

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

MASTER THESIS

**GEOPOLITICS OF NON-INTEGRATION:
RETHINKING
THE RISE OF MILITARY POPULISM IN
FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICA**

BLAMA KEITA

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASSOC. PROF. ALİ ASLAN**

ISTANBUL, 2024

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

MASTER THESIS

**GEOPOLITICS OF NON-INTEGRATION:
RETHINKING
THE RISE OF MILITARY POPULISM IN
FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICA**

by

BLAMA KEITA

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Political Science and International Relations**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASSOC. PROF. ALİ ASLAN**

ISTANBUL, 2024

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to Certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and International Relations.

Thesis Jury Members

Title - Name Surname

Opinion

Signature

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University

Date of Submission

Seal/Signature

ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname:

Signature:



ÖZ

ENTEGRASYONSUZ JEOPOLİTİĞİ: FRANKOFON BATI AFRİKA'DA ASKERİ POPÜLİZMİN YÜKSELİŞİNİN YENİDEN DÜŞÜNÜLMESİ

Blama, Keita

Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı

Öğrenci Numarası: 224022009

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-2240-2200-9655

Ulusal Tez Merkezi Referans Numarası: 10640414

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Ali Aslan

Temmuz 2024, 89 Sayfa

Son yıllarda popülizmin yükselişi ve Batı'da popülist olarak bilinen liderlerin seçilmesi akademik literatürde büyük ilgi görmüştür. Robert Keohane ve John Ikenberry gibi uluslararası ilişkiler akademisyenleri, bu popülist liderliğin yükselişinin Soğuk Savaş'tan bu yana küresel olarak değer verilen liberal uluslararası düzen (LUD) üzerindeki etkilerini sorgulamışlardır. Ancak, Batı Afrika'da son zamanlarda meydana gelen askeri darbeler ve bölgenin siyasi seyrindeki yeni yüzlere daha az dikkat çekilmiştir. Burkina Faso, Gine, Mali ve Nijer son üç yılda en az bir kez darbe yaşamış ve bu antidemokratik iktidar ele geçirme eylemleri halk tarafından büyük ölçüde desteklenmiştir. Bu araştırma, Batı Afrika'daki bu darbelerin kök nedenlerini keşfetmeyi amaçlayarak temel bir soruyu ele almaktadır: Frankofon Batı Afrika'da neden askeri darbeler (askeri popülizm) artış göstermektedir? Çalışma, bağımlı değişkeni olan askeri popülizmin artışı ile bağımsız değişkeni olan LUD'a güvensizlik arasındaki bağlantıyı kurarak bu soruya yanıt aramaktadır. Batı Afrika'daki darbe vakalarını inceleyen araştırmacılar genellikle liderlik tarzları ve sosyoekonomik zorluklar gibi içsel değişkenlere odaklanmışlardır. Bu içsel değişkenlerin önemini kabul etmekle birlikte, bu çalışma, son Batı Afrika darbelerinin küresel popülizm yükselişiyle iç içe geçtiğini ve kısmen artan anti-institüsyonel duygular ve liberal uluslararası düzene yönelik büyüyen güvensizlikle motive olduğunu savunmaktadır. Keşif amaçlı bir vaka çalışması yaklaşımı benimseyen tez, seçilen vakaların çeşitli konuşmalarını ve çok taraflı ve ikili belgelerini analiz etmektedir. Bulgular, Afrika'da

küresel popülizm ve askeri darbeler üzerine büyüyen tartışmalara katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Askeri Darbeler, Askeri Popülizm, Batı Afrika, Liberal Uluslararası Düzen, Popülizm.



ABSTRACT

GEOPOLITICS OF NON-INTEGRATION: RETHINKING THE RISE OF MILITARY POPULISM IN FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICA

Blama, Keita

MA in Political Science and International Relations

Student ID: 224022009

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-2240-2200-9655

National Thesis Center Reference Number: 10640414

Thesis Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Ali Aslan

July 2024, 89 Pages

The recent rise of populism and the election of perceived populist leaders in the West have gained significant attention in academic literature. International relations scholars, such as Robert Keohane and John Ikenberry, have questioned the implications of this rise of populist leadership on the liberal international order (LIO), an order cherished globally since the Cold War. However, less focus has been drawn to the recent surge of military coups in West Africa and the emergence of new faces in the region's political trajectory. Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger have all recently experienced at least one coup d'état in the past three years, with significant public support for these undemocratic seizures of power. This study thus seeks to explore the root cause of these coups by addressing the fundamental question: Why have military coups (military populism) been on the rise in Francophone West Africa? The study addresses this question by establishing a link between its dependent variable, the increase in military populism, and its independent variable, mistrust in the LIO. Researchers who have studied coup cases in West Africa have generally focused on domestic variables, including leadership styles and socioeconomic challenges, as the principal causes of these actions. While recognizing the importance of these domestic variables, this study argues that the recent West African coups are intertwined with the global rise of populism, motivated partly by escalating anti-institutional sentiment and growing mistrust in the liberal international order.

Drawing on an exploratory case study approach, the thesis analyzes various speeches and multilateral and bilateral documents of the selected cases. The findings aim to contribute to the growing debate on the global rise of populism and military coups in Africa.

Keywords: Liberal International Order; Military Coups; Military Populism; Populism; West Africa.



DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late father and hero, Elhadj Musa Keita. May your gentle soul continue to rest in perpetual peace. Your sacrifice for humanity has never been forgotten, as you left behind a structure and legacy that continues to inspire us.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

What a journey it has been! I am thankful, first of all, to the Almighty, the Omniscient, for His divine blessings and for entrusting me with the strength to complete this thesis, even as I continue with the coursework for my second Master's degree program at Tampere University.

My greatest gratitude and appreciation go to my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Ali Aslan, for his invaluable guidance and academic advice throughout this journey. His insights and expertise have greatly contributed to the completion of this thesis. Moreover, I am profoundly thankful to him for inspiring my passion for international relations theories.

I would equally like to extend my sincere appreciation to all the professors in the IHU Graduate School of Politics and International Relations, especially Professor Erik Ringmar, for their scholarly guidance. What would non-Western international relations theories be without the profound insights of Professor Erik?

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my beloved mother, Maiba Konneh, whose constant prayers and encouragement have been a source of strength. My heartfelt thanks also go to my brothers, sisters, and the entire family for their patience and support throughout this long journey.

Thank you all for being a part of this incredible journey and for helping me reach this significant milestone. Your presence in my life has made all the difference.

Blama Keita
ISTANBUL, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ÖZ.....	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
DEDICATION.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER I BACKGROUND	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Research Problem.....	4
1.3. Research Questions and Variables	6
1.3.1. Variable	6
1.4. Aims and Objectives	7
1.5. Research Significance	8
1.6. Organization and Scope.....	9
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1. Introduction	11
2.2. The Liberal Order/Democracy: Where is it from?	11
2.3. Liberalism as the Order	14
2.4. Conceptualizing Populism.....	15
2.4.1. Populism as an Ideology.....	15
2.4.2. Populism as Political Logic	17
2.4.3. Populism as a Discourse	18
2.4.4. Populism as an Organization Technic	18
2.4.5. Military Populism: The Possible 5 th ?	19
2.5. Populism: A New Contender to the LIO?	21
2.6. Related Studies on the Causes of Military Coups in West Africa.....	24
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	29
3.1. Introduction	29
3.2. Research Method and Design.....	29
3.3. Data Collection and Analysis	31

CHAPTER IV POLITICS IN UNIFORM: AN OVERVIEW OF COUPS IN THE CASE STUDY COUNTRIES.....	33
4.1. Introduction	33
4.2. Colonial Era and Struggle for Independence	34
4.3. Post-Independence Period: Era of Coups	36
4.3.1. The Case of Guinea	38
4.3.2. The Case of Mali	39
4.3.3. The Case of Burkina Faso	41
4.3.4. The Case of Niger.....	47
4.4. Chapter Conclusion	52
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.....	54
5.1. Introduction	54
5.2. The Populist Nature of the Recent Coups in West Africa.....	55
5.2.1. The Anti-Establishment Sentiment	59
5.2.2. Identified Factors Influencing Anti-Establishment Sentiments	60
5.3. Growing Mistrust in the Liberal Order in West Africa	63
5.4. France: The Tarnished Image of the LIO in West Africa	67
5.5. ECOWAS and the Liberal Values it Represents	70
5.6. Alliance of Sahel States.....	71
5.7. Chapter Summary.....	75
CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION.....	76
6.1. Summary	76
6.2. Implications for Policy and Practice	77
6.3. Future Research Directions	78
REFERENCES.....	79
APPENDIXES	88
APPENDIX A	88
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	89

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1. Summary of Successful Military Coups in the Case Study States of This Study (Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger) 51

Table 5.1. Adopted by the Author Based on the Various Speeches of the Coup Leaders 58



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1. A Bar Graph Showing the Number of Coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Guinea Since Independence	37
Figure 5.1. Top - Down Populism Diagram	56
Figure 5.2. Protesters in Niger Holding the Russian Flag and A Banner that Says: “France, get out of Africa.”	82
Figure A.1. A Supporter Holding A Placard That Reads: “Down with ECOWAS, Long Live ASS/AES”	88
Figure A.2. A Map Showing the ECOWAS Suspended Countries, Including Niger as of 2024	88



LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

LIO	Liberal International Order
EU	European Union
USA	United States of America
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West Africa
CMR	Civil-Military Relations
NPP	Nigerien Progressive Party
PDG	Democratic Party of Guinea
CNDD	National Council for Democracy and Development
CNRDRE	National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy
CSP	Council of Popular Salvation
AU	African Union
CNR	National Council for the Revolution
SMC	Supreme Military Council
CFA	Communauté Financière Africaine
ASS/AES	Alliance of Sahel States
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

The future of liberal democracy and the liberal international order (LIO) has recently raised a significant conflicting debate in the aftermath of a string of seismic political happenings that rippled throughout the World. At the core of the discourse, the question remains: Are the heartlands and homes of liberal ideology veering back towards nationalism and isolationism? (Colgan & Keohane, 2017; Mansfield & Rudra, 2021; Ikenberry, 2018). These have puzzled after cornerstones of the LIO have faced unprecedented challenges, ranging from the United Kingdom's resolution to leave the European Union (EU) in the historic Brexit referendum to Donald Trump's selection as the forty-fourth President of the United States (US), the uncommon attack on the US Capitol, and the subsequent withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Accord during the Trump administration.

The recurrent victories of the prescribed populist parties in some of the world's most celebrated liberal countries fold another scholastic puzzle. The triumph of known right-wing populist groups or parties in Italy, Finland, and Sweden demonstrates these parties' rising ascendancy in European politics. As I write this chapter of my thesis, the "right-wing populist Brothers party" has gained the most votes of any single party, making its leader, Giorgia Meloni, the first female prime minister of the country. In more north in both Sweden and Finland, the known populist parties ("Finns Party and Sweden Democrats) secured their highest number of seats in the countries' 2017 and 2023 parliamentary elections (Vollgraaff, 2018). Nonetheless, the described Hungarian and Polish populist parties have maintained their victorious position for nearly two decades. In other European countries, including France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, and

the UK, there is a constant rise in support gained by the described populist parties.¹ This steady increase has raised a more serious concern among scholars of international relations as to whether populist rhetoric will continue to weaken liberal ideas through its anti-elitist and anti-globalization rhetorical forces.

In recent articles, researchers including Keohane and Colgan have analyzed the above phenomenon as a result of an uneven distribution of financial benefits from the rising economic globalization that they backed in their previous debates (Colgan & Keohane, 2017). Consequently, this inequality continues to fuel the rise of populist leaders and has the potential to impact established global institutions. It is thus fair to underscore the need for a closer look at the relationship between the recent rise of military takeover and the scholarly discourse on surging populism's implications on the established regional and international orders. Moreover, there should be comprehensive scholarly scrutiny and policy actions to navigate the evolving dynamics of global politics.

Populism as a concept has always remained vital in the political literature on the decaying relationships between the ruling elite and the common people everywhere. In a more pragmatic and succinct sense, the core of the concept as a political force, discussion, organizational strategy, or ideal flourishes on an anti-institutional sentiment that captures the ruling elites' stance and image as a corrupt or incompetent authority (Muddes, 2004). This creates a binary or duality conflict between the political "elites" and the "common people." In another perspective, the supporters of populist leaders are largely maintained through "discursive or communicative" tactics. That is the particular leader's ability to propagate the incapability of the ruling regime. Moreover, the discursive approach in this sense relies on the rhetorical aspect of a competitive political phenomenon (Taggart, 2018; Rooduijn et al., 2019). As Laclaus (2005) puts it, language and political rhetoric are vital tools in bringing total divergent demands together under one tree, and this demonstrates how populism functions through the creation of a collective identity (Laclau, 2005). Moreover, several scholars

¹ *European populist parties' vote share on the rise, especially on right* | Pew Research Center. (2023, June 1). Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/06/populists-in-europe-especially-those-on-the-right-have-increased-their-vote-shares-in-recent-elections>

have loosely employed the term "military populism" to describe instances of military involvement in politics and their adoption of populist strategies and policies, particularly in regions where democratic norms are still evolving (Cotler, 1970; Winter, 2014).

However, these studies do not fully conceptualize "military populism," especially within the context of recent West African coups and the current scholarly discourse on the impact of populism on the LIO; this leaves a research gap that this thesis aims to contribute to.

Another cluster of studies has equally focused on populism within specific African nations as electoral or civilian-driven political phenomena, often excluding states governed by military leadership (Carbone, 2009; Resnick, 2015; Nyadera & Agwanda, 2019; Mawa, Asiimwe, & Abaho, 2023). For instance, Sishuwa's (2024) recent work provides a chronological overview of African populism, delineating waves of mobilization and their characteristics, primarily from these domestic standpoints. Similarly, Vincent (2018) has explored the decline of democracy to mere majority rule and the allure of populist rhetoric among South African voters, revealing tensions between democratic ideals and actual governance. Cheeseman (2018) has equally covered the rise of populist appeals in various sub-Saharan African states, particularly their intersection with ethnic politics. As discussed above, these studies fail to integrate the broader global themes on the implications of populism on the LIO. Therefore, this thesis seeks to bridge this gap by conceptualizing military populism within the context of the recent coups in West Africa and dissecting its link with the LIO.

Coup dynamics in Africa have been a recurrent concern, prompting extensive scholarly analysis of the various factors that contribute to this political phenomenon (Bienen, 1984). Researchers who have studied these cases have thus greatly focused on the domestic variables in their various case study states. These variables include the leadership styles, colonial legacies, economic factors, and the role of civil society in the weak democracy of the region as the root causes of these coups (Akinola & Makombe, 2024; Chigozie & Oyinmiebi, 202; Chin & Kirkpatrick, 2023). This thesis recognizes these domestic variables; however, it argues that the recent West African coups are significantly different and they are inherently populist. Consequently, they

are intertwined with the global rise of populism, and are, in part, motivated by an escalating anti-institutional sentiment and a growing mistrust in the LIO. This skepticism is constantly shown in the decisions of three (3) of this thesis's case study countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, to recalibrate their relationships with France—a prominent member of numerous international liberal institutions—and to align with nontraditional partners such as Russia, despite prevailing western sanctions on the country.

1.2. Research Problem

Recent research by both populist and liberal scholars has acknowledged the rise of a distinct leadership style—populism—that stands poised to exert significant influence on the LIO, either positively or negatively (Colgan & Keohane, 2017; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Colgan, 2019). However, most of these studies have primarily focused on cases and data from the West, particularly Europe and the United States. Furthermore, populism studies are largely confined to its manifestation within formal campaigns or electoral politics. However, it is critical to recognize that the LIO, which arguably emerged as the dominant global order following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War (Fukuyama, 1989), includes nations outside of the Western sphere; the order equally includes those in the so-called global South. As a result, there is an essential need to research how the current rise of populism is evident in these regions. In this context, this thesis seeks to explore the populist nature of the emerging military regimes and coups in Francophone West Africa.

The African continent has faced more attempted and successful military interventions in its political history than any other continent in modern nation-state history (Falola, 2022). Coups became prevalent in the 1960s, shortly after the independence of many states on the continent. Over the years, Africa has seen over 200 coups, either successful or unsuccessful attempts. Moreover, the West Africa region stands out as the primary hub for coups across sub-Saharan Africa (Suleiman, 2021). Despite comprising only 16 out of the continent's 54 countries, the WestAfrican region has witnessed a significant proportion of coups of the overall documented coups. West African states witnessed about 51.3 percent of the overall African coups during their early years (1960 to 1969). This followed 49.5 percent from 1970 to 1989 and a

striking 53.7 percent from 1990 to 2010. In total, the region has witnessed 104 coups (both successful and failed) out of the 200 recorded coups across Africa (Chigozie & Oyinmiebi, 2022; WorldAtlas, 2023). In the past years, West Africa (Mali, Guinea, Niger, and Burkina Faso) saw another rise in military takeovers. This is inspired by what can be described as "military populism" (Cotler, 1970; Bienen, 1985; Winter, 2014).

These coups raise questions about the underlying mechanism influencing the selected states' political landscape. Moreover, this increase in military interventions has raised significant economic, social, and security concerns in the region (Suleiman & Onapajo, 2022). Scholars and experts thus comment on the root causes of these coups from different vital dimensions. However, this current surge in coups and military interventions is linked to the victimized regimes' failure to promote domestic socioeconomic conditions, establish democratic institutions, and ensure national security (Cheeseman, 2018; Vincent, 2018; Sishuwa, 2024).

As it is further reviewed in the literature review chapter of this study, the existing literature on coups in Africa predominantly focuses on domestic variables. Consequently, it establishes an alternative set of variables that seek to dissect the root of the recent political upheavals in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger. To address this gap, this thesis employs an approach that considers both dimensions.

It argues that the new wave of military coups in West Africa is not merely a reaction to domestic grievances but is deeply entwined with a growing mistrust in the LIO. As seen in global instances such as the Trump election and the infamous Brexit, there is a palpable skepticism towards established institutions and frameworks; there is a growing mistrust in the established LIO. The failure of the LIO to deliver on its promises, particularly in the aftermath of the war, has left a void that populist leaders in every region are attempting to fill. The aspirations for economic and social progress and prosperity, often linked to the post-Cold War era, have not materialized as envisioned, fostering disillusionment among the populace. The local governance structures within these West African nations have also faced growing mistrust, contributing to an interplay of factors that inspire the emergence of military regimes with populist tendencies.

1.3. Research Questions and Variables

Scholars and researchers have conducted considerable studies to systematically understand the root cause of various coups in Africa. These research efforts have encompassed different social sciences disciplines, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the region's political importance. Moreover, the various studies have been critical in shaping our view of the region's unique complexities and digesting possible insights into potential solutions. However, the new military coups have left another policy and research gap. While existing scholarship has explored the impact of populism on Western democracies, there is a distinct limited analysis of the possibility that these trends manifest in West Africa, which is characterized by a different socio-political landscape.

This study thus seeks to contribute to the studies by analyzing the link between the various coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Guinea and the growing mistrust in LIO. To do this, it is vital to commence with the fundamental research questions that guide this thesis:

- Why have military coups (military populism) been on the rise in Francophone West Africa (Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger)?
- What are the relationships between the recent rise of populism and the coups in West Africa?

The following auxiliary question below is equally worth investigating to help ease the examination of the main research questions above:

- How do the coups in Francophone West Africa (Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger) impact the progress and prospects of regional integration actions in the region?

1.3.1. Variable

Although qualitative research typically tackles complex phenomena without depending on direct numerical measures, the notion of “dependent and independent variables” remains practical, especially when seeking correlations or causality within a case study, as in this thesis.

Dependent Variable: The "Rise of Military Coups (Military Populism) in Francophone West Africa." The variable represents the outcome or phenomenon that this study seeks to dissect. Therefore, it represents the occurrences and patterns of military coups in Francophone West Africa.

Independent Variable: "Mistrust in the Liberal International Order" is the independent variable. This variable is presumed to influence or impact the dependent variable. It represents the skepticism and lack of confidence in the global liberal order within the specific context of Francophone West Africa.

1.4. Aims and Objectives

Amid the scholarly debate on the global rise of populism and the hurdles that traditional norms of international alliances confront, it is instrumental to focus on the regional dynamics that equally face these shifts. Francophone West Africa, in particular, has emerged as a critical region where these discourses have found resonance in the shape of the ongoing military coups.

To timely contribute to these efforts, this thesis aims to achieve the following:

- To examine the specific characteristics and dynamics of recent military coups in Francophone West Africa and their alignment with populist rhetoric and strategies.
- To analyze how the coups have affected the involvement of the selected countries with ECOWAS and their commitment to regional integration initiatives.
- To provide research-based policy suggestions aimed at advancing regional integration, and political stability in the region
- To contribute to the scholarly literature on the relationship between populism and LIO during this rapidly shifting international order.

1.5. Research Significance

Each academic research project is unique in terms of its intended purpose. While some studies are primarily focused on providing insights for policy-making, others are more centered on advancing academic knowledge by filling gaps or strengthening existing literature. However, regardless of their explicit orientation, every study inherently possesses elements that are equally significant to the other area. Consequently, I anticipate that the outcomes of this study, while making a significant contribution to academia, will also hold vital relevance for advising regional policymakers and other areas vital to the development of the West African region.

Policy Relevance: As military coups continue to undermine constructed political norms and institutions in Francophone West African states, understanding their root cause and implications for regional integration is vital for policymakers. The findings of this study will offer recommendations for crafting efficient policies that motivate stability and economic development, ultimately aiding in the development of political environments conducive to ECOWAS's goals of regional cooperation.

Academic Contribution: The thesis will contribute to growing scholarly questioning about the rising relationship between populism and the LIO by providing an analysis of the causal link between “military populism” and the growing challenge faced by the LIO.

Economic Development: Regional integration actions are often inspired for their potential to accelerate economic growth through constant inter-trade and cooperation. Comprehending how military populism impacts these initiatives can aid in sustaining economic development in West Africa.

Security Implication: The West African security terrain is deep-rooted, with menaces ranging from terrorism to organized crime. Understanding how political dynamics, especially those associated with “military populism,” influence these issues is vital for assessing potential security risks. This research can thus inform plans and interventions that account for these evolving political contexts. Moreover, the study can contribute to clearer strategies of how international actors, including regional ones like ECOWAS, respond to these security concerns.

1.6. Organization and Scope

This thesis is composed of six elaborate and major chapters; the chapters equally include different subtitles that help in meeting the purpose of each section and the thesis as a whole.

Chapter One introduces this thesis. The chapter sets the stage by providing background information on the study. It covers the study background and significance, the thesis problem, research questions, variables (dependent and independent), aims of the study, and scope and organization.

Chapter Two, titled “Literature Review,” critically reviews the scholarly literature on the rise of electoral populism and its growing competition with the Liberal order. It dissects capitalized concepts like populism and LIO. Moreover, it conceptualizes “military populism” in the Francophone West African context; the chapter equally reviews relevant existing literature on the root cause of the unpredictable military coups in West Africa.

Chapter Three: The proceeding section, chapter three (methodology), outlines the scientific approach used to conduct this study. It chronologically covers the research design, case selection, data collection, sources, and data analysis. Moreover, it details why these methods were chosen to address the research questions or goal, ensuring transparency and replicability of the thesis's findings.

Chapter Four: This chapter gives an overview of the military’s active presence in my case study countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Niger) and equally elaborates on the historical background of civil-military relations in Francophone West Africa, focusing on my selected region.

Chapter Five: This section titled “Discussion and Analysis” covers the discussion of the collected data, and findings in line with the research questions or objectives, interpreting their significance and implications. It synthesizes the data collected, compares it with existing literature, and explores the theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

Chapter Six: This includes the final and concluding section of the study. It summarizes the key discussion and insights gained from the study. Moreover, it reaffirms the significance of the research question, and it serves as a reflection on the entire thesis, providing closure and reinforcing the thesis's contribution to scholarly literature in our field.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter conceptualizes and reviews the existing literature on “populism” as it is generally approached through four vital lenses: ideology, discourse, political and organizational strategy, and covers the contemporary academic discourse on the relationship between the rapid rise of populism and its impacts on the LIO. The chapter thus starts with the conceptualization of “populism” and spans from the theoretical underpinnings to the regional manifestations. It also focuses on the less-explored phenomenon termed "military populism." This will aid in identifying gaps in the literature and placing the core objective of this thesis appropriately within this ongoing discourse. The review equally covers the related studies on the military coups in West Africa and their determined root causes.

2.2. The Liberal Order/Democracy: Where is it from?

Literature on democracy and the LIO has lauded Athenian democracy for its “direct participation,” and many scholars have drawn upon its principles to structure their concepts and theories. However, the Athenian system is also known for playing a significant role in the birth of “populism” as a concept (Vollgraaff, 2018). This goes back to Aristotle’s analysis of the rise of a new political class comprising individuals outside the traditional aristocratic lineage— a shift that was first seen in Athenian politics following the death of Pericles. This new class represented a change in the political structure of the city-state, mostly made up of craftsmen, traders, or proclaimed common people (Lane, 2012: 188-192). This is consistent with the rise of the middle class throughout the Enlightenment era. This later corresponded with the formation of much liberal democratic ideology (Heywood, 2007: 78–79). As this new social and political elite gained prominence, a new terminology appeared in the political lexicon:

demagogue. A term that was used to refer to leaders who exert power over the people by instilling strong, often illogical support (Heywood, 2007: 28).

Many years after Aristotle's analysis, the term appeared in Niccol Machiavelli's works. He covers the tactics that aristocrats use to gain power and proposes a political system in which the people would actively supervise the ruling class as a countermeasure to the dangers of "demagoguery." He suggested different structures. This includes public appeal systems, the appointment of tribunes, and the popular election of officials from the nobles. This pushes the ideal of citizens holding their officials accountable (McCormick, 2001: 304–305). One can see similarities between current liberal democracy and the system that Machiavelli envisioned. However, a significant distinction lies in the purpose of Machiavelli's institutions compared to those of modern LIO. He designed his structures as safeguards against the inherently "dishonest elite," or the "ruling class," whereas contemporary liberal institutions serve as checks and balances both for those in power and for the populace at large (McCormick, 2001: 310).

Today's framework of modern liberal democracy began to take shape with the adoption of Madison's "The Federalist" in 1788. This paper draws on the basics of Locke, Hobbes, and Montesquieu. Like Hobbes, Madison acknowledged the role of self-interest in politics. Echoing Montesquieu's views, he emphasized the necessity of a separation of powers for the legitimacy of the state. Additionally, Madison underscored the paramount importance of safeguarding individual freedoms through a government bound by law and accountable to those whose freedoms it is tasked to uphold (Held, 2014: 70).

As seen in the literature above, many Enlightenment scholars adopted Athens' Direct Democracy, and Montesquieu was famous for being one of them. He argued that today's state structure weakens the appeal of this democratic system (Held, 2014: 70). Montesquieu maintained that direct democracy itself was not flawed; rather, it became less feasible due to evolving state dynamics. He, however, criticized "direct democracy" as unstable, unjust, and prone to intolerance. Madison contended that such a system lacked checks against the tendency to oppress the weaker party or individual deemed objectionable (Madison, 1788: 20). This critique stemmed from the

dominance of majority interests or passions in a direct democracy, which, according to Madison, jeopardized personal security and property rights (Madison, 1788: 20). This apparent paradox underscores a crucial disconnect in democratic theory: while liberal democracy's foundation lies in direct democracy, they are ultimately incompatible. This paradox warrants consideration in analyzing the relationship between LIO and populism.

Madison (1788) equally maintains that minority interest groups have relatively less complex problems that can be addressed in politics. The majority can effectively protest any potentially detrimental goals or viewpoints held by minority groups through the electoral system of voting. A more complex issue, however, is preventing the majority from abusing its power—a phenomenon Madison referred to as the tyranny of the majority. In his argument, a strong system of political representation and a sizable electorate are needed as constitutional protections to oppose this form of tyranny. However, this representational structure cannot entirely prevent elected politicians from falling prey to predatory factionalism. Consequently, Madison urges the formation of a nation-state with a sizable population and territory to reduce such risk. This is the core of the philosopher's ideology and a fundamental feature of liberal democracy: the balance of interests, which guarantees a society in which no party, whether majority or minority, may exercise unbridled power (Madison, 1788).

Another vital turning point in the evolution of liberal democracy has been reached by Mill's works, whose theories still have an enormous effect on contemporary liberal ideas. He expressed similar concerns to Madison about the possible tyranny of the majority. In his work, Mill (1861) contended that when the “people” as a whole are left in charge of administration, there is a constant danger that the most intelligent and competent people would be left out due to the general lack of experience and knowledge. Thus, Mill supported representative democracy, in which people exercise ultimate authority through duly chosen delegates regularly (Mill, 1861: 228).

Like other liberal scholars, Mill was cautious about the bureaucratic apparatus that accompanied liberal democracy, even despite his worries about the possible dangers of popular government. As Tocqueville had done before him, Mill saw the threat of an ever-growing bureaucracy that would penetrate every aspect of society and make

bureaucratic posts the main targets of aspiration (Mill, 1859: 183). Mill argued that a strong democracy was necessary to offset this inclination toward bureaucratic excess. It is noteworthy that Mill distinguished clearly between bureaucracy and democracy (Held, 2014: 84), emphasizing the two separate parts of liberal democracy. This contrast becomes even more evident when one considers Mill's argument that recognition of the unique foundations of efficient government and popular control is necessary to fully grasp their respective benefits (Mill, 1861: 241).

2.3. Liberalism as the Order

Fukuyama proposed in 1989 that the end of the Cold War would herald the rise of liberal democracy to the top of the political hierarchy. According to his hypothesis, all governments would eventually conform to this designated "ideal," indicating the end of ideological evolution and the ultimate stage of Western Liberal Democracy. According to Fukuyama, there are two main doctrinal threats to liberal democracy. First, it was fascism, an ideology or movement that collapsed at the end of World War II. Second, the collapse of Communism with the conclusion of the Cold War demonstrated its incapacity to continue as a workable political philosophy (Fukuyama, 1989—6).

Fukuyama's early post-Cold War argument took a greater turn in "The Future of History." Following a vital change in the world order, Fukuyama (2012) argues that the decline of the middle class is the newest risk to the highly celebrated liberal democracy and is a major factor contributing to the rise of populism. He cautions against the possibility that globalization and more technical improvements may weaken the middle class. Moreover, this will make it harder for a sizable percentage of people living in developed nations to climb the middle-class ladder. Evidence showing stagnation in median salaries in the US during the 1970s lends credence to this concern (Fukuyama, 2012: 8). Furthermore, recent technical advancements have disproportionately benefited society's most educated and competent individuals, further aggravating inequality (Fukuyama, 2012: 8). For example, in 1974 the GDP was 9% of the earnings of the top 1% of workers; by 2007, this percentage had skyrocketed to 23.5% (Fukuyama, 2012: 8). This phenomenon is not exclusive to the US; one percent of the population currently owns more money than the other 99% put

together (Harrington, 2016: 1). These changes have weakened the middle class and increased economic inequality, which may be deeply contributing to “people’s” disenchantment with the state structures.

Political scholars have pointed out numerous kinds of democracy; however, not all guarantee the preservation of basic rights and principles. As Zakaria (1997) puts it, while democracy in general may thrive in some situations, constitutional liberalism often falters. He argues that focusing solely on elections without robust checks and balances can lead to the consolidation of power by authoritarian figures. This can, in turn, create infamous “illiberal” democracies. In these systems, elections justify power but do not truly represent the people. In a similar vein, Diamon (2003) stresses the need to support already-existing democracies and establish democratic values where they are lacking, with an emphasis on restraining populist and illiberal inclinations.

2.4. Conceptualizing Populism

Populism as a theory and concept is vital today in the political scholarly discussion on the decaying relationships between the “ruling elite and the people” everywhere. However, at the center of the notion’s multidimensional debate is its issue of definition. It could be argued that grappling with the conceptualization of “populism” mirrors the complexity of resolving challenging societal issues, commonly referred to as “wicked problems” due to their complex nature involving diverse policymakers (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Webber & Khanmian, 2008). To address this complexity, researchers and the existing political literature have categorized populism into four significant approaches. This categorizes populism as an ideology, political logic, discourse, and organization strategy (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014).

2.4.1. Populism as an Ideology

Mudde (2004) is a leading scholar who conceptualizes populism from an ideological perspective. He dissected the concept as a narrowly touched ideology that pushes “the people” against “the elite.” He offers a minimalist perspective in his works. Moreover, he sees the notion as a “thin-centered” ideology—an ideology that is built on standing up to a specific elite group who are known to be corrupt from the perspective of a

united and moral public. This perspective underscores populism's anti-elitist stance and its inclination towards an "us versus them" narrative. That is the "people" against the "elite or leadership" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013: 205). In the same direction, Kazin (1995) framed the term as a "moralistic form of political conflict."

In his work "The Populist Zeitgeist" (2004), Mudde seeks to contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse surrounding populism within liberal democracies. He aims to cover three things. Firstly, he proposes a novel definition of populism. Secondly, he challenges the prevalent notion of populism as a pathological phenomenon, supporting its normalcy within democratic processes. Thirdly, he offers a critical analysis of the reactions to and explanations of populism, which he terms the "Populist Zeitgeist." Moreover, Mudde recognizes two dominant conceptions of populism at the time of his study. The first conception portrays populism as an emotionally charged and unsophisticated rhetoric that exploits people's fundamental desires. The second conception illustrates populism as a collection of policies aimed to gain immediate support from individuals and potential voters, with little concern for their long-term usefulness to societal upliftment. The essence of populism lies in the link between "the people" and "the elite." Thus, Mudde contends that populism revolves around the dynamics between these two groups, shaping his understanding of the phenomenon (Mudde, 2004).

Mudde's definition of populism has significantly gained traction in comparative studies due to its minimalist and culturally adaptive nature, allowing for broad adoption. However, Moffitt and Tormey (2014: 383) argue that this definition is not without its flaws. One prevalent critique lies in categorizing populism as a "thin-centered ideology." Using the term "ideology" in such a broad manner risks diluting its clarity, potentially turning populism into a catch-all concept. Moreover, unlike conventional ideologies, populism lacks self-identification among adherents. Both scholars note that few individuals would willingly label themselves as populists, likely due to the negative associations attached to it. Additionally, unlike other established ideologies, populism lacks a cohesive global movement and standing philosophical figures, which further confounds it as an ideology.

2.4.2. Populism as Political Logic

The second approach to understanding populism involves viewing it through the lens of political logic, and Laclau's analysis serves as a significant influence within this framework. Drawing from post-Marxist concepts, Laclau (2005) perceives populism not merely as a rhetorical tool or ideological stance but as a "political logic." He places significant emphasis on how a charismatic leader might unify diverse grievances from various social groups, amalgamating them against a common adversary (government). Laclau's conceptualization arguably highlights the populist inclinations of leaders and their keen focus on addressing the concerns of ordinary people, a phenomenon notably observed in recent instances involving coup leaders in West Africa. The language used in populism rhetoric usually oversimplifies the economic, societal, and political issues in the efforts to create a collective identity for the targeted masses. This simplification is thus communicated in protective slogans, less perplexing policy guides, or emotionally engaging stories that touch the story of every audience. The goal of populism and its leadership is to present the simplest vision of the desired change (Canovan, 2005). Consequently, the notion heavily relies on "emotion," as the slogans are meant to appeal to collective emotions like wrath, optimism, or nostalgia. Within such movements, these emotions are purposefully used to evoke strong reactions even in the lowest followers to maintain momentum (Rydgren, 2008).

Laclau has equally incorporated Gramsci's "articulation" notion into his theory, characterizing it as a vast process of interpellation. Individuals are recognized by a signifier that symbolizes their desires, generating a collective identity as an individual band together around common symbols. These signifiers evolve into empty ones due to conflicting demands, losing coherent meaning but gaining authority with increased identification (Laclau, 2005). Laclau thus defined populism as "populist articulatory practices" that split society into the established order and the "people" (Laclau, 2005: 77). Previous attempts to characterize populism, such as the ideology method previously described, failed to examine the conceptual nature of populism, instead focusing on defining its fundamental content. Laclau departs from the empirical stance and goes with the theoretical understanding of the concept (Moffitt & Tormey, 2013: 384). He contends that populism is the basic organizing element of political life, arguing that since populism involves putting up a radical alternative in public space—

a crucial decision for the future of society—then populism is inherently linked to politics (Laclau, 2005: 47).

2.4.3. Populism as a Discourse

The third view on populism sees it as a discourse, with two distinct sub-approaches: the Essex school of discourse analysis and classical/quantitative content analysis. Scholars such as Howarth and Torfing have elaborated on the Essex school's methods of analysis, and these are generally based on Laclau's core conceptualization reviewed above. The Essex School approach characterizes populism as a rhetoric that challenges the established quo, simplifying politics by dividing society into "the people" and the "other." However, Moffitt and Tormey critique this method for stressing the validity of the Laclauian framework above and suggest a thorough examination of populism itself (Moffitt & Tormey, 2013).

The second sub-approach, classical content analysis, is more empirically oriented. Scholars like Jagers, Walgrave, and Hawkins have advocated for this technique, which uses a qualitative coding methodology to assess populist levels within selected discursive works. Recently, academics such as Reungoat and Pauwels have moved into a quantitative study that employs computer-assisted analysis of large amounts of textual data with an emphasis on specific keywords (Vollgraaff, 2018). However, both traditional and quantitative content analysis have faced challenges and criticism. Classical analysis has reliability concerns owing to irregular sampling and probable coding bias, as well as disagreements about which sources to examine. In contrast, quantitative analysis lacks a solid theoretical relationship to populism and may just corroborate pre-existing views. Furthermore, both approaches focus entirely on populism as speech, ignoring important characteristics like style and visual presentation (Moffitt & Tormey, 2013:385).

2.4.4. Populism as an Organization Technic

The fourth and last significant perspective on populism conceptualizes it as an organizational structure or strategy. This perspective is particularly based on Weyland's definition. He describes populism as a political tactic in which a charismatic

leader pursues or wields executive authority by organizing self-structured support against a particular political opposition. This perspective is developed in reaction to the apparent "conceptual confusion" surrounding populism, especially in Latin American politics (Weyland, 2001: 12). The author focuses on two common interpretations of populism: one as a political way and the other as a tactic. Weyland (2024) maintained that politically understanding populism is extremely broad and distorts case differences, however considering it as a strategy provides clearer bounds and more analytical accuracy. As a result, he adapted this strategic conception to Latin American situations to improve his methodology.

However, there are two major drawbacks to this technique. To begin, Weyland's definition focuses on modes of organization and strategy that might appear in a variety of ways that are not often associated with populism or populist political strategy. Moreover, there is no compelling reason to believe that populism can only thrive in circumstances with minimal structure and institutionalization. For example, the Front National of France has had significant success while functioning under rigorous party structures. Second, his definition is based on observations of populism in Latin America, which raises questions about its usage in examples outside of the area. As the instances examined in this study are located outside of Latin America, Weyland's definition may be limited and will not be used (Moffitt & Torney, 2014: 386).

2.4.5. Military Populism: The Possible 5th?

As reviewed above, contemporary populist literature generally focuses on those four elaborated perspectives (ideology, discourse, political, and organizational strategy) or conceptualizations. In the scholarly literature, the term "military populism" has been utilized loosely to characterize situations where the military engages in political affairs, often employing populist tactics and policies. This phenomenon is particularly observed in regions where democratic practices are still developing (Cotler, 1970; Bienen, 1985; Winter 2014). However, existing studies have not thoroughly conceptualized the term "military populism," especially in light of recent coups in West Africa and the ongoing scholarly discourse regarding the influence of populism

on the LIO. Consequently, there exists a research gap that this thesis seeks to address and contribute to.

The existing literature has some inherent limitations that hinder its ability to examine the nature of populism in states with less liberal and electoral politics. First, the predominant focus on populism as an electoral phenomenon viewed through the lens of civilian mass politics ignores the long-standing position of military elites in state politics, especially in non-western states' politics. For instance, populism in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa emerged after WWII, and the concept was largely associated with the prescribed authoritarian military regimes during that period. Until the third wave of democracy in the 1980s, the literature on Latin America was specifically on how populism and militarism were inextricably linked. During this period, the phrase "military populism" was often used to characterize leaders like General Juan Velasco Alvarado in Peru or Getúlio Vargas in Brazil. It was argued that these leaders combined authoritarian politics with populist measures (Kuehn & Trinkunas, 2020). The ubiquity of military coup attempts, particularly in Africa, emphasizes the importance of broadening the analytical framework beyond "civilian mass politics" to include civil-military interactions in populist contexts. Military interventions leave an indelible mark on a country's institutional structure, elite connections, and political culture, providing a fertile and legitimating ground for ambitious generals to exercise or maintain their political dominance in many ways. As a result, any thorough study of "populism" could significantly benefit from the understanding of military-dominated regimes' populist nature. Such a study requires this complex approach to civil-military interactions to capture the intricate relationship between populist politics and military dominance.

Secondly, the academic literature mostly concentrates on political populism, with an emphasis on political parties and their leaders. The importance of the military in conceptions about democracy and democratization has particularly been neglected in the comparative politics field. Despite this oversight, it is crucial to understand that the dynamics of "intra-elite" power go beyond the opposition and the ruling regime binary. In countries with a long history of military involvement in politics through coups and other direct or indirect means, the military as a structure and institution stands as a vital influencer capable of reshaping the political landscape by aligning with or

emerging as a populist leadership. Although the military plays such a decisive role in determining the political fate of populist leaders in very many countries, its involvement has not been adequately incorporated into the theoretical frameworks discussing populist political configurations (Taş, 2024).

The final aspect to consider is the normative limitation in examining the ongoing populist surge. The prevailing narrative in studies often revolves around the concern that populism poses a serious threat to democracy. However, this pessimistic and problem-solving perspective skews the discussion as it generally portrays populism as a destructive influence. It is important to point out that populism has the potential to function both as a challenge to democracy, weakening checks and balances, and as a remedy, enhancing representation and democratic accountability. This dual nature is also applicable to the issue of civilian control of the military, a crucial element of democracy (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 1996, 2001).

2.5. Populism: A New Contender to the LIO?

The collapse of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of free elections across Eastern Europe represented the pinnacle of the Cold War—a profound clash between West and Eastern communism. Following this triumph of Western ideals, numerous scholars of international relations posited that liberal democracy would reign indefinitely in shaping the global order. In his renowned article, "The End of History," Fukuyama contended that these pivotal events signified not merely the conclusion of a proxy conflict or a phase in post-war history, but rather, "the end of history" itself. He argued that this marked the zenith of humanity's intellectual evolution, heralding the ascendancy of Western liberal democracy as the ultimate form of governance (Fukuyama, 1992, 2006). For African governments, the "end of history" meant the end of an era in which Marxism-Leninism was viewed as a competitive alternative to the liberal ideology of their former colonial powers. Africa's early leaders, known as the founding fathers, adopted Pan-Africanist principles during the 20th century and saw communism as a viable political and economic system for the continent (Herbst, 1990). As a result, Africa emerged from the Cold War and was swept up by the rising globalization wave, aligning itself with the emerging LIO. Their

continued participation in international political and financial organizations served as proof of this, showing a change in attitude toward liberal governance ideals.

The recent emergence of populism and the election of politicians with apparent populist inclinations in several liberal democratic states have introduced an additional competitor to the long-standing LIO. Liberal researchers particularly warn about the rise of nationalism in the international system. Robert Keohane, for instance, has raised concerns about how this revival could affect the current LIO and its established institutions (Colgan & Keohane, 2017; Colgan, 2019). Nevertheless, before these developments, other scholars perceived minimal risk and contended that populism could exist alongside the established order (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 1996, 2001). Interestingly, some others have considered populism as a possible advantage for bolstering the LIO (Söderbaum, Spandler, & Pacciardi, 2021).

Analyzing how populism influences the LIO equally involves examining its diverse expressions across different regions. For instance, Akkerman et al. (2014) dissect the distinct facet of European populism, emphasizing Eurosceptic tendencies prevalent among various populist factions. Their focus centers on vehement criticisms of transnational governing bodies like the European Union (EU), shedding light on a significant hurdle to the LIO's aspirations for seamless international cooperation. This illustrates how European populism specifically targets and challenges supranational structures such as the EU, disrupting the liberal order's pursuit of integration. Nonetheless, this relationship is not one-sided. Some academics, such as Levitsky & Ziblatt (2018), argue that the LIO's shortcomings in addressing economic disparities and cultural apprehensions contribute to the surge of populism. They suggest that the failure to alleviate the negative consequences of globalization catalyzes populist backlash (Colgan & Keohane, 2017; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Colgan, 2019).

In South America, the discourse and research on the link between populism and the LIO have been as compelling as in Europe. According to Casarões, G. S. P. E., & Barros (2022), Bolsonaro's radical-right populist leadership in Brazil has significantly influenced the country's foreign policy, marking a substantial departure from Brazil's historical alignment with the Liberal International Order (LIO). They argue that Bolsonaro's espousal of anti-globalism, religious nationalism, and rejection of core

LIO principles such as multilateralism has positioned the nation as a prominent adversary to the LIO. This case contributes to the scholarly conversation about how populist figures like Bolsonaro may undermine the institutions and principles of the LIO, potentially impacting not only Brazil but also the broader Latin American region (Casarões, G. S. P. E., & Barros, 2022).

An expanding body of literature has also explored the potential for populism to coexist with the LIO. Some studies, for instance, propose that populist leaders might adopt a pragmatic stance, occasionally endorsing elements of the international system while criticizing others (Hobolt & Rodon, 2020). While many scholars emphasize the confrontational nature between populism and the current order, others advocate for a more nuanced viewpoint. As a result, the relationship between populism and the LIO is contingent on contextual factors and the ideological inclinations of populist movements. They argue that while certain populist factions may challenge specific facets of the LIO, others might engage strategically or adopt a pragmatic approach to global cooperation, allowing liberal principles to flourish within the international system. Hence, they suggest that not all forms of populism necessarily undermine the LIO, and particular variants may align with specific liberal ideals (Balta & Kaltwasser & Yagci, 2022; Moffitt, 2019).

In these continuing debates, Ikenberry (2019) has maintained that although the LIO was predicted to face difficulties mostly from outside forces seeking to upend the postwar system. However, the greatest dangers and challenges to it have come from within the Western world. Surprisingly, the ideas of LIO have faced significant dangers due to the disintegration of centrist and progressive alliances in the West and the vulnerability of liberal democracy (Ikenberry, 2019). After initially benefiting from this cooperative global order, the working and middle-class populations in industrialized democracies have felt cut off from the perceived advantages of the LIO because of growing economic inequality. Therefore, liberal internationalism is increasingly seen as a platform furthering the interests of Western states rather than as a means of fostering social solidarity.

2.6. Related Studies on the Causes of Military Coups in West Africa

Military coups have vitally impacted the political trajectory of Africa, notably within West Africa, where these upheavals have been recurrent. The political landscape of the continent has equally been irreversibly changed by these occurrences, which represent ongoing threats to stability and governance. Understanding the fundamental reasons for these coups becomes critical to understanding the region's persistent political instability. Consequently, researchers have traditionally examined a wide range of study causalities and variables, starting from historical, political, and economic to sociocultural elements, weak political and institutional structures, and disproportionate tribal representation in the military (Daniel & Pryce, 2023; Chilaka & Peter, 2022).

The history of military intervention in the region's political scene on the value of military regimes further contextualizes the reasons behind coups in Africa. Moreover, Pat and Thomas (2008) underscore the significance of historical legacies, like colonial borders, weak state institutions, and entrenched autocratic rule, in shaping an environment conducive to military interventions. These historical remnants have left enduring imprints, creating fertile ground for political issues and serving as catalysts for many military disruptions.

The recent coups in the region, particularly in West Africa and the Sahel, are equally attributed to a similar set of variables, including socio-economic factors, political instability, and regional dynamics (Odigbo et al., 2023b). The coups have further been linked to diminishing optimism, insecurity, economic decline, and poor human development, suggesting that military interventions are a response to the failures of these sectors. Moreover, ethnic and economic grievances, corruption, and perceived shortcomings in civilian governance have been identified as catalysts for military coups (Acho & Tacham, 2023). Contradictorily, while some studies have emphasized the role of socio-economic and political factors, another previous study focuses on the military's internal dynamics, such as low levels of professionalism, personal ambitions, and corporate interests (Kandeh, 2004). The debate extends to the military's social and ethnic composition, training, and ideology, with another scholar suggesting that

military coups are influenced by complex civil-military relations and the military's role as a potential modernizing force (Decalo, 1973).

As reviewed above, researchers who have studied these cases have thus greatly focused on the domestic variables in their various case study states. These variables include the leadership styles, colonial legacies, economic factors, and the role of civil society in the weak democracy of the region as the root causes of these coups (Chin & Kirkpatrick, 2023; Akwei et al., 2023; Akinola & Makombe, 2024). For example, Slater and McGowan's early 1984 study proves this perspective. They maintain that African states with thriving economies and some level of political engagement mostly experience fewer or no military coups. Based on this, positive economic indicators, including high employment rates and diverse exports, are vital stabilizing effects. However, Adekeye Adebayo's (2002) analysis challenges this perspective. He argues that despite economic success, military coups and coup attempts undermined the socio-economic and political growth of certain West African nations in the 1980s, including Nigeria and Togo. This implies that military coups cannot be explained solely by economic causes, as demonstrated by Nigeria's history, where political unrest impeded economic growth even in the face of economic momentum (Peters, 1997).

Habiba Ben Barka & Mthuli Ncube (2012) provide an overview of the relationship between economic inequality and the tendency for coups in West Africa. Their research emphasizes how important it is for economic disparities to act as catalysts for instability in politics and military interventions. Moreover, Abu et al. (2015) investigated the causative link between political instability, economic progress, and corruption in the ECOWAS over the 1996–2012 timeframe. Based on the results, political unrest short-term produces economic development, while both political instability and economic development long-term cause corruption. This describes the argument that the military brings about political and economic stability. In other words, the army steps in to stop the political process from collapsing due to unstable political regimes that repress opposition, ineffective governance, electoral crises, insecurity brought on by rival factions fighting for control of the political system, and most significantly, the capitalized corrupt leadership (Akwei et al., 2023). The economic hypotheses maintained that the military should operate to improve society's living circumstances, create jobs for young people, distribute resources fairly, and

manage the economy better from the corrupt civilian leadership (Barka & Ncube, 2012).

Alternative viewpoints on the military's involvement and intervention in Africa have been put forth by Collier and Hoeffler (2007). These researchers maintain that military officials' explanations for maintaining political and economic stability are deceptive. Moreover, they argue that the desire of the military to have the same access to state resources as civilians and their avarice are the root causes of military coups. Therefore, these coups are the outcome of the primordial accumulation of wealth, which has taken the military away from its assigned duty of defending national integrity. On the other hand, Coleman and Brice (1962) put forward that coups are common in Africa because of the social fabric and dynamics of the continent, and this complexity is demonstrated by the military's devotion to specific ethnic groups above or the usage of tribal factors rather than national objectives to explain the coup actions (Chigozie & Oyinmiebi, 2022).

Another popular factor in the existing literature is the nature of the civil-military relations in West Africa. These studies focus on understanding the origins of military coups in line with civil-military relations without considering the confluence of politics. Scholars like Samuel Huntington, Amos Perl Mutter, and Samuel Finer have historically highlighted the involvement of militaries in politics, extolling their virtues. However, alternative findings, such as those put forth by Kandeh (2004), propose different explanations. Kandeh suggests that military coups in West Africa stem from issues like low levels of professionalism and political institutionalization. This perspective particularly emphasizes the role of education within the military, arguing that a lack thereof, particularly among lower-ranking personnel, contributes to instability. However, statistics prove that the majority of military coups in West Africa are planned and carried out by high-ranking officers with observably high levels of education (Adebajo 2002).

The question of colonialism and its legacy in the postcolonial world has equally been studied thoroughly. In Africa and in many newly independent states of regions that were victims of colonialism, military coups became a common systemic means of overthrowing governments. Africa was particularly consistent in the analysis of the

scholars of this century and recognized as the continent most vulnerable to military takeovers (Thompson, 1975; Jenkins & Kposowa, 1990). Scholars like Bertsch, Clark, and Wood (1978) discovered that from the era 1945 to 1972, there was one coup or planned coup in Latin America once every four months; in Asia, there was one every seven months; in the Middle East, there was one every three months; and interestingly, in Africa, there was one every 55 days (1960–1972).

The likelihood of military coups in this setting is greatly influenced by a confluence of political forces. Kemence (2013) conducted a study on the prevalence of military coups and governmental instability in West Africa. He maintained that the sudden and premature withdrawal of colonial military powers is a critical factor contributing to governmental instability and military coups in West Africa. This abrupt departure resulted in a security void and hindered the professionalization of emerging West African militaries, particularly affecting civil-military relations. Through a qualitative case study that involved a controlled comparison between Niger and Senegal, the study highlighted differing outcomes in terms of stability and military coups. The study suggests that a continued military presence by democratic powers, such as the French troops stationed in Senegal, could potentially provide similar governmental stability in other West African countries (Kemence, 2013).

Chilaka and Peter (2022) examined the startling rise in military coups in West Africa during the last ten years (2012-2022), covering both successful and unsuccessful coups. They emphasized the difficulties ECOWAS has in advancing democracy and preserving regional stability, as well as the effects of this rise on the peace, security, and stability of the region.

The authors questioned the efficiency of current strategies, such as imposing sanctions, in preventing coups, arguing that these tactics unintentionally hurt people more than the military. They did this by using qualitative data and analytical frameworks anchored in general systems theory. To combat the growing threat of military coups, their solutions centered on fostering good governance, bolstering sub-regional democracy, and resolving leadership issues.

In a more recent study, Acho and Tacham (2023) researched the causes and consequences of military coups in West Africa since 1990. They mainly focus on the challenges these interventions have for democratic advancement. Their synthesis of academic publications and reports, which employed a qualitative research technique, emphasized several factors contributing to coups, such as ethnic tensions, economic grievances, and corruption-related difficulties. The writers examined assertions by military officials to defend their operations closely, illuminating the far-reaching effects of coups, including breaches of human rights. The detailed analysis of Neocolonialism's role in encouraging coups—an area that has received less attention in previous research—was a noteworthy addition.

In summary, the existing literature on military coups in African politics has significantly contributed to our understanding of one of the region's most crucial threats. However, as reviewed in the literature above, these existing studies have predominantly focused on internal variables to explain various coup cases, leaving a gap that this study aims to address. It maintains that recent coups in West Africa differ from previous ones in the region. Therefore, they should be analyzed with different variables to better dissect their root causes. This argument is grounded in the assertion that recent coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger are inherently populist; they are driven by escalating anti-institutional sentiment and growing mistrust in the international order.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In our field and social sciences research in general, methodology is vital as it offers the structural steps required to study and comprehend complex societal phenomena. A carefully thought-out methodology improves the validity and dependability of research findings, guaranteeing that the study's conclusions fairly represent the world under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Moreover, a suitable methodology permits study replication, promoting the cumulative character of scientific knowledge (Bryman, 2016). Consequently, this chapter outlines the research method used in this thesis. The chapter equally covers the data-gathering and analysis strategies and analytic protocols. These factors directly affect the study's quality, reliability, and applicability.

3.2. Research Method and Design

This study is inherently exploratory. The approach is justified by the novelty and complexity of the research question: "Why have military coups (military populism) been on the rise in Francophone West Africa (Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger)?" As reviewed in the theoretical and introductory chapters of this thesis, the literature on causes of coups in Africa has predominately focused on the domestic variables, including socioeconomic factors, which this study argues are limited in explaining the recent coups in the region. Consequently, the study's focus on an external variable in this new context necessitates an exploratory research design. As argued by Hair et al. (2014), exploratory research is particularly suitable when existing knowledge about a phenomenon is limited or nonexistent. Exploratory research is equally well-suited to a case study approach due to its vast scope. Therefore, in this thesis, the goal is not just to test the pre-existing theories but also to conceptualize

“military populism” in the context of the new West African coups and to explore its causal link with a new variable (mistrust in the LIO). As the study is explanatory, qualitative research is the fundamental methodology. The decision to employ qualitative methods is thus inspired by the quest for understanding the details of the rise of military coups in the study’s four case study countries. Qualitative methods are especially suitable for studying complex social happenings and offering a deep comprehension of the subtleties of an action. Moreover, the method offers the flexibility required to adjust to the dynamic and complex nature of the societal issues under study (Creswell, 2013). In the context of this study, the qualitative method is chosen to allow for a deep and contextual exploration of the rise of military coups in Francophone West Africa. The study seeks to capture the breadth and depth of contextual elements, viewpoints, and expressed experiences related to the various military coups.

The thesis also adopts a case study approach to thoroughly explore the cases selected for this study. The case study approach, as maintained by Creswell (2013), can provide a detailed understanding of the complex phenomenon. Therefore, this will allow for an in-depth exploration of the historical roots, political landscapes, and societal dynamics influencing the re-rise of these military coups. The case study approach’s significance is found in its ability to provide a comparative analysis that captures both similarities and differences, thereby adding to a thorough understanding of the region. Moreover, the case study’s holistic examination equally aligns with the exploratory nature of the study, while the findings carry implications for policymakers, aiding in the formulation of targeted interventions to address the root causes of military coups.

The decision to adopt a case study technique was intentional, and it was selected above alternative approaches such as strictly comparative, experimental, or statistical methods for various reasons. The intricacy of each coup case under consideration provides many distinct characteristics, making mere comparative approaches less suitable. However, it is important to emphasize that, while this research will not rely entirely on comparison, it will include various comparative components. The challenge with a comparative approach stems from the careful balance of choosing examples with similar characteristics to construct constants while simultaneously containing enough variances to produce clearer insights (Burnham et al., 2008: 66). This quandary has been expertly managed using the criteria used in choosing the case studies. An

experimental technique was equally ruled unsuitable as the subject matter has subtle areas of interest that may entail many variables, making practical testing impractical.

Moreover, the study does not use a quantitative approach because of the limited accessibility of databases and sets. Thus, the study's use of a qualitative case study approach is consistent with the subtle character of the research, providing an in-depth analysis of the selected cases.

Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger are selected as case studies for several reasons: First, the three states have experienced recent military coups, making them vital cases for examining such phenomena. Secondly, they share historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, being part of Francophone West Africa, which allows for comparative analysis across similar contexts. Thirdly, each of these countries has faced internal challenges related to governance, political instability, and socio-economic development, providing a richer ground for exploring the relationships between mistrust in the global liberal norms and the rise of military coups in the region. The study refers to the case study countries, namely Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali, as Francophone West Africa to underscore their shared historical legacies and geographical proximity. These nations were all formerly under French colonial rule, a factor that has significantly influenced their socio-political and economic landscapes. Moreover, they all use the CFA franc as their national currency, symbolizing a continued financial connection to their colonial past. Furthermore, until the recent decision by Mali in 2023 to remove French as its official language, each of these countries also designated French as their official language, pinpointing the enduring linguistic ties that have historically bound them together.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The thesis adopts an array of data collection techniques that are in line with the objectives of the study. Given its exploratory nature and its use of a qualitative case study methodology, the study predominantly relies on secondary sources. These include scholarly articles, pertinent research findings, and reliable news reports. The study equally includes an analysis of peer-reviewed publications and books. To further enrich the analysis, official government documents, military communiqués, and public

speeches are included. The reliance on secondary data is necessitated by challenges in accessing primary sources or having an interview with government officials. This limitation underscores the difficulty in acquiring first-hand information and insights directly from key stakeholders intimately involved in the events under scrutiny.

However, despite the challenges posed by restricted access to primary data, the study endeavors to acquire an in-depth understanding of the cases by utilizing a wide range of reliable secondary sources.

As mentioned above, the study relies on content and discourse analysis as its primary method due to challenges in arranging direct contact interviews with subjects. Content analysis, involving the coding of various written and spoken materials, serves as an effective alternative, enabling insight into the stance and perspectives of actors without direct interaction. This technique is consistent with a deductive approach. Specifically, the study focuses on analyzing the rhetoric and actions of coup leaders across the four case countries of this thesis. This is equally based on the position that examining the language used by these leaders is vital for understanding how they convey their policy objectives, which ultimately shape their actions. Employing a qualitative approach allows a nuanced interpretation beyond mere quantification, capturing the attitudes, emotions, and behaviors of the subject. This method facilitates a detailed understanding of why subjects act in certain ways and yields comprehensive insights into the research questions at hand (Halperin & Heath, 2012).

A targeted and theoretically driven inquiry is ensured by commencing the process with variables that are directly generated from the research objectives. The research purposefully avoids drawing broad conclusions from its findings. Instead, the emphasis lies in contextualizing the outcomes within the specific region. This will render the replication of this study plausible. However, the prospects of replication require possible adjustments to account for changing conditions and dynamics, recognizing the research's adaptive character. Ultimately, the goal of this approach is to offer a deeper insight into military populism in different contexts and foster a clearer understanding of the rise of military coups in Francophone West Africa.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICS IN UNIFORM: AN OVERVIEW OF COUPS IN THE CASE STUDY COUNTRIES

4.1. Introduction

Political instability has been a recurring feature in the post-independence histories of nearly all the French-speaking West African states, and these instabilities never unfold without military presence or involvement. Consequently, since the states' independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the public's support has alternated between supporting a civilian administration that promises to live up to the growing expectations and the armed forces that intervene to deal with the alleged ineptitude and corruption of the civilian leadership. In many cases, both civilian and military elites fall short of delivering the progress and prosperity they promise to the people (Conteh-Morgan, 2000). However, both civilian and military elites have frequently failed to deliver on their promises, resulting in a socio-political disconnection that has provided the military with justification to seize and retain power for a duration longer than anticipated. Consequently, Africa has endured very many military coups since the first one recorded in 1963 in Togo, with an apparent concentration in the West African region and its former French colonies. This region has come to be characterized as the "coup belt" as it makes a substantial contribution to the continent's overall coup statistics—roughly 44.4% of all coups in Africa—(StateCraft Inc., 2023).² Present-day West African political history is thus epitomized by a prevalent pattern, with about half of its history consisting of documented coups in most of its 15 member states (ECOWAS, 2022). This chapter thus elaborates on the historicity of the coups in the case-studied countries of this thesis. The chapter does that by systematically detailing the history of coups in the selected four case study countries (Mali, Burkina Faso,

² StateCraft Inc. (2023). Africa: Preventing a coup frenzy. Retrieved from <https://statecraftinc.com/africa-preventing-a-coup-frenzy>

Guinea, and Niger) to establish the overview of the military presence in the politics of the region and how these form a trait to recent coups in the region.

4.2. Colonial Era and Struggle for Independence

In Africa and Francophone West Africa in particular, the Colonial Era, which extended from the late 19th to the middle of the 20th century, was a pivotal time that greatly influenced the current state of civil-military relations (CMR) in the region. Colonial military structures were purposefully designed to serve the interests of the colonial powers, underscoring the intentional crafting of the military apparatus as an instrument of colonial enforcement (Mamdani, 1996). This perspective is particularly vital to understanding the blurred demarcation between civilians and military leadership in the region. Moreover, the military's crucial role in upholding imperial rule, quelling opposition, and enabling resource exploitation defined its standing during the colonial era in Africa. Colonial military troops, including regular French Army units and the French Foreign Legion, were stationed in the colonies of West Africa to retain control over the region. As a result, the military played a crucial role in implementing the imperial agenda, showing the militarization of colonial governance (Smith, 2006).

The military was equally involved in resource exploitation and labor control, going beyond simple enforcement. Control over precious resources like rubber, minerals, and agricultural goods was made possible in large part by the actions of colonial forces. Moreover, forces were often utilized to compel labor, guaranteeing a consistent supply for colonial economic objectives (Berman, 1998; Mamdani, 1996). As a result, the military performed both military and administrative duties. With military commanders participating in both military operations and the administration of the territories, this dual responsibility made it difficult to distinguish between civilian and military power. These two-fold responsibilities strengthened the militarization of these states even after the colonial rules.

A defining feature of French West African colonial military strategy was the direct application of force to uphold order, which demonstrated the imperial power's determination to establish its dominance. Therefore, enforcing imperial rule was one of the colonial military's main responsibilities. For example, Garrisons and other

military forces were placed in strategic locations to oust opposition and protect colonial interests, and the colonial military's suppression of local rebellions and resistance became frequent (Vandervort, 1998).

In some instances, colonial powers organized and trained local troop units to serve their interests. The Senegalese Tirailleurs, for instance, were composed of local soldiers recruited to serve the French colonial army. This practice had significant implications for post-colonial military structures, contributing to the formation of the newly structured national armies with legacies tied to their colonial past (Vandervort, 1998). This legacy of the colonial military equally influenced the position of post-colonial armies in the region as many came to present themselves as the protectors of the newly formed states. Consequently, the military institutions continued to have power in these states even after independence, as inherited from the colonial-era leadership and structures. This continuity of military leadership has played a pivotal role in shaping the states' evolving CMR.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a turning point in the history of continental Africa as countries fought for independence from imperial rule and to regulate their futures. Following World War II, a wave of independence movements swept over Africa and in my case study region in particular. These movements resulted in the independence of Francophone West Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Thus, this transition from colonial rule to independence was a pivotal moment that set the stage for defining CMRs in the nascent states. Moreover, the way the struggle for independence unfolded had profound implications for the subsequent dynamics between civilian and military entities. Army officers became prominent figures in the independence movement in certain cases, contributing significantly to the liberation campaigns while frequently leading the front lines of resistance against colonial powers.

The newly independent state leaders therefore took different mechanisms in this era of decolonization. Leading the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG) in Guinea, for instance, Ahmed Sékou Touré oversaw a resistant independence movement. As a result, Guinea's break from colonial ties was signaled by his strong rejection of the French community. Sekou Toure's push for quicker autonomy ultimately led to Guinea becoming the first Francophone country in West Africa to gain independence in 1958.

Moreover, Touré's unwavering leadership paved the way for a post-independence period marked by socialist policies and a tense relationship with France—a tense relation that is repeating itself today in the region (Sylla, 2019).

Similarly, in Mali, Modibo Keta shaped the struggle for independence with his revolutionary Sudanese Union-African Democratic Rally (US-RDA). At a point, Keta's vision extended beyond political autonomy, encompassing a broader transformation of Mali's economic and social landscape. Consequently, Mali's independence in 1960 marked the beginning of Keita's presidency, during which he implemented policies influenced by socialist principles. He was a pan-Africanism ideologist, as were Sekou Toure and many other pan-African leaders in the region. Keta's emphasis on economic self-sufficiency shaped Mali's early post-independence years and made a lasting impression on the country's political trajectory. Unlike Mali and particularly Guinea, the head of the Nigerien Progressive Party (PPN-RDA), Hamani Diori, took a different approach to gaining independence in Niger. Diori pursued a soft political and economic collaboration with France, stressing a phased and cooperative approach. Under Diori's leadership, Niger attained more peaceful or less radical steps towards independence in 1960. Nevertheless, a series of setbacks, including political resistance and economic hardships, resulted in a military takeover in 1974. Diori's approach, which sought independence within a framework of cooperation, equally demonstrated the difficulties of post-colonial politics as in Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso.

4.3. Post-Independence Period: Era of Coups

As elaborated above, during the post-colonial era, military coups were a common institutional means of overthrowing governments in many newly independent nations. Studies conducted in this period consistently show that Africa was the continent most vulnerable to military takeovers (Janowitz 1977; Thompson 1973). Francophone West Africa especially had a complex interaction of political and socioeconomic issues during these early years (1960s–1980s). Moreover, this was evident as the newly independent states struggled with nation-building in an era when the world was economically divided into Eastern and Western blocks. The ideological stance of these states thus significantly impacted their economic development and the leaders'

vulnerability to coups. Post-independence liberation leaders whose ideologies and political outlooks ran counter to the interests of powerful colonial powers were equally toppled, as seen throughout the Cold War.

The era was thus marked by several military coups and interventions in several regions of the continent. The military commanders used issues like political unrest, corruption, and the idea that newly founded states needed better policy actions. As a result, the continent saw its first military takeover in January 1963 in Togo, a francophone West African state. After this incident, the continent and West Africa as a region have recorded tens of successful and attempted coups. One notable coup happened in Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta). In 1983, Thomas Sankara, a charismatic military officer, came to power in a celebrated coup. Sankara was not a major player in Burkina Faso's early independence movement; however, he emerged as a revolutionary leader in the years following the independence. Following many coups, Sankara became president in 1983 and enacted drastic measures meant to completely change the nation. His idea, known as the "Burkinabé Revolution," aimed to emphasize self-reliance above neocolonial dependency. Despite his assassination that ended his leadership in 1987, his revolutionary ideas continue to impact Burkinabé politics (Harsch, 2014).

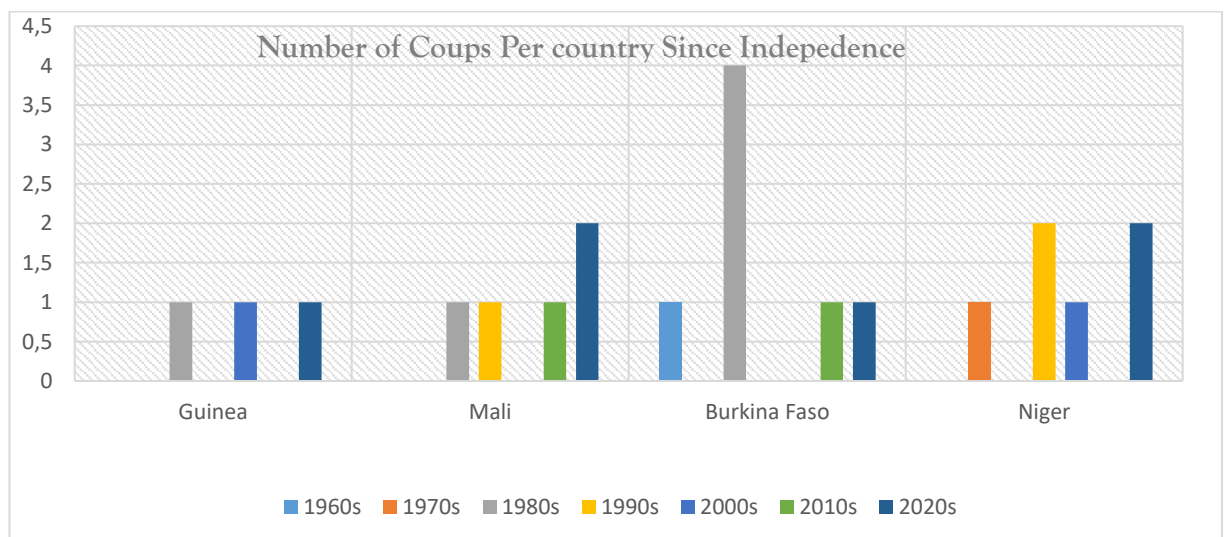


Figure 4.1. A Bar Graph Showing the Number of Coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Guinea Since Independence

Source: Powell and Thyne, Cline Center at the University of Illinois

4.3.1. The Case of Guinea

Different approaches to leadership influenced how newly independent states developed in the context of West African decolonization. Leading the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG) in Guinea, Ahmed Sékou Touré oversaw a more revolutionary independence movement. Guinea's break from colonial connections was thus signaled by his strong rejection of the French community and his push for quick and total autonomy, which ultimately led to Guinea becoming the first Francophone country in West Africa to achieve independence in 1958. In addition to securing Guinea's independence, Touré's unwavering leadership paved the way for a post-independence period marked by socialist policies and a tense relationship with France (Sylla, 2019). However, after the country's founding father Sekou Toure's death, the absence of a stable political and constitutional framework paved the way for military figures to assert control.

Guinea saw a dramatic change in its political landscape in 1984 when Colonel Lansana Conté became president after a sudden coup against the Prime Minister and interim leader Louis Lansana Beavogui's administration. This 1984 coup significantly marked a departure from the previous socialist policies and ushered in a period of autocratic rule. However, despite different challenges and opposition, including attempted coups and mutinies, Conté significantly guided Guinea through its transition period. His step towards promoting multi-party elections as adopted in the December 1990 Constitution was a crucial step towards political pluralism and representation. However, his tenure was not without criticism, as evidenced by the protests and unrest in 2007, which underscored concerns about governance and human rights. Nonetheless, Conté's contributions to Guinea's political evolution remain noteworthy, as he navigated the complexities of post-independence leadership. However, following his death in 2008, Conté's reign was characterized by economic hardships, human rights violations, authoritarianism, and limited political liberties (BBC, 2021).

Following the death of Lansana Conté, a group of officers seized power in Guinea, establishing the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), with Captain Moussa Dadis Camara as its leader until late 2010. This coup ousted Aboubacar Somparé, the former president of the national assembly, bringing another

wave of political instability. As a result, Camara's leadership was marked by fiery media speeches and public humiliations of European diplomats. However, his regime faced severe criticism after security forces violently suppressed an opposition rally in Conakry's stadium on September 28, 2009. This resulted in the deaths of at least 157 people and the rape of over a hundred women, according to Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2022). Further upheaval ensued when Camara survived an assassination attempt on December 3, 2009, organized by his aide-de-camp Toumba Diakité. Moreover, this led to his replacement by General Sékouba Konaté, who oversaw the transition until the election of the long-time opposition figure Alpha Condé in November 2010 (France 24, 2010).

The most recent coup, which is equally the case study of this study, occurred on September 5, 2021, when Mamady Doumbouya overthrew the civilian leader, Alpha Condé. This incident equally marked another significant turning point in Guinea's politics. Like the previous coup leaders, Doumbouya, a colonel in the state's army, cited corruption and unlawful constitutional amendments as some of the reasons for the coup. The international community expressed concern, emphasizing the importance of a return to civilian rule (France 24, 2021). Among Doumbouya's first presidential roles, the state Musa Dadis Camara and three other officials from their CNDD of the formal military junta were forced to leave the Conakry jail by a highly armed militia. Nine persons were involved in his escape; three of them were invaders and four were defense force members of Guinea; six more were hospitalized due to gunshot wounds. Hours later, he was apprehended again. His trial was put on hold for three weeks for unrelated reasons, but it recommenced in November of the same year (Jazeera, A. 2023).

4.3.2. The Case of Mali

As my other case study states, Mali's political history has been marked by a series of coups that significantly reflect the country's socio-political dynamics. The country's first critical upheaval occurred on November 19, 1968, when Moussa Traoré overthrew Modibo Keita, Mali's founding and Pan-Africanist president. As the Cold War's economic and political alignment was evident everywhere, Keita's socialist policies led to economic challenges and political dissent, paving the way for Traoré's

authoritarian rule characterized by a one-party system and human rights abuses. Driven by widespread dissatisfaction, Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré planned a coup against Traoré's leadership in 1991, turning the tide. Hailed as the "Soldier of Democracy," Touré fulfilled his pledge to usher in a period of civilian government, a break from the previous military-dominated administration. The democratic elections of 1992 created the foundation for Mali's transition to a more representative administration (Whitehouse, 2012).

Stability in Mali, however, was hampered in 2012 by a military coup that took place amid a separatist Tuareg uprising in the north. After President Touré's response to the situation was deemed inadequate, the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State (CNRDRE) took over. The CNRDRE was forced to cede power by international pressure, underscoring the fine line that must be drawn between resolving regional issues and preserving stability. Stability in Mali, however, was hampered in 2012 by a military coup that took place amid a separatist Tuareg uprising in the north. After President Touré's response to the situation was deemed inadequate, the CNRDRE took over. However, the CNRDRE was forced to cede power by international pressure, underscoring the fine line that must be drawn between resolving regional issues and preserving stability (Elischer et al., 2022).

The year 2020 witnessed yet another coup, as a revolting armed forces group forced President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta to resign. As a result, the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP) assumed control, prompting another global concern. Eventually, international pressure resulted in the formation of a transitional administration dedicated to the restoration of civilian governance. However, this transitional era was equally marked by vital internal issues, which greatly contributed to another coup that deposed the interim president (Bah N'daw) in September 2021.

The 2021 coup d'état unfolded during the evening of May 24, 2021, when the Army, under the leadership of the then Vice President Assimi Goïta, orchestrated the apprehension of President Bah N'daw, Prime Minister Moctar Ouane, and Minister of Defense Souleymane Doucouré. Assimi Goïta, the leader of the junta that oversaw the coup d'état in Mali in 2020, formally announced the removal of N'daw and Ouane from their positions as prime ministers and the start of fresh elections slated for 2022. Goïta,

the leader of the junta who oversaw the coup d'état in 2020, formally announced the removal of N'daw and Ouane from their positions as prime ministers, and this was announced as the start of fresh elections slated for 2022.³

As elaborated above, this marked Mali's third coup in just a decade; the previous two had taken place in 2012 and 2020, the latter just nine months before the coup of 2021.

The prevailing coup and post-coup circumstances bear a resemblance to the 2012 military coup, orchestrated by junior military officers disenchanted with the state's management of a Tuareg insurgency in the northern region. The prescribed extremist (Tuareg) group took advantage of the power vacuum created by the coup against the so-called Western-backed government. This made it nearly impossible for the Malian military forces—supported by the US, EU, and UN—to put a stop to the ensuing carnage. Similar to what happened in 2012, the leaders of the most recent coup on August 18, carried out their operations at the Kati military camp outside of Bamako, using the government's alleged corruption and incompetence in handling the crises in the country's north and center as justification for their activities.

4.3.3. The Case of Burkina Faso

Similarly to Mali and Guinea, Burkina Faso's political history is characterized by a series of military coups and attempted coups. This equally shows the country's rocky journey through internal power struggles and changes in government. Maurice Yaméogo, the first president of the country, was forced to step down in 1966 as a result of massive union-led demonstrations against the restriction of workers' rights, most notably the 1964 strike ban. A national strike in January 1967 marked the peak of these tensions, which finally led to a military coup and Captain Sangoulé Lamizana's elevation to the presidency. The state's first constitution built up the system of national suffrage for the five-year mandate terms of the national parliament and the elected president. These articles thus brought Maurice Yameogo to power as the country's first president. However, shortly after assuming power, Yameogo abolished all other

³ *Breaking the cycle: Military coups in West Africa | Fragile States Index*. (2022c, July 8). https://fragilestatesindex.org/2022/07/08/breaking-the-cycle-military-coups-in-west-africa/#_ftn7

political parties in the country (Englebert, 2018). Yaméogo's regime was marked by many different protests and eventually a coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana. In January 1966, President Maurice Yaméogo was forced to resign as accusations of corruption and authoritarianism against his administration led to Lamizana's involvement. As a result, the National Assembly was disbanded, the constitution was suspended, and Lt. Col. Aboukar Sangoule Lamizana led a cabinet comprised of top army leaders.

After four years of military administration, the Voltans approved a new constitution on June 14, 1970, which called for a four-year transition to full civilian governance. Throughout the 1970s, Lamizana presided over military or hybrid civil-military governments, maintaining her position of authority. Following disagreements over the 1970 constitution, a new one was drafted and adopted in 1977. In 1978, Lamizana was reelected in open elections (Guisso, 1996). This marked the inception of a military-dominated era, which significantly shaped Burkina Faso's subsequent political trajectory.

The upheaval continued with the 1974 Upper Voltan coup d'état on February 8, leading to the removal of President Lamizana. This incident equally heralded a period of military government marked by frequent leadership changes, which arguably set the stage for the ongoing political instability in the country. Lamizana's regime faced difficulties as it dealt with powerful labor unions, which had traditionally held substantial authority in the country. This tension peaked on November 25, 1980, when Colonel Saye Zerbo carried out a bloodless coup that deposed President Lamizana. Colonel Zerbo again established the Military Committee of Recovery for National Progress in the aftermath of the coup, taking the position of ultimate administrative power while simultaneously destroying the old 1977 constitution (Brittain, 1985).

Colonel Zerbo first faced radical resistance from the state's labor unions. Later, another military leader, Dr. Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo, and his Council of Popular Salvation (CSP) consequently deposed him in 1982. Like their predecessors, the CSP banned political parties and movements while promising a quick transition to civilian governance with a new constitution. However, on February 28, 1983, there was another failed coup attempt against President Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo. In the same

year, another internal division arose within the CSP as prescribed moderate ideologues struggled with radicals, most notably Captain Thomas Sankara, who took over as Prime Minister in January 1983. The ideological conflicts and Sankara's socialist stance contributed to his incarceration, spurring later efforts to win his release, organized by national student unions and other groups who considered it vital for the country (Hagberg 2002, 228–229). However, these efforts culminated in another military coup on August 4, 1983, marking another vital moment in the country's politics. Following the coup, Sankara assumed the presidency and established the National Council for the Revolution (CNR). Concurrently, he established Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) to rouse the population and carry out the CNR's revolutionary ambitions. Unlike the previous regimes, the CNR was made up of minuscule Marxist-Leninist intellectual factions. Sankara developed into an ideologue and captivating individual. Similar to Che Guevara, he rose to fame after his passing and was revered not just in Burkina Faso but throughout Africa and the world at large (Murry, 2018).

Upper Volta was renamed Burkina Faso on August 4, 1984, which means "the country of honorable people." Sankara, a charismatic leader, attempted to unite the populace and begin a large bootstrap development movement via speech, deed, and example. However, many of Sankara's budgetary measures were greeted with mounting opposition and controversy. Moreover, his CDRs, which began as grassroots organizations, declined in certain places, shifting into a battle with various labor unions. The government's coercive techniques and general direction contributed to rising resentment. This rising tension reached a tipping point on October 15, 1987, when Sankara was assassinated in a coup, ushering in Capt. Blaise Compaore. Compaore founded the Popular Front (FP) with Capt. Henri Zongo and Maj. Jean-Baptiste Boukary Lengani to sustain and promote the revolution's aims while attempting to "rectify" perceived departures from Sankara's initial ideals. Recognizing the need for popular support, the new administration tempered several of Sankara's ideas (Skinner, 1988).

A few members within the leftist movement group "le Democratie Populaire/Movement du Travail (ODP/MT)" greatly opposed the inclusion of non-Marxist factions within the FP. On September 18, 1989, accusations surfaced against

Lengani and Zongo, alleging a plot to overthrow the Popular Front. On the same night, they were apprehended and executed. In the aftermath, Compaore considered restructuring and reorganizing the government. As a result, he appointed a new set of ministers and personally assumed the role of Minister of Defense and Security. Subsequently, on December 23, 1989, a presidential security unit detained around 30 individuals, a mix of civilians and military personnel, accusing them of conspiring in collaboration with external opposition to stage a coup against Burkina Faso. The governing ODP/MT later united with several tiny opposition parties in February 1996 to establish the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP). This essentially co-opted much of Compaore's limited credible opposition.

In preparation for the 1997 parliamentary elections and the 1998 presidential election, the remaining opposition parties reassembled. The 1997 parliamentary elections, which were deemed essentially free, fair, and transparent by foreign observers, resulted in the CDP maintaining the majority of the seats (Wilkins, 1989). This marked another vital shift in the country's political history as Compaoré would rule the country until his forced resignation in 2014.

The country's political environment continues to see major upheaval in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. On September 18, 1989, an alleged unsuccessful coup attempt was conducted by top officers against the reigning President, Blaise Compaoré. Subsequently, in October 2003, Burkina experienced another episode of political instability with a coup d'état attempt. Following that, in October 2003, Burkina Faso faced another bout of political instability with a coup attempt. This time was marked by increased tensions and power conflicts inside the country. The effort highlighted the recurring issues that political leaders have in sustaining peace and governance (Hagberg 2002).

The most significant event took place on October 30, 2014, when Lieutenant Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida successfully staged a coup against President Blaise Compaoré. Zida briefly served as president before aiding the appointment of Michel Kafando as the next president. This shift was marked by a rapid political realignment, with Kafando responding by naming Zida as acting Prime Minister in the days after the coup. The aftermath of this coup underlined the ephemeral nature of political power

and administration in Burkina Faso at the time. The exacerbated linkages and coalitions between the political and military sectors had a critical influence on establishing the nation's leadership trajectory. The incidents of October 30, 2014, not only transformed the political landscape of Burkina Faso but also had long-term consequences for the country's following political developments (Wilkins, 1989).

On September 17, 2015, Burkina Faso experienced yet another episode of political instability when the presidential guard, led by Gilbert Diendéré, overthrew interim President Michel Kafando. This coup occurred just one month before scheduled elections in the nation, adding a layer of complexity and uncertainty to the political landscape. The reasons for Diendéré's coup were complex and reflected both military and political elements. The coup sought to sabotage democracy and significantly have an impact on the next elections.

The stability and democratic ambitions of Burkina Faso were seriously threatened at the time by the military's meddling in domestic politics. However, the coup proved to be short-lived, as internal and international pressure mounted against Diendéré's actions. One week after the overthrow, the coup collapsed, leading to the reinstatement of Michel Kafando as the interim president (Wilkins, 1989). The swift failure of the coup underscored the resilience of Burkina Faso's political institutions and the determination of its citizens to uphold democratic principles.

Moving forward to October 8, 2016, Burkina Faso faced another attempted coup. This time was led by loyalists of former President Blaise Compaoré and former his guards. Their goal was to remove President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré from office. Compaoré loyalists' engagement exposed the enduring impact of former presidents and their allies on the political climate of the nation, posing threats to the stability of the recently installed administration. Despite the effort, President Kaboré repulsed the coup, signifying a major win for the state's democratic institutions. Therefore, the October 8, 2016, attempted coup underscored the ongoing battle to create a stable political climate free from the meddling of former governments and the forces affiliated with them.

The political landscape of Burkina Faso continued to be marked by instability in the subsequent years, with a series of coup attempts shaping the nation's trajectory. Burkina Faso saw a significant coup on January 24, 2022, which overthrew Roch Marc Christian Kaboré and his administration. As elaborated above, in the space of eighteen months, this was the fourth coup in the region; the other ones were in Guinea in September 2021, Mali in August 2020, and May 2021 (BBCNews, 2022). The Burkina Faso coup started discreetly, with gunfire heard early in the morning near the president's residence and military garrisons in the capital, Ouagadougou. Within hours, reports surfaced that President Kaboré had been detained. Subsequently, a military junta, led by Paul-Henri Sandogo Damiba, one of the highest-ranking military officers in the country, took to the airwaves to announce the army's decision to dismiss Kaboré's regime. The new junta maintained that their objectives were to restore the nation's "territorial integrity" and "sovereignty," aiming to put the state back on a stable trajectory (Engels, 2022). This intervention resulted in the removal of Kaboré. It equally started the dissolution process of the state parliament and government, which ultimately suspended the constitution. The country saw another coup in September of the same year against interim leader Paul-Henri Sandaogo, who assumed power after the January coup. Damiba took power eight months earlier, following the January 2022 coup, which was motivated by popular dissatisfaction with the previous government's failure to combat the country's Islamist insurgency. However, the interim administration, led by Damiba, was unable to turn the tide against the militants. The non-state forces dominated roughly 40% of Burkina Faso by September. Damiba's choice to become defense minister himself, along with suspicions of pursuing personal interests rather than focusing on counterinsurgency efforts, fueled rising dissatisfaction among military personnel and the population ("BURKINA FASO: World Bank Report," 2022). The anger culminated in the coup organized by Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who, together with other disenchanted officers, denounced Damiba's leadership and prepared an intervention.

The coup also occurred in an atmosphere of geopolitical dynamics, with both Russia and Turkey seeking to expand their influence in the Sahel area. The Wagner Group, known for its ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, played a role in this geopolitical scheming. There was a notable shift in sentiment in Burkina Faso, with some advocating for replacing France, the main ally in the fight against jihadists, with other

international partners, especially Russia. Therefore, Damiba's decision not to align with Russia further divided the military, contributing to the discontent that greatly inspired the coup. Moreover, the incidents leading up to and during the coup showed the complex link between internal and external factors. The factors include military dissatisfaction, public sentiment, and geopolitical considerations, shaping Burkina Faso's political landscape at the time. Building on this unrest, another coup attempt unfolded in September 2022, further highlighting the volatile nature of Burkina Faso's political landscape (Jazeera, 2023). The recurrence of coup attempts within a short time frame underscores the persistent struggles faced by the government and the complexities surrounding the nation's political transitions.

4.3.4. The Case of Niger

Niger's political trajectory has been marked by a series of military coups, more like its neighboring and my other case study countries. The country's political challenges started a decade after gaining independence from France in 1960. In November 1961, Hamani Dori ascended to the presidency through an election done by the National Assembly. Commencing on June 14, 1962, the U.S. government pledged military assistance, furnishing vital military equipment to Dori's administration. His political journey, however, faced a perilous turn on April 13, 1965, when a member of the banned Sawaba Party attempted his assassination in Niamey, resulting in one death. Allegations were swiftly directed at then Ghana's pan-African regime (Salifou, 2010). However, the claim was firmly denied by the Ghanaian government.

During her initial phase of independence, Niger encountered numerous challenges. Politically, the nation adopted a one-party state under the leadership of President Hamani Diori, who quelled opposition through force. The period between 1968 and 1974 witnessed a prolonged and devastating drought, resulting in food scarcity and increased discontent with the government (Salifou, 2010). Despite efforts to tap into the substantial uranium deposits, the economy struggled, and allegations of leaders mishandling food aid stocks triggered widespread civil unrest. As a result, in the early hours of April 14, 1974, Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Kountché organized a military uprising that ousted the government in power since Niger's independence. President Diori's administration became the twenty-fifth on the African continent to succumb to

a coup d'état within eleven years. Moreover, Niger became the eighth state in former Francophone Africa to be subjected to military control through a coup (Higgott & Fuglestad, 1975).

As seen in the recent coups, Lieutenant Colonel Kountche justified the coup for the need for a more efficient and less corrupt government in the country. Consequently, the coup resulted in the suspension of the existing constitution, the dissolution of the National Assembly, and the establishment of a new 12-member Supreme Military Council (SMC). However, despite the initial promises of the state's rapid return to civilian rule, Kountche's regime evolved into what is described as "authoritarian rule." The military held a solid hold on power, and political parties were outlawed. Kountche served as the head of state until he died in 1987. This vitally solidified the military's enduring influence over Niger's political landscape.

Niger went through yet another unprecedented period in the early 1990s, marked by growing calls for political change and a move toward a multiparty system. The desire to abandon one-party control and create a more inclusive political system propelled the movement for change. Proposals for a multiparty system gathered steam, indicating a wider desire for increased public engagement and representation in politics. In response to these appeals, the National Conference was called in 1991, marking a momentous occasion. This crucial occasion provided a forum for discussion and decision-making, which in the end resulted in the new constitution's approval (Baudais & Chauzal, 2011). The National Conference's decision signaled a turning point in the country's transition to multiparty democracy and paved the way for Niger's political system to become more pluralistic.

Following these political shifts, Niger's first multiparty elections in 1993 saw Mahamane Ousmane emerge victorious, becoming the country's president. This marked a historic moment, reflecting the people's participation in a democratic electoral process that stood in stark contrast to the previous era of one-party dominance. However, the newfound democratic journey faced early challenges as the political landscape became increasingly unstable in the period from 1993 to 1996. Tensions escalated between President Ousmane and Prime Minister Hama Amadou, leading to a political deadlock. The disputes between the two leaders greatly threatened

the stability of the country. These tensions reached a breaking point in January 1996 when President Ousmane and Prime Minister Amadou were overthrown by military personnel in a coup. The coup leaders defended the military action by claiming that a deadlock in politics threatened important economic improvements (Tuki, 2024). This sudden change highlighted how tenuous Niger's democratic experiment was and sparked questions about how long democratic institutions would last in the face of political obstacles.

Another turbulent chapter in Niger's political history was brought about by the events of 1999, which included political unrest, a military takeover, and attempts to reestablish civilian control. In April 1999, the state faced a tragic turn when the sitting president, Ibrahim Bare Mainassara, was killed in an ambush at Niamey airport by dissident soldiers. Mainassara, who had come to power through a military coup in 1996, found his presidency cut short violently and abruptly. The circumstances reflected another level of internal divisions within the military and the ongoing volatility in Niger's political landscape. Following the coup, Daouda Malam Wanke, the commander of the presidential guard, assumed power. In a significant announcement, Wanke declared the intention to guide the country toward civilian rule by the year 2000, signaling a commitment to a transition away from military governance. Subsequently, Niger went through a process of political transition and a return to civilian rule. Mamadou Tandja emerged victorious in the presidential election that followed the 1999 coup, defeating Mahamadou Issoufou, a former prime minister. Niger's post-coup course was crucially shaped by Tandja's election as the nation tried to create stable democratic rule. The election was generally regarded as free and fair. This positive assessment marked a significant shift from Niger's prior chaotic political transitions. International observers' recognition of the election's fairness lent credibility to Tandja's win and offered optimism for a more stable and democratic future in the country.⁴ However, while the election was declared largely free and fair, the larger background of political instability and the repeating pattern of military intervention in Niger still arouse vital concerns about the long-term viability of democratic institutions.

⁴ Refworld - UNHCR's Global Law and Policy Database. (2024, February 9). *Freedom in the World 1999 - Niger*. Refworld. <https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/freehou/1999/en/53814>

The country's history took another turn in February 2010, when the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSDR) headed by General Salou Djibo led the fourth military coup. The coup immediately ousted the sitting President Mamadou Tandja. Tensions had risen since Tandja dissolved the parliament in 2009, and extended his mandate through a controversial referendum. Accusing Tandja of threatening democracy by amending the constitution, the coup leaders suspended the constitution, dissolved state bodies, and pledged to turn Niger into a democratic example. The coup was accompanied by the suspension of the constitution and the dissolution of all state bodies, signaling another departure from the struggle towards democracy. The military leaders, however, sought to justify their actions by asserting a commitment to turning Niger into "an example of democracy and good governance." The political tensions leading to the coup had been escalating since 2009 when President Tandja dissolved the parliament and extended his mandate beyond a second term through a controversial referendum (Trithart, 2013). Tandja's actions were met with domestic opposition and condemnation from the international community, setting the stage for the political crisis that ultimately resulted in the military intervention.

In the aftermath of the coup, the military government took control, promising to steer the country towards democracy and good governance. However, the suspension of constitutional order and the dissolution of established state institutions raised another concern about the regime's real commitment to democratic values. To restore democratic governance or to silence the tension, the regime organized new legislative elections in early 2011. In the presidential run-off, Mahamadou Issoufou emerged victorious, signaling another return to civilian rule. Issoufou's election marked the beginning of a new political era in Niger, characterized by efforts to rebuild the state and restore stability after the tumultuous events of the coup (Baudais & Chauzal, 2011).

On July 26, 2023, Niger experienced its fifth military coup d'état since gaining independence in 1960. The coup unfolded as the presidential guard detained President Mohamed Bazoum, and General Abdourahamane Tchiani, the commander of the presidential guard, declared himself the leader of a new military junta. This marked the first coup in Niger since the one in 2010. The swift and forceful actions of the

presidential guard under General Tchiani's command confirmed the success of the coup, disrupting the political stability that had been in place. The detention of President Bazoum underscored the abrupt nature of the military intervention and the fragility of democratic institutions in the country (Jazeera, 2023).

The international community, including the United States and France, condemned the coup, expressing concern over the interruption of democratic processes. The West African regional bloc, ECOWAS, also joined in condemning the coup and went a step further by threatening military intervention against the junta (Avoulete, 2023). This stance by ECOWAS marked a significant response, reflecting the regional commitment to upholding democratic norms and discouraging unconstitutional changes of government. The aftermath of the coup led to what became known as the 2023 Nigerien crisis. The threat of military intervention by ECOWAS created a tense situation, both within Niger and in the broader West African region. The crisis highlighted the complexities of balancing internal political dynamics with external pressure to adhere to democratic principles (Tuki, 2024).

Table 4.1. Summary of Successful Military Coups in the Case Study States of This Study (Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger)

Country	Date	Coup Organizers	Leaders Removed
Mali	1968	Lt. Moussa Traoré	Modibo Keita
	1991	Col. Amadou Toumani Touré	Moussa Traoré
	2012	Capt. Amadou Sanogo	Amadou Toumani Touré
	2020	Col. Assimi Goïta	Ibrahim Boubacar Keita
	2021	Col. Assimi Goïta	Interim President Bah Ndaw
Guinea	1984	Col. Lansana Conté	Ahmed Sékou Touré
	2008	Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara	Lansana Conté/ Death
	2021	Col. Mamady Doumbouya	Alpha Condé

Table 4.1. (cont.)

Burkina Faso	1980	Col. Saye Zerbo	Sangoulé Lamizana
	1982	Maj. Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo	Col. Saye Zerbo
	1987	Capt. Blaise Compaoré	President Thomas Sankara
	2014	Lt. Col. Yacouba Isaac Zida	Blaise Compaoré
	2022	Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré
	2022	Capt. Ibrahim Traoré	Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba
Niger	1974	Col. Seyni Kountché	Hamani Diori
	1996	Col. Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara	Mahamane Ousmane
	1999	Maj. Daouda Mallam Wanké	Col. Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara
	2010	Sqn. Ldr. Salou Djibo	Mamadou Tandja
	2023	Gen. Abdourahamane Tchiani	Mohamed Bazoum

Adopted by the author from different sources cited above

- The table equally shows the complex political history, repeating the issue of military interventions in these states. Each item includes the coup date, the organizer in charge of arranging the overthrow, and the leader who was ousted from office.

4.4. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented the historical patterns and overview of the military coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger. It has equally covered the historicity of political instability and the recurrent theme of military intervention in the four selected states. Therefore, the study has observed that the past coups in these countries were precipitated by a combination of economic hardship, political corruption, and governance failures. However, the newest coup leaders have vitally added security and international influence concerns in the region as an additional set of issues that motivated their actions. Each coup represented a vital shift in the political landscape and the persistent struggle for power and stability within my four case study states.

From 1968 until 2021, Mali saw recurrent coups, demonstrating a cycle of military power in which dissatisfaction with the administration and neglected socioeconomic demands led to subsequent overthrows. From Lt. Moussa Traoré's 1968 coup to Col. Assimi Goïta's recent popularity, the military has played a crucial role in influencing the country's political trajectory throughout times of instability and change. In the case of Guinea, it started with Lt. Col. Lansana Conté's takeover in 1984. This equally shows a similar pattern where leadership changes are driven by the military's response to perceived political and economic fall. The most recent coup in 2021 by Col. Mamady Doumbouya further emphasizes ongoing issues of corruption and governance, reflecting a broader trend of instability. For Burkina Faso, Capt. Thomas Sankara's revolutionary leadership remains a symbol of the struggle between revolutionary ideals and the people who stand against them. Moreover, the 2014 ousting of Compaoré and the successive coups in 2022 emphasize the country's volatile political landscape and ongoing quest for stable governance. Finally, Niger's coups reveal the challenges of economic hardship and the military's role in governance. The 2023 coup by Gen. Abdourahamane Tchiani catalyzes a greater geopolitical division in West Africa.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

This study started with a researchable question on why there are new rises of military coups in Francophone West Africa; it has continued to explore the instances of coups and argues that the new waves of military coups are not merely a reaction to domestic challenges as the past coups in the region are solely known for. The recent coup d'états in French-speaking West Africa are populist, and they are in part influenced by the growing mistrust in the LIO. Therefore, the motifs are deeply entwined with the global rise of populist leadership, which is said to be the result of rising inequality between the common people and the global elites (Pastor & Veronesi 2018). Populism, as defined and conceptualized in the context of this research, thrives on anti-institutional sentiment, framing ruling elites as corrupt or incompetent authorities. In this sense, populist regimes are characterized by their leaders' quest for personal relationships with their supporters as a means of opposing established institutions. The personalities of these leaders are essential as they seek to rally the masses for social change; they aim to create new standards for political behavior while challenging established institutions. Consequently, this portion of the study analyzes the “military populism” and its nature within the context of recent coups in Francophone West Africa. The aim is to critically examine the findings gathered throughout this research, drawing connections between the rise of military coups (military populism) and the broader rising impatience with Western states, especially France's economic and military presence in the region. The chapter equally presents the specific characteristics of military populism as evidenced by recent political upheavals in my four case study countries. Moreover, it analyzes how these coups have been driven by populist rhetoric and strategies, leveraging anti-establishment sentiments and appeals to address popular grievances related to corruption, economic inequality, and insecurity. Finally, it covers the key characteristics of the recent West African coup actions that align with

the rising mistrust in LIO, drawing relation to the core argument presented in this study.

5.2. The Populist Nature of the Recent Coups in West Africa

Starting in 2021, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso have had a disturbing succession of military interventions, indicating a celebrated break from established so-called democratic governance standards. In Guinea, a year of severe demonstrations was spurred by a constitutional referendum that allowed Alpha Condé to run for a third term in government, as well as disputed parliamentary elections in which his party, the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG), won a majority of seats. The numerous protests culminated on September 5, when Colonel Mamady Doumbouya announced on state television the incarceration of President Alpha Condé and the breakdown of the constitution (Jazeera, 2021). Similarly, on May 24, 2021, two months before Guinea's revolution, Mali had its second military takeover in nine months. Malian troops detained interim leaders Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane for allegedly arranging a government change without telling Vice President Colonel Assimi Goïta. Goïta took office on August 18, 2020, after toppling then-President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (also known as IBK). The May coup in Mali followed three months of demonstrations spearheaded by the June 5 Movement-Rally of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP), which contested the April legislative elections after opposition leader Soumaila Cissé was abducted by armed forces. The results, which showed IBK's party winning 51 of 147 seats, were instantly challenged as falsified (SIPRI 2020).

These coups have sent ripples across the region, increasing fears about the fragility of democratic institutions and the possibility of widespread instability. In March 2021, the evolving political environment in Niger added another degree of complexity, with a coup attempt foiled only days before the president's scheduled inauguration. Subsequently, in July 2023, Niger was subjected to a successful military takeover, indicating another facet of the region's political instability and fragility (IISS, 2023). These incidents are representative of a larger worldwide trend marked by the rise of populist sentiment. Rising social and economic pressures, along with a decline in trust in traditional democratic institutions, have produced ideal ground for this rise of status-quo-challenging movements (Pintsch, Hammerschmidt & Meyer, 2022). West Africa,

particularly in its Francophone nations, has emerged as a focus point for these dynamics, as seen by the rise of coups d'état since the beginning of 2021.

As elaborated in the conceptualization section of this study, the populism literature is generally categorized into three major approaches: the conceptual, discursive, and political perspectives or logic. These approaches can be understood as analyzing populism as an ideology, a discourse, and a political strategy. Populism as an ideology involves examining the ideologies of populist leaders within the broader context of their political parties. It views populism as a set of ideas employed to appeal to the masses, emphasizing the role of populist ideologies within their respective party ideologies (Mudde, 2004; 2007; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012). Secondly, populism as a political strategy explores the methods or strategies employed by populists to achieve their political goals (Wayland, 2001; Roberts, 2006; Pankowski, 2010; Jansen, 2011; Weyland, 2017). Lastly, populism as a discourse, which is vastly employed in this study, focuses on the linguistic aspect, analyzing the speeches, social media posts, and political rallies of populist leaders. This perspective sees populism as a discursive style through which leaders convey their ideas to the public, portraying themselves as representatives of the "pure people" against the ruling elite (Kazin, 1995; Laclau, 2005; Panniza, 2005; Hawkins, 2009; Muller, 2016).

The notion of "the people" within populism has historically been framed in Western party political contexts, where charismatic leaders play a pivotal role as mediators of populist sentiment. They appeal to the "pure people" against the perceived corruption of the elite, embodying what is commonly termed a "top-down approach" (He, Eldridge II, & Broersma, 2023). (See Figure 2.) These dynamics were prominently reflected in the findings of this study.

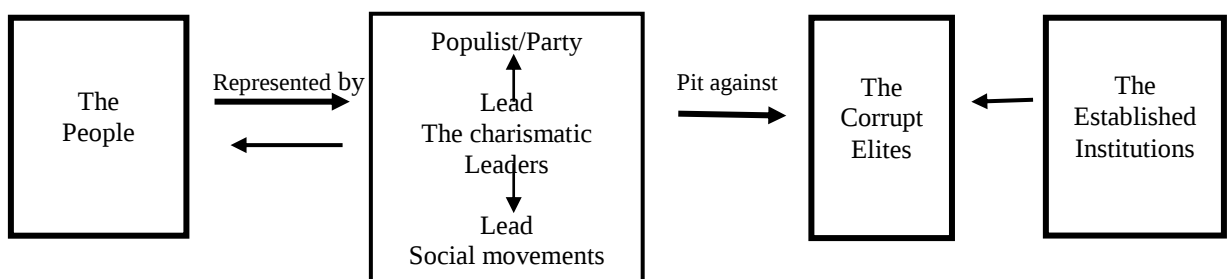


Figure 5.1. Top-Down Populism Diagram

Source: Adopted from: Kun He, Scott A. Eldridge II & Marcel Broersma (2023)

As the adopted top-down figure above illustrates, the military in this form of populist regimes is distinguished by the significance of their charismatic leaders who seek direct connection with their “people.” Moreover, they directly oppose the “established institutional framework” through different movements. Consequently, individual leaders' personalities are significant as they seek to rally large segments of the common “people” for social transformation without necessarily adopting a particularly “leftist” stance. The regimes thus target established institutions and seek to establish new rules for guiding political and social conduct. As seen recently in West Africa and the Sahel region, movements are impatient with formal laws, bureaucratic institutions, established hierarchies, and conventional leaders and beliefs. Therefore, they stand for the revival of “traditions” that have characterized their people's or nation's grandeur at some assumed earlier time (Bienen, 1984). The cry for the revival of the people’s “self” was evident in Mali recently when the coup leader, Col. Assimi Goita, called for a referendum that enhanced the adoption of a new constitution (2023), which relegated the French language from the country’s official language to a working or business language. The adoption of the local languages, including “Bambara, Hassaniya, Fula, Bobo, and Soninke,” proves the regime’s stand for the revival of the nation’s splendor and a project to connect with the common people who take pride in these languages (Eng, 2023b). Moreover, the adoption of the local languages does not only portray the regimes’ stance on the traditional revival but also calls for a relook at the established system that is governed by the rules and values of imperial powers.

In each of the coup cases of this study, the military leaders who orchestrated the coups harnessed “populist sentiments” to legitimize their actions. For instance, in Mali, Colonel Assimi Goïta justified the coup by accusing the Western or French-backed civilian government of failing to address insecurity and economic hardship. Similar narratives were employed by coup leaders in Niger and Burkina Faso, where leaders like General Abdourahamane Tchiani and Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba positioned themselves as champions of “the people.” In each case, including the case of Guinea, the coup leaders promise to restore national dignity and sovereignty. Mamady Doumbouya of Guinea, for instance, has maintained that “we will no longer entrust politics to one man; we will entrust it to the people (Devermont, 2021).

As shown in the figure above, social movements and civil societies are vital in populist movements, and the post-coup mass protests in Mali particularly relied on them. These groups, particularly within the M5-RPF alliance, have been instrumental in mobilizing public sentiment and shaping the political narrative in the country. The Coordination des Mouvements, Associations et Sympathisants (CMAS), led by influential religious leader Mahmoud Dicko, played a crucial role in rallying the people's support against the former IBK administration. Dicko's religious authority and his shift from supporting to opposing IBK highlight the dynamic nature of these movements. Moreover, the civil society movements remain impactful on the recent rise against civilian leaders in the region, as their movements inspire greater challenges even to the Western or French presence in the region. Therefore, in each of the coup cases, the military leaders have relied vastly on these movements. However, while they gained recognition for ousting unpopular Western-backed leaders, their pledge to free the region from foreign, particularly French, influence has been a more powerful motivator of their popularity and legitimacy. The portrayal of an external enemy (France) has significantly boosted the popularity of these coup leaders, overshadowing any actions and pledges they have made for the people (Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023).

**Table 5.1. Adopted by the Author Based on the Various
Speeches of the Coup Leaders**

Identified characteristics of military populism in the recent West African coups (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger)	Description
Anti-Establishment Rhetoric	In all four cases, the military leaders portray the so-called western-baked civilian governments as corrupt, elitist, and detached from the needs of the "common people."
Appealing to Popular Discontent	Coup leaders leveraged widespread public discontent with civilian governments, capitalizing on frustrations over unfulfilled promises and socio-economic challenges. The anti-establishment narrative resonated with segments of the population disillusioned with the political status quo.
Focus on corruption and accountability	Emphasis on rooting out systemic corruption and holding accountable those responsible for mismanagement.
The Promise of Immediate Solutions	Coups are presented as quick and decisive actions to address economic hardship, insecurity, and instability.

Source: Adopted by the author

- The figure above illustrates the essential elements of “populism” or “military populism” identified in coups throughout West African countries, showing the interventions' populist nature. The identified elements are in line with the conceptualization of populism as an antiestablishment and anti-political movement or sentiment (Glaser, 2018), in which the people's stance against the corrupt elites or politicians in this case (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2013) Each trait demonstrates how military officials have used populist rhetoric and techniques to appeal to popular emotion and defend their actions as necessary reactions to perceived inadequacies in the western-backed civilian rules. These corrupt elites are not only the local civilian leaders but also the hegemonic states present in the region.

5.2.1. The Anti-Establishment Sentiment

As elaborated above, the anti-institutional and anti-establishment sentiment embedded in the recent series of military coups in West Africa constitutes an important aspect of their populist nature. Populism, at its core, thrives on challenging the status quo and the existing institutions of a particular state (Ucen, 2007). The military officers who conducted these recent coups expertly exploit this anti-establishment trend to position themselves as advocates of the "common people." This purposeful picture casts the military as a putative buffer against perceived institutional failings, particularly those blamed on allegedly corrupt civilian governments. This picture presents the military as a supposed safeguard against the perceived institutional failings, particularly those attributable to past corrupt civilian administrations. The Burkinabe's youngest coup leader and the head of state since 2022 equally proved this picture in his speech at the 2023 Russia-Africa summit that was attended by sixteen (16) African states including, Goita of Mali and the Guinean Minister of Foreign Affairs. At the summit, Ibrahim Traore, the president of Burkina Faso, maintained that:

The problem is seeing African heads of state, who bring nothing to “people” who are struggling, singing the same song as the imperialists who call us ‘militia’. As a result, they end up referring to us as “people” who do not respect human rights,” Traore said. ...“We, African heads of state, must stop acting like marionettes who dance each time the imperialists pull on our strings (Eng, 2023).

The portrayal of the military as people's saviors becomes a key motif, with them serving as a countermeasure to perceived corruption, insecurity, and inefficiency in

civilian institutions. In the case of Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and recently, Niger, the coup leaders maintained that their interventions are the only way to preserve the interests of the "common people" and the state in the face of institutional collapse. Consequently, a day after the arrest of the Malian civilian leader, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, in August 2020, the state's National "Committee for the Salvation of the People" primarily accused Boubacar's government of corruption. The committee declared its intention to replace Keita, backing that they are standing to "assume our responsibilities before the people and in the eyes of history" (Baltai, 2023). Following a similar path in September 2021, Col. Mamady Doumbouya justified the ousting of Guinean leader Alpha Condé on national television, asserting that "the duty of a soldier" is to save the country (RTG, 2021)." Moreover, Burkina Faso's President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré's replacement was justified or legitimized with similar lines in the post-coup speeches. Just four months after the Guinean coup and Doumbouya's "duty of the soldier" speech, Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Damiba explained the overthrow in Burkina Faso by emphasizing the severity of the ongoing Islamist insurgency, stating that it had "imposed" the intervention of his "Patriotic Movement for Protection and Restoration." He pledged to step down once the security situation was under control as Doumbouya. These narratives not only legitimize the various coups but also strengthen the leaders' appeal to the common people's dissatisfaction with the existing political system. However, despite the promises made by the coup organizing committees to transition to civilian governments, proposed elections are still years away in the various countries as of June 2024. Moreover, divisions within the interim authorities in Mali and Burkina Faso have led to two additional coups, further exacerbating instability.

5.2.2. Identified Factors Influencing Anti-Establishment Sentiments

- The recent rise of anti-establishment sentiments and the surge of coups across Francophone West Africa reflect a different set of factors, each unique to the specific context of the four countries involved. While the causes of each coup may vary, this study has identified common drivers that contribute to this "coup wave" in the region. One significant factor is the growing financial and political "inequality" sensed between the West and the common people of the partnered Africa. Financial interest has been assumed as one of the vital factors impacting "people's" political choices

(Gozgor, 2022), and this issue remains pervasive in the four case study countries of this study. Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger are all on the top list of the world's poorest countries according to the 2024 world population review.⁵ Economic hardship equally creates fertile ground for social unrest and discontent among citizens (O'Kane, 1993). This, in turn, inspires dissatisfaction with governments that are already perceived as ineffective in addressing basic needs and improving living standards. Moreover, the recent challenges posed by the coronavirus and the global economic downturn have exacerbated existing socio-economic problems in the region. These crises have strained healthcare systems, disrupted economies, and exacerbated poverty. This inspires grievances against governments and international partners perceived as ineffective in managing these crises. Additionally, it is maintained that these challenges are part of the many factors influencing the recent rise of populism and the election of populist leaders in many parts of the world (O'Connor, 2017).

The socio-economic conditions in Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have been marked by persistent poverty, widespread unemployment, and inadequate state actions. Despite substantial foreign aid and intervention, the states have struggled to achieve significant economic development. The coup leaders thus maintain that corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of effective governance have exacerbated these issues.

These are also leading to widespread public disillusionment. In many rural and peripheral areas, state presence is minimal, and local populations feel neglected by central governments that are often perceived as being more accountable to international donors than to their citizens. This disconnect creates ground for populist rhetoric that blames entrenched elites and foreign powers for the lack of progress and sovereignty. These actions have not only given rise to populist movements but have also emboldened autocratic tendencies in many states (Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023).

- Another identified factor that has inspired anti-institutional or anti-elitist movements in the case study countries of this thesis is the issue of insecurity. Countries grappling

⁵ *Poorest Countries in the world 2024*. (2024). <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/poorest-countries-in-the-world>

with insurgencies and terrorism may turn to the military for a more robust response, leading to increased military involvement (Kemence, 2013). Despite the presence of different Western hegemonic states in West Africa and the Sahel, the region continues to face severe security challenges. This persistent insecurity has thus become a critical factor fueling public impatience with both local and international institutions, culminating in recent military coups. One of the most referenced examples is Mali, where despite many international interventions, including a significant French military presence under Operation Barkhane, jihadist insurgencies and inter-communal violence have continued unabated. Consequently, the inability of these interventions to establish lasting peace and security has eroded the common people's trust in both the civilian Malian government and its international allies. This disillusionment contributed to the coups in 2020 and 2021, as the population grew increasingly frustrated with the ineffective status quo (Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023).

In Mali, France's perceived closeness to Tuareg rebels sparks another bigger controversy. When the French military stopped Malian forces from taking over Kidal (the country's northern town) in 2013, many Malians saw this as proof of a French conspiracy with northern separatists. Similarly, the people in the region believe that France's failure to stabilize Mali is intentional. France has a "hidden agenda" that involves perpetuating instability in the Sahel to maintain political control and exploit Mali and the broader region economically. Moreover, the French prolonged presence in the region justifies a type of international governance that the common people in the region see as humiliating and an infringement on their sovereignty. Therefore, in Niger, for instance, a significant majority of the population (64%) stands against the new government's reliance on foreign military support (Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023).

Burkina Faso is another important example. The country continues to experience violence from militant groups popularly known to be linked with al-Qaeda and ISIS despite liberal back aid and training for its security forces. Therefore, this growing insecurity, including attacks on civilians and the displacement of thousands, has inspired the Burkinabe's dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction was a significant driver behind the military coup in January 2022, reflecting a broader regional trend where the common people are losing faith in democratic institutions and international support frameworks. In all cases, the sense of insecurity and failure of both local and

international actors to address these issues have led to a surge in populist impatience. Finally, this has resulted in support for military takeovers as a perceived solution to restore stability.

5.3. Growing Mistrust in the Liberal Order in West Africa

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 symbolized the end of the Cold War and was heralded by many, including American scholar Francis Fukuyama, as the beginning of a new era in which liberal democracy and the LIO would become the dominant global ideology or value—a phenomenon he famously referred to as the "end of history." Fukuyama deliberated that liberal democracy and free-market capitalism represented the culmination of human sociopolitical evolution (Fukuyama, 1989). However, the recent decades have revealed significant flaws in this optimistic vision, as rising global socioeconomic challenges have exposed deep-seated inequalities and sparked political upheaval. This is evident in the rise of populist leaders in the West, such as Donald Trump in the U.S. and various far-right leaders in Europe.

The rising economic disparity in countries and between the so-called Global North (the richer West) and the Global South (which the case study countries of this study are said to be part of) has been one of the most prominent issues of the post-Cold War era. The gap between rich and poor nations continues to widen despite economic integration and globalization. Developed countries still control most of the world's financial institutions and diplomatic spheres, sometimes at the expense of less developed countries. This shows itself not just in differences in wealth but also in power and political influence. Therefore, these disparities have increased dissatisfaction and brought about important changes in world politics, as there has been a discernible increase in populist leaders in recent years who capitalize on the discontent of the disenfranchised masses. These leaders commonly exploit economic grievances and portray themselves as the common people's defenders against a disconnected elite. This trend is not exclusive to the Global North; in the Global South, where social and economic inequality is even more pronounced, it has become increasingly apparent. Another example of this political shift can be seen in the coup cases of this study, as the military leaders have successfully overthrown incumbent governments, garnering substantial popular support. These coup leaders cite the

economic and diplomatic inequalities imposed by the West as justifications for their actions, as they maintain that the existing governments, often seen as puppets of Western interests, have failed to address the needs and aspirations of their people. The popular support for these coups is thus symptomatic of broader disillusionment with the LIO that Fukuyama envisioned. Many citizens in the case study states of this study perceive the global financial and diplomatic relations with the West as inherently biased against them. This perception is compounded by the fact that despite promises of development and prosperity through liberal democratic reforms, many regions in the region have seen little improvement in their living standards (Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023). Moreover, the response of the international community to these coups further shows the uneven power dynamics at play. While Western states and international organizations condemn these coups and impose sanctions, such actions sometimes deepen the resolve of coup leaders and their supporters, who view these measures as further evidence of Western hypocrisy and paternalism.

Amidst different socioeconomic issues and the challenges posed by COVID-19 in 2021, Afrobarometer conducted a study that revealed vital perceptions among citizens of different African nations regarding external influences or the presence of various hegemony in their countries. The findings were striking: China was viewed most positively, with 63% expressing a favorable opinion, followed closely by the United States at 60%. In contrast, the "former colonial powers," typically European nations, ranked lower, with only 46% perceiving their influence positively. Of course, it is not new that trust issues have long existed between the West and Africa due to feelings of paternalism, foreign meddling, and a perceived lack of effectiveness associated with Western assistance through its liberal institutional ideals (Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023). However, studies have suggested that the escalating rise of social and economic inequality has vitally diminished public trust in global institutions and the liberal internal order. Consequently, this has significantly impacted the rise of populism in the West (Colgan & Keohane, 2011), and again triggered the recent rise of civil unrest and protests across West Africa. These actions have not only given rise to populist movements but have also inspired people's support for different leadership styles in many African states. The repercussions of this trend are particularly common in West Africa, especially within the Francophone state, where an unprecedented wave of coups d'état has unfolded, marking a departure from the relative stability that followed

the adoption of the Lomé Declaration in mid-2000 (Gallo, 2022). This was a declaration that explicitly stood against coups and imposed sanctions on regimes that ascended to power through such means.

It is equally vital to highlight that in Africa, particularly in Francophone West Africa, the recent emergence of alternative alliance options starting from different development models offered by China to unconventional security partnerships with Russia and even smaller engagements with countries like Turkey and Gulf nations reduces these states' reliance on the West. These countries' alliances do not come with ideology or value imposition, at least for now. Moreover, these alternative states' presence in West Africa differs significantly from that of Western countries' presence since the countries' independence in several key aspects. For example, China's approach to infrastructure development and investment through its new silk road, or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), focuses on building transportation networks and energy facilities (Zhao, 2020). Critics have, however, argued that these projects are typically financed by Chinese loans and carried out by Chinese contractors, which can lead to concerns about countries' future debt dependency on China. However, African nations and regional organizations have demonstrated little setback. Some states and institutes have even shown their willingness to participate in BRI through their foreign visits and other diplomatic actions. This was evident as many African leaders were present at the first and later BRI meetings for global collaboration when important infrastructure deals with China were negotiated (Lisinge, 2020).

In addition to China's, Russia's growing acceptance in West Africa through its security initiatives signals an increasing mistrust of the West and its liberal order. For example, the coup leaders in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have expelled French troops and ambassadors. This shows a significant diminishment in France's role in the region. Moreover, after the July military coup in Niger, thousands of coup supporters and anti-French organizations rallied in the capital, Niamey, condemning France and burning French flags; many other demonstrators equally waved Russian flags and voiced support for Moscow. Similar actions have occurred in Burkina Faso and Mali, reflecting a broader shift in allegiance away from Western influence (VOA, 2023). These supports are backed by the arguments that Russia will provide better military support, including training, equipment, and the deployment of private military

companies like the Wagner Group, which directly bolster local security forces against terrorist threats and insurgencies. This practical assistance is appealing to West African governments seeking immediate and robust security solutions without the political conditions often attached to Western aid. Additionally, Russia's policy of non-interference in domestic affairs and respect for sovereignty contrasts with Western countries' emphasis on governance and human rights reforms, making Russian support more attractive to the region's new leaders.



Figure 5.2. Protesters in Niger Holding the Russian Flag and a Banner That Says: "France, get out of Africa."

Source: Bezreh, A. A. (n.d.). Niger coup: France and Russia's battle for influence. The New Arab.
<https://www.newarab.com/analysis/niger-coup-france-and-russias-battle-influence>

Unlike the recent Chinese financial and developmental engagement and Russia's questioned security initiatives in West Africa, Western countries have maintained a presence in the region for over 50 years, with a strong emphasis on governance, human rights, and development aid rooted in liberal democratic principles. Western aid programs prioritize capacity building, education, healthcare, and institutional reforms aimed at fostering good governance and economic progress. However, it remains questionable whether these initiatives have been effective for the four countries selected for this study, as they remain among the world's poorest countries and the region continues to face significant security challenges. These setbacks are critical, despite the longstanding relationship between the West, particularly France, and the region. Consequently, there is growing discontent with France and the liberal ideals it

represents. This discontent was evident in the demonstrations in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Niger, which culminated in a series of coups in these countries.

5.4. France: The Tarnished Image of the LIO in West Africa

If West Africa is becoming increasingly unhappy with the West or developing mistrust towards the LIO, as this study argues, France has been the most affected. No other country exemplifies these sentiments as much as France. An example of this rejection of the current domestic and international order has been evident in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and, to a lesser extent, in Guinea, as there has been a series of protests against French institutions in various cities of these coup-affected countries. These protests are evident from the October 2022 attacks on the French Embassy in Burkina Faso's capital (Ouagadougou) and the French Institutions in Bamako, Mali. These were demonstrated through consistent demonstrations in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger against France's presence in the West African and Sahel region. Instances such as the ransacking of French-owned businesses and the numerous social media attacks on French politicians show the widespread rejection among the common people toward any form of French presence—military, diplomatic, or economic (Shurkin, 2024).

The rejection of France's presence in West Africa, as manifested in pre-coup demonstrations and post-coup celebrations, tells how the common people in this region are increasingly losing faith in the LIO that France represents in the region. This sentiment is especially evident in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, where recent coups have been accompanied by public displays of anti-French sentiment. As elaborated in chapter four of this thesis, these countries have a long history with France, dating back to colonial times, which left a trail of economic and political grievances. The people in the region see France's regional involvement as a continuation of neocolonialism and economic exploitation in the name of liberal democracy and economic development; it has indeed been argued that the French proposed currency, "Communauté Financière Africaine" (CFA), is a clear example of working neocolonialism in the region today. CFA are two regional currencies used in fourteen of the former French colonies in West and Central Africa. These currencies are guaranteed by the French Treasury and pegged to the euro, ensuring currency stability

but also drawing criticism for the region's perpetuating economic dependency on France (Taylor, 2019).

The failure of French-led military interventions to restore stability undermines France's role further. Operations such as Barkhane, which aimed to combat extremist violence, were deemed ineffective and sometimes exacerbated local conflicts. Despite significant French military and financial presence, the ongoing insecurity and lack of development have resulted in widespread disillusionment (Elischer et al., 2022). This discontent stems not only from the failure of military interventions but also from France's representation of a broader LIO that prioritizes Western models of governance and economic policy. These are viewed as inadequate for the challenges and contexts of the region. For instance, as seen in chapter four of this study, since 2000, Africa has experienced 45 coup attempts, 23 of which have been successful. These successful coups occurred in fourteen countries, with ten in former French colonies, two in former British colonies, and two in former Portuguese territories. Moreover, 16 of these 23 successful coups took place in the former French colonies including, the ones selected for this study.⁶ This pattern raises significant questions about France's influence and the liberal ideas it represents in its former colonies.

In response to this growing disillusionment, there has been a significant shift in the foreign policy decisions of Mali, Burkina Faso, and recently Niger. The new military leaders are seeking alternative partnerships and alignment with prescribed illiberal states such as China, Turkey, and Russia, which provide different models of engagement. As elaborated above, China's approach, which is distinguished by a non-interference policy and significant infrastructure investments, appeals to the people seeking economic development without the constraints that Western aid imposes. China's initiatives have made significant inroads into Africa, providing much-needed infrastructure development in stark contrast to the perceived exploitative practices of former colonial powers (Schiere, 2011). Moreover, Türkiye's expanding influence in the region, through military cooperation and cultural diplomacy, provides another

⁶ *France has become the common denominator behind Africa's recent coups.* (2023, September 28). Africa at LSE. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2023/09/28/france-has-become-the-common-denominator-behind-africas-recent-coups/>

model of engagement that diverges from LIO. These assistances are seen as more respectful to the national sovereignty. They focus on “real” cooperation rather than imposing political conditions. Similarly, Russia's growing presence, marked by military and security agreements, reflects a pragmatic approach to foreign relations that prioritizes immediate security needs. (Marc & Jones, 2021).

West African countries are increasingly looking for partnerships that respect their autonomy and address their specific needs. The appeal of these alternative partners lies in their focus on mutual benefit, infrastructure development, and security assistance without the ideological baggage of the LIO (Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023). Therefore, this realignment indicates a transformation in the foreign policy landscape, which is inspired by a desire for genuine development and stability over adherence to Western models of liberal democracy and economic policy. Consequently, civilian leaders perceived as loyal to France and its liberal order have been overthrown, and instead of widespread fear or anger, these events have often been met with celebration in the streets. In Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, the removal of pro-French governments was not seen as a descent into chaos but rather as an opportunity to break free from the constraints of a system that many felt had failed them. The jubilant public response highlights a collective desire for new governance models and partnerships that promise a break from the past. According to a study conducted by Afrobarometer, the majority of Guineans and Malians favor democracy over other forms of government. However, the people's trust in democratic institutions remains low. In Mali, 82% of the population trusts the military, whereas only 47% trust the civilian president.⁷ These statistics show there has been strong popular support for the coups in both countries.

These statistics and coups equally reflect a deeper dissatisfaction with the LIO and the hegemons that serve as its agents in the Sahel or the West African region. Moreover, the widespread support for the new military juntas indicates that many West Africans see these changes as a possible way to reclaim control of their countries' destiny. This support is motivated by the belief that new alliances with non-Western powers will result in more tailored and effective solutions to the region's complex problems. The

⁷ *Breaking the cycle: Military coups in West Africa | Fragile States Index.* (2022c, July 8). https://fragilestatesindex.org/2022/07/08/breaking-the-cycle-military-coups-in-west-africa/#_ftn7

enthusiastic public reaction to these political shifts demonstrates a widespread rejection of the status quo and an embrace of alternative national sovereignty and development paths.

5.5. ECOWAS and the Liberal Values it Represents

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is arguably the most liberally structured organization in the West African sub-region. Consequently, it has gotten its share of the growing mistrust in the LIO. ECOWAS is a political and economic organization of fifteen West African countries, including the four states selected for this state. The organization was established in 1975 to promote economic integration and cooperation among its member states, facilitating trade, investment, and sustainable development. In recent years, the organization has also worked through its monitoring group, ECOMOG (deployed in Liberia in 1990, Sierra Leone in 1997, and Guinea-Bissau in 1999) to maintain regional peace and security, often through diplomatic efforts and military interventions when necessary (ECOWAS, 2024). However, the organization's recent actions have faced radical responses and criticism due to its inconsistency and recent plans to intervene in regional military coups. For instance, following the overthrow of Niger's government and the hostage-taking of President Mohamed Bazoum, ECOWAS issued an ultimatum to the coup leaders, threatening military intervention should Bazoum not be reinstated. Bazoum was one of the falling elected presidents and pro-Western governments in West Africa. In solidarity, ECOWAS, through its leadership, declared suspending all forms of diplomatic relations with Niger and closing both land and air borders. Concurrently, the military-led governments of Mali and Burkina Faso issued a joint statement cautioning that any ECOWAS intervention in Niger might trigger a military response from their respective nations. The Guinean coup leader, Mamady Doumbouya, equally supported the Nigerien coup leaders, as Guinea, along with Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, are all suspended from ECOWAS (France 24, 2023).

The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, adopted in 2001, establishes mechanisms for addressing unconstitutional changes of government. This protocol encompasses provisions related to democratic governance among ECOWAS member states, including the conduct of elections, the neutrality of the judiciary, and

the impartiality of security forces (ECOWAS, 2001). Despite all ECOWAS members being signatories to this protocol, adherence to these specifications has been inconsistent across the member states. The organization has a history of suspending and sanctioning member states, only to subsequently readmit them once they meet the requirement of holding a "democratic election." For instance, Guinea's political history includes long-serving rulers such as Ahmed Sékou Touré and Lansana Conté, who held office for twenty-five and twenty-four years, respectively. In 2020, former President Alpha Condé, Guinea's first democratically elected leader, amended the constitution to extend his tenure for two additional terms. Although Condé initially symbolized a new era for Guinean democracy, the constitutional amendment sparked widespread protests. ECOWAS, however, merely called for dialogue between the opposing parties and did not impose sanctions on Condé. The 2020 elections proceeded, and ECOWAS election observers deemed them legitimate, validating the results. Nevertheless, Condé was ousted in a military coup one year later, prompting ECOWAS to immediately suspend Guinea and impose sanctions (France 24, 2020).

The situation in Guinea shows ECOWAS's shortcomings in adopting a preventive approach to coups. Condé's constitutional violations precipitated the coup, yet the mechanism for conflict—prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping, and security—failed to alert ECOWAS about the potential for such an event. Unlike nongovernmental groups, which are recognized for their capacity for violence, the mechanism does not automatically classify state institutions that violate electoral laws as threats. For the mechanism to serve as an effective preventive measure, it must consider governments that breach constitutional norms as potential threats on par with nongovernmental entities. Additionally, ECOWAS overlooked the opposition to the constitutional changes, whether expressed through democratic channels or mass protests, intervening only post-coup rather than persuading Condé to comply with constitutional provisions.

5.6. Alliance of Sahel States

The establishment of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES/ASS) marks another vital shift in West African geopolitics. Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, driven by a growing mistrust in the West and the regional body ECOWAS, have united to form a mutual

defense pact. The alliance was officially formed in September 2023, in direct response to threats of military intervention and economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS following the military coup in Niger (Al Jazeera, 2023). The formation of the ASS is a reaction to what these nations perceive as undue foreign interference and punitive measures by ECOWAS, which the new military leaders argue aggravate their internal challenges rather than alleviate them. In a show of solidarity, Burkina Faso and Mali declared that they would deploy troops to defend Niger should ECOWAS engage militarily. This collective stance shows the primary tenet of the ASS charter: “Any attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one member state will be regarded as an aggression against all members, necessitating mutual defense and assistance” (Modern Diplomacy, 2023).

In his address at the 78th UN General Assembly, the Burkinabe minister of state, Bassolma Bazie, repeatedly made a strong case for global inequality. Speaking on behalf of the people of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, the minister equally maintained that these people and states are facing a conflict that was imposed on them by the imperialists under the pretext of terrorism that they are fighting today. Moreover, Bassolma pointed out that, despite the announcement of a \$2 billion commitment from ECOWAS to create an intervention force to restore democracy, just \$25 million had been provided until the organization's collapse and the formation of the G5-Sahel. Therefore, he declared that Burkina Faso will take autonomous actions with the partners it chooses and purchase from the nations it chooses, as he pleaded with other nations to provide the weaponry that Burkina Faso needs to defend itself and keep its people safe from “imperialism” and “terrorism.” This speech was delivered during a pivotal moment in the region’s history as three juntas signed the ASS charter in September of the same year. An action to curtail foreign presence and regional instability and form a cooperative and defensive endeavor, demonstrating the states’ dedication to “collective security.”⁸

In the same address, Bassolma maintained that ASS was established by the three states “to take our destiny in our own hands,” and this is a treaty that will safeguard their

⁸ Reuters. (2023, September 16). Reuters. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/mali-niger-burkina-faso-sign-sahel-security-pact-2023-09-16/>

nations and impact their development goals. Moreover, to improve living conditions for the Burkinabe people, the government extends an invitation to partners—as long as those partners align with the four pillars that reflect the transition vision. He asserted that "our attachment to human dignity goes beyond democracy" and that "we African peoples are profoundly democratic." Instead, he declared, We reject this democratic trap, which has proven to be a means of subjugating our states through their frequently impostor leaders." He continues to paraphrase, "We have decided to say no to all these so-called friends who want our so-called good or who threaten us with war to impose their friendship," as he declared that Niger is headed towards becoming the second Libya vehemently. As President Erdogan has repeatedly advocated (the world is bigger than five) during his addresses, minister Bassolma referred to Africa's lack of veto power or permanent membership as "a crime of the UN" and "a state crime." The UN, ECOWAS, and the African Union need to transform from being "structures used by a minority of heads of state" to "true organizations of peoples."⁹ He emphasized that global inequality is intentional, denouncing the genuine wounds that poison cooperation as state lies, diplomatic duplicity, power thirst, frantic profit-seeking, the devilish spirit of control, and man (UNGA, 2023).

The Guinean coup leader, Mamadi Doumbouya, whose state is not yet a signatory of ASS, made similar points in his speech during the same UNGA session. He equally argued that the People of Africa are more ready than ever to "take their destiny into their own hands," as Africa is dying from a governance and political system that was imposed on her by the West (UNGA2023). Like Bassolma of Niger, Doumbouya repeatedly maintained that the Sahel is facing one of the most hazardous crises in its political history, and ECOWAS must stop interfering in the involved states' domestic affairs and arrange better policy actions in line with dialogue. He equally declared: "We are neither pro- nor anti-American, pro- nor anti-Chinese, pro- nor anti-French, pro- nor anti-Russian, pro- nor anti-Turkish. We are simply pro-African." "The African people are tired, exhausted of the categorizations with which everyone wants to box us in."¹⁰

⁹ *Burkina Faso His Excellency Bassolma Bazie Minister of State UNGA 78TH address.* (2023, September 23). <https://gadebate.un.org/en/78/burkina-faso>. <https://gadebate.un.org/en/78/burkina-faso>

¹⁰ *President Mamadi Doumbouya 78th UNGA Address.* (2023, September). United Nations. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://gadebate.un.org/en/78/guinea>

The formation of the Alliance is seen as a move towards resistance against the injustices and inequalities that have persisted throughout Africa and are a legacy of colonialism. Beyond simply being a new alliance, the ASS openly continues to challenge the established international arrangements that Stephen Krasner (1999) would refer to as "organized hypocrisy." This is an argument that the international system usually presents itself as a faithful observance of long-standing standards and values, such as human rights, non-intervention, and sovereignty, but in reality, these standards are regularly broken or applied unevenly. Therefore, the formation of ASS is a reaction to perceived inconsistencies and double standards in the application of international norms by Western powers and regional bodies like ECOWAS. The states view the punitive measures and threats of intervention by ECOWAS and Western nations as hypocritical, undermining their sovereignty while professing to uphold democratic values and stability. Thus, by forming the ASS, these states plan to assert their sovereignty and counter what they see as the organized hypocrisy of the international order (Krasner, 1999; Al Jazeera, 2023; Modern Diplomacy, 2023).

The departure of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from ECOWAS shows vitally a deeper rift as these states accused ECOWAS of leaving its founding principles and succumbing to the influence of foreign powers, especially France, the tarnished image of LIO in Africa. Moreover, the regimes in their joint statements have criticized the regional bloc (ECOWAS) for not properly supporting their united war against terrorism and for imposing sanctions that exacerbated their economic hardship. These actions undermine the collective security and liberal values that the regional bloc has tried to uphold, potentially leading to deeper security and financial issues in the region. Moreover, the ASS's alignment with non-western powers or so-called illiberal regimes, particularly Russia, reflects a strategic pivot away from traditional Western alliances. Then there are the intermediate powers, like Turkey, which has increased defense and military cooperation with post-coup nations like Mali and Burkina Faso and is looking into deeper military connections with the junta in Niger (Frederick et al., 2020). Therefore, this shift shows a bigger competition for power and influence in the West African region.

5.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed at addressing the main research question of this study, and it approached that by discoursing and analyzing the various data sources chosen for the study, including official documents, speeches, and news coverage, to identify the root cause of the recent coups in the four case study states (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger). Based on the conceptualization of populism and the use of the “top-down populism diagram” (see Figure 2), the chapter has identified populist elements in the analyzed speeches and actions of coup leaders. Moreover, there remains a growing mistrust or impatience with the traditional Western presence in the region. Therefore, the recent coups in the region prove a significant departure from the region's historical patterns of military interventions, characterized by their populist rhetoric and anti-establishment sentiments. The coups have been driven by leaders leveraging public discontent, promising immediate solutions to economic and security challenges, and positioning themselves as champions of the "common people" against perceived corrupt and ineffective Western-backed civilian governments. The chapter equally covers the underlying factors inspiring these anti-establishment sentiments, and the identified factors include economic inequality, persistent insecurity, and the perceived ineffectiveness of local and international institutions. These challenges have led to increased support for military takeovers, seen as more capable of delivering immediate improvements than the West and its LIO. Furthermore, the analysis exposes that rising mistrust in the LIO is particularly exemplified by the rejection of French influence in the region. Opinion polls thus prove that the people in the region view Western interventions and the liberal democratic model as inadequate, leading to a shift towards alternative alliances with non-Western powers such as China and Russia. This shift is marked by the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS), reflecting a collective desire among Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to assert their sovereignty and challenge traditional Western dominance.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1. Summary

This thesis has analyzed the recent surge in military coups in Francophone West Africa, with a particular case focus on Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger. The study was guided by a primary research question: Why have military coups (military populism) been on the rise in Francophone West Africa? Through a thorough review of the literature, the analysis of historical and contemporary data, and a detailed exploration of case studies, several critical insights have emerged. Firstly, this thesis has argued that the recent coups in Francophone West Africa are different from past coups in the region due to their populist nature. The leaders of these coups have harnessed populist rhetoric, emphasizing anti-establishment and anti-institutional sentiments to garner support from the people. This populist approach is characterized by leaders positioning themselves as champions of the "common people" against corrupt and ineffective civilian governments, which are often seen as puppets of Western powers. Secondly, the study has identified a growing mistrust in the LIO as a significant factor contributing to the rise of "military populism" in the region. This mistrust and impatience are inspired by perceived inequalities and failures of the LIO, particularly in addressing the socio-economic challenges and security issues faced by these countries. Moreover, the analysis has shown that the West, especially France, is increasingly viewed as a neocolonial force, perpetuating economic dependency and failing to deliver on promises of stability and development. Finally, the thesis has analyzed and discussed the role of external influences and alternative alliances in shaping the political dynamics of the region. The increasing engagement with non-Western powers such as China and Russia reflects a strategic pivot away from traditional Western alliances. These new alliances are seen as more respectful of national sovereignty and more effective in addressing immediate needs without the ideological constraints imposed by Western aid and presence.

6.2. Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this thesis have significant implications for policymakers and international actors engaged in West Africa and the Sahel region. To address the root causes of the recent coups and prevent future military takeovers, several key actions are recommended:

- **Reevaluating Foreign Policy and Aid Programs:** Western states, particularly France, need to reevaluate their foreign policy and aid programs in West Africa. There should be a greater focus on addressing the real socio-economic needs of the population, reducing dependency, and fostering genuine partnerships that respect the sovereignty of these states.
- **Improving Regional Cooperation and Integration:** Regional organizations like ECOWAS and AU must take ownership of the region and strengthen their mechanisms for promoting good governance and preventing unconstitutional changes in government. This includes not only responding to coups but also addressing the underlying issues that lead to such actions, such as corruption, economic inequality, and insecurity. This should be done in line with the sovereignty, culture, and value principles of each nation.
- **Supporting Local Governance and Development Initiatives:** International and regional actors should support initiatives that build local governance capacities and promote sustainable development. This involves investing in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other critical sectors that can improve living standards and reduce public discontent.
- **Engaging with Emerging Powers:** The international community should recognize the growing influence of emerging powers like China and Russia in West Africa and seek constructive engagement with these actors. This can include exploring opportunities for “trilateral cooperation” on development and security issues.

6.3. Future Research Directions

Although this thesis has significantly covered the rise of military populism in Francophone West Africa and the growing mistrust or impatience with LIO, the research areas below could equally contribute to our understanding and betterment of the region. These will equally address the limitations of this study:

- **Comparative Studies:** Future research could compare the recent coups in Francophone West Africa with those in other regions, such as Latin America or Southeast Asia, to identify common patterns and unique factors.
- **Role of Civil Society:** A further research project could examine the role of civil society organizations in countering populist narratives and promoting democratic governance in coup-affected countries.
- **Impact of Alternative Alliances:** One could equally analyze the long-term implications of West Africa's move towards non-Western powers, including the effectiveness and sustainability of these new partnerships. This would offer insights for policymakers and the academic literature.

REFERENCES

- Akinola, A. O., & Makombe, R. (2024). Rethinking the Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096231224680>
- Abu, N., Karim, M. Z. A., & Aziz, M. I. A. (2015). Corruption, political instability, and economic development in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Is there a causal relationship? *Contemporary Economics*, 9(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.5709/ce.1897-9254.159>
- Acho, M. C., & Tacham, F. P. (2023). Examining the Reasons For and Effects of Military Coups in West Africa since 1990: The Obstacles to Democracy and Progress. *International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 20-33.
- Adams, H. (2023, October 6). Amid Coups, Public Anger, Lessons for West African Leaders and Allies. VOA. <https://www.voanews.com/amp/amid-coups-public-anger-lessons-for-west-african-leaders-and-allies-/7299264.html>
- Adebajo, A. (2002). *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Agence France-Presse. (2023, June 8). Guinea’s “Internet connectivity problems” blamed on politics. Voice of America. <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/guinea-s-internet-connectivity-problems-blamed-on-politics/7128221.html>
- Akinola, A. O., & Makombe, R. (2024). Rethinking the Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 00219096231224680.
- Akinwotu, E. (2021, May 25). Mali: leader of 2020 coup takes power after president's arrest. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/25/mali-leader-of-2020-coup-takes-power-after-presidents-arrest>
- Akwei, B., Machar, B. A., & Mnyandu, P. (2023). „Debris“ of Coups D’ état: Electoral Democracy, Election Violence, Political Vigilantism, and Elections Securitizations in Africa. *South Asian Res J Human Soc Sci*, 5(3), 65-75.
- Barka, H. B., & Ncube, M. (2012). Political Fragility in Africa: are military coups d’état a never-ending phenomenon. *African Development Bank*, 9(9).
- Baudais, V., & Chauzal, G. (2011). The 2010 coup d’état in Niger: A praetorian regulation of politics?. *African Affairs*, 110(439), 295-304.
- Berman, B. J. (1998). Ethnicity, patronage and the African state: The politics of uncivil nationalism. *African Affairs*, 97(388), 305-341.

- Bertsch, G. K., Clark, R. P., & Wood, D. M. (1978). Comparing political systems: power and policy in three worlds.
- BIENEN, H. (1985). Populist Military Regimes In West Africa. *Armed Forces & Society*, 11(3), 357–378. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45304795>
- Breaking the cycle: Military coups in West Africa | Fragile States Index. (2022a, July 8). https://fragilestatesindex.org/2022/07/08/breaking-the-cycle-military-coups-in-west-africa/#_ftn1
- Brittain, V. (1985). Introduction to Sankara & Burkina Faso.
- Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods. Oxford university press.
- Burkina Faso (03/98). (n.d.). U.S. Department of State. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burkinafaso/6083.htm#:~:text=The%20first%20president%2C%20Maurice%20Yameogo,parties%20other%20than%20the%20UDV.>
- Burkina Faso His Excellency Bassolma Bazie Minister of State UNGA 78TH address. (2023, September 23). <https://gadebate.un.org/en/78/burkina-faso>
- BURKINA FASO: World Bank Report. (2022, August). Africa Research Bulletin: Economic, Financial and Technical Series, 59(6). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6346.2022.10648.x>
- Burnham, P., Lutz, K. G., Grant, W. Z., & Layton-Henry (2008). Research Methods in Politics. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Canovan, M. (2002). Taking politics to the people: Populism as the ideology of democracy. In Democracies and the populist challenge (pp. 25-44). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Canovan, M. (2005). The people. Polity.
- Carbone, G. M. (2005). ‘Populism’ visits Africa: the case of Yoweri Museveni and no-party democracy in Uganda.
- Carbone, G., & Ragazzi, L. (2023). Is Africa turning against the West? Ledizioni.
- Cheeseman, N. (2018). Populism in Africa and the potential for “ethnically blind” politics. In D. Albertazzi & T. M. McDonnell (Eds.), Routledge Handbook of Global Populism. Routledge.
- Chigozie, C. F., & Oyinmiebi, P. T. (2022). Resurgence of military coups in West Africa: Implications for ECOWAS. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 5(2), 52-64.

- Chigozie, Chilaka Francis, and Peter Thankgod Oyinmiebi. "Resurgence of military coups in West Africa: Implications for ECOWAS." *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research* 5.2 (2022): 52-64.
- Chin, J. J., & Kirkpatrick, J. (2023). African coups in the COVID-19 era: A current history. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 5, 1077945.
- Coleman, J. S., & Brice, B. (1962). The role of the military in sub-Saharan Africa (pp. 359-405). African Studies Center, University of California.
- Colgan, J. D. (2019). Three visions of international order. *The Washington Quarterly*, 42(2), 85-98.
- Colgan, J. D., & Keohane, R. O. (2017). The liberal order is rigged: Fix it now or watch it wither. *Foreign Affairs*, 96(3), 36-44.
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2007). Military spending and the risks of coups d'états.
- Conteh-Morgan, E. (2000). *Democratization in Africa: The Theory and Dynamics of Political Transitions*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Cotler, J. (1970). Political crisis and military populism in Peru. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 6, 95-113.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications
- Decalo, S. (1973). Military coups and military regimes in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11(1), 105-127.
- Devermont, J. (2021, September 8). Guinea: The causes and consequences of West Africa's latest coup. Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/guinea-causes-and-consequences-west-africas-latest-coup>
- ECOWAS. (2001). Protocol A/SP. 1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.
- Elischer, S. (2022). Populist civil society, the Wagner Group and post coup politics in Mali. *West African Papers*, No. 36, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b6249de6-en>
- Eng, T. A. (2023). Ibrahim Traore: Why Burkina Faso's leader attracts attention. Ibrahim Traore: Why Burkina Faso's Leader Attracts Attention - TRT Afrika. <https://www.trtafrika.com/insight/ibrahim-traore-why-burkina-fasos-leader-attracts-attention-14479334>
- Engels, B. (2022). Transition now? Another coup d'état in Burkina Faso. *Review of African Political Economy*, 49(172), 315-326..

- Englebert, P. (2018). *Burkina faso: Unsteady statehood in west africa*. Routledge.
- Folola, T. (2022). Are coups back in Africa? Premium Times.
- Frederick, B., Watts, S., Lane, M., Doll, A., Rhoades, A., & Smith, M. (2020). Understanding the deterrent impact of U.S. overseas forces. In RAND Corporation eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.7249/rr2533>
- Fukuyama, F. (1989). The End of History? *The National Interest*, 16, 3–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>
- Fukuyama, F. (2012). The Future of History. *Foreign Affairs*, 1–12.
- G. John Ikenberry, The end of liberal international order?, *International Affairs*, Volume 94, Issue 1, January 2018, Pages 7–23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241>
- Glaser, E. (2018). *Anti-Politics: On the Demonization of Ideology, Authority and the State*. United Kingdom: Watkins Media.
- Gozgor, G. (2022). The role of economic uncertainty in the rise of EU populism. *Public Choice*, 190(1), 229-246.
- Guisso, B. L. (1996). Le Burkina Faso au-delà de l'ajustement structurel. *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement*, 21(2/3), 159-183.
- Hagberg, S. (2002). 'Enough is Enough': an ethnography of the struggle against impunity in Burkina Faso. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40(2), 217-246.
- Hair, J. F. (2009). *Multivariate data analysis*.
- Hair, J. F., Gabriel, M., & Patel, V. (2014). AMOS covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM): Guidelines on its application as a marketing research tool. *BrazilianJournal of Marketing*, 13(2)
- Halperin, S., & Heath, O. (2020). *Political research: methods and practical skills*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Harrington, B. (2016). To have and have more: Wealth management and the growth of global inequality. *OECD Yearbook 201*.
- Harsch, E. (2014). *Thomas Sankara: An African Revolutionary*. Ohio University Press.
- Hawkins, K. A. (2009). Is Chávez populist? Measuring populist discourse in comparative perspective. *Comparative political studies*, 42(8), 1040-1067.
- Held, D. (2014). *Models of Democracy*. California: Stanford University Press.

- Heywood, A. (2007). *Politics*. U.S: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Higgott, R., & Fuglestad, F. (1975). The 1974 Coup d'État in Niger: Towards an Explanation. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13(3), 383-398. doi:10.1017/S0022278X00052332
- Higgott, R., & Fuglestad, F. (1975). The 1974 Coup d'État in Niger: Towards an Explanation. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13(3), 383-398.
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2018). The end of liberal international order? *International Affairs*, 94(1), 7–23. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241>
- Inglehart, R. F., & Norris, P. (2016). *Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash*.
- Janowitz, M. (1988). *Military institutions and coercion in the developing nations: The military in the political development of new nations*. University of Chicago Press.
- Jazeera, A. (2021, September 8). ECOWAS suspends Guinea after coup, says it will send mediators. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/8/west-african-bloc-suspends-guineas-membership-following-coup>
- Jazeera, A. (2023). Niger coup: What you need to know. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/28/niger-coup-what-you-need-to-know>
- Jenkins, J. C., & Kposowa, A. J. (1990). Explaining Military Coups d'Etat: Black Africa, 1957-1984. *American Sociological Review*, 861-875.
- Jonah, Marawako., Pedzisai, Sixpence., D., Mapuvire. (2022). An Analysis of the Recurrence of Military Coups in Africa. A Probe into the Experiences of Central African Republic in the 21st Century. *International journal of humanities, social sciences and education*, doi: 10.20431/2349-0381.0902008
- Kandeh, J. D. (2004). *Coups from below: Armed subalterns and state power in West Africa* (pp. 1-13). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kemence, K. O. (2013). *Understanding the root causes of military coups and governmental instability in West Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College).
- Kuehn, D., & Trinkunas, H. (2019). Conditions of military contestation in populist Latin America. In *The Military's Impact on Democratic Development* (pp. 77-98). Routledge.
- Kun He, Scott A. Eldridge II & Marcel Broersma (2023). Who are the people? Populists' articulation of "the people" in contemporary China. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 16(3), 267-284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2023.2183970>

- Laclau, E. (2005). Populism: What's in a Name. *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 103-114.
- Lane, M. 2012. The Origins of the Statesman – Demagogue Distinction in and after Ancient Athens. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73(2): 179-200.
- Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). How wobbly is our democracy. *NY TIMES* (Jan. 27, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/27/opinion/sunday/democracy-polarization.html>.
- Lisinge, R. T. (2020). The Belt and Road Initiative and Africa's regional infrastructure development: implications and lessons. *Transnational Corporations Review*, 12(4), 425–438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19186444.2020.1795527>
- Luckham, R. (2001). *Conflict and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Assessment of the Issues and Evidence*. IDS Working Paper No. 128. Brighton, Sussex: Institute of Development Issues.
- Madison, J. (1788). Federalist Paper 10.
- Mali's transition: High expectations and little time. (2020, September 4). SIPRI. <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2020/malis-transition-high-expectations-and-little-time>
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton University Press.
- Mansfield, E. D., & Rudra, N. (2021). Embedded liberalism in the digital era. *International Organization*, 75(2), 558-585.
- MARC, A., & JONES, B. (2021). *THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF FRAGILITY*.
- Mawa, M., Asiimwe, S. M., & Abaho, A. (2023). Leadership, context, and populist foreign policy in East Africa: An analysis of Uganda and Rwanda. In *Populist Foreign Policy: Regional Perspectives of Populism in the International Scene* (pp. 199-221). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- McCormick, J.P. (2001). Machiavellian Democracy: Controlling Elites with Ferocious Populism. *The American Political Science Review*, 95(2), 297-313.
- McGowan, P., & Johnson, T. (1984). African Military Coups d'État and Underdevelopment: A Quantitative Historical Analysis. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 22(4), 633-666. doi:10.1017/S0022278X0005627
- Mill, J.S. (1861). *Considerations on Representative Government*. Harvard University: Parker, son, and Bourn.
- Miller, A. C. (2011). Debunking the myth of the "good" coup d'etat in Africa. *African studies quarterly*, 12(2), 45.

- Modern Diplomacy. (2023). Russia and the G5 Sahel Group's Indivisible Security Relationship.
- Moffitt, B. (2019). Populism versus technocracy: performance, passions, and aesthetics 1. In *Populism and passions* (pp. 49-64). Routledge.
- Moffitt, B., & Tormey, S. (2014). Rethinking populism: Politics, mediatisation and political style. *Political studies*, 62(2), 381-397.
- Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and opposition*, 39(4), 541-563.
- Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C. R. (2013). Exclusionary vs. inclusionary populism: Comparing contemporary Europe and Latin America. *Government and opposition*, 48(2), 147-174.
- Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C. R. (2017). *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Murrey, A. (Ed.). (2018). *A certain amount of madness: the life, politics and legacies of Thomas Sankara*. Pluto Press.
- Murry, M. (2018). *Burkina Faso: The revolutionary legacy of Thomas Sankara*. Africa World Press.
- Nurudeen, A., Abd Karim, M. Z., & Aziz, M. I. (2015). Corruption, political instability and economic development in the economic community of West African States (ECOWAS): is there a causal relationship?. *Contemporary economics*, 9(1), 45-60.
- Nyadera, İ. N., & Agwanda, B. (2019). THE EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF POPULISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: PARTY POLITICS AND PERSONALITIES. *Uluslararası Politik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 5(2), 76-91. <https://doi.org/10.25272/j.2149-8539.2019.5.2.02>
- O'Connor, N. (2017). Three connections between rising economic inequality and the rise of populism. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 28(1), 29-43.
- Odigbo, J., Ezekwelu, K. C., & Okeke, R. C. (2023b). Democracy's discontent and the resurgence of military coups in Africa. *Journal of Contemporary International Relations and Diplomacy*, 4(1), 644-655. <https://doi.org/10.53982/jcird.2023.0401.01->
- Osnabrügge, M., Hobolt, S. B., & Rodon, T. (2021). *Playing*
- Panizza, F. (Ed.). (2005). *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. Verso.
- Pintsch, A., Hammerschmidt, D., & Meyer, C. (2022). Introduction: the decline of democracy and rise of populism in Europe and their effect on democracy promotion. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 35(4), 405-423.

- President Mamadi Doumbouya 78th UNGA Address. (2023, September). United Nations. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://gadebate.un.org/en/78/guinea>
- Resnick, D. (2015). Varieties of African populism in comparative perspective. The promise and perils of populism: Global perspectives, 317, 348.
- Rooduijn, M., Van Kessel, S., Froio, C., Pirro, A., De Lange, S., Halikiopoulou, D., ... & Taggart, P. (2019). The PopuList: An overview of populist, far right, far left and Eurosceptic parties in Europe.
- Rosemary, H., T., O'Kane. (1993). Coups d'État in Africa: A Political Economy Approach. Journal of Peace Research. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343393030003002>
- Salifou, A. (2010). Biographie politique de Diori Hamani, premier président de la République du Niger. KARTHALA Editions.
- Schiere, R. (2011). China and Africa: An Emerging Partnership for Development? – An overview of issues. Africa Development Bank Group. Working Paper Series.
- Shurkin, M. (2024). Anti-French Sentiment in Africa: An American Perspective. *Revue internationale et stratégique*, 133, 163-171. <https://doi.org/10.3917/ris.133.0163>
- Sishuwa, S. (2024). Populism in Africa. In *Research Handbook on Populism* (pp. 444–455). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Skinner, E. P. (1988). Sankara and the Burkinabe Revolution: Charisma and Power, 1983-1988. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 26(3), 437-466.
- Smith, T. O. (2006). The French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front. *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, 32(2), 307-333.
- StateCraft Inc. (2023). Africa: Preventing a coup frenzy. Retrieved from <https://statecraftinc.com/africa-preventing-a-coup-frenzy>
- Suleiman, M. D. (2021). Towards a Better Understanding of the Underlying Conditions of Coups in Africa. *E-International Relations*.
- Suleiman, M. D., & Onapajo, H. (2022). Why West Africa has had so many coups and how to prevent more. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/why-west-africa-hashad-so-many-coups-and-how-to-prevent-more-176577>.
- Sylla, N. S. (2019). *Guinea: The Political Economy of Contemporary Development*. Routledge.
- Taggart, P. (2018). Populism and 'unpolitics'. In *Populism and the Crisis of Democracy* (pp. 79-87). Routledge.

- Taş, H. (2024). Populism and civil-military relations. *Democratization*, 31(1), 70-89.
- Taylor, I. (2019). France à fric: the CFA zone in Africa and neocolonialism. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(6), 1064-1088.
- The coup in Niger. (2023). IISS. <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic-comments/2023/the-coup-in-niger/>
- The Niger coup's outsized global impact. (n.d.). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2023/08/the-niger-coups-outsized-global-impact?lang=en>
- Thompson, W. R. (1973). The Grievances of Military Coup Makers. *Comparative Politics*.
- Treaty | Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). <https://www.ecowas.int/publication/treaty>
- Trithart, A. (2013). Democratic Coups? Regional Responses to the Constitutional Crises in Honduras and Niger. *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, 23(0), 112-133.
- Tuki, D. (2024). What does the population in Niger think about a military government? *Democratization*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2024.2341314>
- Učeň, P. (2007). Parties, populism, and anti-establishment politics in East Central Europe. *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 27(1), 49-62.
- Vandervort, B. (1998). *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830–1914*. Indiana University Press.
- Vincent, L. (2018). *Seducing the people: Populism and the challenge to democracy in South Africa*. Routledge.
- Vollgraaff, W. (2018). *Populism and liberal democracy: three case studies* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Whitehouse, B. (2012). What went wrong in Mali. *London Review of Books*, 34(16), 17-18.
- Wilkins, M. (1989). The death of Thomas Sankara and the rectification of the people's revolution in Burkina Faso. *African Affairs*, 88(352), 375-388.
- Winter, Y. (2014). The Prince and His Art of War: Machiavelli's Military Populism. *social research*, 81(1), 165-191.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). Discovering the future of the case study. *Method in evaluation research*. *Evaluation practice*, 15(3), 283-290.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A



Figure A.1. A Supporter Holding a Placard That Reads: “Down with ECOWAS, Long Live ASS/AES”

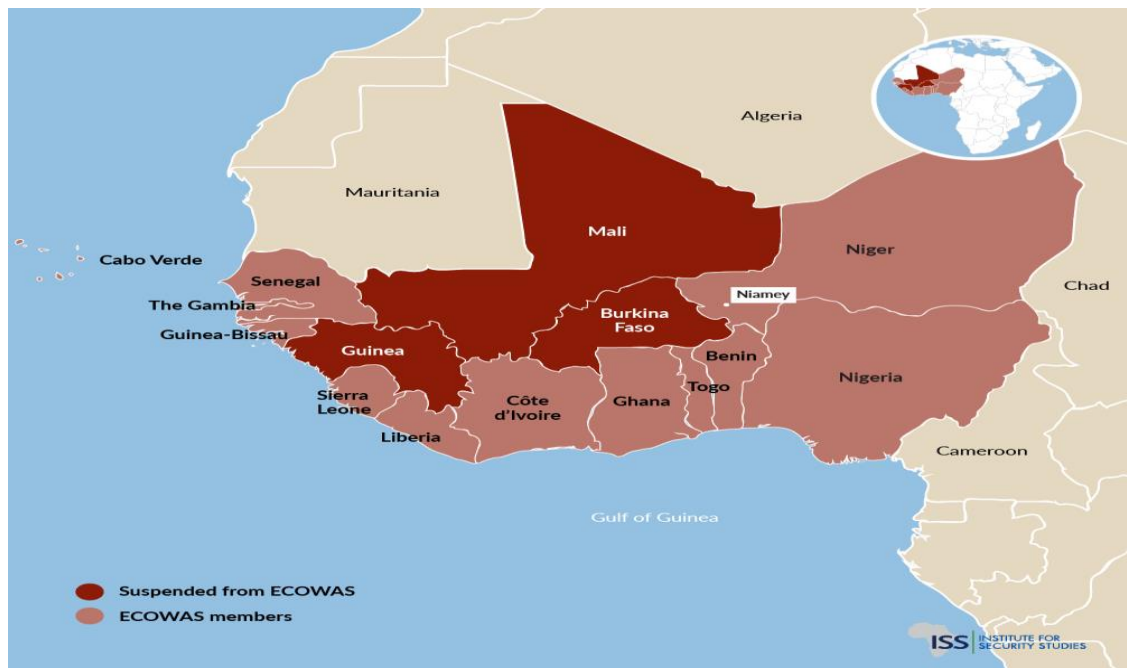


Figure A.2. A Map Showing the ECOWAS Suspended Countries, Including Niger as of 2024

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information:

Name-Surname: Blama Keita

Contact Information:

E-mail (1):

E-mail (2):

Education:

- 2018- 2022 BA in International Relations, Bolu Abant Izzet Baysal University, Türkiye
- 2022- 2024 MA in Political Science and International Relations, Ibn Haldun University, Türkiye
- 2023- MA in Leadership for Change, Tampere University, Finland

Experience:

June 2021- Oct 2021 European Union Assistant Project Manager- Intern, Exramus, Italy

Conferences:

Keita B. (2024). Geopolitics of Non-integration: Rethinking the Rise of Military Populism in Francophone West Africa. Paper presented at the 7th Graduate Conference on Social Science, Humanities, and Management, Ibn Haldun University Istanbul, Türkiye

Keita B (2019). The Evolution of the African Union's Security Architecture: Successes and Challenges in Regional Peacekeeping. Paper presented at the International Relations Student Congress, Bolu Abant Izzet Baysal University | Bolu, Türkiye