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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGES
<b>The Poet as a ‘Restless’ Creature: Some Yorùbá Examples</b> Oyèwálé, Ayòdélé Solomon, University of Lagos	1
<b>Informal Impediments to Achieving full Political Integration: Hegemony and Sovereignty in the Context of East African Community and Economic Commission of West African States</b> OPONDO, Paul Abiero, Moi University, Kenya	27
<b>The Resurgence of Coup d’états in Francophone Africa</b> Zing, Micah Yinpang Bavi HSE University, Russia Egor, Fain Centre HSE University, Russia & Abugbila, Sadat Zakari Simon Diedong Dombo University for Business and Development Studies, Ghana	49
<b>Illiteracy, Poverty and Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: The Management and Policy Options</b> Lawrence O. Odeh, Benson Idahosa University, Benin, Nigeria	79
<b>From the Woman Legislator to Us All: Policy Making in Lagos State House of Assembly, Nigeria</b> Kilelo, Helen, Moi University, Kenya	125
<b>Neoliberalism in Africa: Is there a Pan Africanist response?</b> Oyefolu, Samson, Lagos State University, Nigeria	151



# THREE

## The Resurgence of Coup d'états in Francophone Africa

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### Abstract

*The rising number of coup d'états and coup attempts in recent times, especially in Francophone Africa, is a major and critical concern for the West African bloc as it threatens the future of democracy in the region. This paper, therefore, aimed to examine the root causes of the resurgence of coups in Francophone Africa with focus on Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The major concern is not just why the coups occur, but what the reasons are for such an immense concentration of coups in a specific region within a short time frame. The paper employed quantitative research methods, with the use of logistic regression analysis. The key finding of the study is that there is a positive relationship between the effectiveness of French foreign policy and the resurgence of coup d'états in recent times, suggesting that anti-French sentiments are the fundamental factor contributing to the recent spike in coup d'états and coup attempts in Francophone Africa. It is, therefore, imperative for regional actors such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), East African Community (EAC), among others, to play key roles in establishing consensus dialogue*

*with the countries in question to provide a lasting solution to the coup menace to ensure political stability and the liberation of member countries from neocolonialism.*

**Keywords:** *Coup d'état, Resurgence, Francophone Africa, Political Instability, Regime Change, Anti-French Sentiments*

## **Introduction**

Currently the world is witnessing an unprecedented concentration and frequency of military coups in the Sahel and West Africa, especially in Francophone African countries (Okeke & Ahmed, 2023). The number of coups is immense in comparison with previous decades: According to Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2023) around 13 coups and coup attempts happened just since 2021, and all but one of them (Gabon) occurred in the Sahel and West Africa. Such intensity did not go unnoticed in the mass media and academia. The mass media around the world were quick to call the Sahel the “coup-belt” and provided various explanations to such an extreme spike in coups. It is obvious that the resurgence of coups within the region has been one of the most prevalent and violent form of democratic instability. This is because, despite the continent being blessed with rich natural resources, several Francophone African countries grapple with extreme poverty, clientelism, and corruption, to the extent that the indigenes often do not see the benefits of the exploitation of their natural resources (Avoulete, 2023; Annan, 2014). This paper, therefore, uses the coup d'états in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger as the case studies to uncover the root causes of coups in Francophone Africa.

Although, the root causes or reasons behind these coups are still unclear, the putschists cited ineffective military battles against a jihadist insurgency, poverty, corruption and bad governance as factors. The attempts of incumbents to prolong their terms in office through deceptive, unconstitutional modifications of the



constitution and their unwillingness to surrender power to winning parties (unfair elections and dictatorship) are other obvious causes of coups (De Boer, 2014; Annan, 2014; Avoulete, 2023; Ajayi & Olu-Adeyemi, 2015). We concur wholeheartedly with the views of these authors regarding the causes of coups but argue that for the recent spike of coups in Francophone Africa, there are hidden or root causes that needs to be uncovered, hence the purpose of this study. Recent coups showed a very intriguing picture of the general public cheering for the military while sometimes burning French flags and waving Russian ones. This sentiment has been exacerbated by France's backing of dubious dynastic regimes, which has become a factor in this coup wave, indicating that the ordinary people including the military have woken up from their slumber and are ready to demand accountability and good governance from their leaders.

However, what is unclear as stated earlier is the root cause of the coup in recent times, and this presents a gap that needs to be investigated. For example, during the pro-coup demonstration, there were incidents of the burning of French flags in Niger, as well as in Mali and Burkina Faso and flying of Russian flags throughout the demonstration in these countries. This is a clear indication that Anti-French prejudice has increased over the decades of socio-economic stagnation and the belief that their leaders (presidents) are imposed upon them by the French government just to advance the French agenda and not for the development of their respective nations (Avoulete, 2023). Therefore, the real puzzle is not just why they occur, but what the reasons are for such an immense concentration of coups in a specific region in a short time frame and why they see Russia as an alternative and a better partner. In this paper we attempt to shed light on this extreme spike. We suggest that this phenomenon is the result of complex interplay of factors, such as civil unrest, exploitative French policies on par with corruption

and the military's dissatisfaction with governance and the urge to turn to Russia as an ally.

### **Literature Review**

Over the past decade, the resurgence of coup d'états in Francophone Africa has attracted significant scholarly attention. To grasp the resurgence of coups in Francophone Africa, it is crucial to examine the historical context. According to Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), the legacy of colonialism left deep-seated political and economic inequalities, creating a fertile ground for instability. The persistence of authoritarian rule in the post-independence era, as highlighted by Bratton and Van de Walle (2015), laid the groundwork for discontent and power struggles. Economic grievances have been identified as a key driver of coups in Francophone Africa. Dealing with economic mismanagement, resource misallocation, and corruption, these nations faced challenges in achieving sustainable development (Ndikumana & Emizet, 2018). As explored by Asongu (2016), the lack of inclusive economic policies and equitable distribution of resources heightened social unrest, fostering an environment conducive to coups.

A study by Pryce and Time (2023) on "the role of coups d'état in Africa: Why coups occur and their effects on the populace" employed a potpourri of theoretical frameworks, legitimacy, democratic and political instability, justice as fairness, rational choice, and deterrence to explain why coups occur, their effects on the general population and how they can be curbed. The study argues that coups may occur when attempts are made to 'diversify' armies that are entrenched with disproportionate representation by certain tribes in the nation-state (Harkness, 2016), when the ruling government is civilian, rather than military (Harig, Jenne & Ruffa, 2022), and when political and institutional structures are weak (Raphala, 2017).

In fact, coups in Africa are not a rarity. After the majority of countries in Africa became independent, coup d'états became quite common. Only a few countries in the whole continent were able to avoid this violent regime transformation (Andrews, 2023). In a vast classic literature on coups from the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Harkness, 2016; Thyne & Powell, 2016), Africa is on par with Latin America when it comes to the number of empirical cases of coup d'états. Thus, elaborate studies of coups of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also apply to Africa. Generally, the reasons for coups from classical literature can be grouped into two main clusters: political coups and economic coups. Political coups are mostly related to the army's position in the country and the ambitions of military leaders. The military can overthrow the government because it aims for the expansion of its budget, and leaders of the coup can enrich themselves (Murtaza & Baissa, 2023). When the army's role in society is not limited to national defense, it is often a predictor of military attempts at coup d'états, as the army seeks to gain more political weight, and its leaders aspire to get into the political ranks (Joyce, 2022).

Economic reasoning of coups is mostly tied with the economic well-being of the state as a whole. Economic deprivation, stagnation, and low performance of GDP per capita are among the most often named factors of military coups (Korotayev et al., 2018; Lehoucq, 2021). In the situation of severe economic crisis which threaten the country's safety the military can see the coup as the only means of reviving the economy by dismantling the system (Gassebner, Gutmann & Voigt, 2016). When the population is going through significant economic adversities, the images of deprivations can also be a reason for military to step up, as the suffering of common people can be perceived by military as a threat to national security (O'kane, 1981).

Since the very first years of Africa's decolonization, coup d'états became incredibly common within the continent. There are

multiple reasons for this phenomenon. Finer (1962) writes about political advantages of the army in comparison to civil power, which are superior organization, symbolic status and a monopoly of arms. These advantages are not just mere characteristics of the army, but actual reasons for the army to come in power in the countries where institutions and civil governments are too weak. As Finer (1962) writes, the army has multiple motives to intervene in politics, and one of the most noticeable one is “national interest”. Basically, the “national interest” motive can be very different across various countries, but it often comes up during political crises. Military can also entrench into ethnic and regional conflicts when military personnel largely represent a minority community. In this case, it can have incentive to conduct a coup against the oppressing government (Finer, 1962). Finally, there is a corporate interest when the army fears to be somehow limited or oppressed (Finer, 1962).

Zolberg (1973) discusses various studies on the military interventions in politics in 1960s in Africa. The first decade when the majority of African countries became independent was also the decade of rampant militarism and domination of military governments. Zolberg (1973) highlights the self-assurance of these militaries. Military elites, who were coming into power after coups in 1960s, believed that they can rule better than any civil government, thus, indulging into more risky politics and ignoring the necessity to develop institutions. One of the significant features of African coups highlighted by Zolberg (1973) is international attention to them. Since militaries play such a big role in African countries, they became a target for various foreign influences. Zolberg (1973) states that Western countries are interested in achieving certain goals in Africa and are actively trying to affect changes in the governing of African countries, however, they are unable to control them fully, just as any other actor on the continent. Nevertheless, as Zolberg (1973) writes,

Africa is viewed by scholars as an international subsystem where contagion of coups is a very real issue.

Robin Luckham (1994), who conducts a vast analysis of the field of the military studies in Africa, justly call the early focus of scholars on civilian control Eurocentrism. Luckham (1994) follows scientific works from different authors and time periods. Luckham (1994) provides a palette of explanations of military interventions in politics, such as corporate and professional interests, internal contradictions and conflicts, macro societal conditions and weakness of civil society (which includes such problems as “power vacuum” and economic stagnation), boundary relations between military and civil society (which includes such problems as institutionalization of coup as instrument for circulating military and civilian elites and also a mismatch in ethnic makeup), and finally, internationalization and militarization as global and regional factors (which includes colonial legacies, external assistance and training, neocolonial protection from coups and so on). While there are multiple explanations for military intervention, it is important to remember that neither of them is universal, and empirically coups happen due to a combinations of various factors. Luckham (1994) argues that the processes of democratization can bring down authoritarian regimes and, consequently, devalue the military and its significance in the regime. However, he also states that democracy in Africa does not always have social character and might be impaired by cliques of ruling classes. Military elites can use democracy to legitimize their own rule.

Hutchful and Bailey (1998) are the editors and authors of quite large and detailed book with chapters dedicated to the accounts of the African militarism and difficult civil-military relations. As Luckham (1998) writes, the military absence from politics (which was a real trend in the 1990s with the coups being quite rare), should not stop researchers from studying it since tradition of

warlordism and privatization of army's structures are very real problems. Time has shown that Luckham was indeed right. Military coups returned and are now in the numbers comparable to those of 1960s and 1980s. Luanda's and Mwanjabala's (1998) chapter sheds light on the 1964 mutiny in Tanganyika where members of Tanganyika Rifles, a regiment of the army, mutinied against its officers who were mostly British. This case serves as an example of dangers of army where officer corps and personnel can be in ethnic, regional or class conflict.

One of the deepest studies of African civil-military relations is Samuel Decalo's work "The Stable Minority: Civilian Rule in Africa, 1960-1990" (Decalo, 1998). In this study, Decalo suggests that in order to understand civil-military relations better, we need to consider the topic of stable and peaceful civil-military relations instead of just focusing on coups. Some countries in Africa were immune to military interventions for several decades. Decalo (1998) states that there are several modalities of stable civil-military relations: external guarantor modality, legitimized modality and trade-off modality. External guarantor modality refers to a foreign state providing security guarantees to the regime, often by having its contingent on the African soil. Decalo (1998) highlights such countries as Ivory Coast, Senegal and Gabon as illustrations for such relations with France. Intriguingly, French support did not help Bongo dynasty to stay in power in Gabon in 2023, and it seems like an indicator for the weakening of French influence on the continent. Trade-off modality is probably the most unstable. It involves constant giving of resources to the military in exchange for political support. As Decalo (1998) writes, this modality is quite risky, as many states failed to use it successfully, by giving too much or not giving enough, they could provoke military intervention in politics. However, such countries as Kenya and Zambia are examples of successful implementation of this strategy. Finally, there is a legitimized modality, which is based on the systemic legitimacy

which is accepted by military. As Decalo (1998) writes, it can be based on the absence of or successful suppression of potential socio-economic cleavages. In this modality, stability is also supported by credible leadership and democratic procedures that can suppress or redirect praetorian ambitions of the military.

More recent studies continue literature on coups from the 20<sup>th</sup> century while using more recent methodologies and empirical cases. Patrick McGowan's (2003) article is probably one of the most influential works concerning African coups. McGowan (2003) uses a data set which contains more than 300 coups, which allows to study various trends. Firstly, McGowan (2003) states that, despite democratization trends of the 1990s, coups, failed coups and coup plots remained to be pervasive in Africa. McGowan was also able to establish, that multiparty elections which were one of the components of Decalo's (1998) legitimized modality are not the panacea for coups. The problem here, in McGowan's opinion, is that a lot of elections in African countries are not entirely free, thus, their representative function is hindered. McGowan (2003) comes to a conclusion that all African states are at risk of coups which is almost equal for all countries.

Effects of democratization on coups are also discussed by Maggie Dwyer and Oisin Tansey (2020). The authors state that democratization in Africa has significantly changed trends for mutinies (which are associated with soldiers) and coups (which are associated with officer corps). The authors found that mutinies became more common due to democratization: democracy procedures reduce political grievances among officers, however, they incentivize soldiers to mutiny for their demands. Coups, in Dwyer's and Tansey's (2020) opinion, are in decline also due to the international democracy standards which do not approve coups. Finally, the international peacekeeping created new revenue sources for the militaries and weakened the incentives for coups but created new potential reasons for

mutiny. However, it is important to note that the authors do not touch on the coups after 2020.

Elischer and Larance (2022) highlight the importance of the 2020-2022 coup waves. The authors highlighted that so far sanctions imposed by international organizations were unable to change junta's decision to rule in many countries where coups occurred. There are no signs of transition to civil government. Therefore, the authors show that it is important for scholars to not underestimate coup potential which still remains quite high.

Day and Khisa (2022) justly state that modern scholars do not know enough about military coups. Day and Khisa summarize factors that scholars managed to find evidence for. Those factors include international ones such as training from foreign militaries, foreign aid, participation in proxy wars and external economic shocks. Authors also discuss the ethnic factors, organizational and behavioral characteristics of African armies, and psychological traits of coup leaders. The authors suggest studying civil-military relations on new levels: ideological provenance, experiences with warfare, changing patterns in military recruitment, changing domestic institutional context and changes in regional and global norms.

Abrahamsen (2018) studies the rise of militarism in recent years in a globalized perspective. Abrahamsen states that militarism was weakened after the end of the Cold War when African countries became more democratized. However, after the war on Terror began in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it lead to the rise in international financing of militaries and to the securitization of underdevelopment which often hides the same or even more aggressive militarism than before. Therefore, insurgencies around the continent and reactions to them have led to militaries gaining power on international arena.



Also, a study by Raphala (2017) on a critique of the foreign policy of France towards Africa indicated that when France gave independence to its African colonies, it did not really mean it was completely disengaging from Africa. In essence, a package was imposed on Francophone African countries which tied them to the decolonized African states mainly to preserve French colonial status. Moreover, France's heavy involvement in African countries has earned it a perception of being a police officer of the continent. Scholars argue that France's neocolonial approach to maintaining influence in Africa has contributed to growing resentment. The role of French military presence and bilateral agreements that grant France a privileged position in the defense and security apparatus of its former colonies.

Far from being just one more hiccup in the troubled relations between France and its former colonies, the France-Africa relationship perpetuates a sense of dependency and erodes the sovereignty of African nations. Specifically, it argues that although France has a rather clear security-driven agenda, its operational moves produced by bureaucratic thinking are questioned by influential sections of Sahelian public opinions who frame the French military presence as a deeply political issue over their country's sovereignty (Avoulete, 2023). In addition, being the de facto military guarantor of the security of Sahelian regimes, France constrains the domestic political conversation through the 'red lines' it imposes on actors. This externally induced distortion of the domestic political landscape eventually places Sahelian authorities in front of a dilemma leading into rebating the external control and uprising of the military and militia.

French presence on the continent is considered to be one of the most everlasting of all former colonial powers. French politicians have built a sophisticated system of political, economic, and social leverages in Africa. This system is also known as

Francafrique (Verschave, 1998). An early example of this power can be seen in 1958 when in France and across all its colonies there was a voting for new constitution. When Guinea-Conakry voted against the Fifth Republic constitution, it was decolonized, and it was one of the very first decolonized countries of former French colonial empire. However, this decolonization was severely undermined by further developments. Guinea got into economic blockade, where France and several other Western countries cut all economic and trade ties with the country, which was a significant blow to the very young and fragile economy (Kamil, 2014). Thus, the influence of France on the continent is really strong, and many coups that happened in Africa are somehow related to France. Some of them were done with the support from France, others were conducted against its influence (Yigit, 2022).

The coup d'état in Burkina Faso in 1987 toppled the government of Thomas Sankara. Sankara was a military officer and a communist revolutionary who also gained power over the country as the result of a coup in 1983. His political career was marked with numerous fundamental changes to the history of Burkina Faso. For instance, he was the one who initiated the change of the country's name from colonial Upper Volta to now internationally known Burkina Faso, the name which represents two indigenous languages (Harsch, 2013). Sankara was a faithful Marxist, and he made a lot of effort to make Burkina Faso as independent as possible from Western economies, specifically, France. Therefore, when Thomas Sankara was overthrown by Blaise Compaore in 1987 and shot without witnesses, there were speculations that France had something to do with it. Many years later, French officials themselves would admit the fact that French Special Forces participated in the coup directly (De Miramon, 2021). Thus, the coup of 1987 remains an illustration of how changes in relations with France in Africa can lead to significant political changes.

However, the contemporary “wave” of coups is not orchestrated by France or French Special Forces. The common theme for coups in Africa in the last decade was anti-French sentiment. One of the best examples of it is the coup in Gabon, a former French colony in Central Africa. For a very long time the Bongo family ruled over the nation: Omar Bongo was a president of Gabon from 1967 until 2009. The ties of the Bongo family to France are incredibly strong: they are both personal and political. The Bongo’s are possibly one of the biggest foreign landlords in modern-day France. They hold a large number of apartments in Paris and other French cities, as well as other types of property in the country. In political sense there are a lot of indicators of French influence in Gabon (Nebo Sr., 2023). One of the most notorious examples is how France sent its own militants to support Gabon’s commandos in suppressing riots in Port Gentil during the 1990 riots (Koumba, 1990; Gueye & Rakotomalala, 2013). It is no surprise that one of the significant parts of protests and the coup in Gabon which occurred in 2023 was anti-French sentiment.

In general, Francafrrique was and remains a system of French dominance over the continent, specifically over former French colonies of West and Central Africa. Tools of Francafrrique include various political and economic practices, but one of the most obvious is the system of the sole currency in the territories of former colonies. The CFA franc remains the main currency for the majority of countries in West and Central Africa, and this currency is heavily dependent on the French Central Bank. Another tool of Francafrrique is significant presence of French companies in the former colonies, specifically, “Total” (Bovcon, 2009).

For a long period of time Francafrrique used to be a very stable system which was able to quickly subdue dissent and at the same time remain profitable for some African leaders too. However, in the situation where numerous regimes are changing towards more anti-French policies, and where French foreign military

personnel cannot stay on the territory of former allies such as Mali and Niger, it is clear that something has changed. The Francafrigue system cannot work to the same level of effectiveness anymore. Partly it can be blamed on the changes in French foreign policy. French budget for foreign operations seems to be much less nowadays than it was previously (Bovcon, 2013). More importantly, nowadays France has an actual contender for its African influence and this contender is Russia.

Russian foreign policy with regard to Africa is based on the Soviet policy towards the continent. Since the very birth of the Soviet Union, it had its own school of African studies which was quite different from the Western one. Specifically, Soviet scholars were anti-colonial from the very beginning and were focused on developing a distinct African historiography, predating colonial powers. This was a stark contrast with the Western scientists of early 20<sup>th</sup> century who called Africa “a continent with no history”. In the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century the USSR was responsible for supporting numerous anti-colonial and militant freedom movements across the continent. Active support continued well into the 1980s, while educational, industrial and trade delegations were kept up until the dissolution of the Union. In the first years of the Russian Federation, Africa was not in the focus of Russian foreign policy. However, Russia was able to uphold its relations with African countries to a noticeable degree. When Russia started to experience complications in relations with Western countries, Russian foreign policy basically began its “return” to the African soil. It began in two major ways: establishing multilateral relations with African countries through various events such as “Russia – Africa” summits and establishing military connections across the continent in order to provide security services across the continent. In this situation, African countries who are usually dependent on France can see a new potential partner in Russia.

Again, the study by Hawk (2017) on “African politics and American reporting” investigated the role of media in shaping perceptions of France and its actions in Africa. The findings noted that media coverage often reinforces negative stereotypes and fosters a narrative of French paternalism. The impact of such narratives on public opinion contributes to the escalation of hostility. Social media and information warfare in shaping political narratives and mobilizing dissent have gained prominence in recent time. The ease with which misinformation spreads in the digital age has contributed to public dissatisfaction and a sense of political disillusionment, creating a conducive environment for coups.

The role of the media in coups should not be underestimated. It is a well-known fact that the media can affect revolutionary events, but it is not only revolutionaries who consume mass media and get affected by it. Military officials are also subject to such an influence. One of the most illustrative examples of this is the role the media played in the Egyptian revolution of 2011. For quite a long time Egypt was in military partnership with the United States. In February 2011, in the most intense moments of protests in Cairo, it had just so happened that multiple high-ranking Egyptian military officials were in Pentagon. In the opinion of several authors, the coverage of protests in Cairo in the American mass media may have affected the choice by military to get on the side of the opposition (Beck et al., 2022). Even more intriguing is the fact that African militaries’ communications with American army specialists can be a predictor of coups in the respective countries of those militaries. Studies explain the fact that American military officials who contact African military officials often pursue political careers. Pursuing a political career for a military officer is perfectly normalized in the United States, while in Africa it is not really a career option for soldiers. Close contacts with American officers are one of the reasons for norm diffusion among African officers which often leads to coup d’états

(Grewal, 2022). Therefore, the power of the media and communications is strong when it comes to military coups.

### **Methods and Data**

The study generally employed a quantitative research method in its data gathering and analysis. The quantitative approach refers to a systematic and methodical way of analysing variables by collecting precise numerical data to solve a specific problem. The objective of this approach is to use statistical analysis to obtain significant insights, which are then conveyed in a detailed summary (Scholtz, 2020). Researchers may use quantitative methods to accurately quantify and analyse the correlations between variables. This approach provides a strong basis for drawing data-driven conclusions and gaining valuable insights (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). This method makes it possible to conduct an objective and reproducible analysis (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Utilising a quantitative technique enables the gathering of factual data that is essential for comprehending the conceptual intricacies of the subject (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The approach also enables the investigation of the relationship between variables to test objective hypotheses. Additionally, it facilitates the monitoring of these variables through the use of tools and the analysis of numerical data using statistical methods (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). The reason for this is because the quantitative research technique enables the examination of the relationship between variables to evaluate unbiased hypotheses, hence the adoption of the quantitative research method.

The study depended on data from the Institute for African Studies under the Russian Academy of Sciences in collaboration with the Centre for Stability and Risk Analysis in HSE University. This data has been collected in a number of African countries over the last four years (2020-2023) regarding the image of Russia in African countries. The data specifically covers the variables essential to

this study, hence the adoption of this data for analysis. It is important to note that the dataset covers Africa in general. However, this study is specifically focused on Francophone Africa and not Africa in general. As a result, three countries in Francophone Africa are selected as the sample or cases for the study, and these are Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The justification for the selection of these three is that there is up to date (firsthand) data on these countries available from the selected dataset, hence it was convenient to select them as the sample. Also, these countries have experienced several coups attempts with recent ones occurring within 2022-2023, and recent resurgence of coups in such areas are worth investigating.

For the purpose of this study, the key variables presented in Table 1 are the independent and dependent variables for the analysis.

**Table 1: Key variables of the study**

<b>Dependent variables</b>	<b>Independent variables</b>
<b>The resurgence of coup d'état</b>	Effectiveness of French foreign policy
	Political and economic support from Russia
	Russian support in the fight against terrorism
	Positive attitudes of the country towards Russia's involvement in their economy

*Author's construct, 2024*

As seen in Table 1, the dependent variable of the study is 'the resurgence of coup d'états' which is dependent on the effectiveness of French foreign policy, political and economic support from Russia, Russian support in the fight against

terrorism and positive attitude of the country towards Russia's involvement in their economy.

To elaborate more on the variables, the dependent variable, resurgence of coup d'états was determined with a question asked to the respondents about their assessment of the political situation in their countries in recent years. The effectiveness of French policy was determined by the question, "do you think France's policy towards Africa is effective?" The political and economic support from Russia is also determined when respondents were asked about the political and economic support of their countries by the Russian Federation. In addition, Russia's support in the fight against terrorism is determined when respondents were asked to assess the role of Russia in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel. Lastly, the positive attitudes of the country towards Russian involvement in their economy was determined when respondents were asked whether Russia should be more actively involved in African affairs.

Based on the variables, regression analysis was employed to analyze how the various variables lead to the resurgence of coup d'états. The analysis was run on the key variables of the study to identify which variables have impact on the main question of the study, which factors or variables matter most, which factors can be ignored and how these factors influence each other (positive or negative relationship and the strength of the relationship that exists between the independent and dependent variables).

## **Discussion of Results**

The study assessed the factors causing coup resurgence in the Sub-Saharan African countries, especially among Francophone countries (Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso). Four factors such as the effectiveness of French foreign policy, political and economic support from Russia, Russian support against terrorism and



positive attitudes of the country towards Russian involvement in their economies were identified as the potential factors fueling the recent surge in coup d'états in the sub region. A questionnaire was administered to elicit responses from citizens of these countries. The logistic regression model was therefore estimated to assess the likelihood of coup occurrences resulting from the four identified factors. The result of this study is presented in **model 1**.

Model 1: Logit, using observations 1-415 (n = 327)

Missing or incomplete observations dropped: 88.

Dependent variable: Coup Resurgence

QML standard errors

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p-value</i>	
Russia's Political and Economic Support	-0.6602	0.3253	-2.029	0.0424	**
Russia's Involvement in your Country	-1.0847	0.2467	-4.396	<0.0001	***
Effective French Policies	0.9744	0.4114	2.369	0.0179	**
Russian's fight against Terrorism	-0.6075	0.1986	-3.060	0.0022	***
Mean dependent var	0.128440	S.D. dependent var		0.335092	
Log-likelihood	-136.6020	Akaike criterion		281.2040	
Schwarz criterion	296.3638	Hannan-Quinn		287.2530	

Number of cases 'correctly predicted' = 282 (86.2%)

f(beta'x) at mean of independent vars = 0.335

As seen in Model 1, the results of the study showed that Effective French foreign policy in these countries posed a significant

positive relationship with the likelihood of coup occurrence. In other words, the French foreign policy in these countries has outlived its usefulness and is therefore, viewed as a threat and repression to the citizens of these countries, leading to several coup attempts in a number of Francophone African countries in recent times. This implies that, any increase in the effectiveness of French foreign policy in the subregion is associated with the likelihood of coup resurgence. This corresponded to a coefficient of 0.9744 and with a P-value of 0.0179, signifying that at a statistical significance level of 10%, a unit increase in the effectiveness of French foreign policy in the subregion is associated with a likelihood of 1.981 coup happening.

The findings of the study are not surprising, because the recent coups especially in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso witnessed the burning of the French flag and its replacement with the Russian flag, and the display of several placards with inscriptions “Abas la France vive Poutine” meaning “we are done with France, long live Putin”. All these sentiments signify the rebellion against France and the growth of the anti-French sentiment among the people of various Francophone African countries. This anti-French sentiment according to Avoulete (2023), has been exacerbated by France’s backing of dubious dynastic political regimes, socio-economic stagnation and the perception that their leaders (presidents) are imposed upon them by the French government just to advance the French agenda and not for the development of their respective nations. Other factors accounting for the anti-French prejudice include repression of the citizenry, exploitation of resources, and neo-colonialism in its worse form among others. For example, during the 2023 Russia-African Summit, the president of Burkina Faso said:

*“As for Burkina Faso, for the past eight years we have been fighting the most barbaric and cruel*

*form of colonialism and imperialism which is forcing a modern form of slavery on us. We have learned one thing very well: a slave who cannot protest deserves nothing more than pity, and his future is miserable. We did not wait for anybody to take care of us. We decided to fight the terrorists who are preventing our development” (Ibrahim Traore, President of Burkina Faso, Russia-African Summit, 2023).*

The other variables (Russia’s political and economic support, positive attitude towards Russia’s involvement in their economy, and Russia’s support in the fight against terrorism), however did not show any positive relationship with the resurgence of coup d’états in Francophone Africa. However, with negative coefficients of -0.6602, -1.0847, -0.6075 and P-values of 0.0424, 0.0001, and 0.0022 respectively, the variables were statistically significant implying that they did not directly contribute to the resurgence of coups but could serve as determinant or influential factors fueling the anti-French sentiment among several Francophone countries (*see model 1 for details*).

Thus, the continued support from the then USSR in the form of military or security, funding and grants, infrastructural support among others to several African countries, made Africa to build trust and feel secure with Russians. This explains why the citizens of Francophone countries exhibit positive attitude towards Russia’s involvement in their economies. This corroborates findings by Issaev et al, (2022) that the support of the USSR to Africa in the areas of health, the economy, military, agriculture and education helped build and foster a friendly and positive relationship between Russia and Africa. Similarly, Bondarenko (2012), asserts that the role of the USSR and its support to various African countries in the struggle for independence and freedom

from their colonial masters during the cold war made Africa to view Russia in a favourable light. Despite the support of the then powerful USSR, the role of the Russian Federation in political and economic operations or support in recent time to Africa, especially Francophone Africa (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea, etc.) is noticeable in various spheres such as military technical cooperation, economic support, education among others, and could explain why these countries are comfortable cooperating with Russia and are ready to replace France with Russia. For example, during the 2023 Russia-African Summit, the president of Mali said:

*...That is very important in restoring peace, stability and security, which is why we must now, above all, protect our population and defend the territorial integrity of our country. This strategic choice is very important to us, and we must, of course, become completely independent and self-sufficient and strengthen our armed forces. That is why we, in Mali, have a military partnership with the Russian Federation. Thank you for your support and friendship. Thanks to Russia, we have been able to strengthen our armed forces, our security services, and our law enforcement agencies. The Malian armed forces are now in an offensive dynamic, we have significantly reduced the number of attacks that were targeting military bases, and we have been able to provide security in many locations” (Assimi Goita, President of Mali, Russia-African Summit, 2023).*

The other variables as seen in Model 1 may not directly be the cause of the recent resurgence of coup d'états in Francophone Africa. These factors, especially the support Russia gives to these

countries, particularly Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to get them liberated from the French influence have significant influence in increasing the anti-French prejudice or sentiments.

### **Conclusion and Policy Consideration**

The resurgence of coup d'états in Francophone Africa in recent times is characterized by complex and multifaceted factors. However, it is clear in this study that the fundamental factor influencing the recent spike in coup d'états and coup attempts in Francophone Africa is attributed to the anti-French prejudice (ineffectiveness of French foreign policy in the subregion), shedding light on a critical but often overlooked factor in political instability in the Sahel region.

The results in this sense suggest that although the resurgence of coup d'états in Francophone Africa can be attributed to anti-French prejudice or sentiments by the populace of various Francophone countries, there are other essential factors which are not directly correlated with the coup d'états and coup attempts but serve as determinant factors fueling the anti-French sentiments. These factors include Russia's recent political and economic support to various Francophone countries, Russia's support in the fight against terrorism especially in the Sahel region and the former USSR support to these countries resulting in positive attitudes of the populace towards Russia's involvement in their economy through various agreements, among others.

Although, the result of this study indicates a positive relationship between the effectiveness of French foreign policy (anti-French prejudice) and the resurgence of coup d'états in Francophone African in recent times, it is not to discount the fact that there could be other hidden factors causing the recent spike of coups in the region. This calls for regional actors such as ECOWAS, SADC,

EAC, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), among others to play a crucial role in the establishment of a consensus and inclusive dialogue with the countries in question to provide a lasting solution to the coup menace so as to ensure political stability in the region and the liberation of member countries from neocolonialism.

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