

Moshood Saka* , Nurudeen Lanre Sikiru 

Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria

*e-mail: mf.saka@alhikmah.edu.ng

MILITARY COUPS, CONFLICTS, AND ECONOMIC RECESSION IN AFRICA (2000–2023)

Abstract

Purpose. This study aims to examine the causes and implications of the collapse of representative governments through coups d'état in Africa, with particular focus on the relationship between governance failures, economic challenges, and military interventions.

Design/methodology/approach. The research adopts a qualitative approach based on the analysis of primary documents and secondary data sources. A comparative method is employed to examine selected African countries—Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, and Niger—over the period 2000–2023, enabling cross-country evaluation of political and socio-economic dynamics.

Findings. The findings indicate that military interventions in African politics are not solely driven by military ambition but are largely influenced by economic recession, weak governance, and persistent conflicts. The study reveals that despite transitions to democratic systems, many countries continue to face structural challenges that undermine political stability and economic development. Both civilian leadership failures and military actions contribute to democratic backsliding and the emergence of pseudo-democratic systems.

Originality. This study contributes to the literature by offering a comparative and contemporary analysis of coups in Africa within the post-third wave democratic context. It provides new insights into the interplay between governance quality, economic conditions, and political instability, highlighting the dual role of civilian and military actors in undermining democratic consolidation.

Keywords: Governance, development, leadership, crisis, performance.

Introduction

There have been scholarly debates on African democratic process after the smooth transition to democracy in the post-third wave. The participants revealed that the main obstacle to democratic development in Africa is governance and this constitutes the problem of the study. Ordinarily, governance is transformation of political values to socio-economic development as expectations of the people in the state. The expectation of the people reflects upon a democratic institution through policy framework of the government in power. In Africa, the leadership in power lacks enormous democratic values that can drive the electoral promises and unethical character invited the military intervention in African politics Saka (2024). Many studies have been conducted on governance Bratton and Van de Walle (1997), Abrahamson (2000), and African Union (2022) respectively.

The current study complements other within the prism of democratic breakdown using comparative approach by focusing on Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Guinea respectively. Therefore, the recent cases efforts add to other studies in African democratic experience. Under this sense, democratisation connotes transition from authoritarian regime to democratic principles by transparent elections. The aforementioned countries have experienced the causes without stability due to overwhelming challenges. One of the challenges is lack of smooth exchange of power from the incumbent party to opposition political parties. The participation and contestation could not pave the way to alternative government (democratic consolidation) Saka and Mngomezulu (2023). However, the recent democracies in Africa have attempted democratic breakdown as a radical change to autocratic leadership. Democratic breakdown is a relative of political erosion occurs through coup d'état organized by group of soldiers and failed elite

overthrowing democratic government in power Maeda (2010). The military intervention in politics is triggered by the action of the civilian governments not conforming to democratic ethics after post independent. Regrettably, the occurrence of military coups in Africa is caused by unethical political process creating opportunity for violence to become the decisive reason.

The recent research suggests that what Africa needs is liberal democracy not democratization. The transition to representative democracy receives high volume in the post-third wave democratization. Fukuyama (1992) argues that liberal democracy marked the end point of mankind's ideological authoritarian power and it established democratic governments in history. The earlier forms of authoritarian government are characterized by danger which resulted in malfunction that led to final collapse. Liberal democracy is hitherto a relative of electoral participation and contestation for the power. The process maintains the contribution of Huntington (1991) who emphasizes on the authoritarian leaders deliberately conducting elections for political development. The transition process witnessed enormous efforts of the military leaders in power and supports of the people advocating for representative government both campaigning against the autocratic regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the era marked socio-economic development in post-third wave Africa in 1991. For example, Ghana 1993, South Africa 1994, Nigeria 1999 and many more countries joined the leadership of democratic nation-states in the world. There was a substitute of autocracy for democracy, meaning that there is possibility of representative government everywhere Ake (1992). Therefore, the study conversely responds to possibility of democracy as a new trending issue in Africa. The practice of representative democracy was a concern issue in the post-third wave and this works upon sustainability through socio-economic performance in Africa.

The aim and objective of this study seeks to fill empirical gaps in democratic breakdown in Africa particularly in the post-third wave democratization. It supports the study to explain the rationale behind the military intervention in African politics and its implications. Part of the implication is governance crisis that triggered to civil war after the political independence. Nigeria, Ghana, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Lion, Togo altogether have experienced either long or short period civil war in different circumstances due to unethical democratic process. Therefore, leadership problem among the various ethnic groups re-

sulted in power struggle in Africa. The persistence in the struggle gave the majority ethnic group access to power in some countries.

In the preceding section, the political leaders in Africa are clearly preoccupied with problem of underdevelopment. It is better to understand the notion through the political economy on the perception of social forces after the end of colonialism. The issue of leadership by coup d'état and tenure elongation are unconstitutional in the new states after few years and this frustrated governance. The economic development in Africa is challenged by successive leaders that came through unethical means in each country. In background, leadership in Africa is divided into two political cleavages. The first is big men or dominant elite circulating power among themselves. The second is the antagonist group with collaboration of failed elite to seize power through the barrel of guns. These social forces have fragmented the society upon violence, crisis, war and conflict in the post-third wave democratization Bratton and Van de Walle (1997). The post-third wave leaders are fashioned on neo-patrimonial system under the incumbent party members have political leverage on resources of the country. The ideology of a dominant group in a democratic system creates political antagonism in the political environment. The high celebration of neo-patrimonialism by African leaders characterized the social environment into volume of violence which occurs on daily basis. Frequent political violence with zero effort in substitution for peace clearly invites the interest of the military. This issue originated from the post-colonial society where African racial leaders rule upon the ethnicity and religion intolerance. The action which triggered democratic breakdown is influenced by party disunity in some new democracies. The party disunity is an issue that disregards democratization commonly found in the groups of elite defending their interest over others. This political force penetrate to either forming a new party or cross to an opposition parties with the hope of winning the future elections. In view of these practices, campaign promises is neither fulfilled nor leadership performance enmeshing economic development. Rather, the system encourages corruption, mismanagement of the economic for personal use Gill (2000). However, the military as political gatekeepers and custodian of the country are watching every political step to break through by instrument of coup. In the recent democracies, democratic breakdown is an issue in African politics and it makes the continent different from the West that invented democracy Ake (1992).

Literature review

The conceptualization of democratic breakdown (DB) empirically seeks to fill the gaps in the literature. The phenomenon captures the institutional reversal which is organized by the group of soldiers in the state. Beforehand, the institution confronts internal crisis which results in political erosion or reversal due to either bad governance or political ambition of soldiers to take over the power in the state. The widely accepted criterion for democratic breakdown is put forward by Andreas Schedler (1998) that democracy meets its sudden death when institution is fragile with instability in varying degrees. Linz and Stepan (2013) postulated that lack of preference for democracy by the government official and military manipulation of institution for gain of power. A classic example of Latin America between 1945 and 2005 experienced democratic breakdown by non-commitment of political actors, parties, erratic political violence, and lack of civil-military relations metamorphosed into fall of democratic government. In this sense, fall of democratic government is attributed to authoritarian shift or democratic reversal which occurs as emergence of new authoritarian regime and it takes generically approach Somer (2016).

The illiberal process is not driven by overt coup de tats or forceful seizure of power. Rather, democratic breakdown is established through incremental process and execute under legal façade Norman et al (2019). The study argues that institutional breakdown occurs with non-feasibility of the electoral process paraded by failed elite that want power at all costs in Africa. Feasibility of democracy takes its momentum from credible ideas and behavior, rather trivialized by virulent character of the new leaders Ake (1992). Moller et al (2015) opined that democratic breakdown is witnessed from interwar which declines the economic structure; Germany, Austria and Spain are evident of this event. The fall out in economic crisis interfaces with lack of smooth operation in education, health, security, and law.

The concept of governance attempts to put more understandings of working of democratic government from the perspectives of socio-economic development. Good or sustainable development connotes the governmental policy for equitable distribution and managing of the resources for the general well-being of the people Abdelaziz and Butt (2024). Unconstitutional change of government is a consequential event in Africa implicating governance and the ecosystem, African Union (2022). Regrettably, scourge of corruption in Africa has

adverse effect on governance and the action penetrates resources for the leverage of the ruling party. However, governance serves as an instrument of assessing campaign promises, leadership performance and the deepening of democracy Ikeke (2024). By and large, understanding of governance as the continuum process of democratization and democratic consolidation of political system is essential. The underpinning notion of good governance is not a monolithic discourse but a comprehensive process of democratic government Huntington (1991). Good governance is a clear movement from the old practice of governmental affairs to new system which promotes development that makes uniform understanding according to the World Bank views. Good governance serves as new development and social progress in democratic government organised by cultural political groups in the state, African Union (2022). However, the focus is Africa after the post-independence which failed to fulfil campaign promises and leadership performance. African traditional values and institutions can support good governance through understanding of progress with the impression that political institutions adapt as well diffuse for the practice of good governance Abrahamsen (2000).

The understanding of good governance is recognised from the lens of intellectual scholars in explaining its functions from the practice of democratic governments. The focus of political institutions as practice of good governance relates to the deepening of democracy. In doing this, political party struggles for power which starts multiparty competition and government is formed by the electoral participation at regular interval. For example, the target of every successful government in the United States of America is to formulate ideas that touch aspect of human life. In these views, decentralisation of power relates to specific functions of the state according to the three arms of government, such as legislative, executive and judiciary operate from the constitution. Good governance is achieved through recognition of the electoral principles that improve and impact on the three arms of government Gerring and Thacker (2008). Good governance is explained from the platform of human rights as the bedrock of the government for leadership performing and for improving people's welfare in the state. However, human rights are associated with principles that guide the working of democratic government. Social-political function also paves the way for accountability and transparency of democratic government, United Nations (2007).

Methodology

The research question states the challenges confronting the emerging democracies under the post-third wave democratization. The arguments of scholars affirm unethical leadership selection backslide democratic system in the aforementioned countries. The researchers align with the research framework which guide from the introduction and background of the study to conclusion. The current article employed qualitative method and supported with the primary documents which extract information from available data. The researchers adopted descriptive analysis as scientific instrument in social sciences. This stance illuminates by comparing the quality of democracy through the lens of comparative politics in Africa. It advances the character and action that obstruct democratic system in the emerging democracies. The article reveals the unethical character marred governance before election and after in Africa.

Cases of Democratic Breakdown

The nomenclature of democratic breakdown as well as democratic backsliding premises on reversal to authoritarian regimes. The new democracies in Africa have experienced epileptically democratization. Meaning that, the few among them conducted successful elections after years reversed to authoritarian regimes. Thereafter, the civilians bargain to return democracy which is uncertain in the future. Therefore, Africa rotates the leadership between democracy and autocracy due to internal politics that invited the military intervention. Comparative evidences have portrayed African society as theatrical character in post-third wave episode Isaac and Lanre (2015).

Mali

The country is divided by ethnic groups which make it more diverse in decision-making process. The component compose of Babara, Fulani, Sarakole, Senufo, Dogon, Malinke, Bobo, Songhai, Taureg and the first (Babara) among them is the majority group Cserkits (2020). The leadership performance of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita alias IBK was diminishing by economic decay and corruption. These circumstances forced him to resign in August 2012 and replaced by the interim government. However, the military as the gatekeepers wittingly took over the interim government led by Captain Amadou Sanogo who surrounded the presidential palace in 2012 to take over power Cserkits (2020). The outcome of the coup was smooth and supported by the citizens. Conversely, the France supported the democratic leader-

ship. The military intervention in politics served as the background to Mali political crisis that transit in wave across the state. The second military coup took place in 2020 led by Colonel Assimi Goita. The end of the coup led to arrangement for the interim government headed by Choguel Kokolla Maiga politician who supported the putsch. In May 2021, Malian soldiers arrested and detained transitional President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Mocker for allegedly taken unilateral decision over the coup leaders who are in charge of security and defense department, European Parliament (2021). Malian crisis develops day in day out after the removal of democratic president in 2020. The country is fragmented by conflicts and instability by the insurgent groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda networks and Islamic State operating across the borders, European Parliament (2023). The body of international communities rejected the coup as unprecedented vis-à-vis ECOWAS, European Union, France, African Union Klatt (2020), Afro Barometer (2013).

Burkina Faso

The country achieved her political independence in 1960 from France. Six years (1966) after the first military coup terminated democratic government led off to numerous subsequent coups. Historically, the country is ridden by conflicts and instability which posed danger in the state, Congress Research Service (2023). The pandemic nature of the military coup is political ambition of soldiers succeeding one another to gain power since political independence. The pattern of first coups factored in subsequent coups in 1980 Saye Zerbo, 1982 Quedraogo, 1987 Thomas Shankara, 1983 led by Blaise Compaore who spent 11 year under the military power and 22 year as democratic leader. However, most of the coups were not popular in nature except late Thomas Shankara's coup in 1983 worth different among others. Thereafter, there was a constitutional reform on transition to democratic rule in 1998. In the election, Blaise Compaore was declared the winner, House of Common Library (2022). Few years later, the incumbent president won successive elections through rigging. His election was condemned by the international communities and national opposition parties. However, the new electoral law banned long serving leaders including Blaise Campaore from contesting in further elections in the country. In September 2015, there was unsuccessful coup attempt led by Lt-Col Mamadu Bamba the presidential guard to Blaise Campoare due to disbandment of the presidential guard unit. Afterword, another round of election was conducted

in 2015 won by former Prime Minister Roch Marc Christian Kabore who defeated Blaise Compaore. President Kabore was re-elected in 2020, the election was suffocated in the north region where the people could not vote due to Islamic extremists Sten (2015). As a result, in 24 January 2022 a fresh coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Sandaogo Damiba reversed the country to military rule. In this stance, a counter coup led by Army Captain Ibrahim Trare and his entourage removed Damiba from office in September 2022. As a result of the two coups, the country is not settled and there have been conflicts which claimed about one hundred and thirty (130) lives and sixteen thousand (16,000) left as refugees, UNDP Reports (2023).

Niger

The country got her political independence in 1960 from France. Ever since, the country is characterized by numerous coups and counter coups which started in 1974. The tray of history has identified five military coups having the same patterns in overthrowing democratic government, European Parliament (2023). The 1996 coup preceded other rounds of coups 1999, 2010, 2023 and 2021 was unsuccessful among other coups. In this stance, six military coups have taken place after the political independence. However, the 2023 putsch was led by the presidential guard commander General Abdourahamane Tchianni who unseat democratic leader Muhamed Bazoum Doukhan (2023). The action of the military junta was not silent upon detaining the elected president. The international actors, United States, France, Germany, African Union (AU), ECOWAS Peace and Security Council and European Union have thrown more discussions on restoration of the constitutional president. In addressing the issue, there have been numerous sanctions that could weaken military leadership in the country Obasi (2023). Part of the sanctions, closure of borders, withdrawer of foreign aids, suspends financial and commercial transaction, travel ban and not tolerating military regime in the ECOWAS and AU conferences/meetings. The reason for military intervention in politics is lack of security apparatus is a major concern in the country Mannino (2023). The state has experienced multiple Islamic extremists attacks affiliated with Al-Qaeda networks. The reason was supported by the international leaders and organisations as not tenable. The democratic government is trying its efforts in checking the Al-Qaeda networks and other insurgent penetrating the country, Congress Research Service (2023).

Guinea

The Guinea was the first French Colony in Sub-Sahara Africa to gain independence in 1958. Several years afterword, the state is governed by patron client leaders under a single political party. Starting from the leadership of Ahmed Sekou Tuore led-administration was an independent leader. Ahmed Sekou Tuore fell sick and died in 1984 after his death military officer Lansana Conte took advantage of the chaos by leading a coup. The coup leader notoriously executed the opponent for opposing the coup. The radical authoritarian leader plans toward democratization through multi-party system in 1990, European Parliament (2021). However, there was a transition to democracy in 1993 which elected Lansana Conte but the elections were not smooth. He was re-elected in 1998, and 2003 winning each time despite international challenged his re-election mal-practices. However, Alpha Conde a major opposition candidate in the country returned to political arena challenging the administration of President Lansana Conte for ordering soldiers killing 90 people. The despicable leader was condemned nationally and internationally Arief and Cook (2009). In 2008, he gave up the ghost through ailment nursing for several years in power. Therefore, the death of Conte in 2008 changed the political atmosphere through a fresh coup led by Army Captain Moussa Dabis Camara promising transition to representative democracy. The army decentralized the public administration through military personnel in Guinea. The regime of Camara was filled with arson, assassination and political unrest which claimed many lives in the opposition stronghold areas. The civil unrest in the country destabilized some top military officers taken quick action shot Camera on his head in 2009 Noel and Zulueta (2021). The military leader fled to Morocco for treatment at his absence a transitional government was established headed by his rival General Sekouba Konate. The representative election were conducted in 2010 and 2015, Alpha Conde defeated his opposition Cellou Dalein Diallo who accepted defeat. Before the end of second tenure, amendment on tenure elongation for the third term bid in 2020 was a political project. The Conde was re-elected in 2020, the post- election generated conflict which invited the military coup led by Mamady Doumbouya Benedikter (2022).

Chad

Chad gain political independence in 1960 from France with weak governmental structure managed by 200 ethnic groups. However, the country is defined by conflict which started in 1960s intertwined

with Libya and Sudan conflict. The long drive of conflict in the state divided the leadership into rebel groups and each group claiming legitimacy Jawo (2022). One of these constitutes religious affiliation between the Islam and Christianity dictate opposition in Chad. President Tombalboye led the country in 1965; his government was terminated by a coup in 1975 Marchal (2021). The country was polarized into two factions, the supporters of late Tombalboye Chadian (National Liberation Front) and Hissene Habre who controlled the central government between 1975 and 1990. The putsch led by Idris Deby supported by the Sudan and Libya changed the political platform. Numerous coups attempted failed between 1990 and 1996 but dictator maintained the power. There was a transition to democracy in 1996

which favoured Idris Deby changing from military head of state to democratic leader. He was re-elected in 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016 with overwhelming electoral rigging and opposition party boycotts elections Ayangafac (2009). Despite the long serving tenure by one -party hegemony, Idris Daby was killed while defending his country against incursion by the Libya-based rabels in April 2021. After his death, the ruling elite protect their power-hold by successfully installed Mahamat Daby (son) as interim president in 2022. The dynasty succession is fundamentally significant to hold power for the elite and ethnic group over other groups. The France plays significant impact in democratic transition after Idris Daby (father) death and succession of Mahamat Daby (son) Gnanguenon (2012).

Table 1
Showing the history of African democratization and reversal Process

Country	Surviving	Breakdown	Founding Election	Years of Coups	Independence	Colonized
Nigeria	Surviving	Active	1999	1966, 1967, 1975, 1978, 1983, 1985, 1990, 1993	1960	British
Ghana	Surviving	Active	1993	1966, 1967, 1972, 1979,	1958	British
Benin	Surviving	Active	1989	1963, 1972, 1977	1960	France
Burkina Faso	Crisis	Breakdown	Military	1966, 1980, 1982, 1987, 2022	1960	France
Guinea	Crisis	Breakdown	Military	1984, 2008, 2021	1960	France
Mali	Crisis	Breakdown	Military	2020, 2021	1960	France
Niger	Crisis	Breakdown	Military	1974, 1996, 1999, 2010, 2021, 2023	1960	France
Togo	Surviving	Active	2005	1963, 1967	1960	France
Guinea Bissau	Surviving	Active	2014	1980, 1998, 1999, 2012,	1974	Portugal
Mauritania	Surviving	Crisis	2009	1978, 1979, 1980, 1984, 2005, 2008	1960	France
Ivory Coast	surviving	Crisis	2000	1999	1960	France
Senegal	Surviving	Very active	Active		1960	France
Sierra Leon	Surviving	Active	1996	1992	1961	British
Liberia	Surviving	Active	2004-2005	1980	1847 free land	America
Gambia	Surviving	Active	2017	1994	1965	British
Chad	Not surviving	Breakdown	Military	1975, 1990, 2021	1960	France

Source: Created by author using the primary data from: Ziankahn, D.D. (2001), Barka, H.B, and Ncube, M (2012).

The beginning of the 21st century witnessed renewed hope about the birth of democratization in Africa. The process was actively supported by the national and international communities promising to support them through financial aids Gyimah-Boadi

(2021). The democratic achievement was a share common ground on fall out of autocratic regimes vis-à-vis one party system, and military regimes in the post-third wave. Each country in Africa conducted founding election (first), Nigeria 1999, Ghana 1993,

Benin 1989, Togo 2005 including other countries. Democratic experience is based on leadership performance, campaign promises, and the deepening of democracy. It corroborates the quality of democracy that is in practice after the founding elections (first) saka (2020). From the table above, Senegal is the only country that has not experienced military coup after the political independence in 1960, rather other countries reversed to authoritarian regimes. Conversely, the political journey in Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Togo and Gambia altogether have not reversed after the founding elections (first) due to active democratization. Except, Ivory Coast, and Mauritania are witnessing electoral crisis after the founding elections (first). Recently, democratic breakdown occurred in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad Ibrahim (2023). In view of these analyses, the francophone countries are prone to either democratic breakdown or electoral crisis in the table. Nigeria has recorded the highest coup, follows by Niger and Mauritania in the West Africa Sub-region after post-colonialism.

Rationales for military intervention in Politics

The military intervention in African politics grossly frustrating democratic growth in the post-third wave democratization. Few countries in the West and central Africa have reversed to authoritarian and some are grilling under conflicts among these, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, and Chad. They are struggling to survive democratization Ziankahn (2011). However, the rationales for the successive military coups are in varying degrees. Economic decayed in the institutional structures are attributed to weak policy framework of democratic governments. The inhabitants are resource citizens that drive political affair for the socio-economic development. Rather, economic recession compels the environment to underdevelopment by the failed elite that come to power through undemocratic process Hagberg et al (2018). The democratic leadership is maneuvered either by the military cabals or the civilian counterparts to serve their interests. As a result, the political structures are affiliated to patron client networks and the process generates underdevelopment in Africa. For example, the structural dilapidation was due to economic recession in Niger and Chad including other countries invited the military incursion into politics. Infrastructural facilities such as airports, roads, schools, hospital altogether are at dismal, European Parliament (2023). This is due to failure of democratic principles which challenge accountability and campaign promises for the interest of the people.

The failure of democratic principles in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Chad including other African countries exposed democracy to risk which serves as advantage for the military cabals Cold-Ravnkild (2013).

Democratic breakdown in recent cases is caused by crisis which is designed by ethnic power bloc against the constitutional democracy. This approach projects election procedures to maintain one party hegemony power under a system not tolerating the opposition parties in the state. Election is cooked by the majority ethnic group to have political advantage and accommodate patronage of the supporting groups. In normal practice, liberal democracy adapts under competitive of political groups participating in decision-making process. In Africa, this principle is overturned by the majority ethnic group to maintain leadership advantage which triggered to large-scale crisis in Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso are typical examples Okon (2023). The general reasons for democratic breakdown in the post third wave inform economic mismanagement, corruption and embezzlement of the big men (elite) in power. The current leaders penetrated through corrupt election which works against campaign promises and leadership performance. The campaign promises are limited to serving the cabinet members who support the government in power as leadership performance Maclachlen et al (2015).

The political machineries (supporters) are established to maintain undemocratic structure of the corrupt leaders in all situations such as mass media, court, military, and police. In this practice, democratic breakdown (reversal) is characterized into two groups. The first group is attributed to robust arrangement between the top military officials and the civilian counterparts to seize power. The collaboration of the civilians in the government prolongs the military administration through corrupt practices in the state. The second group holds on failure of democratic leaders with pervasive political crises metamorphosis into military coup Matlosa and Zounmenou (2023). The radical top military officials mobilize for a revolutionary coup to rescue the state from anarchy. The reversal to authoritarian regime in Africa is supported by the public to lend legitimacy to the ruling regime. The successive of military coups in Africa frustrated the practice of liberal democracy after the political independence. The ritual exacerbate counter military coups which resulted in civil wars, examples are Nigeria in 1967-1970, Burundi 1993-2005 and Liberia in 1990- 2002 including other countries Benedikter (2022). Many countries experienced much violence that led to crisis during the process of electoral sys-

tem which ploughed them to unresolvable conflicts. In the process of electoral competition, the incumbent party incorporates political ideology that stands against the opposition political parties in order to get, maintain and retain power Otte (2023).

Implications of Democratic Breakdown

The issues in democratic breakdown (reversal) in Sub-Sahara Africa centre on power struggle that every ethnic group is concerned about to gain. The practice polarized the region into power blocs. Some African leaders struggle for power in suppression of the political opponents which trivialized socio-political development. The socio-political development is bargained by the reactionary forces, the out power elite are hostile to incumbent power elite to harassment and assault Ake (1996). Thereafter, conflict, war, violence and arson are contagious in Africa after the attainment of political independent in the respective countries. The post-third wave leaders use ideology to maintain power as well retains power in the successive elections. They retain power by shifting the political goal post through tenure elongation. The practice was evidence in Nigeria during President Obasanjo, Guinea Alpha Conde, Burundi Pierre Nkurunziza, and Idris Deby Chad. These African leaders have neither obeyed the electoral principles nor accepting the model of liberal democracy. It means that election outcome either positive or negative is for the interest of the people that establish government. In view of this process, the people are the end of democracy by the consent but trivialized in Africa Ake (1992).

Regrettably, election process in Africa is not smooth and unfair poll in different circumstances. Therefore, the recent democracies suffered under mass poverty, violence, and economic decayed are syndicate of democratic breakdown in Africa Eriksson & Hagstromer (2005). The electoral virtue is lost after the assumption of power for amassing of wealth becomes the political honour of African leaders. The celebration of the practice under the new democracies translates to frequent coups and counter coup in Africa political environment. For example, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso witnessed overthrow of government by the presidential guards. This political interplay put the country into successive pandemic coups. Those in power of authority either military or the civilian government are struggling to gain power that could not address good governance, IPSS (2021). Rather, political crisis is inherited in every successive government not tolerating opposition in the state. The human rights

and rule of law are not followed properly by the people to the detriment of democracy. The authoritarian rule is embedded in democratic government as each political leader engage in virulent and dubious character to appropriate security by means of state power Lancher (2022).

The civilian rule and the military cabals both share a common ground on democratic breakdown to authoritarianism. In this sense, the recent coups and counter coups in Africa was as a result of reactionary forces (ethnic, Islamic, Christian ideology) that overwhelmed the politics after the political independence Tar (2010). The reality in Niger, Guinea, Chad, and Mali including other African countries show that all attempts to return to democratic process were aborted. The military junta in power became more vicious and desperate move for repression of opposition vis-a-vis maiming, incarceration and assassination of political enemies. Suspension of the constitution, political parties and politicians were banned from contestation and participation in democracy Umaru (2016). The tension in the state is delay of transitional programme in each country that experienced coup d'état. Even within the limit notion of democratization. The military junta led administration, and political allies have all embarked upon actions and processes that have led to democratization but failed due to lack of democratic wheels.

Results and discussion

This section reveals that good governance has been problematic in the recent African democracies due to unethical action and character that could not transform political power into socio-economic development. The case of Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea and Niger altogether are challenged by the military coups, to a large extent that the ethnic political groups was a weight in the process of holding the state power. Therefore, there is hope in the future democratization process with viable electoral system that could select leadership among the political groups in Africa.

Conclusion

We observed leadership in Africa is diluted by undemocratic ideologies which are not working for the system. This gave the military cabals advantage in parading the corridor of power as alternative government which lacks developmental values. Democratic breakdown implies death of democracy at an interval and democratization connotes either transi-

tion to democracy or long journey of democratic government. The central institutions are monopolized by autocratic African leaders with supporting culprits to gain access to treasury in the state. Therefore, the demise of Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Chad is a lesson learned for other African countries. My conclusion concerning the military incursion into democratic process in Africa in the post-third wave is unending practice. The rivalry among the soldiers supports the military coups and counter coups and this episode is clear after the political independence. The continuous military coups in Africa 21st C have devastated the principles of democracy, governance and socio-economic development. However, the soldiers changed to civilian government in order to lend legitimacy. This paradigm shift posed more danger to democratic process in Africa.

Acknowledgements and Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no acknowledgements and no conflicts of interest related to this study.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, M.S. and N.S.; Methodology, M.S. and N.S.; Software, M.S. and N.S.; Validation, M.S. and N.S.; Formal Analysis, M.S. and N.S.; Investigation, M.S. and N.S.; Resources, M.S. and N.S.; Data Curation, M.S. and N.S.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, M.S. and N.S.; Writing – Review & Editing, M.S. and N.S.; Visualization, M.S. and N.S.; Supervision, M.S. and N.S.; Project Administration, M.S. and N.S.

References

- Abdelaziz, A. K. D., & Butt, S. J. (2024). Sustainable governance in the digital age: E-governance innovation for climate action. *Journal of Recycling Economy & Sustainability Policy*, 4(1), 54–69.
- Abrahamsen, R. K. (2000). *Disciplining democracy: Development discourse and good governance in Africa*. Zed Books.
- African Union. (2022a). *Africa governance insight: Governance, human rights and migration in Africa* (Vol. 1).
- African Union. (2022b). *Coups d'état and political stability in the West Africa Sahel: Implications for the fight against terrorism and violent extremism*.
- Afrobarometer. (2013). *Popular perceptions of the causes and consequences of conflict in Mali*.
- Ake, C. (1992). *The feasibility of democracy in Africa*. University of Ibadan.
- Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and development in Africa*. Spectrum Books.
- Amani Africa. (2022). *Addressing the recent resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government: Policy recommendations for AU extraordinary summit*.
- Arieff, A., & Cook, N. (2009). *Guinea's 2008 military coup and relations with the United States*. Congressional Research Service.
- Ayangafac, C. (2009). *Resolving the Chadian political epilepsy: An assessment of intervention efforts*. Institute for Security Studies.
- Benedikter, R. (2022). *Guinea's gold sheds light on the difficulties of reforming North–South exploitation*. *African Studies Quarterly*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.32473/asq.21.2.135963>
- Bratton, M., & Van de Walle, N. (1997). *Democratic experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cold-Ravnkild, S. M. (2013). *War and peace in Mali: Background and perspectives*. Danish Institute for International Studies.
- Congressional Research Service. (2022). *An epidemic of coups in Africa? Issues for Congress*. <https://crsreports.congress.gov>
- Congressional Research Service. (2023a). *Burkina Faso: Conflict and military rule*. <https://crsreports.congress.gov>
- Congressional Research Service. (2023b). *Niger: In focus*. <https://crsreports.congress.gov>
- Cserkits, M. (2020). *The coup d'état in Mali: Synchronizing African facts with European conceptions*. Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy.
- Doukhan, D. (2023). *The instability of the Sahel: A military coup in Niger*. Reichman University.
- Eriksson, H., & Hagström, B. (2005). *Chad: Toward democratization of petro-dictatorship*. Nordic Africa Institute.
- European Parliament. (2021). *Political crisis in Guinea*.
- European Parliament. (2023a). *Mali: Yet another coup*.
- European Parliament. (2023b). *The coup in Niger: Consequences for EU policies in the Sahel*.
- Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. Free Press.
- Gerring, J., & Thacker, S. C. (2008). *A centripetal theory of democratic governance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gill, G. (2000). *The dynamics of democratization: Elite, civil society and the transition process*. Macmillan.
- Gnanguenon, A. (2021). *Chad in its regional environment: Political alliances and ad hoc military coalitions*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2021). *Democratic backsliding in West Africa: Nature, causes, and remedies*. Kofi Annan Foundation.
- Hagberg, S., Kibora, L., Barry, S., Gnissi, S., & Konkobo, A. (2018). *Anthropological perspectives on political practice and democratic culture in Burkina Faso*. Uppsala University.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century*. University of Oklahoma Press.

- Isaac, A. A., & Lanre, A. (2015). Resurgent military political adventurism in West Africa. *African Research Review*, 9(2), 91–103. <https://doi.org/10.4314/afrrrev.v9i2.7>
- Maeda, K. (2010). Two modes of democratic breakdown. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(4), 1129–1143. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381610000575>
- Marchal, R. (2021). Chad under Idriss Déby.
- Matlosa, K., & Zounmenou, D. D. (2022). The tension between militarization and democratization in West Africa. *Journal of African Elections*, 10(2), 93–114.
- Møller, J., Schmotz, A., & Skaaning, S.-E. (2015). Economic crisis and democratic breakdown. *Historical Social Research*, 40(2), 301–318.
- Nathan, L. (2017). A survey of mediation in African coups. African Peacebuilding Network.
- Noel, T., & Zulueta, K. (2021). The 2021 coup pandemic. International IDEA.
- Obasi, N. (2023). ECOWAS, Nigeria and the Niger coup sanctions. International Crisis Group.
- Okon, E. N. (2023). ECOWAS response to the conflict in Mali. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 37, 36–53.
- Otte, M. (2023). Unpacking Niger's coup and regional implications. Brussels International Center.
- Schedler, A. (1998). What is democratic consolidation? *Journal of Democracy*, 9(2), 1–26.
- Saka, M. (2020). Feasibility of democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa. *AEGIS Journal of International Relations*, 4(2).
- Saka, M., & Mngomezulu, B. R. (2023). Post-third wave democratization. *AEGIS Journal of International Studies*, 7(2), 128–152.
- Saka, M. (2024). Violent terrorist groups and development in the Sahel-Sahara region. *Acta Uni*

Information about authors:

Moshood Saka (corresponding author) – Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Al-Hikmah University (Ilorin, Nigeria, e-mail: mf.saka@alhikmah.edu.ng).

Nurudeen Lanre Sikiru – Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Al-Hikmah University (Ilorin, Nigeria e-mail: slnurudeen@alhikmah.edu.ng).

Received: December 16, 2025

1st Revision: December 27, 2025

Accepted: March 19, 2026