



## RESURGENCE OF COUP D'ÉTAT IN AFRICA IN AN ERA OF MASS DEMOCRATISATION: A STUDY OF NIGER, BURKINA FASO, AND MALI EXPERIENCES

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study explores the recent occurrences of coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, by examining their causes, implications, and potential solutions. Through a comprehensive analysis of historical, political, economic, and social factors, this research aims to provide insights into the root causes of coup d'états in these countries. It unveils the regional and global ramifications of these coups, as well as strategies for preventing future occurrences and promoting democratic governance. The theory of Democratic Backsliding, as articulated by Levitsky and Ziblatt (2001), formed the theoretical framework. The work concluded that coups d'états remain a persistent challenge to democratic governance and political stability in Africa, as evidenced by recent developments in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. It was recommended among others that there is a critical need to strengthen democratic institutions and governance mechanisms. This entails bolstering the rule of law, ensuring transparent and accountable governance, and promoting inclusive political participation.*

**KEYWORDS:** Coup d'état, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Accountability, Good Governance, Political Participation and Democratization.



## INTRODUCTION

In Africa's past and present, coup d'états have been and still are a major threat to democratic government and political stability. Many African countries have made a lot of progress towards democracy, but coups keep upsetting these efforts, causing problems with the government, violations of human rights, and problems with the economy. In the past few years, coups or attempts at coups have happened in countries like Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. This shows that democratic institutions in the region are still under threat.

In terms of number of coups d'état, Africa has the most power. It is important to note that since 2020, there have been six coups d'état on the continent. Understanding the basic goals and paths of these coups is important for both figuring out why they happened and understanding how they are manifesting right now. To study coups d'état in former French colonies in West Africa, we need to come up with a new way to explain things or explain what we know. These first two parts come from past research on military coups and how they affect economic and political instability. The second and third parts come from the variables of external effect and climate change, which were not part of the main ideas about the subject before. Also, to make sure that the proposed theoretical framework's parts are valid, the four examples being studied will be looked at to see if there are any similarities or differences. Between 2020 and 2022, there were six coups and three attempts at coups, which is a big increase from the 20 years before (UNDP, 2023, p. 3). The research that has already been done on coups d'état does not look at the wide range of factors that make the region's politics unstable. Even though economic factors are taken into account by most theories, they need to be looked at in more depth. This includes looking at the effects of political instability and economic inequality, as well as climate change issues and the possible impact of outside groups. There needs to be up-to-date research that looks at how the world's politics are changing and how major world powers affect the political stability of these countries. The economic factors, political instability, outside effects, and climate change that make up the theoretical framework will be looked at in detail in this study.

West Africa's people are unhappy with the government's plan to fight poverty and the unstable safety situation. This has created a democratic situation with weak institutions and poor socioeconomic well-being (Espelund, 2022; Espelund, 2023; Mbara & Graham, 2023, pp. 101–102). Most Africans still want democracy as their preferred form of government, according to results of polls. But people are less sure in democratic government because governments are not stable, and elected leaders are not living up to democratic standards (UNDP, 2023; Afrobarometer Network, 2023; Afrobarometer, 2023b).

It is important to recognise that the instability in the region is caused by many things, including the rise of terrorist groups, climate change, desertification, population growth, and bad government. Small-scale farming has decreased in the Sahel region because the Sahara desert has grown. This is something that most people in the area do not think about (Friedman, 2017; Sköld, 2022). Problems with safety in these countries can be traced back to slavery, the erasure of minorities, and differences in gender and social status, all of which have led to long-lasting imbalances of political power.

In recent years, it has been hard for the governments of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali to keep their political credibility. The Tuareg people, who are a nomadic ethnic minority, have rebelled in both Mali and Niger because they were not included in politics and society (Waugh, 2022, pp. 5–6; Gunnarson, 2020, p. 14). The uprisings in Niger were caused by people wanting more



political and economic control over the extraction of natural resources. In Mali, on the other hand, the people wanted independence (Gunnarson, 2020, p. 14). People in Mali rose up in 2012, led by the Tuareg-led Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA). These protests set off a chain of events that are thought to have led to the country's coup d'état. France sent in the military because Islamist groups with ties to Al-Qaeda took over a lot of the land and were fiercely against the MNLA (Waugh, 2022, p. 6; Gunnarson, 2020, p. 14). Africa used to be a French colony, and recently there have been more military coups d'état all over the continent. It is very important to deal with the fact that countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso are not doing enough to stop Islamist terrorists. This has created an environment that is good for military upheaval. It has not been possible to achieve stability with Western military aid, and the juntas always use this as an excuse for their coups d'état (Lupulescu, 2021).

Because of these reasons, it is important to look into where coup d'états come from, how they affect countries, and what can be done to stop them in these specific African countries.

## **CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

### **Concept of Coup d'état**

A coup d'état is an illegal attempt by the military or another powerful political group to get rid of the current government. In 2011, Jonathan M. Powell and Clayton L. Thyne looked at the definitions of coups given by fourteen different scholars and found some similarities and differences. Basically, what their research showed was that most coups use violence as a plan to attack the government, the regime, or the chief executive. The military, hired guns, or political elites are behind the coup (Powell & Thyne, 2011, pp. 250–252). In this study, the military juntas are named as the bad guys. However, it is important to keep in mind that military juntas may be controlled by civilian government members or foreign groups.

The research conducted by Powell and Thyne (2011) also highlights the crucial aspect that a coup d'état is only possible if the actions taken to remove the government were conducted unlawfully (Mbara, 2023). Singh (2022) provided an analysis of a coup attempt from three distinct perspectives. Firstly, coup attempts can be likened to conflicts, where they can be seen as a small-scale invasion of a nation carried out by its military forces. Secondly, a coup attempt might be likened to referendums on the ongoing authority of the current government, carried out by its own armed forces (UNDP, 2022). An alternative interpretation is that a coup might be perceived as a strategic military chess match or a game of coordination. Officers will evaluate the potential risks and costs associated with aligning themselves with a certain party. If the current incumbent is unreasonable, there will be a valid reason to remove them. However, if the challenger is on the losing side and there is a possibility of intensifying the current dispute, the risk will not be justified. Singh (2022) contends that the military will support the candidates they perceive to have the most robust base of support (Singh, 2022, pp. 21–22).



## **Causes of Coup d'états in Africa**

### **Economic Instability and Corruption**

One of the primary causes of coups in Africa is economic instability, exacerbated by widespread corruption within the government. The mismanagement of public funds and resources has fueled discontent among the population, particularly in the face of persistent poverty and underdevelopment (Murray, 2012). Economic grievances have often provided incubation for military intervention as a response to perceived government incompetence or malfeasance.

### **Ethnic and Regional Tensions**

Africa's diverse ethnic and regional makeup has also played a significant role in precipitating coups. Competition for power and resources among different ethnic groups and regions has frequently led to political instability and conflict (De Cordier, 2019). The manipulation of ethnic divisions by political elites to consolidate power has further exacerbated tensions, creating conditions conducive to military intervention (Ousmane, 2015).

### **Weak governance and institutional fragility**

Weak governance and institutional fragility have been persistent challenges in Africa, contributing to a cycle of political instability and coups. The lack of effective checks and balances, coupled with the concentration of power in the hands of a few, has undermined democratic governance and fostered an environment ripe for military intervention (Moussa, 2017). Moreover, the military has often been perceived as the only institution capable of restoring order and stability in the face of governance failures.

### **External Influences and Geopolitical Considerations**

External influences and geopolitical considerations have also influenced the occurrence of coups in Africa. The continent's strategic importance, particularly its vast uranium reserves and its role in regional security, has made it a target for external actors seeking to shape political outcomes (Friedrichs, 2018). Foreign powers, including former colonial powers and regional actors, have sometimes intervened overtly or covertly to support or oppose various political actors, contributing to instability and volatility.

### **Concept of Democracy and Democratization**

Democracy fundamentally relies on the principle that power resides with the people. The authority of the government is derived from the consent of the governed, meaning that citizens have the ultimate say in decision-making processes. This is often expressed through voting and participation in political processes (Dahl, 1989). Democracy emphasizes the equality of all citizens in political participation. This includes equal access to voting, the right to run for office, and the ability to influence political decisions. Political equality is essential for ensuring that no single group dominates the political landscape perpetually.

A democratic system is governed by the rule of law, where laws are applied equally to all citizens, and everyone, including leaders, is subject to the law. This ensures that power is exercised within a legal framework, preventing arbitrary rule and abuse of power (O'Donnell,



2004). A key component of democratization is the regular conduct of free and fair elections. These elections provide a mechanism for the peaceful transfer of power and the accountability of elected officials to the electorate. Without credible elections, the legitimacy of a democracy is compromised (Nweke 2017).

Democracy guarantees civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and press. These freedoms allow citizens to express their views, organize politically, and hold the government accountable. Civil liberties are crucial for a vibrant and functioning democracy (Diamond, 2019).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

It is possible that the current problems with coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali can be explained by the idea of democratic backsliding. Democratic backsliding is when democratic institutions, norms, and practices slowly fall apart, allowing authoritarian rule to take over again (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, two political scientists, wrote a book in 2018 called "How Democracies Die" that explains the Theory of Democratic Backsliding. This theory looks at how democratic norms, institutions, and practices slowly lose their strength in systems that are supposed to be democratic. Democratic backsliding happens when important democratic values like the rule of law, respect for political rights and civil liberties, and the proper functioning of democratic institutions are weakened. This can cause a slide or relapse into authoritarian rule.

The relevance of the theory to the subject matter is hinged on several reasons/factors:

Firstly, failures of socio-political institutions and governance failures are key drivers of democratic backsliding in these countries. Weak governance institutions, pervasive corruption, and economic mismanagement have undermined public trust in democratic processes and institutions (Murray, 2012; Azimi, 2017). Ethnic and regional tensions, worsened by competition for power and resources, further destabilize political systems, creating conditions conducive for coups (Ousmane, 2015; De Cordier, 2019).

Secondly, the role of the military in African politics is another critical aspect of democratic backsliding. In Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, the military has historically played a prominent role in governance, often intervening in politics to address perceived governance failures or to assert its own interests (Kamga, 2018; Rochette, 2016). Military coups or attempted coups reflect power struggles within the state and the military's perception of its role as a guardian of national stability.

Thirdly, external factors, including geopolitical interests and interventions by foreign powers, also contribute to democratic backsliding in these countries. The Sahel region, where Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali are located, has become a battleground for competing regional and international actors seeking to advance their interests (Friedrichs, 2018). Foreign support for authoritarian regimes or opposition groups can accentuate internal conflicts and undermine democratic processes, increasing the likelihood of coups or political instability.



## Reflections on Origin of Coups in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali

To understand the prevalence of coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, it is essential to examine their historical contexts. These countries have experienced various forms of political instability, colonization, and post-colonial challenges that have shaped their political landscapes. Niger, for instance, gained independence from France in 1960 but has since faced numerous military coups and political turmoil (Elischer, 2018). Similarly, Burkina Faso and Mali have grappled with coups, authoritarian regimes, and ethnic tensions throughout their histories. These historical legacies contribute to the vulnerability of these countries to coup attempts.

### a. The Niger Experience:

In the fifty years since independence, there have been five times when the military effectively interfered with democratic rule in Niger. Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Kountche led a military coup in April 1974 that ended Hamani Diori's 14-year term as president, put the country's constitution on hold, and got rid of the National Assembly. The 12-person Supreme Military Council (SMC), which Kountche set up, took over government matters. Several reports say that more than 20 people died during the terrifying event (Elischer, 2018).

In 1996, army officials planned a coup to remove President Mahamane Ousmane and Prime Minister Hama Amadou in January. They said that economic reforms were in danger because of a political impasse, which made France, which had colonised the country before, angry. According to Mbara 2022, Lieutenant Colonel Ibrahim Bare Mainassara, who is in charge of the military, took over as leader of the country and said that the coup was meant to start over instead of ending multiparty democracy. In April 1999, soldiers who had turned against the government killed Mainassara in a surprise attack at Niamey airport. This started the third coup in the country's troubled history. Before a president was elected and civilian government was restored in 2000, Daouda Malam Wanke, who was in charge of the presidential guard, took over. After the election, Mamadou Tandja beat Mahamadou Issoufou, who had been prime minister, in the popular vote to become president of Niger. In general, election observers from around the world thought that the one that happened after the 1999 coup was free and fair.

After a firefight, Tandja and his deputy ministers were caught in 2010 by a group of military commanders calling themselves the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSDR), led by General Salou Djibo. All state bodies were dissolved after the constitution was put on hold. In response to Tandja's claims that the constitution had been changed, the military government promised to make Niger a model of democracy and good government. "What we did was in Niger's best interest..." "We kindly ask that you stay calm. We are here to help, we are listening carefully, and we promise that we will never let you down," one of the coup leaders said. Tensions in Niger's government rose after Tandja dissolved the parliament in 2009 and, pending a vote, extended his own term beyond a second term. While the legislative elections were going on in early 2011, Issoufou won in a run-off for president (Sköld, 2022).

Under the direction of General Omar Tchiani, members of the presidential guard were able to break into the presidential palace in Niamey on July 26, 2023, and arrest President Bazoum inside. Both people in Niger and people around the world are worried about how unstable the country is because of this event. The military said that all institutional operations would stop, that land and air borders would be closed, and that there would be a curfew. Hassoumi



Massoudou, Niger's foreign minister, told the military to free President Bazoum and work out their problems through diplomatic talks. As Elischer (2023) says, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the US, France, and the UN all strongly condemned the coup, saying it was "unconstitutional." President Mohamed Bazoum was put under house arrest, which strengthened the junta's control over power while efforts to restore constitutional order were made through mediation. The coup shows that security problems and power struggles within the country are getting worse. This is the latest in a series of military coups that have happened in the area since 2019. This suggests that people there think Western influence is waning and Russia's involvement is growing.

On July 26, 2023, different parts of the armed forces in Niger declared a military coup d'état, which meant they were taking power and suspending the constitution. At first, President Mohamed Bazoum was locked up at home by the presidential guard, a highly trained anti-coup team. The action seemed to have been caused by Bazoum's plan to pick new military leaders and remove General Abdourahmane Tchiani as head of the presidential guard. That same day, the army backed the newly formed junta in an effort to keep the different groups from fighting, which could have been very dangerous and responsible for many deaths. The junta seems to still have a strong grip on power, even though Bazoum has not officially quit and efforts are still being made to restore constitutional order through mediation.

This coup in Niger is the first one in the Sahel region since 2019, when the Sudanese Armed Forces got rid of Omar al-Bashir, who had been in power for a long time. Modern military governments rule over a single line of countries that goes from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Red Sea in the east. During this time, military forces in the area also tried to take power several times but failed. Before, Niger stopped a coup attempt in 2021, which was only two days before Bazoum took power. Additionally, the governments of Benin, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe have all said they do not want the military to be involved in their countries' politics. The above pattern shows that Western influence is waning in the area and that multilateral involvement is not working to stop the worsening of political and security conditions in the area.

### **b. The Burkina Faso Experience**

Burkina Faso has had a sequence of political upheavals, characterised by military interventions and civilian-led movements, since achieving independence from France in 1960. The initial coup took place in 1966 when Lieutenant Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana removed President Maurice Yaméogo from power, based on accusations of corruption and political domination (Monga, 2011). The rule of Lamizana endured until 1980 when he was deposed in a subsequent coup orchestrated by Colonel Saye Zerbo, who pledged to redress economic and social demands (Kamga, 2018). The latter was deposed by Major Jean Baptiste in 1982, resulting in Captain Thomas Sankara assuming the position of Prime Minister. Sankara then ousted Jean Baptiste in a separate coup in 1983.

Burkina Faso, once referred to as Upper Volta, has had a number of coups and political turmoil. The predominant historical period of military governance in the country is characterised by the autocratic leadership of President Blaise Compaoré, who ascended to office by a coup in 1987. Notwithstanding the shift towards democratic rule in the early 21st century, Burkina Faso still grapples with issues of corruption, poverty, and insecurity. The 2014 rebellion against President Compaoré's endeavour to prolong his tenure resulted in his removal, underscoring



the significance of popular opposition in confronting authoritarian dictatorial governments (Ouattara, 2017).

Burkina Faso's president, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, was removed by a military coup on January 24. At the time, the country was facing a growing security crisis. People in Kaboré, as well as the defence and security forces, had consistently said they are unhappy with the country's political leadership. With this event, West Africa had its fourth coup in less than two years. Former Mali presidents Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and Bah N'Daw were removed from office in August 2020 and May 2021, respectively. Kaboré was removed in September 2021 (Kamga 2021).

It is clear that the growing number of coups in West Africa is more than just a passing trend. It is a sign of a deep problem with the country's corrupt and unresponsive political systems. They show that democratic ideas need to be rethought, not just elections but also the effectiveness of institutions that are supposed to protect and help people. The most recent coup in Burkina Faso was planned by Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, who was recently made commander of the country's third military zone.

Commencing in 2015, the nation has encountered an unparalleled crisis resulting in the deaths of around 7,569 individuals within a span of six years and the displacement of over 1.6 million people. Recurrent assaults by jihadist militants have specifically targeted both civilians and government officials, particularly the armed personnel, resulting in significant casualties. Civil servants, teachers, and judicial personnel were also subjected to targeted attacks, resulting in the exploitation of public services in regions affected by the conflict.

A strike on the town of Solhan, located near the Niger border, in June 2021 resulted in the deaths of a minimum of 132 individuals. Although it was one of the most lethal incidents in the nation, it was not an unusual occurrence. Despite Kaboré's ongoing efforts to emphasise security, Burkina Faso experienced a total of 1,337 crisis-related violent incidents in 2021, resulting in 2,294 casualties. His government set up the *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* in January 2020. They were a group of civilians who were sent to help the national defence and security forces. Most of its new members came from community militias that already existed. In addition, the administration took steps to improve the budget. The national budget for defence and security went from €240,746,280 to €652,759,680 between 2016 and 2021—a 271.14% rise (Hoffman, 2020).

Nevertheless, these investments had a minimal impact on enhancing the living circumstances or operational capabilities of the forces, primarily because of budgetary management issues. Instead, ongoing issues with equipment and supply have weakened them, while Islamic terrorist organisations have become more powerful (Hoffman, 2020). In November 2021, a terrorist attack on the Inata military base resulted in the deaths of 53 police officers who were awaiting logistical backup and supplies, including meal rations.

People all over the country were upset about what happened, which led to calls for Kaboré's resignation. When his Prime Minister Christophe Dabiré was removed in early December, things seemed to calm down for a short time, but not for long. The disaster at Inata made the gap between the soldiers on the front lines and the political and administrative systems even bigger. But the lack of trust was not new or unexpected; it was two-way and lasted for a long time. This started after Blaise Compaoré was removed from power in 2014, and his presidential





security unit fell apart. It also happened after the failed counter-coup in September 2015. Even though the counter-coup did not work, it made political leaders less likely to trust the military.

Also, a lot of Burkinabè were unhappy with how the Kaboré government ran the country's politics. The government was often accused of corruption, neglect, and favouritism. Surveys done since 2017 show that people in Burkina Faso have become less trusting and unhappy with their government because it has not lived up to their expectations of good governance. After Compaoré had been in charge for 27 years after taking power in a coup, these expectations were important. In the late part of 2021, when problems with security and the government were still going on, rumours of a coup came back. Lieutenant-Colonel Emmanuel Zoungrana was arrested in early January of that year, which showed that the threat was taken very seriously. He was believed to have instigated the action. Despite this, two coups ensued in a span of nine months from January 2022 to September 2022, contributing to the ongoing political instability in Burkina Faso. On September 30, 2022, Captain Ibrahim Iraore expelled the Interim President, Lt Col Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiebo, who had assumed power through a coup in January 2022, due to his failure to effectively control the Islamic terrorist insurgency.

Historically, Burkina Faso has experienced a coup on seven occasions since gaining independence in 1960. These coups occurred in 1966, 1980, 1983, 1987, and twice in 2022, excluding the unsuccessful attempt in September 2015 and the popular rebellion in October 2014. Within the present regional framework, however, the recent coup underscores the difficulties posed by inefficient administrations that do not fulfil the public's expectations regarding openness and safety. Collectively, these coups exemplify a significant crisis in the political systems of West Africa, which must not be disregarded. Amidst the increasing number of military changes in West Africa, the most recent one in Burkina Faso is the most significant and uncertain. It has the potential to exacerbate political and security issues in a region experiencing increasing fragility in the Sahel and the coastal states.

### **c. The Mali Experience**

The nation of Mali, located in West Africa, has undergone a multifaceted sequence of coups, insurgencies, and political crises in recent times. The coup d'état of 2012, orchestrated by lower-ranking military officials, led to the removal of President Amadou Toumani Touré and the subsequent seizure of northern Mali by Islamist insurgents. Following the coup, Mali was thrust into a prolonged conflict, intensifying ethnic tensions and humanitarian emergencies. Mali's ongoing struggle with instability underscores the difficulties of democratic consolidation in the Sahel area, despite numerous attempts to reinstate constitutional order (Hänggi, 2019).

During the early hours of August 18, 2020, armed individuals opened fire on a military base in Kati, a town 15 kilometres (9 miles) from Bamako, Mali's capital. When the rebels got to the capital, they caught the Minister of Finance, Abdoulaye Daffe, the Chief of Staff of the National Guard, and the Speaker of the National Assembly, Moussa Timbiné. Prime Minister Boubou Cissé urged talks with the rebels, recognising that they had good reasons to be angry. After that, a mutiny commander said that Keïta and Cissé were caught at Keïta's home in Bamako. Moussa Faki, who is the head of the African Union Commission, confirmed that Keïta, Cissé, and other officials had been caught and called for their immediate release. A spokesperson for the M5-RFP opposition coalition said they agreed with their arrest and called it a "popular insurrection (Mbara, 2023)." The authorities were taken to Kati's military complex, which was where the rebellion began. As news of the rebellion spread, a large group of protesters gathered



at Bamako's Independence Monument to demand that Keïta stepped down. Also, protesters set fire to a building that belonged to the Ministry of Justice on purpose. At that time, it was not clear how many soldiers were involved in the coup, who started it, or who would lead afterward. A government spokesman told Voanews 2024 that Mali's military government had put off a presidential election that was supposed to bring democracy back to the West African country after a coup in 2020.

"Technical reasons" caused the presidential election that was supposed to happen in February 2024 to be moved, according to a government spokesman in Bamako, the capital city. This was done so that the transitional government could look at its election data and deal with a new part of the constitution that would put off the second round of the contest. This was the second instance in which Mali's military administration, which arose from two coups in 2020, has delayed the nation's presidential election. Political figures in Mali expressed their disapproval of the move, which has the potential to result in economic sanctions from the regional grouping of West Africa, ECOWAS. In July 2022, the council lifted sanctions on Mali following the government's commitment to conduct the election (Voanews, 2024).

Currently, Mali is grappling with assaults perpetrated by armed factions associated with al-Qaida, the Islamic State organisation, as well as former insurgents whose long-standing peace agreement with the government has collapsed in recent weeks. An upheaval of coups in the Sahel area of Africa began in Mali in August 2020, when military forces under the command of Colonel Assimi Goïta deposed the democratically elected president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. The military declared its intention to reinstate civilian authority within a span of 18 months. Seven months into the transition process, military authorities ousted the interim president and prime minister they had designated and placed Goïta in office as the president of the transitional government. In June, Malian voters participated in a referendum to decide on a new draft constitution that the government claimed would facilitate presidential elections.

Haggai (2022) was emphatic that after the coup, Mali was plunged into a period of political turmoil and insecurity, exacerbating existing challenges facing the country; these include the following:

**Escalation of Conflict:** The coup precipitated a security vacuum in Mali, which allowed various armed groups, including Tuareg rebels and Islamist militants, to seize control of northern regions such as Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal. The conflict escalated as these groups sought to advance their territorial ambitions, leading to widespread displacement, human rights abuses, and humanitarian crises.

**Humanitarian Crisis:** The conflict following the coup exacerbated Mali's humanitarian crisis, with thousands of people displaced from their homes and in need of assistance. The influx of refugees into neighboring countries strained resources and humanitarian aid efforts, further exacerbating the plight of vulnerable populations.

**International Intervention:** The deteriorating security situation in Mali prompted international intervention, including military operations led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the deployment of French forces under Operation Serval. These interventions aimed to counter the incursion of Islamist militants and restore stability in Mali.



**Challenges to Democratic Governance:** The coup and subsequent conflict undermined Mali's democratic institutions and electoral processes. Despite efforts to establish a transitional government and hold elections, the political landscape remained volatile, with ongoing disputes over legitimacy and representation.

**Ethnic and Communal Tensions:** The conflict in Mali deepened existing ethnic and communal tensions, particularly between the predominantly Tuareg north and the southern regions. Intercommunal violence and reprisal attacks further destabilized the country and hindered efforts to achieve reconciliation and national unity.

**Human Rights Abuses:** Human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, kidnapping, forced disappearances, and sexual violence, have been documented by various human rights organizations during and after the conflict. Both state security forces and armed groups have been implicated in these abuses, thereby perpetuating a cycle of violence and impunity.

**Continued Instability:** Despite international efforts to stabilize Mali and facilitate peace negotiations, the country continues to grapple with insecurity, political instability, and governance challenges. The presence of armed groups, ongoing attacks on civilians and security forces, and persistent threats of terrorism pose significant obstacles to peace building and reconstruction efforts.

## CONTENT DISCUSSION

### (a) Current Issues and Challenges

The recent coup in Niger in 2022 and the subsequent suspension of the constitution have raised concerns about the country's democratic future (BBC News, 2022). Similarly, Burkina Faso faces ongoing security challenges, including terrorist attacks and political instability, following the 2022 military takeover (France 24, 2022). In Mali, despite the 2020 coup being condemned internationally, the transition to civilian rule has been marred by delays and uncertainties (Al Jazeera, 2022). These recent developments underscore the persistent threats to democratic governance and stability in the region.

### (b) Implications of Coups on Democratic Governance

The prevalence of coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali has significant implications for democratic governance in Africa. Coup d'états undermine the rule of law, constitutionalism, and electoral processes, eroding trust in democratic institutions. Moreover, coups often lead to human rights abuses, repression, and political persecution, stifling dissent and civil liberties. The international community's response to coups varies, with sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and peacekeeping interventions being common strategies to restore constitutional order. However, addressing the root causes of coups requires long-term investment in institution-building, conflict prevention, and democratic reforms.



### **(c) Economic Consequences of Coups**

Coups and political instability have adverse effects on economic development and prosperity in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Investors perceive political uncertainty as a deterrent to business operations, leading to capital flight, reduced foreign direct investment, and economic stagnation. Moreover, coups disrupt government spending, exacerbate fiscal deficits, and undermine public services, further leading to poverty and inequality. The economic fallout from coups often intensify social tensions and expand grievances, and thus perpetuate the cycle of instability and conflict.

### **(d) Regional and Global Ramifications**

The spillover effects of coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali extend beyond their borders, impacting regional security and stability. In the Sahel region, coups contribute to the proliferation of armed groups, transnational crimes, and terrorism, posing challenges to neighbouring countries and international security actors. Moreover, the global community's response to coups sets precedents for future interventions and peace building efforts. Regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) play a crucial role in mediating political crises and promoting democratic norms, but their effectiveness depends on political will and institutional capacity.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In conclusion, coups d'états remain a deadly challenge to democratic governance and political stability in Africa, as evidenced by recent developments in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. We are inclined to argue that understanding the causative factors and implications of coups are essential for developing effective strategies to prevent future occurrences and promote democratic consolidation. By addressing governance deficits, socioeconomic disparities, and security challenges, African countries can build resilient institutions and foster a culture of democracy and peace. Preventing coups requires a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of political instability and strengthens democratic institutions as against strong personalities. This includes promoting good governance, transparency, and accountability, as well as fostering inclusive political processes that accommodate diverse interests. Investing in socioeconomic development, poverty reduction, and conflict resolution are also essential for addressing underlying grievances and building resilient societies. Moreover, regional cooperation, diplomatic engagement, and peacebuilding initiatives can help to mitigate the risk of coups and promote stability in Africa and beyond.

In light of the recent coups d'état and/or attempted coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, the following are recommended:

1. There is a critical need to strengthen democratic institutions and governance mechanisms. This entails bolstering the rule of law, ensuring transparent and accountable governance, and promoting inclusive political participation.



2. Efforts should focus on addressing socio-economic grievances and inequalities. Economic disparities and lack of opportunity contribute to public frustration and discontent, providing fertile ground for political unrest and military intervention.
3. Regional and international cooperation is essential in addressing the root causes of coups and promoting stability in the African region. Collaborative efforts among African states, regional organizations, and the international community can enhance security cooperation, support democratic governance, and address cross-border challenges such as terrorism and organized crimes.

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