African Union, The West, And Resurgence of Military Coup D’états in Africa

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Abstract

This paper investigates the recent increase in military coups in Africa and suggests potential actions the African Union and Western nations can take to address this issue. The study utilized a qualitative descriptive approach for data collection and analysis, while conflict theory was used to explain the problem at hand. The research discovered that the upsurge in military coups in Africa stems from both general and country-specific factors, such as ineffective governance under civilian rule, the dynamics of civil-military relations, external interests, and security threats instigated by external forces, including terrorism. The paper suggests that enhancing democracy and improving governance are the most effective means of preventing military coups, rather than shortening the lifespan of military regimes or hastening the transition from military to civilian rule. The African Union and Western nations should collaborate in addressing this issue through a comprehensive approach, which may require country-specific strategies.

Keyword: military coups, government, civilian rule, political system, democracy

Introduction

In the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, a substantial number of military governments held power worldwide, leading to an increased scholarly focus on studying them. By 1979, Sub-Saharan Africa had 14 military regimes in control, while Latin America had nine, Arab states and North Africa had five, Southeast Asia had three, and South and East Asia had one each. However, with international pressure, military involvement in politics began to decline in the 1990s, and transitions to civilian rule were made. But since 2011, military interventions have been on the rise, particularly in Africa. In 2021, six coup attempts took place in Africa, four of which were successful, and in 2022, Burkina Faso had two successful coup attempts, with others failing in Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, and Sao Tome and Principe. This study aims to explore the reasons behind this trend and examine how the African Union and Western nations can help address it, as it threatens to undo the democratic gains made over the past two decades on the continent.

Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings

This article presents a theory that explains the occurrence of military coups, which is rooted in human behavior. Military coups are characterized as a swift, forceful, and unconstitutional overthrow of a sitting government by the military, often involving violence (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). They can occur against a democratically elected government or a military regime that has already taken power. The political system in question may be characterized by various ideologies, including monarchy, authoritarianism, capitalism, socialism, or Marxism (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). To analyze this situation, the study employs conflict theory, a sociopolitical theory developed by Karl Marx (1818-1883), a prominent political philosopher who pioneered the formation of communism as an economic doctrine. Marx's renowned works, The Communist Manifesto (1848) and Das Kapital (1867), outline conflict theory as a means to explain political and economic events through an ongoing struggle for limited resources. Marx emphasizes the hostile relationship between social classes in this struggle, particularly the relationship between capital owners, whom he calls the "bourgeoisie," and the working class, whom he refers to as the "proletariat." (Hayes & Barnier, 2022).

Conflict theory suggests that society is in a constant state of conflict as individuals and groups compete for limited resources. This theory argues that social order is established through the exercise of power and domination, whereby those who are wealthy and influential use any means necessary, including oppressing the poor and powerless, to retain their status. Conflict theory emphasizes that individuals and groups within society strive to maximize their own wealth and power (Hayes & Barnier, 2022). This theory concentrates on the competition among social groups for limited resources. Conflict theory argues that social and economic institutions serve as battlefields for groups or classes to maintain inequality and control over society by the ruling class. Marxist conflict theory divides society along economic class lines between the working-class proletarian and the bourgeois ruling class. Subsequent iterations of conflict theory examine diverse types of conflicts among...
capitalist factions and various social, religious, and other groups. (Hayes & Barnier, 2022). Conflict theory seeks to explain social processes such as war, poverty, discrimination, revolution, and domestic violence. It argues that much of human history, including the emergence of democracy and civil rights, can be attributed to capitalist attempts to control and dominate the masses rather than a desire for social harmony. The key tenets of conflict theory are social inequality, resource allocation, and conflict between different socioeconomic classes (Hayes & Barnier, 2022). Marx's version of conflict theory posits two main classes: the bourgeoisie, who are wealthy and own the means of production, and the proletariat, who are working-class and lack property ownership (Hayes & Barnier, 2022). Max Weber, a German sociologist, expanded upon Marx's conflict theory and introduced his own ideas. Weber argued that conflicts over property were not limited to one specific instance, but rather existed in various forms and layers within all societies. Weber's perspective on conflict went beyond Marx's, asserting that certain social interactions, such as conflict, foster solidarity and beliefs among individuals and groups within a society. Therefore, a person's response to inequality may vary based on their affiliation with certain groups, their perception of those in power as legitimate, and other factors (Hayes & Barnier, 2022).

The present study suggests that there are both internal and external factors that create favorable conditions for military coups in many African countries. In Africa, factors such as poor economic conditions, oppression, limited opportunities for leadership positions, religious and tribal differences have contributed to the acceptance or rejection of military regimes that take over. These factors also fuel calls to overthrow elected governments and replace them with military regimes, highlighting a conflict between the governed and the ruling class, arising from discontent with the current political and economic conditions, a desire to throw off the oppressor's yoke, a desire for change, and so on. While contemporary conflict theorists have expanded the scope of conflict theory beyond Marx's narrow economic classes, economic relations remain a fundamental aspect of inequality across groups in various branches of conflict theory (Hayes & Barnier, 2022). According to conflict theory, the existing economic and political structures in African societies have led to severe conflicts between different segments of society. This has created situations in some Third World nations where justice is difficult to find and those who feel disadvantaged may support any entity or action that can offer relief. Military intervention often arises as a result of this societal imbalance, with the military exploiting its monopoly of coercion to disrupt democracy. Recent military coups in African states have demonstrated this pattern (Hayes & Barnier, 2022). Critics of conflict theory argue that it neglects to acknowledge the possibility that economic relationships may be beneficial for all parties involved. For instance, conflict theory views the connection between employers and employees as one of opposition, with employers attempting to pay the least possible amount for labor and employees attempting to increase their earnings. However, in reality, employers and employees often have good relationships. Additionally, institutions such as pension plans and stock-based compensation can further obscure the division between workers and companies by providing workers with a personal stake in the success of their employer (Hayes & Barnier, 2022).

The Background

Conflict theory asserts that African states are marked by severe difficulties that create social and economic instability. These difficulties result from the states’ inability to provide for their citizens’ basic needs, such as employment, food, shelter, and security. The poverty level is escalating, and those in positions of authority, particularly the military, are acting with impunity, leading to dissatisfaction among civilians. This has created a perception that a change of regime is necessary, and any change, including a military coup, would be welcomed. According to Shraeder (2004), military personnel are perceived as saviors during crises, and their willingness to bring about political-military changes and economic development has garnered the trust of the people. This sentiment has been observed in South and Latin America, where the first military coups in the southern hemisphere took place (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022), starting with Colonel Juan Peron's intervention in Argentina in 1943, which spread throughout the Third World (Asomba, 1973). However, Africa has experienced the most significant impact of military coups, with 71 coups taking place between 1952 and 1990 (Thomson, 2010).

Military regimes typically come into existence due to political, economic, or social crises, with the primary goal of replacing ineffective leaders and governments. They operate on the belief that everyone should have equal political, economic, social, and civic rights. Military coups d'état are the most common method of seizing power, where members of the armed forces use force or the threat of force to overthrow the head of state. Once established, military regimes will typically have a strict military hierarchy and control over the security system. Although military regimes share some characteristics with other forms of government, they are distinct in their origins and power structures (Mastro, 2022). Some people believe that all military governments exhibit the same characteristics and tendencies. However, there are differences across military administrations (Hammou, 2023). Military governance, for example, might be a presidential republic with an executive presidency apart from the legislative. It might be a semi-presidential system, with an executive presidency as well as a distinct head of government that heads the remainder of the executive and is selected by the president and answerable to the legislature (Hammou, 2023). A military government is any kind of government that is managed by military forces, regardless of whether the government is valid under the laws of the jurisdiction and whether it is constituted by indigenous or by an invading power (Hammou, 2023).

According to Clapham and Philip in Mastro (2022), there are four main variations of military rule. The first is the veto regime, where the military opposes well-established civilian political processes and is committed to maintaining the existing social order, even at the expense of repression. In contrast, the breakthrough regime aims to challenge and transform a social order that conflicts with its modernization objectives. Breakthrough regimes often initiate significant reforms, but repression can still be prevalent, similar to veto regimes (Mastro, 2022). The third type of military rule, known as the moderator regime, consists of professional military forces that aim to address the challenges left by previous civilian governments and subsequently restore power to civilians. Moderator regimes can be observed in societies at various stages of social and economic development and often face internal disagreements regarding the timing of their transition back to civilan rule, leading to high levels of instability. Unlike authoritarian or repressive regimes, moderator regimes do not
exhibit strong tendencies towards such characteristics. On the other hand, The fourth category, known as factional regimes, arises when military officials join forces with civilian political actors and groups, united by common characteristics such as ethnicity or ideology. Like moderate regimes, factional regimes exhibit instability and a lack of repressive measures. (Mastro, 2022). There are other types of military governments. Military occupation and administration of conquered foreign territory; military dictatorship, when done extra-legal; an authoritarian government ruled by a military and its political designees known as a military junta; military junta is a government managed by a committee of military officials. Stratocracy is a type of military-run government (Edeh, 2020). The use of martial law, arbitrary law, or rule by might distinguishes military government. It is ruled by the armed forces, which assume power by force of weapons rather than through elections (Edeh, 2020). Because there is usually nothing to constrain the military's powers when in control, military governance is considered as worse than democratically elected government. Fundamental human rights of citizens are violated (Edeh, 2020).

The qualities of military rule that follow will help you comprehend how it differs from democratic control. The country is subject to military rules (Decrees and Edicts). When the military seizes control, the constitution of the country is frequently suspended, and new legislation is drafted so that the military can simply govern everything (Edeh, 2020). In doing so, the military does not seek consent from any other branch of government. To ensure the effectiveness of the military's new legislation, even existing government guns are muted. A military government usually makes no mention of democracy. This is due to the incompatibility of democracy's core qualities with dictatorship or the imposition of laws, both of which are practices of military governments (Edeh, 2020). The separation of powers among the three departments of government (executive, legislative, and judiciary) is one of the cornerstones of democracy. This is not the case under military authority. In most cases, the military functions as both the legislative and executive arms of government. In some cases, they also perform judicial functions by adopting laws that determine whether a person is guilty or not guilty of a crime. Furthermore, during military control, the people have little say in how the government handles their country's problems (Edeh, 2020). There is no rule of law or rule of rights either. Fundamental human rights are eroding. This is merely one more facet of military command. Fundamental human rights are those that are given to a person simply for being human. They are immovable and inalienable inherent rights that can never be revoked. Nonetheless, citizens’ fundamental human rights are often severely constrained during military administration. The military protects their interests while also ensuring the smooth operation of their administration (Edeh, 2020).

The military governs through decrees and edicts, and as a result, the original laws of the land are suspended or modified in order to keep the government running smoothly. The military can even pass new legislation. Decrees and edicts are terms used to describe new legislation adopted by the federal and state military governments, respectively (Edeh, 2020). There is no separation of powers. The division of governmental authorities and functions into the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial arms of government, articulated by Baron de Montesquieu, is also a necessary component of democracy. Because a military government integrates legislative and administrative duties, there is no separation of powers under military rule (Edeh, 2020). The military is supposed to be supreme and above all laws and authorities in a country under this situation. This also leads to dictatorship. A military administration employs a unitary system. The military often takes a more unitary approach when aiming to lead the entire country from the center. A unitary government is one in which the central government and its constituent parts share no power (Edeh, 2020). The military leadership system has been blamed for this issue. Another contributing factor is the military's contempt for principles such as separation of powers, checks and balances, and local autonomy (Edeh, 2020). Periodic elections are usually not held during military rule because the military suspends the law that requires them. Given this, the head of any military administration has the authority to serve indefinitely. His decisions will be irrefutable, and his position will be unassailable unless another military group intervenes and seizes control violently (Edeh, 2020).

Meanwhile, some of the traits listed may not be universally relevant throughout military governments in different countries. For example, it is widely assumed that military rule primarily by force (Tikkanen, 2022). Military power, on the other hand, may require onerous measures to secure permission from the governed. Some military governments, such as GenDuring Sani Abacha's tenure in Nigeria from 1993 to 1998, elections were held for both national and subnational representative bodies, although their legitimacy was questionable. Some military regimes have made efforts to establish a semblance of the rule of law by granting varying degrees of independence to the judiciary. Constitutional proposals have also been put forward and, in some instances, implemented. However, despite these measures, military regimes often resort to applying military law to civilians and employ tactics of extrajudicial repression, including torture, forced disappearances, and assassinations, through the actions of state security officials. (Tikkanen, 2022). Militaries, despite being part of the governmental structure, have a significant degree of relative autonomy due to their control over coercive instruments. Militaries do not function as a unified unitary actor (Tikkanen, 2022). They are divided into three groups: high command, lower officers, and enlisted personnel. Vertical competition There may be competition among the various service branches, which include the army, navy, and air force. They are also typically divided by class, region, and gender (Tikkanen, 2022). Differences in military recruitment rates between major ethnic groups in ethnically divided nations might lead to the notion that the armed services are made up of, or represent, one ethnic group against another (Tikkanen, 2022). These divisions tend to increase when the military takes power, and many military regimes have toppled as a result of their incapacity to manage them (Tikkanen, 2022). Military control is generally seen as inappropriate for any country. All of its characteristics are incompatible with the basic concerns of every government, which should be natural justice, equity, and good conscience (Edeh, 2020). Military domination also increases the likelihood of future military coups and attempted coups (Tikkanen, 2022). The advantages of direct command can foster competitiveness and conflict inside the military. Militarism and the exaltation of war and military achievement are also prevalent in military regimes. Politics, according to many military personnel, is a de facto continuation of war. As a result, to solve difficulties, people turn to utilizing force (Tikkanen, 2022). Inadvertently, some military regimes have fostered the rise of oppositional cultural and political movements, as various groups such as artists, students, religious leaders, dissidents, and others find creative ways to express themselves in defiance of the authoritarian nature of military rule. (Tikkanen, 2022). Imposing martial standards of behavior on recalcitrant populations can lead to scenarios in which large groups of people band together to oppose the generals (Tikkanen, 2022).
During the subsequent decades, the majority of military regimes that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s transitioned into civilian rule. The end of military regimes has occurred through diverse means, with some collapsing following failed military operations, while others successfully negotiated their exit from power through formal or informal agreements. (Tikkanen, 2022). Despite various modifications and changes, the transition from military dictatorships to civilian rule has not been achieved in many cases. Instead, in certain instances like Nigeria in 1993, the replacement of military leaders resulted in the emergence of new military regimes, such as when Sani Abacha succeeded Ibrahim Babangida. (Tikkanen, 2022). The privileges established during military rule can persist beyond the duration of the military administration, creating conditions that favor a potential return to power by the military. These privileges may include the military's control over the police or its involvement in maintaining internal public security. Additionally, the armed forces may be granted a special mandate for “law and order” or upholding the rule of law, which is enshrined in the constitution and provides constitutional legitimacy for their political interventions. Other privileges may include a designated portion of the national budget allocated to the military, higher salaries for military officers compared to other government officials, and authority over the intelligence services. Post-military administrations are sometimes forced to obtain military permission for a wide range of state actions. Stable civilian administration, on the other hand, is not synonymous with lowering military prerogatives, and civil-military peace must occasionally be obtained at the expense of not evaluating or revising any of those legacies of military power (Tikkanen, 2022). The formation of military power in the majority of African countries has been a negative event, since it foreshadows future political uncertainty and the likelihood of further military coups at any time.

The African Union

The African Union (AU) is an organization comprising 55 member states from the African continent. Its establishment took place on September 9, 1999, in Sirte, Libya, through the Sirte Declaration, which advocated for its formation. The AU was officially founded on May 25, 2001, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and its formal inauguration occurred on July 9, 2002, in Durban, South Africa. The primary objective of the AU was to succeed the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which was formed on May 25, 1963, in Addis Ababa by 32 signatory governments but dissolved on July 9, 2002. The Assembly of the African Union, a biannual gathering of the heads of state and government from member nations, serves as the platform for making significant decisions within the AU (source: https://au.int/en/au-nutshell).

The African Union Commission, located in Addis Ababa, serves as the secretariat of the organization. With a population of over 1.3 billion people, the African Union aims to achieve several objectives: fostering unity, coherence, and solidarity among African countries and nations; safeguarding the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of its member states; accelerating political and socioeconomic integration across the continent; advocating for African common positions on issues affecting the continent and its people; promoting international cooperation in line with the principles of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; ensuring continental peace, security, and stability; supporting democratic principles, civic engagement, good governance, and the protection of human and people's rights as defined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights treaties; enabling Africa to actively participate in the global economy and international negotiations; fostering economic, social, and cultural growth and promoting African economic integration; encouraging cooperation in all aspects of human endeavors to enhance the well-being of Africans; coordinating and harmonizing policies among existing and future Regional Economic Communities to gradually achieve the Union's objectives; advancing development by promoting research, particularly in science and technology; collaborating with international partners to combat preventable diseases and improve overall health on the continent (source: https://au.int/en/au-nutshell).

The African Union consists of both political and administrative entities. The highest decision-making body within the AU is the Assembly, comprising all the heads of state or government from member states. Other political institutions within the AU include the Executive Council, which consists of foreign ministers responsible for preparing decisions for the Assembly; the Permanent Representatives Committee, composed of ambassadors representing member countries in Addis Ababa; and the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), a consultative body representing civil society. The AU Commission serves as the secretariat for these political structures. Additionally, the AU fulfills its role in Africa by pursuing its broad objectives and endorsing significant recent documents that establish continental norms, supplementing the existing ones from its inception (source: https://au.int/en/au-nutshell). The African Union has endorsed several important documents that establish continental norms, including the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (2003), the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (2007), and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) along with its accompanying Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic, and Corporate Governance (CSM, 2009). The AU has actively engaged in addressing military coups, as demonstrated by notable instances. For instance, in May 2003, the AU deployed a peacekeeping force comprising troops from South Africa, Ethiopia, and Mozambique to Burundi, marking its first military intervention within a member state. Additionally, AU troops were present in Sudan during the Darfur conflict until the operation was transferred to the United Nations on January 1, 2008, under UNAMID. Furthermore, the AU has contributed troops from Uganda and Burundi for a peacekeeping mission in Somalia (The Economist, 2011).

The African Union (AU) often faces criticism from its detractors, who raise concerns about issues such as ineffective governance, implementation challenges, and the increasing security threats. Additionally, there is a lack of trust among citizens of AU member states (Agupusi, 2022), who believe that the AU does not intervene effectively when elected leaders take actions that pave the way for military involvement in politics. These criticisms carry weight, considering that the AU's initial vision was to guide Africa towards a future characterized by African renaissance and Pan-Africanism. The AU's mission statement envisions an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, where its citizens play a central role and exert influence on the global stage (Agupusi, 2022). The commitment of African leaders remains a significant obstacle to the resurrection and prosperity of Africa. The governance of the AU is only as strong as its leadership, and thus, the quality of governance within member countries, particularly among regional leaders, has an impact on the overall governance of the
union (Agupusi, 2022). The gap between the initial enthusiasm for the union and the reality of unfulfilled dreams after 20 years can be attributed, in part, to the leadership quality of the countries that support the current AU.

The African Union's (AU) area of greatest vulnerability lies in economic development. The establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development aimed to provide a policy framework for Africa's sustained economic progress. Its objectives encompass poverty eradication, fostering economic growth, and integrating Africa into the global economy. In addition, the AU has been reprimanded for failing to consult with civil society stakeholders in member countries. Consultation with civil society would aid in increasing accountability, improving governance, and providing members with a sense of ownership. The African Union (AU) continues to face obstacles in implementing its economic development framework, hindering the achievement of its objectives. The relatively low level of intra-African trade compared to other regions highlights the importance of regional integration. While intercontinental trade constitutes about 15% of global trade, Europe, North America, and Latin America have rates of 68%, 37%, and 20% respectively. Enhancing African trade would promote manufacturing, reduce dependence on natural resources, and diversify the African market, thereby impacting good governance, as well as economic and political stability. In addressing these challenges, the AU has taken steps forward, such as the establishment of the African Standby Force in December 2003. This force operates in a decentralized and regionally coordinated manner, aiming to effectively manage conflicts related to insurrections in various countries. However, the rise of military coups is certainly a comment on the AU's performance; however, all difficulties cannot be attributed to the Union, but rather to national governments, who are known to breach several of the AU conventions in the field of good economic and political governance.

The West

Western nations (popularly known as the West) have been interested in Africa since the slave trade until the era of 'legitimate' commerce. They were present throughout colonialism and have remained active in Africa in the post-colonial period for a number of reasons. The West has a wide range of influence, from economic to political, and there is widespread condemnation of western nations' interference, if not outright intervention, across the continent. These are mostly European countries, such as France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Portugal, which all have strong ties to their colonial ancestors on the continent. Despite not being a colonial master on the continent, the United States retained a strong presence. A few factors still play a role in the connection between Western nations and Africa. One of them is that the continent is portrayed in a particular way to the Western world, and this image occasionally impacts Western activities. Their national interest is crucial in this. Africa was previously colonized, but it now has resources that western nations require. It also serves as a market for Western culture and goods. This is one setting for western nations' action, such as the United States, Canada, and European Union member countries. Western nations are continually interested in a wide range of concerns on the African continent, vying with other eastern nations. They promote trade, markets for their products, resource development (such as gas and solid minerals), and human rights advancement. The most recent endeavor to halt illegal migration from Africa into Europe should not be forgotten. The EU considers Africa to be a strategic priority because it is Europe's closest neighbor and sister continent. Europe and Africa share a common history, closeness, and mutual interests, as well as substantial economic, cultural, and geographical ties (EU, 2022). In recent years, relations between the EU and Africa have been developed on two complementary frameworks: the Africa-EU Partnership and the new Partnership Agreement with the Organization of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS). (EU, 2022).

The West approaches its efforts in Africa in a number of ways, and it has been accused of assisting military coups or military governments at times. This was particularly true during the 1970s and 1980s. Even now, the West is accused of helping with Egyptian military leaders who remove an elected government. Western countries, particularly Europeans, have been accused of participating in military incursions in Africa. Security and prestige issues are more likely to motivate EU actors than humanitarian ones (Gegout, 2018). However, humanitarian reasons, as well as the need for improved security, drive European intervention in Africa (Gegout, 2018). Perhaps the West, particularly Europe, best articulates how and why it is connected to Africa. It is constantly willing to take what it calls its collaboration even further than previously. It identifies measures to strengthen European-African relations (Borrell, 2021). According to the EU, many challenges affect both Africa and Europe. There are, nevertheless, several opportunities available. It thinks that only by working together can both parties advance better and faster, and that there is an urgent need to accelerate the pace. Europe wants both sides to be stronger on the world stage, to aim higher, and to collaborate on tangible, innovative, and transformative projects (Borrell, 2021). For example, Europe wishes to collaborate closely with Africa in order to address climate change. The EU has mobilized in recent years to aid Africa in adapting to its consequences, most notably through the Great Green Wall against Desertification project, but it expects to significantly increase this effort in the future. It also wants to coordinate efforts to ensure that the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) is a success. Europe also desires to work with the continent to accelerate economic development while encouraging participation by all, particularly in rural regions, provided that liberties are maintained and hegemonic interests are not served. Terrorism, extremism, various forms of trafficking, piracy, and even cybercrime, according to the EU, are serious concerns that Africa and Europe face together. Only with close international collaboration will these scourges be eradicated (Borrell, 2021). Europe also feels that peace and security are key pillars of cooperation since African instability and insecurity inevitably affect Europe. The EU has long been involved in this sector in Africa, with Africa, and for Africa (Borrell, 2021). The EU is thus deploying its forces in Somalia, the Sahel, Central African Republic, and even Mozambique in close partnership with the African Union to assist “African solutions to African problems” (Borrell, 2021).
Military rule in Africa

The African continent has experienced numerous instances of military coups. In the postcolonial era, there were over 200 attempted coups, resulting in the removal of approximately half of the continent's government leaders. Following the end of the Cold War, there was a transition towards democracy from 1989 to 1994, leading to a decline in the illegitimate seizure of state power through military coups. However, starting in 2020, there has been a recent surge in coup activities across Africa (Ibrahim, 2022). Successful and unsuccessful military coups have occurred in countries of West and Central Africa, including Mali, Chad, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, and Sudan, in recent times. Despite facing penalties, membership suspensions, and condemnation from international and regional organizations like the African Union (AU), the region continues to witness a wave of military coups (Ibrahim, 2022). This poses an increasingly significant problem. The rise of insurgencies and extremist violence, coupled with the presence of weak, nascent, and transitional democracies across Africa, has created fertile ground for military interference in civilian and political affairs (Mishra & Toprak, 2022). The recent resurgence of military involvement in countries such as Guinea, Sudan, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Guinea-Bissau have brought back memories of past instances of military interference in civilian governance. The reappearance of this phenomenon can be attributed to widespread dissatisfaction among the population. Additionally, the deteriorating socio-political and economic conditions in many cases provide justification for coups, while power struggles among the elite can also be contributing factors (Mishra & Toprak, 2022). Mishra and Toprak (2022) cite the following historical coups as illustrative examples:

Mali (August 2020): After the parliamentary election that led to the ousting of former President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, the Malian military seized control amid the prevailing unrest. Consequently, a military-led administration assumed authority. The primary reasons behind the coup were the government's mishandling of insurgencies, allegations of corruption within the government, the detrimental effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and a struggling economy.

Chad (April 2021): During his visit to the troops combating the Front for Change and Concord in Chad, former President Idriss Deby met a tragic end, losing his life. This event unfolded as a brazen seizure of power, disregarding the constitutional provisions, with his son, Army General Mahamat Idriss Deby, swiftly assuming his position as the new leader.

Guinea (September 2021): Special Forces commander Mamady Doumbouya, who received training in the United States, orchestrated a coup d'état against former President Alpha Conde. Citing pervasive corruption and prolonged poverty, Doumbouya asserted that his actions were motivated by the welfare of the public, as he opposed a controversial constitutional amendment enabling Alpha Conde to seek a third term in office.

Sudan (October 2021): Under the leadership of General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the Sudanese military staged a coup by dismantling a power-sharing arrangement with former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, which had aimed to guide Sudan towards its first democratic election in many years.

Burkina Faso (January 2022): Led by military leader Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, soldiers detained former President Roch Kabore, leading to the dissolution of his administration. The coup was justified by citing Kabore's failure to effectively address the growing Islamist insurgency and address the concerns of citizens. The mutinous soldiers demanded stronger weaponry and support to combat extremists, as well as the removal of defense chiefs. The credibility and leadership of Kabore were further undermined by a devastating attack carried out by armed groups in the village of Solhan, Yagha province, resulting in the loss of over 130 lives. Subsequently, in response to the coup in Burkina Faso, citizens took to the streets in the capital city of Ouagadougou, celebrating the coup and demonstrating against French influence by destroying French flags. As a consequence, Burkina Faso's membership in both ECOWAS and the African Union was temporarily suspended.

Guinea Bissau (February 2022): A failed coup took place in Guinea Bissau, a small coastal state in West Africa. Despite its size, the country has gained prominence in the illicit drug and narcotics trade, leading to pervasive corruption and frequent political instability. Guinea Bissau has emerged as a significant hub for the transit of cocaine from Latin America to Europe. President Umaro Sissoco Embaló characterized the coup as an "unsuccessful assault on democracy," suggesting potential connections to drug trafficking.

The surge in coup attempts and heightened military involvement in Africa stands in direct opposition to democratic values and presents a risk to the continent’s peace, stability, and security. It is noteworthy that a significant number of these coups take place in countries undergoing a transition towards democracy following years of authoritarian governance (Mishra and Toprak, 2022). Militaries are essential in democracies. They may either refuse to put down major protests or overthrow oppressive regimes. On the other side, they may block democracy by destabilizing elected governments, particularly when reforms or efforts to implement changes endanger their entrenched interests (Mishra and Toprak, 2022). The latter is clear from the fact that many African dictators develop ethnic armies to consolidate their rule. African autocrats recruit soldiers of the same ethnicity as themselves into the military and grant them crucial leadership positions. The soldiers' and autocrats' same community identity promotes loyalty. In such cases, the increasing number of military coups could be linked to militaries' inclination to maintain, rather than modify, the status quo when its entrenched rights and privileges are threatened (Mishra and Toprak, 2022). Coups have also been a regular event in Africa, particularly in the Sahelian region, due to under-funded and under-resourced troops. Combating the rising tide of extremist violence without adequate combat readiness, i.e., insufficient training, armament, resources, and finances, has placed an unsustainable strain on African forces. As a result, soldiers have intervened against governments, as seen recently in Mali and Burkina Faso (Mishra and Toprak, 2022).
When the Burkina Faso military seized control in January 2022, deposing the country's democratically elected president, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, the main concern was the government's failure to prevent jihadist attacks that had destabilized large swathes of the country (Ibrahim, 2022). This affected 1.4 million people and resulted in 2,000 deaths by 2021. The broad sentiment in the country is that the time has come to try an alternative government, which corresponds to one of the main reasons coup planners boldly launch the coup in most countries involved. Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Damiba, a 41-year-old infantry soldier trained in France and the United States, is the coup leader and president of Burkina Faso (Ibrahim, 2022). His background also refers to a trend on the continent in which many coup strategists have received training in Western countries. External influences from other parts of the world are also typical in how coups in Africa occur. Damiba reportedly tried and failed to persuade President Kabore to hire the Russian Wagner paramilitary organization just before the latest coup in Burkina Faso (Ibrahim, 2022). One of the first people to congratulate Damiba after the coup was President Vladimir Putin's buddy and Wagner Group owner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, who spoke of "a new era of decolonisation in Africa" (Ibrahim, 2022). This was a sign that the Russians would eventually take over the French imperial power. The Burkinabe coup was similar to Egypt's in 2013, in that the coup was announced on national television months before it occurred. Africa's politics have shifted in recent years. The restoration of the military to power is driving this (Ibrahim, 2022). Burkina Faso experienced a failed coup in 2015 (Ibrahim, 2022). However, there was no impediment in 2022. In 2017, Zimbabwe had its first military coup in the country's history. The same pattern of an elected administration was noticeable, which had become an unsettling phenomenon for citizens and the elite (Ibrahim, 2022). Sudan experienced a military coup in 2019. Mali experienced another military coup in 2020. In 2020, military forces were active in facilitating power transitions in Tunisia and Algeria (Ibrahim, 2022). In the same year, a military coup in Niger Republic was foiled. Mali's military strongman was dissatisfied with the limited powers he had in 2020, so he staged another coup in 2021, giving himself complete authority (Ibrahim, 2022). In 2021, Sudan witnessed a repeat of history as the military once again orchestrated a coup, seizing full control and severing ties with civilian collaborators (Ibrahim, 2022). Similarly, the coup in Chad aimed to maintain power within the family following the death of Idris Deby (Ibrahim, 2022). In Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea, civilians have shown support for military rule, willingly cooperating with the military (Ibrahim, 2022). This highlights the emergence of a new generation in Africa, devoid of the memories of the devastating consequences of military rule, and mistakenly viewing it as a viable political solution (Ibrahim, 2022).

According to Ibrahim (2022), various non-military groups in the Sahel region and other parts of Africa have acquired weapons and are engaged in armed struggles for power or involved in acts of armed banditry. This has resulted in a widespread state of insecurity. Countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Central African Republic, and Democratic Republic of the Congo are experiencing significant challenges in containing armed combatants and reducing insecurity. In some countries, including Nigeria, the military has assumed responsibilities that are typically assigned to the police (Ibrahim, 2022). In various countries, military personnel express discontent over corrupt democratic administrations that fail to provide them with sufficient weaponry to combat insurgents, jihadists, and armed groups (Ibrahim, 2022). They report unpaid salaries and allowances, as well as challenging working conditions that hinder their ability to address security threats effectively (Ibrahim, 2022). However, elected governments argue that corruption has infiltrated the military ranks, leading to the misappropriation of funds allocated for warfare (Ibrahim, 2022). This has resulted in the emergence of war economies, where officers enrich themselves at the expense of effective military operations (Ibrahim, 2022). These circumstances have given rise to two competing narratives, fueling a growing blame game (Ibrahim, 2022). According to Ibrahim (2022), there are three distinct types of coup d'état prevalent in Africa. The first type is referred to as a constitutional coup, where incumbent presidents disregard the normative framework they had previously established and seek to extend their tenure beyond constitutional limits. This undermines the legitimacy of political systems. The second type involves manipulating elections through extensive fraud to alter the electoral outcomes. Since 2012, there have been at least thirteen African countries where leaders have employed legal tactics and political maneuver to exceed the two-term limit (Ibrahim, 2022). Often, it is the experience of these two forms of coups that paves the way for the third type: military coups d'état (Ibrahim, 2022).

### Impact of military rule

Military authority raises the likelihood of future military coups and attempted coups. The benefits of direct authority frequently fuel competitiveness and conflict inside the military (Tikkanen, 2022). As previously stated, some military regimes attempt to regulate this competition by, for example, distributing the spoils of office evenly among the many service branches. Military rulers may require civilian groups to establish hierarchical and disciplined structures along military lines (Tikkanen, 2022). In the following decades, most military governments of the 1960s and 1970s became civilian. Regime transitions presided over by the military, with democracy as the ostensible ultimate goal, have proved particularly troublesome because militaries tend to intervene in the process on a regular basis in order to achieve their desired outcome (Tikkanen, 2022). Military regimes terminate in various ways that have long-term consequences for people and nations. Military prerogatives established during military rule have the potential to outlast the military government itself. Returning to civilian authority is a painful experience for military leaders in societies where military operations have been perceived as answers to increasingly complicated economic and political problems (Barkey, 2020). Even in the best of circumstances--when soldiers freely withdraw--the transition process rarely yields the desired consequences for the military. The transition's flaws are embedded in the process's dynamics, which involve officers' own miscalculations and, more crucially, civilians' urge to display independence and resistance (Barkey, 2020).

When soldiers and civilians govern together, various dynamics can emerge that have long-term consequences for people and the state. Each can have a different impact on a country's civil-military ties (Hammou, 2023). Military dictators can channel mass mobilization, minimize their reliance on the armed forces, and discredit civilian opposition by forming their own civilian political organizations, as witnessed in Sudan under Jafar Nimeir's Sudanese Socialist Union. Civilians
in this situation lack significant autonomy from their military partners, which might have an impact on governance and the transition to civilian administration (Hammou, 2023). Civilian partners, on the other hand, can cultivate a large following due to the contagious nature of military coup d’etats, as highlighted by Anyoko-Shaba (2022). There is a concern that the recurrence of coups could lead to a wider spread of such events, facilitated by various circumstances unique to each country. In 2021 alone, four nations experienced military coups, with Bissau and Burkina Faso witnessing military interventions in January and early February 2022, respectively. The rapid succession and evolving nature of these coups have raised alarm bells and called for heightened concern (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). The recent surge in quick successive coups disrupts the positive trajectory of democratic progress (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). Historically, military coups have been a common occurrence in countries of the Global South, particularly in Africa. The decline of military rule in the past was largely attributed to the resolute stance of the international community against it (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). However, the reemergence of military coups in Africa has prompted a closer examination of this phenomenon. It is evident that countries with a history of military regimes are still grappling with the consequences and remnants of their misuse. Nevertheless, many African nations face a multitude of challenges stemming from dysfunctional political, economic, and social systems. These challenges include leadership failures in meeting the needs of their citizens, which often lead to tensions and uprisings. Widespread corruption, nepotism, tribalism, and detrimental economic and political practices by civilian governments contribute to the factors that prompt military intervention (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022).

However, occasionally the grounds cited as having prompted coups are false and unworkable. According to Anyoko-Shaba (2022), they typically strike when the military's interests are at jeopardy. Military rule is widely acknowledged to be an aberration, but governments seek legitimacy by promising that they will be brief and that they will transfer power after restoring normalcy to society (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). However, history demonstrates that restoring normalcy is the last thing the military brings to the table because it undermines the most fundamental democratic norms and rights (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). When they leave, their traces are rarely wiped out of the polity or the people's minds. Citizens will always believe the military can come to their aid when elected leaders engage in poor governance and people are pushed to the brink of despair, unable to find a way out through the ballot box. Military governments in Africa are known for coercion and, at times, poor performance. They restrict fundamental human rights and have not proven to be the spearhead of any African society's socioeconomic revolution. This is expected to reemerge with the comeback of military coups. The military has largely damaged its own credibility as a corrective regime, which is why their revival is of interest and worry to both onlookers and international entities. The recurrence of military coups in African politics is a threat to democracy and confirms the society's leadership issue (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). Many elected governments have displayed a lack of leadership skills, which is to blame. This has been proved in nations where even elected administrations have become authoritarian, like Chad, Mali, Guinea, Bissau, Sudan, and Burkina Faso (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). In view of the revival of military coups in Africa, despite their rejection by the international community, particularly the AU and the West, it is critical to examine the circumstances that promoted them and propose ways to prevent them.

Discussion/Analysis

A variety of circumstances have contributed to the resurgence of military coups in Africa. The significance of the AU and the West in relation to the phenomena is also mentioned. The emphasis here is on how to find a solution to the problem, as everyone agrees that military rule is an aberration and cannot be the solution to Africa's myriad economic and development demands. Three entities must be prioritized in this process. One, African countries and their internal problems. The African Union is the second. The third region is the West. African governments have numerous obstacles, which contribute to a situation that has historically resulted in military coups across the continent. To begin, it is safe to say that the recent string of military coups calls into question the effectiveness of democratic administration in West Africa. This is true if it is recognized that the majority of justifications cited by coup plotters are about the bad performance of the civilian governments that they topple. Sometimes coups occur as a result of civilian leadership’s choice to modify the constitution and go beyond its constitutional bounds, a phenomenon known as the third term phenomenon. Some of these difficulties are more generic in nature. However, how military coups occur and what causes them are typically context-specific, and this article believes that they should be examined against the backdrop of structural weaknesses in the affected countries. These include increasing socioeconomic pressure, low human development indicators, a youth bulge, and failing security sector reform (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023). Others are democratic backsliding caused by governance crises, third-term syndrome, and constitutional manipulation (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023) as a result of incumbents' desire to remain in power despite popular opposition. There are also geopolitical swings in alliances to consider, as well as insecurity tied to terrorism and criminality. This is especially true in Mali and Burkina Faso, which have suffered two military coups in as many months (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023). These are mostly internal national factors that contribute significantly to military coups. It might be argued that solutions to such situations must consider the unique nations involved rather than general proposals that may leave out specifics that could support the revival of military coups.
As previously said, different countries have distinct kinds of governance founded by the military (Hammou, 2023), making it necessary to evaluate some national details. When it comes to averting military takeovers or coups, one-size-fits-all solutions have frequently been the norm. However, if efforts to prevent or remove the military from power are to be effective, this issue must be revisited. The country-specific systems used to govern by each military regime have various repercussions for the nation, which may affect solutions given from within or from beyond. First, efforts to limit military engagement in politics will be useless if soldiers have civilian sympathizers - either willing participants in post-coup governments or instigators of coups themselves (Hammou, 2023). Second, the international community's repeating demand for a 'civilian' government following a coup ignores the all-too-common approach of delegating power to a military-affiliated civilian party (Hammou, 2023). There may even be instances where people assume fatigues and serve alongside officers to govern. Civilians, including political parties, could be militarized during the course of military administration to the point where their structures take on a command pattern, similar to what might exist in a socialist or communist state. This creates a perpetually ideal environment for the military to find room and gain acceptance when they enter politics in such countries. It should also be highlighted that, while military governments are often egalitarian, they are held together by a variety of ideologies. Authoritarianism and free market liberalism have been practiced by military rulers. There have been socialist military dictatorships. Because military government is intrinsically undemocratic, several variations are possible. Civilian administrations, or soldiers who transition into elected civilians, may sometimes continue on this route in nations with a history of military intervention. Their undemocratic practices in a civilian government may disenchant citizens, who may then be inclined to a violent change of government via military coup if this remains the only alternative. Such a unique country scenario is significant, and it must be acknowledged when proposing solutions such as prevention or transition to civilian administration. Earlier research thought that economic and social modernisation in emerging nations will lead to more professional and advanced military. It was thought that this would keep them out of politics. However, the military was discovered to be the most modernized and technically advanced component of the middle class, allowing it to offer a unique contribution to development, particularly democratization (Mastro, 2022). As a result, in unstable modernizing countries, armed forces are best fitted to promote order, making them very likely to intervene in politics. This is the case in Egypt, where a civilian government was deposed by a highly industrialised military with firms and external linkages and influences, including those with the US. Could this be one of the reasons why their action was received with minimal resistance from the West when President Morsi's elected government was deposed in Egypt? This is especially true given Egypt's importance in sustaining peace and stability in a region where the West is apprehensive of Iran. We have an internal as well as a foreign crisis that may prompt the military to act. It will continue to happen as long as external forces choose military intervention to leaving Egypt in the hands of a civilian government friendly to the enemies of states like the United States and Israel. Still on domestic concerns, each nation's reliance on wealthier nations has encouraged close links between their forces and those of western nations. This previously led to the assumption that the military forces were willing agents of capitalism and its domestic class allies (Mastro, 2022). So, the militaries of poorer states would carry out the wishes of wealthier ones within their own borders. In a system where, wealthier nations must protect their control over critical economic supplies in poorer African governments, this could be one reason the latter does little even when a military coup is imminent. This was demonstrated in Burkina Faso with the recent coup, where it was announced that there would be a coup long before it occurred. In this scenario, where foreign influences on the military are implicated, that specific angle must be considered when a solution to prevention or transition to civilian authority is sought.

Even if a case has been made for how military coups have met with public support in some of the countries where they have recently occurred, historical experiences in the 1970s and 1980s show that they are never as effective in governing as democratic administrations. In the past, early enthusiasm was followed by disillusionment among the economic elite and the middle class as a result of military governments' repressiveness and economic failure (Mastro, 2022). Despite the fact that some military officials voted, military control declined and gave way to elected administrations. This implies that any return to military authority at this time will have to end in a transition to civilian government, no matter how long it takes, and that this is where the focus for answers should be. This is supported by the fact that, while studies have failed to find lower levels of economic development or performance in countries with military regimes when compared to countries with other forms of government, these studies have also failed to establish any strong relationship between regime type and public policy performance (Remmer, 1989, cited in Mastro, 2022). In fact, the military is not often successful as a modernizer or champion of economic progress. In terms of social policy, one major distinction between military and civilian regimes is that the military spends more money on armaments while civilians spend more money on social welfare. This reduces popular support for military governments and eventually pushes them to return power to civilians (Mastro, 2022). The same pattern is predicted for Africa's emerging military rulers. The recent wave of coups has called into doubt the effectiveness of democratic transitions in West Africa. It also strains regional government cooperation at a time when it is most needed to combat the growing threat of violent extremism (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023). The need of focusing on each country's internal dynamics becomes even more apparent when it is noted that coups, particularly in Africa, have been extensively studied against the backdrop of structural weaknesses in the affected countries. Rising socioeconomic pressures, weak human development indices, and failing security sector reforms are among them (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023). Any solution must take into account the interplay of these political, security, and socioeconomic issues. They demonstrate why military interventions into politics must be avoided, and they inform the actions of transitional authorities during discussions (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023).

Lack of international legitimacy and incapacity to rule effectively, which led to the decline of military rule in the 1990s, may point to the AU and the West's role in reversing the current rise. Because these nations are AU members and most African nations are still related to their old colonial masters in the West, the two bodies are crucial in identifying solutions that address prevention or transition to civilian government. It is important to note, however, that studies have shown that responses from external entities tasked with providing solutions to military coups have proven inadequate (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023). External players have struggled to persuade military leaders to make transitions brief and civilian-led. In fact, coup leaders have been in power in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso for 30, 17, and 13 months,
respectively. They see themselves as change agents, and some have post-transitional political ambitions (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023). These challenges are critical in the search for solutions. Wishing for brief transitions is no longer a viable option. External players, such as the AU and the West, have limited options, but one of them is to optimize the process's outcomes by focusing on the substance of transitions rather than their duration (Théroux-Bénoni & Kanté, 2023). Having said that, a look into the AU’s efforts to avoid military coups or transition to civilian government would show the need to consider problems other than the military itself. As a solution to military coups, democracy must be strengthened. It is a preventive approach, since it is considered that if civilian governments improve on important indices, there will be fewer reasons for the military to carry out coups, and their popularity among citizens will decline. This is especially true given that removing the military from power or managing military transitions and their aftermaths either creates circumstances for stability or sets the foundation for the next coup. In fact, those in service prefer to transition into civilian leadership, which in many areas lays the groundwork for another military takeover. All recently deposed leaders in West Africa either came to power by coups, such as Burkina Faso's Paul-Henri Sampaodo Damiba, or won post-transition elections following an unlawful change of government. Mali's Ibrahim Boubacar Keta was elected president in 2013 and was deposed by Colonel Assimi Gota in 2020 following months of demonstrations. His election came after Amadou Sanogo’s military takeover in 2012.

In Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was elected president following a public revolt in 2014 that deposed long-term president Blaise Compaoré and a failed coup attempt in September 2015. In Guinea, Alpha Condé was elected president following the forcible takeover of power by Moussa Dadis Camara in 2008, following the death of long-time leader Lansana Conté. In these three countries, power was returned to a civilian-elected administration in 16 months on average. However, post-coup elected government stoked popular anger, providing ideal ground for military players to retake power. This swing from military to elected civilian and back to military illustrates that external organisations like as the AU must focus more on internal dynamics. They should focus on deepening democratic practices in any intervention rather than managing the military once in power. Even beyond post-coup surveys, close attention is required, highlighting the need to enhance democracy and its processes.

The above is especially pertinent given that the AU itself recognizes the necessity for African nations to enhance democracy. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) stated in 2014 that unconstitutional transitions in government stemmed from "deficiencies in governance." Greed, selfishness, mismanagement of diversity, failure to seize opportunities, marginalization, human rights violations, refusal to accept electoral defeat, manipulation of constitutions and their revision through unconstitutional means to serve narrow interests, and corruption are all major contributors to unconstitutional government changes and popular uprisings. ‘(Handy, Akum, and Djilo, 2020. It is so accepted that simply condemning coups is insufficient. African and international actors must address the low level of democracy and governance. The near-unanimous condemnation of the Mali rebellion, followed by the forced resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keta, calls into question the African consensus on illegitimate transfers of administration. Various international peace and security actors criticized Mali's August 18 coup d'état in a rare show of unity. Despite Keta's resignation and dissolution of Parliament and government, they also called for a return to constitutional order. The African Union (AU) went even further, imposing targeted penalties on the coup plotters. Given the AU’s inclination to criticize international sanctions against African governments (Handy, Akum, and Djilo (2020), this increased enthusiasm for sanctions appears odd.

Africa's peace, security, and governance rules and mechanisms will be put to the test on a regular basis. Early warning system and civil society organization reports frequently properly forecast government failures (Handy, Akum, and Djilo (2020)). However, in the absence of political commitment to conflict avoidance, the AU and regional organizations will increasingly react to crises rather than prevent them. Actually, focusing on unlawful government changes is a simple approach to governance challenges. The AU’s efforts to deepen democracy across nations will be more like it. This is especially true because hastening the political process to end military rule may result in weak governments. This works for current political elites, who are frequently complicit in fueling the confidence crisis (Handy, Akum, and Djilo (2020)). Negotiations are frequently hampered by hasty elections, which have little possibility of representing a country's sociopolitical realities (Handy, Akum, and Djilo (2020)). The position is further exacerbated by the likelihood that any measure implemented may be misunderstood as a benefit for sitting presidents seeking to retain power (Handy, Akum, and Djilo (2020)). The AU is working to strengthen ties with civil society and establish effective capabilities to prevent political crises. The West (Western nations) is becoming increasingly interested in African political stability. According to others, this is in the best interests of the West because it handles different difficulties such as illegal migration to Europe, promotes economic stability, and provides a ready market for products from Western nations. Nonetheless, the aftermaths of previous African coups revealed European and American officials to be more worried with the presence of Russian-linked Wagner Group mercenaries than with the region's basic political problems (Thurston, 2022). This highlights the risks of regional and international actors putting counter-terrorism (and competition with Russia) ahead of other warning indicators. These include botched elections with low turnout, out-of-touch leadership, and restrictions on free expression (Thurston, 2022). Without a doubt, this circumstance highlights the importance of paying attention to internal and country-specific processes that lay the ground for military takeover, as highlighted in this study. Some analysts believe that counterterrorism is being overemphasized in the West. It is also evident that the recurrence of coups represents a fork in the road for policymakers in West Africa, France, and the United States (Thurston, 2022). They can choose to leave the coup in place, confirming de facto military supremacy across the Sahel. They can also draw a red line and demand that it be crossed. France, the United States, and ECOWAS have generally condemned the new round of Sahelian and West African coups while silently accepting them as done deals (Thurston, 2022). The West, particularly Paris and Washington, appear keen to resume normal operations with whoever is in charge. In this example, “business as usual” refers to counter-terrorism operations. Such initiatives are ostensibly intended to increase political stability, but in practice they limit effective diplomatic responses to coups, corruption, electoral anomalies, and human rights violations (Thurston, 2022).

This is a disaster that will have long-term ramifications for the countries involved and the African continent. It emphasizes the reality that if military coups are permitted to occur first, little or no progress will be made in halting them. Preventive actions will be required, including addressing many of the difficulties that weaken democratic governance. Both
the AU and the West will have to work together in this situation. Each recognized cause of the rise of military coups must be thoroughly investigated and answers proposed. It is past time to enforce rigorous obedience. This is how vital the task has become for the continent and the international community; otherwise, the continent’s and the international community’s democratic successes over the last two decades will be squandered, with no one benefiting. As a result, there is a need to leverage current institutions and develop new ones in order to expand democratic processes across the African continent. For example, the AU’s Peer Review Mechanism, which focuses on good governance in African countries, has to be reinforced. If bad governance by civil administration is a cause of the rise of military coups, the answer must be sought in good government. The third term challenge has resulted in coups; the AU and the West must address this to ensure that leaders do not modify the constitution to become life presidents. Addressing this is significantly less expensive than dealing with the consequences of military coups afterwards. This comprehensive yet holistic attention to the reasons of coups should be prioritized now, as sanctions, insistence on a shorter life for the military in power, and a speedy transition back to military rule have all proven ineffectual in deterring military takeovers. There is a need for closer collaboration between the AU and the West in guaranteeing adherence to agreed-upon measures and methods. The AU may discuss “African solutions to African problems.” The reality is that the continent will need to work with the world community to get this done because many situations have shown that doing it alone does not always yield the intended results. To summarize, no single country can address the conditions that have contributed to the recurrence of military coups on its own. External entities, particularly the African Union and Western nations, must be involved.

Conclusion

The reemergence of military coups in Africa highlights the persistent presence of conducive conditions in many African countries. Previous attempts to impose sanctions and limit the duration of military rule have proven ineffective in light of this resurgence. It is imperative, therefore, to shift focus towards addressing the underlying conditions within civilian governments that contribute to the recurrence of military coups. Such efforts cannot be undertaken by individual nations alone, especially considering the transnational nature of issues like terrorism, which have destabilized countries like Mali and Burkina Faso and contributed to military coups. The international community, particularly the African Union (AU) and Western nations, must come together to play a crucial role. Current solutions should prioritize the strengthening of democratic practices as a safeguard against military coups, and tailored approaches should be implemented as each nation faces unique factors that facilitate such coups. Civilian governments must demonstrate stricter adherence to democratic principles, and the AU, in collaboration with Western partners, should collectively ensure compliance. Failing to address the continued spread of military coups will exact a high cost on both the African continent and the international community.

References


