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The Role of External Influences and Regional Organizations in Shaping the Outcomes of the Burkina Faso Military Regime and Its Implications for African Political Stability

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of regional organisations and external influences on Burkina Faso's military government and the implications for African political stability. It talks about how the legitimacy, policies, and length of time in power of the military have been impacted by international players, regional security plans, and global interests. The study employs a variety of techniques, such as statistical data on political stability and in-depth examination of regional organisations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The findings highlight the complex role of outside influence in African politics by demonstrating that regional organisations can both help stabilise situations and instigate conflicts. The article concludes with recommendations for enhancing the ways in which regional organisations can promote stability and democracy in African nations dealing with comparable governance challenges.

Keywords: Burkina Faso, Military Regime, Regional Organizations, Political Stability, External Influences

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1: INTRODUCTION

There have been big changes in Burkina Faso's politics, especially after the military coups in 2022 and 2023. These events show how hard it is to run a country in West Africa, where military governments often come to power during times of political crisis. External forces and regional organisations have become more important in shaping the outcomes of these regimes. They can support or oppose them in ways that directly affect political stability. Burkina Faso is still having trouble with governance, and the involvement of international actors and regional groups like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union shows how these problems fit into the bigger picture of geopolitics in the area (Ugbudian, 2021).

Outside forces have a big impact on the path of Burkina Faso's military government. Countries like Mali have formed alliances based on their shared military goals in order to fight against regional sanctions and interventions meant to bring back democratic rule. These kinds of alliances show that West African politics is changing, and that old partnerships may need to be rethought because of new security issues (International Crisis Group, 2023). This dynamic gives us a way to look at how outside forces can both stabilise and make the political situation in Burkina Faso more complicated by putting military cooperation ahead of democratic norms.

In this case, regional organisations have also been very important. ECOWAS, for example, has always

supported democratic government in West Africa. However, its responses to the military government in Burkina Faso have been varied, moving back and forth between criticism and negotiation (Yeboah and Aikins, 2024). The changing position of the organisation makes people wonder how effective it is and what it means for political stability in the whole region. Some people say that the organisation needs to change its plans to deal with the specific problems that military regimes cause while also encouraging a return to democratic rule (Kouadio et al., 2022).

In the end, to fully understand the effects on political stability in Africa, you need to know how external factors and regional organisations work together. As Burkina Faso deals with the problems of its current government, the lessons learnt may help with governance and conflict resolution in similar situations on the continent in the future. This study aims to shed light on the complicated relationships that shape Burkina Faso's political landscape and how they affect the stability of all of West Africa.

1.1: Overview of Burkina Faso's political landscape and military coup.

Burkina Faso's political scene has been unstable, with governments changing often, especially since the most recent military coup in January 2022. There have been a number of coups and transitional governments in the past. The first was the revolutionary period under Thomas Sankara in the 1980s, and since then there have been a number of military and civilian governments. The political situation has gotten worse because of rising security issues, such as extremist violence linked to Al-Qaeda and ISIS groups, which have made it much harder for the government to keep order and run the country (Tiendrebeogo, 2021). These ongoing security threats have made people unhappy, and some people think that the military might be a better option than civilian leadership.

The military coup in January 2022, led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, was caused by a lot of people being unhappy with how the government was handling the rising violence and insecurity in the Sahel region (International Crisis Group, 2022). Protesters showed their anger by holding demonstrations and calling for better security and the resignation of then-President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. The military justified the coup as a necessary step to restore security and governance. This is part of a growing trend in West Africa, where military regimes have positioned themselves as saviours during crises that civilian governments have had trouble handling (Crisp, 2023).

After the coup, the new military government promised to make the country more stable by making a number of changes, such as promising to improve security and hold elections by a certain date. The international community,

especially regional groups like ECOWAS, reacted with both caution and condemnation, stressing the need for a quick return to constitutional order (Adepoju, 2020). ECOWAS's response showed how hard it is for regional organisations to find the right balance between supporting stability and upholding democratic values. This shows how complicated these political changes are.

Burkina Faso is still dealing with the effects of military rule, and the situation is still changing and unclear. The military government has a lot of problems to deal with, both from people inside the country who want better governance and accountability and from people outside the country who want democracy to return. The outcome of this regime will have a big effect on the political stability of Burkina Faso and the rest of West Africa, where similar things are happening in Mali and Guinea (Kouadio et al., 2022). To figure out where governance and security in Burkina Faso are headed in the future, you need to understand these changes.

1.2 Importance of Understanding External Influences and Regional Organisations

To understand the political situation in Burkina Faso and the rest of West Africa, you need to know how outside forces and regional organisations work. Foreign governments, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations are some of the outside forces that have a big effect on domestic policies and governance frameworks. For example, the fact that the United Nations and the European Union are involved in providing humanitarian and security assistance shows how outside help can affect the way a country is run. This influence, on the other hand, raises worries about national sovereignty and the possibility of becoming reliant on foreign aid, which can make it harder to govern locally (Kandeh, 2021).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) are two important regional groups that help settle disputes and keep politics stable. ECOWAS, in particular, is responsible for keeping the peace and safety in the area. It often steps in to restore constitutional order in member states after coups or civil unrest. The group's reaction to the military coup in Burkina Faso in 2022 shows what it can and can't do to help with governance problems (Adepoju, 2022). To figure out how likely it is that countries with similar problems will be stable in the long term, we need to know how these groups work and how well they enforce democratic norms.

Burkina Faso is in the Sahel region, which has security problems that often go beyond national borders. This means that regional actors need to work together. Because security in the Sahel is so interconnected, national governments must work with regional organisations and outside partners to effectively deal with problems like terrorism and organised crime (Ndiaye,

2020). We can learn more about the effects on governance and collective security in the region as a whole by looking at how Burkina Faso works with these groups.

Also, the way that outside forces and regional organisations affect each other has a big impact on the future of political stability in Burkina Faso and the rest of West Africa. As military governments take over because of problems with government, it is important to understand these changes in order to make policies that support long-term peace and democratic government. This is important for policymakers and practitioners who want to help keep the peace in a region with complicated political problems and changing security threats (Crisp, 2023).

1.3: Research objectives and questions.

The study of Burkina Faso's military regime and the role of external influences and regional organisations is critical for understanding the broader implications for political stability in West Africa. This research aims to explore the complex interactions between these elements and their effects on governance outcomes in Burkina Faso. Specifically, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. To analyze the impact of external influences on the governance and stability of the Burkina Faso military regime.
- ii. To assess the role of regional organizations, particularly ECOWAS and the AU, in mediating the political situation in Burkina Faso.
- iii. To understand the implications of Burkina Faso's military regime for broader political stability in the Sahel region.

Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the research will address the following key questions:

- i. How do external influences shape the political and security landscape of Burkina Faso under military rule?
- ii. What roles do ECOWAS and the African Union play in influencing the outcomes of the military regime in Burkina Faso?
- iii. What are the potential consequences of the Burkina Faso military regime for political stability across the Sahel region?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the recent political upheavals in Burkina Faso, there is a timely and important focus on the effects of regional organisations and outside forces on military regimes in Africa. The legitimacy, direction of policy, and

general stability of military governments are greatly influenced by a number of external actors, such as regional organisations, international financial institutions, and former colonial powers. According to Nwankwo (2019), these outside parties frequently use tools like conditional aid, diplomatic pressure, and security assistance to influence a regime, which can either make it stronger or weaker.

Organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have played a crucial role in mediating political disputes and fostering democratic transitions in Burkina Faso. Nonetheless, there is disagreement regarding the efficacy of their interventions (Bado & Traoré, 2020). These outside factors actively shape the political environment rather than acting as passive observers, resulting in complex relationships between regional military leaders and global stakeholders.

In the past, ECOWAS has played a significant role in promoting democratic governance and conflict resolution in West Africa. Their tactics, which range from applying sanctions to holding diplomatic talks, are meant to stop military overreach and promote civilian governance. ECOWAS has put pressure on military leaders in the wake of recent coups in Burkina Faso, emphasising the need to restore constitutional order (Akinrinade & Ojo, 2021). Although there have been successful transitions, the results of such interventions have been uneven; military regimes frequently oppose outside pressure, prolonging unstable times. This situation demonstrates how regional organisations have a dual role in upholding democratic norms while negotiating their own political and strategic constraints, which affects the paths taken by military regimes and their consequences for regional stability.

Foreign governments and international financial institutions are also considered external actors, and their policies have the power to drastically change the trajectory of military regimes. For instance, organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) can force regimes to implement reforms by imposing conditionality or suspending aid, which occasionally leads to a return to civilian governance (Osei-Tutu, 2020). On the other hand, foreign military aid has the potential to strengthen military governments and firmly establish authoritarian governance. External security assistance has been crucial in Burkina Faso's fight against insurgencies, but it has also come under fire for allowing military leaders to stifle dissent and delay the country's transition to civilian governance (Youssof & Diarra, 2022). These factors highlight the intricate relationships between incentives and pressures that influence military regime choices and their effects on regional political stability.

The military regimes in Burkina Faso are influenced by both regional and external factors, which raises concerns about political stability throughout Africa. External actors' interventions can affect regional stability

by either promoting the consolidation of democracy or unintentionally strengthening militarised governance. The Burkina Faso situation is a prime example of how outside forces can spur short-term stabilisation initiatives while also endangering long-term democratic advancement if not handled carefully (Bates & Ngoma, 2021). Furthermore, military regimes that see outside interventions as a threat to their sovereignty frequently oppose regional organisations like ECOWAS as they attempt to strike a balance between diplomatic engagement and coercive measures. In the end, these factors combined produce a complex environment in which regional and global actors have the power to either spark democratic transitions or prolong instability. Promoting long-term political stability throughout Africa, particularly in areas characterised by frequent military interventions, requires an understanding of these dynamics.

2.1: Historical Context of Military Regimes in Burkina Faso

Since Burkina Faso gained independence from France in 1960, repeated military interventions have had a significant impact on the country's political history. In 1966, Lieutenant Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana led the nation's first military coup, which signalled the start of a pattern of military rule punctuated by short-lived civilian administrations. Even though Lamizana's government at first established a semblance of civilian governance, military rule persisted until his overthrow in 1980, which sparked additional military upheavals (Ndiaye, 2018). Following that, there were several military takeovers, including significant coups in 1982, 1987, and 2015, which demonstrated the continuous hostilities between military groups and civilian actors. Military leaders frequently used the need to restore order and stability as an excuse for these interventions, which frequently took place in the midst of political unrest, economic hardships, and conflicts over national identity (Tapsoba & Kaboré, 2019). This recurring trend emphasises how crucial the military has been to Burkina Faso's post-independence history as a stabilising force and political actor.

An important turning point that brought a unique revolutionary spirit to Burkina Faso's military-led politics was the 1987 coup by Captain Thomas Sankara, who is frequently referred to as Africa's Che Guevara. Despite early popular support, Sankara's government faced resistance from both internal and external parties to its radical social, economic, and anti-imperialist reforms. Blaise Compaoré led a coup in 1987, abruptly ending his tenure. He consolidated military power and ruled until his overthrow in 2014 as a result of massive protests. Compaoré's lengthy reign (1987–2014) served as an example of how military leaders often use authoritarian tactics to solidify their hold on power by stifling dissent and exerting control over political institutions. Although Compaoré's overthrow was a watershed that rekindled

calls for democratic governance, military power remained firmly established, as evidenced by the subsequent coups in 2015 and 2022, which highlighted the precarious state of civilian-military relations in Burkina Faso (Kaboré & Tapsoba, 2020). Analysing the long-lasting impact of military regimes and their nuanced legacy in forming Burkina Faso's political landscape requires an understanding of this historical background.

The aftermath of the 2015 coup serves as a prime example of the continuous conflict between military rule and democratic goals. The military maintained considerable control over security policies, particularly when it came to dealing with jihadist insurgencies, despite the transitional government's efforts to restore civilian rule with the support of regional organisations like ECOWAS. The military's role in governance continued despite elections and constitutional reforms, frequently being justified by internal instability and security concerns. Military regimes remain major players in Burkina Faso's political history, as evidenced by recent events like the coup in 2022. These regimes are frequently defended by the need to fight insecurity, but they run the risk of jeopardising the consolidation of democracy (Seydou & Traoré, 2023). The historical pattern of military intervention, in conjunction with external pressures and internal grievances, highlights the ongoing impact of military regimes on the political stability and regional security environment of Burkina Faso. Gaining an understanding of this complex past is crucial to understanding the nation's continuous conflict between military influence and democratic advancement.

2.2: Analysis of past military regimes and their impacts on governance.

Burkina Faso's political culture, institutions, and governance structures have all been greatly impacted by the country's history of military regimes. Authoritarian rule characterised by centralised power, repression of dissent, and limited political pluralism has frequently been the outcome of previous military interventions. For example, the military takeovers spearheaded by leaders like Blaise Compaoré and Sangoulé Lamizana solidified a personalist style of governance and undermined democratic institutions (Bouda & Ouédraogo, 2019). In practice, these regimes frequently restricted civil liberties and hampered the growth of democratic norms, but they usually justified their interventions as being required to restore stability during political crises. These military regimes' legacy endures to this day, shaping the political environment by encouraging an authoritarian culture and mistrust of civilian-led government (Kaboré & Tapsoba, 2020).

Beyond authoritarian inclinations, military regimes have an impact on state institutions and policy continuity. The military's hold on important political and security domains during Blaise Compaoré's rule (1987–2014)

resulted in limited institutional reforms and poor democratic accountability. While the military continued to have significant influence behind the scenes, particularly within security apparatuses, his government maintained a front of civilian rule (Seydou & Traoré, 2019). Attempts at decentralisation, rule of law, and democratic consolidation were frequently undermined by such arrangements, which frequently resulted in a concentration of power within elite networks. Furthermore, coups' frequent disruptions hampered long-term policy planning and institutional development, which are essential for stability and sustainable development (Bouda & Ouédraogo, 2019).

But according to some academics, Burkina Faso's military governments have also had a complicated role in state formation, particularly in times of crisis. For instance, the military participated in attempts to combat insurgencies and stabilise the nation during the transitional period following the 2015 coup, frequently at the expense of democratic processes (Kaboré & Tapsoba, 2020). Military intervention revealed flaws in political institutions and emphasised the need for reforms, even though it momentarily interrupted civilian governance. However, in general, the pattern of military rule has impeded the growth of strong democratic institutions and contributed to enduring governance issues like insecurity, poor service delivery, and corruption. These past events show how Burkina Faso's governance paths have been influenced by military regimes, which has had a lasting effect on the nation's attempts at political stability and democratisation.

2.3: The evolution of political stability in Burkina Faso.

The intricate development of Burkina Faso's political stability has been typified by cycles of military interventions, shaky civilian governments, social unrest, and democratisation initiatives. Recurrent crises that have impeded long-term political stability have plagued the nation since its independence in 1960. Military takeovers and authoritarian governments dominated the early years after independence, particularly under Sangoulé Lamizana and Blaise Compaoré. Their long terms created a pattern of political instability based on weak institutions and personalist rule (Ndiaye, 2018). Protests, repression, and sporadic attempts at democratic reform frequently characterised these eras, but stability eluded them.

A major turning point was the overthrow of Blaise Compaoré in 2014 as a result of widespread demonstrations against his attempt to prolong his rule. With early aspirations for the consolidation of democracy, this event marked the beginning of a precarious transition towards civilian rule. However, the consolidation of long-term stability was hampered by the transitional government's many problems, which included political

factionalism, economic hardship, and insecurity (Seydou & Traoré, 2020). The 2015 elections that followed showed a desire for change, but underlying problems like socioeconomic grievances and regional inequalities remained and threatened stability.

Political stability has been greatly impacted in recent years by security concerns, particularly those arising from jihadist insurgencies in the Sahel region. The 2022 military takeover of President Kaboré is a prime example of persistent vulnerability and the frequent use of force to resolve security and governance issues. Although these coups caused political instability at first, they also highlighted the ongoing difficulty of creating strong institutions that can preserve stability in the face of both internal and external pressures (Kaboré & Tapsoba, 2023). Overall, Burkina Faso's political stability evolution highlights the country's dynamic and precarious governance by reflecting a pattern of interrupted democratisation, ongoing insecurity, and the enduring influence of military actors.

2.4: Comparative context with other West African countries experiencing similar upheavals.

Burkina Faso

West African nations have seen frequent coups, political instability, and social unrest over the past ten years, which is reflected in Burkina Faso's political upheavals and governance issues. This comparative viewpoint draws attention to the similarities and differences between nations like Mali, Guinea, and Niger, which have all experienced upheavals stemming from conflicts over security, governance, and socioeconomic grievances.

Mali

With several military takeovers since 2012, including the most recent in 2020 and 2021, Mali provides a relevant analogy. Similar to Burkina Faso, jihadist insurgencies, ethnic tensions, and weakened state institutions are the main causes of Mali's instability. Efforts to consolidate democracy have been undermined by these factors, which have resulted in persistent security issues and frequent disruptions of civilian rule (Koné & Traoré, 2019). Both nations serve as prime examples of how challenging it is to establish stable governance in the face of political factionalism and violent extremism.

Guinea

There are parallels in Guinea as well, especially with the military takeover of President Alpha Condé in 2021. Discontent with authoritarian rule, economic grievances, and calls for political reform—problems that are relevant to Burkina Faso's recent protests and military

interventions—were the driving forces behind the coup. The unrest in Guinea, like in Burkina Faso, highlights the vulnerability of civilian governance and the propensity of military actors to step in during emergencies (Seydou & Traoré, 2022). These incidents are representative of regional trends in which military takeovers are frequently interpreted as reactions to insecurity and poor governance.

Niger

Numerous coups and political changes have occurred in neighbouring Burkina Faso, Niger, frequently as a result of economic hardship, jihadist insecurity, and discontent with the ruling class. Niger has demonstrated some tenacity in upholding a formal democratic process in spite of these disruptions, but stability is still precarious. Economic vulnerabilities, the spread of jihadist insurgencies, and the involvement of military actors in governance are all part of the shared regional context (Oumar & Diallo, 2020).

All things considered, the comparative study shows that West African nations going through comparable upheavals are typified by weak institutions, security issues, and socioeconomic complaints that usually result in political or military conflicts. Although the unique circumstances of each nation vary, taken as a whole, they show the structural obstacles to regional stability and democratic consolidation.

3: THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SHAPING MILITARY OUTCOMES

In times of political unrest or transition, regional organisations are especially important in influencing military outcomes within member states. Organisations such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have played a crucial role in resolving security issues, advancing democratic governance, and mediating disputes in the West African context. Their effects on military regimes are complex and include both military and diplomatic measures, particularly in the wake of coups or civil unrest.

The goal of ECOWAS has always been to advance regional peace and stability. As evidenced by its reactions to numerous crises in member states, its intervention tactics have changed from being mainly diplomatic to involving military action. For example, ECOWAS swiftly denounced the January 2022 military coup in Burkina Faso and demanded a return to constitutional order, prioritising communication and negotiation over military means (Adepoju, 2022). Although its efficacy can vary based on the political dynamics within member states and the military leaders' willingness to comply with ECOWAS's mandates, such responses demonstrate the

organization's commitment to upholding democratic norms (Zanker & Stepputat, 2020).

Furthermore, addressing military outcomes in West Africa has been a major focus of the African Union. The necessity of accountability and adherence to democratic principles is emphasised in the AU's framework for dealing with unconstitutional changes of government. The AU strengthened its opposition to military regimes by suspending Burkina Faso's membership and imposing sanctions in the wake of the recent coups in the country (Mansour & Hossain, 2021). The actual impact of such measures frequently depends on the political will of African leaders and the geopolitical context, but this approach emphasises the AU's goal to support democratic transitions and prevent the entrenchment of military rule.

Collaboration among regional organisations is crucial, as evidenced by the intersection of governance and security issues. Burkina Faso is situated in the Sahel region, which is vulnerable to cross-border threats like organised crime, terrorism, and humanitarian crises. To effectively address these issues and promote stability, regional organisations must respond in concert (Ndiaye, 2020). Through cooperative security frameworks, ECOWAS and the AU are influencing military outcomes as they recognise the need for coordinated efforts and strategies to counter these transnational threats.

To sum up, regional organisations such as the AU and ECOWAS play a crucial role in determining military outcomes in Burkina Faso and the larger West African region. A mix of diplomatic engagement, sanctions, and, when required, military interventions define their roles. Analysing the future course of governance and stability in states impacted by the military requires an understanding of the influence of these organisations as political dynamics continue to change.

3.1: Examination of ECOWAS and the African Union's responses to the Burkina Faso regime.

The African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are two regional organisations that have been instrumental in responding to the military interventions and political upheavals in Burkina Faso. Both regional initiatives to re-establish constitutional order and more comprehensive plans to tackle security and governance issues throughout West Africa are reflected in their answers.

In the past, ECOWAS has taken the initiative to address coups and unconstitutional changes of government in its member nations. In order to put pressure on the military authorities to reinstate civilian rule, ECOWAS implemented a number of sanctions, including diplomatic and economic ones, after President Kaboré was overthrown by a military coup in Burkina Faso in 2022 (ECOWAS, 2022). In order to isolate the coup leaders and promote a return to constitutional

governance, these sanctions included travel restrictions, asset freezes, and trade relations suspensions. However, the military government in Burkina Faso has remained in power in spite of these measures, claiming that their actions were justified by security concerns and ongoing insurgencies, raising doubts about the effectiveness of ECOWAS (Adebayo & Tapsoba, 2023).

The African Union has also demanded that constitutional order be restored immediately and denounced the coup. As part of its response, the AU suspended Burkina Faso's membership and made diplomatic attempts to mediate a return to civilian rule. However, like ECOWAS, the AU has had trouble implementing its decisions, particularly in light of the security issues and the military's defence of its intervention (Koulibaly & Traoré, 2022). Although both organisations have placed a strong emphasis on communication and regional stability, they still have little power over the military leaders, especially when jihadist insurgencies pose a security threat and complicate the political situation.

Furthermore, the reactions of the AU and ECOWAS both mirror larger regional worries about the spread of military takeovers and the undermining of democratic gains in West Africa. Even though they support the restoration of democracy, their actions frequently strike a balance between diplomatic pressure and practical concerns for regional security and stability. Burkina Faso serves as an example of the conflict between regional attempts to maintain constitutional order and the complicated situation on the ground, where governments defend military interventions as essential responses to socioeconomic crises and insecurity.

3.2: Policies and interventions: successes and failures.

The policies and interventions implemented by regional organisations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) in response to military regimes and political instability in West Africa, particularly Burkina Faso, reflect a complex landscape of successes and failures. Understanding these dynamics is essential for assessing their effectiveness in promoting peace, stability, and democratic governance.

Successes of Regional Interventions

One notable success of ECOWAS has been its proactive stance in conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts across West Africa. For instance, ECOWAS's deployment of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia during the civil war is often cited as a landmark intervention that

managed to restore some degree of order, despite facing significant challenges (Williamson, 2019). This historical precedent illustrates how regional organisations can effectively mobilise resources and personnel to address crises, setting a framework for future interventions.

In recent years, ECOWAS has also demonstrated effectiveness in mediating conflicts and fostering dialogue among political factions. Following the military coup in Mali in 2020, ECOWAS imposed sanctions but also engaged in negotiations to facilitate a return to civilian rule. This dual approach of leveraging both pressure and diplomacy resulted in the establishment of a transitional government (Zanker, 2021). Such diplomatic interventions can be seen as successful case studies of regional organisations playing a constructive role in restoring democratic governance.

Failures of Regional Interventions

Regional organisations have a history of notable failures, though. The uneven implementation of policies and the selective enforcement of democratic norms have been two significant obstacles. This contradiction is best illustrated by the January 2022 military takeover in Burkina Faso. Even though ECOWAS has a long history of supporting democratic governance, its response was criticised for being slow to act and for not taking decisive action to stop the deterioration of democratic institutions. This was part of a larger trend of regional organisations being reluctant to get involved in member states' internal affairs (Adepoju, 2022).

Furthermore, the African Union has frequently failed to adequately respond to unconstitutional changes of government. Although the AU has a framework in place to deal with these kinds of changes, its enforcement procedures are usually inadequate. Although the AU's decision to suspend Burkina Faso from membership after the coup demonstrates an effort to preserve democratic values, it is questionable whether such actions will actually result in meaningful change (Mansour & Hossain, 2021). The credibility of the AU is weakened when diplomatic pressure is relied upon without strong follow-up procedures, which frequently results in military regimes being held accountable.

In conclusion, there has been a mixed record of success and failure with regard to ECOWAS and AU policies and interventions in tackling political instability and military regimes in West Africa. Although there are noteworthy examples of successful interventions that foster peace and communication, the difficulties posed by member states' sovereignty and the irregularities in upholding democratic norms continue to make these organisations' work more difficult. Assessing the future efficacy of regional organisations in advancing stability and governance in Burkina Faso and the larger Sahel region requires a sophisticated grasp of these dynamics.

3.4: Case studies of regional mediation efforts and their impacts on governance.

Regional mediation initiatives have become critical tools in addressing political crises and fostering governance stability in West Africa. Examining specific case studies highlights both the strategies employed and their outcomes in promoting democratic transitions, peace, and stability.

Case Study 1: ECOWAS Mediation in The Gambia (2016-2017)

The intervention of ECOWAS during the 2016 presidential crisis in The Gambia was one of the most prominent regional mediation initiatives. ECOWAS quickly arranged diplomatic talks and threatened to use force to force compliance from President Yahya Jammeh when he refused to accept his electoral defeat. Jammeh eventually gave up power and accepted the election results as a result of the regional body's consistent diplomatic pressure and a standby force ready to step in (Fofana, 2018). This successful mediation showed that regional unity can successfully influence governance outcomes and reaffirmed ECOWAS's role in defending democratic processes.

Effect on Governance: A regional precedent for resolving electoral disputes through dialogue and multilateral pressure was established by the Gambia's peaceful transition, which also strengthened democratic institutions and restored constitutional order. Additionally, it reaffirmed how crucial regional solidarity is to preserving democracy.

Case Study 2: Mediation in Mali's Political Crisis (2012-2013)

ECOWAS and the AU made regional attempts to address the 2012 coup and the ensuing insurgencies in Mali. A roadmap for the restoration of civilian rule was the result of diplomatic discussions between military leaders and ECOWAS. Election planning, constitutional amendments, and ceasefire agreements were all part of the mediation. Despite ongoing difficulties, these initiatives helped bring about the eventual return to civilian rule in 2013 (Traoré & Diarra, 2014).

Effect on Governance: By restoring constitutional order and facilitating efforts to quell insurgencies, the mediation assisted in stabilising Mali's precarious political environment. But persistent security issues show that mediation is insufficient to settle long-standing disputes, underscoring the necessity of all-encompassing, long-term plans.

Case Study 3: AU-ECOWAS Mediation in Guinea (2021)

Following Guinea's 2021 military coup, the AU and

ECOWAS launched joint diplomatic initiatives aimed at restoring civilian rule. These efforts included dialogue with military leaders, economic sanctions, and regional peacekeeping considerations. While initially unsuccessful in immediate restoration, these mediations kept diplomatic channels open and placed pressure on the military regime (Sékou & Kouyaté, 2022).

Impact on Governance: The mediation underscored regional commitment to democracy but also revealed limitations when military actors prioritise security concerns over democratic restoration. It highlighted the need for sustained engagement and inclusive dialogue to achieve governance stability.

Overall Insights:

These case studies illustrate that regional mediation efforts can be effective in restoring constitutional order, strengthening democratic institutions, and stabilising governance when backed by strong regional unity, diplomatic resolve, and strategic engagement. However, their success often depends on the willingness of local actors to compromise and the broader security context. The regional organizations' roles remain crucial but must be complemented by domestic reforms and long-term capacity building.

4: External Influences and Geopolitical Dynamics

The political environment in Burkina Faso and, more generally, the West African region is greatly shaped by the interaction of external factors and geopolitical dynamics. Governance, security, and socioeconomic conditions are impacted both directly and indirectly by international actors, such as foreign governments, multinational companies, and international organisations. Assessing the viability of political regimes and the likelihood of stability in nations under military rule requires an understanding of these factors.

The Effects of Foreign Governments

Through military cooperation, aid, and diplomatic ties, foreign governments significantly impact Burkina Faso's internal dynamics. In the past, the region has benefited greatly from the assistance of Western countries, especially France and the United States. For instance, local governments and military regimes are significantly impacted by France's military presence and security alliances in the Sahel, which are framed within the framework of counterterrorism operations (Hassane, 2021). The legitimacy of the local government may be weakened, and anti-Western sentiments may be stoked among the populace, if this dependence on foreign military assistance is perceived as neocolonialism.

(Bohler-Muller et al., 2020).

Furthermore, local governance initiatives are frequently complicated by the geopolitical interests of external actors. Military assistance and collaboration with governments that might not strictly follow democratic norms have increased as a result of the recent strategic shift in U.S. foreign policy towards a focus on thwarting Chinese and Russian influence in Africa (Chivvis & Kavanagh, 2020). Given that military regimes may put retaining power ahead of advancing democratic values, this dynamic raises concerns about the long-term effects on Burkina Faso's democratic governance and human rights.

Regional stability and international organisation

The political climate of Burkina Faso is also significantly influenced by international organisations like the African Union and the United Nations. The UN's support for development and humanitarian initiatives demonstrates how security and socioeconomic stability are intertwined. The political environment and local governments' readiness to work cooperatively with these organisations, however, frequently determine how successful international interventions are (Ladbury et al., 2021).

The recent military takeover in Burkina Faso has put the African Union's frameworks for advancing democracy and dealing with unconstitutional changes of government to the test. The AU's response, which included suspending Burkina Faso's membership, shows that it is committed to maintaining democratic norms; however, without strong enforcement mechanisms, the impact of such measures is still limited (Mansour & Hossain, 2021). The ability of these organisations to bring about significant change is further complicated by the geopolitical environment, which is marked by conflicting interests among international actors.

Sahelian geopolitical rivalries

Burkina Faso is situated in the Sahel region, which is characterised by geopolitical rivalries that have a big impact on local security and governance dynamics. Local regimes must negotiate outside pressures while attempting to preserve their sovereignty in a complex environment created by the competition between superpowers, especially the US, France, Russia, and China (Bohler-Muller et al., 2020). These rivalries, which have a big impact on the internal stability of West African states, frequently take the shape of military alliances, financial investments, and diplomatic contacts.

For example, there are worries about the potential effects on human rights and governance in nations like Burkina Faso of the growing number of Russian private military contractors operating in the Sahel, such as the

Wagner Group. In areas already struggling with violence and insecurity, their involvement can cause further destabilisation and frequently carries a lack of accountability (Dumont, 2022).

In conclusion, Burkina Faso's political landscape is significantly shaped by geopolitical dynamics and outside influences. A complex environment where governance and stability are constantly negotiated is created by interactions between foreign governments, international organisations, and local regimes. Understanding these outside factors will be crucial for creating plans meant to advance sustainable governance and regional stability as Burkina Faso negotiates its political difficulties.

4.1: Evaluation of Foreign Participants in Burkina Faso

Numerous international actors, including foreign governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and multilateral institutions, have been drawn to the Burkina Faso crisis. Their participation reflects the crisis's multifaceted regional and international aspects, which include diplomatic, development, humanitarian, and security initiatives.

Foreign Administrations

A number of foreign governments have actively contributed to the ongoing crisis in Burkina Faso. Nations like the United States, France, and neighbouring West African countries have offered diplomatic, intelligence, and security support. During the crisis, France, which has previously participated in Sahelian security through Operation Barkhane, has changed its strategy to emphasise military cooperation and strategic communication (Ferguson, 2022). The United States has emphasised stabilisation efforts while providing counterterrorism assistance and humanitarian aid. In an effort to restore civilian rule, regional governments—particularly those of ECOWAS member states—have coordinated diplomatic responses and sanctions against military rulers (ECOWAS, 2022).

NGOs (non-governmental organisations)

In the face of growing violence and displacement, NGOs working in Burkina Faso have been essential in delivering humanitarian aid. Internally displaced people (IDPs) have received support, food assistance, and health services from organisations like the International Red Cross, MSF (Doctors Without Borders), and regional NGOs. Despite difficulties brought on by insecurity, restricted access, and depleted resources, their work has been essential in meeting urgent humanitarian needs (UN OCHA, 2023).

Institutions at the Multilateral Level

The main multilateral players in diplomatic, humanitarian, and peacebuilding activities are the United Nations, the African Union, and ECOWAS. In addition to coordinating humanitarian aid and supporting efforts to restore stability, the UN has called for political dialogue. While ECOWAS has spearheaded diplomatic efforts and sanctions to put pressure on the military regime, the AU has denounced unconstitutional changes and promoted constitutional order. Though their influence is frequently constrained by security concerns and the sovereignty of Burkina Faso's authorities, these institutions seek to support governance reforms, foster dialogue, and advance human rights (UN Security Council, 2023; AU Commission, 2022).

Overall Effects and Difficulties

Humanitarian aid and security stabilisation in Burkina Faso have been greatly aided by international actors. But they continue to encounter obstacles in their efforts, such as growing insecurity brought on by jihadist insurgencies, restricted access to impacted areas, and political opposition from military leaders. Although coordination between these actors is essential, conflicting interests and practical limitations frequently make it difficult.

4.2: The impact of foreign aid, sanctions, and diplomatic relations on military governance.

External elements like foreign aid, sanctions, and diplomatic ties have a big impact on Burkina Faso's military governance dynamics and those of the Sahel region overall. By influencing their policies, methods of governance, and dealings with both internal and external actors, these factors have the power to either stabilise or destabilise military regimes.

Military Governance and Foreign Aid

In military governance, foreign aid has two functions: it can be a lever for advancing democratic reforms while also frequently acting as a crucial resource for regimes. In the past, Burkina Faso's military regimes have depended on foreign assistance to deal with urgent security and economic issues. To combat terrorism and improve governance, for example, the European Union and the United States have contributed significantly to development and military assistance (Mansour & Hossain, 2021). Such assistance can increase military regimes' capacity to uphold law and order, but it can also breed dependency and thwart attempts to create independent governing bodies.

However, military regimes and their international allies may become tense due to the conditions frequently

placed on foreign aid. For instance, in order to continue providing aid, the European Union has demanded that democratic governance and human rights be upheld. Aid may be cut back or stopped in situations where military regimes don't meet these requirements, which can worsen already-existing governance issues and cause more instability (Zanker, 2021). The realities of local political dynamics, therefore, frequently limit the effectiveness of foreign aid as a tool for advancing democratic governance, even though it can supply vital resources.

The Effects of Sanctions

Another important outside factor influencing military governance is sanctions. They are frequently used as foreign policy tools to put pressure on governments to abide by international standards. Following the January 2022 military takeover in Burkina Faso, the new government was subject to sanctions from the African Union and ECOWAS, which included economic measures and exclusion from regional organisations (Adepoju, 2022). Even though the goal of these sanctions is to bring democracy back, they may have the opposite effect right away, causing economic hardship and deteriorating living conditions for the general populace.

Sanctions can also incite nationalist feelings within military governments, giving them the opportunity to portray outside pressure as foreign meddling. As they use public sentiment against perceived external enemies, military governments may become more determined to hold onto power as a result (Hassane, 2021). As a result, even though sanctions are meant to push military governments towards democratic changes, they occasionally have the opposite effect, strengthening authoritarian policies and sabotaging opportunities for communication and compromise.

The Impact of Diplomatic Relations

The way military regimes behave is greatly influenced by diplomatic ties. Cooperation and a framework for discussion can be fostered by constructive diplomatic engagement, opening doors for stability and reform. On the other hand, isolation and a greater need for outside partners can result from deteriorating diplomatic ties. The changing geopolitical environment, especially the increasing sway of China and Russia, has consequences for military governance in Burkina Faso. These nations' growing involvement frequently occurs without the strict conditions attached to Western aid, which may give military regimes greater freedom to rule without upholding democratic principles (Bohler-Muller et al., 2020).

The complexity of diplomatic relations has been exemplified in recent years by the presence of Russian private military contractors in the Sahel. Their

participation frequently avoids conventional Western avenues of influence and could result in governance models that put military fixes ahead of democratic procedures (Dumont, 2022). International actors that support democratic governance and human rights may face difficulties as a result of this change, which has the potential to drastically change the governance environment.

In conclusion, diplomatic ties, sanctions, and foreign aid all have a significant impact on Burkina Faso's military governance. These factors can help stability and development, but they can also make governance more difficult, especially when regimes put survival ahead of democratic reforms. Comprehending these factors is crucial for assessing the future course of military rule in Burkina Faso and the larger Sahel, emphasising the complex interaction between outside forces and regional political realities.

4.3: How external geopolitical tactics and regional stability interact

The geopolitical tactics of outside actors are closely linked to the stability of the West African region, especially in nations like Burkina Faso. These outside factors affect governance, regional dynamics, and initiatives to advance peace and security.

As a Geopolitical Priority, Regional Stability

In West Africa, regional stability is essential for population well-being, security, and economic growth. Transnational threats like resource conflicts, migration crises, and terrorism can result from instability. With the belief that everyone benefits from regional security, regional organisations such as the African Union and ECOWAS prioritise peace and stability while serving as peacekeepers and mediators (Adebajo & Rashid, 2017).

External Geopolitical Plans

West Africa is strategically important to superpowers like China, Russia, the United States, and France. France's military presence and historical clout are intended to combat terrorism and preserve regional supremacy. To gain strategic access, the United States prioritises combating terrorism, stopping illegal trafficking, and advancing democratic governance. While Russia's involvement entails security cooperation and diplomatic outreach, China's Belt and Road Initiative aims to gain economic influence through infrastructure investments (Adebajo & Rashid, 2017; Oumar & Diallo, 2022).

Relationship to Regional Stability

Although external strategies can lead to tensions, they

frequently seek to align with regional stability goals. For instance, security aid or military interventions can strengthen government capabilities, but they can also increase tensions if they are seen as neocolonial or outside-driven. Stability is promoted by diplomatic and financial efforts, but conflicting interests can result in rivalries that weaken regional unity. Furthermore, external actors occasionally use regional instability to further their strategic goals, influencing conflict resolution and governance reforms (Williams, 2020).

Burkina Faso is one example.

External strategies in Burkina Faso have included diplomatic initiatives by multilateral organisations, humanitarian interventions by nongovernmental organisations, and military assistance from the United States and France. These attempts to stabilise the nation are frequently hampered by internal political dynamics and insecurity brought on by insurgencies. Depending on how their objectives line up with local priorities and regional consensus, the involvement of external actors can either strengthen or weaken regional stability.

External geopolitical strategies and regional stability interact in a complicated and reciprocal way. Even though external actors aim to maintain stability in order to protect their strategic interests, their actions may have unforeseen repercussions that affect regional cohesion, governance, and sovereignty. Fostering local ownership of peace processes and coordinating external strategies with regional priorities are necessary for a sustainable peace in West Africa.

5: IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN POLITICAL STABILITY

Burkina Faso's recent military actions and problems with governance are a good example of what this means for political stability in West Africa as a whole and how other African countries can learn from it. Knowing how these things work can help us come up with ways to promote democracy and cooperation in the region.

5.1 What the Burkina Faso Case Means for Political Stability in West Africa as a Whole

Burkina Faso's situation is a warning for political stability in all of West Africa. The military coup in January 2022 and the problems with governance that followed show how weak democratic institutions are in the area. Military regimes have taken advantage of the fact that political leaders can't deal with important issues like security, economic inequality, and corruption (Zanker, 2021).

Also, the role of outside influences, both good and

bad, shows how connected West African countries are to each other. When foreign governments and organisations have a say in how things are run, they can either strengthen or weaken democratic norms. For example, relying on foreign military support may make things safer in the short term, but it can also hurt local legitimacy and accountability, leading to cycles of instability (Bohler-Muller et al., 2020). The Burkina Faso case shows that political stability in one country is often closely tied to what is happening in the region as a whole. This means that governance and security must be handled in a way that involves everyone.

5.2 What Other African Countries Can Learn from Military Interventions

Burkina Faso's experience with military interventions can teach other African countries a lot of important things:

Why it's important to deal with the root causes: When governments don't deal with underlying social and economic problems and security issues well, they often have to send in the military. Countries that are vulnerable in the same way must make inclusive governance and socio-economic development their top priorities to make military solutions less appealing.

Working with Civil Society: Civil society and grassroots movements play a very important role in pushing for democratic government. In the past, Burkina Faso's civil society has been a strong force against authoritarianism. Supporting these groups can give people more power and make them stronger against military takeovers (Mansour & Hossain, 2021).

The Dangers of Relying Too Much on Outside Forces: Governments can have problems when they rely on foreign aid and military support. Countries should work towards becoming self-sufficient and set up independent governments that put their own interests ahead of outside pressures.

5.3 Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for policies and actions that could help with regional cooperation, promoting democracy, and resolving conflicts:

The following suggestions are made to improve political stability and encourage democratic government throughout West Africa:

Improving Regional Cooperation: West African countries should support regional organisations like ECOWAS and the AU to improve security and governance for everyone. This includes making it easier to intervene when there are unconstitutional changes of government and making sure that democratic norms are always followed (Zanker, 2021).

International partners and regional organisations should make promoting democracy their top priority by giving conditional aid. This should include supporting

elections, strengthening institutions, and encouraging civic participation. Support that is tailored to fit the needs of a specific area can be better at building democratic resilience.

Putting money into ways to resolve conflicts: Building strong ways for regional organisations to resolve conflicts can make it easier to talk and negotiate during times of crisis. Training local mediators and giving regional organisations more resources to deal with conflicts can make military interventions less likely.

Encouraging Economic Development: To keep things stable in the long term, we need to fix social and economic inequalities. To reduce the conditions that lead to unrest, regional and international partners should put money into sustainable development programs that support job creation, education, and infrastructure.

5.4: Conclusion

The Burkina Faso case has effects that go beyond its own borders and gives us useful information about the difficulties of maintaining political stability in West Africa. African countries can help make the region more stable and prosperous by learning from their mistakes and following specific advice. This will help build strong democratic governments and lower the chances of military interventions.

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