

**RESURGENCE OF COUPS IN AFRICA: A STUDY OF THE RECENT TREND
OF MILITARY TAKEOVERS IN WEST AFRICA (2021-2024)**

BY

**RUKEVWE GIFT NWADJEBE
ART2100607**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

NOVEMBER 2025

**RESURGENCE OF COUPS IN AFRICA: A STUDY OF THE RECENT TREND
OF MILITARY TAKEOVERS IN WEST AFRICA (2021-2024)**

BY

**RUKEVWE GIFT NWADJEBE
ART2100607**

**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS
(B.A) IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY, NIGERIA.**

NOVEMBER 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify this research project was carried out by **RUKEVWE GIFT NWADJEBE** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, under my supervision.

MR. VICTOR O. AIGUOBARUEGHIAN
Project Supervisor

PROF J.C NWAKA
Head of Department

DATE

DATE

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and Holy Spirit the Comforter; and also, to my family for their unwavering support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to Almighty God for his grace, protection, and infinite mercy that have seen me through my academic pursuit. My sincere gratitude goes to my Project Supervisor and Course Adviser, Mr. Victor O. Aiguoabarueghian for his strict guidance and mentoring towards ensuring that this work comes out well.

I also want to thank my Wonderful Mom, Madam Felicia A. Moge kwu for her undying love and support all through this journey, as well as my siblings; Okiemute, Oghenefejiro, Ogheneovo and Ogheneyoma, for their unwavering care and support. And to my niece and nephew, Kika and Jeffery, thank you too.

My special thanks goes to my Academic Mentor Dr. Williams Ehizuwa Orukpe for his benevolence and always making out time for me whenever I called for an advice. I also want to appreciate all the Lecturers I was privileged to be under their tutorship throughout the course of my study in this University.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues and friends; Isioma, Osayewenre, Ikwuni Wisdom, Kemus, Azubs Morris, Clinton, Desmond, Tolani, Socrate, Moses, Ebere, Nzaza, Emehdiong, Pabs, Wamenite, Smallz, Wizzy, Gerald, Sam, Priscilla, Abigail, Gbemisola and everyone that made my time in this University a memorable one.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Page

Title Page - - - - - i

Certification - - - - - ii

Dedication - - - - - iii

Acknowledgements - - - - - iv

Table of Contents - - -- - - v

List of Tables - - - - -

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction - - - - - 1

Aim and Objectives - - - - - 3

Scope of the Study - - - - - 3

Methodology - - - - - 4

Literature Review - - - -- - 4

Chapterization - - - -- - 8

Endnotes - - -- - - 10

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF COUPS IN AFRICA

Introduction	-	-	-	--	-	-	-	-	-	12
Overview of Coups in Africa in the 20 th Century	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Analysis of Key Factors Contributing to the Coups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
Fragile Political Institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
Contagion Effect of Coups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Politician of the Military	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Cold War Effect	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
International Efforts in Response TO the Coups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
Endnotes	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	-	-	22

CHAPTER THREE: RESURGENCE OF MILITARY TAKEOVERS IN WEST AFRICA (2021 – 2024)

Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
Analysis of Coups in West Africa During the Period of Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
Underlying Causes of the Re-emergency of Military Takeovers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26

Failing Democratic Governance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
Weak State Institution-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27
Growing Public Discontent and Economic Crises	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
Security Challenges	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
Contagion Effect	-	-	-	-	--	-	-	29
Examining the States Affected: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger						--	-	29
Endnotes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPACT OF COUPS ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY’S RESPONSE

Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39
African and Ecowas Response to the Resurgence of Coups in West Africa	--							40
African Union’s Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
ECOWAS Response	-	-	-	--	-	-	-	41
Reaction of External Organization (U.N and E.U) and States (United States, France, Britain, Russia and China)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
The United Nation’s Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42

European Union’s Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
Reactions of US, UK, Russia and China	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44
Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
Endnotes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION									
Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52
Bibliography	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The term “Coup d’etat” is not a new phenomenon in African politics, as it has been almost inseparable from the continent’s internal political affairs since the start of the post-colonial era in the mid-20th century. The world has recorded about 492 coup attempts (as at when this study was conducted) since 1950, and Africa has witnessed about 220 of them; making it the most of any region in the culture with about 109 successful.¹ It can be said that as the ‘wind of self – determination’ swept through the continent bringing an end to colonial rule, along came with it a wave of coup d’etat. During the first three decades of Independence, Sub-saharan African averaged three military coups per year, with the first one taking place in Togo on January 13, 1963, when President Olympio was assassinated.² According to former Nigeria President, Olusegun Obasanjo, “the anticolonialist struggles in Africa were waged as much to end foreign rule, racial bigotry and the associated indignities to extirpate illiteracy and all manners of backwardness. Yet, no sooner had colonial rule ended than our new (African) rulers set about converting the revolution into one of fire and thunder against their own people.”³

Over the years, “Democracy Apologetics” have opined that the persistent occurrence of military interventions in Africa since the post-colonial era has had an adverse effect impact on the socio-economic and political development of the continent, claiming that the constant premature change of governments have hindered smooth continental socio-political and economic integration. Their opinion is in defense of the ideals of democracy, which asserts that the only legitimate avenue to attain political power is through the ballot box. They believe this is the only recognized way of remove an elected official from the seat of power; and this is the more reason they have criticized the whole idea of military takeovers or coups in general.

This opinion cannot be totally held to be accurate, even though it has led many people to demonize the whole idea of a military rule in our society today, associating it blood thirsty Dictators and Tyrants, thereby making military rule seem undesirable in the hearts of all the masses. It should not be totally forgotten that many of the military takeovers in African states has been as a result of ineffective leadership and widespread corruption by the democratically elected leaders. It is on this basis that the military has justified their takeovers, as they claim their motive is to restructure the socio-economic and political landscape of their nation, as the results of the failed attempts to establish a well-structured society under democratic rule. Nevertheless, it is in no doubt that Military Coups had become a ritual African Politics in the post-colonial period as the continent has witnessed incessant coups for many decades. It has been that way across Africa since

independence; a contest for power between the soldiers themselves; suppression of freedom by both politicians and soldiers, and mismanagement which is no better under either one.⁴

There are no doubts that coups in Africa has reduced since the start of the 21st century. The greatest number of successful coups in Africa took place near the mid-point of the U.S-Soviet Cold war rivalry stretching from 1946-1991. Coups were most prevalent in the 1966, when seven took place. The next most tumultuous year was 1980, when five were staged.⁵ The same cannot be said for our present day where coups are now more difficult to perpetuate and also, the modern International community has become less tolerant of the act of overthrowing elected governments. Nevertheless, it should be noted that while military takeovers have drastically reduced in the 21st century, its effectiveness in the recent cases has shown a higher success rate. So while cases of coups are becoming less frequent around the world, they are also becoming more effective.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This project aims at analyzing the resurgence of coups in modern day Africa. It would examine its impact on Africa's socio-economic and political integration, as well as make efforts to reposition the previously held ideas about coups and Military rate in modern society.

The objectives of this work are listed below:

1. To examine the emergence of coups in early post-colonial Africa
2. To analyze the resurgence of coups in present day Africa and its implications on the continent.
3. To analyze recent patterns and cases of the recent military takeovers in West Africa
4. To examine the socio-political and economic impacts of the recent coups on regional integration.
5. To explore the possibilities of more military takeovers in the region.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study would focus on the recent military takeovers in West Africa between 2021-2024. Using three West African states(Burkina Faso, Mali and the Republic of Niger) as case studies, and this study will delve into the causes and impacts of military coups on the states affected as well as the sub-region of West Africa. The study will also examine the diverse reactions of the International Community towards the resurgence of military takeovers in West Africa.

METHODOLOGY

This study will employ a mixed research method, using historical information as foundation to build on contemporary issues. Through a comprehensive analysis of the available sources, this project will seek to present a vivid understanding of the factors

that gave rise to the resurgence of military takeovers in Africa and what the political future of the region would look like with this recent development. In examining this phenomenon, various research methods will be employed.

Primary Sources: This will include government publications.

Secondary Sources: This will include published articles, journals, books; as well as web outlet publications on military takeovers in West Africa during the period of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

*“African Military History and Politics: Coups and Ideological Incursions, 1900-present”*⁶ by Akwasi B. Assensoh and Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh examines the interplay between military actions and political contexts in Africa in the 20th century, exploring the causes and consequences of military interventions, as well as the role of ideology, and how they have shaped African governance and society. It offers valuable insights into the dynamics of military authority and political change in Africa. The book has been praised by scholars for its balanced approach as it combines historical analysis with contemporary relevance. It insights into the historical and ideological dimensions of military politics in Africa, makes it a very significant contribution to the study.

In *“Military Coups in West Africa since the sixties”*⁷, Godfrey Mwakikagile analyzes the prevalence and impact of military coups in West Africa, focusing on their historical context, causes and consequences in post-colonial African politics. The author

highlights the major factors which has played a huge role in the different coups have taken place since the period of independence. He stated, "What is behind all those coups? Reasons vary, from country to country, but they all can be summed up into one which is invariably given by all those who overthrow governments: mismanagement, especially of the economy by those they dispose". The book explores the dynamics of military politics in the region. Also, in the book "*The Challenge of Stability and Security in West Africa*," the authors provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors affecting the socio-economic and political milieu in the region, thereby posing a threat to the stability and security of West African"⁸ The authors explore the interplay of political, economic, and social factors that contribute to insecurity and economic meltdown in the region.

Jimmy D. Kandeh, in his book "*Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*"⁹, explores the phenomenon of military coups in West Africa through the lens of subaltern groups. He emphasizes on the crucial role played by lower level officers (subalterns) in challenging state power or governments, and reshaping political landscapes. In his introduction, he wrote: "A significant number of military interventions in West Africa have been carried out not by disrespected senior officers but by subaltern ranks of the military, who occupy a class position in the army that is analogous to the working class in society." The author's insights makes this book an essential resource for understanding the complexities of political change in the region.

Issaka K. Souare gives an in depth analysis of the underlying causes of civil wars and military coups in West Africa, in his book "*Civil Wars and Coups d'état in West Africa*."¹⁰ He went further to propose solutions that will enhance stability and security in the region. The book identifies key factors driving violence in society, such as ethnic divisions, economic disparities, and political exclusion; these elements creates instability in the society, which makes it prone to conflict and coups.

In "*A Deeper Look into the West African Coup wave*,"¹¹ by Daniel Baltoi, the writer examines the recent surge of Coups in West Africa, analyzing the underlying causes, implications and the response from both regional and international actors. The writer provides a critical framework for understanding the political dynamics that led to these coups, which includes both internal and external forces. According to the writer, "Although these events do represent a trend with similar causes and timing, the broader picture does not necessarily suggest that the coup wave will spread elsewhere in West Africa. The causes of each coup are particular to each country's past and present, and similar states have been able to transition into much more durable democracies." It is important to note that at the time this work was published in January 9, 2023, only Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea had experienced military takeovers in that same year. In 2023, Niger and Gabon experienced coups simultaneously. This suggests that there is a likelihood that this trend might eventually spread to other states in the region, owing to

the fact that they (the other West African states) are currently facing the similar challenges that prompted the coups in these states.

Also, Habu Mohammed emphasized in his work, *“The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa and the Role of the African Union (AU)”*,¹² that one of the numerous challenges bedeviling the African continent today is the epileptic process of democratization. Good governance, at least defined from the context of establishing a democratic system that thrives on political legitimacy with high level of responsive leadership and accountability as well as greater supply of public goods, has eluded the continent. In short, the paradox of African governance architecture has resulted in the existence of authoritarian democracies, which has over the years created an enabling for the resurgence of military takeovers.

The volume *“Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa: Beyond the Coup d’état,”*¹³ edited by Moses Khisa and Christopher Day, provides a critical analysis of civil–military interactions within the African context. The book begins with the premise that Africa’s militaries play key roles in political and societal processes that do not necessarily involve the signature move of the coup d’état previously associated with military intrusions and activities. While coups still occur, and are an important phenomenon, the effort to rethink civil-military relations requires examining patterns of military institutions and actors that stray beyond or engage differently in matters of

national security or even domestic law and order, all of which have implications for political processes and societal relations.

Chilaka Francis Chigozie and Peter Thankgod Oyinmiebi in their work *“Resurgence of military coups in West Africa: Implications for ECOWAS”*,¹⁴ highlighted how the region have experienced a relatively low number of military incursions in almost two decades. But with over 20 failed and successful coups in recent times, the implication of this to the peace, security and stability of the region has raised serious concerns among scholars. This growing concern comes from the argument that democracy is dying as well as failing in the subregion. More so, the sub-region is confronted with grave security,(banditry, terrorism, arms proliferation, drug trafficking, among other forms of crimes and criminality) economic (rising poverty, declining economic growth), citizens’ discontent and leadership crisis. As such, the spate of coups has been seen as the product of the aforementioned issues.

In *“Government and Politics in Africa”*¹⁵ by William Tordoff, the author examines the Military and how it has played a central role in African politics since independence. Citing that the inadequacy in the political culture of these states have been the bane of their political instability, which in turn makes them a soft ground for military interventions as an alternative to the failed democracies.

CHAPTERIZATION

CHAPTER ONE

Background to the study.

This chapter gives a general introduction to the phenomenon of military coups in African politics. It examines the works of scholars that have probed the same area of interest as well as sets out the aims and objectives, scope of study and methodology used in this research.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical analysis of Coups in Africa

This chapter gives a historical view of military incursions in the African political scene in the early years that preceded the period of independence, highlighting the factors responsible and how the OAU and other international actors were able to mitigate the circle of coups in Africa during the closing parts of the 20th century.

CHAPTER THREE

Resurgence of Military takeovers in West Africa (2021-2024).

This chapter examines the resurgence of military takeovers in the African political scene, especially in West Africa, which has witnessed a quick rise in the number of coups in recent years than any other sub-region in Africa. Using Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger as examples, this study delves into the causes of the resurgence of coups, giving a

detailed analysis of the factors behind these military takeovers and analyzing the internal situations of the Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger during the period of study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Impact of Coups on regional integration and international community's response.

This chapter discusses the impact of the resurgence of military coups and its implications on regional cooperation and integration in West Africa, by examining the reactions of the African Union and Economic Community of West African States(ECOWAS), as well as the reaction of the wider international community and some prominent State Actors in the international system. It also takes a look at how some of the reactions, especially the suspension of the three Sahelian States from ECOWAS, has pushed them into establishing their own bloc in order to build a mutual defense community and protect their national interests in the face of hostilities from their ECOWAS neighbors and external forces.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion.

This chapter concludes the research and highlights the key factors that has played a part in the resurgence of military takeovers in Africa, as was demonstrated in the study. This is the concluding chapter which gives a general summary of the entire research.

Endnotes

1. Megan Duzor, Brian Williamson, "Coups in Africa," *Voice of America News* (October 3, 2023), retrieved 8th May 2025, www.projectvoanews.com
2. Godfrey Mwakitagile, *"Military Coups in West Africa Since The Sixties"* (New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc, 2001) p. 1
3. Olusegun Obasanjo, Hans d'Orville, eds. *"The Leadership Challenge of Economic Reforms in Africa."* (New York: Crane Russell, 1991) p. 4
4. Godfrey Mwakitagile, *"Military Coups in West Africa Since The Sixties"*. p. 5
5. Megan Duzor, Brian Williamson, "Coups in Africa," *Voice of America News*
6. Akwasi B. Assensoh, Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh, *"African Military History and Politics; Coups and Ideological Incursions 1900-Present"* (New York: Palgrave, 2004)
7. Godfrey Mwakitagile, *"Military Coups in West Africa Since The Sixties"*
8. Alexandre Marc, Neelam Verjee and Stephen Mogaka, *"The Challenge of Stability and Security in West Africa."* (Washington, D.C: World Bank Publications, 2018)
9. Jimmy D. Kandeh, *"Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa."* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
10. Issaka K. Souare, *"Civil Wars and Coups d'état in West Africa"* (Maryland: University Press of America Inc, 2006).

11. M. Khisa and C. Day, eds., *Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa: Beyond the Coup d'État* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2022), 4.
12. Mohammed A. Habu, "The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa and the Role of the African Union (AU)," *Socialscientia and Humanities* 7, no. 3 (2022). p. 82
13. Daniel Baltoi, "A Deeper Look into the West African Coup Wave," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, January 2023, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/a-deeper-look-into-the-west-african-coup-wave/>. Accessed 8th May 2025.
14. Chilaka Francis Chigozie and Peter Thankgod Oyinmobi, "Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa: Implications for ECOWAS." Published by *African Journal of Social Science and Humanitarian Research*, vol.5, 2022.
15. William Tordoff, *Government and Politics in Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF COUPS IN AFRICA

Introduction

After independence, the overwhelming majority of West African leaders centralized power. The shift toward an autocratic political system with zero tolerance for competition was built on the character of the extractive colonial state. Many postcolonial states failed to dismantle the despotic institutions that had been nurtured under colonialism¹. This created a defective political system, which would turn out to be inviting for military presence in governance.

Coup d'état had become a common phenomenon in post-colonial Africa owing to its high frequency since the 1950s, which saw a surge in the number of military incursions in politics. The toppling of King Farouk in 1952 by the Egyptian army marked the beginning of military intervention to gain political power in Africa². This became the dawn of an occurrence that would dominate a major part of the continent's political sphere for the coming decades.

OVERVIEW OF COUPS IN AFRICA IN THE 20TH CENTURY.

As the colonial era began to draw to a close after the Second World War, with the United Nations at centerpiece of the push for Self-determination, many African states began to attain Independence, and this struggle for independence was shortly followed by a wave of coup d'états. From the 1960s through to the 21st century, coups became a

routine phenomenon across the continent. During the first three decades of Independence, (from 1960 to 1990) there was at least twenty two successful coups d'état per decade.³

Up until very recently, Military coups d'état have been the most frequent method of political change in the Third World. Amongst all the regions, however, Africa stands out at the top of the list in this regard. Since independence in or around the 1960s, the military has supplanted civilian governments in nearly half of Africa's states.⁴ Political life in most part of Africa was engulfed in military takeovers, as many African states, especially in sub-sahara Africa, experienced a series of coups and counter-coups. These events left a bad taste in the mouth of many Africans, as they decried the incessant manner at which these coups were being perpetrated. The frequency of coups d'état in the region reached the point where in Benin, for instance, in just one decade (1963-1973), there were six successful coups.⁵ This had a great effect on the socio-political life in many states in the region, which in turn affected their economic development, as the frequent premature change of government broke the chain of continuity in the political life of a continent that was trying to find its feet after years of subjugation and colonial rule. At this point, coups became a "legitimate" means of changing democratically elected regimes, and this occurrence took a domino effect, as it spread from one African state to another.

Indeed, when military takeovers began to surface as a mushrooming cascade of regular events in the 1960s on the African continent, many Africans and scholars of the

continent's affairs thought that it was a temporary matter that would abate over the years⁶. However, the trend of military takeovers remained consistent in African political life, especially in sub-saharan Africa, which experienced its first military coup in 1963 in the Republic of Togo in West Africa. This was followed by a number of military takeovers across the region such as in Dahomey (now Benin Republic), Ghana, Congo, Nigeria, among others; resulting in political instability in the region, which in turn had an adverse effect on their economic life. With coups on the rise in the early years of independence, many states in the continent experienced a series of coups and counter-coups. The period between 1960 and 1970 and slightly beyond has generally been called the decade of coups in Africa. Once Coups started in Africa, they became like a wild African bushfire. They spread through the entire sub-regions at an alarmingly high speed. They went through the national borders as if these boundaries did not exist anymore.⁷

While significant number of successful coups occurred in the immediate post-independence era, the 1970's and 1980's were masked by a plethora of both successful and failed coups attempts⁸. Though this period witnessed a significant reduction in the number of successful coups, attempts at overthrowing governments within African states still persisted, as the decline in the success rate did not deter disgruntled military officers from attempting to gain power, which they credit to corruption by politicians and mismanagement of state economy.

ANALYSIS OF KEY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE COUPS.

The actual causes of military takeovers (especially in Africa) has been a debate among scholars and political analysts, and many of them have cited different theories to back their claims, yet most of these claims have proven to have one defect or another. While trying to explain the factors responsible for coups, it is important to keep in mind that even the perpetrators themselves have often cited that their intervention in politics is as a result of corrupt practices by politicians and mismanagement of their nation's economy.

Fragile Political Institutions

According to Henry Bienen, an American writer, he argues that the military is able to intervene “because it does retain legitimacy untainted by civilian failures”⁹. His view is from a critical standpoint of the social and political environment of states affected (especially in Africa), stressing that the weak political culture of these states made them susceptible to military interventions. As a continent just emerging from colonial rule, African states were still in their “political infancy”, therefore, they were yet to establish strong political institutions and this had a telling in the way most politicians were involved in abuse of office and other forms of misconducts which propelled some of the military interventions that took place at that time.

Contagion Effect of Coups

Another explanation given by scholars in trying to understand the factors responsible for coups in Africa, is the theory of contagion. This theory argues that the occurrence of a coup in one country, due to the social and political environment, stimulates more coups in other countries, especially neighboring ones¹⁰. This view explains that the military officers in one state might be tempted to intervene in political affairs after witnessing a successful coup attempt in a neighboring country.

Politicization of the Military

Another factor that has contributed to the phenomenon of coup d'état in African is the politicization of the military. The prime role and mission of the professional army is clearly to be the custodian and the defender of the territorial integrity of the nation¹¹. This asserts that the primary job of the military is to protect and preserve the statehood of a nation both from internal and external aggression. A professional army ought to maintain non-partisanship as its prime role is to protect the state from foreign invasion or internal threats to the state's national security. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in most African states, as some African militaries tend to be used as a political tool both by politicians and top Generals in the army. The Military has become captive of the society and social forces. Thus, the military is susceptible to all the cleavages such as religious, ethnic, clanic, class, ideological, e.t.c, that are present in the wider society¹¹. This can be observed in the composition and recruitment pattern of some militaries, especially in sub-

saharan Africa. Jimmy Kandeh studied the composition of a number of national armies in the region and presented some very alarming statistics. For example, he claims that in the Togolese army, an estimated 90 percent of the officers and 40 percent of soldiers belong to the late President Gnassingbe Eyadema’s ethnic group (the Kabre). Yet they make up only 25 percent of the population, while the Ewe ethnic group represent an estimated 50 percent of the population¹³.

Also in Nigeria, statistics shows how the politicians of post-independence (especially from the North) manipulated the recruit scheme in order to favor people from their region. When Northern politicians assumed power in 1960, they enacted policies that increased the number of northerners in the corps. For instance, they lowered entry qualifications and drastically slashed failure rates in selection tests into the Nigerian Military Training College with the aim of attracting more northern enlistees¹⁴.

	NORTH	WEST	EAST	SOUTH CAMEROONS
Pre-Independence (Earlier -1959)	8 (14%)	10 (17%)	37 (65%)	2 (3.5%)
Pre-Quota	21 (32%)	12 (18%)	29 (45%)	3 (5%)
Post-Quota (1960-1966)	104 (48%)	46 (21%)	66 (31%)	---
Total	133 (39%)	68 (20%)	132 (39%)	5 (2%)

Table 1: Statistics by N.J Miners.

The above statistics shows the dominance of a particular ethnic group over the others in post-independence Nigerian Military, which would go on to have effects on the events

that took place in 1966, when the nation experienced two coups in 6 months, which would later culminate in the events that led to the country's civil war in 1967.

Cold War Effect

The bipolar struggle between competing ideologies during the Cold War era heightened political tensions across the world, and it also played a role in some of the military takeovers that took place in Africa during that period. Ideological motivations was behind a number of coups in Africa, as those responsible for the coup looked to change the socio-political base of their state. The desire to radically change the social base of their countries away from status-ridden oligarchies to embrace democracy and the rule of law induced some military leaders to intervene in political affairs. A notable example is Captain Thomas Sankara, who led a coup d'état in Burkina Faso in 1983 with a clear vision of a just, reformed and prosperous society, Sankara and his associates embarked on gigantic efforts to truly modify the social base of the Burkinabé state to the benefit of the poor and voiceless.¹⁶ Another example was the coup that overthrew President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. On February 24, 1966, the publicly-avowed socialist government of Nkrumah in Ghana was swiftly overthrown by the country's armed forces under very suspicious circumstances¹⁷. The coup was seen by socialists as one that was backed by Pro-Western forces which publicly condemned the Nkrumah regime. In *Dark Days in Ghana*, Nkrumah stated that "In Ghana, the embassies of the United States, Britain and West Germany were all implicated in the plot to overthrow my

government. It is alleged that the U.S Ambassador, Franklin Williams, offered the traitors 13 million dollars to carry out a coup d'etat, Africa, Harlley and Kotoka were to get a large share of this if they would assassinate me at Accra airport as I prepared to leave for Hanoi. I understand Africa said: "I think I will fail," and declined the offer. So, apparently, did the others. It is particularly disgraceful that it should have been an Afro-American ambassador who [allegedly] sold himself out to the imperialists and allowed himself to be used in this way".¹⁸ In fact, on 11 March 1965, barely eleven months before the overthrow of Nkrumah on 24 February 1966, both McCone, the CIA Director, and Mahoney, the American Ambassador to Ghana, together with the Deputy Chief of Africa Division, whose name is yet to be declassified¹⁹, met in Washington to discuss once again the Ghana issue. The first item on their agenda could not be more striking. It bluntly read: "Coup d'etat plot, Ghana".²⁰ This clearly shows the ideological underpinning behind the Ghanaian coup in 1966, as the West viewed Kwame Nkrumah as a threat to their interests in the West Africa region due to his close ties with the Soviet Union and their socialist ideas.

Psychological Factor

There is also the psychological factor which has prevailed in some African states in the occurrence of military interventions. It can be asserted that once the barrier which stands in the way of the military from intervening has been broken in one state, it may create a cyclical nature of events. The military, having intervened once in a state, may be

disposed to intervene again. Dahomey (now People's Republic of Benin) which experienced six coups in less than 10 years, is the prime example of this phenomenon²¹.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS IN RESPONSE TO THE COUPS

The emergence of coups d'état in Africa in the early years of independence was largely criticized by democrats who believed that the last thing needed, by a continent that was slowly emerging from subjugation by external powers, was a "kind of authoritarian" leaders. Some of them blamed this wave on military takeovers on 'power-thirsty military officers' as they described them, who took advantage of the new and fragile political systems of newly independent African states; while others laid their blames on the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which they believed did very little in the early stages to discourage coup plotters. They believed that the Organization's Charter provision of "Non-interference in the internal affairs of States"²² abetted coup plotters to unseat constituted governments and take over power. For the first fifty years of independence, more than half of government transitions was by forceful means. The forceful transfer of power within African states had become a "widely accepted norm". To underscore this key point, more than half of the chairpersons from the AU's predecessor, the Organization of African Unity were brought to power via a coup or civil conflict²³. This explains the grievances held by democrats who asserted that the Organization encouraged coup practices in African states due to the fact that most of its leaders got into power through that very same means.

For the OAU means the primacy of sovereignty and territorial integrity ensued the stability of a diplomatic system that banked on strict judicial statehood. And while the principle of non-interference fit well within this institutional framework, it interacted differently with other OAU principles. For instance, non-interference dovetailed with the OAU's "unreserved condemnation... of political assassination as well as of subversive activities"²⁴. Though there's no doubt that the OAU failed to intervene in the early coup d'état that took place in post-independence Africa, but the assertion held by democrats that the organization encouraged such activities cannot be totally held to be true.

Not just the OAU, the United Nations have also received its fair share of criticism by Democratic Enthusiasts for its failure to intervene in the event of coups d'état in post-independence Africa. They hold strongly that the Superpowers (United States and Soviet Union) Cold War Struggle blindsided the organization, thereby preventing them from making much effort to discourage the sorts of military takeovers that took place during that period (especially in Africa). They believed that the superpowers being part of the United Nations Security Council, could not come to an agreement in taking any feasible action to prevent these coups. To some extent, this view holds some truth, because more often than not, calculations of real politic hold the UN Security Council back from taking action to deter or reverse military takeovers²⁵. This poor track record is not especially surprising. The Security Council has never been particularly adept at responding to coups. According to Oisín Tenney, an expert on international diplomacy around military

takeovers, notes that the council did not address coups at all until the Cold War ended and has taken only a “highly selective” approach to them since²⁶.

It has been quite visible that the lack of consensus among members has played a part to its inactivity when it comes to the success of coups. The politics of Cold War too has had a large effect on international responses to coup activities, especially because Beijing and Moscow was always opposing the allowing of the Western powers to intervene. And this had an impact on the way the international community responded to the military takeovers that took place during that period, and it was only during the last decade of the 20th century that some sort of concern was given to the issue of coups, which saw a visible lessening in military takeovers.

After long decades of unresponsiveness to coups, the OAU finally took a step to contain the rise of military takeovers in the continent. It was only in the late 1990s that representatives of the OAU began to speak out against coup activity in a meaningful fashion. At the Harare Summit of 1997, for example, Robert Mugabe stated, "We are getting tougher and tougher on coups... Democracy is getting stronger in Africa and we now have a definite attitude against coups²⁷." The Harare Summit was followed by the Algiers Declaration on unconstitutional changes of government, which also paid special attention to democratization on the continent and particularly, the Lomé Declaration for an OAU response to unconstitutional changes of Government which was the first time the OAU officially condemned a coup activity²⁸.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has also made its own contribution to discourage military takeovers in the region during this period. Using its military arm ECOMOG to enforce its stance against unconstitutional change of governments, it got involved in the internal politics of its member states as was witnessed in Sierra Leone. Major (Later Lieutenant-Colonel) Johnny Paul Koroma came to power in May 1997 as the result of a military coup²⁹. Having toppled the elected Sierra Leonean government of President Tejan Kabbah, the ECOMOG forces succeeded, at an expensive price in human lives and material destruction, in dislodging Koroma's forces. ECOMOG drove them out of the country to join the guerilla-like liberation army called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), whose leaders later accepted the July 7, 1999 peace agreement.

Conclusion

The wave of military takeovers that took African states during the early years of independence can be attributed to the weak political institutions in most African states in these early stages. These newly born States at that time were unable to consolidate their political culture as a result of the instability in their good-economic welfare thereby creating the opportunity for military personnel to intervene in order to restore the stability of their nation. This invariability set off successive crises of coups in different African states, and in no time these interventions began to take on new shapes as it got influenced by ideological factors, as well as external actors who harbored different spheres of

interest, which affected the internal affairs of African states. In the early stages, very military interventions in the continent for many decades until the closing decade of the 20th century, when many international actors such as the OAU (United Nations) and ECOWAS, among others, were able to intervene in and to discourage the near-norm of forceful change of governments in the continent. With this, the number of military takeovers in the continent was significantly reduced.

Endnotes

1. Alexandre Marc, Neelam Verjee, and Stephen Mogaka, *Challenge of Stability and Security in West Africa*(Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2015), 100.
2. PSC Report, "*The Evolution of Coups in Africa*," (11 October 2023) <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/the-evolution-of-coups-in-africa>. Accessed July 4, 2025.
3. Moses Khisa, "*Coups in Africa*," Oxford Bibliographies, 20 February 2024 <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199846733/obo-9780199846733-0235.xml#backToTop>. Accessed August 7, 2025
4. Tordoff, William, "*Government and Politics in Africa*," (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002) p. 168
2. Issaka K. Souaré, "*Civil Wars and Coups d'état in West Africa*," (Maryland: University Press of America, Inc, 2006) p. 28
3. Akwasi B. Assensoh., Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh, "*African Military History and Politics*," (New York, Palgrave, 2001) p. 128
4. Chuka, O., "*African Democratization and Military Coups*," (Westport, Praeger, 1998). p 40
5. Ibid.

6. Henry Bienen, “*Public Order and the Military in Africa: Mutinies in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika*”, in *The Military Intervenes: Case Studies in Political Development* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968), p. 38
7. Issaka K. Souaré, "*Civil Wars and Coups d'état in West Africa*,"p. 94
8. Ibid., p. 100
9. Ibid., p. 101
10. Jimmy D. Kandéh, "*Civil-Military Relations" in West Africa's Security Challenges*," (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004) p. 156
11. Adewale Ademoyega, “*Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup*” (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Nigeria Publishers Limited 1981) p. 24
12. N. J. Miners, “*The Nigerian Army*”, 1956-1966 (London: Methuen 1971).
13. Issaka K. Souaré, "*Civil Wars and Coups d'etat in West Africa*" p. 104
14. Akwasi B. Assensoh., Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh. "*African Military History and Politics*" p. 132
15. Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p.49
16. Issaka K. Souaré, "*Civil Wars and Coups d'etat*" p. 111
17. Ibid., p. 112
18. Tordoff, William, "*Government and Politics in Africa*" p. 152
19. OAU Charter, Article III(2), (1963). p. 4

20. Moses Khisa, Christopher Day, *"Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa: Beyond the Coup d'état,"* (Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2022), p. 65
21. Ibid., p. 69
22. Richard Gowah, Ashish K. Pradhans, *"Why the UN Security Council Stumbles in Responding to Coups,"* 24 January 2022 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/why-un-security-council-stumbles-responding-coups#:~:text=Beyond%20fundamental%20disagreements%20about%20the,leverage%20in%20the%20countries%20concerned>. Accessed July 20, 2025
23. Ibid
24. Moses Khisa, Christopher Day, *"Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa,"* p. 70
25. Ibid., p. 71
26. Sierra-Leone Web, "Johnny Paul Koroma," https://www.sierra-leone.org/Johnny_Paul_Koroma.html. Accessed August 8, 2025.

CHAPTER THREE

RESURGENCE OF MILITARY TAKEOVERS IN WEST AFRICA (2021-2024)

Introduction

The dawn of the 21st century in the African political scene saw a significant decline in the rate at which military takeovers occurred. This can be generally attributed to the efforts made by some notable International Organizations, such as the United Nations, the OAU/AU, and ECOWAS, that took a strong stance against coup d'état. These elements made sure to discourage coup plotters by demonizing the idea of military takeovers and promoting democratic and constitutional change of government as the only legitimate path for states to take in the navigation of their political destiny. With these efforts, the idea of Military intervention had almost become a story of history in African politics, until recent years when the continent began to experience a new wave of coups, especially in West Africa. The political history of West Africa is rife with incidence of coups and counter-coups, the sub-region has proven to be a 'soft ground' for coups due to instability in the socio-economic life, as well as the weak political institutions present in the respective states.

ANALYSIS OF COUPS IN WEST AFRICA DURING THE PERIOD OF STUDY

The overthrow of President Boubacar Keita and the Transitional Government in Mali in August 2020 and May 2021, respectively, via coups brought light to the legitimate dilemma that civilian governments face as a result of corrupt practices and weak

governance.¹ Until the Malian coups military takeovers had rarely occurred in the last two decades, and this had banished coups from the minds of Africans, often seeing it as a myth in African political history, especially in West Africa which has had a fair share of coups in the foregoing decades before the 21st Century. However, the resurgence of military coups and democratic backsliding in West Africa has raised concerns about the capability and effectiveness of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) thus, posing an existential threat to the organization²

This new wave of coups have caused an alarm among democrats, who believe that the militarization of politics might drag the continent back to the early years of independence when military rule had become a norm in the African political scene. The Malian coups which took place 8 months apart, would appear to be the opener for more coups in the West Africa sub-region, as it began to spread to neighbouring states such as Guinea, Burkina Faso and Niger within the next couple of years. This resurgence of military coups in the sub-region, clearly highlights the similarities in the democratic institution of many states in West Africa, as the affected states have exhibited similar internal conditions, which has made them ripe for military intervention following years of failed democratic governance. The influx of coups activity in Africa over the past several years, ten successful since 2019, has renewed debate over whether coups, like transmissible diseases, are contagious. The pace and proximity at which such events have occurred would certainly seem to suggest they are, or, at the very least, would lead one to believe

they might be. Niger's coup in late July 2023 came just ten months after a successful coup in Burkina Faso³. This spread of events of military takeovers have left many political analysts wondering if and how long it would take before it engulfs the entire West African region, owing to the fact that most of the States within this region face similar internal political and economic conditions that has propelled the rise of military interventions over the past few years. These conditions includes poverty and poor economic performance, repression of citizens rights/freedom, instances of unconstitutional/undemocratic practices and poor social service delivery. This has led many scholars to question the so-called democracy that is practiced by most African states. Therefore it did not come as a surprise when military coups began to re-emerge within the continent, as it was only a matter of time before the "undemocratic and arbitrary" African leaders got opposed for their actions in governance.

UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THE RESURGENCE OF MILITARY TAKEOVERS

In 2021, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, warned about an "explosion in seizures of power by force" across the world declaring "military coups are back" in a speech to the General Assembly; Guterres ascribed a loss of faith in governments and institutions, a breakdown of values and rise in mistrust, compounded by geopolitical divisions undermining international cooperation. He warned "a sense of impunity is taking hold"⁴.

The events that precedes military takeovers are unique to each country's internal political and economic situation, however, it has been noted that most of the states that experienced military takeovers in West Africa in recent years, have tend to have a bit of similarities in their different internal structures. These internal conditions of the states affected help to explain the actual reasons behind the military interventions that have taken place recently in West Africa.

Failing Democratic Governance

The first issue to be cited as a major cause of military interventions in West Africa, is the problem of governance. Democratic governance and leadership failings throughout the area are to blame for the resurgence of coups. Public anger has been fueled by problems such as widespread corruption among the ruling class, violations of human rights, and arbitrary term restrictions⁵. Though most of states claim to be practicing Democracy, their policies and actions have spoken otherwise; politicians and their political parties are more interested in satisfying their private needs than representing the interest of the people. This has become a major problem in the political affairs of most African states, and it can be said that African democracy has been cloaked in "elitism". The presence of patronage politics, has bred lack of openness, and high levels of corruption in government⁶. In most African states, the political parties are rid of political ideologies, and this lack of focus has given room for corrupt politicians to easily switch party memberships at will whenever their wishes are not granted. Political parties, which

ought to reflect the political culture of the people, are now being used as an avenue for power grabbing by politicians, and this has invariably led to political instability, which has opened the doors to military interventions in those states affected.

Weak State Institutions

Weak state Institutions has been another factor in this context, as it has been observable in African politics, the continued abuse of office by government officials without accountability or checks and balances by the other arms of government. Weak state institutions, political divisiveness, election violence, and ongoing constitutional subversion have beset the majority of post-independence civilian governments. Military factions have potential to seize control because of the institutional instability and democratic fragility.⁷ Many African leaders have often sought to extend their terms in office, and those that have succeeded have continuously remained in power by organizing sham elections, without any resistance from the legislative arm or judiciary. An example was in the case of Guinea; Alpha Conde was democratically elected in 2010, making the country's first democratic election since gaining independence from France in 1958. But during his second term, Conde changed Guinea's constitution to allow himself to stay in power longer than two terms. In October 2020, Conde won a third term, defeating opposition leader Cellou Delein in a flawed election marked by violence and border closures that prevented people living abroad from casting their votes.⁸ After the election, protests broke out and more than 400 of Conde's political opponents were sent to prison.⁹

This blatant abuse of office and the inability of the other arms of Guinea's government to check the President's actions, ultimately gave a clear invitation to the military to step in and intervene in the state's political affairs.

Growing Public Discontent and Economic Crisis

Public discontent and economic crisis has also been a driving factor in the resurgence of coup d'états in West Africa, as many states in the sub-region has been home to economic mismanagement by their political leaders, and this has constantly led to a significant decline in the economic development of the sub-region. Unemployment, poverty and high inflation are examples of economic issues that have spurred opposition to the current administrations. The bulk of people still live in impoverished economic circumstances despite shifts in political leadership.¹⁰ For this reason, most people in society often envision military coups as a necessary reset key that can bring about change to societal living, and rescue their nation from the hands of corrupt politicians.

Security Challenges

It can also be argued that an increase in Extremism and Security challenges have played a role in the re-emergence of coups in the African political scene. The sub-region of West Africa especially, has witnessed a rise in security threats by different non-state actors attempting to exert political or religious freedom. Overwhelmingly, this increase in insurgencies has played a role in aiding military takeovers, as most civilian governments in the sub-region have been accused of not adopting the right approaches to combat and

bring an end to insurgencies in their different states. Failures to control instability have contributed to coups in Nations like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso at the center of the Sahel issue.¹¹ Across the sparsely populated, poorly policed Sahel, weak local governance creates gaps for jihadist movements to fill, which further weakens local governance and lends legitimacy to coup plotters.¹² Instability breeds coups, so it was not much of a surprise to many political observers when these states began to experience military interventions one after the other. Over the last five years, terrorists are estimated to have gained control of up to 40 percent of Burkina Faso's territory, leading to 2,500 closed schools and over one million internally displaced persons.¹³ This has propelled the military to step in and intervene in the state's political affairs in a bid to restore order to society.

Contagion Effect

Besides the obvious reasons for these military interventions, another possible cause is the "Contagion effect". This element stems from the argument that coups are contagious, and the recent spread of coups across State borders in West Africa attests to this argument. Since 2020, coups have clustered, which suggests that a copycat contagion effect is at work. Plotters in other parts of the region have been motivated by the recent coups' early success in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso.¹⁴ For this reason, most International observers have feared that coups may possibly spread to more states across the region owing to the political and economic landscape of the region; one which has

been largely characterized by instability, and so far, the military juntas in the respective states affected by this new wave of coups have ultimately managed to retain power.

EXAMINING THE STATES AFFECTED: BURKINA FASO, MALI AND NIGER.

Military incursion in political affairs in West Africa has surged in recent few years, affecting several states in the region such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, among others. The socio-economic and political conditions of these states has been significantly marred by corruption, economic instability, security crisis and above all, weak democratic institutions.

Mali

Nine months after mid-level officers seized power in the name of the National Committee for the Salvation of People(CNSP), fissures between the junta and transitional government surfaced.¹⁵ The junta led by Assimi Goita had seized power earlier in August 2020, ousting President Boubacar Keita on the grounds of widespread corruption and social discontent as a result of poor governance by the civilian government. The transitional government led by the interim president, Bah Ndaw made attempts to institute reforms in government. On Monday, May 24, 2021, the interim president, Bah Ndaw, and prime minister, Moctar Ouane, announced a cabinet reshuffle that dropped two key ex-CNSP members, removing Col. Sadio Camara as defense minister and Col. Modibo Koné as security minister.¹⁶ The attempts by the interim government to strengthen its position was brought to an end the very next day. On Tuesday, May 25,

2021, interim Vice President Goita announced that he had ousted Ndaw and Ouane for failing to consult him on the cabinet shakeup, which he argued violated the country's transition agreement.¹⁷

Before the Malian coups, they had been ongoing protests in Mali, calling for the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. This was as a result of the displeasure over the government's management of the activities of insurgents in the state, as well as government corruption and a dwindling economy. Political tension has been simmering since Keita won re-election in August 2018 in a poll that opposition parties said was marred by irregularities.¹⁸ This led to widespread dissatisfaction among Malians due to the government's alleged electoral fraud and failure of the judicial arm to put things right. According to a news report published by Reuters that "Protesters are angry about a decision by the constitutional court to overturn 31 of the results, handing Keita's party 10 more parliamentary seats and making it the largest bloc."¹⁹ This growing mistrust for Keita's government was intensified by an increase in attacks by jihadists in the state, as the insurgents sort to take advantage of the ongoing political chaos in the state to extend their control.

The intensifying security challenges in Mali has had an adverse effect on its economy. Economic factors such as poverty and unemployment largely contributed to military incursions in West Africa.²⁰ Afro-barometer surveys shows that public support for military takeovers has increased throughout the area, a study shows that an average of

46% of participants across 18 nations said they would be in favor of the military assuming control of the country. Just before the coups in 2021, support for coups was highest in Mali: (67%), followed by Guinea (59%).²¹ This survey only proves the argument by political analysts that Mali has been a breeding ground for coups, having experienced one less than a decade before in 2012.

Despite the pressure from external bodies, the Malian Junta has been able to hold onto power since 2021 and this has led to multiple sanctions on Mali by both the regional body (ECOWAS) and other international actors, in their bid to force out the military leaders and re-institute civilian rule.

Burkina Faso

Just like Mali, Burkina Faso also experienced two coups in less than a year (January and September 2022). By January 2022, grievances and tensions between the armed forces and the democratically-elected government of Roch Kaboré, had been building for months.²² The military's discontent has stemmed from supposedly lack of support and resources from the government in terms of arms and material resources in their fight against Islamist militants in the state. This has led to multi-casualties suffered by both civilians and the army itself. In November 2021, militants killed 49 gendarmes and four civilians at a camp in Inata, marking the country's largest loss of security forces to date.²³ The event sparked anti-government protests, calling for Kaboré to step down. On January 23, 2022, soldiers mutinied. Their list of demands included a call for more

support, troops, and training for the fight against terrorism in the country, changes to deployment processes, increased support for families who lost their relatives in conflict, improved assistance for injured soldiers, and for the replacement of intelligence and military chiefs by the government.²⁴ A coup was carried out against the government the following day, led by a group of army officers, and installed Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. The coup was initially welcomed by many in Burkina Faso, as the previous government had become deeply unpopular due to its failure to deal with the insurgency.²⁵ However, the new regime was also unable to defeat the rebels and instead lost even more territory to jihadists and other militants.²⁶ And this led to the second coup, led by Captain Ibrahim Traore on 30th September 2022, removing interim President Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba from office and installing himself as the new leader of Burkina Faso.

Being a landlocked state, Burkina Faso's economy has mostly depended on its neighbors for trade and access to the sea, leaving her with limited options when it comes to its economic relations with other states. Its economy is primarily based on agriculture and mining, particularly gold production.²⁷ More than 40% of the population was below the national poverty line. According to the 2023-2024 Human Development Index (HDI) report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Burkina Faso ranks 185th out of 193 countries.²⁸ The high rate of poverty in the state played a crucial role in the re-awakening of coups, as social discontent began to grow rapidly, coupled

with the fatal situation of insecurity in the nation which ultimately left the military with no option but to intervene.

NIGER

In July 2023 military officers forcibly removed the democratically elected president of Niger, the sixth coup in West Africa in three.²⁹ President Mohamed Bazoum was put under house arrest, which strengthened the junta's control over power while efforts to restore constitutional order were made through mediation. The coup shows that security problems and power struggles within the country are getting worse.³⁰ The Nigerien coup which took place in late July 2023 comes following a series of coups in the West African region in the recent years, which has raised concerns about the possible return of military takeovers as a means of regime change in West African politics.

Following the new wave of military takeovers in West Africa, it can be said that Niger's coup has attracted the most attention compared to others in neighboring states like Mali and Burkina Faso. In a BBC report on the Nigerien coup, it listed a few factors why Niger's coup has attracted so much attention from the International community; most particularly, two key elements stands out. Strategically, it hosts French and US military bases and is seen as a key partner in the fight against Islamist insurgents.³¹ In fact, the US State Department describes Niger as "important as a linchpin for stability in the Sahel" and a "reliable counter-terrorism partner" against various Islamist groups linked to either Islamic State or al-Qaeda.³²

Economically, it is rich in uranium, producing 7% of all global supplies. The radioactive metal looms so large in the country's economy that one of the grandest thoroughfares in the capital, Niamey, is named the Avenue de l'Uranium.³³ Regardless of Niger's richness in such an important mineral resource, it still ranks as one of the lowest standards of living across the world. Though it has economic potential, its economic fate does not rest in its own hands, as former colonialist, France and other Western powers like the UK and US, have heavily vested interests in Niger's mineral resources; and this has been cited as one of the reasons why the military decided to intervene and expel foreign influence in Nigerien affairs.

Besides Niger's economic troubles, it has also been in a continuous fight against terrorist elements in the Sahel region. Despite having foreign military bases within its territory such as the United States and French bases, the security situation in the state has failed to improve, which has invariably given rise to a feeling of distrust by the Nigeriens towards the foreign elements resident in the State. Following the military takeover, Niger ordered the expulsion of foreign armies within its borders. Niger has ever since decided to sought for assistance, and cooperate with neighboring states to enhance its security by forming an alliance known as the AES(Alliance des États du Sahel). The junta has opted to rely on a new defense alliance with neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali. They are also both under military rule and resisting demands, including from West African regional bloc ECOWAS, for a rapid restoration of civilian-led democracy.³⁴

Conclusion

The resurgence of coup attempts in West Africa over the past years has caused a great concern both to other States within the region and to external elements. The region's socio-political and economic instability has become a breeding ground for military interventions, most especially, the weak democratic institutions in its respective States. With every new coup, the phenomenon becomes further ingrained in a country's political culture, to the extent that new coups are executed increasingly effectively. Military officers are now better-skilled in holding onto power at home, as well as resisting pressures from external forces. It can generally be observed that the coup attempts which have taken place in recent years has had a far higher success rate than those of previous decades. So, while coups had become less frequent in the 21st century African politics, the recent military takeovers have been more effective in execution and holding onto power.

Endnotes

1. Anthony Mayowa Oladoyin and Goddy Uwa Osimen, "State Fragility and the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 4, no. 1 (2025): 358–370.
2. Kwesi Aning and Jesper Bjarnesen, "Ecowas' Dilemma: Balancing Principles and Pragmatism," *The Nordic Africa Institute*, April 10, 2024. <https://nai.uu.se/stories-and-events/news/2024-04-10-ecowas-dilemma-balancing-principles-and-pragmatism.html>. Accessed August 20, 2025.
3. Christopher M. Faulkner, Jaclyn Johnson, and Jonathan Powell, "Revisiting Coup Contagion," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, December 2023. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/12/revisiting-coup-contagion/>. Accessed September 2, 2025.
4. United Nations: Secretary-General's Address to the General Assembly (UN.org) (2021).
6. Anthony Mayowa Oladoyin and Goddy Uwa Osimen, "State Fragility and the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa," p. 365.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Youssouf Bah and Danielle Paquette, "Guinea's Alpha Condé Overthrown in Military Coup," *The Washington Post*, September 5, 2021.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/09/05/guinea-alpha-conde-military-takeover/>. Accessed August 20, 2025.

10. Declan Walsh and Eric Schmitt, "Guinea's Coup Raises Concerns About American Security," *The New York Times*, September 10, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/world/africa/guinea-coup-americans.html>. Accessed August 21, 2025.
11. Anthony Mayowa Oladoyin., and Goddy Uwa Osimen, "State Fragility and the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa,"p. 365
12. Ibid.
13. Daniel Baltoi, "A Deeper Look into the West African Coup Wave," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, January 2023. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/a-deeper-look-into-the-west-african-coup-wave/>. Accessed May 8, 2025.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 366.
16. John J. Chin and Jessica Kirkpatrick, "African Coups in the COVID-19 Era: A Current History," *Institute for Politics and Strategy, Carnegie Mellon University*, 2023. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2023.1077945
17. Danielle Paquette, "Mali's Military Detains President and Prime Minister," *The Washington Post*, May 25, 2021.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/25/mali-military-president-prime-minister/>. Accessed August 23, 2025.

18. Melissa Bell, Barbara Wojazer, and Caitlin Hu, "*Mali Coup: Vice President Ousts President and Prime Minister from Office, Assumes Power*," *CNN*, May 25, 2021. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/25/africa/mali-vice-president-ousts-president-prime-minister-intl>. Accessed August 23, 2025.
19. Bate Felix and Philippa Fletcher, "Why Mali Is in Turmoil Again," *Reuters*, July 30, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/why-mali-is-in-turmoil-again-idUSKCN24S1TZ/>. Accessed August 24, 2025.
20. Ibid
21. Omolara Akinyemi, David Olubunmi Apeloko, and Celestina Ekene Chukwudi, "The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa," *Journal of African Union Studies* 13, no. 2 (August 2024): Article 4. p. 80.
22. Anthony Mayowa Oladoyin., and Goddy Uwa Osimen, "*State Fragility and the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa*," p. 363.
23. John J. Chin and Jessica Kirkpatrick, "African Coups in the COVID-19 Era: A Current History," p. 8.
24. Maggie Dwyer, "Burkina Faso's Coup Makers Capitalized on Wider Grievances Within Ranks," *The Washington Post*, January 28, 2022.

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/01/28/burkina-fasos-coup-makers-capitalized-wider-grievances-within-ranks/>. Accessed August 24, 2025.
25. John J. Chin and Jessica Kirkpatrick, "African Coups in the COVID-19 Era: A Current History," p. 9
 26. Okpanachi Aluda and Amana I. Akogwu, "Military Coups in West Africa and Insecurity in Nigeria: An Overview," *West African Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 2, no. 2 (April-June 2024):p. 91
 27. Thiam Ndiaga and Anne Mimault, "Heavy Gunfire Heard at Military Camp in Burkina Faso Capital," *Reuters*, January 23, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/heavy-gunfire-heard-military-camp-burkina-faso-capital-2022-01-23/>. Accessed August 25, 2025.
 28. World Bank Group. "Burkina Faso Overview: Development News, Research, Data," *World Bank*, last modified October 9, 2025. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso/overview>. Accessed October 12, 2025.
 29. Ibid.
 30. Louisa Brooke-Holland, "Commons Library Research Briefing," *House of Commons Library*, no. 9861 (September 18, 2023), p. 10.
 31. Obinna G. Sunday and Onyinyechi Semudara C., "Resurgence of Coup d'État in Africa in an Era of Mass Democratisation: A Study of Niger, Burkina Faso, and

Mali Experiences," *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration* 7, no. 4 (2024): 55.

32. Robert Plummer, "Niger Coup: Simple Guide to What's Happening," *BBC News*, July 28, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66339528>. Accessed August 26, 2025.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid

35. Ibid

CHAPTER FOUR:
IMPACT OF COUPS ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE

Introduction

The return of military takeovers in the West African sub-region has had an enormous impact on the economic and political cooperation and integration of the region. The states affected by this new wave of military coups, especially in the Sahel region, have been treated as 'Pariah States', by their neighbors and the International Community as well. This worsens the situation of a loosely integrated region marred by a large number of economic crisis due to poor leadership, insecurity and neo-colonial influence in most West African States. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was established in 1975 to promote regional integration and stability, has been challenged by the resurgence of coups and the need to uphold its principles of democracy which it preaches. Since its establishment, the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) has faced multiple political, economic and security challenges arising from member states' 'inability' to address these challenges.¹ ECOWAS needs to be bold and good from within in order to effect the change desired; but this has proven to be a huge challenge for the regional organization. Now with the resurgence of military takeovers, a clear division has been created among the States in the region; West Africa is faced with the threat of disunity as the States led by military juntas such as Mali, Burkina Faso and

Niger seek to move from the regional body and establish their own bloc, due to sanctions and isolationist policies adopted against them by their neighboring states in ECOWAS.

AFRICAN UNION AND ECOWAS RESPONSE TO THE RESURGENCE OF COUPS IN WEST AFRICA

The new wave of coups in Africa has caused an alarm across the international community, especially within the continental and regional organizations (African Union and ECOWAS, respectively), and they have both been quick to give a response to what they have termed a threat to the stability and development of the sub-region, and the entire continent at large.

African Union's Response

The most appropriate entry point to the understanding of the AU's commitment to regional peace, sustainable democracy and political stability for its member countries is the Lome Declaration of 2000. The Declaration which was made by the organization's predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), against the background of the urgent need to retreat from the much criticized policy of non-interference into the affairs of member States, is aimed to foster democracy.² This has been identified as the beacon of the organization's stance against military takeovers, as it aims to discourage potential coup plotters within its member states. Its central target of policy change was to outlaw unconstitutional governments and confer legitimacy to those that come into power through credible and competitive electoral process.³ Since the continental bloc was

established on the 9th of July 2002, it has made efforts to overcome the ghost of the non-interference principle which had haunted its predecessor; therefore its response to the resurgence of military takeovers in Africa was not surprising. The continental organization did not hesitate to take actions against the states under military rule. Politically, the AU's most significant action has been the suspension of member states where military juntas have seized power through unconstitutional means. This has led to a rapid deterioration in relations between the AU and states such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. ⁴ This decision was "reaffirming the AU Zero tolerance policy towards any forms of unconstitutional changes of government in line with Article 4(p) of the Article 4(p) of the AU Constitutive Act".⁵ This is in-line with the organization's objective to enforce peace and stability in the continent, as it stated that "the determination of Council to silence the guns in Africa by the year 2030, with a view to creating conducive conditions for the realization of the AU Vision of an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its people and representing a dynamic force in the global arena, as well as AU Agenda 2063".⁶

ECOWAS Response

The Economic Community of West African States in its response to the resurgence of military interventions, went beyond just "political reprimand" on the 'Pariah States' like the African Union did, but have also handed out its economic sanctions on the three Sahel States in an attempt to pressure the military juntas to relinquish power to their ousted

governments. For example, after the Niger Coup, ECOWAS imposed crippling sanctions on the country, such as border closures, no-fly zone for all commercial flights and the freezing of central bank assets.⁷

Relations between ECOWAS and the three Sahelian States have been tense. Since the military seized power in Mali in 2020, Burkina Faso in 2022 and Niger in 2023. Despite sanctions by ECOWAS on these three states, they have remained defiant and refused to restore power back to the ousted regimes. The relationship between ECOWAS and the Sahelian States seems irretrievably broken as the trio have decided to withdraw from the regional organization. The withdrawal of three of ECOWAS's 15 member states underscores the bloc's failure to counter unconstitutional changes of power in recent years.⁸ And they have since formed the 'Alliance of Sahel States', which is a mutual defence pact in response to ECOWAS' threat to use force against Niger in order to restore the ousted government. Although, the regional body has since made some efforts to negotiate with them in a bid to reintegrate them back into the bloc, but this move has proven abortive. The three states maintain their decision to withdraw from the regional body as they claim that external influence in the organization has hampered its growth and prevented it from fostering real cooperation and integration among its member states. According to the departing countries, they will now experience greater sovereignty and also independence from a force that has a foreign agenda.⁹

REACTIONS OF EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS (U.N AND E.U) AND STATES (UNITED STATES, FRANCE, BRITAIN, RUSSIA AND CHINA)

The wider International community have not withheld their thoughts on the recent wave of Coups in Africa, especially the notable actors such as the United Nations and European Union, along with the more powerful States such as the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China. It is no surprise that all these notable international actors have shown interests in the recent developments within the West African region, as it is well known that the Sahel region holds a large quantity of natural resources, and it is also considered a strategic position that connects Northern and Southern Africa. The region has been constantly plagued by instability, which has seen the rise of militancy led by jihadist terrorists, as well as other issues, such as trafficking and economic crisis. Military takeovers have been a major source of concern in the region and beyond. Since 2020, the region has had four successful coups d'états and three failed ones¹⁰. The Sahel region has been tagged as the “hot bed” of instability in Africa, majorly due to the challenge of insecurity present there and how it has negatively impacted the lives of the people residing in the region. Despite the challenges facing the region, the scramble for the Sahel remains intense.¹¹

The United Nations’ Response

The United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, has hinted that "development is a central objective if we want to create conditions of peace and stability

in Africa”,¹² as the international body responds to the recent wave of military takeovers in the continent. Mr. Guterres highlighted the need to strengthen international bodies such as the African Union, and their diplomatic efforts to foster peace, stability and democracy on the continent¹³. This stresses the fact that the rise of military takeovers in the past few years have been as a result of political and socio-economic crisis which has plagued the region for decades. The inability of the governments in respective states in the region to tackle these issues effectively, have led to a loss of faith in democratically elected leaders; as the urge to initiate a military intervention does not create itself, but stems from lapses in governance, which has become a constant trend in most African states.

European Union’s Response

The European Union has also shown their concern for the developments in the Sahel sub-region, but has adopted a more cautious stance on the issue. In this context, the Union's response moves between a forcefulness and caution, combining sanctions and strong diplomatic engagements with calls for dialogue, in a difficult attempt for balance. The development of the EU’s relations with the Sahel has been championed by France, which colonised this region in the past and which since the 1960s has pursued an active policy of cooperation with the newly established states there.¹⁴ The EU relies on Sahelian Countries, especially Niger, to stop mass, illegal immigration into the bloc. Niger is a major transit country in the region. Niger had security and defense partnerships with the EU until recently when the country unilaterally cancelled the deals. This is a source of

concern to the EU¹⁵. Niger's strategic position in the European Union's interest in the Sahel region makes it complicated for the Union to institute a firm stance against the state, as it has been seen that despite the sanctions placed on the military leaders of the State, they (the EU) still provide humanitarian assistance to the people of the country. According to a statement released by the Union; In a non-paper circulated at the August 2023 informal meeting of EU defence ministers in Toledo, the European External Action Service (EEAS) suggested an autonomous EU sanctions regime. This sanctions regime would be based on criteria targeting 'natural and legal persons being responsible for, or providing support to or having engaged directly or indirectly in actions or policies that undermine democracy and the rule of law in Niger', and officials who 'obstruct or undermine efforts to restore the constitutional order'.¹⁶ It proposed a humanitarian exception in any future sanctions regime, to avoid the unintended consequences of sanctions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.¹⁷ This policy adopted by the European Union, goes to prove its cautious stance in respect to the resurgence of coups in the Sahel region in West Africa.

Reactions of US, UK, Russia and China

The resurgence of military takeovers in Africa have attracted the attention of some major state actors in international politics such as the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia; and their reactions have differed significantly, and this does not come as much of a surprise, owing to the intricate relationship between some of them,

especially that of the East-West rivalry. A rivalry that has long stood between both sides, has yet again become evident in their responses to the recent political development in West Africa. The West have unsurprisingly condemned the recent military takeovers in the region, citing concerns on undemocratic practices and human rights violations.

UK's Reaction

In a statement issued by the UK Foreign Office, it says that “UK condemns in the strongest possible terms attempts to undermine democracy, peace, and stability in Niger” citing the ECOWAS response, it said that “ECOWAS had set out a strong and clear response to this infringement of the democratic rights of the people of Niger”¹⁸. The British government decided to implement sanctions on the military juntas, thereby intensifying the pressure on them to relinquish power and return to civilian rule. Although, just like the European Union, the UK government opted to continue providing humanitarian assistance to the population; it has expressed its full support to ECOWAS and their efforts to pressure these landlocked states to return to civilian rule by implementing harsh sanctions such as border closures and no fly-zone bans.

France's Reaction

French interests has been the most-impacted by the recent coups in the Sahelian region. Being the former colonizer of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, it has maintained strong links with these states by establishing both political and economic ties with them in post-independence; controlling most of the resources of these former colonies, as well as

establishing military bases within their territories. For decades after decolonization, France continued to pull strings and reap benefits in Africa. At times, the heavy-handed influence sparked opposition, but French-backed leaders often returned to power¹⁹. The recent coups in these states have mostly thrived on the growing anti-French sentiments which have emerged within states in the region, as it has been observed that the public opinion in these Sahelian States favors closer ties with the East than the West. Thousands of supporters of the junta that took over Niger in a coup earlier this week marched through the streets of the capital, Niamey, on Sunday waving Russian flags, chanting the name of the Russian president and forcefully denouncing former colonial power France.²⁰ The anti-French protests was also witnessed in Burkina Faso and Mali, with the Sahelian States' population calling for the evacuation of French military bases, diplomatic missions and mining companies. Macron withdrew French troops from Mali following tensions with the ruling junta after the 2020 Coup, and more recently from Burkina Faso, for similar reasons. Both African countries had asked for the French forces to leave.²¹ This has been as a result of their decision to shift from pro-Western relations to a pro-Eastern partnership; as they move to steer the fate of their respective nations to a new direction.

United States' Reaction

The United States of America have expressed their disapproval over the move by the Sahelian States to cut ties with the Western Powers, especially the expulsion of the

French and U.S. military bases in their respective states; citing the dangers of terrorists overrunning the region without a strong military presence to deter them. Before the military takeover in July 2023, the U.S. was a significant contributor of aid to the country (Niger). In 2018, the U.S. committed US\$447 million to the country to strengthen Niger's agricultural and livestock sectors. The U.S. also supported the country's fight against insurgency before the coup.²² Likewise in Mali, prior to the August 2020 coup, U.S. bilateral foreign assistance to Mali totaled more than \$130 million in FY(fiscal year) 2019 and over \$135 million in FY 2020.²³ The coups caused a significant change in the relationship between the U.S. and the Sahelian States. In October 2023 (three months after the coup), the U.S. cut off more than US\$500 million in assistance to Niger. This has affected the country's security funding.²⁴ The refusal of the Military Juntas in these states to succumb to Western pressure has further deteriorated their relationship, leading to multiple sanctions and economic isolation of the three Sahelian nations.

China and Russia's Reactions

Unlike the Western Powers, China and Russia's partnerships with the Sahel States have greatly increased following the recent military takeovers. Taking advantage of the geo-political shift away from Western influence, Russia and China have closely aligned themselves with the three Sahelian States to promote their own interests in the region. China is concerned about Niger's stability (and provided military support to past governments to this end) as it has important economic interests in Nigeria's oil and

Uranium resources. Though, China has been accused by the West of involvement in the coups due to its economic interests in the region, China has called for a ‘political resolution of the coup’ and proposed to mediate talks²⁵. The Chinese government has typically avoided condemning the coup leaders, opting rather to call for the peaceful resolution of differences and the restoration of order and pledging support for the positions of the AU and the regional bodies.²⁶ China has taken a cautious stances on the issue in order not to jeopardize its economic interests both in the Sahel and Africa at large.

Likewise, Russia has assumed a similar position. They refrained from openly condemning the coup and have maintained close ties with the military juntas in the Sahel region. Coup governments across Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have shifted away from western alliances and towards Russia, deepening military and economic ties.²⁷ And this have furthered the allegations by the West that Russia might have fueled the military interventions in these states. This increased partnership between Russia and the Sahelian States have seen a development of a strong military alliance between the AES and Russia, solidifying their shift away from Western influence and seeking solace with the Eastern bloc.

Conclusion

The Chapter examines the impact of the resurgence of coup d'états on regional integration in West Africa. The region has been faced with rising tensions, as both ECOWAS and the African Union have made attempts to intervene in the internal affairs

of the states affected by the coup, even as far as the ECOWAS threatening to institute military actions in Niger. This growing tension has led to the breakaway of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger from the regional body, and establishing their own bloc military alliance known as the "Alliance des Etats du Sahel (AES)" or Alliance of Sahel States. The three breakaway states have taken a strong stance against ECOWAS and Western influence in the region, expelling the U.S. and French troops from their territories; as well as some Western-owned corporations, especially mostly mining companies. The reactions from the international community have been mixed. While attracting sanctions from the African Union, ECOWAS, and the West; Russia and China have developed close ties with the military juntas in these States.

Endnotes

1. Ana Cristina Andrade Lopes, Admilson Mendes, Michel Cabral, and Silvino Fernandes, "How do Citizenship, Military and Security Dynamics Impact the Development of ECOWAS?" *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 11, no. 10 (August 2018): 20.
2. Habu Mohammed. "The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa and the Role of the African Union (AU)." *Socialcadia Journal of the Social Science and Humanities*. Vol. 3(3), 2022, p. 95.
3. Ibid.
4. Matteo Peccini, "The African Union's Pace of Integration: The Sahelian Crisis as a Challenge to Supranational Expectations," *ACCORD*, July 29, 2025. https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-african-unions-pace-of-integration-the-sahelian-crisis/#_ednref10. Accessed September 8, 2025.
5. African Union. "Communiqué of the 1212th Meeting of the PSC Held on 20 May 2024, on the Updated Briefing on the Political Transition in Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, and Niger." *Peace and Security Department, African Union*.(2024)p. 1.
6. Ibid.

7. Chris Ewokor, "Ecowas: What Changes as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger Leave the West African Bloc?" *BBC News*, January 29, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5yvvd91j72eo.amp>. Accessed August 8, 2025.
8. International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The Withdrawal of Three West African States from ECOWAS." 2024. *Strategic Comments* 30 (4): iv–vi. doi:10.1080/13567888.2024.2366681.
9. Chris Ewokor. "Three military-run states leave West African bloc-what will change".
10. Olayinka Ajala, "Scramble for the Sahel – Why France, Russia, China and the United States Are Interested in the Region," *The Conversation*, January 8, 2024. <https://theconversation.com/scramble-for-the-sahel-why-france-russia-china-and-the-united-states-are-interested-in-the-region-219130>. Accessed September 16, 2025.
11. Ibid.
12. United Nations: *Secretary-General's Address to the General Assembly* (UN.org) (2021).
13. Ibid.
14. Łukasz Maślanka, "Vanishing Partners: The Implications of the Sahel Coups for the EU's Security Policy," *OSW Centre for Eastern Studies*, November 2, 2023.

- <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2023-11-02/vanishing-partners-implications-sahel-coups-eus-security>. Accessed September 16, 2025.
15. Olayinka Ajala, "Scramble for the Sahel – Why France, Russia, China and the United States Are Interested in the Region.”
 16. Bruno Bilguin & Eric Pichon. "The Niger Coup: Consequences for EU policies in the Sahel". *European Parliamentary Research Services*. Sept 2023. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/753951/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)753951_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/753951/EPRS_BRI(2023)753951_EN.pdf). Accessed September 20, 2025.
 17. Ibid.
 18. Sam Jones. "Niger Coup: Britain cuts aid and neighbours may use force to restore president". *The Guardian*. July 31, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/30/niger-coup-west-african-states-reinstatement-president-mohamed-bazoum>. Accessed August 6, 2025.
 19. Agency France-Presse. "African Coups Show Changing Ties with France". *Voice of Africa*, September 3, 2023. <https://www.voaafrica.com/amp/african-coups-show-changing-ties-with-france/7253590.html>. Accessed September 19, 2025.
 20. The Associated Press. "Supporters of Niger's coup march, waving Russian flags and denouncing France". *National Public Radio*, July 30, 2023. <https://www.npr.org/2023/07/30/1190969703/supporters-of-nigers-coup-march-waving-russian-flags-and-denouncing-france>. Accessed September 17, 2025

21. Agency France-Presse, "African Coups Show Changing Ties with France".
22. Olayinka Ajala, "Scramble for the Sahel – Why France, Russia, China and the United States Are Interested in the Region."
23. U.S Department of State, "U.S Relations With Mali: Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet". *Bureau Of African Affairs*, December 4, 2020. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-mali/>. Accessed September 20, 2025.
24. Olayinka Ajala, "Scramble for the Sahel – Why France, Russia, China and the United States Are Interested in the Region."
25. Bruno Bilguin & Eric Pichon. "The Coup in Niger: Consequences for EU policies in the Sahel."
26. Sizo Nkala and Khensani Ntlemo, "China's Non-Interference Principle and the Military Coups in Africa," *SOAS China Institute*, February 28, 2024. <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/china-institute/2024/02/28/chinas-non-interference-principle-and-the-military-coups-in-africa/>.
27. Salah Ben Hammou, "Coups in West Africa Have Five Things in Common: Knowing What They Are Is Key to Defending Democracy," *Democracy in Africa*, November 2, 2023. <https://democracyinafrica.org/coups-in-west-africa-have-five-things-in-common-knowing-what-they-are-is-key-to-defending-democracy/>.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

This research have critically analyzed the resurgence of military coups in Africa. Military Coups have proved to be a constant phenomenon in the African political space since independence, with many states in the continent experiencing coups and counter-coups, almost making it a norm as a means of regime change. The wave of military takeovers that swept through Africa in the early years of independence was seen as a huge blow to the newly birthed political institutions of African states, crippling the already fragile political institutions left behind by ex-colonialists, as they proved impractical in withstanding the political storm that that swept through the continent in the form of Coup d'états.

Economic instability have always been an avenue for political incursion by the military, but this have not been the only cause for interventions by the military; Insecurity have also played a part, as well as external influence in the domestic affairs of the States affected. Africa being a region of interest by many World powers, have seen constant interference by these external actors in its internal affairs, and it is notable that these external elements have influenced African political affairs, and in most cases, have contributed to the military interventions. Also, the 'ripple effect' caused by military takeovers have been discussed as a 'contagion factor' which has seen coups spread across national borders as witnessed across different sub-regions in Africa. And this is owing to

the fact that most African States face similar internal challenges such as poor leadership and economic mismanagement.

The resurgence of coups in West Africa have raised concerns across the international community, as many perceive that coup d'etat might be on the rise again. This new wave of coup goes beyond just the obvious factors of political and economic instability, but it has added a new element to its flavor, and this new element is the 'anti-western' sentiments growing rapidly in most African states, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Western Imperialism in its modern guise known as neo-colonialism has been a major factor in the under-development of many African states. France especially has kept a tight grip on the resources of its former colonies, and this played a crucial role in the three coups that took place in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The military Juntas in these states have not hesitated in making their feelings known to the French Government, first by expelling French troops in their respective states and also nationalizing assets owned by French mining companies in the Sahelian States. The three states went further to align themselves to Russia and China, a move which has alarmed the West, as such an alignment threatens their interests in the Sahel region. In response, they (the United States, Britain and France) have placed multiple sanctions on the three states, withdrawing aids and other economic and security contributions to the region. The African Union and ECOWAS have also followed suit by placing sanctions and suspending the three states for failure to reverse the coups after a given ultimatum. The

ECOWAS, African Union, and the West, have labelled the three Sahel countries as Pariah States through isolation; thereby prompting them to break away from ECOWAS and establish their own organization known as the Alliance des États du Sahel(AES) or Alliances of Sahel States. This breakaway has further divided the West African region which has struggled to promote cooperation and integration since the establishment of its regional body(ECOWAS), deepening tensions between ECOWAS and members of the newly formed AES.

Though the recent trend of military takeovers in West Africa indicates a possible return of military incursions in politics as seen in the early years of independence; no coups have occurred in the region since the Niger Coup of July 2023. So despite the fact that the internal conditions of most West African states suggests a possible resurgence of military interventions in political affairs, the new wave of coups have subsequently died down.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Secondary Sources

Books

Ademoyega, A. *Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup*. Ibadan: EvansBooks Limited, 1981.

Assensoh, A. B. and Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh *African Military History and Politics: Coups and Leadership Tussles 1900-present*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Bienen, Henry. *The Military Intervenes: Case Studies in Political Development*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968.

Mwakikagile, Godfrey. *Military Coups in West Africa since the sixties*. New York: Nova science publishers, Inc, 2001.

Kandeh, Jimmy D. *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Khisa, Moses and Christophe Day, eds. *Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa: Beyond the Coup d'Etat*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2022.

Marc, Alexandre, Neelam Verjee, and Stephen Mogaka Mogaka. *The Challenge of Stability and Security in West Africa*. Africa Development Forum series. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2015.

Miners, N. J. *The Nigerian Army, 1956-1966*. London: Methuen, 1971.

Nkrumah, Kwame. *Dark Days in Ghana*. New York: International Publishers, 1968.

Obasanjo Olusegun and Hans D'Orville, eds. *The Leadership Challenge of Economic Reforms in Africa*. New York: Core Resorts 1991.

Souare, Issaka K. *Civil Wars and Coups d'Etat in West Africa*. Maryland: University Press of America, Inc, 2006.

Publications of International Organization

African Union. "*Communique of the 1212th Meeting of the PSC held on 20 May 2024, on the Updated Briefing on the Political Transition in Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, and Niger.*" Peace and Security Department, African Union.

Organization of African Unity, "*Charter of the Organization of African Unity*" 1963.

United Nations, *Coups Only Make Crisis Worse*, 2023.
<https://www.un.org/sg/en/admin/technical-content/slider/267476> Accessed 20th September, 2025.

U.S Department of State, "*U.S Relations With Mali: Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet*". Bureau Of African Affairs, December 4, 2020.<https://2017-2021.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-mali/>. Accessed September 20, 2025.

World Bank Group. "*Burkina Faso Overview: Development News, Research, Data.*" Last modified October 9, 2025.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso/overview>. Accessed October 12, 2025.

Journal Articles

Aluda, Okpanachi, and Amana I. Akogwu. "Military Coups in West Africa and Insecurity in Nigeria: An Overview." *West African Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 2, no. 2 (April-June 2024).

Akinyemi, Omolara, David Olubunmi A., and Celestina Ekene C.. "The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa." *Journal of African Union Studies*, 13, no. 2 (August 2024): Article 4.

Anthony, Mayger O. "State Fragility and the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 4, no. 1 2025.

Brooke-Holland, Louisa. "Coups and Political Stability in West Africa." *House of Commons Library, Commons Library Research Briefing*, no. 9861. September 18, 2023.

Chilaka, Francis C. Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa: Implications for ECOWAS. *Africa Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*. Vol. 5 2022.

Chin, John J., and Jessica Kirkpatrick. "African Coups in the COVID-19 Era: A Current History." *Institute for Politics and Strategy*, Carnegie Mellon University, 2023. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2023.1077945.

- Habu, Mohammed A. "the Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa and the Role of The African Union (AU)" *Socialscientia and Humanities* 7, no.3, 2022.
- Lopes, A. C. A.; Mendes, A.; Cabral, M.; and Fernandes, S. "How Do Citizenship, Military and Security Dynamics Affect the Development of ECOWAS?" *Africonology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 11, no. 10 (August 2018).
- Oladoyin, Anthony Mayowa, and Goddy Uwa Osimen. "State Fragility and the Resurgence of Military Coups in West Africa." *Journal of Ecohumanism* 4, no. 1 (2025).
- Sunday, Obinna G., and Onyinyechi Semudara C. "Resurgence of Coup d'État in Africa in an Era of Mass Democratisation: A Study of Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali Experiences." *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration* 7, no. 4 (2024)

Internet Sources

- Agency France-Presse. "African Coups Show Changing Ties with France". *Voice of Africa*, September 3, 2023. <https://www.voaafrica.com/amp/african-coups-show-changing-ties-with-france/7253590.html>. Accessed September 19, 2025.
- Ajala, Olayinka. "Scramble for the Sahel – Why France, Russia, China and the United States Are Interested in the Region." *The Conversation*, January 8, 2024. <https://theconversation.com/scramble-for-the-sahel-why-france-russia-china->

[and-the-united-states-are-interested-in-the-region-219130](#). Accessed September 16, 2025.

Aning, Kwesi, and Jesper Bjarnesen. "Ecowas' Dilemma: Balancing Principles and Pragmatism." *The Nordic Africa Institute*, April 10, 2024. <https://nai.uu.se/stories-and-events/news/2024-04-10-ecowas-dilemma-balancing-principles-and-pragmatism.html>. Accessed August 20, 2025.

Bah, Youssouf, and Danielle Paquette. "Guinea's Alpha Condé Overthrown in Military Coup." *The Washington Post*, September 5, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/09/05/guinea-alpha-conde-military-takeover/>. Accessed August 20, 2025.

Baltoi, Daniel. "A Deeper Look into the West African Coup Wave." *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, January 2023. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/a-deeper-look-into-the-west-african-coup-wave/>. Accessed May 8, 2025.

Bell, Melissa, Barbara Wojazer, and Caitlin Hu. "Mali Coup: Vice President Ousts President and Prime Minister from Office, Assumes Power." *CNN*, May 25, 2021. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/25/africa/mali-vice-president-ousts-president-prime-minister-intl>. Accessed August 23, 2025.

Ben Hammou, Salah. "Coups in West Africa Have Five Things in Common: Knowing What They Are Is Key to Defending Democracy." *Democracy in Africa*, November 2, 2023. <https://democracyinafrica.org/coups-in-west-africa-have->

[five-things-in-common-knowing-what-they-are-is-key-to-defending-democracy/](#). Accessed September 20, 2025

Duzor, Megan, and Brian Williamson. "By The Numbers: Coups in Africa." *VOA Special Report*. Last updated October 3, 2023. <https://projects.voanews.com/african-coups/>. Accessed May 4, 2025.

Dwyer, Maggie. "Burkina Faso's Coup Makers Capitalized on Wider Grievances Within Ranks." *The Washington Post*, January 28, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/01/28/burkina-fasos-coup-makers-capitalized-wider-grievances-within-ranks/>. Accessed August 25, 2025.

Ewokor, Chris. "Ecowas: What Changes as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger Leave the West African Bloc?" *BBC News*, January 29, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5yv91j72eo.amp>. Accessed June 28, 2025.

Faulkner, Christopher M., Jaclyn Johnson, and Jonathan Powell. "Revisiting Coup Contagion." *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, December 2023. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/12/revisiting-coup-contagion/>. Accessed September 2, 2025.

Felix, Bate, and Philippa Fletcher. "Why Mali Is in Turmoil Again." *Reuters*, July 30, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/why-mali-is-in-turmoil-again-idUSKCN24S1TZ/>. Accessed August 24, 2025.

International Institute for Strategic Studies. "The Withdrawal of Three West African States from ECOWAS." *IISS*, June 2024. <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2024/06/the-withdrawal-of-three-west-african-states-from-ecowas/>. Accessed September 20, 2025.

Jones, Sam. "Niger Coup: Britain Cuts Aid and Neighbors May Use Force to Restore President." *The Guardian*, July 31, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/30/niger-coup-west-african-states-reinstatement-president-mohamed-bazoum>. Accessed August 6, 2025.

Maślanka, Łukasz. "Vanishing Partners: The Implications of the Sahel Coups for the EU's Security Policy." *OSW Centre for Eastern Studies*, November 2, 2023. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2023-11-02/vanishing-partners-implications-sahel-coups-eus-security>. Accessed September 16, 2025.

Ndiaga, Thiam, and Anne Mimault. "Heavy Gunfire Heard at Military Camp in Burkina Faso Capital." *Reuters*, January 23, 2022.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/heavy-gunfire-heard-military-camp-burkina-faso-capital-2022-01-23/>. Accessed August 6, 2025.

Nkala, Sizo, and Khensani Ntlemo. "China's Non-Interference Principle and the Military Coups in Africa." *SOAS China Institute*, February 28, 2024. <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/china-institute/2024/02/28/chinas-non-interference-principle-and-the-military-coups-in-africa/>. Accessed September 20, 2025.

Paquette, Danielle. "Mali's Military Detains President and Prime Minister." *The Washington Post*, May 25, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/25/mali-military-president-prime-minister/>. Accessed August 23, 2025.

Peccini, Matteo. "The African Union's Pace of Integration: The Sahelian Crisis as a Challenge to Supranational Expectations." *ACCORD*, July 29, 2025. https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-african-unions-pace-of-integration-the-sahelian-crisis/#_ednref10. Accessed September 8, 2025.

Plummer, Robert. "Niger Coup: Simple Guide to What's Happening." *BBC News*, July 28, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66339528>. Accessed August 26, 2025.

PSC Report. "The Evolution of Coups in Africa." *PSC Report*. Last modified October 11, 2023. <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/the-evolution-of-coups-in-africa>. Accessed July 4, 2025.

Walsh, Declan, and Eric Schmitt. "Guinea's Coup Raises Concerns About American Security." *The New York Times*, September 10, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/world/africa/guinea-coup-americans.html>. Accessed August 21, 2025.