

Afrika'da Geçmişten Günümüze Darbelerin Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi**A Comparative Study Of Past And Present Coups In Africa**Mahamane Moutari Aboubacar İSSA¹, Ferruh TUZCUOĞLU²¹Doktora Öğrencisi, Sakarya Üniversitesi,
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<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0319-9396><https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1481705>**Özet**

Bu çalışmada, Afrika'da geçmişte gerçekleşmiş ve günümüzde de zaman zaman tekrar eden askeri darbeler karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alınmakta ve Afrika ordularının ülkelerini korumadaki rolü ve kendi hükümetleri için yarattığı potansiyel güvenlik riskleri tartışılmaktadır. Çalışma, 1956'dan 2023'e kadar Sahra altı Afrika'daki darbelerin nedenlerini siyasi istikrarsızlık, ekonomik sıkıntı, neopatrimonyalizm ve yeni sömürgeciliğin etkisi gibi faktör çerçevesinde değerlendirirken, Mali, Nijer, Burkina Faso, Gine ve Sudan'daki darbeleri spesifik örnek olarak incelenmekte ve darbeye götüren koşullar ile darbelerin sonuçları ayrıntılı olarak masaya yatırılmaktadır. Çalışma, darbe olan ülkelerdeki hükümetlerin, ülkedeki sosyal mutabakatı sürdürmek ve askeri darbelerin oluşumunu engellemek için, ekonomik ve politik zorlukları ciddi bir şekilde ele almasına ihtiyaç olduğunu vurgulayarak sona ermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Darbe, Afrika, Neopatrimonyalizm, Neokolonyalizm, Sahra altı Afrika.

Abstract

This study is a comparative study of past and present coups in Africa. The role of the military in protecting the country and the potential security risks it poses to their own governments are discussed. The study analyzes the roots of coups in sub-Saharan Africa from 1956 to 2023, examining factors such as political instability, economic hardship, and the impact of neopatrimonialism and neocolonialism. In addition, specific coups in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Sudan are examined and the circumstances and consequences of these events are analyzed in detail. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for governments to maintain the social contract with citizens and address economic and political challenges to curb the occurrence of military coups.

Keywords: Coups; Africa; Comparative; Neopatrimonialism; Neocolonialism. Mali; Niger; Burkina Faso; Guinea and Sudan

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1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the military has played a crucial role in safeguarding nations from outside dangers. Military institutions, while essential for defending a nation against threats, can also present security risks to their own governments. This is because their capacity to use coercive force creates the potential for the military to use their weapons against the regime that authorized their establishment (Feaver, 1999). The presence of military forces in nations with minimal political oversight has the capacity to worsen civil disputes and undermine political systems. As per the assertions made by Douglass North, John Wallis, and Barry Weingast, societies experiencing a civil war do not possess absolute authority over their armed forces (North et al, 2009). African military institutions have been instrumental in protecting nations from both internal and external threats, including local uprisings. Nevertheless, their actions have led to political administrations becoming destabilized through the orchestration of coup d'états. Military coups, which refer to situations where the military forces or a certain group within them use their coercive power to overturn the highest level of government and take control, have been quite common in African nations after attaining independence (Sampford, 1991). This raises various concerns, including how to comprehend the connection between politics and military coups (Barka and Ncube, 2012).

This paper adds to the discourse by emphasizing that coups d'état represents a continuation of political processes specifically in the context of Africa. It analyses coups in many independent sub-Saharan African states from January 1, 1956, to 2023. It looks at the root causes of coups in the past and present comparatively.

2. COUPS: WHAT ARE THEY AND WHAT CAUSE THEM?

Coups, also known as coup d'états, are sudden and illegal seizures of power by a group, typically within a government or military. They occur when a faction within a country's ruling establishment attempts to overthrow the existing leadership and take control. Coups can happen for several reasons, such as political instability, dissatisfaction with the current regime, power struggles, or the desire to implement ideological changes. A coup d'état might be likened to the unauthorised incursion of soldiers into a town, resulting in the suspension of legal governance. The coup plotters occasionally detain the town's elected or appointed authorities without affording them a fair trial or due process. Successful coup plotters undermine the efforts and safety of parents and guardians, destabilizing society through the use of firearms, which ironically, are funded by taxpayers. Therefore, coups first lack any substantial legitimacy. Studies have indicated that democratically elected governments, which typically have higher legitimacy compared to military governments, can be difficult to overthrow if coup plotters face challenges in finding support within their own ranks due to public concerns about accepting a change in regime (De Bruin, 2018).

Conversely, democratic governments may be more susceptible to overthrow than military juntas due to the lesser degree of scrutiny and supervision placed on military officers in the former (Geddes, 2009). In general, coups in economically disadvantaged subregions, such as West Africa, have a higher probability of being successful due to the presence of less robust political and institutional frameworks (Finer, 2002; Londregan and Poole, 1990). In addition, economic difficulties within a nation can provide a justification for soldiers to initiate a coup, despite the widespread understanding that military regimes have not been more successful than democratically elected governments in addressing a country's economic problems (Johnson et al., 1984; Saaka, 1994; Thompson, 1975). Coup d'état hinder a state's progress towards achieving socioeconomic self-reliance, as Western states and regional institutions often withdraw crucial financial assistance from underdeveloped states that seize power through armed means. Indeed, coups are regressive in this context. It is not always justifiable to approve of the conduct of unruly and arrogant soldiers who want to undermine constitutional governance, using the pretext of liberating their country from perceived incompetence and corruption. In our analysis of coup reasons, we go into the influence of legitimacy theory and the presence of economic and political instability in fostering coup attempts.

As coups d'etat grew more common in the latter part of the 1960s, scholars started to create notable case studies. The following authors appeared in this Journal in 1975: Fischer (1969), Higgott

& Fuglestad (1975), Lewis (1972), and Southall (1975). Additional qualitative research on the military's role in Africa featured in this Journal are Decalo (1973), O'Connell Welch (1967, 1972, 1975). Study in this field has been ongoing since 1989 (Ihonvbere, 1996). Precise case studies, such as the failed coup in Birmingham in 1978 (Kebschull, 1994), offer a wealth of precise and nuanced comparative and quantitative information.

2.1. Neo-patrimonialism

This involves the use of state resources by some organizations to gain the support of the general populace and ultimately overturn a government. Considering the aforementioned, the presence of multiple actors in the local, regional, and international systems is acknowledged as influential actors in various activities, including government overthrows. One group that stands out among these is the military. Neo-patrimonialism, as defined by Christopher Clapham, refers to a system where political and administrative structures are officially based on rational-legal principles, but are characterized by pervasive patrimonial ties. Neo-patrimonialism refers to a system where individuals in positions of power exploit their authority for personal purposes and benefits, rather than adhering to a clear separation between private and public domains. The phrase originally came from Max Weber, who defined it as a regulation established for the governance of administrative and military people (Cooper, 1982)

Hence, state players hold significant importance in the realm of international relations. According to the realists, the state is seen as a unified entity in international relations, acting in a logical and calculated manner, and the scope of global politics is limited (Sabri, 2013). Prominent advocates of neo-patrimonialism in this context include Max Weber, Christopher Clapham, Vanda Walle, Ulf Engel, Mathias Basedau, and others. The African coups that took place in the 1950s have also been analyzed in relation to the concept of neo-patrimonialism. It originates from the phrase patriarchal and is connected to masculine chauvinism. It provided a fundamental description of the political structure that was present in Africa following the conclusion of the patronage system during the Cold War. This idea is based on Weber's model of administration, which includes elements of patrimonial, charismatic, and legal bureaucratic systems. Weber argues that the system is characterized by a patriarchal personal authority rather than rule by institutions. Notable advocates of neo-patrimonialism in this context include Max Weber.

2.2. The Economic Theory

The surge in military expenditure throughout Africa during the 1970s, coupled with widespread corruption within the military and a rise in socioeconomic inequality, created favorable conditions for military coups. When the government has been unable to develop and execute public policy, along with other political and economic deficiencies like sluggish economic growth, pervasive corruption, and the absence of officially recognized democratic institutions, the military has been presented with a favorable chance to oust the current leader (Barka and Ncube, 2019). Houle (2016) also asserts that social and class imbalances contribute to the emergence of coups. The occurrence of coups d'état demonstrates both the immediate and indirect effects of class disparity. When inequality increases, the military junta, in their role as recruiters, have decreased the potential losses associated with alternative choices. According to this concept, inequality generates opportunities and incentives for rebellion. In addition, in countries with significant inequality, the military is more likely to be powerful, and leaders are more willing to use the military to suppress threats from the population (Houle, 2016).

2.3. The Divine Revelation Theory

Political power elites can be categorized into many socio-political and economic ideological frameworks. The rise of African nationalism and the application of Western political paradigms to describe different personality types result in a range of leadership phenomena.

An example of charismatic leadership is demonstrated by the late Kwame Nkrumah, who has a strong personal attraction as the political dictator of his party and nation. Despite any perceived flaws, which critics often highlight, the undeniable influence of charisma, personal magnetism,

demagoguery, or genuine appeal, as exemplified by David Easton, led many Ghanaians to accept these qualities as valid and necessary within the political system (Easton, 1967). Various political leaders, including individuals referred to be agitators and demagogues, negotiators and pacifists, employ a combination of legal-rational arguments that can be categorized as messianic, bogus charismatic, or Fabian democratic. The ideologies of the "new nations" of the Third World can be characterized as variants of charismatic-messianic-mystical personality types. Some notable examples include Mao-Tse-Tung, Sukarno, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Habib Bourguiba, Sekou Toure, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Fidel Castro, and Mahatma Gandhi. Their authority duties were either directly inherited or acquired from displaced systems. It is important comment on the Divine Revelation Theory of General Idi Amin of Uganda, within the framework of the transferability of authority positions and the personal legitimacy linked to the leadership of subsequent regimes. Ogueri maintains that Amin's folksy, unorthodox, and personalized approach to Ugandan politics is both messianic, as if he had a mystical guarantee, and a spectacular demonstration of African nationalism (1976).

When nationalism extends beyond mere religious identity to a genuine assertion of divinity, it can be referred to as the Divine Revelation Theory. This theory is one of the various factors that motivate military coups d'état in Africa. General Idi Amin Dada of Uganda is the prime example of this ideology in contemporary African politics. Idi Amin asserts that he is driven by divine revelation in his fresh approach to African politics, as expressed in a newspaper interview: "In early August of this year, I was in Frumoja, a town located in the northern region of Uganda. During the dream, God conveyed to me that in order to have the African population control the economy of my country, I should remove all individuals who are not citizens of our country, as well as those who do not prioritize the interests of Uganda, and send them back to their respective countries. I had that dream at dawn and promptly drove my jeep from Frumoja to Tororo, where I delivered a speech to paratroopers. I informed them that the individuals of Asian descent who were given the opportunity to become citizens of Uganda in 1962 but declined would be required to depart from the nation" (Ogueri, 1976).

2.4. The Failing Democracy Theory

Practically every African nation is confronted with the formidable challenge of implementing or redefining democracy so that it is more effective and responsive. A substantial body of academic literature has examined the shortcomings and stumbling paths of democratic implementation in Africa over time (Awolowo, 1985; Ake, 2003; Hounnikpo, 2006; Collier, 2009; Omotola, 2009; Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013; Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2014; Omotola, 2021). Indeed, Ake (2003) articulated the type of democracy that is most appropriate for the African continent. He believed that this would constitute a democracy distinguished by the subsequent attributes:

- a. A democratic system wherein individuals possess genuine authority in decision-making beyond the mere formality of electoral selection.
- b. A socialist system that prioritizes tangible political, social, and economic entitlements, in contrast to a liberal system that emphasizes intangible political liberties.
- c. A democratic system that prioritizes collective rights to the same extent as individual rights.
- d. Lastly, an incorporation democracy (Ake, 2003:132).

In addition to these presumptions, it is crucial to assert that the fundamental obstacles confronting democracy in Africa originate from the absence of fundamental democratic orientation among the majority of African societies and their leaders, with some having never voluntarily adopted democracy. Certain African nations, particularly those in North Africa such as Libya, were compelled to adopt democratic systems. Others underwent democratization in order to qualify for foreign loans and other forms of development assistance. As a result, their democratic attitudes are influenced. Democratic attitudes comprise the fundamental dispositions of the state and the populace. In addition to determining the efficacy of democratic institutions, it also improves it. Indeed, democratic survival and growth are energized and the potential for a viral democracy is increased when societal values

align with democratic values. When democratic values are harmonized with domestic value systems, conditions are created that enable democratic processes to be retooled and substantially developed from within, thereby providing more opportunities for the people to realize their individual and collective aspirations for a better society. These values, according to Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2012), are inherent in individuals and provide sustenance for the practice. In the majority of contemporary African democracies, institutions would function as distinct entities from the populace in its absence (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2012). Consequently, this phenomenon exposes democracy and the state to an ongoing conflict, which, in certain instances, can culminate in the downfall of a democratically elected government.

Therefore, retooling democracy in Africa necessitates complete citizen proprietorship of the institution's processes, resources, and means. In the political sphere, how and what prevails will be determined by the people. Support for and adherence to state policies and programs would be motivated by a sense of "we" at this time. Given the all-encompassing nature of development and the fact that humanity is both the object and subject of it, a sense of communality would motivate the people to work toward a better society as a collective. This deficiency is notably pervasive in numerous African states and has significantly contributed to the widespread disillusionment. For the sake of development, it is critical that African states recognize this, recalibrate, and reintegrate domestic democratic standards into modern governance structures.

The aforementioned elements, namely political instability, neo-patrimonialism, the divine relation, and economic issues, and failing democracy were derived from existing theories on military coups d'état. This is accomplished through a thorough analysis of the concepts in these theories and a comparison with information on actual coups d'état in various nations. This study aims to further the knowledge of the intricate dynamics that contribute to political unrest in the continent and military coups d'état by integrating them into the theoretical framework. This method seeks to address the existing gaps in theoretical explanations and provide a comprehensive view on the complex nature of coups d'état in Africa.

3. COUP IN THE PAST

Patrick J. McGowan (2003) found that between 1956 and 2001, about 188 attempted military coups were witnessed, with a success rate of 43%. During the first thirty years of independent Africa, the continent had an average of almost twenty successful coups every decade as mentioned by Khisa and Day (2020). Additional analyses of the data support this trend, revealing that throughout the initial twenty years of independence, the continent witnessed around forty effective coups (Meredith 2014: 608). Between 1960 and 1990, there were a minimum of twenty-two successful coups per decade, totalling more than seventy from 1956 to 1990. By 2012, over one-third of African states were governed by military regimes, and the continent had witnessed 88 accomplished coups in 33 states (Souaré 2014: 75; Young 2012: 145).

Benin experienced five accomplished coups within the first decade of gaining independence, characterized by a frequent turnover of power among military personnel (Reid 2012: 154). By the 1980s, the majority of African countries had undergone at least one accomplished coup, with certain countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria having six coups each. After deposing civilian leaders, military personnel began overthrowing each other through countercoups, palace coups, and "coups of descending order" by junior officers. This occurred in Burkina Faso and Ghana, where senior officers who ousted the current rulers were later replaced by dissatisfied junior officers. The cycle continued as these junior officers succumbed to the extravagant abuse of power and were subsequently replaced (Schraeder 2003: 204). Botswana, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa were the only countries that came out of this time without harm. The democratization wave reached the continent in the late 1980s, leading to the military appearing to retreat to their barracks. However, this pattern was also linked to a rise in violent conflicts in Africa, leading to an increase in coups, rebellions, and cross-border proxy conflicts in the 1990s (Tamm 2016; Day 2015).

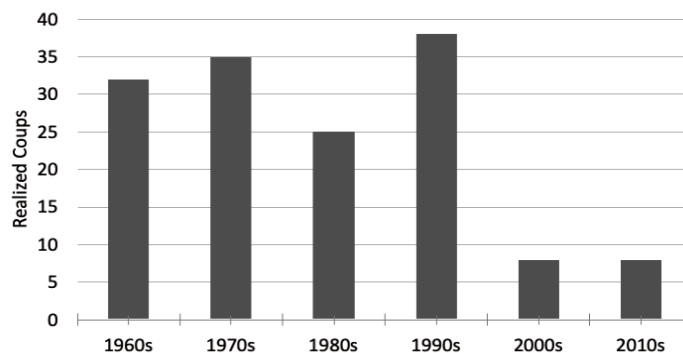
Amidst the political landscape that followed independence, the initial surge of coups occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, post-independence liberation leaders whose political and ideological positions were in opposition to the interests of key colonial powers were deposed. This was further compounded by the leaders' inability to fulfil the economic and developmental ambitions of the citizens. The actions of senior military officers were influenced by an array of factors, including the advent of one-party states and dictatorships and the intense superpower competition that characterized the Cold War (Schraeder 2003).

In general, these coups were violent, resulting in the assassinations of twelve African leaders, extensive violations of human rights, especially in West Africa, and extrajudicial executions. Certain coups were lauded for putting an end to the statism of one party and lifelong governments. The initial surge ultimately led to the initial reorganization of the political environment in Africa following its independence.

A fresh wave of coups surfaced between 1990 and 2001 in response to the failure of African leaders, predominantly military, in the 1980s to fulfill their pledges, embrace democracy, and address the socioeconomic requirements of their citizens. While motivated similarly to the initial wave, this one was predominantly spearheaded by mid-level military officers who justified their exploits as a response to economic mismanagement. Conversely, this surge in affairs constituted a mere 14% of leader demises and was distinguished by a relatively substantial decline in the extent of human rights violations linked to coups. However, it posed a significant risk to the tenure security of numerous African leaders and jeopardized the progress of democracy across the continent (Khisa and Day, 2020).

As a consequence, by the tail end of the decade, regional and continental standards had become more stringent, leading to the Algiers decision regarding unconstitutional government transitions and the subsequent ratification of the Lomé Declaration in 2000. The former prohibited coup-makers from participating in summits of the Organisation of African Unity, whereas the latter issued a stance condemning unconstitutional changes of government (UCGs) and declared a policy of zero tolerance towards coups. As a result of these responses and the subsequent spread of democracy, the number of coups was drastically reduced, bringing an end to the second phase (Souaré, 2014).

Graph 1



A graph demonstrating the frequency of coups in the continent.

3.1 Why Those Coups

Despite the inherent challenge of overstating the gravity of the coup return in Africa, certain observers have succeeded in doing so. The Wall Street Journal reported, in the wake of the October coup in Sudan, that the frequency of military coups has reached its highest level since the decolonization era (Khisa and Day, 2020). The departure of 2021 from recent history has been sufficiently dramatic, albeit exaggerated, to warrant comparison to the independence era. The Economist stated more precisely that there have been more coups in 2021 than in the preceding five years combined (Barka and Ncube, 2019). A data analysis by Barka and Ncube reveals more than 3 decades after independence a great number of effective coup attempts in Africa was witnessed

especially since 1999, and the greatest number of attempted coups since 1991. Even more significantly, the victims of the coups have not followed any particular pattern. These occurrences have been documented in the context of leadership vacuums, youthful and long-established regimes, nations transitioning to and from democracy, those undergoing ongoing insurgencies, and those experiencing relative peace. The fact that this high number of coups occurred in 2021 within the framework of the AU UCG, which has sought to dissuade coups and other unlawful seizures of power since 1997, is perhaps even more intriguing (Barka and Ncube, 2019)

Engaging in a military takeover is a perilous endeavor. It is filled with significant outcomes. As long as there is a possibility of success, the individuals who start something new will continue to play a crucial role in any revolutionary plan. Empirical evidence demonstrates that, with a few notable exceptions, such as General Joseph Ankrah of Ghana, General Houari Boumediene in Algeria, and Lt-Colonel Sangoule Lamizana in Upper Volta, the individuals who orchestrate coups d'état are typically selected from the younger members and mid-level officers of the military. The term "young" refers to individuals who are young in both age and rank, specifically ranging from Second Lieutenants to Majors, and in some cases, Lieutenant Colonels. Senior military leaders who advanced in rank from the erstwhile West African Frontier Force, the King's Rifles of East Africa, and the renowned French Legionaries, deliberated for an extended period on a few specific aspects of promotion. Consequently, when reaching significant levels like as Colonel, Brigadier, and General, they often became old, traditional, and even reactionary.

The militaristic side of nationalism, which gained strength from the early days of public addresses at "freedom squares," cannot be attributed to a single motivation. Nationalist leaders were often incarcerated for their incendiary rhetoric. The act of imprisoning greatly stirred up their supporters. As a result, the intensity of nationalist agitation escalated, starting from harmless campaigns for village elections and culminating in the disruptive aftermath of coups d'état and civil wars. There must be more psychological factors contributing to such a dramatic purge, beyond just a simple change in What are the motivations behind military rule in Africa? What are the main causes of these perplexing experiences that often leave government officials in a state no better than when they started. The prominent factors encompass. I. Legitimate reasons for a change in government, II. Violation of the constitution by civil political elites, III. Excessive spending IV. Sluggish progress, V. Tribalism and ethnocentrism, VI. Influence of foreign ideologies, 7. Comparison of capitalist and socialist communist economic systems. Chapter VIII: The Spread of Coups IX. Ambition for authority and renown, X. Unfavorable terms of employment, XI. Absence of military alliances, departure of foreign military officers. 12. Traditional African family lifestyle characterized by a broad kinship system.

3.2. Why These Coups

The Sahel region of Africa has faced a multitude of significant economic, political, and social challenges. From 2018 to 2022, the increasing occurrence of military coups has highlighted the possibility of a leadership crisis in addressing economic and social problems, terrorist activities, and extremism of all kinds. This part of the paper provides a detailed analysis of the six military overthrows that occurred over this time period of time. "These coups" there refers to the coups in very recent time.

Under the leadership of Colonel Assimi Goita, the Malian soldiers capitalized on the general population's discontent with the allegedly altered parliamentary elections and the government's failure to maintain order and safeguard the civilian population from frequent assaults by local armed groups and Islamic extremists. President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita highlighted the numerous shortcomings of the government, encompassing issues such as corruption and instability. Consequently, following the military coup, a number of Malians expressed their joy over the August 200 government seizure (Dion and Sany, 2021). In the month of May 2021, the nation of Mali's military detained the interim civilian President Ndaw and the prime minister, both of whom had been appointed under military supervision, nine months after the August 2020 coup. Goita asserted that the cabinet established by the civilian leaders breached the provisions of Mali's transition charter and appointed himself as the president of

Mali. The citizens of Mali perceived the situation as a conflict between those who held positions of authority. A study conducted by Afrobarometer in 2021 revealed that 75% of the population in Mali has a preference for democracy. Although the general public is open to the idea of the military taking control of the government because of their reputation for being free from corruption, there are worries among civil society groups and the international world regarding the military's unclear strategy for transitioning to a democratic system. The military, under the leadership of Goita, initially suggested a February 2022 timeline for the restoration of democracy, but this was later changed to 2026. The junta has been compelled to declare a 24-month period of transition for holding elections because to the pressure exerted by regional organizations and the international community.

In March 2021, a failed insurrection occurred in Niger. The intended military overthrow was motivated by the tensions in the country that arose from a presidential electoral run-off in February 2021. The incumbent president first refused to accept the result but was subsequently convinced to give up power and make history as the first non-military president to peacefully transfer control to another individual (France 24, 2021a). France 24 (2021b) reported that Mohamed Bazoum received 55.75% of the votes, while the current president Mahamane Ousmane received 44.25%. Nevertheless, Ousmane asserted that he had secured victory in the election with a margin of 50.30%. Subsequently, he challenged the electoral result at the constitutional court, but his petition was dismissed. Shortly before the presidential inauguration, there was a coup attempt aimed at undermining the newly elected president. A fight with terrorist militants in western Niger resulted in the death of approximately 137 individuals (The Defence Post, 2021). The African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Algeria denounced the attempted military coup. The Algerian Foreign Affairs Ministry affirms its unwavering backing for the safeguarding of stability and prosperity for the people of Niger, with whom it shares longstanding relations rooted in friendship, cooperation, solidarity, and good neighbourliness (Maurouf-Araibi, 2021). Niger's battle against terrorism and interethnic violence created a significant apprehension of political instability. The occurrence of any kind of unrest in Niger would exacerbate the existing political upheaval and security crises that has afflicted the Sahel area (Akinola & Makombe, 2024).

The Sahel region witnessed its third coup in Chad. In April 2021, President Idriss Deby of Chad, who had held power for more than three decades, was slain in combat. A temporary president, General Mahamat Idriss Deby, was appointed by the military. Chadians initiated protests in response to this action, and various non-governmental organizations, including a diverse group of political leaders, labelled it as a 'military coup d'état' (Debos, 2021). The oppressive response by security forces, resulting in the deaths of nine civilians, heightened the level of anxiety. Chad is a nation with a strong military presence and a political landscape characterized by uprisings and the violation of human rights (Debos, 2021). The insecurity in the country is believed to be caused by the increased military presence in the Sahel region and the involvement of France, its former colonial power. French interventions, despite their military success, were unable to build the required level of state legitimacy needed to secure long-lasting peace and political stability. This was highlighted in an interview with a Professor of African Studies in April 2022 in the United States. France's support for African political leaders diminished their motivation to govern in a way that prioritizes the needs of marginalized populations and promotes the development of the state. Furthermore, it deprives individuals of their suffrage and their ability to run for political office. Foreign powers, especially France, hindered the re-establishment of competent civilian administration in Chad by militarizing the country (Brachet, 2022).

In September 2021, Guinea had the spillover effect of a series of coups, resulting in the removal of President Alpha Condé by the military, led by Special Forces commander Mamady Doumbouya. Paradoxically, Colonel Doumbouya proclaimed the coup as the people's purpose and a righteous intervention (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2021). The military coup was executed based on the belief that President Condé was engaging in autocratic behavior by attempting to modify the constitution in order to serve a third term, resulting in the erosion of democratic principles.

Furthermore, the economy had been poorly administered, resulting in subpar service delivery, as evidenced by the state of disrepair of roads and hospitals. Based on the Afrobarometer survey, a majority of 63% of Guineans expressed the belief that corruption has escalated from 2019 to 2020 (Keulder, 2021). Guinea has not successfully completed the process of solidifying its democratic transition, as demonstrated by the occurrence of the third military coup d'état since gaining independence in 1958. The 2021 coup d'état in Guinea generated widespread jubilation, as it reinforced the military's stance of being a champion of democracy and a defender of the vulnerable population (Interview, professor, April 2022, Conakry). Despite being condemned by the international world, particularly ECOWAS, which even imposed sanctions on the military officers responsible for the coup d'état (Sakor et al., 2021), this action was carried out without any consideration.

In October 2021, the military, led by General Abdel Fattah Burhan, ousted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and removed civilian Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. The military justified their actions by citing political infighting and a lack of commitment to democratization. The Sudanese population expressed their disapproval of this action through civil resistance actions shortly after the coup, demanding the restoration of the civilian-led government (Akinfenwa, 2021). Following several weeks following the coup, the military succumbed to both internal and international pressure. Despite the reinstatement of the prime minister, the streets of the city, Khartoum, remained crowded with demonstrators. As depicted previously, African nations have experienced circumstances that foster an environment conducive to the occurrence of military coups. These conditions encompass factors such as poverty and weak economic performance, suppression of individual liberties, violations of democratic principles, and inadequate provision of public services. Frequently, it has been observed that when a country experiences one coup, it is an indication that other coups are likely to follow. Figure 1 provides evidence supporting this idea. Although popular uprisings are considered genuine and driven by the people, their ultimate outcome is typically contingent upon the military's decision-making process (Akinola & Makombe, 2024).

3.3 Neocolonialism

The concept of neocolonialism originated when the initial cohort of political leaders in contemporary African nations, such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, grappled with the paradoxes that arose after gaining independence. These African leaders came to the realization that they possessed political authority over their states, but lacked economic power, even after gaining independence from the colonizers. Alex Quaison-Sackey, the former Foreign Minister of Ghana, is recognized for popularizing the term 'neocolonialism' during a United Nations General Assembly meeting in 1958. He defines neocolonialism as the act of granting a form of independence to a country, while secretly intending to make it a client-state and exert control over it through means other than politics. In other words, neocolonialism refers to the transfer of political authority from European colonizers to African leaders, as well as the continued foreign control of African economies through other methods. According to Kwame Nkrumah, neocolonialism is characterized by the situation when a supposedly independent state nonetheless remains under the influence and control of a foreign power, despite having the appearance of international sovereignty. The economic structure and political policy of the country are actually influenced by external forces (Nkrumah, 1965).

Neocolonialism is evident in the manner in which former colonizers, like as France and Britain, have subverted Africa's political stability by orchestrating coups. It is widely known that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) received assistance from Britain to provide financial support, plan, and direct the coup of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. This action was taken because they perceived him as the most significant threat to their interests (Quist Adade, 2016). Moreover, it is claimed that the previous colonizers have connections to numerous political executions in Africa. France has faced allegations of involvement in the assassination of at least 22 African presidents, including Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, since 1963 (Chiwanza, 2019).

Although the concept of neocolonialism has been useful in analyzing various political and socioeconomic problems, such as coups in contemporary Africa, there have been numerous efforts to undermine the word since its introduction. In 1964, Alex Douglas-Home, a former British Foreign

Secretary, asserted that the word neocolonialism has no validity in Britain's political lexicon (Uzoigwe, 2019). Neocolonialism is often linked to obsolete and crude versions of Marxism and dependence theory. It is also associated with African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Robert Mugabe, who have been criticized as 'tyrants' due to their uncompromising actions (Langan, 2018). Neocolonialism is extensively employed in African, British, and other political discussions due to its relevance in comprehending contemporary Africa and certain other societies (Uzoigwe, 2019).

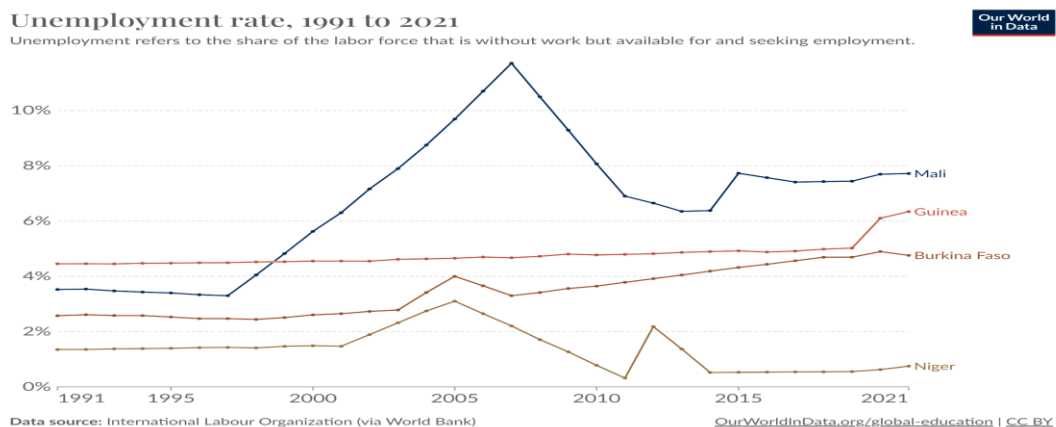
Considering the enduring connection between foreign powers and instabilities in Africa, it is imperative to acknowledge the participation of both domestic and international entities in the present surge of military coups in Africa. In September 2021, reports emerged regarding Mali's present military regime's decision to enlist the services of Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group. This group has faced allegations of committing severe human rights violations in Africa. The primary inquiry that emerged from this news was if the Russian mercenaries and/or any other foreign factions played a role in the coup that overthrew Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in 2020.

The concept of neocolonialism provides valuable insights into the collaboration between foreign and domestic entities in instigating military coups in Africa, among other phenomena. The majority of sub-Saharan African countries can still be categorized as neocolonial as they rely extensively on external assistance, such as military and economic aid, to sustain themselves. In this context, foreign powers can easily exacerbate political and socioeconomic issues, such as orchestrating coups in sub-Saharan Africa, if it serves their own goals.

The below mentioned here a based on the findings and categorisation informed by sources across different papers and research done on the subject matter. These factors are internal impact which are largely economic, political instability, external impacts and climate change.

3.4. Economic Factors

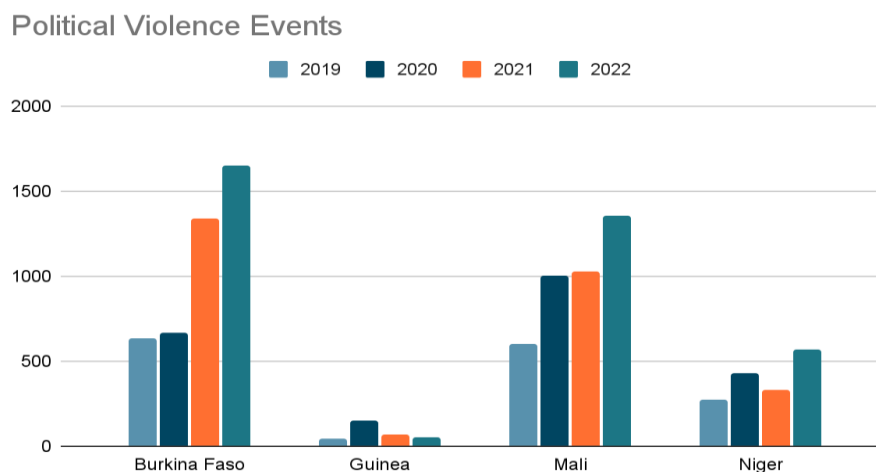
The World Bank, (2016a) estimates that over 40 percent of Burkina Faso's citizenry falls below the poverty threshold, placing the nation at the 184th position out of 191 nations included in the UNDP HDI report. Niger's agricultural sector contributes 40 percent of the country's GDP. It is projected that by 2023, 44.1 percent of the population will be living in extreme poverty. The increase in the number of people living in extreme poverty is a consequence of rising inflation and negative per capita growth (The World Bank, 2017a). The confluence of the pandemic's impact and the security situation in Mali has resulted in an escalation of extreme poverty in 2021. In 2022, there was a significant increase in extreme poverty, with 90 percent of the country's impoverished population concentrated in the rural areas of the south (The World Bank, 2016b). Guinea's budget heavily relies on arable land, energy possibilities, and natural resources. Given that the agriculture business employs the bulk of the workforce and generates income for 57 percent of 29 households in rural areas, it has a substantial impact on poverty reduction (The World Bank, 2017b).



(Source: OurWorldInData, 2023)

Despite experiencing consistent economic development over the past twenty years, several West African countries continue to face significant challenges in reducing unemployment rates. Self-employment is prevalent in Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Niger. The percentage of [insert specific variable] in Burkina Faso is 85%, in Guinea it is 87%, and in Niger it is 90% (Makanga and Msafiri, 2020, 1-6). Based on Afrobarometer surveys done in 2016/2018, 2011/2013, and 2014/2015, it was found that the general public held the belief that the government's management of unemployment was inadequate. This sentiment was particularly strong in Guinea, where 90 percent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the government's handling of job insecurity. According to Makanga and Msafiri (2020, 9), unemployment was considered the primary concern that their government needed to tackle. According to the 2016–2018 survey, the unemployment rate in Burkina Faso was 62 percent, while in Niger it was 60 percent, in Mali it was 46 percent, and in Guinea it was 48 percent (Makanga and Msafiri, 2020: 4). Given that a large proportion of people in West African countries work in informal industries and are not counted in official unemployment statistics (AUC/OECD, 2018: 198), it can be challenging to accurately determine the actual trend from data sets such as Figure 6. Unemployment disproportionately affects young individuals, who are more inclined to pursue employment in the informal sector. This is evident in Mali, where 94 percent of the workforce is engaged in informal sector labour. The area experiences a brain drain as young, educated individuals often depart in pursuit of career opportunities (AUC/OECD, 2018).

Graph 2



The Sahel region has experienced prolonged periods of violence. The international world mostly attributes the majority of the violence to Jama'at Nasral-Islam wal Muslimi (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), while government military and community-based militias also contribute to violent attacks. Burkina Faso has emerged as a new conflict hotspot, surpassing Mali, with a twofold increase in organised political violent incidents in 2021 compared to the previous year. The key catalyst behind the escalating violence is JNIM, which has significantly intensified its operations throughout the nation (ACLED, 2022). The escalation of clashes between government forces and extremist organisations, rebel groups, and local militias is leading to more frequent and brutal incidents. These conflicts largely impact border and rural areas, although there are also instances of cross-border conflicts. Typically, neighbourhood strongmen, religious authorities, and state authorities employ these groups as their own military forces to resolve conflicts related to resource allocation or to strengthen their authority. The conflicts in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali are having a particularly significant impact. The Islamist group JNIM is a notable transnational entity that carries out assaults in all three nations. Violent occurrences have occurred both within the cities and in the surrounding areas.

These three countries share a fundamental characteristic: they are all grappling with substantial Islamist insurgencies, resulting in comparable patterns of political violence. In 2012,

militant factions engaged in territorial disputes in Mali, with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine, and the MNLA making swift progress. These occurrences cease when restrictions are imposed on areas that challenge the authority of Jihadist organisations. These areas replace true city rule and are used to suppress the civilian population and acquire valuable resources (OECD, 2023:19-21). The incidence of organised violence in Burkina Faso witnessed a significant surge of almost 80 percent, with the number of fatalities rising from around 1500 in 2021 to nearly 2600 in 2022. In Mali, the level of violence has escalated significantly, with the number of deaths rising from approximately 1500 in 2020 to 3600 in 2022. This increase is attributed to various forms of violence, including state-based violence, non-state violence, and one-sided violence (which refers to the use of armed force by the government or formally organised groups against civilians). Regarding violence, Niger maintained a generally stable situation between 2021 and 2022, with a decrease in the occurrence of one-sided violence.

However, there was an increase in state-sponsored violence due to the increased activities of JNIM in territories adjacent to Burkina Faso (UCDP, 2022). Mali achieves a perfect score of four points on the Conflict Severity Index created by ACLED, while Burkina Faso attains a score of three and Niger obtains a score of two. The four metrics used to assess the intensity of conflicts are fatality rate, level of risk, spread, and disintegration (ACLED, 2021). Guinea had a period of political turmoil characterised by contested elections and associated acts of violence. In October 2020, President Alpha Condé sought re-election for a third term, which led to widespread protests. It has been reported that during these rallies, security personnel allegedly caused the deaths of at least 12 individuals. Condé was officially announced as the victor by the electoral commission, however, Cellou Dalein Diallo, the opposing candidate, disputed the outcome, alleging electoral fraud and calling for protests (Roth, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this research examined the causes of military coups in Africa by comparing historical and contemporary instances of coups across the continent. This paper aimed to broaden the theoretical framework on military coups in the continent by incorporating variables from other works and research. It thoroughly examines all potential causes accountable for the military situation in both the past and present. The text addresses the concept of neocolonialism, which refers to the idea that modern African states have remained economically and militarily weak since gaining independence, making them vulnerable to both domestic and foreign threats. The extensive participation of foreign powers in military coups and political killings in Africa, together with the adoption of neocolonial currencies like the CFA franc by former French colonies in Africa, highlights the enduring presence of neocolonialism. Walter Rodney has contended that the issue of neo-colonialism requires thorough research in order to build a strategy and tactics for African liberation and progress. Further investigation is required to examine the reemergence of military coups in West Africa from the perspective of neocolonialism.

Based on the preceding discussion, it is prudent to conclude that military coups are a continuation of politics through alternative methods. This phenomenon is most noticeable in West Africa, where there is a very high occurrence of military coups in democratic institutions that primarily benefit the political elite. The prevailing comprehension of a political organization in Africa is primarily limited to bureaucratic organizations where political leadership arises through electoral processes. Nevertheless, political leadership can also be attained by military coups. The possession of weapons and authorized use of force by the State enables military personnel to depose and replace Heads of States in power. Coups, therefore, provide a continuation of political strategies through alternative methods, although being typically undesirable in most countries. Governments often facilitate the occurrence of military coups when they disregard established formal institutional structures, such as constitutions and other legal systems that uphold political authority. This phenomenon is primarily observed in West Africa, where dubious political choices, such as extending the duration of presidential mandates and neglecting to ensure sufficient security for the local populace, have contributed to the occurrence of military coups.

The policy conclusion is that governments must faithfully uphold social pacts with citizens, which ought to function as the basis for their standing in Nations. The political elite must be vigilant against reckless behaviors, such as rampant embezzlement of public assets and unconstitutional power grabs, as these foster conditions favorable to military takeovers. West African politicians, specifically, must revise their comprehension of governance and their approach to engaging with the local community in a more pertinent manner in order to mitigate the occurrence of coups in the region.

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