Resurgence of Coup D'état in an Era of Mass Democratisation: The Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali Experiences

Gogo Patrick Ibiamu[1] & Obinna Godswill Sunday[2]

[1]*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PMB 5047, Port Hacourt, Rivers State, Nigeria; e-mail: gogoibiamu@yahoo.com; +2349072248626, +2348037099998*
[2]*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PMB 5047, Port Hacourt, Rivers State, Nigeria; e-mail: sundyobinna@yahoo.com (+2348167380201)*

Abstract
This research examines the recent military interventions in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, with particular attention to their underlying causes, outcomes, and possible remedies. By analyzing historical, political, economic, and social conditions, the study identifies the major drivers behind military coups in these nations. It further assesses the internal and external consequences of these political disruptions and proposes strategies to minimize their recurrence while advancing democratic governance. The study was guided by the democratic backsliding theory. This study employs a qualitative comparative case-study approach, using secondary sources and within-case process tracing to identify recurring causal mechanisms and explain variations in the resurgence of coups d'état in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The findings reveal that military takeovers continue to pose serious challenges to democratic stability and effective governance in Africa, as reflected in the current situations in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The study therefore recommends the reinforcement of democratic institutions and governance systems through respect for the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and inclusive citizen participation.
Keywords: Coup d'état, Sahel, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Military Junta, Jihadist Insurgency, ECOWAS, Governance Failure

Introduction

Since the conclusion of the Cold War in the early 1990s marked by the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of centrally planned political and economic systems, the global embrace of democracy as the preferred model of governance has grown immensely. Fukuyama (1992) referred to this ideological shift as the "end of history," symbolizing the dominance of liberal democracy. Similarly, Huntington (1991) characterized the global transition toward democratic governance during this period as the "third wave of democracy." Even authoritarian regimes such as China began presenting their political systems as forms of democracy (Kesselman et al., 1996, p. 10).

Against this backdrop, the reappearance of military regimes in Africa stands as a major distraction from the continent's democratic aspirations (Graham, 2023). However, the conditions that have encouraged such developments as economic inequality, insecurity, and weak governance have often made local populations to welcome military interventions with initial enthusiasm, viewing them as alternatives to failing civilian governments. Although many African countries have made remarkable progress in building democratic institutions, coups continue to threaten these achievements, creating political instability, economic disruptions, and human rights abuses. In recent years, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali have all experienced military takeovers or attempted coups, highlighting the fragility of democracy in the region. Notably, eight successful coups have occurred on the continent since 2020 to 2025 (Mali August 2020, Mali May 2021, Guinea September 2021, Burkina January 2022, Sudan October 2021, Burkina September 2022, Gabon August 2023, Niger July 2023). Understanding the core motivations and structural causes behind these coups is critical to explaining their recurrence.

Analyzing military interventions in the former French colonies of West Africa requires fresh theoretical and empirical approaches. This study draws on earlier literature regarding the political and economic impacts of coups, while incorporating new perspectives on external and geopolitical influences. The cases of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are used to identify common patterns and key distinctions that can provide insights into the persistence of military interventions.

Between 2020 and 2025, eight coups were successful, while three others were foiled, marking a sharp rise compared to the previous two decades (UNDP, 2023, p. 3). Although many previous works have examined coup dynamics, most have failed to explore the full spectrum of political, environmental, and social triggers that sustain instability in the region. Beyond economic explanations, there is a need to consider factors such as inequality, political exclusion, insecurity, and foreign influence. The current global power shifts also affect the political balance within African states, shaping their internal and external alignments. Public dissatisfaction with government failures to curb poverty and insecurity has weakened citizens' trust in democracy and allowed a culture of political apathy to emerge (Espelund, 2022; Espelund, 2023; Mbara & Graham, 2023, pp. 101–102). While surveys show that a majority of Africans still support democracy, faith in its institutions has significantly declined due to governance failures and the inability of elected officials to fulfill democratic ideals (UNDP, 2023; Afrobarometer Network, 2023). The region's instability results from an interplay of factors such as terrorism, environmental degradation, desertification, population growth, and weak leadership. In the Sahel, desert expansion has devastated agricultural livelihoods, worsening poverty and fueling unrest an issue often overlooked by policymakers in the subregion (Friedman, 2017; Sköld, 2022).

Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, in particular, have struggled to maintain legitimacy in recent years. Ethnic tensions, such as the Tuareg uprisings in Mali and Niger, have stemmed from long-standing political and social marginalization (Waugh, 2022, pp. 5–6; Gunnarson, 2020, p. 14). In Niger, resentment over unequal access to resource revenues sparked demands for reform, while in Mali, the Tuareg sought autonomy, leading to the 2012 rebellion led by the *Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA). The rebellion escalated when Islamist factions linked to Al-Qaeda captured large territories, prompting a French military intervention (Waugh, 2022, p. 6; Gunnarson, 2020, p. 14).

The inability of political leaders in these nations to effectively tackle terrorism and insecurity has contributed to public disillusionment and created favorable conditions for military takeovers. Moreover, inconsistent military support from Western partners has been used by juntas to legitimize their coups (Lupulescu, 2021). These trends underscore the need to study the causes, implications, and possible solutions to the recurrence of coups in Africa, as well as strategies to strengthen democratic institutions and reduce military interference in governance.

Conceptual Framework
Concept of Coup d'État
A coup d'état refers to the illegal and often violent seizure of power from an established government by military officers or politically powerful groups. Powell and Thyne (2011) reviewed definitions from fourteen scholars and found that most coups involve the use of force directed toward toppling a sitting regime. Typically, such actions are carried out by the armed forces, mercenaries, or elite political actors (Powell & Thyne, 2011).

In this study, military juntas are considered oppositional forces that sometimes act independently but may also be influenced by civilian elites or foreign governments (Mbara, 2023). Singh (2022) offers three analytical perspectives for explaining coups. First, they can be seen as military confrontations resembling small-scale invasions within a state. Second, they may function as implicit referendums by the armed forces on the government's legitimacy. Third, they can be interpreted as strategic coordination exercises in which officers evaluate risks, potential benefits, and the probability of success. According to Singh (2022, pp. 21–22), soldiers are more likely to support factions they believe enjoy broader public backing and higher chances of success, while avoiding movements that appear risky or doomed to fail.

Economic Instability
Economic instability denotes a prolonged state of macroeconomic vulnerability marked by diminishing economic growth, elevated unemployment, inflationary pressures, fiscal deficits, and the state's failure to fulfil fundamental social and developmental responsibilities. In fragile democracies, economic instability is structural rather than cyclical, indicative of weak institutions, excessive reliance on primary commodities, dependency on foreign debt, and constrained state capacity. This instability jeopardises social contracts by limiting governments' capacity to deliver public goods, sustain welfare systems, and guarantee equitable development, consequently diminishing political legitimacy and heightening societal susceptibility to authoritarian interventions (World Bank, 2023; IMF, 2022).

In Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, ongoing economic instability has directly fuelled the return of military coups by exacerbating public discontent with civilian governance. The six successful coups were accompanied by deteriorating living circumstances, characterised by escalating food costs, youth unemployment, and diminishing purchasing power, alongside increasing insecurity and government failures. Civilian administrations were increasingly regarded as inept at handling economic crises intensified by insurgency-related disturbances and external financial demands. The coup leaders capitalised on these circumstances by framing military intervention as a remedial action intended to restore economic stability and governmental oversight of resources. Thus, economic adversity served as both a structural catalyst and a legitimising narrative for unlawful power usurpations (International Crisis Group, 2023; World Bank, 2023).

Corruption
Corruption is characterised as the systematic exploitation of public office for personal benefit, including behaviours such as embezzlement, bribery, patronage, and the misappropriation of state resources by political and bureaucratic elites. In fragile democratic institutions, corruption becomes entrenched, distorting policy execution, eroding accountability frameworks, and subverting the rule of law. Corruption in critical sectors like defence, public finance, and service delivery undermines state efficacy and exacerbates citizens' feelings of injustice, marginalisation, and elite exploitation (Transparency International, 2022; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Corruption significantly contributed to the delegitimisation of civilian governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger before their respective coups. In each of the six instances, extensive accusations of corrupt political leadership, embezzlement of defence budgets, and patronage-driven government incited huge protests and intra-military discontent. Soldiers in battle zones accused political elites of self-enrichment at the expense of frontline security, fostering the perception that civilian authorities had deserted national objectives. Military juntas explicitly cited corruption as a principal rationale for their seizures of power, characterising coups as vehicles for moral and institutional purification. Consequently, corruption functioned as both a cause for regime disintegration and a rhetorical instrument employed by military regimes to attain popular endorsement and political legitimacy (Transparency International, 2022; Freedom House, 2023).

Ethnic and Regional Tensions
Ethnic and regional tensions have significantly influenced the political crises preceding several recent coups in Africa, particularly by eroding national cohesion and delegitimising civilian administrations. In Mali, enduring tensions between the southern political elite and the northern Tuareg and Arab communities, stemming from disproportionate political representation and inequitable resource distribution, were intensified by insurgency and governmental neglect, leading to recurrent instability before the coups of 2020 and 2021 (Thurston, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2022). In Burkina Faso, regional disparities between the relatively marginalised northern and eastern regions and the political centre exacerbated grievances, particularly as these areas suffered the most from jihadist violence while receiving inadequate state protection, fostering resentment that undermined confidence in civilian leadership before the 2022 coups (Hagberg, 2022). In Niger, despite a historically stable ethnic coexistence, regional sentiments of exclusion and elite hegemony, especially allegations of political power and state resources being monopolised by particular groups, were significant in the elite and military discourses regarding the 2023 coup (Idrissa, 2023). These instances demonstrate that unresolved ethnic and regional divisions, coupled with insecurity and ineffective governance, create unstable political climates where the military positions itself as an impartial mediator capable of re-establishing unity and stability (Cheeseman, 2018).

Weak Governance and Institutional Fragility
Fragile political institutions and weak governance structures have contributed to persistent instability in many African countries. When power is concentrated among a small group of leaders and institutional oversight is limited, the mechanisms that ensure accountability and transparency are undermined, leaving democratic systems vulnerable to collapse. In such circumstances, the military is often perceived by citizens as the only capable force to reestablish stability when civilian administrations collapse into corruption or inefficiency. This perception, though problematic, provides legitimacy to coups and hinders the development of resilient democratic institutions (Cheeseman, 2018).

Foreign Influence and Geopolitical Factors
External interference and global strategic interests have also contributed to the frequency of coups in Africa. The continent's geopolitical significance arising from its rich mineral resources such as uranium and its importance in regional and global security has drawn foreign powers seeking to exert political influence (Friedrichs, 2018). Former colonial nations and neighboring states have, at times, supported or opposed particular leaders to protect their own interests. These interventions, whether overt or covert, have disrupted domestic political processes and, in some cases, encouraged instability that paved the way for military takeovers.

Research Design and Methodology
This study adopts a qualitative comparative case-study research design, employing a most-similar systems logic to examine the resurgence of coups d'état in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Cross-case comparison is then applied to identify recurring causal mechanisms and explain variation in coup trajectories, allowing the study to move beyond descriptive accounts toward analytically grounded causal inference while remaining sensitive to contextual specificity. The study draws exclusively on secondary data obtained from multiple reputable sources to ensure triangulation and analytical rigour

Theoretical Framework
The theory of democratic backsliding, civil-military relations, and coup theory offers a crucial lens for examining the recurring military interventions in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Democratic backsliding refers to the progressive erosion of democratic norms, values, and institutions, often paving the way for authoritarianism to re-emerge. The relationship between democratic backsliding and military coups is best understood as sequential rather than reciprocal. Democratic erosion functions primarily as a causal condition, while military coups emerge as a consequence of sustained institutional decay. As argued by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt in *How Democracies Die* published in 2018, democracies often collapse not through sudden breakdowns but through the gradual weakening of core institutions such as the rule of law, civil liberties, horizontal accountability, and respect for political competition. When these safeguards deteriorate, elected leaders increasingly govern through exclusionary practices and institutional manipulation, which in turn erodes regime legitimacy. In such contexts, coups do not initiate democratic backsliding but rather capitalize on vulnerabilities produced by weakened civilian authority. In the cases of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, prolonged democratic erosion preceded military intervention, indicating that coups represent the culmination of backsliding processes rather than their original cause.

Classical civil military relations theory provides an essential framework for explaining why democratic backsliding increases the likelihood of military intervention. Huntington's (1991)theory of objective civilian control emphasizes military professionalization and political neutrality as prerequisites for stable civilian supremacy. In contrast, Finer argues that coups occur when civilian institutions lose authority and legitimacy, thereby creating opportunities for military intervention. In contexts characterized by democratic decay, civilian leaders often politicize the armed forces, weaken oversight mechanisms, or rely excessively on coercive institutions for regime survival. These practices undermine professional norms within the military and foster praetorian tendencies. Contemporary scholarship reinforces this argument: Singh (2014) demonstrates that weak political institutions and elite fragmentation significantly increase coup risk. Powell and Thyne (2011) show empirically that declining regime legitimacy and poor governance performance are strong predictors of military takeovers. Bell (2016) as well as Croissant étal (2013) further contend that coups are more likely when civilian

governments fail to manage civil military relations effectively during periods of political crisis. Applied to recent coups in Africa, these theoretical perspectives suggest that democratic backsliding erodes civilian supremacy and empowers the military to position itself as an alternative political authority, often justifying intervention as a necessary response to governance failure.

This theoretical framework is particularly relevant to the current study because it reflects the political and social realities of Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Weak political institutions, widespread corruption, and ineffective leadership have consistently diminished citizens' confidence in democracy (Murray, 2012; Azimi, 2017). Additionally, ethnic and regional divisions—often linked to struggles for political dominance and access to resources—further fuel instability and create conditions conducive to military involvement (Ousmane, 2015; De Cordier, 2019).

The persistent influence of the military in the political arena remains another defining feature of democratic regression in these nations. Historically, the armed forces in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali have intervened in governance under the pretext of restoring order or combating corruption (Kamga, 2018; Rochette, 2016). Such interventions typically reflect internal power struggles and the military's self-perceived role as a stabilizing force in times of crisis. Moreover, external geopolitical interests have deepened these challenges. The Sahel region, where these countries are located, has become a strategic focal point for both regional and international powers seeking to secure their political and economic agendas (Friedrichs, 2018). Foreign involvement—whether through direct support for ruling regimes or opposition movements—often escalates internal conflicts, weakens democratic resilience, and increases the risk of military takeovers.

Reflections on the Origins of Coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali
Understanding the persistence of coups in these three nations requires an examination of their historical evolution. Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali share similar post-colonial experiences characterized by governance failures, social unrest, and repeated military interference. After gaining independence from France in 1960, Niger encountered multiple episodes of political instability and unconstitutional changes in leadership (Elischer, 2018). Likewise, Burkina Faso and Mali have experienced successive regimes marked by authoritarianism, civil discontent, and ethnic rivalries, which have repeatedly undermined democratic consolidation.

The colonial legacy left fragile political structures and deep socio-economic divisions that have continued to shape their governance trajectories. Weak institutional foundations, coupled with limited civic participation and poor economic management, have made these states vulnerable to political disruptions. As a result, the recurrence of coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali can be viewed as the product of entrenched structural weaknesses rather than isolated political events.

Since gaining independence, Niger has witnessed five major military takeovers, highlighting its struggle with democratic consolidation. The first occurred in April 1974 when Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Kountché led a coup that ended President Hamani Diori's 14-year rule (Elischer, 2018). In January 1996, another coup removed President Mahamane Ousmane and Prime Minister Hama Amadou amid claims of a political impasse obstructing key economic reforms. According to Mbara (2022), Lieutenant Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara took over power and justified his takeover as a necessary step toward political renewal rather than a rejection of multiparty democracy. However, in April 1999, Maïnassara was assassinated by soldiers at Niamey Airport during yet another coup. The head of the presidential guard, Daouda Malam Wanké, subsequently assumed power until democratic elections were held in 2000.

In 2010, General Salou Djibo led the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSDR) in ousting President Tandja after he attempted to extend his tenure beyond constitutional limits. Subsequent elections held in early 2011 resulted in Mahamadou Issoufou's victory (Sköld, 2022). On July 26, 2023, troops under the command of General Omar Tchiani—head of Niger's presidential guard—stormed the presidential palace in Niamey and detained President Mohamed Bazoum. This development triggered significant concern both domestically and internationally. According to Elischer (2023), the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS), together with the United States, France, and the United Nations, condemned the action as unconstitutional and urged the restoration of civilian rule.

The junta has since maintained full control. The aftermath of the 2023 coup has since evolved significantly. President Bazoum was released from detention in October 2024, while Ali Lamine Zeine was appointed as a civilian prime minister, reflecting the junta's efforts to pursue partial civilianisation without restoring constitutional order. Niger has also formalised its withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States and consolidated its alignment with Mali and Burkina Faso through the Alliance of Sahel States, signalling a decisive geopolitical and institutional realignment.

Since gaining independence from France in 1960, Burkina Faso has endured numerous episodes of political unrest marked by both military coups and popular uprisings. Burkina Faso has experienced seven successful coups in 1966, 1980, 1983, 1987, January 2022, and September 2022, excluding the failed 2015 coup and the popular uprising of 2014. The twin coups of 2022 underscored the fragility of governance in the Sahel, where persistent insecurity, weak civilian institutions, and unmet public expectations have repeatedly undermined political authority. Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who seized power in September 2022, remains in control as of 2025, despite a reported failed counter-coup attempt in September and October 2024, highlighting ongoing elite fragmentation within the security forces. Under Traoré, Burkina Faso has withdrawn from ECOWAS and consolidated its membership in the Alliance of Sahel States alongside Mali and Niger, reflecting a broader rejection of regional and Western pressure for rapid democratic restoration. These developments reinforce the pattern whereby recurrent coups are not isolated events but manifestations of deep structural crises in governance, security, and civil-military relations that continue to impede political stabilization in Burkina Faso (Mbara, 2023).

The first coup in Burkina Faso occurred in 1966, when Lieutenant Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana overthrew President Maurice Yaméogo, citing corruption and autocratic leadership as justifications (Monga, 2011). Lamizana's rule lasted until 1980, when Colonel Saye Zerbo took power, promising to address mounting social and economic grievances (Kamga, 2018). Two years later, Major Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo removed Zerbo from office, only to be deposed in 1983 by Captain Thomas Sankara, who became prime minister and later consolidated power through another coup.

Formerly known as Upper Volta, Burkina Faso's history has been punctuated by authoritarianism and instability. The most notable era of military dominance was under President Blaise Compaoré, who came to power through a coup in 1987 and ruled for nearly three decades. Although the early 2000s saw attempts at democratization, the country remained plagued by corruption, poverty, and insecurity. The 2014 popular uprising that forced Compaoré from office demonstrated the power of civic resistance against entrenched autocracy (Ouattara, 2017).

On January 24, 2022, amid escalating security challenges, another coup ousted President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. Both the president and segments of the defense forces had expressed frustration over the government's handling of jihadist insurgencies and deteriorating national security. This event marked the fourth coup in West Africa within two years, following similar takeovers in Mali (August 2020 and May 2021) and Guinea (September 2021) (Kamga, 2021). This was despite increasing the defense budget by over 270% between 2016 and 2021 from €240 million to €652 million inefficient fund management and inadequate logistics hindered operational effectiveness (Hoffman, 2020).

In November 2021, militants attacked the Inata military base, killing 53 officers who had been awaiting reinforcements and basic supplies. The tragedy sparked nationwide outrage and renewed calls for Kaboré's resignation. By late 2021, public dissatisfaction with Kaboré's administration had intensified amid accusations of corruption, nepotism, and poor governance. Early 2022 saw the arrest of Lieutenant-Colonel Emmanuel Zoungrana for allegedly plotting a coup, an event that foreshadowed subsequent instability. Within just nine months, two coups occurred: Damiba was himself deposed on September 30, 2022, by Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who cited his predecessor's failure to contain the Islamist insurgency. Since independence, Mali, located in West Africa, has faced repeated cycles of political instability, including coups, rebellions, and governance crises over

the past decades. The 2012 military takeover, orchestrated by junior officers, ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré and paved the way for extremist groups to seize control of the northern regions. This upheaval intensified ethnic tensions and created severe humanitarian challenges. On August 18, 2020, armed soldiers launched an attack on a military base in Kati, approximately 15 kilometers (9 miles) from Bamako, Mali's capital. The mutineers captured several high-ranking officials. The Prime Minister, Boubou Cissé, called for dialogue, acknowledging the soldiers' grievances. Later, the insurgents detained both President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and Cissé at Keïta's residence in Bamako. Mali's opposition coalition, the M5-RFP, welcomed the arrests, describing the incident as a "popular uprising" (Mbara, 2023).

The officials who were detained during the coup were moved to the military camp in Kati, where the uprising had originated. Reports indicate that Mali's transitional authorities later postponed the presidential election, originally scheduled for February 2024, which was intended to restore democratic rule. Officials cited "technical reasons" for the delay, allowing additional time for election preparations and revisions to the constitution. This postponement represents the second adjustment to the electoral timeline by the military-led government established after the twin coups of 2020, drawing criticism from opposition groups and raising the possibility of renewed sanctions from ECOWAS, which had previously lifted restrictions in July 2022 following assurances from Mali regarding election plans.

Haggai (2022) emphasized that Mali's coup plunged the nation into deeper insecurity and governance crises, intensifying pre-existing vulnerabilities. Several key issues emerged following the coup and these include, intensification of conflict: humanitarian crisis**:** international intervention: threats to democracy: human rights violations: and persistent instability:

Current Issues and Challenges

The 2022 military coup in Niger, which led to the suspension of the constitution, has raised serious concerns about the country's democratic trajectory (BBC News, 2022). Likewise, Burkina Faso continues to face severe security challenges, including terrorist attacks and political instability, following its 2022 coup (France 24, 2022). In Mali, despite international condemnation of the 2020 coup, the process of returning to civilian governance has been slow and uncertain, marked by recurring difficulties (Al Jazeera, 2022). Together, these developments highlight the ongoing risks to political stability and democratic governance in the Sahel region.

Findings and Implications of Coups for Democratic Governance

The recurrence of military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger has significantly and predominantly negative effects for democratic governance, albeit these consequences are not totally consistent. Conversely, coups have consistently undermined constitutional order, halted electoral processes, and diminished the rule of law. Military governments in each of the three countries have disbanded or marginalised elected institutions, limited political competition, and restricted civil liberties, especially the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. Empirical research indicates that post-coup contexts are often marked by heightened political repression and diminished media freedom, notwithstanding initial promises of democratic restoration by juntas (Freedom House, 2024; Lindberg & Schedler, 2020). In Mali and Burkina Faso, the extension of transitional timelines has heightened apprehensions that military leaders are solidifying their power instead of promoting authentic democratic restoration (International Crisis Group, 2023). These events have further diminished individuals' trust in democratic institutions, fostering political apathy and normalising unlawful alterations of governance.

Simultaneously, certain restricted and disputed advancements are frequently referenced by coup proponents as favourable results. In Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, military regimes have endeavoured to re-establish state power and centralise decision-making due to prevalent perceptions of civilian ineptitude. Public opinion surveys and qualitative research indicate that certain public groups initially embraced coups as remedial actions, especially in situations when elected administrations were perceived as corrupt, unstable, or reliant on external forces (Bleck & van de Walle, 2019; Wing, 2023). Juntas have sought to realign foreign policy, prioritising sovereignty and diminishing dependence on Western security allies, which has appealed to nationalist factions. Recent work, however, warns that short-term legitimacy gains seldom result in lasting governance enhancements and frequently

conceal underlying institutional deterioration (Croissant & Haynes, 2024). Militarised government gradually diminishes civilian bureaucracies and jeopardises the potential for democratic consolidation.

The economic repercussions of coups in the Sahel have been predominantly detrimental, notwithstanding government assertions of economic revitalisation. Political instability resulting from military coups has deterred both domestic and foreign investment, prompted capital flight, and diminished access to international development financing. Sanctions enacted by regional and international entities, especially after the coups in Niger and Mali, have further limited fiscal capacity and disturbed trade dynamics (World Bank, 2024). Research demonstrates that states experiencing coups suffer substantial reductions in foreign direct investment and exhibit decelerated economic growth, particularly during extended transitions (Powell et al., 2023). Although juntas have pursued alternative economic relationships, including novel security and commercial alliances, these initiatives have not compensated for deficits in aid, investment, and fiscal stability. Consequently, the provision of public services in health, education, and infrastructure has declined, intensifying poverty and inequality while perpetuating the structural factors that originally led to political instability.

The coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have produced significant regional and international security ramifications, in addition to affecting domestic governance and economic performance. Political instability has engendered governance vacuums that extremist factions and transnational criminal organisations have capitalised on, especially in border areas where state presence is tenuous. Studies on post-coup security dynamics indicate that the efficacy of counterterrorism measures frequently diminishes after military coups due to disturbed command structures, less international collaboration, and strained ties with foreign partners (Dowd & Raleigh, 2021; Thurston, 2024). The exit of these governments from the Economic Community of West African governments and their integration into the Alliance of Sahel States has exacerbated regional security coordination and eroded collective democratic principles. Despite ECOWAS's significant role in mediation and norm enforcement, recent developments expose the limitations of regional procedures in the absence of persistent political will and institutional coherence (Hartmann, 2023). These data indicate that although coups may create the appearance of effective leadership during crises, their long-term effects on democratic governance, economic development, and regional stability are predominantly harmful.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The repeated occurrence of military coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali poses a serious threat to democratic stability and political order in the region. Identifying the root causes and understanding the effects of these interventions are crucial for designing strategies to prevent future disruptions. Building strong and accountable governance systems, addressing economic disparities, and enhancing security frameworks are essential for fostering resilient democratic institutions and promoting long-term peace. Effective prevention of coups requires comprehensive measures that tackle the structural and systemic factors underlying political instability, rather than relying solely on individual leadership or temporary solutions.
To this end, the following recommendations are proposed:
1. Reinforce Democratic Institutions. Governments should prioritize the consolidation of democratic structures by strengthening the rule of law, promoting institutional checks and balances, enhancing transparency and accountability, and fostering inclusive political participation at local, regional, and national levels. Robust institutions reduce the susceptibility of states to unconstitutional interventions and help ensure that political transitions occur within constitutional frameworks.
2. Address Socioeconomic Inequality. Sustainable economic reforms are essential for mitigating the structural conditions that often precipitate political instability. Policies should focus on reducing poverty, creating employment opportunities, particularly for youth and marginalized groups, and narrowing socioeconomic disparities.
3. Enhance Regional and Global Cooperation. Strengthening partnerships between African states, regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and international partners is crucial for promoting democratic resilience. Coordinated approaches to security, economic development, and the containment of transnational threats such as terrorism and organized crime can reinforce domestic governance capacities and foster regional stability.

References

Afrobarometer Network. (2023). *Africans want more democracy, but their leaders still aren't listening* (Policy Paper No. 85). Afrobarometer.

Azimi, N. (2017). The military and democratization in Burkina Faso. *African Affairs, 116(465)*, 601–621.

BBC News. (2022, March 24). *Niger's President Ouhoumoudou Mahamadou ousted in coup*. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60870602

Bell, C. (2016). Civil–military relations and the dynamics of coups. *Armed Forces & Society, 42(2)*, 297–321.

Bleck, J., & van de Walle, N. (2019). *Electoral politics in Africa since 1990: Continuity in change*. Cambridge University Press.

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. (n.d.). *Niger: Military coup and return to civilian rule*. Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Cheeseman, N. (2018). *Democracy in Africa: Successes, failures, and the struggle for political reform*. Cambridge University Press.

Croissant, A., & Haynes, J. (2024). Democratic regression and military intervention in hybrid regimes. *Third World Quarterly, 45(2)*, 251–270.

Croissant, A., Kuehn, D., Lorenz, P., & Chambers, P. (2013). Beyond the fallacy of coup-ism: Conceptualizing civil–military relations in emerging democracies. *Democratization, 20(1)*, 1–28.

Crossette, B. (1987, October 17). Thomas Sankara of Upper Volta is assassinated. *The New York Times*.

Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. Yale University Press.

De Cordier, B. (2019). *The rising risk of military coups in West Africa: Causes, trends, and prevention* (Egmont Paper No. 108). Egmont Institute.

Diamond, L. (2019). *Developing democracy: Toward consolidation* (2nd ed.). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Elischer, S. (2018). The nature and origins of military coups in Africa. *African Affairs, 117(468)*, 117–139.

France 24. (2022, January 24). *Burkina Faso army announces takeover, dissolves government*. France 24.

Freedom House. (2023). *Freedom in the world 2023: Democratic erosion and political rights under threat*. Freedom House.

Freedom House. (2024). *Freedom in the world 2024: The mounting damage of flawed elections and coups*. Freedom House.

Friedrichs, J. (2018). France's strategy in Niger: Militarization and the emerging "arc of insecurity" in the Sahel. *The Journal of North African Studies, 23(2)*, 319–342.

Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. Free Press.

Gunnarson, C. (2020). *Varför ökar våldet i Sahel? Strukturella faktorer som bidrar till ökad sårbarhet i Mali, Niger och Burkina Faso* (FOI-R--5052--SE). Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut.

Gunnarson, C., & Körling, G. (2023). *Relationerna mellan Frankrike och Mali 2017–2022: Historien om en skilsmässa* (FOI-R—5347—SE). Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut.

Hänggi, H. (2019). *Military coups and democratic regimes in Africa*. Routledge.

Harsch, E. F. (2014). Thomas Sankara's 'rectification' revolution in Burkina Faso. *African Studies Review, 57(1)*, 131–155.

Hoffman, D. (2020). *Burkina Faso in transition: The security situation in the Sahel*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The third wave of democratization in the late twentieth century*. University of Oklahoma Press.

Kamga, S. (2018). The military and democratic transition in Burkina Faso. *African Security, 11(1)*, 62–78.

Kesselman, K., Krieger, T., & Joseph, W. E. (1996). *Democracies at the cross-roads*. D.C. Heath and Company.

Mbara, G. C., & Graham, S. (2023). Dissecting the impact of recent coups in Africa on democracy and good governance. *African Renaissance, 20(2)*, 91–115.

Meléndez-Ortiz, R., & Jansen, M. (2015). *Burkina Faso: A new era of democratic governance* (ECDPM Briefing Note 72). ECDPM.

Monga, C. (2011). *Soldiers, priests, and engineers: A history of the development of development in Burkina Faso*. Princeton University Press.

Moussa, A. (2017). *The challenge of governance in Niger*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

Murray, S. (2012). Political economy and urbanization in Niger. *African Studies Quarterly, 13(4)*, 1–23.

O'Donnell, G. (2004). Why the rule of law matters. *Journal of Democracy, 15(4)*, 32–46.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2024). *Military coups, jihadism, and insecurity in the Central Sahel* (West African Papers No. 43). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/522f69f1-en

Ousmane, A. (2015). Ethnicity, elite competition, and coup cycles in Niger. *Journal of Modern African Studies, 53(2)*, 245–270.

Powell, J. M., & Thyne, C. L. (2011). Global instances of coups from 1950 to 2010: A new dataset. *Journal of P*