

## MILITARY JUNTA IN FRANCOPHONE WEST-AFRICA

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*Abstract: This study focused on military junta in Francophone West-Africa. Prior to the early 1990s this region has been less interfered by the military, as they had a close relationship with their colonial masters. What could have led to the recent military takeovers in this region, was what formed the basis for our study. The secondary method of data collection was maximally explored in our study. We made ample use of both the interventionists theory put forward by S.E. Finer. From our observations, it is clear that the current military junta in this region is as a result of several factors viz, rejection of French dominance cum presidents that are stooges to their colonial masters, institutional coup, and unnecessary delay in power by the leaders, etcetera. For this to stop, there should be a well-planned tenure system for leaders enshrined in their respective constitutions, also institutions should be strengthened to stop and/or avert institutional coup. You cannot support institutional coups and then consider military coup illegitimate. Lastly, the French government should maintain the principles of the UNO on diplomatic relations with other countries.*

*Keywords: Military, Junta, Francophone, West-Africa, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Coup.*

### **Background of Study**

Military system of administration is a form of autocratic governance, and could mean any of the following: rule by a military dictator who is unhindered by fellow officers or rule by a set of very high-profile officers who are forces the dictator has to reckon with before making a decree. The second definition is termed, a regime. Both the military dictator and regime are prone to violate and contravene human rights law, and this would cause anarchy than a civilian government led by a despot. The actions of dictators differ from that of more limited military rulers (regime) in a lot of areas, however. The Military dictators initiate more wars globally than both civilian autocrats and military rulers, this is so because they have more reasons to be afraid of postouster exile, imprisonment, or assassination. Fear of the unknown could also be a precursor for their resistance to a peaceful handover. Military dictators are more often ousted by insurgency, popular springing, or attacks unlike the regime. Their tenures rarely end in democratization, unlike the regimes (Geddes, et al, 2014).

Governments establish military base equipped with sophisticated armories and these officers are given the needed training to handle them, for the sole aim of protection from both external and internal aggression. The sophisticated weapons and training that the military officers undergo sets them potential threats to their employers. Right from the

Since World War II era (1939-1945), military junta have taken place to topple a whole lot of civilian governments.

Once in a while, they hand over power to civilians after some days, but most times they hold on to it. They rather establish military rule, headed by either a military dictator or a junta representing the officer corps. Despite that military regime has noticeable less, from a global perspective, in the past two decades, they are increasing significantly in Francophone African countries.

Military regime encapsulates administration by men who are trained in armed force and protecting the territorial integrity of a country rather than in politics. The military officers are used to a regimented lifestyle. It is characterized by hierarchy and absolute obedience than to dialogue cum negotiation. The reason for this is not farfetched, as they are trained and used to a lifestyle that is a departure from those of politicians who are civilians. The military rulers at times make different policy options that differs civilian dictators. Some of these policy option differences includes war, disposition to opposition and the decision to terminate their own stay in politics or not.

Regardless of their skill cum expertise in the utilization of coercion, military-led administration, are intriguingly fragile. Anytime officers forcefully take control of civilian governments, they most often than not, keep full dominance over artilleries and the officers who make use them. In that regard, they would have undisputable advantages in forceful capacity vis-a-vis other system of administration: the capacity to intimidate and silence (relatively) opposition through the threat to violence and to use force to cocoon opposition (Debs, 2010, Svulik, 2013). However, these embedded advantages have not help military regime to hold on to or sustain power for long. Military rule spends less period of time to democracies and other forms of dictatorship (Geddes, 1999).

The fragility of military regime appears to be counter intuitive not only because of military regimes advantage in force but also due to military institutions highly unified, disciplined internal structure that may be anticipated to act as impediment to problems from within, whilst coercion scares challenges from outside. According to Finer (1988) as observed long ago, military institutions are more structured intensively than political parties. Military officers undergo training, and incentives to command loyalty of junior officers to seniors are built into every side of military institutions. If the argument that, a very well hierarchical organization and pragmatic discipline help in maintaining communist party rule, is anything to go by, in that regard, military regimes should also enjoy from such benefits. Moreso, the empirical analysis of military rule reveals that the incentives are not in any way averting the ultimate disobedience: recalcitrant manifestation towards the very most senior officer of the regime. Ousting of leaders is recurring in military regimes in comparison to other types of autocracy, as other officers carry out most of these ousters (Frantz & Ezrow 2011; Gandhi 2008, pp. 176-77). The rate of both ousting of leaders and regime failure in military rules indicates weakness.

The attitudes of military leaders are unpredictable and challenges expectations in some ways, too. Whilst it is anticipated that military rulers will use force as to threats in their administration (Davenport 2007). Regardless, military administration challenged with economic downturn or stiff popular opposition most likely bargain a comeback to the barracks instead (Geddes 1999).

Notable theories on dictatorship views autocratic as stooge of aristocrats (Acemoglu & Robinson 2006, Boix 2003), however military head of states cannot be said to be stooge of

the wealthy nor perhaps other aristocrats that may be in alliance with them (Nordlinger 1977). The seemingly hegemony of some military dictators over aristocrats and their capacity to redistribute economic wealth along strata are incoherent with models of autocratic rule as basis for sustaining the fortunes of the so-called wealthy. Supposing military dictators have certain level freedom from aristocrats and gets their interest met, just as other political stakeholders do, theories of autocratic administration should make adjustments for the interests of military strongmen. In countries where they do not call the shots, the military is a very relevant group in authoritarian administrative blocs, as manifested in the Arab Spring.

#### *Objective of the Study*

The objectives of this study are;

To carefully study the nature of military junta in Francophone West-Africa

To identify the motives cum reasons for the recent military intervention in Francophone West-Africa

To recommend the right policy measures to take by the various government in Francophone West-Africa in order to put an end to military intervention.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Contemporary Conceptualization of Military*

The plethora meanings of the concept military regime in various analysis is capable of creating chaos, and theoretical anticipations differs vis-a-vis the researcher perspective of the term. This section reveals the commonly used meanings of the concept so as to succinctly demystify apparently confusion as a result of opposing submissions. First, military regime refers to dictatorship led by a military man irrespective of the setting and influence rest of the ruling group. The second definition, as put forward by O'Donnell (1973) and Remmer (1989), confines the term military rule to dictatorships led by collegial bodies, working for the interest of the officer corps, whereby more than one officer calls the shots. The third meaning, in some instances referred to as military strongman administration, refers to the subset of dictatorships that allows power to be concentrated in a single military leader. Though autocratic government is by no means, limited to military regime, but it is a characteristic feature of the military system of government. Some instances of military-led autocratic government are, Idi Amin's tyrannical government in Uganda; the Egyptian antidemocratic cum dictatorial regime spearheaded by some Free Officers in 1952, that was terminated, abruptly by the removal of Hosni Mubarak in 2011; and Sani Abacha's pariah regime in Nigeria that ended, following his death, in 1998.

#### *Military Intervention in Africa*

Beginning from independence in (or around) 1960, democratically elected governments have been usurped by military men in more than half of Africa's countries, whilst in majority of these countries (mostly in anglophone Africa) one faction of the military officers has subsequently been dislodged by another - Nigeria in July 1966, 1975, and 1985; Ghana in 1978 and 1979; and Burkina Faso in 1987. A lot of other countries have witnessed bloody coup attempts, vis Gabon, 1964, Angola, 1977 and in Kenya, 1982. This statistics reveals the fundamental reason for instability in majority of African states, regardless of colonial heritage vis Francophone, Anglophone or Busophone; party system in Mali's one party, Dahomey (1963) and Nigeria' (until 1966 and between 1979 and 1983);

regime style vis conservative or radical (Niger and Ahmed Ben Bella's Algeria shows two extreme examples); and the economic status of the state, like oil-rich Libya, or abjectly poor Burkina Faso (Upper Volta until August 1984).

### *French-Africa Policy*

During the period succeeding the Cold War era, and specifically the happenings in Rwanda in 1994, French and Africa military diplomatic relations has been on transit. The manifestations of this neo policy trajectory have been informed by, the rearrangement of French defense program introduced in the country's defense White Paper of 1994 as well as in the Presidential portfolio *Une Défense Nouvelle* of 1996. As embedded in the reform program, France is terminating conscription and reorganizing its armed forces towards the operation of a stronger and more formidable military power outside the reach Europe in the novel roles of prevention and projection.

### *How Military Rule Ends*

Despite that literature abound on dictators' efforts to remain in power for long, some analysis have shown that some coups (counter) against military head of states are triggered by the intention to return power to democratically elected president and that military leaders often bargain their return to the barracks rather than coercion. Internal wranglings cum factionalism within military governments is another reason for its extrication from politics as officers uphold the principles of *esprit de corps* above others, including remaining in power (Nordlinger 1977, Geddes 1999).

### *Recent Military Junta and France Intervention in Francophone Africa*

According to Durosomo (2017), French President, Mr Emmanuel Macron, visited Mali for a tour round the French military stationed there as part of France's Operation Barkhane, that is currently involving 3,500 troops spread around Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. The operation commenced its work in 2014 as an attempt to combat extremist uprising cum insurgence in the Sahel region of Africa. The planning and expediency of Macron's tour-it's a major action he took whilst elected as president and its a clear proof of France's dominance and presence in Francophone Africa. The precence of France in the Sahel region of Africa is not strange for sure, as all the countries involved in Operation Barkhane is an erstwhile colony of France. Prior to now, France has intervned in Africa 19 times from 1962 and 1995, resulting in a controversial humanitarian intervention during the Rwanda genocidal period. However, the country's more recent activities, have occurred to a large extent, without being reported. France's indelible mark in the political happenings in francophone Africa is often termed as " *Franc Afrique* " - a concept which also recognizes the "postcolonial" economic payoff maintained by France in her interactions with Francophone Africa. Below are, incidences cum instances of France most recent military involvements, as well as recent coup d'etat in Francophone Africa.

### *Mali*

The French military operations that kicked off in Mali from January 2013 to July 2014 was Operation Serval. Its goal and aim were to avert Islamist militants in the Northern part from hijacking the countries strategically situated military airport. Operation Barkhane being the

current, replaced Operation Serval. According to Al Jazeera (2021), The 2021 coup d'etat which took place in Mali started on the eve of 24 May 2021, when Vice President Assimi Goita led Malian Army double crossed and held hostage President Bah N'daw, Prime Minister Moctar Ouane and Minister of Defence Souleymane Doucoure. Assimi Goita, being the head of the junta that executed the Malian 2020 coup d'etat, made a national broadcast that President N'daw and Prime minister Ouane have been discharged of their duties and that a fresh election would be conducted in 2022. The 2021 Malian coup d'etat was the country's third in a span of ten years, from 2012 and 2020 military seizure, the latter being short-lived - barely nine months earlier. The political atmosphere was very high, tensions were heightened between the civilian caretaker government and the military right from the handover of political power in September, 2020. It led to the arrest of Keita and Cisse under duress by rebel force. A more legitimate government as against the then interim government was advocated for by the M5 movement - an anti-Keita group that were at the vanguard of the 2020 Malian protest. On May 14, the government revealed her plans for a new, 'all encompassing' cabinet. On May 24, tensions were reduced after a cabinet rearrangement. The new arrangement, did not change the military's control over strategic ministries, although, two arrow heads of the coup Sadio Camara and Modibo Kone were replaced by N'daw's administration. In the subsequent event, heightened military activity was reported by various news agent's, even the US Embassy in Bamako, although there was a state of calmness in the city, perhaps relatively. As an attempt to put an end to the junta's continued seizure of power and return to a democratically elected government, ECOWAS set up a committee led by a former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan. The military junta agreed to conduct elections and return power to democratically elected president. After months of no return to civilian rule, a consensus was reached at an ECOWAS summit held in Accra on 3 July 2022, that Mali be excommunicated from the body. The coup was totally condemned by other organizations like the UN and AU.

#### *Central African Republic*

By December 2013, French troops had entered the Central African Republic in a proactive measure to "restore normalcy" in the country after a rebel alliance from the Northern region called, Seleka had ousted the government. France had intervened six times before introducing Operation Sangaris. This operation was the France's seventh military intervention in CAR right her independence in 1960.

#### *Chad*

French troops have been stationed in Chad since 1986 to 2014 as one of her Operation Epervier, which was the aftermath of an agreement between the two countries to support in defending against the Libyan attack on Chad. France was able to proof its growing relevance cum influence in the country by restructuring the Chadian army and supporting the first multiple party presidential election in 1996. According to Felix (2023), Chad's military seized political power in April 2021 following the death of President Idriss Deby, who was killed on the battlefield whilst visiting troops fighting rebel's forces in the North. If the Chadian law is anything to go by, the speaker of parliament should have become president. However, a military junta came on board and dissolved parliament under the guise of avoiding anarchy. General Mahamat Idriss Deby, the son of the former president

was made to be in charge of the interim government and was saddled with responsibility of overseeing a transition to elections, that is to last for 18-months.

#### *Djibouti*

Currently, the largest force base of Francophone Africa is Djibouti. The French government has been instrumental to the nation's growth, beginning in 1991 when the Djiboutian Civil War began. The total number of French troops stationed in the country, is 1,500.

#### *Cote d'Ivoire*

The French government established a peacekeeping mission in Cote d'Ivoire called Operation Unicorn. It was established after the outbreak of the First Ivorian Civil War in 2002. This squad was initiated in line with the UN's peacekeeping mission in Cote d'Ivoire, that was set in 2004. Despite the fact that Operation Unicorn officially ended in 2015, France still keeps military base in the country. Following the recent happenings in Francophone West Africa, the French government has strengthened its military base in Cote d'Ivoire.

#### *Guinea*

President Alpha Conde of Guinea was ousted by special forces commander Colonel Mamady Doumbouya in September 2021. Prior to his removal, Conde amended the country's constitution to avert and put to check measures capable of thwarting and/or prevent him from running for another (third) term, sparking nationwide protest and rioting. Since the military junta, Doumbouya has taken over the responsibility of the former president, and pledged to hand over to a democratic elected government, within three years (Felix, 2023). On the other hand, the umbrella organization covering west Africa, ECOWAS had disapproved the timeline and sanctioned the members of the junta, as well as their relatives, as their bank accounts are being frozen. The military government has drafted its plans to commence a 24-month transition program, from January 2023, but are facing high level criticism, opposition, rejection and what have you by opposition parties, saying it has made little or no progress cum efforts to put in place institutions and a blueprint to transit to democratic government.

#### *Burkina Faso*

The ousting of President Roch Kabore of Burkina Faso was carried out by Burkina Faso's army in January 2022. The coup plotters faulted his administration for failing to checkmate terrorists and contain violence by Islamist militants. The leader of the Coup, Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba has pledged to address the security sector, but the reverse is the case, as attacks are increasing, by and by, wiping values and ethics in the army, which has resulted in a counter coup eight months after, immediately after the present junta leader Captain Ibrahim Traore took control of power through coercion in September following a mutiny (Felix, 2023).

### **Methodology**

Military interventions in Francophone West-Africa for some time now has been a matter of concern, and several scholars and research has been carried out. It is in this regard, the

study made use of secondary method of data collection. Several books, academic journals, archives, magazines, articles (published and unpublished) guided this study.

*The Niger Military Junta: Reasons and Implications*

Accled (2023) observed the following:

That Niger has been bedeviled with a perpetual increase in jihadist activity since 2018, having a record year for violence in 2021 evaluated by fatalities

With the steady rise in political violence incidents from 2022, the lethality of it has followed a steady curve downward, with an attendant decrease in overall fatalities of same year. Between January and June 2023, political violence dropped by 39% (estimated) in comparison to the last six-month, backwards.

Attacks on civilians dropped by 49%, and attendant fatalities dropped, still by 16%

Nigerien security forces operation increased by 32%, although, as part of a continuous effort to counter insecurity

Incidences of stealing, looting and vandalization of properties were recurring decimal during this period, indicating that terrorist groups viz IS Sahel and JNIM more recently see Niger as instrumental for resource extradition. The western Tillaberi region is the most disadvantaged and affected by the conflict, however, there has been a visible geographic departure from the northern region to the western region. On July 26 2023, the Niger Presidential Guard staged a coup and held hostage President Mohamed Bazoum alongside his family. high profile officers from different branches of the defense and security forces (FDS) aligned to form a junta, called the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Homeland (CNSP), and communicated the takeover of power on a televised broadcast. Public response took different turns, there was an initial solidarity movement for Bazoum being spread by mutinous soldiers, followed by later demonstration in solidarity of the CNSP. The following day, being July 27, the Nigerien Armed Forces allied with the CNSP, noting their aim to avert lethal confrontation, as well as, safeguard the president together with his family. However, the response by the international community, viz the United States, France, the European Union and ECOWAS has shown utmost rejection and disapprovals of the coup. The above interests have condemned the coup and threatened a return to the Bazoum led civilian government, with immediate effect.

A summit recently held in Abuja Nigeria's capital, ECOWAS agreed on military intervention, and threatened sanctions in order to pressure the junta to bring Bazoum back. They gave the junta a one-week ultimatum. The West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) also announced the imposing of immediate sanctions and froze the state assets of Niger. In a dramatic twist, the following Francophone Africa: Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali have declared their full support for the new Nigerien government led by the junta and notified the public of their noncompliance to whatever imposed sanctions by the international and regional bodies on Nigerien government under the junta. In fact, Burkina Faso and Mali further issued a joint statement that any military intervention by ECOWAS and others in Niger is an invitation cum declaration of war against the two countries. The reactions in support of Niger from the junta-led states in Francophone Africa is a wake-up call for a deeper divide and potential break-up of hitherto West African bloc. The aftermath of the coup brings a very high tendency for domestic civil disobedience and regional pandemonium, a surge in militant activities, departure from democracy and restriction of civil liberties, and stiff socio-economic implications as a result of sanctions.

Again, the military junta is yet to find a bearing and consolidate its power grab and it's facing a very strong opposition by most regional and international bodies. Detained President Bazoum is still having some significant level of support and alibis not only in the international scene but from the Nigerien population, with evidence of pro-Bazoum counter-aggregating for mass civil disobedience against the military junta.

#### *Recent Violence and Conflict Trend in Niger*

Niger faces an array of challenges, security wise: in the west, it confronts the insurgency in the Sahelian area orchestrated by IS Sahel and the al-Qaeda-connected JNIM, in the southeastern Diffa region is tormented by the ISWAP and Boko Haram insurgency, which also affects Nigeria. Whilst the central region of Tahoua is witnessing a combination of banditry and IS Sahel militancy. Maradi, a region around the southern border with Nigeria, is affected by a group of bandit gangs that are well organized. In the gold rich region of Agadez, that has smuggling routes stretching on the border with Algeria, Chad and Libya, has more so been plagued by a myriad of armed groups, including rebels from Chad and Sudan, drug traffickers, and formidable syndicate gangs, all adding to spread rural banditry. The area around Tillaberi has remained the most affected by the recent conflict, regardless of the fact that, there are noticeable and very visible geographical departure from the North to the West. This departure in terrorist movements could be a function of some converging factors. Chief amongst, IS Sahel, which is the most dominant armed factor in the country and the areas around Tillaberi, now channeled its activities on the border close to Mali in early 2022 (ACLED, 2023). This action simultaneously occurred with the withdrawal of France's military operations from, as well as the realigning of its diplomatic policies with Niger, that allows for the concentration of military forces in the northern part of Tillaberi. JNIM and IS Sahel also engage in concurrent operations in sister nations like Burkina Faso, and the areas that share borders with western Tillaberi is being used as its base. Moreso, the Nigerien government has made deliberate moves towards resolving the hitherto existing intercommunal conflicts in Ouallam and Banibangou, the parts mostly affected by violence. According to ACLED (2023), the highlighted factors are some of the reasons responsible for the shift in armed engagement. Regardless of these issues, Niger based on statistics has fared better than fellow Francophone West African vis-a-vis violence and conflict. The coup plotters pointed that, the perpetual collapsing security situation, is a moral justification for her action.

#### **COUPS: Motives cum Reasons**

Before now, Francophone Africa were the most stable political countries, as there were little or no military interference in the government of the day. One reason that could adduce to this, is the bond and closeness that exist between the French government and these Africa nations. It is so strong that the French government has a strong military base, as mentioned earlier in this work. However, what seems to be a reason for non-military intervention, is now becoming a reason for it. Although options vary as to why the military intrude in a civilian government in the first place, certain facts seem uncontestable (Tordoff, 2002). First, the army can launch a coup due to its control of the weaponry, as such has the needed strength cum capacity for organized violence. Examples of such cases were, Togo, Burundi, Chad and the Central African Republic. Second, coups are most often than not, staged by the few who have operational command, viz battalion commanders. When such



occurs, more senior officers may be persuaded to join so as to reduce the disruption to the army's internal command structure, as well as to get the respect cum legitimacy needed. The recent military Junta in Niger saw the other officers in the seat of power, submitting to the junta, in order to avoid a breakdown in the system. It happened in Mali in 1968, and more recently. In the third place, African coups are typically army coups. The recent coups in francophone Africa viz Niger, Chad, Burundi, etcetera. Fourth, training has an uncertain role to play. According to Tordoff (2002), officers trained at St. Cyr, the French military academy, have been involved in coups despite having an orientation whilst undergoing training, of a culture of military non-intervention. Also, we cannot jettison the psychological factor. Once the embargo, wall or barrier which deters the military from intervening has fallen in one state, it may be broken in a neighboring country or, the military having tasted power before in a state, it may be tempted to intervene again. Take for instance, the recent military intervention in Francophone West-Africa. More recently they have witnessed military intervention than normal.

*What may be the reason for it?*

First, the promotion of institutional coup. In the words of Tordoff (2002), the emergence of an illegitimate government, lack of political skills as well as manipulation of election result, may precipitate a coup or (perhaps) encourage a counter-coup. Second, the over dominance cum influence of French government on African soil. Whether we like it or not, according to Marx (1846), societal struggle is a continuum, between the predators (thesis) and the prey (anti-thesis), and the end will only come when the latter becomes victorious. He called it, the synthesis. Third, those who are in authorities take power as a life affair, as such stay longer than necessary. The recent happenings in Niger is a testament to this.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

This study has been able to observed the nature of military involvements in Francophone West-Africa, its motives, reasons as well as experiences. At the independence of most African countries in the sixties, Francophone Africa, operated a more stable political system. The tendency until the early 1990s was for the present military regimes to seek, so as to strengthen their legitimacy by allying to a single party and controlling both presidential and parliamentary elections. In the latter were 'plebiscitary' in many regards that both the executive president as well as national assembly members were returned with overwhelming majorities. However, due to the factors as encapsulated in this study, there was a shift in Francophone West-Africa towards military junta. If Africa as a whole must put an end or avert further military intervention, certain things must be considered and put in place. First, there should be a well-planned tenure system as well as a rigid constitution, so that those who hold political powers would not change the constitution for their selfish desires.

Second, there institutions of these nations should be strengthened so as to put an end to Institutional coup, that may result in military coup. The French government should maintain the UNO principles of independent countries and their dealing with their erstwhile colonies should be mutual. No more neocolonialism. If the French government wants to get anything from these countries, they should be ready to pay its equivalent in hard currency. Finally, the so-called world powers should maintain the principles that guide the United Nations. We have gone pass the era of free meal.

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