

Regional Dynamics and West African Politics: The Impact of Burkina Faso's Leadership Change on ECOWAS Stability

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of Burkina Faso's leadership transition on regional stability within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Employing a qualitative methodology, including document analysis and expert interviews, the research explores the political, security, and diplomatic implications of Burkina Faso's change in leadership on regional cohesion and policy coordination. The findings highlight the complexities of leadership shifts in a fragile political environment and their ripple effects across neighbouring states and regional institutions. The paper underscores the importance of leadership legitimacy and regional solidarity in maintaining stability in West Africa.

Keywords: West Africa, Burkina Faso, ECOWAS, leadership change, regional stability, qualitative analysis

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1: INTRODUCTION

The political landscape of West Africa is marked by a persistent pattern of political instability, characterised by recurrent military coups, unconstitutional leadership changes, and fragile democratic processes. These internal political upheavals significantly influence regional stability, particularly within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which aims to promote peace, security, and democratic governance across member states (Adebajo, 2018). As the regional organisation tasked with conflict prevention and resolution, ECOWAS's effectiveness hinges on the political stability of its member countries, making leadership transitions in these states critical junctures for regional peace and security.

Burkina Faso, a prominent member of ECOWAS, exemplifies the challenges posed by leadership upheavals in the region. The country has experienced multiple political crises over the past decade, including the popular uprising that ousted long-standing President Blaise Compaoré in 2014 and, more recently, the military coup in 2022 that deposed the transitional government. These events reflect broader patterns of instability driven by domestic grievances, security threats from extremist groups, and perceptions of governance failures (Chauveau & Ouedraogo, 2022). Such leadership

changes are not isolated incidents but are interconnected with regional dynamics, including the responses of ECOWAS, which has often struggled to balance diplomatic engagement with sanctions and interventionist policies.

The impact of Burkina Faso's leadership change on ECOWAS stability is complex and multifaceted. On one hand, leadership transitions driven by unconstitutional means undermine the normative framework of democratic governance that ECOWAS seeks to uphold, thereby challenging regional legitimacy and cohesion. On the other hand, the regional organisation faces dilemmas in responding effectively to coups—balancing the principles of non-interference with the need to uphold democratic norms and regional stability (Adeniran & Ojo, 2020). The military takeover in Burkina Faso, therefore, raises critical questions about the resilience of regional institutions and their capacity to adapt to evolving political realities.

Scholars have highlighted that leadership legitimacy and adherence to constitutional processes are vital for regional stability in West Africa. Leadership crises often exacerbate security challenges, such as the proliferation of extremist groups and intercommunal violence, which further threaten regional peace (Olaniyan, 2019). Moreover, regional responses—ranging from sanctions to

dialogue—are often contingent upon perceptions of legitimacy and regional solidarity, which can either reinforce or undermine stability (Adebajo, 2018). Despite the importance of these issues, there remains limited scholarly focus on how specific leadership changes, such as Burkina Faso's recent upheaval, influence regional dynamics within ECOWAS.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of Burkina Faso's leadership transition on ECOWAS stability through a qualitative lens. By analysing official documents and media reports and conducting interviews with policymakers, scholars, and regional experts, the researchers provide a nuanced understanding of the political and security repercussions of leadership change. The findings will contribute to ongoing debates about the role of regional organisations in managing political crises and consolidating democracy in West Africa.

In sum, this paper underscores the interconnectedness of domestic political developments and regional stability, emphasising that leadership legitimacy and regional cooperation are essential for peace in West Africa. As Burkina Faso navigates its current political transition, understanding its regional implications provides helpful information regarding the broader challenges facing ECOWAS and the prospects for sustainable stability in the sub-region.

1.1 Background to the Study

Historical Overview of Burkina Faso's Political Landscape

Burkina Faso's political history has been characterised by a pattern of authoritarian rule, revolutionary upheavals, and fragile democratic transitions. Since gaining independence from France in 1960, the country experienced a series of military coups, starting with the 1966 coup that ushered in military rule under Sangoulé Lamizana, followed by successive juntas and authoritarian regimes (Kouanda & Kaboré, 2018). The most notable period of stability emerged under Blaise Compaoré, who seized power in 1987 through a coup and ruled for 27 years until his ousting in 2014 amidst widespread protests against constitutional manipulation to extend his tenure (Keenan & Naylor, 2020). Post-2014, Burkina Faso embarked on a fragile democratic transition marked by constitutional reforms, political turbulence, and challenges in consolidating democratic norms (Miller et al., 2019). The country's history reflects a persistent struggle between authoritarian tendencies and aspirations for democratic consolidation, often disrupted by coups and internal conflicts.

The Role of Burkina Faso within ECOWAS

Burkina Faso is a key member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), an

organisation established to promote economic integration, peace, and stability in the region (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2019). ECOWAS has historically intervened in Burkina Faso's political crises, advocating for constitutional order and democratic governance. Its role has intensified amid recurring coups, especially with the 2014 transition and the 2022 military takeover. ECOWAS's response to Burkina Faso's leadership changes underscores its dual mandate of regional stability and sovereignty preservation. The organisation's deployment of diplomatic pressure, sanctions, and occasional peacekeeping efforts exemplifies its approach to managing leadership crises (Kuehne et al., 2021). Burkina Faso's interactions with ECOWAS demonstrate the regional organisation's influence on national politics and its capacity to shape leadership transitions, although its effectiveness remains contested.

Recent Leadership Change: Causes, Circumstances, and Immediate Aftermath

The most recent leadership change in Burkina Faso occurred in January 2022 when the military ousted President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré amid escalating insecurity caused by jihadist insurgencies, economic hardship, and public discontent (Keenan & Naylor, 2022). The coup was precipitated by persistent violence, perceived governmental ineffectiveness, and a loss of confidence in civilian leadership's ability to address security challenges (Kouanda & Kaboré, 2018). The immediate aftermath saw the establishment of a military transitional government, suspension of the constitution, and a pledge to restore stability through a future electoral process. However, the transition has been marked by ongoing instability, further coups in the region, and international condemnation, highlighting the fragility of Burkina Faso's political order and the challenges of consolidating leadership legitimacy following such upheavals (Miller et al., 2023).

Theoretical Frameworks on Leadership Change and Regional Stability

The study of leadership change and regional stability has been informed by various theoretical approaches. Rational choice theory emphasises that leadership transitions are strategic decisions driven by domestic and regional incentives that have implications for stability (North & Weingast, 2017). Institutionalism highlights the importance of political institutions and norms in shaping the outcomes of leadership changes, suggesting that strong institutions can mitigate instability (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Additionally, the security dilemma framework, adapted to regional politics, posits that leadership upheavals can provoke regional insecurity due to power vacuums and shifting alliances (Krause &

Williams, 2018). These frameworks collectively underscore that leadership transitions are complex processes influenced by domestic politics, institutional strength, and regional security dynamics, which in turn affect regional stability.

1.2 Overview of West African regional politics and ECOWAS

West African regional politics is characterised by a complex interplay of democratisation struggles, security challenges, and the quest for regional integration amidst persistent instability. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975, has been at the forefront of regional efforts to promote peace, stability, and economic development. However, despite its proactive stance, ECOWAS faces significant challenges in enforcing its mandates, especially regarding unconstitutional government changes, security threats, and sovereignty issues.

One of the defining features of West African politics is the recurrent occurrence of military coups, which have profoundly tested the authority and legitimacy of regional institutions such as ECOWAS. Since its inception, ECOWAS has adopted a normative framework condemning unconstitutional regime changes, establishing protocols and sanctions aimed at restoring constitutional order (Adebajo, 2018). Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these measures has been inconsistent. For instance, the organization's responses to coups in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso reflect both its normative commitments and the geopolitical realities that influence its decision-making processes (Chauveau & Ouedraogo, 2022). Critics argue that ECOWAS's reliance on sanctions and diplomatic pressure often yields limited results, especially when regional states face internal security crises or external influences that undermine regional cohesion (Olaniyan, 2019).

Security challenges remain at the core of West African regional politics. The proliferation of extremist groups, notably Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda affiliates, has compounded fragile political environments, leading to increased insecurity and displacement. ECOWAS, in collaboration with international partners, has launched various peacekeeping and stabilisation missions; yet, these efforts are often hampered by limited resources, sovereignty concerns, and divergent national interests (Adeniran & Ojo, 2020). Moreover, the security dilemma is intertwined with political legitimacy; military coups often cite security threats as justification, further complicating regional efforts to restore civilian rule and stability (Adebajo, 2019).

The regional integration project, embodied by ECOWAS's economic and political initiatives, faces internal challenges such as economic disparities, governance deficits, and divergent national interests. While the economic community has made strides through

initiatives like the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, progress remains uneven, and member states frequently prioritise national sovereignty over regional directives (Dossou & Gbenou, 2018). Additionally, the political will to enforce regional norms is often inconsistent, with some leaders viewing regional interventions as infringements on sovereignty, particularly when they threaten domestic political interests.

Recent scholarship emphasises that ECOWAS's effectiveness is contingent upon its capacity to adapt to rapidly changing political contexts, including the rise of populist and authoritarian tendencies within member states. The organization's crisis response mechanisms are often reactive rather than proactive, leading to criticisms of a lack of strategic foresight (Dawson, 2020). Furthermore, regional politics are increasingly influenced by external powers, such as France, China, and the United States, which pursue their interests in the region, sometimes at odds with ECOWAS's normative goals (Kuehne et al., 2021). This external influence complicates regional efforts, especially regarding security and economic cooperation.

In conclusion, West African regional politics are marked by a tension between normative aspirations for democracy and stability and the realities of political fragility, security threats, and sovereignty concerns. Despite its foundational commitment to peace and integration, ECOWAS faces systemic challenges that hinder its full realisation of regional stability. Its future effectiveness will depend on its ability to strengthen institutional capacities, foster genuine regional solidarity, and cope with the confusing geopolitics of the sub-region.

1.3 Significance of leadership changes in regional stability

Leadership changes within states—whether through democratic elections, coups, or transitional arrangements—are pivotal in shaping regional stability, especially in regions marked by political fragility such as West Africa. These transitions influence not only domestic governance but also have far-reaching implications for regional cooperation, security, and economic integration. Understanding the significance of leadership changes is critical for regional organisations, like ECOWAS, which seek to uphold democratic norms and maintain peace across member states.

1. Leadership Legitimacy and Normative Frameworks

Leadership legitimacy is fundamental to regional stability. Democratic elections that result in peaceful transfers of power reinforce norms of constitutionalism and political stability. Conversely, unconstitutional leadership changes, such as military coups, undermine these norms and often trigger regional responses aimed at restoring democratic order. For instance, recent coups

in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso have challenged the normative authority of ECOWAS, which has responded with sanctions and diplomatic pressures (Kuehne et al., 2021). These leadership disruptions can erode the credibility of regional institutions, weaken regional norms, and embolden anti-democratic actors.

2. Security Implications

Leadership transitions, especially abrupt or unconstitutional ones, are often associated with increased insecurity. Military takeovers tend to destabilise governance structures and create power vacuums, which may lead to civil unrest or insurgencies. For example, the 2020 coup in Mali led to political instability that facilitated the resurgence of jihadist groups and complicated regional security efforts (Dawson, 2020). Leadership changes can also influence the strategic calculus of regional and international actors, affecting cooperation on security issues and peacekeeping operations.

3. Economic and Developmental Impacts

Transitions in leadership can disrupt ongoing development projects and economic stability. Political uncertainty deters investment, hampers regional trade, and can lead to economic sanctions or aid suspension. In West Africa, leadership crises have often resulted in economic downturns, further exacerbating poverty and inequality (Dossou & Gbenou, 2018). These economic disruptions undermine regional integration efforts and threaten long-term stability.

4. Political Culture and Governance Trajectories

Frequent leadership changes can entrench cycles of authoritarianism or weaken democratic institutions. When leaders cling to power or are replaced through illegitimate means, it hampers the development of strong institutions and erodes political accountability. Such dynamics can create a culture of instability, making future leadership transitions more unpredictable and conflict-prone (Adebajo, 2019).

5. External Influence and Regional Dynamics

Leadership changes often attract external actors' interests, influencing regional stability. Foreign powers may support certain regimes or opposition groups, further complicating regional politics. For instance, external military and diplomatic support during coups can either undermine or bolster regional efforts to restore constitutional order, impacting regional stability (Kuehne et al., 2021).

In sum, leadership changes are highly significant for regional stability because they serve as catalysts for political, security, and economic outcomes. While peaceful and constitutional transitions tend to reinforce

stability and democratic norms, unconstitutional or violent leadership changes threaten regional cohesion and security. The capacity of regional organisations like ECOWAS to respond effectively to such changes is thus vital for shaping the trajectory of regional stability.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Research Questions

1. How do leadership changes influence political stability within West African states?
2. What role do regional organisations, like ECOWAS, play in managing and responding to leadership transitions, especially unconstitutional ones??
3. In what ways do leadership changes impact regional security dynamics and cooperation efforts?
4. How do external actors influence leadership transitions and their subsequent effects on regional stability?
5. What are the long-term implications of leadership changes for democratic consolidation and governance in West Africa?

Research Objectives

1. To examine the impact of leadership transitions on political stability in West African states.
2. To analyse the effectiveness of ECOWAS's responses to leadership changes, particularly unconstitutional regime changes, and their implications for regional stability..
3. To assess the security challenges and opportunities arising from recent leadership changes in West Africa.
4. To explore the influence of external powers on leadership transitions and regional stability in West Africa.
5. To evaluate the long-term effects of leadership changes on the democratisation process and governance quality in the region.

1.5 Rationale for focusing on Burkina Faso

The choice to focus this research on Burkina Faso is grounded in the country's recent political developments and their profound implications for regional stability in West Africa. Burkina Faso has experienced a series of leadership changes in the past decade, notably the 2014 uprising that ousted President Blaise Compaoré, the constitutional crisis that ensued, and the military coup of January 2022. These events exemplify the complex interplay between domestic political upheavals and regional stability, making Burkina Faso a compelling case for detailed analysis.

The 2014 uprising in Burkina Faso was a landmark event that challenged entrenched authoritarianism and

sparked hopes for democratic consolidation (Kouanda & Kaboré, 2018). However, subsequent leadership transitions, including the 2022 military coup, have highlighted persistent fragilities within the country's political institutions and governance structures. These upheavals have not only affected domestic stability but have also impacted regional security, given Burkina Faso's strategic position and its ongoing conflict with jihadist insurgents linked to the Sahel crisis (Keenan & Naylor, 2020).

Burkina Faso's leadership crises are emblematic of broader regional challenges in the Sahel and West Africa, including weak state institutions, rising insurgencies, and external influences from international actors. The country's political volatility directly affects neighbouring states and regional organisations like ECOWAS, which has struggled to respond effectively to unconstitutional government changes (Kuehne et al., 2021). Analysing Burkina Faso allows for a nuanced understanding of how leadership changes influence regional security architectures and stability.

Focusing on Burkina Faso fills a critical gap in scholarly discourse regarding the country's recent political trajectories and their regional impacts. It offers observations about the efficacy of regional responses, the resilience of democratic norms, and the challenges of state-building in fragile contexts. Moreover, this focus provides helpful lessons for policymakers and regional actors seeking to promote stability and democratic governance amid ongoing crises.

In sum, Burkina Faso's recent leadership upheavals offer a vital case study to understand the broader dynamics of leadership transitions and regional stability in West Africa. Their analysis is essential to inform both academic debates and practical policy interventions aimed at fostering peace and sustainable development in the region.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section critically examines recent scholarly debates surrounding leadership change, regional stability, and the specific context of Burkina Faso within West Africa. The review synthesises contemporary academic insights to contextualise the significance of leadership transitions and their implications for regional security and democratic consolidation.

Leadership Change and Democratic Consolidation

Recent scholarship emphasises that leadership change in fragile states often occurs amidst entrenched institutional weaknesses, economic hardship, and security crises. Keane and Naylor (2020) argue that in West Africa, leadership transitions frequently follow patterns of constitutional manipulation, military intervention, or electoral disputes, which undermine

democratic norms. In Burkina Faso, the 2014 transition was viewed as a critical juncture, where mass protests led to the ousting of Blaise Compaoré, raising questions about the durability of democratic reforms post-transition (Miller et al., 2019). However, scholars like Kuehne et al. (2021) warn that such transitions often lack institutional depth, leaving underlying fragilities unaddressed, thereby increasing susceptibility to subsequent crises.

Military Coups and Regime Instability

The recurrence of military coups in West Africa has prompted extensive analysis of their causes and consequences. Kuehne et al. (2021) contend that coups are often driven by security failures, economic crises, and public disillusionment with civilian governments. The recent 2022 coup in Burkina Faso exemplifies this pattern, with the military citing insecurity and governmental incompetence as justifications. Scholars such as Keenan and Naylor (2022) emphasise that these coups challenge the notion of a linear democratisation process and instead reflect a cyclical pattern where military actors reassert control amid perceived failures of civilian leadership. The literature increasingly suggests that these upheavals threaten regional stability, especially given the interconnected nature of security threats in the Sahel.

Regional Stability and ECOWAS's Role

The role of regional organisations, like ECOWAS, has been pivotal in managing leadership crises. Adeniyi and Olufemi (2019) highlight ECOWAS's efforts to promote democratic norms through diplomatic sanctions, dialogue, and occasionally, peacekeeping interventions. However, recent analyses by Kuehne et al. (2021) critique the organisation's effectiveness, noting that ECOWAS often faces dilemmas balancing sovereignty with regional stability, sometimes resulting in inconsistent responses. In Burkina Faso, ECOWAS's imposition of sanctions following the 2022 coup underscores both its influence and limitations. Scholars argue that regional stability hinges on the organisation's capacity to adapt its strategies to the complex realities of leadership change, insurgency, and political legitimacy issues (Keenan & Naylor, 2020).

Theoretical Perspectives on Leadership Change and Stability

The study of leadership change and political stability draws upon a diverse array of theoretical frameworks, including institutionalism, security studies, and political economy, to analyse the complex dynamics involved in transitions of power. These perspectives offer valuable insights into how leadership changes can either consolidate stability or trigger instability, especially in

fragile states characterised by weak institutions, sociopolitical tensions, and regional vulnerabilities.

From an institutionalist standpoint, scholars like Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) emphasise the critical role that robust democratic institutions play in safeguarding against authoritarian backsliding and political chaos. They argue that strong, resilient institutions—such as independent judiciaries, free press, and electoral commissions—serve as buffers during leadership transitions by providing predictable rules and mechanisms for peaceful change. However, in fragile states like Burkina Faso, where institutions are often weak, corrupt, or politicised, these structures tend to be insufficient, thereby exacerbating instability during leadership upheavals. This fragility can lead to power vacuums, increased factionalism, and a breakdown of the rule of law, which may precipitate cycles of violence or authoritarian resurgence.

Security studies perspectives, notably those articulated by Krause and Williams (2018), focus on how leadership upheavals impact regional security dynamics. They emphasise that leadership transitions often generate security dilemmas, wherein shifts in power provoke fear and defensive actions among neighbouring states or internal factions. Such dynamics can fuel conflict, intervention, or proxy struggles, especially when transitions occur abruptly or illegitimately. For example, sudden leadership changes in Burkina Faso have sometimes heightened regional tensions, prompting fears of spillover violence or destabilisation that threaten both national and regional security.

Political economy frameworks, as discussed by North and Weingast (2017), view leadership changes through the lens of strategic interactions among political actors. They posit that during transitions, actors engage in strategic calculations based on incentives, constraints, and perceptions of risk. These calculations influence whether transitions proceed peacefully or descend into conflict. In contexts marked by insecurity, corruption, and institutional weakness, these strategic considerations become more volatile, increasing the likelihood of power struggles, coups, or violent disputes. Understanding these strategic interactions is crucial for designing effective interventions that promote stability.

Recent scholarship underscores that in countries like Burkina Faso, leadership change is deeply intertwined with institutional deficiencies, security challenges, and regional influences. The fragility of governance structures, coupled with ongoing security threats from insurgent groups and regional instability, complicates transitions and often undermines efforts at peaceful change. While regional organisations, such as ECOWAS, have attempted to mediate and facilitate smooth transitions through diplomatic engagement, sanctions, and peacekeeping missions, their effectiveness remains contested. Critics argue that without addressing the root causes—namely governance deficits, socio-economic

inequalities, and security threats—such efforts risk being superficial or short-lived.

The literature advocates for nuanced, context-specific approaches that prioritise strengthening domestic institutions, enhancing governance capacity, and addressing underlying socio-political grievances. Such strategies are critical to promoting sustainable stability and preventing the cycle of violence or authoritarian resurgence following leadership changes. Furthermore, empirical research is needed to deepen understanding of how leadership transitions influence regional security trajectories, particularly in fragile states like Burkina Faso where external regional pressures, internal divisions, and security threats intersect.

What all these imply is that, these theoretical perspectives collectively highlight that leadership change is a multifaceted process shaped by institutional strength, security considerations, and strategic actors' behaviour. Recognising these interconnected factors is vital for designing effective policies and regional interventions aimed at promoting peaceful and stable transitions in fragile contexts. Continued research and tailored approaches are imperative to address the unique challenges posed by leadership shifts in Burkina Faso and similar settings, ultimately contributing to regional stability and development.

2.1 Regional integration and political stability in West Africa

The relationship between regional integration and political stability in West Africa has garnered increasing scholarly attention, especially given the region's recurrent political upheavals, insurgencies, and economic challenges. This section critically examines recent academic debates, emphasising how regional organisations, like ECOWAS, influence political stability and the complexities inherent in fostering regional cohesion amid diverse national interests.

Theoretically, regional integration is often conceptualised through liberal institutionalism, which posits that regional organisations facilitate cooperation, reduce conflicts, and promote stability by creating shared norms and mechanisms for dispute resolution (Acharya, 2017). Realist perspectives, however, highlight that states primarily pursue national interests, and regional integration may be superficial or serve elite interests rather than genuine stability (Adebajo & Ramesh, 2019). In West Africa, these divergent perspectives help explain both the potential and limitations of regional bodies like ECOWAS in maintaining stability.

ECOWAS has played a pivotal role in attempting to stabilise the region, especially through conflict prevention, crisis management, and the promotion of democratic norms (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2019). Recent scholarship underscores its active involvement in mediating coups, electoral disputes, and insurgencies. For instance,

Kuehne et al. (2021) argue that ECOWAS's intervention in Guinea-Bissau (2018) and its sanctions policy post-coups in Mali and Burkina Faso demonstrate a proactive approach to safeguarding regional stability. Nonetheless, critics contend that ECOWAS's effectiveness is often constrained by sovereignty concerns, inconsistent application of sanctions, and internal divisions among member states (Keenan & Naylor, 2020).

Despite efforts at regional integration, West Africa faces persistent challenges that undermine stability. These include weak institutional capacity, economic disparities, and security threats like jihadist insurgencies and cross-border conflicts (Adebajo & Ramesh, 2019). The economic integration process, exemplified by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), aims to bolster economic resilience, which is crucial for political stability. However, scholars warn that without addressing governance deficits and security concerns, economic initiatives alone may have limited impact on stability (Acharya, 2019).

Recent studies emphasise that regional integration efforts are intertwined with governance and security. For example, Nnadozie (2020) highlights that regional norms promoting democracy and human rights are often undermined by authoritarian tendencies or military coups—common in countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The recurrent coups challenge ECOWAS's normative authority and question whether regional institutions can effectively promote democratic consolidation. Conversely, some scholars argue that regional organisations can act as catalysts for reform if they adopt context-specific strategies that balance sovereignty with regional interests (Küehne et al., 2021).

Empirical analyses reveal mixed outcomes. While ECOWAS's diplomatic and economic interventions have prevented full-scale regional conflicts in certain instances, persistent insecurity and political crises suggest that regional integration alone is insufficient for stability. Instead, scholars advocate for a holistic approach that combines regional cooperation with domestic governance reforms and security sector strengthening (Keenan & Naylor, 2022). Additionally, fostering regional economic resilience through integration initiatives could reduce incentives for conflict by addressing underlying socio-economic grievances.

In sum, recent scholarship affirms that regional integration in West Africa holds significant potential to enhance political stability but faces substantive obstacles. The effectiveness of regional organisations, like ECOWAS, depends on their ability to adapt strategies that respect sovereignty while promoting democratic norms, security, and economic development. Moving forward, an integrated approach that addresses governance deficits, security threats, and economic vulnerabilities is vital for realising the stabilising benefits of regional integration in West Africa.

2.2 Leadership transitions in fragile states

Leadership transitions in fragile states remain a critical area of study, especially given their profound implications for political stability, governance, and peacebuilding. Recent scholarship emphasizes that leadership changes in such contexts are often characterized by volatility, contested legitimacy, and institutional fragility, which collectively influence the prospects for sustainable development and security. This review synthesizes current academic debates and empirical findings from 2017 onward, highlighting key themes related to the nature, challenges, and outcomes of leadership transitions in fragile states.

Fragile states are typically defined by weak state capacity, lack of legitimacy, limited rule of law, and pervasive violence (OECD, 2018). Leaders in these contexts often face immense challenges in consolidating authority, managing ethnic or factional tensions, and establishing credible institutions. Recent studies underscore that leadership transitions—whether through elections, appointments, or crises—are often abrupt, contested, and accompanied by violence or institutional upheaval (Boege et al., 2019). For instance, in countries like Burkina Faso and Mali, leadership changes have frequently been driven by military interventions or mass protests, reflecting deep-rooted governance deficits (Keenan & Naylor, 2020).

Scholars identify multiple drivers behind leadership transitions in fragile states, including external pressures, domestic grievances, economic crises, and security failures (Krause & Williams, 2018). Recent research emphasizes that transitions during crises often lack institutionalized processes, leading to power vacuums or cycles of instability (Kuehne et al., 2021). For example, the military coups in West Africa (e.g., Mali 2020, Burkina Faso 2014 and 2022) exemplify how military actors leverage instability to assume control, often citing insecurity and governance failures as justifications (Keenan & Naylor, 2022).

The literature highlights that leadership transitions in fragile states frequently undermine or reset ongoing state-building efforts. Boege et al. (2019) argue that abrupt changes can erode institutional memory, weaken rule of law, and hamper service delivery, thereby perpetuating fragility. Conversely, some scholars suggest that transitions offer windows of opportunity for reform if managed inclusively and with strong external support (Snyder & Vinck, 2020). For instance, the 2014 transition in Burkina Faso, which ousted Blaise Compaoré, initially opened space for democratic reforms; however, subsequent leadership crises have challenged stability (Miller et al., 2019).

Legitimacy remains a central concern during leadership changes. Transitions perceived as illegitimate or imposed often trigger protests, violence, or coups, exacerbating fragility. Recent studies highlight that contested elections or leadership claims rooted in ethnicity or factionalism can ignite conflict (Kuehne et al., 2021). The role of external actors—such as regional

organizations and international donors—is crucial in mediating legitimacy crises and supporting peaceful transitions (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2019).

Security challenges, including insurgencies and organized violence, profoundly influence leadership transitions. Leaders often come to power by exploiting or exacerbating existing conflicts, or they struggle to maintain control amid insurgent threats (Krause & Williams, 2018). Post-transition security arrangements are critical; failure to establish credible security institutions can lead to renewed violence or the resurgence of insurgencies. Recent cases, such as Mali's repeated coups, illustrate how security failures undermine leadership legitimacy and prolong fragility (Keenan & Naylor, 2020).

External actors play a significant role in shaping transitions in fragile states. Multilateral organizations, donor agencies, and neighboring states influence the pace and nature of leadership changes through diplomatic pressure, aid conditionalities, or peacekeeping missions. While external support can bolster stability, scholars warn that excessive reliance on external actors may undermine local ownership and legitimacy (Snyder & Vinck, 2020). For instance, international mediation efforts in Burkina Faso and Mali have had mixed outcomes, often limited by local political dynamics.

Recent scholarship underscores that leadership transitions in fragile states are complex, context-dependent processes shaped by internal and external factors. They often entail significant risks of instability, conflict, and setbacks to development goals but can also serve as opportunities for reform if managed inclusively and strategically. A nuanced understanding of local political dynamics, legitimacy concerns, security challenges, and external influences is essential for fostering peaceful and sustainable leadership transitions in fragile environments.

2.3 The role of regional organizations like ECOWAS in conflict prevention and resolution

Regional organisations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have become pivotal actors in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding in West Africa. Their geographical proximity to conflict zones, profound understanding of regional political, social, and economic dynamics, and legitimacy among member states position them uniquely to mediate disputes, foster dialogue among conflicting parties, and implement peacebuilding initiatives (Adebajo & Ramesh, 2019). ECOWAS's interventionist approach is exemplified by its proactive stance during coups, insurgencies, electoral crises, and communal conflicts, often deploying a combination of diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, and peacekeeping missions to maintain regional stability. For example, its swift response during the 2017 Gambian presidential crisis

demonstrated the organization's capacity to influence leadership transitions peacefully and prevent escalation into a wider conflict, reaffirming its role as a regional peacekeeper (Adebajo, 2018).

Recent scholarship emphasises the evolving strategies employed by ECOWAS, notably its shift towards preventive diplomacy and early warning mechanisms. The organisation has increasingly invested in establishing rapid response teams, standby forces, and diplomatic channels aimed at addressing tensions before they escalate into full-blown crises. For instance, Kuehne et al. (2021) highlight ECOWAS's deployment of standby forces and diplomatic engagement efforts during Liberia's 2018 elections, which contributed significantly to preventing electoral violence and promoting a peaceful transfer of power. Similarly, its early warning systems, designed to monitor political and social indicators, have been instrumental in alerting member states and international partners to emerging threats and enabling timely interventions. These developments demonstrate ECOWAS's commitment to a more proactive, rather than reactive, conflict management philosophy, aligning with broader trends in regional peacekeeping and conflict prevention.

The normative framework underpinning ECOWAS further reinforces its conflict-resolving role. The organization's core principles prioritise the promotion of democracy, human rights, constitutionalism, and respect for sovereignty, which serve as guiding standards for member states and intervention strategies. This normative stance is reflected in initiatives such as the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which sanctions sanctions and diplomatic measures against unconstitutional changes of government. However, the effectiveness of these normative commitments is often limited by practical challenges, including concerns about member state sovereignty, political will, and resource constraints. Adeniyi and Olufemi (2019) say that even though ECOWAS's rules help make it look legitimate, it struggles to enforce them consistently because some member states are unwilling to accept outside interference or sanctions, especially when these actions could threaten their independence or stability.

Moreover, regional organisations like ECOWAS face persistent challenges in balancing the tension between sovereignty and intervention. Their success in conflict management often hinges on their capacity to coordinate effectively with international partners such as the United Nations, the African Union, and bilateral donors. International support provides crucial resources, training, and legitimacy but also introduces complexities related to overlapping mandates and differing strategic priorities. Recent studies underscore the importance of capacity-building efforts, institutional reforms, and increased funding to enhance the conflict management roles of organisations like ECOWAS. Kuehne et al. (2021) emphasise that strengthening institutional capabilities—

such as establishing dedicated conflict prevention units, improving logistical support, and streamlining decision-making processes—is vital for effective intervention. Additionally, resource constraints remain a significant obstacle; many member states lack the financial and logistical capacity to sustain peacekeeping operations or diplomatic initiatives over the long term, necessitating sustained external support.

Further complicating ECOWAS's role are internal issues such as organisational cohesion, political will among member states, and divergent national interests. The organization's ability to act decisively often depends on the consensus of its member states, which can be difficult to achieve amid differing priorities or domestic political pressures. For example, during the 2012 Mali crisis, internal disagreements and delays hampered ECOWAS's capacity to respond swiftly, illustrating how internal division can undermine regional efforts (Adebajo & Ramesh, 2019). Strengthening internal cohesion requires ongoing institutional reforms, clearer mandates, and mechanisms for resolving member disagreements more efficiently. Additionally, external support—both in terms of funding and strategic partnerships—must be aligned with regional priorities to ensure coherence in conflict management efforts.

Despite these challenges, ECOWAS exemplifies the vital yet complex role that regional organisations play in maintaining peace and stability. Its ability to act as a regional peacekeeper is contingent upon internal cohesion, resource availability, external partnerships, and the political will of member states. The organisation's evolving strategies—such as a focus on preventive diplomacy and early intervention—highlight its efforts to adapt to increasingly complex security environments, including insurgencies, terrorism, and political instability. However, its impact remains limited in some cases due to resource constraints, sovereignty concerns, and internal divisions. Overall, ECOWAS's experience underscores both the potential and the limitations of regional organisations in conflict management, illustrating that their success depends heavily on internal institutional strength, external support, and the political commitment of member states.

In all, ECOWAS exemplifies the vital yet complex role regional organisations play in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding within fragile states. While its normative commitments and strategic shifts toward preventive diplomacy have enhanced its capacity to manage crises, persistent challenges related to sovereignty, resource limitations, and internal cohesion continue to constrain its effectiveness. Strengthening institutional capacity, securing sustained external support, and fostering greater internal unity among member states are essential for enhancing ECOWAS's conflict management role. As regional organisations evolve, their success will increasingly depend on their ability to balance respect for sovereignty with proactive interventions, adapt to changing security threats, and

build resilient institutional mechanisms capable of sustaining peace and stability in West Africa.

2.4 Gaps in existing research regarding leadership change impacts

Despite the increasing scholarly attention to leadership transitions in fragile states, significant gaps persist that hinder a holistic understanding of their long-term impacts on state stability, development, and social cohesion. One notable gap relates to the nuanced analysis of how leadership changes influence the broader trajectories of state capacity and development. While numerous studies document immediate political instability, violence, or regime collapse following leadership shifts (Bellamy & Williams, 2015), fewer investigations have systematically examined how these transitions affect institutional consolidation or regression over extended periods. For example, Snyder and Vinck (2020) highlight that, although some transitions temporarily stabilise governance, they often leave underlying institutional weaknesses unaddressed, which may resurface later, undermining long-term development. Empirical evidence from countries like Liberia demonstrates that leadership changes can initially improve governance but subsequently falter due to persistent structural deficits, highlighting the importance of longitudinal research that captures these evolving dynamics (Richburg & Adjei, 2019).

Another critical gap concerns the role of local and marginalised actors in shaping and responding to leadership transitions. Existing research predominantly focusses on elite political actors—such as presidents, military leaders, or international mediators—thus neglecting the perspectives and agency of grassroots communities, women, youth, and marginalised groups (Krause & Williams, 2018). Yet, these actors often bear the brunt of transitional upheavals and possess critical insights into community needs and local power dynamics. For instance, in the aftermath of Burkina Faso's 2014 uprising, grassroots movements played a decisive role in shaping the transition process, but their contributions remain under-analysed in academic literature (Tapsoba, 2017). Incorporating their experiences is essential for designing inclusive peacebuilding strategies that foster social cohesion, address grievances, and prevent renewed violence. A more comprehensive understanding of local agency can enhance the effectiveness of externally supported transition initiatives, making them more rooted in community realities.

Furthermore, there is a notable paucity of empirical research on the effectiveness of international and regional mediatory efforts during leadership transitions, particularly in contexts where external actors exert significant influence. Organisations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, or the United Nations often intervene to facilitate peaceful transitions, but the outcomes of these

efforts remain underexplored. Kuehne et al. (2021) argue that external interventions can either bolster domestic legitimacy or undermine it, depending on how they are perceived by local populations. For example, in Guinea's 2021 military coup, external actors' responses ranged from sanctions to diplomatic engagement, but their impact on stabilising or destabilising the transition process remains contested. Understanding the conditions under which external factors contribute to sustainable leadership change versus exacerbating conflict is vital for refining intervention strategies and avoiding unintended consequences (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2019).

Most existing studies tend to focus on specific case studies or regional contexts, leading to a shortage of comparative analyses that could reveal broader patterns or transferable lessons across fragile states. For instance, research often concentrates narrowly on post-conflict Liberia, Mali, or Sierra Leone, without systematically comparing these cases to identify common factors or divergences. This restriction limits the development of generalised frameworks or policy recommendations applicable across different contexts. Addressing this gap requires longitudinal, multi-level research that integrates political, social, and economic factors across diverse settings. Such comparative analyses could help identify critical variables that influence the success or failure of leadership transitions—such as institutional strength, external support, or social cohesion—and facilitate the formulation of adaptable strategies suited to various fragile contexts (Herring & Elbadawi, 2020).

In addition, there is insufficient attention to the role of informal institutions, social norms, and customary practices in shaping leadership transitions. While formal political processes are often the focus of scholarly inquiry, informal mechanisms—such as traditional authority structures, kinship networks, or religious institutions—play a significant role in mediating power transfers in many fragile states. For example, in northern Nigeria, customary leaders often influence political transitions and conflict dynamics, yet their roles remain underexplored in academic literature (Okonkwo & Udo, 2018). Recognising and integrating these informal institutions in transition frameworks could enhance the legitimacy and sustainability of leadership changes, especially in contexts where formal state institutions are weak or contested.

Moreover, the impact of leadership transitions on social cohesion and inter-group relations warrants further investigation. Transition periods often exacerbate existing ethnic, religious, or regional divisions, potentially leading to renewed cycles of conflict or marginalisation (Camacho & de la O, 2019). For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, leadership changes were accompanied by ethnic tensions and violence, illustrating how transitions can deepen societal fractures if not managed inclusively. Research that systematically examines how different transition processes affect inter-group trust and social cohesion is

essential for designing interventions that promote reconciliation and prevent relapse into violence.

Another underexplored area concerns the gendered dimensions of leadership transitions. Women and other gender minorities often have limited visibility and influence in formal political processes, yet they are disproportionately affected by the upheavals associated with leadership changes. Studies, such as those by Moyo and Daru (2020), emphasise that gender-sensitive analyses are vital for understanding how transitions impact women's rights, participation, and security. Incorporating gender perspectives can help design more inclusive and equitable transition processes that harness the full potential of diverse societal actors, ultimately fostering more resilient and democratic states.

Finally, there is a need for more rigorous methodological approaches, including mixed-methods research and participatory frameworks, to capture the complex realities of leadership transitions. Many existing studies rely heavily on qualitative case studies or quantitative surveys, but integrating both approaches can reveal more about causal mechanisms and contextual nuances. For example, ethnographic research that documents local perceptions during transitions can complement macro-level analyses, ensuring that policy prescriptions are grounded in lived realities. Developing innovative methodological tools will enable scholars and practitioners to better understand the multifaceted impacts of leadership changes and craft more effective, context-sensitive interventions.

What this implies is that, it is important to tackle these research gaps—such as the long-term effects on institutions, the role of local actors, and the need for new methods—to gain a better understanding of leadership changes in fragile states. Filling these gaps will not only enrich academic debates but also inform more effective policies and peacebuilding strategies, ultimately contributing to more stable, inclusive, and resilient states. A multidisciplinary, inclusive, and longitudinal research agenda is crucial for capturing the complex realities of leadership changes and ensuring that interventions are both contextually appropriate and sustainable.

3: METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the complexities of leadership transitions in fragile states and the role of regional organisations, such as ECOWAS. Data collection primarily involves document analysis, including official statements, policy documents, and media reports, to gather contextual and institutional information. Additionally, semi-structured interviews are conducted with regional experts, policymakers, and scholars to gain diverse perspectives and nuanced insights into the processes and impacts of leadership changes. This combination of sources ensures a

comprehensive understanding of the issues from multiple angles.

Data analysis is carried out through thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, key themes, and relationships within the qualitative data. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations—such as informed consent, confidentiality, and avoiding harm—are prioritised to ensure integrity and respect for participants. Nonetheless, the study recognises limitations inherent to qualitative methods, including potential biases in subjective interpretation, limited generalisability, and the challenges of accessing sensitive or classified information in fragile contexts. These factors are acknowledged and addressed where possible to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study's findings highlight the profound implications that leadership changes have on political stability within West African states, illustrating the complex interplay between regime transitions and regional security dynamics. Unconstitutional regime changes—such as coups in Mali and Guinea—serve as critical catalysts for unrest, undermine the legitimacy of existing institutions, and destabilise the democratic fabric of these nations. These abrupt power shifts often precipitate cycles of violence, civil unrest, and prolonged instability, which weaken state authority and diminish citizens' trust in democratic processes. Nyang'soro (2017) emphasises that coups fundamentally disrupt the rule of law and erode public confidence in democratic governance, thereby creating fertile ground for further instability. Such disruptions challenge the resilience of institutions, making it difficult for governments to implement reforms or maintain socio-economic stability, which are vital for long-term peace.

In stark contrast, constitutional transitions—marked by peaceful handovers of power—are generally associated with greater political stability and democratic consolidation. Ghana's peaceful transfer of power exemplifies this, illustrating how adherence to constitutional norms and robust institutional frameworks can foster stability and legitimacy. Ayee and Nkirete (2016) argue that such transitions reinforce democratic norms, strengthen institutional capacity, and serve as models for other states grappling with leadership succession issues. These processes promote continuity, reduce uncertainty, and bolster public confidence in democratic institutions, which are essential for sustainable development and regional stability. The contrast between unconstitutional and constitutional transfers illustrates the vital role of institutional strength and adherence to democratic norms in shaping political trajectories in West Africa.

Regional organisations, notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), play a pivotal role in managing leadership transitions and maintaining regional stability. The evidence indicates a mixed record of effectiveness: while ECOWAS has demonstrated success in mediating coups and restoring order through diplomatic pressure, sanctions, and peacekeeping missions, its interventions are often hampered by limited capacity and inconsistent enforcement. Adebajo (2018) highlights ECOWAS's intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone as pivotal moments that helped stem violence and re-establish peace, illustrating the potential of regional mechanisms to influence regime transitions positively. However, Olasupo (2014) notes that the heterogeneity of member states' interests and the lack of binding enforcement mechanisms sometimes undermine ECOWAS's ability to prevent unconstitutional changes or to respond decisively. Such evidence reveals the necessity for strengthening regional institutions to enhance their credibility and operational capacity.

Leadership changes exert a significant influence on regional security dynamics, often exacerbating existing threats or fostering cooperation depending on the nature of the transition. Instability resulting from leadership crises can create power vacuums that extremist groups like Boko Haram exploit, thereby intensifying regional security challenges. Gaibullov et al. (2019) establish a correlation between regime instability and increased violence, highlighting how political upheavals can destabilise not only the affected state but also neighbouring countries through the spread of violence and transnational terrorist networks. Conversely, peaceful and well-managed leadership transitions can encourage regional cooperation, facilitate intelligence sharing, and promote strategic alliances that bolster collective security. Akinola and Olumuyiwa (2020) suggest that stability at the leadership level is integral to fostering regional resilience, enabling states to coordinate efforts against common threats more effectively.

External actors—such as former colonial powers, neighbouring states, and global powers—play a crucial role in shaping leadership transitions and their regional consequences. Fomunyam (2016) discusses how external diplomatic and economic pressures can influence the legitimacy and stability of regimes, either supporting democratic processes or exacerbating tensions through sanctions or military assistance. When managed prudently, external involvement can bolster legitimacy and facilitate peaceful transitions. However, when driven by strategic interests or short-term objectives, it can undermine sovereignty, exacerbate internal conflicts, and further destabilise the region. The complex nature of external influence emphasises the value of contextual sensitivity and multilateral coordination in managing external interventions, ensuring

they contribute positively to democratic consolidation and stability (Oladipo & Alege, 2019).

The long-term implications of leadership changes for democracy and governance are nuanced and multifaceted. Peaceful, constitutional transfers of power tend to reinforce democratic institutions, promote transparency, and foster good governance, thereby contributing to durable stability. Gyimah-Brempong and Agyemang (2018) highlight Ghana's exemplary democratic transfer as a model that has strengthened institutional legitimacy and encouraged political participation. Conversely, unconstitutional or violent regime changes often set back democratic efforts by eroding public trust, entrenching authoritarian tendencies, and fostering cycles of repression and unrest. Nang'oro (2017) emphasises that such disruptions create a cycle of instability that hampers efforts towards democratic consolidation and institutional development, thereby prolonging periods of governance uncertainty and social fragmentation.

The relationship between regime stability and democratic deepening illustrates the value of resilient institutions in safeguarding democratic gains. Strong judicial systems, independent electoral commissions, and accountable security sectors are critical components that buffer states against abrupt leadership changes. Furthermore, fostering a political culture rooted in respect for constitutional norms and the rule of law is essential for curbing the appeal of unconstitutional power grabs. The evidence suggests that states with resilient institutions are better equipped to manage leadership transitions smoothly, thus promoting stability, legitimacy, and democratic consolidation over the long term.

Moreover, the role of civil society and political accountability mechanisms cannot be overlooked in fostering durable leadership transitions. Civil society organisations often serve as watchdogs, advocating democratic norms and holding leaders accountable during and after transitions. Their engagement helps create a political environment where constitutional processes are respected, and deviations are challenged. Strengthening these domestic institutions complements regional efforts to promote stability, creating a feedback loop that reinforces democratic norms and reduces the likelihood of unconstitutional interventions. The synergy between domestic resilience and regional cooperation thus emerges as a vital element in sustaining democratic development.

Finally, fostering resilient institutions and adhering to democratic norms are crucial strategies for ensuring that leadership changes act as catalysts for stability rather than sources of chaos. Building institutional capacity, promoting inclusive political processes, and strengthening legal frameworks are essential steps toward this goal. The evidence from West Africa demonstrates that when leadership transitions are managed within the bounds of constitutional legality, they reinforce democratic legitimacy and contribute to regional

stability. Conversely, failure to uphold these norms often results in setbacks that hinder progress, deepen social divisions, and invite external interference. Therefore, a comprehensive approach that combines institutional strengthening with regional and international cooperation is vital for sustainable peace and democratic deepening in the region.

In sum, this analysis demonstrates that leadership changes are central to the political, security, and democratic trajectories of West African states. Unconstitutional regime shifts threaten regional stability and security, while constitutional transitions serve as vital anchors for democratic deepening. Regional organisations like ECOWAS have a significant, albeit imperfect, role in mediating these transitions, and their effectiveness can be enhanced through capacity building and stronger enforcement mechanisms. External influences further complicate these dynamics, emphasising the need for prudent management of external interventions. Ultimately, fostering resilient institutions, adhering to democratic norms, and strengthening regional cooperation are key strategies for promoting sustainable stability and democratic development across West Africa. These efforts are essential to ensure that leadership changes serve as catalysts for progress rather than setbacks, securing a more stable and democratic future for the region.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of leadership changes on political stability and regional dynamics in West Africa. The key findings reveal that unconstitutional regime changes, such as coups, significantly destabilise political institutions, undermine democratic progress, and heighten security threats, while peaceful, constitutional transfers of power strengthen democratic resilience. Regional organisations like ECOWAS play a crucial role in mediating leadership transitions, although their effectiveness varies depending on enforcement capacity and regional cooperation. Leadership crises also influence security dynamics, often exacerbating insurgency and violence, which require coordinated regional responses. External actors continue to shape leadership trajectories through diplomatic, economic, and military means, adding complexity to governance and stability efforts. Overall, the research underscores the importance of strong institutions, regional cooperation, and responsible external engagement in fostering sustainable stability in West Africa.

5.1 Contributions to Understanding Regional Dynamics

This study advances understanding of West Africa's complex political landscape by highlighting how leadership transitions serve as pivotal moments that

influence not only domestic governance but also regional peace and security. It emphasises that regional organisations, particularly ECOWAS, are vital actors whose effectiveness can determine the trajectory of political stability across member states. Additionally, the research underscores the interconnectedness of leadership, security, and external influence, illustrating that stability in West Africa depends on a nuanced balance of internal governance and external engagement. By dissecting these dynamics, the study provides a nuanced perspective that policymakers and regional actors can utilise to design more effective intervention strategies and promote democratic consolidation.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should explore the following areas to deepen understanding of West Africa's political landscape:

1. Long-term Impact of Leadership Changes: Investigate how different types of leadership transitions influence long-term democratic development and institutional resilience in specific countries.

2. Role of Civil Society and Media: Examine how civil society organisations and media influence leadership legitimacy, public opinion, and resistance to unconstitutional changes.

3. External Influence and Sovereignty: Analyse the evolving role of external actors, including international donors and foreign governments, in shaping leadership transitions and regional stability, with attention to sovereignty concerns.

4. Security Sector Reform: Assess the effectiveness of security sector reforms in consolidating peace after leadership changes and reducing insurgency and violence.

5. Comparative Regional Analysis: Conduct comparative studies between West African states to identify best practices and common challenges in managing leadership transitions and fostering stability.

By pursuing these avenues, future research can contribute to more effective policies and a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that underpin stability and democratic progress in West Africa.

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