Resurgence of Coups in West Africa and Sahel Alliance Implications	

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ABSTRACT

The paper, titled "Resurgence of Military Coups in the West African Sub-region and the Implications of the Emergence of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES)," focuses on the military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger between 2020 and 2023. These coups present disturbing political events that raise serious concern for the political stability in the junta States and the region as well. Most importantly, it threatens the future of democratic governance in the West African Sub-region. The aftermath of sanctions on Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger by Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the threat of military intervention amongst other factors gave impetus to the formation of the contending bloc; Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in the region thus leading to fragmentation of the union of ECOWAS, divisive politics, regional economic sabotage by AES member States amongst other unfolding implications. The paper addresses this issue by setting two objectives for the study: to identify the factors responsible for recent coups and to examine the implications of the AES on ECOWAS. The State fragility theory was adopted as a framework for the study. The research is qualitative, and as such, the historical research design was adopted. Findings reveal that though the AES is founded on grounds of addressing rising insecurity amongst its members, the bloc also serves as a tool for legitimizing these junta governments. Also, existing regional cooperative security frameworks and trade liberalization are threatened. The paper recommends that a sincere and committed focus on enhancing democracy and, by extension, the promotion of good governance should be encouraged by the ruling elite, adopt a systemic approach to curtail rising insecurity in the region by ECOWAS to facilitate trade and investment, while continued use of diplomacy should be used to woo back estranged members.

1. Introduction

The West Africa sub-region and the Sahel have recently come under international scrutiny due to the latest resurgence of coups; five out of the seven military coups witnessed within the last four years in Africa have occurred in this region. This development, according to Ahouangan (2022), has raised considerable concern and evoked memories of the coup era of the early independence period, spanning from the 1960s to the 1980s. The nature of these recent coups, in terms of the numbers and the ease with which counter-coups have taken place within the sub-region, has also become very disturbing, thus reaffirming once again the belief in the weakness of democratic governance in the sub-region. The various democracies in the sub-region are perceived to have become superficial and barely well-functioning, thereby contributing to successive military coups despite several decades of civilian rule after independence. The events of the latest coup in the region began in August 2020, when a group of Malian colonels led a coup against President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. In May 2021, the military again intervened in a second coup against interim President Bah Ndaw. In September of the same year, Mamady Doumbouya led a coup against Alpha Condé in Guinea.

Another coup took place in Burkina Faso in September 2022, which led to the ousting of interim President Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, who had also come to power eight months earlier. In Niger, President Mohammed Bazoum was removed from office in July 2023 by General Abouraha Mana Tchiani, who proclaimed himself the leader. In the same year, 2023, there was also a failed coup attempt in Gabon. Developments arising from the recent coup events have led to the eventual formal exit in January 15, 2025 of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger from the 15 member States regional organization of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the subsequent formation of a coalition of Alliance of Sahel States (AES) citing issues of interference and lack of confidence from ECOWAS. Since these developments, tensions between the two blocs have intensified, with broader implications for institutional operations, economic integration, and, most significantly, regional security.

The pervasiveness of the military as principal agent of social change is demonstrated by these recent resurgence of military coups in the West Africa sub region which could be traced to the military emergence from the early post-independence periods of 1960's when the military took control of the political landscape and add influence through its direct involvement in politics outside its constitutional role of guaranteeing State security and defense. At the early stage of the events of military coups in the region, many considered this phenomenon an aberration that was most likely to be corrected within a few years of these new States establishing themselves democratically; however, this became a norm in African politics. This norm was recently described by the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), António Guterres, as not just an act of impunity, but an epidemic that not only fails to resolve political crises, but also exacerbates and worsens them (Nicholas, 2023). Most countries in Africa have experienced at least one successful coup, while several others have had two or more. While Africa leads the world in the number of countries that have experienced military coups, the West African sub-region tops this chart as the region with the most coups on the continent.

This number is elucidated in the statistical studies conducted by two American researchers, Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne cited by Brook-Holland (2023) and Duzor & Williamson (2023) which reveal that out of 486 attempts at coup in the world between 1950-2022, 244 are failed while 242 successful and Africa had the highest number in all three categories (attempt, failed and successful) with 214 attempts, 106 successful and 108 failed. This is compared to Latin America (146 attempts, 70 successful and 76 failed), Asia Pacific (49 attempts, 27 failed and 22 failed), Middle East (44 attempts, 21 successful and 23 failed), Europe (17 attempts, 8 successful and 9 failed), and South Asia (16 attempts, 10 successful and 6 failed).

Green (2023) corroborated with Amani (2022) and Duzor & Williamson (2023) in asserting that a recorded decline was experienced across Africa from 2000, particularly in West Africa, with an average of less than one successful coup per year. This situation was generally attributed to pressures from international partners and action from both regional and sub-regional Organizations in Africa, which helped to pave the way for democratic stability within this period leading to a minimal occurrence of coups within this period and up until 2011, when military coups began to rise again with the spates becoming dramatically high from 2020 thus changing the narratives once again.

Table 1. Global Distribution of Coups According to Region in the World.	Figure 1. Africa Map showing West Africa having the highest Number of Coups on the Continent
1950-2022 REGION — COUP ATTEMPTS — SUCCESSFUL — FAILED **Africa** — 214 — 106 — 108 Latin America — 146 — 70 — 76 Asia Pacific — 49 — 27 — 22 Middle East — 44 — 21 — 23 Europe — 17 — 8 — 9 South Asia — 16 — 10 — 6 **Global** — **486** — **242** — **244**	

Source: Jonathan Powell-University of Central Florida, Clayton Thyne-University of Kentucky/August 30, 2023

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The recent military coups portend several challenges to the various States in the West African sub-region. Firstly, these coups threaten the stability of democracy in the region, with the possibility of creating a contagious coup, given that the same worsening socio-economic and political conditions that led to the recent coup events in various states since 2020 are also prevalent in other civilian democratic States in the region. Secondly these coups have put to test the unity of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as the junta government of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have not only taken a forceful stance of joining forces together, but as well, declaring to engage the assistance of a foreign actor against ECOWAS if they attempt a military intervention in any of these coup States.

The three Francophone States of Mali, Burkina-Faso, and Niger have also gone a step further by formally withdrawing their States' membership from ECOWAS to form the Confederation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), thereby fragmenting the Union and further heightening the age-long divisions between the Francophone and Anglophone countries and which had existed since the era of independence. Division also exists within the Francophone States in the region between loyalists and those opposed to the French colonial legacy in the region.

The emergence of the affiliation of Sahel States (AES) threatens the existing security and economic integration framework of ECOWAS. For example, trade liberalization and other economic programs by the Union would be adversely affected. Recently, the AES coalition imposed a 0.5 import levy on all goods entering the three States from ECOWAS. Also, cooperative regional security programs aimed at addressing regional instability arising from terrorism, insurgency, arms proliferation, refugee crisis, illegal migration, and illegal cross-border crime, such as arms proliferation, are jeopardized. The general objectives of the study are to examine the reasons for the resurgence of military coups in the West African sub-region

and their implications on the emergence of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). The specific objectives are to:

a. Examine factors responsible for military coups in the West Africa sub-region, particularly in Mali, Burkina-Faso, and Niger, recently.

b. Examine the implications of the emergence of the Alliance of the Sahel States (AES) vis-à-vis ECOWAS and AES.

2.   Method

The research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on understanding and interpreting phenomena within their natural and historical context, rather than relying on numerical data. Given the nature of the study, a historical research design was deemed the most appropriate approach. This design involves the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of past events, documents, records, and other relevant sources to gain insights into patterns, causes, and consequences over time. By employing this method, the study seeks not only to document what happened but also to analyze the social, political, and economic conditions that shaped those events. This approach enables the researcher to draw meaningful connections between past occurrences and present realities, providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

Table 2. Research Method

Activity	Decription
Collection	Collect the data
Evaluation	Analyze the social, political, and economic conditions that shaped those events
Interpretation	Interpretation of past events, documents, records, and other relevant sources to gain insights into patterns, causes, and consequences over time

3.   Results from the Literature

In the book "The Comparative Method and Civil-Military Relations" by Adekanye (2024), he asked a pertinent question on the crux of the problem of military institution in society, "Who guards the guardian themselves" or put differently, "how does one prevent the military from using its monopoly of coercive apparatus of the state from tyrannizing over the rest of the society". Scholars and students of civil-military relations have repeatedly raised this question. Maigre (2009) states that this problem is as old as the advent of organized society itself, thus reaffirming Rapoport's assertion that this problem is an eternal recurrence that derives its correlation from the structure of society and the form of military institution.

Maigre (2009) asserts that a conscious effort to establish a defined path in the military field was initiated after World War II. This quest to understand the military problem in society, which has become a recurring phenomenon, especially in developing nations, has raised the need for political scientists and other social scientists to devote more attention to the study of this particular political behavior. Adekanye (2024) traced this path by citing contributions from eminent scholars, such as S. P. Huntington, in "The Soldier and the State", in which Huntington

set a theoretical direction for civil-military relations. To Huntington, the security of the State can only be achieved and maintained if there exists what he called objective civilian control, which ensures a strict demarcation between the civilian (liberal) and military (professional) spheres. According to Huntington, this will enhance autonomous military professionalism, thereby enabling each group to play its role more effectively.

Samuel Decalo, in his *Military Coups and Military Regimes in Africa,* emphasized the idiosyncratic element in the military hierarchies as a major factor that profoundly accounts for military intervention more than any other factor. One of the most comprehensive explanations for military coups and other forms of conflict in West Africa is the perspective provided by Patrick J. McGowan, who examined the political economy through a world-systems theory lens, in line with rational choice. McGowan argued "that coups are a product of the structural weakness, profound state weakness and derivative predatory rulership which in turn derive from the inferior position they occupy in the international division of labor" (Ehwarieme, 2011).

However, publication on civil-military relations has expanded since the 1960s, with several scholars and researchers in the field, including George A. Kelly, et al., stating that military coups or regimes are the most extreme forms of direct control of government by this institution. They defined "military coup as an irregular transfer of the power of State chief executives by the regular armed forces or internal security forces through the use of force. The military assumes control of the legislative and executive functions by overseeing the policy formulation and implementation process. In some instances, the military takes control of the judiciary and tries to exert control over interest groups in society (Adekanye, 2024).

According to the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces cited in Maigre (2009), the chances of military coup is lower when there is an effective method of control by the democratic civilian government and eight key feature to achieving this control is stated as follows; (1) there must first exist strong democratic parliamentary and judicial institutions as well as Civil Society Organization and an independent media to oversee the performance of the military, (2) civilian authorities have control over military missions, composition, budget and procurement policies; at the same time military policy is approved by civilian control (3) civilians have the required military expertise to fulfil the responsibilities of defense management (4) neither the military as an institution nor individual military leaders attempt to influence domestic policy (5) the military must be ideological neutral (6) the military has a minimal role to play in national economy (7) there is an effective chain of command and (8) members of the military must be free to exercise their right.

According to Eregha (2014), a fair amount of generalization has been asserted that, although the causes of military coups in West Africa are multi-dimensional, they can be fairly situated primarily in the failure of governance, which has resulted in social exclusion, among other negative consequences. Most democratic civilian governments from the independence period to date have denied the people of West Africa the benefits of good governance and the dividends of democracy, which are usually promised during electoral campaigns. Rather, various subsequent governments have become synonymous with corruption and parochial sentiment, undermining the interests of the governed. The centerpiece of rulers and their

sycophants is self-centeredness, thus making government a group of cabals of political elites and cohorts that impoverish the masses, leading to further deepening poverty and underdevelopment in the region.

Duzor and Williamson (2023), citing World Bank estimates, stated that Gabon, Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali all had less than $22 billion in GDP in 2022, compared to the United States' (US) net worth of $25 trillion in the same year. These States, though independent and facing their own peculiar challenges, share similar conditions, including poverty, a dwindling economy, infrastructural deficits, insecurity, ethno-religious crises, and weak institutions, which are largely attributed to governance failures. For several years, concerns have been raised that insecurity in the Sahel region could spread to West African coastal states, such as Nigeria. In 2019, the government of the United Kingdom (UK) explained that one of the reasons for increasing its deployment to the United Nations Mission in Mali was to prevent the conflict spilling over to its neighbors. However, despite various efforts by international partners to contain conflict, the recent resurgence of military coups has once again raised a need for a reevaluation of the present preemptive measures of addressing the challenge, which many believe should go beyond suspension of membership, uncoordinated and lack of concerted economic sanctions by States, and a later reinstatement of membership status of junta governments. The actions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as the immediate constituent in this existential threat have recently included the placement of sanctions on all four countries, which included suspension of their memberships, amongst others, such as the threat to use force against Niger if it refuses to hand over power back to the deposed elected democratic civilian government.

3.1   Trends and Patterns of Military Coups in West Africa

Military coups in West Africa have typically followed a pattern of a "coup season" that starts in one country and spreads to other countries like a wildfire, as was the case in the 1960s to the late 1970s and again in the 1980s to the early 1990s. The recent resurgence of military coups in the West African sub-region, which began in 2020, actually started in 2018 in Chad, with six coups experienced between 2018 and 2021. However, the geographical proximity of Chad in the Sahel region to its West African neighbors has become a harbinger for a series of coups in the region, starting with Mali in 2020.

Beyond the factor of regional proximity which has led to a contagion of coups, one other factor of military coups in the region is the military institution itself, which according to Finer (1974) enables it to take control of State power and play the guardian role, this again according to him is also related to the low political culture which has also led to the weakening of cohesive authority of the military institution. The background to military incursion has generally been based on economic, political, and social failures, resulting from the failure of democratic governance and consolidation.

Table 2 (See Appendix) reveals that the frequency of military coups in the West African region was very high between 1960 and 1980. The number of attempted coups is also relatively high for each country. The period between 2010 and 2019 witnessed only three successful coups: Guinea-Bissau (2003), Togo (2005), Niger -2010 and Mali (2012). Between 2020 and 2023, five successful coups have already been recorded.

3.2   Analysis of Recent Military Coups in Mali, Burkina-Faso, and Niger

Mali: The August 2020 coup came eight years after an earlier coup of 2012, which was ascribed to the failure of the government to curb the intractable problem of insurgency, the government's lack of respect for democratic norms, lack of basic social services, and corruption in government. The 2020 coup was preceded by three months of protests, demanding President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's resignation due to the flawed March election, corruption issues, and insecurity. Eight months later, in May 2021, the Malian Army, led by Vice President Assimi Goita, initiated and led a coup leading to the overthrow of the interim civilian president, Bah N's government, which the military had constituted itself. Fernof and Cole (2020) assert that instability in Mali has led to destabilization in the Sahel region, with a host of interconnected challenges increasingly being exploited by terrorist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda. This position was also asserted by Kwesi and Sarjoh (2009) when they stated that Mali represents a severe combination of challenges of poor governance, constitutional crisis, armed conflict, drug trafficking, and illicit flow of small arms and light weapons.

The factors that have led to the development of political instability in the State of Mali are multifaceted; however, preceding 2012, when Captain Amadou Sanogo orchestrated a coup against President Amadou Touré, Mali had enjoyed a fledgling period of democratic rule with only two previous successful coups in 1968 and 1991. The 2012 coup plotters justified their action based on dissatisfaction with corruption in government and the inability of the government to handle the age-old Tuareg rebellion. The aftermath of this coup witnessed a period of instability, which was exacerbated by the prevalence of various forms of violent interest groups, upon which the present military coup has justified its seizure. The nature of conflict in Mali has shown violent levels of extremity in the West African sub–region. For instance, State authority of the 2012 junta government which took over power was challenged by Islamist group in the North of Mali while at the same time, radical idealogical groups like the Ansar Dine (Defender of faith) which had ties with Algeria based al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups carried out violent attack alongside extremist jihadist groups, recruiting militant from neigbouring countries of Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria.

The instability created by these groups in Mali during this period also led to power sharing among key actors, including the interim President Diocounda Traoré, Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra, and the leader of the ex-junta. The 2006 Algiers Accord, brokered by Algeria, is a testament to the high-level instability in the State of Mali. The current military government of General Assimi Goita, which seized power in May 2021, has continued to hold onto power without any known plan to hand over to a civilian government, consolidating ties with its francophone coup neighbors, Burkina Faso and Mali.

Burkina Faso: In September 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traore led a coup to remove interim president Sandaogo Diamiba over dissatisfaction with his inability to deal with the country's Islamist insurgency, which had led to constant kidnapping and killing. Before this takeover, the citizens were frustrated with the civilian government, accusing it of corruption, nepotism, and laxity (Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 2023). Burkina Faso's political history has been marked by turbulence, including military coups, violent revolts, democratic transitions, and aborted civil democratic governments, with more years under military rule than under civilian

leadership since gaining independence in 1960. Maurice Yameogo, the first president, was overthrown in 1966 by military leader Sangoule Lamizana, who was in turn overthrown in 1980 by Saye Zerbo. Within two years, military leader Zerbo was overthrown by Jean Baptiste Quedraogo in 1982, and barely a year later, in 1983, Thomas Sankara seized power, assisted by an ally, Blaise Campaore. Thomas Sankara was, however, later assassinated in a bloody coup by Blaise Campaore in 1887, who had the longest stay in power for 27 years. He was ousted in 2015. A transition government was formed under Michel Kefando in 2015, which transferred power to Marc Christian Kabore, who was elected in a democratic election. In January 2022, Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, a military officer, staged a coup against the civilian President and seized power. In September 2022, Ibrahim Traore ousted military leader Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba.

Niger: On July 26, 2023, the Presidential Guard seized power from President Mohammed Bazoum. The junta government, headed by General Abdourahamane Tchiani, was formed from senior officers from various units of the Defense and Security Force, known as the National Council for Safeguarding the Homeland. The Niger Armed Forces joined this Council. The July 2023 coup was hinged on economic stagnation, poverty, and years of control of mineral resources (uranium) by France, amongst other security challenges. The Niger coup was the third in the Central Sahel after Mali and Burkina Faso. Green (2023) submits that, unlike Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea, which were mainly caused by structural issues such as manipulated elections and constitutional referendum for extended tenure of office, Niger's coup was mainly economically induced. Preceding this coup, an attempted coup occurred in March 2021, arising from tensions stemming from a presidential election between then-incumbent President Mahamane Ousmane and Mohamed Bazoum (Akinola and Makombe, 2024).

The coup was condemned by international partners such as France, the United States, and the European Union, alongside its continental and regional organization, the AU and ECOWAS. A threat of intervention was issued by its regional body, which was not followed through; however, sanctions were imposed. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data 2023 examines the multidimensional nature and factors that contributed to the July 26 coup, establishing that, beyond the known economic factor, insecurity played a significant role, citing a range of security threats that have confronted the State of Niger from different regions. For example, the Diffa region in the southeastern part is affected by ISWAP and Boko Haram, the West is confronted by Sahelien insurgency led by IS Sahel, and al-Qaeda is affiliated with the JNIM. The Tahoua region in the Central Niger is affected by a mixture of IS Sahel militancy and banditry. The region along the southern part of the Maradi region, which shares a border with Nigeria, is plagued by active criminal gangs. In contrast, the Agadez region, rich in mineral resources such as gold, has become a key smuggling route. The region most affected by conflict, according to this group, is Tibaberi. It has been argued that France's withdrawal from Mali has led to a shift in the conflict in this region.

These four countries in the West Africa sub-region represent areas of a volatile threshold of violence caused by a rising network of insurgent and terrorist groups. In 2022, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger alone had more than 2,700 terrorist attacks recorded, justifying the claim by

the military that the civilian government was unable to combat the challenges of insecurity, amongst other maladministration (Zambakari, 2023). In the Figure 2, levels of conflict and violence are displayed. The graph reveals that Burkina Faso experienced the highest number of insurgencies and other related violent attacks, followed by Mali and Niger. For Guinea, however, the rise in insecurity is basically due to communal violence.

Figure 2. Violent attacks in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Guinea, 2010-2022
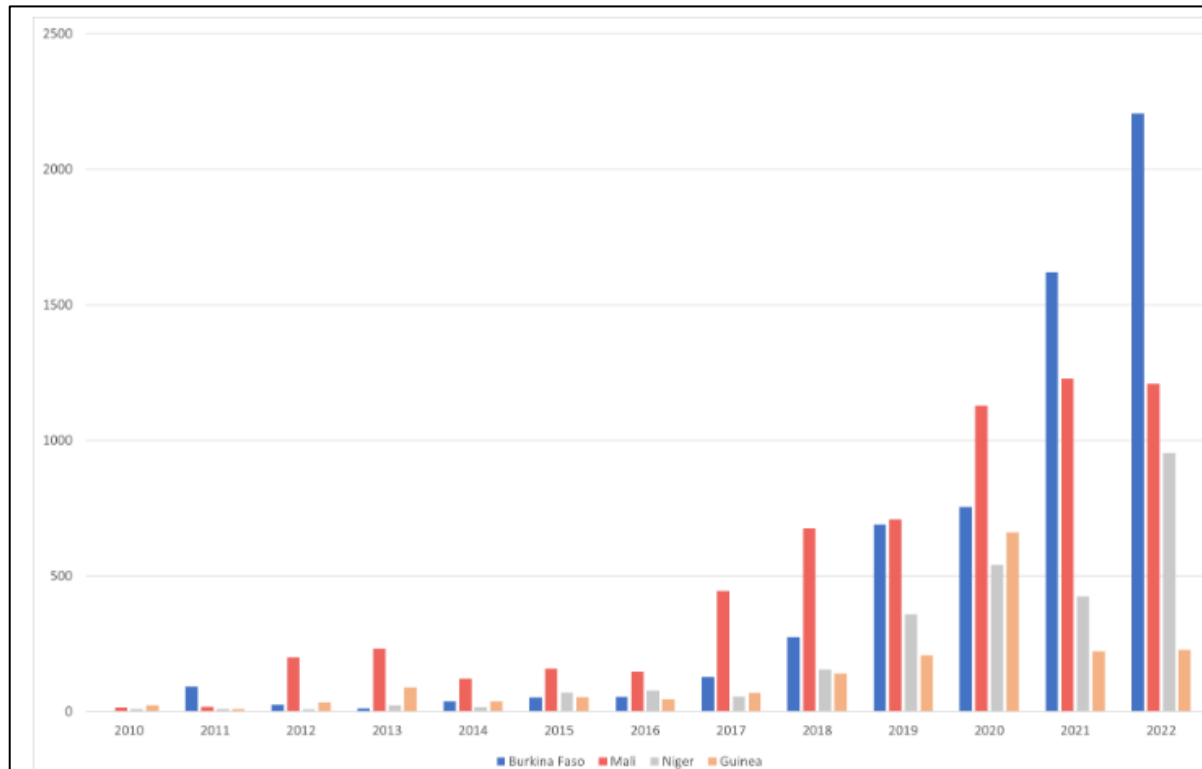
Source: Geneva Centre for Security Policy (2023)

The Geneva Centre for Security Policy (2023) explains that an understanding of the perception of citizens in these four West African countries concerning the military coups portrays a majority support of the coups. According to this Agency, this could be attributed to two main factors. The first is ascribed to an increased attention paid by citizens to corruption in governance and the consequent widespread underdevelopment. Access to such data is made possible and available due to advancements in information and communication technologies, which have led to an increasing number of social media users. This factor is also facilitated by better education. The second factor, according to the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (2023), for the recent coup is the resentment of citizens in these West African countries towards their erstwhile colonial government, based on a relationship they consider no longer beneficial, especially in terms of trade and economics. This sour relationship has led to a courtship from more friendly allies, such as Russia and China, with investment opportunities considered to be better, as well as more military assistance.

3.3   The Emergence of Alliance Sahel States and its Implications on ECOWAS

The emergence of the Alliance of the Sahel States (AES), formed by Mali, Burkina Faso formalized as a Union on September 16, 2023, by the signing of the Liptako Gourma Charter. The Alliance stems from a stance by the junta governments of Mali, Burkina Faso,

and Niger to form a united front to address the common challenges facing these countries, which include religious extremism, terrorism, insurgency, threats from external armed non-state actors, and dissatisfaction with the regional government of ECOWAS. Thus, the alliance was established to create a collective defense framework and mutual support system to address the contending issue. The AES emerged immediately due to strained relations with ECOWAS, resulting from imposed sanctions, threats of military intervention, amongst others, particularly following military coups in all three member countries since 2020. The withdrawal of these States from ECOWAS in January 2024 marked a major geopolitical shift, disrupting years of regional integration and trade worth over $150 billion annually (Juška, 2024). The alliance has also challenged France's influence in the region, leading to a broader rejection of France's colonial legacies in the West African sub-region. The AES can navigate through this political extraction by courting a new ally in Russia's Russia-backed Wagner armed group, thus opening the door to a post-Cold War era between the West and the East.

According to Chigozie and Oyimbo (2022), a good place to start examining the implications of the recent coup in the region is with the immediate States of occurrence. Using the concentric circle as a tool of analysis, political instability has been indicated as one of the immediate consequences arising from the suspension of the democratic process and institutions in this Junta State. The military coup serves as the negation of the constitutional rights of citizens, weakening civil societies and leading to political uncertainties, which will become triggers to more violence, as was the case in Mali. Withdrawn civil liberties lead to a repressive government, which eventually gives room for more armed conflict and violence.

Okeke and Ahmed (2023) asserted that while it may seem that a majority of citizens in these junta States may jubilate and welcome a military coup with the hope of a better future, occasioned by disenchantment with the lack of dividends from democratic civilian government, this euphoria of jubilation has always been short-lived. In addition, Okeke and Ahmed (2023) further stated that a report by Soldiers and Citizens, which conducted a survey of 500 citizens from countries that have recently experienced a military coup, shows that only 17 percent of those interviewed preferred a non-democratic form of government. Thus, because interests are not represented and State powers are confined and not equitably distributed, the State becomes easily prone to political instability created through political exclusion, thereby resulting in political destabilization, which is most likely to lead to more coups. Apart from this, violent uprisings, insurgencies, and terrorist attacks are likely to feature in these countries.

Kwesi and Sarjoh (2009) assert that Mali and Niger in the Sahel are countries already facing powerful insurgent groups, which the national government has been unable to defeat on its own. These violent non-state actors not only exploit political crisis to expand their network within the State but also expand their group through transnational recruitment. The economic implications of the recent coups in junta governments are evident in the economic instability of each of these States, and as already indicated by previous studies, military regimes hinder development across the West African sub-region. WANEP (2024) stated that the recent Military coups disrupted key sectors, including agriculture, the oil industry, and mining activities, leading to decreased productivity and increased global commodity prices due to supply chain disruptions. The contestation for national wealth by military personnel and

political groups, as new actors in these sectors, resulted in both economic and political instability.

Obasi (2023) states that sanctions are meant to compel junta governments to comply with the rule; however, the adverse effects of these sanctions on the economy are mostly felt by ordinary citizens rather than the coup plotters. Additionally, the impact of sanctions on the economies of these coup States is usually felt long after the sanctions have been lifted. Citing the example of the recent sanctions imposed on Niger, Obasi (2023) stated that the sanctions on Niger following the July 2023 coup, particularly the border closure, had negative economic effects on Nigeriens and neighboring countries, such as Nigeria. Economic trade liberalization between the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and ECOWAS has become most hindered with the emergence of this new bloc. Juška (2024) reports that the introduction of a 0.5% tax on imported goods to Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso by ECOWAS has further widened the trade gap between the organizations. The free movement of persons and goods from ECOWAS has been limited by the member states of AES. Other measures include the non-recognition of ECOWAS passports in these states and a blockade of commercial activities, such as banking and financing, which have been negatively impacted, thereby affecting financial stability. Other consequences of the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Mali from ECOWAS, which negatively impede the Alliance of Sahel States and "vice versa" include;

a. The risk of food insecurity. The withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to form the Alliance of Sahel States serves as a competition to ECOWAS, thereby exposing these States to economic restriction, which would exacerbate an already challenged food supply chain brought on by activities of terrorism, farmer-herder conflict, and other armed conflict, which have led to the displacement of farming communities.

b. Loss of preferential trade benefits: the AES will no longer benefit from or enjoy the ECOWAS trade liberalization scheme, which makes allowance for duty-free access for goods and services within the region, particularly agricultural products, mineral products, and traditional handicrafts.

c. Disruption to access to the infrastructural project. The Alliance Sahel States are likely to lose access to the infrastructure in the bloc that hitherto was available to them. Such include the Economic Community of West African States electricity Market, ECOWAS Bank of Investment and Development, and transport routes, which are necessary for economic development.

d. Economic isolation: Limited regional cooperation may limit foreign investment and access to global financing, as investors may perceive the political and economic environment as unstable.

e. Loss of the Regional Collective Security Pact. Security initiatives by the regional government, which ensure cross-border security against terrorism, banditry, migration, and financial crimes handled by ECOWAS Interpol, are limited and denied altogether to the AES.

2.4 Theoritical Framework

The study adopts the state fragility framework as a basis for analysis. This theory is particularly relevant in explaining the reasons behind the resurgence of military coups in the West African sub-region and their implications for Nigeria's political instability. The relevance

of this theory is accentuated by its focus on three core components of State functions: authority (monopoly of force), legitimacy (representation), and capacity (common good and prosperity). The state fragility theory has contributions from scholars. These scholars used several concepts to describe unstable sovereign States, some of which include State failure, dysfunction, weakness, collapse, or failed States. Gunner Myriadal in the 1960s and 1970s also introduced the concept of a soft State to describe primitive and corrupt pre-colonial States (Di John, 2010).

Di John (2010) defines State fragility as a classification of States according to capacity deficit, which is categorized into levels of weak, failing, failed, or collapsed. The last two represent the end stage of State fragility. It is a gradual or rapid disintegration of socio-economic, political, and legal loss of societal fabric, evident in the disintegration of the State structure (administrative and political) that could lead to the complete erosion of the State. However, as the theory of State fragility gained popularity, State failure became classified as one of the levels of fragility according to some authors.

The theory has been criticized on several grounds. Firstly, there is a lack of consistency among various authorities regarding what constitutes the main focus of the definition; in fact, many International organizations have varied focuses. A corollary to this is the critique of faulty causes. Secondly, the concept has been criticized for being a neo-colonial idea used by the West to impose its values on erstwhile colonies, especially through programs like Responsibility to Protect (R2P) by major Powers (Ayers, 2012). Some authors believe that at one point or another, all states fail, and whatever the nomenclature of classification of fragility, they still bear the label "State". Thirdly, many of the definitions overlook the uniqueness of the political nature of the supposed fragile states; focusing solely on capabilities is detrimental to state-building. Despite these criticisms, we find the State fragility theory particularly suitable for this study, as it helps in understanding and explaining the multi-dimensional problems of social, economic, and political nature and conflict dynamics of military centrality common to States in the West Africa sub-region and Nigeria in particular, which have manifested in several problems of destabilization.

3.5   Major Findings

a. Findings reveal that the failure of civilian democratic governments has been mostly responsible for the events of military coups in the West Africa sub-region, particularly in the Alliance of Sahel States of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

b. In addition to the above are the immediate factors of extreme poverty, increasing armed conflict and violence, terrorism, and religious extremism, such as the Jihadist movement, that have led to the onset of these coups.

c. Finding reveal that while the formation of the Alliance of the Sahel States is hinged on poverty, rising insecurity and instability in these States amongst other factors such as the particular failure of ECOWAS to address the problem of insecurity, there is the convert reason by these junta regime to legitimize their governments by using the organization of the AES as a counter force against ECOWAS.

d. Frosty relations between ECOWAS and AES will jeopardize the existing regional integration framework in the areas of security, economics, and politics, and increase the tendency for more divisions amongst States in the region.

4. Conclusion

While the ECOWAS aims to maintain the existing integrative framework by resisting every form of fragmentation and attempts to court the AES back into its fold, it must recognize that this may not be possible. It should, however, consider the criticism leveled against the organization, particularly its failure to aid in instituting credible, legitimate elections in the various States of the West African sub region, especially in its failure to boldly declare unacceptable the outcome and winner of "rigged" General elections and sanction winners from such fraudulent election to enhance good governance and democracy in the region. In terms of insecurity, ECOWAS must also brace up to adopt workable models to the increasing regional insecurity that creates instability, thus making it easy for military coups to take place. Additionally, until the States in the region fully benefit from the region's integrative economic policy, the Organization's relevance will be undervalued; therefore, this should be a priority. It is recommended that ECOWAS should be more pragmatic in quickly formulating policies and initiating a framework that would absorb the void, shocks, and instability created by the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in the areas of security and economy.

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Table 2. Trend in Military Coups in Terms of Successful and Attempted Coups in the West Africa Sub-region, from 1960 to 2023.

Country	Successful Coup years	Coup Leaders
Benin	1963	Gen. Christophe Sogio
	1965	Congacou
	1967	Alley
	1969	De Souza
	1972	Maj Mathieu Kerekou
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1975,1977, 1988, 1992, 1995	
Burkina-Faso	1966	Lt, Col. Sargoule Lamizana
	1980	Col. Saye Zerbo
	1982	Maj Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo
	1983	Capt. Thomas Sankara
	1987	Capt. Blaisa Campaore
	2022	Correeire Seabre
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	Nil	Nil
Cape Verde	Nil	Nil
Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)	1999	Gen. Robert Guei
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1980, 1981, 1995, 2001	
The Gambia	1994	Lt. Yahya Jammeh
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1994 and 1995	
Ghana	1966	Gen. Joseph Ankrah
	1972	Lt. Col. Ignatius Kutu Acheampong
	1978	Gen. F. W. K. Akuffo
	1979	Jerry Rawlings
	1981	Supporter of Rawlings
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1967, 1977, 1979, 1982, 1983	
Guinea	1984	Incl, Col. Lansana Conte
	2021	Col. Mamady Dounbouya
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1970, 1985, 1996	
Guinea-Bissau	1980	Maj Joao Bernardo Vieira
	1999	Gen. Mane
	2003	Gen. Verissimo Correira Seabre
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1998 and 2000	
Liberia	1980	M. Sgt. Samuel Kanyon Doe
	1994	Tom Woewieyu
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1980, 1980, 1985, 1994, 1994	
Mali	1968	Lt. Moussa Traore
	1991	Lt. Col. Amedou Toumani Toure
	2012	Cap. Amaduo Sanogo
	2020	Group of Military Officers
	2021	Assimi Goita
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1991	
Mauritania	1978	Lt. Col Quid Salek
	1980	Lt. Col. Mohammed Khouna Ould Heydalla
	1984	Col. Moaouia Taya

	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1981, 1982, 1987, 1990, 1995	
Niger	1974	Lt. Col Seymi Kountche
	1996	Col. Ibrahim Barra Mainassara
	1999	Maj. Daudan Malam Wanke
	2010	Col. Ely Quid Mohammed Vall
	2023	Gen. Abdourahmane Tiane And Member of Presidential Guards
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1983	
Nigeria	1966	Maj, Nzeogwu
	1966	Hausa Army Officers
	1975	Gen. Murtala Ramat Mohammed
	1983	Gen. Mohammadu Buhari
	1985	Gen. Ibrahim Babangada
	1993	Gen. Sani Abacha
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1976, 1990,	
Senegal	1962	PMM. Mamadou Dia
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	Nil	Nil
Sierra Leone	1967	NRC (army officers) Genda Juxon-Smith
	1968	Stevens
	1992	Cap. Valentine Strasser
	1996	Gen. Julius Maada Bio
	1997	Maj. Johnny Paul Koroma
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1967, 1971, 1987, 1992, 1995, 1996	
Togo	1963	Sgt. Maj. Emmueal Bodjolle
	1967	Lt. Col. Etienne Eyadema
	2005	Military, Faure Gnassingbe
	Unsuccessful Coup (Attempted)	
	1964, 1970, 1983, 1986, 1991, 1991, 1991, 1991	

Source: Adekanye (2024)