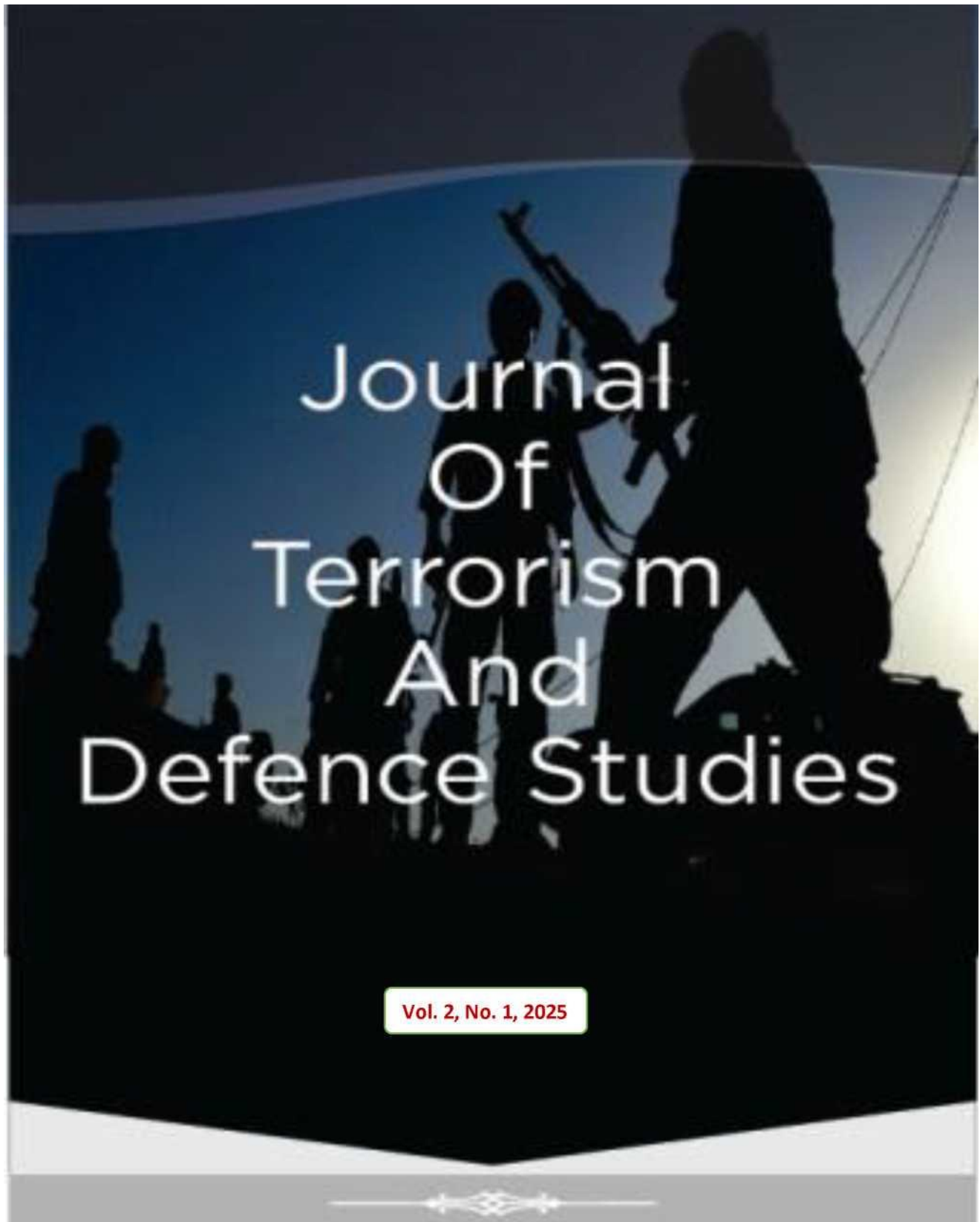




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EDITORIAL NOTE

This special issue started with a wholistic review of the different dynamics of insecurity and defence threats within the African states.

The first article presented the challenges of kidnapping, terrorism and police brutality in Nigeria. It reveals that the Nigerian state has been weighed down by the multiple threats of progressive terrorism often carried out through mass abduction of villagers, groups and targeted travelers. Unfortunately, the hope of the victims for rescue is often worsened by the increasing culture of police brutality, which turns the expected saviors into part of the popular source of terror.

The second article presents military coups as a major threat in West Africa. In contemporary times, West African states have become a centerpiece of continuous coups and failed coups. This wind of coups in West Africa is largely driven by the culture of corruption, nepotism and bad governance which creates ungoverned spaces for insecurity and a beautiful environment for coup plotters to launch their attacks and win public opinion. The article that followed unraveled the negative wind of human trafficking and the negative psychology as well as false hope that drives victims into the untold hardship. The situation is worsened by the crisis of untold hardship that goes with reintegration.

Furthermore, the next article presented the crisis faced in the Contemporary Zimbabwean state. These crisis were driven by a combination of neocolonialism, bad governance, land crisis and poor fiscal policy which weakened national spirit of development and undermined nation building process in Zimbabwe. The last article evaluated the culture of military rule. It unveils the multiple corruption, nepotism, ethnicity and human rights violations within the Nigerian state under military rule. The implications became that the Nigerian state was high jacked and pushed away from the part of democratization towards the part of militarism in the post-independence years of the state.

Finally, I wish to invite you to take your time and read through the wonderful contents of the articles. They are highly scholarly and have sound promise of satisfying your intellectual appetite.

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MILITARY COUPS AND GOVERNANCE CRISES IN WEST AFRICAN STATES

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Abstract

West African states have witnessed the resurgence of military coups in the last quinquennium. The study, which used qualitative methodology drawn from secondary data source argues that the proliferation of military coups in West Africa are products of governance deficits, which is evident in the perennial socio-economic challenges, increasing poverty level, low Human Development Index, rising spate of insecurity, democratic retrogression marked by widespread sit-tight syndrome, electoral malpractice, and shrinking democratic and human rights space. It is within the purview of these governance deficits that the West African military has continued to organize coups and counter-coups as a corrective measure to the incapacities of democratic government and its apparatus to engineer sustainable growth and development. In all West African coups, military officers emphasised the need to address the persistent governance deficits that democratic governance has neglected. The study, however, recommends the transformation of democratic governance structures and capacities to reflect sustainable and global best practices that prioritise the welfare of citizens, promote democratic values and culture of good governance towards addressing the inherent challenges emanating from military incursion into politics.

Keywords: military coups, bad governance, politics, West Africa,

Introduction

Over the past quinquennium, West African States' domestic politics have continued to attract concerns within the continent and the global community. Since the attainment of independence by West African States, politics and governance have been at the centre of their growth, development, and nation-building debate (Emerson, 1961; Olukayode, 2005). The centrality of politics and governance in the growth and development of West Africa cannot be farfetched. Politics and

governance comprise the political and administrative processes that regulate the relationship between the government and the citizens (Bingham et al., 2005; Lee, 2019). Political governance entails the use of state power (leadership) to protect the interests of all and provide socioeconomic indices that support the Human Development Index (HDI) in a manner that promotes sustainable livelihoods (Leftwich, 1994). According to Ngai (2019), political leaders are the main forces behind political governance since they

have the authority and responsibility to allocate political and socioeconomic resources in a way that benefits everyone. However, in cases where the leadership cannot coordinate all political governance strata, there exist governance deficits. In the case of West Africa and other developing countries, these governance deficits remain widened and have been a cog in the path to sustainable democratic indices.

One of the dark sides of West African politics and governance has been the leadership problem. The question of leadership has dominated every stage of West African politics. Any discussion about West African leaders since independence has generally reflected negativity and failure (Jallow, 2014; Mbah, 2013). Since independence, the crux of West African leadership has not only grappled with the problem of state-building but has also been mainly described as the cog in the wheel of West Africa's path to sustainable governance practise. In different West African states, leaders were found guilty of corruption, misappropriation of governance revenues, igniting ethnic and religious identities to cling to power and assert influence, and reinforcing the principle of neo-colonialism through disadvantaged collaborations with global state and non-state actors. The nature of West African leaders prompted many West African political scholars to assert that West Africa's challenges to nation-building are the problem of leadership. As Jallow (2014) noted, irrespective of the wreckage post-colonial West African leaders have caused, it would be out of place to give the impression that West African leaders did nothing good for their countries. However, alongside these "good"

things, a concurrent series of crises perennially hindered West Africa's growth and development.

As West African post-colonial leaders continued to grapple with the challenges of nation-building, another wave of political crises also hit West Africa's governance space with the wave of military incursions into West African politics (Okeke, 2018; Ogboona et al., 2023; God'stime & Ambrose,

2021; Akinola, 2023; Olawale & Idris, 2024). The recent surge in military takeovers throughout West Africa is not a novel occurrence. Aside from several kinds of political rebellion against authoritarian and unimaginative West African leaders in the early post-independence era, the military also held West African leaders accountable for the continent's ostensibly ongoing developmental woes and nation-building difficulties. The military saw its intervention as a critical step toward restoring West Africa's standing in international affairs and a remedy for repressive rule. Thus, military takeover emerged as West Africa's most familiar political process and means of removing government, especially during the 1950s and 1980s. To parody J. F. K.'s famous saying, West Africa's post-colonial rulers made peaceful change impossible and therefore rendered violent change inevitable (Jallow, 2014: 6).

As West Africa continued to increase its disposition towards sustainable democracy, the democratic dispensation movement began to spread around the 1990s through the 2000s and spread throughout continents ruled by

military juntas, including Benin, Mali, Ghana, Malawi, Uganda, Nigeria, and others (Decalo, 1992; Ihonvobere, 2019; Brown & Kaiser, 2007). The notion that the West African military had given control of West African political affairs to democratic government and was moving toward sustainable democratic practise was one of the key results of this wave. However, despite what appears to be progress made by West African nations in the areas of democratic political participation, election administration, the expansion of civil societies, and public opinion, recent events in some West African countries have cast doubt on the idea that the continent's militaries have stepped back from politics (Venter, 2010). However, the recent wave of West African military forces into the political space challenges the existing democratic normative framework (Lynch & Crawford, 2013). As efforts to interrogate the proliferation of military rule and its implications for the continent and global space have continued to illuminate political policies and programmes within and outside the continent, the article contends that the primary thrust of military incursion into West African politics has been engineered by bad governance. The article is divided into three sections, apart from the introduction and conclusion. The second section examines the concept of governance using the terms 'good' and 'bad.' The following section discusses the emergence and proliferation of military rule in West Africa. The last section examines the nexus between bad governance and the proliferation of military rule, drawing insights from the nine military coups that occurred in West African countries between 2020 and 2023 and

other unsuccessful coups.

Complexities of Governance and the State of West Africa

The complexity of West African citizens' perceptions and interests regarding what constitutes government and, at best, good and bad governance, is a challenging and complex issue in West Africa. Gallilie (1995) and Anthony (2006), it is "basically contested" and has been given drastically various interpretations. Government and governance are linked together; at their most complex, they are linked with politics. Government and governance are connected by institutions that offer public services and regulations, but governance defines how citizens interact with the government (Rose & Peiffer, 2019). Governance is a behavioral relationship between governors and the governed. The government is a set of institutions established by a constitution and laws. A limited interpretation of governance is the relationship between public officials, who serve as the principals' agents in the governance process, and principals, who determine what the government's institutions do (Peters & Pierre, 2004). These relationships are essential for high-level politics because they focus on how public officials deal with the citizens.

Several scholars and institutions have sought to provide a comprehensive definition of governance based on global indices over the years. The World Bank (n.d) defines governance as "the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored, and

replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them". The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) defined governance as "the process of decision making and the process by which decision is implemented (or not implemented)." Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2004: 254) define governance as "the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised" including the process associated with the selection and replacement of government officials and "the capacity of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and the respect of citizen and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions."

Thus, governance entails the relationship between the government and the society, which details how these relationships are managed, primarily determining citizens' trust or distrust, leaders, and government legitimacy and pervading all government activities. The mechanics of these relations are in line with the position of Pomeranz and Stedman's (2020) principles of governance. According to Pomeranz and Stedman (2020), governance entails five principles: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence, which define the government's identity, its relations with the citizen, and the components and outcomes of its policies and governance. The concept of good, poor, and bad terms in governance measures either the state of progress or the dysfunctionality of the state's social affairs.

Bad governance indices are associated with poverty, widespread corruption, disregard for individual fundamental human rights, and disregard for the minority and vulnerable in society. Klosowicz (2018) notes that bad governance may lead to humanitarian crises, such as starvation or displacement, and unleash an internal or external war, causing suffering for the country's people. Bad governance is rightly perceived as a source of miseries befalling the state and people, such as poverty, internal conflicts, exile, corruption, and humanitarian crises.

Re-Reading Military Coups in West African Politics

The wave of military coups in the contemporary international democratic order has been a significant phenomenon met with dismay in West Africa (McGowan, 2003; Taruvinga, 2023; Grewal, 2023). The military intrusion into West African politics did not meet the immediate postindependence aspirations of the political space on the continent. Nonetheless, newly independent governments prioritised sustained nation-building and economic development. Nevertheless, political turmoil and economic problems, typified by poor leadership and a crisis of nation-building, characterised the era of military meddling in politics. (Darkwa, 2023). One of the first military interventions in West African politics occurred in Sudan in 1958. After Major General Wahhab and Lieutenant General Ahmed Abboud led a coup in Sudan, West African countries started a period of military incursions beyond their political boundaries. Several West African countries experienced military takeovers between 1958

and 1980, including Togo (1963), Sudan (25 May 1969), Dahomey (1963, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1972), Congo Zaire (1965), Central West African Republic (1966), Upper Volta (1966), Ghana (1966, 1972, 1978, 1979), Nigeria (1966, 1975), Burundi (1966, 1976), Rwanda (1973), Sierra Leone (1967, 1968), Mali (1968), Somali (1969) (Wiking 1983) until the early 1990s, when another wave of democratic dispensation swept across West Africa.

The justification for the military coup has been a significant dispute about their entry into West Africa's democratic space. The fact that there is no one explanation for the growth in military coups in West Africa, especially between the 1950s and the late 1980s, is a crucial outcome of these changes over time (Abang, 2022). Military coups were fueled and incited by a wide range of variables, which can be broadly classified into foreign and internal forces. Internally, some West African countries' political and socio-economic environments propel military coups (Ironya, 2018; Darkwa, 2023; Hendrix & Salehyan, 2017). At the same time, factors like ideological conflicts from the Cold War era, contagion effects, and uprisings against the dominance of foreign forces or external actors in the affairs of sovereign West African states all impact external factors (Darkwa, 2023). When it comes to domestic players, coup plotters have employed a variety of defenses over the years to take control, such as widespread democratic mismanagement, political power struggles among democratic leaders, a dearth of positive nation-building indicators, political instability, and economic setbacks (Amoateng, 2019; Chigozie et al.,

2022). After carefully analyzing the body of

scholarship on military intervention and the advantages and disadvantages of military takeovers, it is discovered that certain scholars still have a bias toward earlier military regimes. Notwithstanding the optimism and exceptionalism that military leaders like Ghana’s Jerry Rawlings, Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi, Burkina Faso’s Thomas Sankara, and Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser are points of challenging these narratives, the adverse effects of military intervention in West African politics outweigh the positive ones (Darkwa, 2023).

Even though West Africa has been working toward durable democratic norms since the 1980s, this progress has been hampered by military incursions into politics, particularly in the twenty-first century. In the past two decades, several West African states have had military takeovers of power. These include Mali (2012), Guinea-Bissau (2012), the Central African Republic (2013), Egypt (2013), Zimbabwe (2017), and Sudan (2019). These countries have seen military takeovers of power (Bukari & Braimah, 2023; Moses & Ige, 2023; Taruvinga, 2023). Nine military takeovers occurred in West Africa between 2020 and 2023, which raises the issue of whether the region has again entered a phase of military-political interference. August 2020

saw the removal of Mali’s President Ibrahim Boubacar Keta, who was replaced by Bah Ndaw, according to Colonel Assimi Gota. Furthermore, in March 2021, there was a documented coup attempt in Niger. In April 2021, the third coup in the Sahel area toppled President Idriss Deby of Chad, who had led the country for nearly 30 years (Adeoye, 2022). In May 2021, Assimi Gota struck again, deposing President Ndaw and taking control of Mali. Due to the ripple effect of the waves of coups throughout the region, Mamady Doumbouya, the Special Forces commander, removed Alpha Conde from office as president of Guinea in September 2021.

General Abdel Fattah Burhan led a military coup that ousted Omar al-Bashir in 2019. Abdalla Hamdok, a civilian prime minister, assumed office in October 2021. (Adeoye 2022). On 24 January 2022, Lt. Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba toppled President Rocj Marc Christian Kabore. On 30 September 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traore took over as Lt. Colonel Paul's successor. Henri’s Colonel Amadou Abdramane and General Abdourahamane Tchiani toppled President Mohamed Bazoum’s democratically elected administration in Niger between 26 July and 28 July 2023, in a

Table 1: Coups in West Africa, 2020-2023

S/N	West African States	Period	Coup Plotters
1	Mali	18-19 August 2020	Colonel Asimi Goita
2	Mali	24 May, 2021	Colonel Asimi Goita
3	Guinean	5 September, 2021	Colonel Mamady Doumbouya
4	Burkina Faso	24 January 2022	Lt. Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba

manner akin to that of General Brice Oligui toppling President Ali Bongo Ondimba's government in Gabon on 30 August 2023. (Moses and Ige, 2023). Between 2020 and 2023, there were nine successful military coups. There are also several failed coup attempts in nations like the Central West African Republic, Ethiopia and Guinea-Bissau.

5	Burkina Faso	30 September, 2022	Captain Ibrahim Traore
6	Niger	26-28 July, 2023	Colonel Amadou Abdramane and Gen Abdourahamane Tchiani
7	Gabon	30 August, 2023	General Brice Oligui

Source: Compiled by the authors

Governance Crises in Military Coups: Insights and Perspectives

Since it is impossible to overstate the value of leadership and good governance in the establishment of states, discussions and worries about West African nations have persisted. Military coups have depleted a great deal of the human and material resources of the continent; assassinations, attempted assassinations, and, in some cases, bloody civil wars, insurgents, and terrorism as a result of the doctrinal absence of sustainable governance practises in West African politics. The sit-tight syndrome, dwindling democratic space, resistance to the dominance of Western forces, rising waves of insecurity, and poor socio-economic governance indices that result in a low human development index and unsustainable livelihood are just a few of the bad governance indices that have continued to fuel military presence in West African politics. This section drew on examples of various countries that have experienced military coups between 2020 and 2023 to illustrate some interconnections between the resurgence of military coups and governance deficits in West Africa.

The governance deficit in West Africa, which has mainly prompted the incursion of military rule in West Africa, is the sit-tight syndrome (Olayinka, 2023). The practices of sit-tight syndrome in West African politics, despite the

continuous flagrant display that democracy remains the cornerstone of governance in West Africa, can be described as an index of bad governance. The process entails the refusal of West African leaders to release political power. In West Africa's political governance, West African leaders exhibit sit-tight syndrome through various mechanisms, such as constitutional coups (an act of altering the presidential term limit through continuous review and amendment of constitutional provisions governing political governance) and conduct of unfree, unfair, and rigged elections, among several others. West African leaders who exemplified sight-tight syndrome have reinforced the military's decision to intervene in domestic politics.

In Guinea Conakry, protesters and opposition leaders backed the army that ousted Alpha Conde, elected after decades of military rule ending in 2010. As the first freely elected leader of Guinea since independence in 1958 and having served two constitutional terms in office, Conde changed the constitution, allowing himself a chance to stand for a third term, which he won, to the chagrin of opposition candidates and uneasiness in diplomatic circles. Opposition protests followed, leading to military interventionism (Akintayo, 2021). Also, in Gabon, the coup appears to have ended the Bongo family's fifty-five-year hold on power. El Hadj Omar

Bongo Ondimba was president between 1967 and 2009, marking forty-two years of governance. After El Hadj Bongo's death, his son, Ali Bongo, won the presidency in an election criticised at the time as little more than a dynastic handover. Ali Bongo, who had just won a third term in power in the 26 August election, which appeared to be widely disputed, leading to a coup staged by a junta of senior officers (Benneth, 2023).

Also, shrinking democratic space has led to military intervention in West African politics. The case of Sudan is evidence of this trajectory. The inability of President alBashir to maintain and gain widespread legitimate influence and persistent unrest, given Bashir's tendency to sit tight, also fuelled military overthrow. In 1989, AlBashir became president following a military takeover (Mwai, 2022; Daniel, 2023). Regardless of the motivation for the coups, the plotters frequently claim that the primary agenda for seizing power was to reinstate democracy in the country. Although severe democratic crises have marred Sudan, the degree to which Sudan's military geniuses reinstate democratic values has also gained widespread criticism. However, mainstream news from Sudan has claimed that the military has contributed significantly to the shrinking of democracy through their involvement in various corrupt practices and human rights abuses under President alBashir's administration (Susan, 2022; Amgad, 2022). Hence, the coups were considered avenues for the military to protect their interest, prompting the seizure of power. However, irrespective of the validity of the above claim, the shrinking democratic space that accommodated the military provided the leverage through which

the coup was executed. Involvement. Also, democracy in the Republic of Niger remains fraught. The democratic practice—reduced mainly to the procedural dimension of elections and the tricks of political competition—has not produced management of public affairs perceived as effective and fair for the benefit of the population (Eurasia, n.d). There are widespread suspicions of corruption and high-profile embezzlement, leading to distrust between the government and the governed (Paul, 2022; Civicus, 2023). On this pretext, the military seeks to intervene based on the corrective modalism.

The rising spate of insecurity, poverty, and the crisis of underdevelopment has also fuelled the increasing spate of military coups in West Africa. In Mali, the military coup was justified based on social problems, contested election results, political corruption, and an eight-year violent Islamist insurgency (Omoyeni, 2023). Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba noted the deteriorating internal security situation in Burkina Faso, which he attributed to the country's escalating Islamic insurgency and the democratic government's incapacity to handle the situation effectively (Ornella, 2022). Additionally, western influence and deepening neo-colonial influence pursued by various democratic governments, often considered puppets, have also prompted military coups in West Africa.

In the case of the Niger and Burkina Faso coups, the anti-French vitriol flourished, and the military government ended a longstanding accord that allowed French troops to operate in both countries. In Niger, which neighbours both countries, allegations that President Mohamed Bazoum was a puppet for French

interests were used to legitimise his removal from power, and five military deals with France have since been revoked by the junta led by Gen Abdourahmane Tchiani (Prime News, 2023). Widespread protests and attacks on the French embassy followed the aftermath of the coup. The vulnerability of France and other Western powers in these countries can be attributed to their inability to restore order, making them increasingly vulnerable to criticism (West African Report, 2023) . Despite considerable funding and troops, the French-led international response to Islamist insurgencies in the Sahel region has failed to enable West African governments to regain control of their territories (Primenews, 2023). Hence, in the wake of the coups, the military often emphasized the governance deficit in which the civilian leaders could not protect their citizens and relied on external forces considered a liability rather than a blessing. Growing widespread anger and frustration encouraged military leaders to believe citizens would celebrate a coup.

Conclusion

The study has examined the rise of military coups by interrogating some factors categorised as indices of bad governance and how they impacted the rise of military coups in West Africa. As the rise of military coups in West Africa has begun to challenge the narratives and goals of the democratic wave witnessed in the 1990s and West Africa's path to a sustainable and consolidated democracy, the question of whether military intervention was appropriate has dominated the primary

debates. With the rise of global democratic values, in particular, negating the military's intervention in democratic space, it is also essential to probe into the causative factors that provide the avenues for military intervention. Irrespective of the categorization of factors that prompt West African military intervention, it is evident from the above analysis that the governance problem sums it up. Governance defines the nature of the relationship between the government (leadership) and the citizen, which is characterised by expectations that are marked by the government's provision of socio-economic and political necessities that can support sustainable livelihoods. However, at a critical level of analysis, it is evident that West African countries are suffering from governance deficits, which is evident in the perennial socio-economic challenges, increase in poverty level, low human development index, rising spate of insecurity, democratic retrogression marked by widespread sit-tight syndrome, electoral malpractice, and shrinking democratic and human rights space. Within the purview of these governance deficits, the West African military has continued to organize coups and counter-coups. In all coups, military officials emphasise the need to address the persistent governance deficits that democratic governance has neglected. Although the extent to which the military addresses the identified challenges that motivated their intervention remains contentious, a significant finding of the study is that the resurgence of military coups is a product of governance deficits.

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