, some scholars like Rodney (1972), Dumont (1962) and Nkrumah (1963) considered the contact as moment of rapacious exploitation in the history of Africa. Thus, the wind of independence which blew across the African states signaled and rekindled the hopes and aspirations of rebuilding the perceived battered economy and improving quality of lives and good governance of African newly independent

countries. The ensuing political independence pushed for a multi – party democracy in which virtually all countries particularly in West Africa have come to embrace in the late 1980s and early 1990s (AU policy paper, 2022).

The rising pace of unconstitutional change of power and security challenges in many states not only undermined the drive for democracy but the democratic gains earlier achieved by these countries continue to wane. This was worsened in the African continent especially in West Africa with the growing and panoply of diverse security threats in the post - colonial period that came to threaten her internal peace and stability. These security skirmishes were caused by a combination of factors ranging from social, political, and economic conditions that culminated into widespread corruption, conflict and post –conflict scenarios, porous borders, failing national administrations and growing culture of impunity and immunity that feed the development of criminalities in the region (Mazzitelli, 2006). The question that continues to agitate minds is what then independence could connote in its true sense given the fact that the post – independence realities of Africa remain worrisome to millions of citizens whose conditions are barely better off.

Significantly, governance-related issues such as corruption, bad governance and political malfeasances kept unabated as the order of the day in the immediate post – independent Africa. Hence, the unconstitutional change of power by the military through coups across many parts of Africa, East to North and from West to South becomes rampant. This situation is succinctly captured by Suleiman and Onapajo (2022) when they posited that, “by 2012, there had been over 200 coups and attempted coups in Africa from their various times of independence and there was a coup attempt every 55 days in the 1960s, 1970s and over 90% of African states had a coup experience (Suleiman and Onapajo, 2022:1)’. Although, these were counteracted by fierce contestations, confrontations, campaigns, protests and consistent symposia rendered by eminent citizens against the military rulers. Similarly, sanctions and suspensions applied both at the regional and international forums against erring members of the military juntas already in offices in defiance of adjudicating the throne for democratic rule laid the foundation for the withdrawal of States like Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali from the sub regional organization –ECOWAS (Reuters, 2025).

However, in the past decade and in recent times, the gains recorded seem to have suffered continuous reversals given the spate of democratic revisionism, unconstitutional regime changes and constitutional crises that created the pathways in some African countries such as Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Guinea Bissau thereby setting the stage for the military comeback in Sub – Saharan Africa as more people live under fully or partially authoritarian states today than in the last two decades(African News

Agency,n.d).Thus, the spate of coups in recent times have become of great concern with many different shades of opinions at play over what appears to be a regression to authoritarianism as a system of governance that typified colonialism; an era of draconian rule, decrees and codes. More worrisome is the fact that these coups seem to receive enormous supports from the citizenry to the extent that Burkina Faso like her neighbouring Mali ended military cooperation with former colonial power France and pursued closer ties with Moscow (Congress, 2023).

The inability of the regional body such as ECOWAS and its member states to restore a constitutional order has undoubtedly increased the popularity of the military junta across most of these African states. According to Oshita (2022), it becomes worrisome given the mixed memories of the good, the bad and the ugly associated with previous encounters with military governments. The jubilations and celebrations among citizens of these countries suggest that all is not well and importantly the fall of democracy and perhaps acceptance of military rule which had survived since 2022 till date.

Noticeably, the military coup of January 24, 2022 in Burkina Faso is the fourth in West African region in recent times and sixth successful coup in the continent since 2020(Okafor,2022). For the third time within the only span of five months, violence facilitated the return of military rulers to power in African countries such as Guinea, Mali (twice in the past thirteen months) between 2021 and 2022, and Chad witnessed new leaders who rose from their respective barracks. Conversely, the January 24, 2022 military coup which overthrew Burkina Faso's President Roch Marc Christian Kabore followed a similar trend of that of former Malian presidents Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and Bah N'Daw in August 2020 and May 2021 respectively, and again that of former Guinean president Alpha Conde in September 2021 (Moderan & Kone, 2022).

Flowing from the above, this study becomes imperative to interrogate the cause(s) of military takeovers in Africa particularly in West Africa with a view to determine its security dimensions and implications to the overall stability of the sub-region. This is necessary as reoccurring happenings have continued to undermine the growth of democratic system in sub-Saharan Africa as some African leaders continue to perpetuate themselves in power by regular rigging of elections and elongating their tenures beyond term limits. It is in light of the foregoing that this paper set out to interrogate the nature and dynamics of security threats in West Africa, looking at its implications on the state of democracy and governance.

Origins of Military Coups in Africa

Before interrogating the inextricable cause (s) of military coups in Burkina Faso as the main focus of this paper, it is expedient to understand that Military coups d'etat is not relatively a new phenomenon in Africa. Consequently, West Africa where Burkina Faso is located is the most coup – ridden sub region in the world. According to Suleiman & Onapajo (2022), in each decade 1958 and 2008, West Africa had the highest number of coups on the continent, accounting for 44.4%. They also affirm that since 2010, there have been over 40 coups and attempted coups in Africa; some 20 occurred in West Africa including the Sahel and since 2019 there have been 7 coups (five successful and two failed). A study by Powell and Thyne identified over 200 attempted coups since the late 1950s in Africa in which half of these have been successful (Powell & Thyne, 2011).

Eizenga (2022) in his work titled “Another coup has been averted in Burkina Faso: but for how long?” gives a detailed analysis of how Burkina Faso has evolved, the long legacy of military intervention that culminated into the first 27 years of independence spanning the Burkinabe’s soldiers staged five coups d’etat, one autogolpe – a military coup initiated or abetted by a country’s elected leaders and the last coup that killed the famous Captain Thomas Sankara thus leading to Blaise Compaore succession and the eventual restructuring of the military. According to Punch Editorial (28 January 2022), since Thomas Sankara , who had also assumed power via a coup in 1983, was violently deposed as president in 1987, Burkina Faso has continued to witness military rebellion. Compaore, ruled for 27 years before he was ousted in a popular uprising in 2014 (BBC News, 2011). Furthermore, in the view of Eizenga (2022), the inability to get the security situation of the Burkina Faso under control has heightened the level of violent events linked to militant Islamist groups thus making them doubled from nearly 500 in 2020 to more than 1, 150 in 2021 (Eizenga, 2022).

According to Emordi & Unumen (2020) despite the independence and political gains recorded since 1990s in the African continent, the nature of leaders and their policies have continued to undermine the continent developmental stride. Most of these leaders continued to horrendously plunder their states; bestially abuse fundamental human rights and basic freedom; and capriciously continue to commit so much atrocities leaving the citizens of their countries in pain. In follow up to this thought, Ibelema posits that “ from Africa’s first contemporary coup in Egypt in 1952 to Burkina Faso’s latest coup in late January, the explanations are always alike whether the coup entails the overthrow of a monarchy or an elected government, the driving force is always dissatisfaction if not distress (Ibelema, 2022). It is on this strength that the commander of the U.S. African command, General Stephen Townsend attributed the resurgence of coups in Africa to corruption

and lack of good governance (Punch February 4, 2022). According to Gboyega (2003: 125), the military intervention may become inevitable where the civilian rulers had proved incapable of carrying the burdens of statecraft thus making the people to become disillusioned and apathetic (Gboyega, 2003).

Similarly, in the submission of Oshita, he alluded that “despite the fanfare about democracy and what some regard as its benefits or gains, the democracy in West Africa remains largely superficial, cosmetic and inauthentic, constituting a basis for civilian assaults on the constitution, amounting to noncombatant coups in the sub Region” (Oshita, 2022: 9). He argues further that democracy in West Africa is one inundated and superintended by unprecedented depravities such as terrorism and insurgency, impunity, mass poverty and misery for majority of the people, expanded corruption and display of stolen wealth, degradation of the rule of law and abuse of due process, vote – buying, abandonment of the voting population by the political elite, lack of accountability and transparency (Oshita, 2022: 11). Furthermore, Oshita (2022), explicitly described the possibilities of coups be connected to factors such as foreign interest and influence, societal conditions, economic difficulties, insecurity and deteriorating living conditions, elite or class conflicts, ethnic or group interests, ineffective or loose leadership.

Additionally, while identifying external causes of coups in Africa, scholars like Sulieman & Onapajo (2022) affirm that the quest for strategic influence and advantage by foreign powers in Africa made them to aid and abet coups in the continent. According to these scholars, as long as their strategic interests are protected and preserved they tolerate local politics and authoritarianism in form of military coup. This explained why China could criticize the coup in Guinea and muted on that of Mali. Also, China joined Russia to prevent France with the support of US and EU to have the UN Security Council support the decision to impose economic and border sanctions on Mali. Importantly, the political crisis in Burkina Faso and other African countries is an opportunity to review African conflict prevention instruments especially issues of governance that needs more attention rather than focusing on elections and unconstitutional changes of government, other dimensions such as mediated dialogue and inclusive crisis management should be given greater attention (Ojeme, 2022)

In a bid to buttress the understanding of the workings of the military, Ogbole, et al (2020), posit that the military comprise of the Army, Air Force and Navy. They are men or women in khaki given the constitutional mandate to protect the territorial and external defence of every country who for so many reasons could hijack the seat of authority, dethroning a legitimately or illegitimately constituted authority a coup (Ogbole, et al,

2020). Therefore, coups are as old as humanity itself. Coup as an intricate phenomenon, refers to the overt or covert means of taking over power from a democratically elected leader.

Significantly, many scholars have argued that more often than not bad governance is the driven force for military coups. This is particular real in Africa given the level of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. According to Sani, the inability of leaders to address fundamental issues of health, education, energy, infrastructural provisioning and food, rule of law and fundamental human rights have led to what Richard Joseph termed catastrophic governance (Sani, 2020). In the view of Adeniji (2000), governance embodies the overall direction and management of each country's affairs in accordance with its established constitution, institutions, cultural values, norms and procedures (Adeniji, 2000). It is the act or process by which a political system achieves values such as accountability, participation, openness or transparency and respect for the rule of law and due bureaucratic process (Inokobar & Kumokor, 2011:141 cited Ekpenyong & Agha 2014:478). The absence of the above elements will result into bad governance. Governance entails accountable delivery of the elected government officials in line with the constitutional provisions and democratic norms.

The main idea of democracy has widely been corrupted in Africa as tenure elongation has become the new normal in many African countries. Democracy comes from Ancient Greek: *demo* means 'the people' and *kratein* means 'to rule'. Larry Diamond (2004) gave an overview of what in his opinion is democracy. According to him, democracy as a system of government must cover the following key elements: i. A system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; ii) Active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; iii) Protection of the human rights of all citizens; and (iv) A rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens. However, democracy can only thrive where there are functional and effective institutions and institutions are not built by spirits but through the goodwill and constitutional provisions authored and allowed by men. It is on this premise that late former President of America Abraham Lincoln defined it as the government of the people by the people and for the people. Again, institutions are built in cognizance and consonance of the country's cultural milieu and by men of goodwill. In other words, democracy can only thrive when there is the real idea of collegiality, inclusion and cultural sensitivity. The import of democracy in the recent times has been deviated from the pedestal of goodwill towering the paths of individuals' idiosyncratic values and party tokenism at the detriment of the citizenry. Rather than being an institution and mechanism of effective governance, it has emerged as

instrument of coercion and intimidation of the perceived opponent with the ideology of perpetuity through derisive tenure elongation.

Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to underpin this study with theoretical framework, there are various theories relevant to the phenomenon of coups. Some of these are the game theory, realist, constructivists and identity based theories. However, this study employed contagious and regional diffusion theory to explain the phenomenon of coup in West Africa. It must be noted that diffusion itself do not cause coups rather the structural pathologies or conditions in existence do such as weak institutions, security threats, and declining public trust in democracy (Diamond, 2015). For example, the Mali coup of August 2020, led by junior officers cited insecurity and corruption being responsible for their actions. The Niger and Burkina Faso experiences were not totally at variance as weak governance, and elite misrule were considered as the basis for the military intervention. Thus, contagious and regional diffusion theories tend to explain the resurgence of coups in its cluster form in time and space in West Africa. The contagious diffusion was an idea derived from Hagerstrand's (1967) work on innovation diffusion. According to his claim, an event in one place lowers the perceived cost and risk of the same event closeby. Hence, such as event spreads through direct contact, observation, and demonstration effects (Hagerstrand, 1967).

Huntington (1968) buttressed this argument that a successful coup makes a coup seem more feasible elsewhere because elites tend to assess the template that delivers. Similarly, Brinks & Coppedge (2006) alluded that states embedded in a region share media, militaries, ethnic ties and normative expectations. For example in West Africa, the 2020 coup in Mali and subsequent removal of leaders in Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger took the same pattern. This is because military officers often observe the success or failure of neighbouring coups. Similarly, the Niger coup of 2023 occurred few months after the Burkina Faso's coup saga. Moreover, the citizens perception, demonstration and reactions to events further reinforce the diffusion and demonstrate how contagious coup can be in a place like West Africa where the borders are porous, contiguous and citizenry looks alike (Baker Institute, 2025).

Therefore, contagious and regional diffusion has been able to explain explicitly how patterns driven by structural conditions across a region such as the West Africa and by extension the Sahel could ignite military coups leveraging on structural pathological conditions defined by prolonging insecurity, economic hardship, weak governance, insurgencies and tenure elongation that characterized most of the West African and Sahelian countries.

Research Methodology

This study adopts qualitative and descriptive analytical methods. Qualitative methods are well suited to investigate complex and ravaging threats such as coups in West Africa that comes contagious effects across the porous borders. The ravaging threats in the West Africa and the Sahel is an interesting case studies to study the pattern of military coups in the region. Therefore, the study uses mainly secondary data which comprised sources from academic literature, books on African security, military coups, democracy and government reports. The paper specifically uses a comparative case design using the coup d'etat in Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Guinea and failed attempts in Benin Republic.

West Africa and the Military Coup Putsch in Perspective

Military coups are not necessarily new developments in Africa. Coups have been seen as an endemic feature of African politics. Therefore, West Africa is aptly known as “coup belt” of Africa (Suleiman, 2021). West Africa experienced its first coup in January 1963, when soldiers in Togo took over the government and assassinated the country's president Sylvanus Olympio (Media Governance Series, 2022). Consequently, post independent Africa had history of military coups and had been plagued by both army mutinies and military coups d'état. In the recent times, the resurgence of these military coups have been greeted by popular support and applause in the West African countries which had necessitated the need to ask if democracy has failed in West Africa and Africa in general or the case of its death in the sub –region (Suleiman & Onapajo, 2022). Thus, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres description of the resurgence of coups as pandemic best explained the situation in Africa.

The latest successful coups putsch occurred in Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea. For instance, on October 25, 2021, the Army General Abdel Fattah sacked the Sudanese civil authority. As if that was not enough, there was another coup in Guinea. Similarly, on September 5, 2021. Military leaders in Guinea overthrew the civilian government of President Alpha Conde. The coup was led by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya. Again, the Mali coup hit the stage. On August 2020, the military ousted President Ibrahim B. Keita which was followed by mass protests against Keita's government and weak governance. In May, 2021 Colonel Assimi Goita led the second coup in Mali in just a space of nine (9) months. Quite very recent were two coups, one successful, the other failed. On January 24, 2022, the military junta overthrew the civil government of Burkina Faso. Another coup was in early February, 2022 where suspected military personnel attempted to overthrow the civil government in Guinea Bissau. It was the fourth coup attempt. In

just some months, three soldiers were arrested and charged with a plot to overthrow the government of Captain Ibrahim Traore who earlier seized power in September 2022 (Aljazeera, 2023). In entirety such military actions are aberrations taking too farther what the citizens believed could be a temporal relieve, they are becoming routine exercises, loosing grip and popularity as an approach.

It is premised on the above that former Vice President of Nigeria Prof Yemi Osinbajo exclaimed that “sanctioning these coupists without any proper teeth has not been particularly effective (Angbulu, 2022). ECOWAS and the AU need to re – invent modern ways of dealing with such emerging military threats rather than waiting for sanctioning after the deed has been done.

Table showing the succession of military coups in West Africa and the Sahel since 2019

Country	Coup Year	Type of Coup	Coup Leader	Dethroned President
Burkina Faso	2022- Til Date	Successful	Captain Ibrahim Traore	Lt- Col Paul-Henri Damiba
Guinea – Bissau	February 1, 2022	Failed	Unclear	Pres. Umaro Embalo
Burkina Faso	January 24, 2022	Successful	Lt- Col Paul –Henri Damiba	Pres. Roch Kabore.
Guinea	September, 5, 2021	Successful	Col. Mamady Doumbouya	Pres. Alpha Conde
Niger	March 31, 2021	Failed	Unclar	Pres Mohamed Bazoum
Mali	May 24, 2021	Successful	Assimi Goita	Pres. Bah Ndaw.

Source: Author’s Extraction and Compilation

Coups and its resurgence in West Africa in the recent times have been attributed to several burning issues such as the absence of democratic practice, leadership challenges, economic crisis, greed of military officers, youth and rising citizen’s discontentments (Isilow, 2022). On the whole, the experience of the military in governance portends complex challenges as more often the rationale for political and economic stability these military put forward are often hoax.

Military Coups in West Africa: Some Prompting Factors

The rationale or causes of coups is often multifaceted. In West Africa, these factors can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal are those that emanated from challenges of national governance while the external are the ones influenced by global dynamics with significant impact on governance and stability of the region. Some of these factors are discussed below:

State Fragility/ Weak Institutions: While the recent coups in some African countries are clear indication of a ‘coup culture’ in West Africa, the disturbing state of democratic institution and state fragility contributed immensely to the challenges. In essence, governments in West Africa share a common denominator of varying accumulated public policy failures, poverty and wide spread of corruption which have all poignant drivers of violent conflicts threatening democratic institutions. A fragile state has weak capacity to execute basic governance functions and lacks the ability to develop mutually constructive relations with society. According to Okolie (2022) such weaknesses promote corruption, ineffectiveness, undemocratic practices, as well as failure of state authority and legitimacy. For over a decade, Mali was embroiled in multifaceted challenges ranging from rising terrorist groups, fragile institutions and limited state authority amidst chronic corruption. Similarly, Burkina Faso was noted for high level of poverty, unemployment, military mutinies and growing insurgent threats.

Division in the Military Administration: Contrary to the general assumptions, not all coups are always desires for power as some of those who had often led coups often come under intense pressure from the masses as vocalized in mass protests and pressure particularly from rank – and – file soldiers whose units take regular casualties from insurgents (Ibelema, 2022). Both these dynamics of coups are suitable to explain the challenges that resulted into coup in Burkina Faso, Mali and other African countries. Besides, the history of Burkina Faso and Niger is one replete with coups since the independence in 1960. Importantly, the dismissal of Prime Minister Christophe Joseph Dabire by President Roch Marc Christian Kabore in early December initially eased tensions, but this was short –lived. However, the tension further widened the gap between troops on the ground and military. The immediate cause was the growing discontent among security forces over president Kabore’s alleged failure to provide adequate support for the military against militants linked to both al –Qaeda and the Islamic state. Both armed groups have been menacing in Burkina Faso and Mali for some time leading to mutinies in northern cities of Kaya and Ouahigouya (The Tribune, 2022).

Growing Nature of Militant Islamist Groups: The growing nature of militant Islamist Groups in affiliation with AI – Qaeda and ISIS have worsened the situation in Burkina Faso and other Sahelian countries. Terrorist groups and the consequences of their violent actions are external threats likely to threaten an existing government (Media and Governance Series, 2022). Thus leading to kidnapping, killing of civilians and security agents thus prepared the ground for military coup. Since the first jihadist attacks in 2015, more than 2,000 people have died while more than 1.5 million people have fled their homes (Agency Report, 2022). In January 2016, an attack on Splendid Hotel and a restaurant in Ouagadougou killed 30 people most of whom were Western tourists (The Tribune, 2022). Also, by June 2021, about 132 to 160 people were brutally killed after being attacked along the Solhan village which is not far from the Niger border (Moderan & Kone, 2022). This was considered the worst attack in six years. Also, in 2021 alone, Burkina Faso recorded some 1,337 crisis – related violent incidents, with 2294 casualties (Moderan & Kone, 2022). In August 2021, attackers killed 65 civilians and 15 police officers in northern Burkina Faso.

Citizens' Disposition to Change: Post – Colonial Africa has seen over 200 coup attempts and roughly half had seen the leaders successfully removed (Powell, 2022). Unlike before, there is an increased acceptance of politics by the gun. This sudden acceptance by the citizens out of love for the military is consequent upon governance deficits. This arises from the fact that democracy comes with expectations and huge hopes. However, unimpressive democratic conditions, non – fulfillment of the entitlements of citizenship and denials of democratic dividends not only got the masses frustrated and agitated but influenced the growing insecurity in place like Africa. It is premised on the above thought that citizens in Burkina Faso were jubilating and celebrating when the military took over in Burkina Faso on 24 January 2022. This stemmed from the scale of mass killings and displacement by Jihadist ravaging the country.

The military putsches in Africa portend serious threats to Nigeria's national stability as a hegemon in so many ways and if not tamed urgently could be disastrous and become a pandemic. For example, the withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali from ECOWAS portends serious implications for Nigeria's military collaboration towards defeating the Boko Haram and its splinter group, Islamic State West Africa Province, an insurgency that is not only a decade old but also masterminded the death of retired General Idris Deby the late President of Chad and many military officers in Nigeria. Therefore, Nigeria and other African States need to do more internally to ensure stability and cohesion, taming the monster of terrorism than falling aback to undemocratic governance that may alter the spirit and letters of the

law against such a preparation. Consequently, the implications of the Burkina Faso's military coup and democratic revision to Nigeria's national security would be assessed through the following prisms:

Geographical Location and Contiguity: The proximity of the countries that belong to the Sahel and West Africa offers some lessons the current study. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Nigeria who doubled as the Chairman of the Mediation and Security Council, Yusuf Tuggar alluded that the surge of military coups in the West African is fast becoming a threat to the democratic culture in the region (The Guardian, 2023). Similarly, many scholars had established evidently how instability and absence of governance had worsened the Jihadi threat in West Africa. Given Nigeria's diversity and the spate of violence as threatened by one form of insecurity or the other across the six geo-political zones, it stands to be reasoned that Nigeria and other neighbouring sister states must not stay aloof. The Nigerian, Nger, and many other West African Militaries are currently overstretched confronting multiple security threats in across the geopolitical zones and further instability in the Sahel which cascaded into uncontrollable anarchy putting the military under more strains. West Africa is geographically contiguous with North and Central Africa which ordinarily make events within the regions interwoven. Therefore no region could be said to be immune from ravaging coups across Africa. Besides, coups are contagious and there are obvious reasons for other countries in West Africa and others to do same if urgent decisions are not taken. Consequently, the creeping disaster in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger such as the military recent coup poses strategic threat to regional security given the geographical contiguity, state of insecurity and pace of diversities in the country. In line with the above thought, sister states including Nigeria are not totally safe from the wrangles and lingering crises that can ideally influence military coups in addition to the geographical polemics.

Citizens Support: It has been evidently demonstrated on how many citizens across the countries celebrated the takeover of powers from democratically elected leaders in virtually all the coups that took place recently in Africa while the citizens are not particularly happy given their experiences with the military interventions but the necessity for change in the ways these countries are governed might have mainly influenced such actions. This is well captured by Cheta Nwanze of SB Morgen Intelligence when he adduced that 'the fact that in Mali, Guinea and now Burkina Faso, we had seen people come out on the streets to celebrate the coups shows that people are fed up with democracy'(Cited in Okafor, 2022). Also, thousands of ordinary Burkinabe trooped to the streets to celebrate the military takeover (Tribune,

2022). It would be seen that the reactions of Burkinabes and other citizens in places like Guinea, Mali to military takeovers were greeted with jubilations and celebrations signifying acceptance of the military rule. While this may be considered as truly misguided act on part of the people, and a step backward to democracy, but its implications go deeper to countries in West Africa and particularly Nigeria. In fact, Nigeria's governments must be wearied given the fact that coups are contagious and the recent events of wide condemnation of government policies during the COVID – 19 pandemic outbreak and #EndSARS agitations coupled with other underlying factors such as the state of the economy, insecurity, unemployment, poverty and ethnic divisions may deny the government overwhelming supports in the event of crisis may threaten the country's national security. Hence, there is need for the government to address issues threatening the well – being of the citizens as bad economy, insecurity, poor infrastructural facilities know not ethnic groups and could serve overwhelmingly as mobilizing factors against the government in all circumstances.

State Loss of Monopoly of Violence: States have become vulnerable as a result of emergence of several non-state actors with dangerous weapons contending the space with the government security agents. Resurgence of coup in most of the West African countries are traceable to Islamist insurgent activities that kept spreading and capitalizing on local tensions and grievances against political elites. People are fed up with economic situations of the country, many youths are wallowing in poverty and millions seem not to have prospects. The poor equipment of most of the military forces have contributed to the magnitudes of criminalities facing the region. For example, in Nigeria, since 2015 there has been growing threat of the Boko Haram Islamist groups which had killed thousands of citizens and displaced millions. Similarly, Nigeria has been a home to ravenous banditry groups that had killed millions, displaced millions and still raging. More so, there have been other security threats ranging from kidnapping across the country, secessionist agitations in the South East and West, Militancy in the Niger Delta and other sundry issues. The recent Abuja – Kaduna train attack of March 28, 2022, the murderous killings in Saint Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State in June 5 and the attack of Kuje prison on 6th July 2022 in Abuja are all demonstrations of the state loss of monopoly of violence. Moreover, there have transnational threats across the porous borders in West Africa with its contagious effects on the regional security. Thus, loss of monopoly of violence by the states across the region have made countries and citizens alike to become vulnerable and tools for criminalities. This calls for rapid and urgent investment on human security.

Misgovernance and state of the economy: The unwholesome deviations and flagrant disregards to democratic norms and principles by some of the leaders who behold offices in the post-independence Africa have in no small measures especially in the recent times built pathways that not only serve as a safe haven but rapidly aiding quick returns of military rulers into offices. This was succinctly painted when General Stephen Townsend, the Commander, United State of America African Command submitted that 'the US does not support and condone unconstitutional change of government and the broader effect they have on democracy and the progress of democracy but the lack of good governance and corruption are behind much of that'. It is obvious that Nigeria is not immune from such causal factors. The example of the #EndSARS saga in Nigeria in October 2020 is still very fresh that in the event of bad governance, injustice, unemployment and poor state of the economy, little thing could fuel agitation and protestation as weapon of citizens mobilization. Governance crises have been in the heart of festering coups across most of the West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and Guinea. The level of insecurity facing the Nigerian state today cannot be divested from poor governance. Therefore, Governments across states need to rejig the state of the economy to mitigate sufferings of the masses as a weapon of demobilization for crimes.

Foreign Influence: This is another influential factor that had made coups in Africa inevitable. Most of the post-independence coups in West Africa have foreign fingerprints. Foreign influence and strategic competition make coups more likely to occur. This becomes a critical point of note as the availability and management of key natural resources, especially gold, uranium, and bauxite ignited and attracted the interests of the Western Power thereby defined their economic leverage in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso as these countries structurally dependent on Western aid, regional trade corridors and external financing (Ghai, 2025). Therefore, the Western Powers leveraged on this to define their strategic options. For instance, Russia is cited in both the 2021 and 2020 coups in Mali as well as the least one in Burkina Faso (Suleiman & Onapajo, 2022).

Similarly, some issues in Nigeria have foreign dimensions. For instance, during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, the foreign countries were so much interested and keenly followed as the events unfold especially the Toll gate saga even when they do not have first class details of the scenarios. Sensitivity to strategic security matters in her sister states should become more expedient to Nigeria as is surrounded by French controlled countries. It needless to restate that France has for long been interested in breaking the population of Nigeria to whittle down her domineering effects in West Africa for economic and strategic reasons. Therefore, the hovering and

renewed relationships between Nigeria and France particularly after the withdrawal of its troops in Burkina Faso should be done with absolute cautious

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has given an assessment of military coups in West Africa. The spate of coups in Africa in the recent times from Sudan to Mali, Guinea to Burkina Faso had shown the uncertainty in the continent's democratic stability and the overwhelming supports of the citizens had also explained the grievances about the deviations from democratic norms and dividends. The military takeover would not solve the real driving forces of conflict rather it would only complicate it. However, the findings revealed that the main issue lies with governance and disconnection of the political leaders from the citizens. Some of these leaders in Africa manipulate the constitution to suit their whims and caprices, trying to elongate their tenures against the constitution even when they were obviously not delivering on the mandates of democratic dividends. Therefore, response to tackle military coups must firstly address governance deficits that is exacerbating security situation if urgent and permanent solutions must be sought. More so, democracy should be practiced in line with Africa's cultural milieus to situate the circumstances and situations of the state of the Africa within the purview of her governance. This will automatically abate and checkmate unnecessary foreign intervention or continuous interests in Africa states of affairs.

Regional bodies like the African Union and ECOWAS should shift the approach from a mere reactionary posture to a more proactive one. They must also be firmed in addressing governance deficits in the form of non – fulfillment of the entitlements of citizens and oaths of the constitution. It is high time the African continent came to the re – invention of genuine democratic system built on strong political and democratic institutions deriving its processes and –orientations from African cultural milieu and peculiarities.

The sustainable response to elimination of coups is drastic improvement in the socio – economic and political conditions of the citizenry and removal of sit – tight leadership syndrome among some countries in Africa. The ECOWAS and AU should wake up to recalibrate their early warning systems in a manner that is proactive and effective applying same to ensure coup plotters are heavily sanctioned and deprived from staying a day in the office. Politicians need to stem up mechanism to fight corruption, tackle poverty and menace of unemployment that feeds insecurity in most of the African states by ensuring political offices are demonetized and professionalized to discourage miscreants in the realm of power.

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