

**ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON GOOD GOVERNANCE, ELECTION, DEMOCRACY AND RE-
EMERGENCE OF MILITARY RULE IN WEST AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF BURKINA FASO
2020 -2025**

BY

**NWAJAGU OGECHUKWU PERPETUAL
GOU/U22/IRE/580**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU.**

MAY, 2026

**ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON GOOD GOVERNANCE, ELECTION, DEMOCRACY AND RE-
EMERGENCE OF MILITARY RULE IN WEST AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF BURKINA FASO
2020 - 2025**

BY

**NWAJAGU OGECHUKWU PERPETUAL
GOU/U22/IRE/580**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATION, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES, GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU,**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF
THE BACHALOR OF SCIENCE [B.Sc], DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATION**

SUPERVISOR: DR. NETCHY C. MBAEZE

JULY, 2026

DECLARATION

I hereby declare the project entitled “ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance, Election, Democracy and Re-Emergence of Military Rule in West Africa: A Case Study of Burkina Faso” submitted by me to Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu state in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree Bachelor Of Science (B.Sc) in international relations is a record of bonafied project work carried out under the guidance and supervision of **Dr. Netchy C. Mbaeze**.

Nwajagu Ogechukwu Perpetual
GOU/U22/IRE/580

Date

APPROVAL

This project has been examined and approved by the Department of International Relations, Godfrey Okoye University for the award of Bachelor of Science (B. Sc.) in International Relations.

Dr. Netchy C. Mbaeze
Supervisor

Date

Prof. Sam Ugwuozor
Head of Department

Date

Associate Prof John Odoh
Dean, Faculty of management and Social Sciences

Date

External Examiner

Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to the almighty God for his mercy and goodness towards me from whom my help and strength comes from. He is the source of all wisdom, knowledge and grace that has accomplished me throughout this four years journey. With a grateful heart I say Thank You Lord.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I give all glory and thanks to Almighty God, whose grace and guidance have sustained me throughout this work. His blessings and strength made every step possible.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Netchy Mbaeze, for his committed guidance, useful suggestions, and patience. I also appreciate my Head of Department, Prof. Sam Ugwuozor, for his leadership and support.

I extend my sincere thanks to my lecturers: Mr. Onyishi, Mr. Kingsley, Sr. Lucy, Dr. Ifedi, and Dr. Okonkwo, whose teachings, advice, and contributions enriched my learning experience.

I sincerely express my deep appreciation to my guidance, Rev. Fr. Nkem Nwajagu, for his direction, encouragement, and constant support.

My profound appreciation goes to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sunday Nwajagu, for their unwavering love, prayers, and support. I am also deeply grateful to my siblings for their encouragement and constant motivation.

To my friends Chisom, Amarachi, Empress, Matilda and Cynitha, I love you guys
To everyone who contributed in one way or another, I sincerely thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Declaration	ii
Approval	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	
viii	
Abstract	ix
 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	 1
1.1 Backgrounds to the study	
1	
1.2 Statement of the Problem	
3	
1.3 Research Questions	4
1.4 Objectives of the Study	
4	
1.5 Significance of the Study	
5	
1.6 Scope of the Study	6
1.7 Limitations of the Study	
6	
1.8 Operational Definition of Terms	
6	
 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	 8
2.1 Conceptual Review	8
2.2 Review of Theme of Research Questions	
29	
2.3 Empirical Review	

44	
2.4 Theoretical Review	48
2.5 Gap in Literature	
53	
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	56
3.1 Theoretical Framework	
56	
3.2 Hypotheses	63
3.3 Research Design	63
3.4 Method of Data Collection	64
3.5 Method of Data Analysis	
66	
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	67
4.1 Overview of ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy	
67	
4.2 The Re-emergence of Military Rule in West Africa	77
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	85
5.1 Summary of Findings	85
5.2 Conclusion	86
5.3 Recommendations	86
REFERENCES	88

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Description Data Presentation	71
Table 4.2 Historical Poverty Rate Trends	74
Table 4.3: Heads of State of Burkina Faso (1960–Present)	
81	

ABSTRACT

This study addresses unconstitutional military takeover in West Africa despite the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, 2001. The aim is to evaluate ECOWAS legal and security frameworks in preventing coups, using Burkina Faso 2020-2025 as the case study. Grounded in Democratic Consolidation Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory, the study examines the interaction between regional institutions and domestic politics. Using qualitative case study methodology, it analyzes ECOWAS protocols, AU frameworks, coup timelines, sanctions and literature on Burkina Faso 2022 coups, 2029 transition plan, and 2024 ECOWAS withdrawal. Findings show ECOWAS enforcement is limited by dependence on member state will, erosion of democratic legitimacy from insecurity and poor governance and weakened regional solidarity when multiple states reject ECOWAS. The study recommends ECOWAS should apply sanctions and diplomatic measures consistently to all member states to restore credibility and deter coups and also reforms its decision making to be more transparent, neutral, and principle based reducing the influence of powerful states and political interest..

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Conceived in 1975 under the banner of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the primary ambition of this West African regional organisation was to consolidate a level of economic integration, cooperation, and collective self-reliance that was, at the time, thought to be sufficient for the success and stability of member states (ECOWAS, 1975). It quickly became apparent, however, that economic integration, no matter how deeply rooted or extensively integrated, would inevitably remain contingent upon a stable political environment, with democratic governance, peace and security not just desirables but necessities. Accordingly, the scope of the ECOWAS mission was broadened beyond purely economic issues to encompass peace and security; conflict prevention; democracy; and good governance.

By the late 1980s and throughout much of the 1990s, the ECOWAS member states experienced what could perhaps be classified as a severe period of political and instability, characterised by civil wars and a series of military coups which engulfed a number of them - from Liberia to Sierra Leone to Guinea-Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire.

These events illustrated the degree to which insecurity had become infectious throughout the sub-region, demonstrating the stark inability of any single nation state, operating alone, to provide sustainable peace and security; to promote democratic governance; or, indeed, even maintain any sense of lasting stability and constitutional rule (Adebajo, 2002). In an attempt to stem the tide and respond to the evolving security environment of the sub-region ECOWAS agreed a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999), followed in 2001 by the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. These

documents institutionalised democracy, constitutionalism and good governance as core normative commitments for all member states and signaled ECOWAS' zero tolerance policy for unconstitutional transfers of government. The 2001 Protocol committed ECOWAS member states to organise regular, transparent and credible elections; uphold rule of law; adhere to separation of powers; promote accountability; support broad-based participation in governance and gave ECOWAS the authority to impose collective sanctions or suspend a member state if the constitutional order were to be disrupted.

At a superficial level, these normative instruments were designed to create sufficient institutional safeguards to prevent military intervention by enhancing democratic capacity building and providing credible deterrents against unconstitutional grabs for power.

Nevertheless, the sub-region has experienced a worrying escalation in military coups over recent years – ranging from Mali (2020, 2021) to Guinea (2021), Burkina Faso (2022) and Niger (2023). The spate of military coups over recent years has led many to question whether ECOWAS' frameworks for democracy and good governance were as effective in theory as they appear deficient in practice; or whether the mechanisms developed for implementation and enforcement were sufficiently robust and backed up by sufficient political will from member states to deter any recurrences (Souar, 2022). In many instances of the return of the military to power, the military acted in the aftermath of widespread leadership failure; deeply fractured governance structures; continued security concerns and the increasing discontentment of the populace with civilian government.

The proliferation of violent extremists in the Sahel, together with rising inflation, economic stagnation and youth unemployment have heightened anti-government

sentiments and thereby delegitimized civilian rule and increased demands for more forceful or decisive governance solutions (International Crisis Group, 2023). Furthermore, in many cases the integrity of election processes in the sub-region has become compromised by alleged fraud, exclusion or manipulation by incumbent political actors, thereby failing to provide an effective peaceful avenue for changes in leadership. A loss of faith in the elections process as a vehicle for political accountability necessarily undermines public confidence in constitutional order and opens the possibility for the re-emergence of military dominance of the political system (Lynch & Crawford, 2011).

In the broader context of the sub-region, these renewed coups represented far more than isolated events.

The recurrent nature of military take-overs suggested a clear discrepancy between ECOWAS' aspirations as enshrined in normative documents like the democracy protocol and the prevailing political dynamics within many member states. Weak and uneven implementation of ECOWAS' protocols, uneven sanctions enforcement, and lack of consensus and unified approach amongst member states of ECOWAS did little to advance the Organisation's resolve against unconstitutional power transfers. The present study is rooted in this larger debate in regional governance, democratic consolidation, and the dynamics of civil-military relations in West Africa. Without delving deeply into the sub-regional history of conflict and political upheaval, its emphasis is squarely on examining the political and governance conditions that gave rise to the repeated emergence of military power in the sub-region over the recent past, and the degree to which ECOWAS' framework for Democracy and Good Governance proved responsive to these conditions or failed to effectively mitigate their effects.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

ECOWAS' institutional and legal frameworks to achieve democracy, good governance and constitutionalism among its member states "are fully elaborate in all their institutional and legal framework", yet there persists what I describe as the pervasive military interventions occurring from country to country in West Africa, as there is a significant mismatch between policy and actual practice. One of the main challenges facing ECOWAS is that the democracy and good governance protocols developed by the regional bloc lack sufficient implementation and enforcement in an environment of failure of leadership, weak institutions and electoral malfeasance where such shortcomings could have served to render the legitimacy of the democratic practice untenable. It is evident that in many countries within the region, civilian governments have failed to produce noticeable gains in citizens' quality of life.

Rather, "ineffectual governance has produced poor conditions such as pervasive insecurity, weak infrastructure, deficient service delivery, job scarcity and corrupt practices," which then cause a crisis of confidence in the effectiveness of democratic institutions and a loss of regard for constitutional governance, thereby encouraging and legitimizing military coups.

The crisis is compounded by electoral malpractice; by the frequent perversion of the elections' function as institutions to select a ruling group through, for instance, ballot stuffing, intimidating rival candidates, excluding certain segments of the population from electoral process, opaque counting or vote tabulation, civil society has tended to experience growing disappointment and hostility towards the process of elections for selecting a governing elite, thereby creating an amenable political and societal atmosphere for military intervention. The matter is even more complex due to ECOWAS internal makeup and mode of operation, consisting, as it does, of "members

states, many of whom have history of authoritarian practices and weak governance and/or have had such practices within their institutions and political structures.” These have often hindered consistent and firm approach to non-constitutional changes, thereby weakening the impact of its policy instruments, such as sanctions and the use of force. In essence, the gap which this study seeks to address is how ECOWAS frameworks for achieving good governance and democracy amongst its member states have not translated into a concrete guarantee of democracy because of how the ECOWAS framework could and often has been hampered due to weak enforcement of its democracy and good governance protocols and by its own internal makeup, as a result of which military intervention still remains one of the options that can be pursued when the democratic institutions continue to be weakly constituted in a region characterised by widespread governmental failures.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How has the lack of effective implementation of ECOWAS democracy and good governance protocols enhanced military takeovers?
2. How has the composition and internal dynamics of ECOWAS undermined democratic rule and facilitated military intervention?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overarching purpose of this research is to investigate the efficacy of ECOWAS democracy and good governance regimes in preventing military coups in West Africa, with particular reference to the drivers that undermine the enforcement of these mechanisms.

In detail, the research seeks:

1. To determine the role of the non-effective implementation of ECOWAS democratic and good governance protocols in fueling military takeovers.

2. To scrutinize the ways in which the composition of and the dynamics within ECOWAS have played a role in derailing democratic governance and have limited the organization's ability to thwart unconstitutional changes in government.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study holds a multi-faceted importance. Academically, it enriches the scholarly literature on democratic governance, regional integration, and civil-military relations in the sub-region by illustrating the divergence between regulatory frameworks and operational politics. The interaction between the performance of leaders, election credibility, and enforcement mechanisms at the regional level, explored within the study, allows for a better understanding of the challenges of translating normative ideals into durable democracy.

At the level of policy-making and practice for regional institutions like ECOWAS, the study's findings reveal the gaps in current democracy and governance mechanisms and draw attention to the need for greater resolve, consistent application of these mechanisms, and more effective enforcement capacities. They provide relevant inputs for reforming the regional systems in light of the failures of leadership, governance, and electoral processes.

National governments, electoral authorities and civil society can find useful insights in the study to strengthen democratic institution and prevent the recurrence of coups. It will enable them to promote transparent election, improve service delivery, uphold good governance practices and guarantee a sustainable process of demilitarization of the political scene.

For citizens in West Africa, the study would highlight the consequences of ineffective governance, the absence of rule of law, widespread insecurities, and the overall undermining of democracy on their day-to-day life experiences, arguing for the

indispensability of improvements in these aspects of life as essential elements for the viability of democratic politics. Academically it informs the discussion on democratic governance and civil–military relations in West Africa (Sesay, 2019).

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is organized in accordance to thematic and geographic dimensions.

Geographical Scope of the study is Burkina Faso, supplemented by comparative examples in other West African countries.

Thematic scope of the study includes leader deficit, governance crisis, fraudulent elections, and role of ECOWAS in preventing unconstitutional changes in government.

The temporal scope ranges from post-1960(independence of several countries in West Africa) up to the latest of the coups, though with emphasis on ECOWAS post 2001 Protocol.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

While this research offers a broad scope on the ECOWAS protocol on good governance, democracy, election and good governance, there exist a number of limitations that ought to be mentioned . First of, this study is heavily dependent on secondary data from existing sources such as official reports, media releases, an organisation's database etc, that could potentially compromise timely accuracy. Limited accessibility to confidential files dependence of secondary source materials ,findings cannot always be representative of all member states . It was tough to secure all the required document and there were several instances of damaged material on several website.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Coup d'tat: The violent or illegal takeover of a government, often by a military group.

Protocol: Protocol could be described as a protocol of etiquette; A formality of rules guiding any or all aspects of diplomatic relation and formal behavior protocol of etiquette the formal rules guiding behavior. ECOWAS Protocol: Protocol of the good governance of ECOWASA treaty an international agreement annexed to the Revised Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Democracy: Is a system of governance in which every citizen is entitled to participate.

Rule of Law.

It is a system which relies upon fairness, due processes and equitability. It has free election for both the elected in the society and the elect as well, the rights and duties. It guarantees individual freedoms, public control of government, freedom from fear of any abuse or misuse of governmental power. Free and fair election; right, equality, non-discriminatory , pluralistic.

Good governance: is the process where public institutions impartially consider the preferences and interests of citizens when make decision during the exercise of their public mandate.

Leadership Failure: Is the inability or reluctance of leadership to effectively govern the nation , to protect and secure citizens, effectively manage its national resources and to provide essential services for the population. Electoral Malpractice: Malpractices in the course of an electoral process that subvert the legitimacy and the free choice of candidates in an election. Military Coup: An unconstitutional overthrow of a government or other ruling authority by means of violent or the seizure of political power with the use of military force or its threats.

ECOWAS Democracy and Good governance Mechanisms: the legal, institutional, and

policy frameworks put in place by ECOWAS to promote democratic values, constitutional governance and political stability within member states (ECOWAS, 2001).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

Looking back at earlier writings helps clarify ideas about democracy, how countries are run, election methods, and groups working across West African nations. With that in mind, the aim here is to show why leaders still seize power illegally even when regional rules exist to stop such actions. Earlier research has explored these patterns, offering context around whether democracies hold steady, if leadership works well, and how neighboring states team up on safety matters. Placing this study alongside

those talks gives it grounding in broader academic conversations - work shaped by thinkers like Diamond in 1999 and Huntington in 1991.

Because it shows what others have explored, a literature review shapes how scholars approach fresh questions. When past studies come into view, patterns begin to form - suddenly, assumptions shift. One sees not just conclusions but the reasoning behind them. Where ideas thin out, curiosity grows stronger instead. Building on earlier thinking does not mean repeating it; sometimes it means questioning why certain paths were ignored. Through this process, every new project finds its place - not apart from conversation, but within it.

West Africa's journey with democracy has drawn deep study since the 1990s, especially how power shifts and shared rules shape nations. Because of past turns toward elected rule mixed with stretches of unrest and coups, researchers keep returning to these patterns. Even though a surge of change swept through in the early '90s, holding on to fair systems didn't go smoothly.

When political figures, organizations, and ordinary people all view democratic rule as rightful, then - according to Linz and Stepan (1996) - democracy takes hold. Still, even with legal frameworks meant to block abrupt power shifts, military takeovers keep happening, which keeps researchers attentive (Omotola, 2012; Zounmenou, 2020).

Questions swirl now around how well democracies hold up, how fairly governments operate, plus whether regional groups truly keep peace in place (Adebajo, 2002). Because of this shift, research has turned toward what drags democracy backward - alongside steps that might reinforce laws and leadership in West Africa.

So much of what's been written zeroes in on core ideas behind how power works across West Africa. Looking at varied takes about who runs things, how votes get

counted, how groups organize themselves nearby - all of it helps explain why some places hold steady while others shift fast. This part digs into those moving parts without assuming one path fits every nation.

This analysis splits into four broad parts. Starting off, key ideas get examined - things like democracy, effective rule, voting systems, together with structures across regions. Power use in steering national resources shapes what the World Bank called governance back in 1992. Free, tough races keeping leaders responsible? That is how Schmitter and Karl saw democracy in their 1991 take. Such notions sit at the core when exploring how political bodies operate, along with how ruling styles shape democratic results.

Looking closely at academic debates comes next, focusing on how democracy rules are applied across West Africa. Much of this conversation centers on ECOWAS, the regional group that steps in when governments face trouble. Instead of standing by, it pushes for constitutions to be respected, blocks coups before they grow, while stepping up during moments of political tension. Its actions shape how nations in the region handle power shifts, sometimes quietly, other times with firm moves.

2.1.2 Democracy and Electoral Processes in West Africa

People often describe democracy as a way to choose leaders by holding regular elections that are fair, open, sometimes contested, where everyone can speak freely and institutions watch over power. What holds it together? The idea that those who govern do so only because people allow them to. Because of this setup, ways exist for ordinary individuals to step into decisions shaping society while also watching what officials do. Key parts include laws applying equally to all, dividing government roles, allowing many voices in politics, defending personal freedoms, plus having residents involved directly in how things run.

For years, thinkers about power and rule have pointed to voting as key in systems where people hold sway. Voting acts like a channel - citizens show who they want leading or what rules they favor. When ballots happen again and again, those in charge may stay if trusted - or step down when trust fades. In such moments, votes become a lever: officials answer for choices, knowing eyes watch. This rhythm keeps decision makers close to lives shaped by their decisions.

Still, democracy isn't just about holding elections. Thinkers like Robert Dahl say real democracies need open rivalry between parties, active involvement by people, along with basic rights protected. Without safe spaces to form groups, speak freely, or debate issues, government by the people stalls. What holds it together? Structures that defend legal fairness, keeping those in power inside clear boundaries set long ago.

West Africa's path to democracy carries twists rooted deep in its past. After breaking free from colonial control in the late fifties and sixties, nations across the area set up governments inspired by European models - some leaning on parliament, others on presidents. Yet those first attempts at self-rule rarely lasted long. Power shifted fast when unrest took hold, fueled not just by tribal divides but also shaky state frameworks alongside money troubles that pulled foundations apart.

Years passed, then one after another, countries across West Africa fell into long stretches of army-led control. Not uncommon now, soldiers seized power repeatedly, stepping in when leaders failed or chaos loomed. Often they claimed stability needed saving, yet quickly shut down parliaments. Constitutions vanished overnight. Freedoms shrank without warning.

When the Cold War ended around the late 1980s into the early 90s, it shifted how governments worked in many African nations. Outside trends toward democracy

played a role, nudging changes even in parts like West Africa. Because activists pushed locally while foreign influence added weight, along with shifts in economic policy, new party systems began emerging - old constitutions came back online not long after.

After years of army control and one-ruling-party setups, West Africa shifted toward democracy around 1990. Multiparty voting appeared in many nations alongside changes to basic laws and efforts to build fair governance. To run votes fairly, independent election bodies formed; freedoms found stronger backing through updated national charters. Rival groups gained legal status, opening space for debate instead of top-down rule.

Peaceful handovers of authority happened after fair votes in a number of nations. Not long ago, such shifts would have sparked unrest - now they became routine. One by one, governments began shaping rules that outlasted individual leaders. Progress showed not through grand declarations but quiet consistency.

Even so, how deeply democracy takes root differs greatly from one place to another. Where a few nations have built stronger systems over time, many still face problems like unfair votes, shaky leadership frameworks, because stability often fails to follow. That is why experts point out - just holding elections on schedule won't make a true democracy grow.

Getting democracy to stick means people start trusting it as the normal way to run politics. When voting happens, it needs openness, real choices, fairness, without manipulation. Each round of ballots should feel honest enough that results are seen as true. People need to believe what comes out of the vote counts actually shows what voters wanted. Over time, these moments build a shared trust in how power shifts hands.

Outcomes start looking fixed when votes get bought, people fear speaking up, rival groups face roadblocks, or tallies somehow shift behind closed doors. Trust in how things work begins to crack once the system plays unfair tricks. Power stops answering to ordinary voices if folks feel like choices were made long before they showed up at polling stations.

Out here in parts of West Africa, voting troubles pop up more than they should. When fear is used to scare voters away, trust begins to slip. Ballots sometimes get changed after people cast them, quietly shifting outcomes. Government tools meant for public service show up in campaign spots, tilting the field. Election oversight often leans one way, feeding doubts about fairness. Results come out - then rival parties say no, we did not win like that. Leaders already in charge tend to stick around, helped by systems that bend when counted.

Out of arguments over votes, streets fill with people shouting. When leaders clash after polls, nerves stretch tight across capitals. Sometimes anger bursts - gunfire replaces debate, power shifts stall for months on end. What begins at ballot boxes ends in chaos more than once.

One wrong move here might shake democracy right down to its core. If election results lack public trust, divides grow sharper - confidence in leaders starts fading. People start seeing voting not as power but as empty ritual when things feel rigged from the start.

Over time, weaker elections chip away at how much people believe in elected leaders. As faith in democracy slips, different kinds of rule start sounding reasonable to some. Sometimes, those wearing uniforms step forward, saying unrest gives them reason to act.

Nowhere has the frustration with flawed votes grown louder than in parts of West

Africa, where recent takeovers followed accusations against elected leaders. Power seized by force hardly ever leads to fair rule later on, yet shaky faith in voting can make soldiers stepping in seem like a tolerable shift. When ballots are seen as broken, some people shrug - quietly allowing uniforms to replace politicians, at least for now.

When people have faith in how votes are counted, democracy tends to last longer. Because they see voting as a real chance to shape decisions, their support for elected leaders grows stronger. Yet if voters think election rules are rigged or broken, belief in government begins to fade. So trust in ballots shapes whether democracies stand or stumble.

So much depends on strong election systems if democracy is to take root across West Africa. Because without fair oversight, trust in votes can fade fast. Running elections falls to independent bodies meant to stay neutral under pressure. From signing up voters to guiding poll workers, their work shapes how people see the outcome. Tallying ballots comes down to them too - no shortcuts, just careful counts. When it ends, they speak first about who won, making timing matter as much as accuracy.

Open ways to sign up voters matter just as much when it comes to trust in elections. When lists of who can vote stay correct, cheating at the polls becomes harder while access stays fair for everyone allowed to take part. Just like that, courts free from bias must handle election disagreements so complaints get settled before tensions grow.

Sometimes watchers show up when votes are counted. These teams check if rules get followed during voting events across countries nearby or far away. When they stay present through everything, cheating drops because people know someone is watching closely. They write down what happens without picking sides. What they

find helps others see how fair things really were. Trust grows a little easier after that. Quiet influence often shapes better results than loud demands ever could.

On top of that, classes about government help people take part more fully in democracy. When voters learn what they're allowed to do and what is expected of them, they tend to join discussions and decisions with clearer understanding. Fair votes are often revealed by nongovernment groups, journalists, and learning endeavors. How fair votes in West Africa can strengthen the democracy The stability of Democracy across West Africa hinges on fair vote and sturdy political structures; full participation breeds active, capable government where the trust needed for a country to flourish. Fair votes hold it all up as much as active citizens do. When election systems are reliable the population comes to trust democratic institutions as its government functions in an open environment and its policies lead to peace instead of instability.

2.1.3 The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001)

With regards to the protocol on democracy and good governance in Africa, this treaty is an addition to the 1999 "Mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security" which was passed by ECOWAS. These two frameworks was produced and intended to combat and eliminate any political instability and conflicts that would come to occur in the West African sub region and furthermore encourage better democratic governments.

ECOWAS developed the protocol which in 2001 due to political climate of West Africa which was not positive. For example, the 1990s saw various civil wars as well as military coups, especially in Liberian and Sierra Leone, all of these caused regional stability to become questionable. This gave rise to serious security issues and humanitarian problems. Due to the scale of these problems regional leadership

recognized that economic cohesion as first promised was possible only with peace and order within the nations of the region.

The protocol also stems from the belief that democratic leadership and a stability are both linked, if there is democracy then there will be peace and in addition good development to. In addition the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was intended to serve as a “disincentive” to unconstitutional changes in government. The adoption of this protocol was influenced also by the desire to increase regional capacity for promoting good governance through strengthened norms, mechanisms and sanctions as well as to counter the trend of coups in the region.

One of the significant protocol issues, which was a great move for the region, is the absolute opposition to any form of military coups which means that should anyone in the leadership want to overthrow a government they shall automatically face sanctions from the organization which should be a strong ‘deterrence’. This means for any leaders or military person to attempt to grab the reins of power by force will no longer be overlooked as in the past in the region, a tough and strong line from ECOWAS.

This means to get into political office you must always gain the full cooperation of the electorate. Therefore, for the process of becoming involved in the political arena then for any candidate standing; they should ensure that the results be valid as this should demonstrate a will of the voting citizens and encourage any candidate to ensure fair results are given without any political manipulation of election. If a election result not properly conducted or, even worse, it is based on manipulation then there will be many angry people and could cause further instability and problems for ECOWAS members. The protocol reinforces the importance that all national election bodies must ensure fairness, transparency and must not let

political issues get the better of any issues concerning any election process.

The protocol states that there will always be support and respect for separation of powers as this means no one will ever have over-indulging powers in the governing body. It shows a great effort of ECOWAS to create governance as a legitimate method of ruling because if there are separation powers then it would ensure that there are people guarding what power any one person holds to give them more balance in governing.

In addition, the protocol emphasizes on fundamental issues as human rights and the rule of law. Human rights are crucial because it makes sure all citizens are able to express and choose what they want as well as giving those who are being elected the responsibility to represent citizens. The protocol puts much significance to rule of law which ensures no one is 'above' the law, everyone is equal in the eyes of the law which applies to all of ECOWAS countries.

The protocol also fosters good governance, Accountability and inclusiveness within governmental systems in ECOWAS states. It makes it easier to keep leaders focused and on task – because they realize they cannot afford to take their respective country for granted. A central rule in all democracies is for leaders to ensure accountability of their activities in governance for the sake of their people and not themselves.

Additionally ECOWAS, not only expressed its position regarding the process of good governance, but has also laid down processes of addressing any unconstitutional change of government in member states through sanctions and if need be, the imposition of economic sanctions to enforce good governance, peaceful transfer of power. In dire situations that threatens regional security and stability, such as internal conflicts within a member country, ECOWAS has military missions which can

intervene and assist in maintaining peace within member countries. The mechanism of sanction employed by ECOWAS aims to protect the gains of democratization across the region.

Through its emphasis on these institutionalized mechanism, ECOWAS moved democratic promotion from purely an internal, domestic political issue to one of shared, collective responsibilities. All member states of ECOWAS today owe themselves a duty to protect and preserve democratic values within the region.

Despite the legal backing and robust provision of this framework on democracy, numerous challenge(s) and concerns regarding its enforcement still exist. Among the foremost is the issue of Political will among the member states of ECOWAS. Democratic progress is heavily tied to the will of national governments in participating in collective responses against unconstitutional change of government and, in making commitment to the collective good of the community at large.

To a certain extent, the disparity in the quality of governance and of democratic institutions and arrangements in the member countries, at times, may contribute to challenges in the uniform implementation of some of the democratic norms enshrined in the protocol. Member countries with weaker governance systems might be challenged in fully meeting some standards expected under the protocol relative to those with more established democracies.

Also geopolitical considerations and internal power relations in the region can, at times, impact on the velocity and manner in which ECOWAS decides to react to political crises occurring in any of the member countries. In fact, decision on matters like imposition of sanction would typically require the consent of a substantial percentage of member states, and political/strategically interests can differ between countries. It is because these factors exist that the decision-making processes

regarding reactions to unconstitutional political transitions could differ.

The existence of domestic factors within some of the member countries which are inimical to sustained political stability might make decision making for sanctions against unconstitutional government change in a member country more cumbersome to undertake. A government of a member state fearing that imposing sanctions may, in the future, be used against it, might be inclined to be defensive regarding its policy responses.

In the same vein, capacity of regional organizations has been one other important bottleneck to effective implementation of protocols. The process needs funding, institutional set up and operational capacity to act decisively. Although ECOWAS as an organization have gained impressive experience and developed important capacity in peacekeeping, intervention in conflict situation, mediation processes; there exist limited resources that often hamper quick responses to rapidly emerging situations that need immediate reactions.

The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance is undeniably one of the most significant African regional governance instruments adopted for promotion of Democracy and Good Governance. It represents a shared aspiration and a firm commitment by all West African countries to preserve and promote democratic governance as an indispensable mechanism that would contribute to Regional Political Stability and prevention of coups. However, ultimately success of the protocol is linked to a confluence of its formal framework and substantive dynamics of implementation of its goals. This requires strong political will, political co-operation and institutional commitment among member countries.

By creating a body of common regional principles on democratic rule, the protocol is still playing a pivotal role in how regions handle political change and promote

democracy in West Africa.

2.1.4 The Role of ECOWAS in Regional Stability

The Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, once primarily seen as a regional economic bloc for the unification of states, has over the decades undergone tremendous reforms, growing into a significant security and political actor in the West African sub-region. Founded on May 28 1975 with a mandate to promote economic cooperation and integration among West African states, the bloc's mandate would eventually expand beyond mere economic activities, to address prevailing challenges to regional political security, governance and development. A notable aspect of ECOWAS evolution into an instrument for political and security regional stabilization could be attributed to several factors, chiefly, the outbreak of internal civil strife across the sub-region in 1990s leading to immense displacement of persons as well as a threat to regional economic and social infrastructure, in such states as Liberia and Sierra- Leone.

Indeed, within this period, civil conflicts ravaged the sub-region leading to massive destruction of livelihoods, human cost, political instability, social collapse as well as threats to regional peace and security.

Such regional threat to ECOWAS states necessitated for regional organization for regional stabilization, to effectively intervene in countries with prevailing internal crisis to achieve, maintain or to help Restore Peace to the Region. ECOWAS thus stepped in during the Liberia crisis, which begun in 1989 to take up the role of military assistance for civil population as well as maintain peace. Thus ECOWAS created the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the regional peacekeeping force with the mandate to support peace initiatives in the country to maintain peace during civil wars in the Liberian crisis

(1990s). This would further spur subsequent role by ECOWAS in crisis management as Liberia and other subsequent countries provided learning experience.

ECOWAS played a pivotal role during the Sierra Leone crisis when the then democratically elected government was overthrown by coup d'etat, where it supported restoration of democracy in the country.

Similarly, ECOWAS participated in political stabilization efforts of the country following internal military crisis that could destabilize the country. The role of ECOWAS in restoring peace in the continent is enormous. The institution has been in operation since 1990s in the region to maintain peace in conflict countries which include Liberia and Sierra Leone that have had devastating civil wars.

These have given the sub-regional body experience and the legitimacy to interfere, through regional diplomatic means, for the sole objective of restoring peace, stability and order to member countries within the sub region. Thus ECOWAS now occupies an important regional security space in West Africa in order to promote political stability. By institutional framework, ECOWAS has established within the years various organs for the management of conflict in the region.

To cater for the growing mandate, ECOWAS came up with a mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security in 1999 to deal directly with crisis in countries within its sub- region in the West African sub region.

Among the structures available at the disposal of the institution for crisis management is the early warning system to enable ECOWAS anticipating crises across the sub region to intervene proactively to prevent its outbreak. There is also the Mediation and Security Council that supports efforts by ECOWAS to mediate conflict among member countries. The political management of crisis by ECOWAS can be broadly categorized into several thematic areas, namely preventive

diplomacy and mediation, election observers, sanctions and military intervention as well as peacekeeping operations that have since then become specialist roles for the organization within its area of coverage. In view of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) which is a brigade comprising of military, police, and civilian contingents drawn from the ECOWAS member states, is now one of ECOWAS instruments that could be utilized for crisis management in case of political instability in any of its member countries, as is the case now with Guinea Bissau, and some part of the region is at risk, it has given ECOWAS considerable space to exert its regional clout, but the organization's effectiveness depends upon internal Political Cooperation between the member states, such that when it comes to decision on various Political Crisis they would make the common decision or stand against it; as when there will be differences in opinion amongst member states it could hinder decisive actions and responses from ECOWAS to prevent the ongoing Crisis.

2.2 Thematic Review

This thematic review will focus on specific research discussions and debates that address major issues relevant to the study. While conceptual reviews discuss the meaning of concepts and their intellectual bases, this review examines how democracy, governance, and regional organisations play out in a practical West African context. This review highlights major issues that scholars discuss when focusing on the role of regional organisations in the enforcement of democracy and in the prevention of unconstitutional political change.

This paper will then critically examine the roles which ECOWAS plays in the prevention of unconstitutional changes of government.

It has been acknowledged by scholars of African politics that democratic governance has come to feature, as a central plank of academic debates and policy dialogues

with regard to political stability in Sub-Saharan Africa, not just in relation to national politics, but also with respect to the regional arena. Much academic attention, consequently, has been devoted to how political behaviour of member states can be shaped by regional bodies and how regional normative frameworks might shape patterns of domestic politics in Africa. In fact, the interest that scholars have demonstrated in West Africa, largely spurred by ECOWAS's increasing assertiveness in intervening in the various security challenges, and notably its proactivity in conflict resolution, mediation, peacekeeping and democratisation processes, can be attributed to the significant strides made by ECOWAS in regional co-operation and security building and most important, in setting certain norms in the region, in terms of constitutional rule and the maintenance of peace and stability within its member states. Therefore, this thematic discussion, with specific emphasis on ECOWAS' s enforcement of democratic norms in its member states, will cover key discussions concerning ECOWAS and the prevention of coups and the reestablishment of civilian government by using the literatures that focus on the matter in order to highlight both success and challenges of democratic governance efforts.

In addition, the discussion will try to provide insights into institutional mechanisms that may be involved in ECOWAS's actions, thereby facilitating an understanding of regional institutional behaviour.

2.2.1 The Enforcement of Democratic Norms by ECOWAS

In view of regional democratic norms, the enforcement actions by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have constituted a crucial part of its efforts at ensuring peace and constitutionalism in the region. Since its establishment in May 1975, and the subsequent adoption of democratic governance regimes such as the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in September 2001,

ECOWAS has been able to transform itself into a significant institution for safeguarding democratic practices among its member states. Regional regimes often attempt to shape member state behavior, to the extent possible, by creating certain standards or norm that each state is supposed to adhere to, or is pressured to conform to.

These standards also serve to create expectations concerning accepted state behavior that makes possible action in support of, for example, norms by providing a basis to criticize actions that deviate, and to build consensus to take action against states whose conduct departs from the norm (Emmerson and Smith, 1986, cited in Crawford, 2004, p. 3). Thus for ECOWAS, to enforce norms of democracy implies an insistence that states should abide by constitutionalism rather than resort to violent means or unconstitutional take-over of government.

The region can take certain actions as a regional group and with the collaboration of other partners to achieve this.

While it is true that Ekenjoko (2001: 43) notes ECOWAS' approach to promoting democracy has been palatable and had some measure of success, many scholarly analyses have suggested that ECOWAS, while, as a force that assisted in the displacement of military governments by establishing civilian rule, the organization does have some success but at other times the intervention efforts did not turn out as positively (Sdersten, 1989, Muni, 2002). ECO WAS may exert control over member states who desire to pursue divergent or contrasting paths on democratic principles by leveraging different measures, including: sanctions; diplomatic pressure, and mediation efforts ECOWAS' military interventionist behavior is always in situations where a regime gains power through undemocratic means, thereby, ostracizing any member state found guilty of conducting coups from the proceedings of the

organization, especially when ECO WAS is the source from which an economy sources financial aid, loans, and also market outlets. Sanctions the Council of Ministers, following recommendations of ECO WAS Committee on Administration and Finance, ECO WAS Committee on Energy or ECO WAS Commission on Trade, Customs and Free Movement, based on a commission's proposal to initiate sanctions against a member state for the goal of contributing to the restore of democratic rule according to the directives of the ECO W AS Charter on Democratic Governance and Sustainable Development. In the sanction process the country will experience suspension from all ECO WAS Organs and organizations, and will lose any diplomatic Recognition of its government.

Other Sanctions include the exclusion from any organizations and bodies related to ECO WAS as well as prohibition from attending and receiving sponsorship from international organizations, government bodies or even conferences recognized by the organization (ECOWAS Charter, 2001).

Diplomatic Isolation If an unconstitutional coup or power seizure happens, ECOWAS, very promptly mobilizes international forces towards withdrawing their representation in the concerned country' and diplomatic relations; this kind of coordinated action helps isolate the unconstitutional ruling regime, curbing its ability to transact business with global actors, thus reducing the flow of foreign resources (loans, aid etc.,). This action consequently would help mount pressures within the country to coerce the ruling regime into either reversing the action or negotiation with the political opposition in order to have the return of constitutional rule. Furthermore, this also support democratizing forces present in the country, (Crawford, 2004:9). ECOWAS Mediation ECOWAS has been the mediator in numerous interventions in peace-talks aimed at compelling struggling leaders to abdicate and

ensure either the immediate commencement of constitutional politics, or interim transitional government structures to realize said objectives (Onuoha, 2007) this helps establish after a coup, such that a group, through dialogue and negotiations can lead an interim government which eventually passes power to a transition to elections held within set parameters of time. ECOWAS's role as facilitator of mediation interventions has continued over the years, bringing support and facilitating political negotiations in order to resolve inter-state conflicts peacefully to help ensure regional stability, ECOWAS' efforts have gone as far as providing a facilitator in mediation, for instance, for the issues of Guinea and Niger, to just mention a couple of those not quite few interventions, (Soderstern, 1989)

These include: Nigeria's suspension from ECOWAS following the military coup of April 24, 1996 that brought Colonel Sani Abacha to power, with sanctions also imposed. ECOWAS suspended coupist leaders from Burkina-Faso, Guinea; Mali; Niger, Senegal etc. From travelling outside their countries and imposing various economic and other sanctions that ultimately resulted in the restitution of civilian rule. A memorable intervention by ECOWAS was when it helped to intervene in Nigeria's politics after a military coup. ECOWAS implemented several sanctions, including terminating Air Service with Nigeria, suspending its membership in ECOWAS on March 1996, after the country's second successful military coup that March 15, 1996. Bringing Brigadier General Yahya Jammeh to power in the Gambia. ECOWAS then sanctioned The Gambia's membership. ECOWAS recently suspended all activities including high-level political gatherings in Guinea on March 22, 2021 in response to an coup plot against President Alpha Condé, of February 2021, and sanctioned it on March 24, 2021.

ECOWAS interventions sometimes did not result in immediate reforms and

democratic institutions in, which results in several challenges facing ECOWAS to realize the political unity in region because there is differing or conflicting interests between member states that has impact on decisions made by ECOWAS?

Moreover, ECOWAS has sometimes faced challenges of financial inadequacy, as it also faces institutional and management weaknesses that have an impact on their ability to tackle efficiently regional issues in.

In addition, there are concerns that the national governments be reluctant to interfere too closely in the internal political decisions of their own country. However, the formal commitments by member states to the principles in the ECOWAS governance framework would mitigate this political anxiety of sovereignty that limits interference by a regional organization into affairs of an independent member state. Enforcement of such political condition could weaken the dissuasive effect of regional political norm, where political actors could have a chance to escape serious consequences and that will provide them a loophole to indulge in coups which are against the will of the people. It becomes an added impetus for politicians involved in an undemocratic act. That is why, experts insist on consistent enforcement of these norms by regional organization to avoid the issues stated. The other point which has become part of the discussion on norm enforcement is the importance of regional leadership and the role it plays in effective enforcement outcome. Regional leaders play a pivotal role in mobilization to support collective action, for intervention on political developments within member countries which may challenge the democracy norm of the region. However, if member states were experiencing political uncertainty at regional as well as national level, this action and collective leadership can face hurdles, because the most significant actors in the region, which often includes the influential states are involved in political unrest in their respective

countries. Thus the attention of their focus is elsewhere on the internal issues instead of the regional affairs. This indicates that consistent support by states for norm enforcement process matters a lot for effective policy and actions, as not everyone would be on same track in political crises or uncertainty at the regional level. It also includes effective norm diffusion where norms gain accept and become embedded in the Political system to discourage such behavior over a certain period. Norm diffusion is a learning phenomenon of the system, which require institutional and consistent support for democratic practices from member countries and the organization itself. Diplomatic ties with member States, engagement with civil society groups, and education on norms are crucial for fostering widespread societal support and acceptance of norms. So effective norm enforcement require two basic pillars which are the operational capacities of organizations, political commitment of the member states. So for successful norm enforcement the operation capacity of organization needs to be sufficient and states support towards collective action. Similarly if sanctions are implemented equally on all, irrespective of any affiliation with political powers or any other vested interests of states, the efficacy and legitimacy of norm will be enhanced. Conclusively, norm enforcement is crucial measure of the legitimacy and efficacy of the ECO WAS as the regional governance Institution, and, though the organization had been successful in deterring coups on several instances, more efforts and resources are needed to address some fundamental flaws in enforcement framework to ensure political governance on constant basis. So as it will enable the organization in the future to improve the norm enforcement on sustained basis to ensure the well-being of all member states.

2.2.2 Election Monitoring & Govt legitimation

In the discourse of democratization at regional level and its promotion, election

monitoring is widely regarded as an indispensable instrument, by means of which, credible elections and consequently the legitimation of democratic regime is assured. On this front, at regional level and most specifically in West African sub- region, the role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECO WAS) through its deployment of election observation missions is of paramount significance to support the integrity of electoral processes in its member states, reinforcing political norms that promote democratic standards. Judith Kelley asserts that, "election monitors deter fraud, detects, irregularity, and legitimate, and in so doing contributes to political processes to become fairer." Election monitoring or observation process is the process by which impartial stakeholders assess the compliance of electoral processes with applicable national legislation and internationally accepted democratic standards in the context of a member state's electoral cycle. Observers are appointed by the regional organization(s), including International Institutions as well as Civil society to assess, evaluate the overall credibility, transparent and Fairness of the electoral process. Use of election Monitoring is attributed to a concept of legitimacy of an election; a legitimate election, According to Robert Dahl, " " is an institution, that would not exist as an entity in a society that satisfied its members preference or even in society, where the system as a whole satisfied members' preferences

We all like to consider ourselves in good standing with the current order, whether we participate or not. The fact is, however, a legitimate government can be maintained only by conducting free and fair elections. Unfortunately, a faulty or fraudulent election is one sure way to lose legitimacy as a governing party or regime.

When an election result is contested, it will typically lead to all sorts of trouble, especially protests, civil discord, even violence, in some cases-including armed

conflict, especially between political contestants.

In less stable systems, it will mean a loss of faith and confidence in constitutional governance and in many cases this can open the door for anti-democratic actors and interests. It is a risk ECOWAS is trying to minimize through the regular deployment of election observers throughout the region and they use their observation mechanism to monitor elections during presidential elections, legislative polls and even general elections throughout ECOWAS' eleven member states. Observers examine if, all other factors being equal, an election was free and fair with a respect to the election campaign and balloting day on the entire spectrum ranging from pre-election registration to voting, including the result count. Pre-election activities such as voters' registration and collation, the allocation of public resources such as government-controlled media and public sector resources and the use and abuse of administrative or state resources, or undue state pressure, on potential candidates as well as voters are carefully assessed.

Also they check if there were, for example, restrictions or denial of campaign rights, especially to opposition candidates and parties.

As Andreas Schedler points out, "The menu of manipulation includes all the ways in which elections can be rigged". If Election Day conditions meet with the standards of democratic elections, then, observation reports will indicate if these conditions held up during the count and transmission of results. Such information contributes to creating a basis for public consensus on who has legitimately won an election.

The presence of an international observer corps will have a discouraging effect on the would-be fraudsters and intimidators if the observation process is rigorous and the information public is to be disseminated and accessible to both political contestants and the electorate. A report of the observation may thus be considered

an unbiased report and so serve to build the necessary confidence in the population that, despite political machinations, the will of the electorate will ultimately have an effect. The use of international observer teams over time has been associated with significant progress in improving electoral Transparency in many parts of West Africa, which, according to various scholars and observers has led to better organization of elections, a more consistent enforcement of elections laws and a greater respect for human rights of all political contestants.

Reports from the observation missions have become a primary means of generating and diffusing politically credible information that not only raises the prospects for the use of the rule of law, but also, where applicable, the prospects for intervention by regional organisations to facilitate democratic transition.

According to researchers such as David P. Hammer, and Leonardo Porto real who have studied election observers they argue: “election monitoring has the potential to strengthen democratic legitimacy in a number of important ways that include helping to establish government legitimacy in a new regime, facilitating transfers of power from one government to another and deterring the perpetration of fraud during electoral competition”. The effectiveness of electoral observation and assistance efforts, as I have suggested, is likely to be highest when efforts complement other strategies for promoting democratic governance. This observation is supported by evidence about the limitations of monitoring alone.

While observers generally focus their attentions on voting day procedures, there is evidence suggesting that election fraud or undue interference may often take place prior to polling day.

For instance, electoral authorities can attempt to unduly restrict registration lists and prevent certain parties from gaining full access to voter roll information

(Schraeder 2000); incumbent regimes can attempt to prevent certain political factions from registering as official parties; and political parties or even government officials may use the pre-election campaign period to buy votes or engage in extensive patronage campaigns that buy votes or prevent opponents from fully accessing voters through propaganda, access to media and election-related advertising (Schedler 1999). A potential weakness in election monitoring is that these pre-election acts can sometimes lead to elections that appear to be relatively free and fair when those on the ground on Election Day (or just after Election Day, to observe result count) witness relatively few irregularities. Another, limitation stems from the fact that it may be very difficult for outside monitors to detect when state officials influence election administrative processes-such as, determining polling locations that will disproportionately disadvantage one group of parties, or allocating resources that might influence election outcomes-in ways that can still impact a democratic electoral contest but may not lead to a clear instance of electoral fraud in terms of ballot count or rigging on Election Day (Schraeder, 2000).

The influence that an observation mission has upon a national government in terms of causing it to refrain from carrying out election fraud is based largely upon a demonstration that the observers may deter their fraud, for example through monitoring and observing all the stages of the electoral process. It's essential that international election monitors are seen to be neutral; impartial, independent, objective, fair, reliable, professional, effective, and representative, and are able to influence government to take action towards its commitments; but, there's a substantial difference between such recommendations being available to political parties, electorates and the general public as part of the process of democratization and actually getting governments to act upon them. The effectiveness of any

postelection process could be enhanced by including provisions that help governments to respond positively and in a timely way to an electoral report.

It's important to acknowledge that election monitoring alone has a number of intrinsic limitations and weaknesses to it.

As such it should be part of a larger approach that also comprises other elements of institution building that can help support the broader process of democratic elections, such as promoting democratic institutions like a credible and efficient electoral commission to administer elections, ensuring access of credible judicial oversight of election results and issues and fostering public civic education to enlighten and promote public participation and also strengthening the role of Civil Society Organizations and media, to perform election monitoring on all levels, thus complementing regional monitoring and improving transparent elections. ECOWAS enhance participation of its citizens in the democratic process; support free, fair and regular elections, and deepen the scope of intra state- conflict prevention, management, resolution, post conflict peace building and security. ECOWAS will strengthen, support and develop its instruments for conflict management in the prevention, early warning systems and response to threats to peace and security including any attempts to seize power by unconstitutional means, to facilitate effective implementation, for sustainable peace and security in the region through its current initiatives, including a well-defined election monitoring regime. This means that future ECOWAS election missions need to incorporate a significant element of support and guidance to national electoral bodies, provide meaningful recommendations on legal and policy reforms, monitor implementation of reforms and assist member states in building their internal capacity to prevent and mitigate fraud.

2.2.3 The Re-Emergence of Military Coups in West Africa

Western Africa's experience with a recent slew of military coups, and particularly the Sahel region's struggle with extremism, has ignited a fresh round of discussions on the viability and sustainability of democratic rule in the continent. Many academics say this includes poor governance, high levels of corruption, chronic insecurity, struggling economies, and low popular confidence in elected leaders. Western Africa's military coups also raise security concerns. The spread of extremist violence in the Sahel, however, seems to be the chief contributor to these coup-prone instances.

Civilian rulers struggle to provide security and protection against rebels or Islamist insurgents throughout the countries, *let alone* control territory or adequately respond to growing dangers facing the people.

Because civilian leaders often find themselves completely inadequate, the military wins legitimacy and the public's affection-making a military overthrow seem feasible. The events of neighboring coups. The influence of external events also cannot be ignored. Because the military successfully overthrown one government and in the next state as well, many neighboring governments are prone to copycatting the coups. Therefore, strong regional bodies and means to enforce its dictates, for security purposes as well as governance, are needed.

2.2.4 Case Study: Burkina Faso and the Breakdown of Democratic Order

Burkina Faso's situation is a classic case of how an alignment of threats – bad governance, institutional failure and, most importantly, insecurity – can come together and undermine democratic processes that, at the constitutional level, should be immune.

For decades the country was run by Blaise Compaor until the popular uprising of

2014 brought his rule to an end. The euphoria following the uprising raised high expectations that Burkina Faso would enter a period of reform that was more accountable, transparent, and inclusive. The transition introduced a new political roadmap and in 2015 multi-party elections brought Roch Marc Christian Kaboré to the presidency – a development that was widely seen as a significant democratic milestone and welcomed by both the regional body, ECOWAS, and the African Union. However, these positive developments did not prove sustainable. Almost immediately a rise in insurgent violence in the northern and eastern areas of the country began. Extremist groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) had been growing in activity and capitalized on the relative weakness of the state presence and lax security border to increase attacks in the north and east of the country, targeting not just the military and police but also local government officials and civilians.

Several citizens feared that the government was complacent toward worsening insecurity, as security apparatuses were poorly trained and equipped, while their operational capacity to counteract rising threats was minimal. Frustration peaked with the low-trust levels that the populace entertained with the ability of civilian rule, to manage the security of the country while economic and social problems like pervasive poverty and deficient infrastructure exacerbated tensions. The distrust against civilian government continued to grow and eventually led to a two time military takeover in a single year in 2022.

Military leaders justified the interventions on the grounds that the civilian government was not adequately addressing security issues and their takeovers serve to further illustrate the dangers that weak institutions and lack of security pose to stable democratic governance.

The events in Burkina Faso thus offers a number of key lessons. First, it underlines that formal constitutionality and democratic institutions alone can neither prevent or ensure political stability and accountability as in Burkina Faso they were not resilient enough to stand up to persistent insecurity.

Second, a degree of security and state legitimacy remains fundamental to the sustainability of democracy as well as the government's authority and credibility in office. States that can neither protect their populations, guarantee the delivery of justice, or provide a range of social services risk losing public trust, opening the door to other groups to provide what is seen as a viable alternative such as a military administration.

Third, and in line with the preceding point, in cases of prolonged security crisis and unconstitutional changes in power where institutions demonstrate weaknesses, it becomes ever more critical that governments demonstrate efficacy in providing for its security, maintain national integrity and sovereignty by curbing any expansion of insurgency or instability thereby enabling for a sustained presence of democratic practice.

The text further illustrates the interdependence between security, democratic legitimacy and good governance: ongoing lack of security together with insufficient state presence may result in erosion of trust by citizens which can undermined democratic legitimacy of the state, leaving space for non-state or military intervention, thus creating further instability and vulnerability for neighbours. Therefore Burkina Faso illustrates in miniature the dilemmas faced by many governments of West Africa and the tension to be navigated between the desire for security and the push for economic development under a democratic roof. The mere existence of the institution/framework is not enough to guarantee durable,

substantive stability, the strengthening of the capacity of state actors and robust security institutions being two requirements.

The most recent research empirically based, assessing ECOWAS interventions to protect democracy and prevent unconstitutional changes of regime, offer a “mixed result”.

Some of these interventions have undoubtedly been successful (through diplomacy, sanctions and peace-keeping operations) but only under some conditions: it depends on internal political processes and capabilities and the specific conditions of the various crises.

2.3 Empirical Review

However, ECOWAS’s interventions in securing peace and in the context of preserving the integrity of its member states from unconstitutional power transfers are mixed (Adebajo, 2002; Sesay, 2003). Empirically, as documented by ECOWAS itself and academic research, intervention in an effort to uphold democracy has, in many cases, been found wanting. The capacity of ECOWAS in promoting peace and the integrity of member states by the use of its diplomatic tools and interventions depends on the interplay between domestic state capacity, intra-regional politics and conflict resolution.

ECOWAS peacekeeping and military intervention

The other empirical dimension that deals with the effectiveness of ECOWAS is with respect to peacekeeping and military interventions to restore peace in member states and the establishment of democratic processes where they are eroded through political unrest and coups. Historical case studies of Liberia (1990-1997), Sierra Leone (1991-2002), and Guinea-Bissau (1998-1999) are relevant and highlight ECOWAS use of regional collective security in stabilizing some countries. These

interventions were aimed at providing order where political authority is compromised and the military has engaged in unconstitutional change of government.

Thus, ECOWAS intervention in peacekeeping through ECOMOG in Liberia was, for example, a decisive action to stop the warring factions from taking the capital and further destabilizing the country, enabling a relatively free and fair elections.⁵² Similarly, ECOWAS mission to Sierra Leone, in cooperation with the United Nations, helped to stabilize the post-civil war environment and create conditions for the emergence of civilian rule and Guinea-Bissau.

These examples demonstrate the possibility of ECOWAS use of collective security to forestall long-term crises in member states and prevent internal crisis from spilling over to other parts of the region, thereby undermining the principles of collective security. But, the success of these interventions was conditional. In Guinea Bissau, for instance, it was established that ECOWAS could resolve some aspects of the political crisis, but this depended on the willingness of the warring elites, and ECOWAS could not achieve peace that lasted. More generally, it was argued that ECOWAS operations were usually constrained by the willingness and capabilities of the domestic state to uphold the principles and terms of its engagement.

2.3.1 Diplomatic and Political Interventions

The ECOWAS has been predominantly using diplomacy and political means - such as the use of sanctions, mediating crises and observing elections - to avert unconstitutional changes in government. Empirical evidence has shown that these means has helped to achieve some positive results in some cases. In The Gambia in 2016–17 political crisis, for instance, ECOWAS engaged in diplomatic pressures, imposing sanctions, and even using the threat of military action in response to what

then became a widely contested presidential election after ruling leader Yahya Jammeh refused to accept the outcome.

This eventually pushed the leader to give up power peacefully and ECOWAS demonstrated its ability to assert authority in enforcing democracy without resorting to immediate use of arms (Jaye, 2018).

Sanctions have also often been employed in a more targeted manner, imposing travel bans, assets freezes, suspension of membership in ECOWAS etc, as means to force member states undergo unconstitutional political transitions into returning to democracy. Empirical analyses suggest that they could, in theory, act as an 'early warning sign and a strong deterrent by communicating regional disapproval of unconstitutional governments' and deter potential coup leaders (Aning & Larney, 2010). Nonetheless, empirical analyses also points to continuing challenges of implementation; that the imposition of such sanctions and political negotiations does not always guarantee the quick compliance of the concerned country or a smooth and speedy transition back to democratic governance. Often members of ECOWAS would resist the regional organization's decisions for several reasons including internal dynamics of domestic politics, alliance with other member countries, or simply as defence of their national sovereignty.

Thus research on the recent coups in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso showed that the effectiveness of sanctions as well as political dialogues has been somewhat hampered by the slowness in applying measures or delayed decision-making processes which would dilute their deterrent impact (Bs, 2021; Konat, 2022).

2.3.2 The Role of Domestic Institutional Strength

In general, the empirical literature shows that the strength of domestic institutions plays a significant role in the effectiveness of ECOWAS interventions. States with

democratic institutions such as independent judiciaries, professional civil services and credible election management bodies are often better able to resist outside pressure and are better able to withstand the effects of the kinds of political crises that often trigger ECOWAS interventions (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). By contrast, those with relatively weak institutions and centralizing tendencies have a propensity to suffer much more prolonged instability even in spite of regional pressure.²² Guinea-Bissau is one good example where the collapse of democratic standards, characterized by repeated coup attempts, political instability, as well as a lack of state capacity and factionalized military power was exacerbated by weaknesses in the state institutions themselves so much that ECOWAS' mediation failed to bring lasting stability (Jaye, 2019). In contrast the intervention in the Gambia was more straightforward given a relatively stronger existing structure (Pace and Lammert, 2019).

There are three areas where data limits the current literature on ECOWAS interventions. The first area relates to the availability of data, especially data pertaining to the ECOWAS intervention process. Second, the measurement of ECOWAS' effectiveness may be difficult because the successful short-term stabilization may not necessarily lead to democratic transitions. Last but not least, disentangling the impact of ECOWAS intervention from that of other countries and international organisations, especially in conflict zones, is quite tricky due to the combined impact of various international actors like France and the UN.

Notwithstanding these limitations, evidence seems to indicate that ECOWAS has a very useful role to play in maintaining regional stability, but that role is constrained by both the structural features of member states and by the politics involved at the regional and national level. Evidence from case studies and statistical analyses

points to the necessity of ECOWAS for ensuring democracy and preventing coups but this can only take place as an alternative to further instability; it is in short the effective complement to the existence of robust democratic systems and the capacity to resolve problems within individual states (Bratton & van de Walle 1997). So, the empirical evidence strongly suggests that interventions, while they are of varying degrees of success in achieving their democratic objectives, can assist in limiting such phenomena as the impact of militarized power in politics and the overthrow of democratically-elected leaders in West Africa. The intervention could be a successful vehicle for stabilizing a conflict situation, de-militarizing politics and ensuring the swift transition back to democratic civilian rule. It is very clearly not a substitute for an indigenous-democratic framework, good governance, and proactive policy solutions within the state that prevent political and economic crisis and thus intervention.

2.4 Theoretical Review

Theory for Analysis The present research is guided by a theoretical framework that offers analytic lenses for comprehending enduring unconstitutional governments in West Africa. The framework for this research is based on two overarching bodies of theories: theory on democratic consolidation and theory on complex for regional security.

2.4.1 Democratic Consolidation Theory

Democratic Consolidation Theory Democratic consolidation theory is an established and important part of political science concerning what determines why some states achieve and maintain democratic forms of government, and others only partially establish these or ultimately devolve to some form of autocracy. The assumption is that it is insufficient for democracy to simply achieve an election procedure. Instead,

there needs to be an institutional structure which society has adopted which means that democratic procedure and process becomes 'the only game in town'. This means, according to Linz and Stepan (1996), all actors within politics, including the current government, opposition parties, the military, and civil society must embrace democratic norms and procedures as the accepted rules by which political and state life is organised and legitimated.

Key elements of democratic consolidation include:

Consolidated democracies are contingent upon institutional robustness. This means having strong, independent, and professional institutions that are able to administer the law, arbitrate disputes, and maintain mechanisms of checks and balances. These include functioning electoral commissions, an impartial judiciary, a responsible legislature, and an efficient and neutral bureaucracy that facilitate the orderly and predictable functioning of elections.

Where such institutions are underdeveloped, politicized or lack authority, rule of law falters and avenues for unconstitutional intervention open up.

Political elites' dedication. These democratic theorists identify the willingness of political leaders and elites to adhere to the constraints of democratic institutions and principles, such as elections that reflect the preferences of voters, constitutions that limit the power of government, and peaceful transfers of power as critical. When elites act without regards for such democratic ideals because they are more focused on personal power or partisan advantage then democratic systems are vulnerable to manipulation, electoral manipulation or coup attempts. It is the leadership behavior which matters the most, it is the leaders not necessarily that of their followers who make or breaks a democratic system (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986).

Citizens support.

This argument holds that without the support and belief of the citizens, a democracy will likely not to last. Citizens in democratic countries ought to support and value democratic institutions. If the governments lose its credibility as a result of corruption, an inability to provide basic needs and the social and political exclusion, the citizens lose faith in their government and can result in an increase in both civil conflicts and possibly in the chance that either soldiers will step in to take over the political power or other groups will overthrow the regime (Finer, 2002).

Effective Governance Performance. The ability of the government to provide quality public goods and services to its citizens can greatly legitimize the democratic government. If such is missing, there are more possibilities to see an eruption of violence in a society and more justification for military takeovers (Finer, 2002). In countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea for instance, democracy is in place on a basis of constitution, elections and parliaments, but democratic culture and institutions have not been firmly established (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997, pp 102–4; Gyimah-Boadi, 2004).

They have remained somewhat fragile, because of ongoing internal electoral disputes and weak institutional capacity; they have often remained prone to various corrupt practices, as well as ongoing violence.

For this reason, they continue to be referred to as being ‘transitions’ or ‘in the process of’, and of ‘democratization’, rather than having a democracy. Such view, is of the opinion that recurring military coups in West Africa are not necessarily due to the non-desirability of democracy as such, but rather are indications that the consolidation processes are far from complete (Finer, 2002). Examples of the cases like Burkina Faso (2022), Mali (2021, 2020), Burkina Faso (2015), and guinea are cases where military putsch occurred after widespread corruption allegations against

politicians, economic malaise, perceived political instability and deteriorating security situation. Moreover, for democratic theorist, such as Diamond (1999), democratic transition should be followed by democratic consolidation processes.

The consolidation phase involves making democracy routinised as norms of political life through institutions, political parties, and social organizations which will not make any change in the fundamental character of a social system without any resistance or any particular struggle with external actors (Finer, 2002).

From this perspective, democratic consolidation is understood as the process by which democracy becomes the “only game in town, meaning by and large political actors, citizens and elites will come to the conclusion that in the political arena there are more to gain than in attempting to overthrow a democratic regime” (Diamond, 1999). Thus, consolidation entails the institutionalization and practice of norms of procedural democracy which are accompanied by the internalization of values such as respect for rule of law, tolerance of dissent, minority rights, peaceful transfer of power, and due process of law. These norms will be internalised through various social spheres of citizens such as in educational institution, media, non-governmental organizations etcetera.

In other words, for the survival of any given democracy, it must be consolidated. In most cases, such as Burkina Faso (Bs, 2021), Mali (Konat, 2022), Guinea and Niger, democracy as a practice was only consolidated at a partial or fragile stage when the regimes were overtaken by a military take-over.

To recapitulate Democratic Consolidation Theory offer an excellent explanatory framework for the vulnerability of West African democracies to coups and instability, emphasizing that, Robust institutions, elite embrace of democratic norms, public endorsement of democracy and governmental performance reinforce the stability of

democracy; coups and unconstitutional changes of state can often reflect failed consolidation as oppose to the fact of democracy; a more consolidated form of democracy would indeed increase resilience through more complete approaches at strengthening both institutions capacity and public participation. These offer a good start on analyzing why unconstitutional change has been persistent in West Africa, a starting point for understanding ECOWAS response and their impact as well as how they shape how the local political dynamics can further their goals.

2.4.2 Regional Security Complex Theory

It was developed in 2003 by Barry Buzan and Ole Waver of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Lund University, Sweden. RSCT describes security not just as a matter for each nation-state, but of a closely linked regionally connected structure in particular areas. According to Buzan and Waver, security interdependence is normally patterned into regionally-based clusters: "security complexes."

This regional perspective means a nation state's actions regarding security concerns others near it in a regional bloc, this affects them too, therefore the problem becomes of concern to a group of states.

These could include states dealing with not only standard military concerns, but non-traditional ones too like political destabilization, conflict, insurrection and even humanitarian crises. The main argument for RSCT is that you cannot look at the individual state, when it comes to security, if the actor in the region has concerns in its area it automatically looks after itself the best way it can. Buzan explained this well: "The security of each actor in a region cannot realistically be considered apart from the others. "In West Africa for instance, any military overthrow, conflict or breakdown in democracy could see a knock-on effect in other states, through several possible ways: Refugees In an unstable region a crisis can trigger large migrations.

Alexander Betts explains that "refugees are a product of political failure and insecurity." As of November 2022 it is estimated there have been more than 2,300,000 refugees due to military action across Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. This places an additional humanitarian, military and economic pressure on neighboring states. Insurgency the movement of terrorist or separatist movements over porous borders is a cause of regional concern. The Economist reports that in the Sahel, armed group have managed to penetrate across the borders between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, causing instability and issues with each respective government. Stathis Kalyvas states that "Civil wars are rarely confined within national borders." Political contagion a successful military takeover by those unhappy with their governments, or similar unconstitutional political intervention may empower opposition group or would-be generals in neighboring countries to attempt a similar action through a demonstration effect. The RSCT framework is used to further examine the political context of the intervention and its ramifications by viewing the security system as interconnected and a coup in any particular state or region has serious security implications for the others states within the same region, security of all states in a given region affects that of another within that specific region.

When referring to West Africa, it highlights ECOWAS's significance for preventing or addressing such potential situations, with the idea that such regional co-operations can lead to a decrease in, or removal of political instabilities; The region's security has always historically had direct connections, for example ECOWAS interventions aimed at resolving coups and coups-in-waiting are underpinned by the belief that the security of one member state is inextricably linked to that of the others as argued by Aning; that regional security co-operation is "the result of shared vulnerabilities" of ECOWAS members. There are a variety of empirical examples in

support of such theory. The crisis that took place in Gambia in 2016 was a successful demonstration in action of RSCT where ECOWAS backed diplomacy alongside military action forced President Yahya Jammeh to concede power. In 1990 and again in 2003, ECOWAS's intervention into neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively, stabilized both nations that have also become entwined politically with each other as well as having struggled with democracy at similar points in their history. Additionally, ECOWAS's intervention into Gambia had ramifications on neighboring Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. There is a range of literature relating to how RSCT highlights the relationship between institutional forms and their impact on security. ECOWAS 's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, which now includes the standby Force, and also its role in the crisis in Gambia demonstrate how a regional entity with effective governance mechanisms attempts to mitigate the negative impact of domino effects of destabilization and erosion of democratic standards.

To conclude, Regional Security Complex Theory presents an excellent framework for understanding why the numerous political crises occurring across West Africa cannot simply be approached as individual phenomena. In one country, instability, failed leadership or coup will invariably lead to impacts on neighboring countries through, refugees, insurrections spill over' and a diffusion of similar political crises into the area that encourages further coordinated regional action through, the ECOWAS as example. For in it appears the relationship between regional policy and domestic-political policy, and in the region democratic, institutional sustainability, is inseparable.

2.5 Gap in Literature

Even with a plethora of literature dealing with both Democracy, Governance and

ECOWAS interventions in West Africa, there appears to remain several areas of research that would deserve further investigation. Although there have been a substantial amount of studies dealing with the various ECOWAS interventions, very few of those research contributions have undertaken a detailed consideration of ECOWAS, itself, its own organizational makeup, its decision-making processes or the actual internal mechanisms within which its bureaucratic function operate. It is critically important that, how ECOWAS prioritizes and allocates resources towards specific conflicts that how it manages its members and internal disagreements have on the efficacy of their actions be further elucidated. For example, there is little that has been published on the role that the agendas of member state, discord between regional leaders or power dynamics within ECOWAS on particular intervention. Unfortunately the research thus far in the subject area have, rather unfortunately treated such governance deficits as distinct issues separate from the wider region such as poor, the 'endemic corruption', weakness of government and failure in the provision of, essential service etc. Nevertheless, there has been some research highlighting the critical impact of a domestic structure being linked to regional interventions, and that the latter is limited by, not only, the former, but vice versa – if a member state has 'democratic fragility' then this will impede the influence and impact of regional sanctions and mediation. Existing research into this subject predominantly looks at specific countries, in contrast to systematically taking a comparative or cross country perspective in West Africa. Through such an approach one would gain further clarity on those specific characteristics, structures and regional conditions that are indicative of coups and render the region highly resistant to regional solutions. And there still remains that for far less the focus of empirical work in ECOWAS interventions in the region, has been dedicated to the

economic, social inequality and public trust dimensions that drive unconstitutional interventions; by these factors a much clearer and better understanding would emerge about why coups persist even within the strong presence of regional institutions, of this I hope to offer insight on, the ECOWAS has been observed by scholars to effect other states although few studies exist that systematically establish this connection, within West Africa. Through quantitative methods this can indeed be measured and evaluated, thus allowing for further understanding of which West Africa nation-state the coup/political crisis has spilled over and may cause for more proactive interventions on behalf of ECOWAS. To bridge this divide in research, This present study will examine how domestic democratic governance in West Africa has contributed to military coup- coups d'état that persist regardless of strong, formal institutions that seek to defend against it, and to ECOWAS's response, thus bridging these conceptual gaps to help foster greater regional resilience.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Two complimentary and robust theories form the undergirding for this study; that of Democratic Consolidation Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory, which

together, provides a framework to understand and explore why and how the recurrent wave of military intervention has continued in the region despite the proliferation of various regional democratic governance regimes. Through the use of both, we are able to explore multi-layered perspectives, both domestically as well as regionally as an impetus to political stability. According to the latter, Democratic Consolidation, defines a consolidated democracy, not just as a country in possession of regular elections or an elected government, but more significantly as a democracy where political institutions become deeply rooted, and which has become the basis for legitimatizing the power holders in the eyes of the citizens (Linz & Stepan:1996,p5).

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) on democratic consolidations suggests that a political situation becomes consolidated once political actors consider democratic games as the 'only acceptable game', and when other actors or masses deem the process legitimate and valid, democratic processes have a higher chance of succeeding.

With the consolidation of democracy, the probability for unconstitutional changes, such as the ever present coups in the region, is reduced considerably. In the context of West African countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea amongst others, many still in transitioning or semi-consolidated state where although formal systems of elections and constitutionalism may be in place, their efficacy often comes under question due to weak and poor service delivery mechanisms, corruption as well as fraudulent electoral manipulation which may render governance dysfunctional, creating an atmosphere where other actors including the military may be able to hijack and perpetrate extra-constitutional change in the name of national security, and in the national interest. Moreover, citizens' confidence in elections, the capacity

of democratic institutions to address their needs, the integrity of election management bodies and the political accountability mechanism of the government significantly strengthens the regime in any country. The level of civic trust in democratic institutions is of paramount importance to the success or failure of democratic process (Diamond, 2005).

When a country consistently demonstrates its inability to solve socioeconomic problems and ensure security, and when government institutions seem impervious and unresponsive, citizen trust diminishes, and they may even tolerate or welcome coups as a potential solution.

In a word, Democratic Consolidation Theory places emphasis on building democratic regimes which would ensure for adequate, effective and efficient functioning institutions with the full confidence of the masses and elite stakeholders thereby securing them from such unconstitutional regime change, by also establishing legitimate rule. Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) The study is primarily anchored on Robert Waver's theory on regional security complexes (RSCT), a sub-discipline in international relations which emphasizes how threats and security perceptions between units that are sufficiently interact with one another such that their securities are inextricably linked, and will thus find any of them to be preoccupied with the securities of all, thereby taking measures on each.³ The theory holds that no country security problem can be studied in isolation, but must necessarily be understood in the context of how its own internal politics might affect the security situation within its broader neighbourhood (Buzan & Waver, 2003). The core idea of RSCT, in analyzing any region or security complex is that of a meshed interaction in which events of insecurity in a single state could have effects beyond its immediate borders thereby threatening the stability of neighbors, which is in turn,

able to spread with ease throughout the complex through such mediums such as, cross border flows of refugees, insurgency and, an upsurge in organised crime.

The approach further posited the idea of shared securitization: by which shared threat perceptions among members of a complex will necessarily have implications for political and institutional relationships. It implies that events, which lead to a breakdown of these ties, might precipitate security crisis within the security complex of the region and may thus be an impetus for militarism in order to restore political equilibrium and security as and when any internal disturbance is perceived to threaten the regional security framework. On application of RSCT into the context of West African region, regional body ECOWAS represents a significant agent.

ECOWAS intervention in crises in member states has taken various forms including peacekeeping (ECOMOG in Liberia, Sierra Leone), election observation mission, mediations and sanctions.

Its intervention efforts, albeit with limitations, aim at combating political spillages and threats to regional security within its constituent member states. For example, ECOMOG's military intervention into Liberia in the early 1990s successfully resolved and prevented further deterioration in the security situation. ECOWAS was instrumental in mediating the Gambia crisis of 2016/17, forcing the defeated incumbent president, Yahaya Jammeh to relinquish power after initial resistance and stand down from the presidency. The continued coups in Mali and Burkina Faso exemplify how a problem in one country spills into another to precipitate similar political changes with ripple effect.

Hence by blending Democratic Consolidation Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory, this paper views Military Interventions as a problem which is a culmination of domestic political weaknesses and a regional security concern where any

destabilising occurrence can easily pose threats and or undermine the efforts of the entire regional body at maintaining peace and stability in the zone.

The dual-level analysis from domestic factors like lack of good governance and effective state institutions in countries affected by military coups and, at the regional level in order to counter regional instability through the deployment of military force or sanctions can be explored. The framework therefore provides for us an effective research approach. A dual approach means we are examining the problem at two interconnected levels: Domestic Level: where issues of weak democratic consolidation as evidenced by government's inability to provide security, manage the economy and run efficient government structures creates an enabling condition for unconstitutional political intervention or take over of government, and where publics' are either oblivious to issues or tolerant of extra constitutional regime change.

Regional Level: where a regional body such as ECOWAS may decide on collective military or non- military action in intervention in any member state experiencing political or regime crisis; whose capacity to perform such tasks, may be enhanced or limited by its internal structures, political goodwill and coherence amongst members. The approach is thus a pragmatic one.

3.1.1 Assumptions of the theory

The study is based on three principal assumptions derived from our chosen theorizations of the Democratic Consolidation Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory.

These three are deemed to be critical for a proper understanding of and as research guide to political instability and the problem of unconstitutional military interventions in West Africa: Fragility of Democratic Regimes in West Africa(DCT): 3 Robert Waver, 'The European Home Security Space', (2004).

The general assumption being, democratic system is always weak and shaky if there are deficient govern mental institutions. When there is weak and ineffective institutional framework, for all purposes that can lead to corruption, manipulation of elections, lack of public interest in politics and failure to deliver goods and services to the public. This is captured by Linz and Stepan (1996, pp 74-5), whom assert that a democratic system need not imply merely the practice of competitive elections: that more over in many countries especially the third world a democratic opening cannot be consolidated solely through elections. The same logic holds true with regard to the establishment of democracy, which goes beyond mere elections and demands thorough institutions to succeed and to stabilize democracy.

The failure of these conditions makes an opening up towards democracy susceptible to military coup.

Electoral Credibility and Accountability as Preconditions for Democratic Consolidation:

This study assumes that democratic consolidation requires prior attainment of democratic consolidation that implies the credibility of the electoral processes, adherence to the rule of law and effective accountability structures (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 34). In the words of the authors, whenever elections are thought to have been unfair, state institutions responsible for conducting elections to be biased or their members to be accountable neither democratic legitimacy, nor the stability of constitutionality as against extra constitutionality could be guaranteed. If citizens lack faith in constitutionalism, a climate conducive for militarization is created (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 35). The core assumption emphasizes the significance of the legitimacy derived from institutional procedures and practices to maintain democracy, as, 'the greater the people's faith in a democratic order, the

more tolerant they will be of its inherent imperfections and more likely to remain loyal to it' (Lipset, 1963: 89; Huntington, 1991: 413). Henceforth, this chapter assumes that this relationship is pertinent in understanding political stability of democracies, for without public faith in a constitutionally established system there cannot be enduring democratic stability. Political interconnectedness within the West African regional security complex

The principal assumption from the literature concerning the Regional Security Complex Theory is that the destabilisation within one state does not operate as an isolated phenomenon and this could have both direct and indirect influences upon the other states within that specific regional complex (Buzan and Waver, 2003: 188). Instability within a state of West Africa such as a coup or a protracted governance crisis can then result in a political contamination through various channels including: the movement of refugees across states' borders; the spread of rebellions/insurgencies to neighboring states; or the proliferation of demonstrations inspired by unconstitutional coups elsewhere. (Buzan and Waver, 2003: 188; Odhiambo and Williams, 2006)

This hypothesis of the political interdependence of states in the West African complex ensures this dissertation encompasses both micro-level national and macro-level regional impacts and will enable a clearer conceptualisation and examination of the interactions between these processes.

Role of Regional Organisations in Stabilisation and De-Stabilisation

The premise of the research design in this dissertation will be based on the assumption that regional organisations like ECOWAS are capable of managing political transitions in member states provided that their enforcement mechanisms (imposed selectively as well as collectively) are used both rigorously and collectively. These enforcement instruments could range from sanctions to peacekeeping operations; from mediating negotiations to imposing electoral

sanctions and providing assistance to ensure transparent elections. (Toulan and Jorgen, 2011) Thus, the efficacy of the regional organisation in restoring political stability will hinge on the 'political will, and economic and institutional resources and internal coherence of the region and its constituent states' (Toulan and Jorgen, 2011). A failure to exert adequate and consistent enforcement within the regional structure would likely undermine the legitimacy and authority of the regional organisations' interventions, thereby providing room for additional extra-constitutional intervention. Therefore, and to avoid an incomplete analysis the, present research would assume that ECOWAS has an intrinsic capacity to affect the stability in member states: as is argued the organisation's 'mechanisms can have a stabilizing function to de-escalate intra-state conflicts and prevent civil wars' (Scharpf, 2006: 292, in Kouraogo, 2013).

Domestic and Regional Dynamics Interconnection The final assumption drawn is that the interconnection between the political system of the country in question and regional security dynamics has an influence on whether particular countries succumb to civil war or not. Thus, political instability within a nation and, to a lesser extent, regional crises contribute to civil war because of, 'a reinforcing spiral of crisis.' (Buzan and Waver, 2003: 209) More accurately, Weak state institutions within the country in question have been identified as contributing to the political crisis and regional issues and the inadequate response from regional actors exacerbate such problems (Buzan and Waver, 2003).

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Application this thesis applies democratic consolidation theory and regional security complex theory within the West African region to provide a nuanced understanding of the causes and impacts of the recent increase in military interventions.

Application of Democratic Consolidation Theory I have taken a perspective of Democratic Consolidation theory, this thesis aims to demonstrate that the fundamental prerequisites of democratic consolidation such as credible election processes, efficient and independent state institutions and public confidence in the established order, is what the author will be using to illustrate how military coups tend to be justified within several West African countries even after a transition to democratic rule has occurred. Democratic Consolidation Theory addresses key features of post-transitional societies including: the nature of institutions that manage the state; election procedures used in post-transitional countries; and public confidence in democratic governance. This study, using a democratic consolidation approach will help answer the question: why did the existing regimes fail to consolidate their democratisation in the face of political instability, making these countries highly vulnerable to coups d'état despite the implementation of various formal democratic institutions such as constitutions, elections and other relevant state structures. Application of Regional Security Complex Theory The Regional Security Complex theory is used in this thesis to study the spatial distribution of Political Instability in the region and how they are linked to each other in ECOWAS to provide a framework on what kind of interventions the Organisation should undertake. This means that it is hoped that this dissertation will use this theory to answer the following: The ways in which Political instability is disseminated across national borders within ECOWAS? And the influence that ECOWAS collective interventionist mechanisms have on enhancing political stability in member states.

Political Contagion: the knock-on effects of coups or crises in one country spilling over into neighbours. Cross-Border Security Challenges: how conflict and displacement spill over into domestic political realities. Effectiveness of Regional

Mechanisms: how ECOWAS interventions- diplomacy, sanctions, peacekeeping and mediation-help and hurt regional democracy and rule of law.

This combination of approaches enables an investigation at the micro- (national) and macro- (regional) levels in order to demonstrate how domestic governance challenges and regional security issues reinforce and mutually shape each other.

Therefore, it is an approach which moves beyond an exclusively national and internal -focused political and institutional framework, the latter being characteristic of much of democratic consolidation literature and into the realms of shared, multi-jurisdiction political and security realities that the Regional Security Complex Theory analyses. In addition, since ECOWAS operations-e.g. Sanctions, peacekeeping missions, and mediation attempts- are inherently regional in nature, it implies the need for a theoretical analysis which captures these wider system dynamics, which again makes use of Regional Security Complex Theory more salient. Moreover, when it comes to military coups and the response by ECOWAS to coup attempts, both The Democratic Consolidation Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory suggest that the analysis needs to be sensitive to the structure and internal characteristics of regional bodies, as well as their relationships with their member states- hence the incorporation of the internal composition of ECOWAS in the analysis. Finally, both The Democratic Consolidation Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory call for the analysis of events and decision-making over time to trace causal pathways –hence the need to adopt an analytical approach that takes an event or sequence of events seriously in the interpretation of the research and data being analyzed.

It is precisely these combined approaches which provide both breadth and depth, offering a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections between national governance challenges and the challenges of regional insecurity and stability that

arise as a consequence of coups, for instance in Burkina Faso, and indeed across the wider ECOWAS region.

In addition to these key theoretic linkages which form part of the analytical framework that the study has adopted as discussed previously: The research also implicitly takes cognizance of other scholars and think tank perspectives that underscore the dynamic nexus between governance, state fragility and regional stability in West Africa as highlighted above when discussing some aspects of the theory on which the current study will draw from.

3.2 Hypotheses Null

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between weak implementation of ECOWAS democracy and good governance protocols and the persistence of military coups in West Africa.

Hypothesis 2:

The internal composition and dynamics of ECOWAS do not significantly affect the occurrence of military coups in West Africa.

3.3 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, employing a case study approach to explore the persistence of military intervention in West Africa, with a primary focus on Burkina Faso. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this research because it allows for the in-depth exploration of complex political phenomena, governance dynamics, and regional institutional mechanisms, which cannot be adequately captured through purely quantitative methods. Qualitative research enables the study to engage with the nuances of institutional behavior, political

decision-making, and social legitimacy, all of which are central to understanding why unconstitutional changes of government continue to occur despite formal democratic frameworks.

The case study design is selected because it facilitates a comprehensive, context-specific analysis of political instability within a defined setting.

By focusing on Burkina Faso, the study is able to examine the interaction between domestic governance challenges, public trust in institutions, electoral credibility, and military involvement, alongside regional enforcement mechanisms implemented by ECOWAS. This design provides a rich, descriptive, and interpretative understanding of the factors that contribute to unconstitutional interventions, enabling the identification of patterns, causal mechanisms, and contextual variables that influence democratic stability. In addition to focusing on Burkina Faso, the study incorporates comparative insights from other West African countries, such as Mali, Guinea, and Niger, to provide a broader regional perspective. This approach allows for cross-case analysis, which helps identify shared patterns and divergences in governance failures, ECOWAS interventions, and the recurrence of coups.

By combining an in-depth single-country focus with broader regional comparisons, the study achieves both analytical depth and comparative breadth, enhancing the validity and generalizability of its findings.

The research design also emphasizes a process-oriented investigation, examining the sequence of events leading to military interventions, the responses of domestic institutions, and the role of ECOWAS enforcement mechanisms. This temporal dimension allows the study to analyze causality and interdependence between domestic political dynamics and regional security measures. Moreover, by situating Burkina Faso within the wider West African context, the study captures the regional

spillover effects and political contagion mechanisms highlighted by Regional Security Complex Theory.

Finally, the qualitative case study design aligns with the study's theoretical foundation. Democratic Consolidation Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory require an analytical framework capable of capturing institutional, political, and social complexity. Qualitative case studies enable the researcher to explore these theoretical concepts in practice, investigating how governance failures, electoral malpractice, citizen perceptions, and regional interventions interact to shape political outcomes.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The study relies primarily on secondary data sources, which provide comprehensive historical, institutional, and policy information necessary to examine the persistence of military interventions and the effectiveness of ECOWAS governance mechanisms. Secondary data collection is particularly appropriate because it allows for analysis of existing evidence, official records, and scholarly interpretations, ensuring that the study is grounded in reliable, verifiable information. Sources include: Primary institutional documents: ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), communiqués of ECOWAS summits, statements from the ECOWAS Peace and Security Council, and reports of ECOWAS election observation and peacekeeping missions. These sources offer insight into the organization's policies, decision-making processes, and interventions in member states. Academic literature: Scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals, books, and monographs on West African politics, democracy, security, and military coups. These sources provide theoretical frameworks, historical context, and empirical evidence for analysis.

Policy briefs and reports: Research outputs from international and regional organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the International Crisis Group (ICG), and think tanks, which offer contemporary analyses and policy recommendations. Government and NGO documents: Official government reports, parliament records, electoral commission reports, and publications by civil society organizations operating in Burkina Faso and other ECOWAS member states, detailing governance practices, electoral outcomes, and responses to political crises. Media coverage: Reporting by reputable regional and international media outlets on political events, military interventions, and public reactions in Burkina Faso and across the West Africa region.

These provide contemporary and qualitative accounts of the unfolding political landscape. These various secondary data sources complement each other, offering a multi-faceted view of the phenomenon under investigation. Triangulation of data from these diverse sources ensures robustness and validity of the findings.

Given the nature of the study and the challenges associated with accessing primary data due to political or logistical constraints, secondary sources provide sufficient richness and depth to conduct rigorous analysis.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

4.0 Research Design & Methodology

The methodology applied for the analysis of data. The analysis of relevant documents and literature sources through qualitative content analysis is carried out. Analysis is targeted at detecting patterns related to governance outcomes, electoral credibility,

institutional deficiencies, ECOWAS intervention, regional political processes.

It further applies comparative interpretations to relate the Burkina Faso case to general trends of the regional political landscape.

3.6 Sampling Method

Because of the nature of the study which utilizes a Qualitative approach and secondary sources, a purposive sampling technique will be used. A purposive sample includes people who have the characteristics or experiences that you want to study (Burns, 2000). By using purposive sample technique, the researcher could deliberately focus and select those documents, case studies and events, which provided important data and relevant information pertaining to this particular topic. The selection is aimed at providing insight on governance outcomes, electoral reliability and the processes of intervention within ECOWAS.

Sampling procedures for this research study included: Sample of Case Study Country - Burkina Faso's military coups, democratic transitions and the regional intervention made it appropriate for this research topic on exploring the nexus between local governance and intervention mechanisms in regional politics.

Case study - in addition, comparative examples with the other west African states of Mali, Guinea, and Niger-were used to capture broader understanding on governance failure, ECOWAS intervention and election reliability-and also-identifying and compare and contrast the commonalities and differences. Samples of Documents - ECOWAS protocols, Official statements of the regional organization, Election outcomes reports from different states, scholarly and professional literature regarding governance, electoral practices and ECOWAS interventions as well as policy analyses from respected research bodies and organizations on these issues. These data were selected for their reliability and validity concerning governance

issues in ECOWAS, election outcome processes and interventions by the regional organization, in as far as democratic governance and regional stability is concerned.

Period of Study - this research will limit data that has a timeline post 2001 when ECOWAS Protocol on democracy and good governance was promulgated. The data used were limited to that period since the study on ECOWAS's interventionism in the West African political sphere since 2001.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview of ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy

The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, signed in 2001, represents a milestone in efforts to ensure democratic and constitutional rule in West Africa. Emerging during a period of considerable instability characterized by civil conflicts, military intervention, and democratic crises, the protocol reflected ECOWAS's expanded role beyond economic integration into conflict prevention, security management, and democratic governance. The protocol was a collective effort by member states to establish norms and principles of democratic and good governance, serving as a commitment to end the prevailing culture of unconstitutional change of government.

Previously, military coups were a common phenomenon across many countries in the sub-region, undermining the rule of law and hampering development.

In response, ECOWAS developed the protocol to promote a political environment grounded in the rule of law and democratic practices. The core objective of the protocol was to ensure the peaceful transfer of power through legitimate elections, bolster democratic institutions and practices, promote accountability in governance, and enhance the transparency of the electoral process. Moreover, it emphasized respect for human rights, democratic principles such as separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and the rule of law as critical elements for regional political stability and development. However, the protocol has been challenged by recent political events.

Despite being signatories to the protocol, countries like Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger have experienced military coups recently.

This trend points to persistent challenges with its implementation and enforcement. Military intervention in politics within West Africa remains a significant challenge, driven by a complex interplay of weak institutions, security concerns, corruption,

leadership failures, flawed electoral processes, poverty, and diminished trust in civilian rule. The lack of adequate democratic dividend has made citizens receptive to military interventions.

The persistent disparity between the ideals enshrined in the ECOWAS protocol and the realities on the ground remains a fundamental impediment to the consolidation of democracy in the sub-region. Despite ECOWAS's consistent denouncement of unconstitutional coups and sanctions, the recent spate of military interventions suggests the need for stronger domestic institutions and a more robust approach to democratic governance.

4.1.1 Objectives and Key Provisions of the Protocol the ECOWAS Protocol on

Democracy and Good Governance protocol in ECOWAS was instituted to enhance the practice of constitutional governance and to entrench democratic stability in the West African sub-region. ECOWAS established several principles and institutional guidelines under the protocol to ward off political instability and military intervention in the conduct of governance within its member countries. Several democratic guidelines have been advocated in the protocol.

One fundamental tenet advocated by protocol was the promotion of rule of constitutionalism.

ECOWAS advocated that politics must be won, played out and transferred strictly through constitutional procedures. The rationale behind the establishment of such policy was to reduce the spate of unconstitutional means in politics in general, particularly military Coups in West African region. Also ECOWAS posited that unconstitutionally constituted government will not be recognized as a legal entity among its member states. ECOWAS highlighted constitutional and democratic governance as one of the bedrock on which democracy rests.

Therefore, ECOWAS posited the need for free and fair elections, transparency and the existence of the rule of law, as central to governance of all member states.

The article of the protocol emphasize regular, free and fair election while the latter promotes transparent, accountable and responsible governance and respect for human rights. One of the other core aspects addressed by protocol is that of separation of powers, to ensure that none branch of government, is more empowered than others, for the betterment of the society by instituting some checks and balances in their operations. For the purposes of promoting this check and balance, the protocol promotes checks and balances of all forms. In another perspective, ECOWAS protocol is against the arbitrary use of powers as it insists on accountability, good and accountable governance.

To further solidify this aspect, ECOWAS protocol stipulate as contained in Article “accountable, transparent and participatory governance”. Moreover ECOWAS protocol does not allow room for unconstitutional alteration of power through a putsch. On prohibition of unconstitutional changes in government states that member States shall not under any circumstances, resort to unconstitutional means to alter the political or democratic systems of their respective countries or to seize power. However, even though the ECOWAS Protocol is comprehensive and well-structured to address these various dimensions of democracy and governance. The practical application is still challenging in several member states as corruption, election rigging and manipulations have led to weak and corrupt electoral bodies and governance institutions in some West African countries.

The absence of an appropriate punitive action by ECOWAS may allow for unchecked undemocratic actions of incumbent leader's and Military Coups are still witnessed.

Military Coups happen frequently in the West African Sub-Saharan Africa regions not

because there were no democratic instruments in place. The frequent political upheavals that lead to Coups have been mainly as a result of weak governance institutions. Economic and Social Council in 2003 notes that in many member states' election outcomes often lead to conflicts or are marred with widespread abuses of electoral rules. Poor governance and insecurity often contribute to widespread public discontent particularly those who lack sufficient income and are deprived of civil liberties. When the elected governments appear to be ineffectual and inept to tackle issues of hunger, economic hardship and insecurity, sections of the society become predisposed towards supporting military intervention as means of providing alternative solutions.

4.1.2 Data Presentation

Table 4.1 Description Data Presentation

Country	Date of Recent Coup	Current Leadership Status	Cause of Coup	Democratic Status	Key Alliance & Current Position
Burkina Faso	January 2022. September 2022	Captain Ibrahim Traore	Inability to control terrorism. Intra military Friction	Non Democratic (Military Rule)	Transition delayed to 2029, left ECOWAS and co-founded AES.
Mali	August 2020 May 2021	Col. Assimi Goita	Electoral Grievance. Corruption. Military Attrition	Non Democratic (Military Rule)	Left ECOWAS, and co-founded AES. Relies heavily on Russian military support.
Guinea	September 2021	Col. Mamady Doumbouya	Human Right Violation. Economic Inequality. Constitutional Manipulation.	Non Democratic (Military Rule)	Remained suspended from the African Union. Maintained isolated interim rule.
Niger	July 2023	Gen. Abduourahamane Tchiani	Elite Power Struggle. Opportunistic Seizure	Non Democratic (Military Rule)	Transition delayed to 20230.Left ECOWA and is a member of AES.
Guinea Bissau	November 2025	Brig. Gen. Denis N'Canha	Factionalism. Institutional	Non Democratic (Military)	Most recent West African coup, in parliament dissolved

			Paralysis	Rule)	and also suspended by African Union(AU)
--	--	--	-----------	-------	---

4.1.3 Implementation and Compliance mechanism

To uphold democratic principles across member states, ECOWAS has implemented a number of enforcement mechanisms under the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. Key among them are:

Diplomatic Mediation: When a member state faces a political crisis, ECOWAS often deploys mediators and special envoys to consult with political actors and encourage peaceful dialogue. This is an attempt to prevent escalation of conflicts and unconstitutional transitions.

Sanctions: ECOWAS has periodically imposed sanctions, such as suspension of member states from decision-making processes, travel bans on leaders and border closures, on countries that have experienced unconstitutional change of government or coup d'état. These measures are meant to push such governments back towards restoring constitutional rule.

Election Observation Missions: ECOWAS observes elections within its member states to ensure that they are conducted according to democratic standards and laws. This is intended to discourage electoral malpractice and boost election credibility.

Regional Peace and Security Architecture: The organization has a standby force and other regional security arrangements that can be mobilized for conflict prevention, stabilization and enforcement of peace in cases of political instability or violent

conflict in the region.

Despite having these mechanisms, implementation has not been entirely effective:

Inconsistent Responses: ECOWAS' response to political crises has sometimes been perceived as slow, biased or ineffective, depending on the particular member state involved. Not all member states are treated with equal severity in terms of sanctions or interventions.

Questionable Impact of Sanctions: Sanctions have a debatable effect. They can negatively impact the civilian populations rather than the ruling elite. For instance, the sanctions against countries like Mali and Burkina Faso led to criticism from populations who felt ECOWAS was worsening their economic conditions rather than fixing the root cause of the political instability.

Lack of Political Will: The effectiveness of any enforcement mechanism depends on the political will of member states to implement such measures. As ECOWAS is a body of sovereign states with varying political interests, building consensus for forceful actions against errant regimes is often difficult.

Financial and Institutional Constraints: Adequate funding and strong institutions are crucial for the operation of the mechanisms. Weak financial and administrative capacities of ECOWAS hinder timely and effective responses to crises.

Weak Domestic Institutions: Ultimately, the stability of the democratic framework of a member state rests on the quality of its domestic institutions, such as the judiciary, legislature, and electoral management bodies. ECOWAS' role is supportive, but without functional institutions at the national level, even strong regional oversight has limitations.

These issues collectively suggest that while ECOWAS has laid down principles and mechanisms for upholding democratic governance, their practical application and

effectiveness face persistent challenges at both the regional and national levels.

Table 4.2 Historical Poverty Rate Trends:

Timeline Era	Poverty Metric Type	Approx. Rate (%)	Context & Economic Drivers
1960–1989	No baseline survey	Extremely High	Broad subsistence economy. The vast majority lived in extreme deprivation, heavily impacted by severe Sahelian droughts
1990	International (\$2.15/day)	High	Earliest retroactively modeled extreme poverty peak.
1994	National Poverty Line	Medium	First official national household survey conducted.
1998	International (\$1.90/day)	Very High	Severe structural adjustment period and a major drought in 1997 spiked extreme poverty.
2003	National Poverty Line	High	Stagnant due to slow rural growth and regional shifts.
2009	International (\$1.90/day)	High	Steady transition as agriculture and cotton exports expanded.
2014	National Poverty Line	High	Significant reduction owing to urban growth and gold mining expansion.
2019	International (\$2.15/day)	Medium	Extreme international poverty reached its lowest point before COVID-19.
2021–2022	National Poverty Line	Medium	Poverty rose by 1.8% from 2018 (41.4%) as conflict displaced millions.
2023	International (\$2.15/day)	Low	Roughly 6.4 million people remained under the

			international extreme line.
2024–2026	National Projection	Very low	Minor gradual contractions (~1% reduction per year) counteracted by ongoing security shocks.

Source: UNDP Multidimensional Poverty Index

4.1.4 Challenges Facing the Enforcement of the Protocol

ECOWAS protocol implementation beset by several difficulties: Why have several ECOWAS countries been prone to military takeovers despite democratic framework. Several challenges have continued to impede the enforcement of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in West Africa. While the organization has developed key democratic principles and mechanisms for enforcement, practical implementation has proven elusive due to a variety of political, institutional, economic and security related factors.

One of the significant challenges in enforcing ECOWAS protocols on democracy and good governance stems from political will deficiencies within member states.

ECOWAS member states are composed of sovereign nations that hold diverse and, sometimes conflicting, commitments to democracy. Several member states suffer from existing challenges related to their own domestic governance deficits, irregularities in electoral processes, corruption, and institutional weaknesses. Therefore, it can be extremely challenging for them to agree on any rigorous enforcement of ECOWAS protocols as they could, down the line, apply to themselves. An equally critical issue is selective democratic policy enforcement.

At times ECOWAS has come down very hard on unconstitutional political transitions, in other instances its responses were somewhat meek, if not delayed.

This sort of inconsistencies, over time, make the organization's stance not credible, and diminish the potency of regional sanctions. It becomes obvious for political

actors to assume that the outcome is far more reliant on their political connections, and not on democratic values. The sovereignty of members is another constraint on enforcing ECOWAS commitments in the region.

Most African governments are allergic to interference from outside to what they consider their internal political affairs. While they endorsed the various regional governance frameworks as ECOWAS member state, any push for enforcement of any commitment against their political self-interest would face resistance. This clash between national sovereign interests and collective ECOWAS demands limit ECOWAS capacity to respond decisively at certain crises in some member state(s).

Further, financial and logistic deficiencies also compromise the enforcement capacities of the organization.

The successful execution of peace support operations, mediation missions, electoral observation, and diplomatic interventions cost considerable financial resources and institutional setup to run effectively, but ECOWAS is typically starved of these essential requirements that hamper promptness. In addition to security challenges across the sub-region, terrorist groups in West Africa's Sahel region, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have posed substantial crisis for the region and have put the civilian governments in these countries under severe pressure, hence strengthening the role of militaries. These situations have often served to justify military coups in a variety of circumstances; civilian leaders are sometimes perceived as lacking the ability to effectively address security threats. Domestic institution fragility still remains an additional key impediment that limits the democratic progress of several ECOWAS countries.

In many countries, these institutions, including electoral commissions, judiciary, anti-corruption bodies, legislature remains vulnerable to external manipulations and can

hardly maintain any reasonable independence to oversee government's activities, hence contributing to an unstable governance system and public loss of faith in civilian regime.

Pervasive corruption and poor governance has also contributes greatly to an unstable democratic practice across ECOWAS countries. The vast number of ECOWAS citizens experiences extreme poverty, hunger, unemployment, inadequate living conditions, and insecurity and poor public services delivery despite years of democracy- governance experience in their respective country. Such situations breed anger, dissatisfaction, and skepticism from public and hence loss of trust on democratic institutions.

Electoral anomalies such as cheating, intimidation, ballot stuffing, violence at polling stations, and election related abuses also has historically undermined democratic practice, especially at national polls and that has often led to election related protest, political violence and a legitimacy crises for democratic leadership, this, in turn, also challenge and threaten to undermine constitutional governance.

4.2 The Re-emergence of Military Rule in West Africa

With the resurgence of military takeovers in the recent months in a number of West African states, including the July 2023 coup in Niger, the debate on the state of democracy and constitutional governance within the region has intensified. In the 1990s with the triumph of multipartyism, accompanied with, among other things constitutional reforms and regional democratic networks, it appeared the idea of militaristic coups within Africa would be an anathema and a bygone era in a couple of decades to come, at least in as far as most parts of West Africa were concerned. The political developments of 2020 and beyond, with coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Niger have demonstrated this would seem a premature conclusion.

While West African states have invested heavily in constitutional governance and democratic promotion since the 1990s, they have, it seems, a long and tough road ahead toward entrenching sustainable democratic governance.

The recurring trend towards military intervention is a manifestation of a multitude of governance and institutional challenges plaguing a number of states in the region. In numerous West African states, democratic governance has been characterized by failure, whether to guarantee public safety, enhance security, ensure stability or improve public services and governance. Corruption, insecurities and poverty, in addition to state failure to enhance rule of law and promote better governance have led to the general public disgust of the ruling elites. Of all the contributing factors to insecurity in West African states, Terrorism and other forms of violence and extremism has been on the increase within the region, in the region of the Sahel which has been largely affected by terrorism and its associated challenges. This has placed the political systems and administration on immense pressure from various quarters of state and society. Military coups have historically proven popular for many states' inhabitants who are dissatisfied with failed civilian authorities, which are seen as impotent in protecting the population from widespread terrorist activities (see below). It is due to failures in governance to contain terrorism that in Mali and Burkina Faso, most inhabitants welcomed coups.

Many inhabitants welcome coup as it gives an alternative of order and security to civilian governments in their countries of citizenship.

Rising living costs, persistent unemployment, poor infrastructure, and limited access to adequate services as a result of poor and corrupted governments have weakened peoples faith in democratic processes in West Africa for a significant period. As result of widespread dissatisfaction on democratic governments in many of the regions

states many believe that, politicians on most states will prefer personal interest, power as an important criteria rather than serving for development and overall benefit of the states and public in West Africa. Weak institutional infrastructure undermines democratization in the region.

The failure of democratic institution, such as electoral institutions, legislatures, judiciaries and anti-corruption bodies, to hold governments accountable and respond effectively to citizens needs. In the same vein, electoral processes often marred by rigging and fraud, accompanied by suppression of political opponents have eroded public trust and political accountability among West Africa state political regimes. Despite the consistent and unanimous position of the Economic Community of West African states on anti-coup stance on political instability in the regions states, the recent political situation reveals how little the organization has achieved to curbing it, perhaps a lesson from the many failed regional initiative for enhancing democracy on the African continents.

Hence, it indicates, that democratic systems in the regions remain incomplete and is susceptible to unpredicted disruptions.

To achieve a truly democratic, accountable and a more responsive political culture in West Africa requires strengthening of institutions, ensuring effective rule of law, fostering social justice and equitable economic development and upholding civic values and culture not simply constitutional framework and electoral democracy alone.

Historical context and Root causes

Military action against regimes has become endemic to the history of West Africa ever since the post-independence period. Many of the recently independent nations on the African continent were plagued by challenges in developing the framework

for functioning democratic nation-states as political instability and economic woes characterized life. Ethnic tensions and fragile institutions of state were prevalent throughout West Africa in post-independence years and the military gained a degree of leverage and power throughout many of these new states.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, West African countries regularly experienced military coups.

This period also witnessed recurrent instability in such nations as Ghana, Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso. Coups occurred for numerous reasons in these countries including political corruption, institutional weaknesses, election fraud, and mismanagement of economies. In most of these instances, military officers justified their takeover attempts as attempts to reform or correct the ailing nation. However, the results often failed to fulfill their promises as many military leaders' governance were often characterized by the repression of the opposition and the establishment of brutal regimes.

The wave of democratization that spread across Africa in the 1990s created expectations that military rule would gradually disappear from the continent. Several West African countries adopted multiparty democracy, introduced constitutional reforms, and organized civilian elections. International pressure for democratic governance also increased after the end of the Cold War, while regional organizations such as ECOWAS strengthened their commitment to constitutional rule and democratic governance.

For a period, democratic transitions appeared to reduce the frequency of military coups within the region. Civilian governments became more common, and constitutional governance gained greater regional acceptance. However, despite these democratic transitions, many underlying governance problems remained

unresolved. Weak institutions, corruption, poverty, insecurity, unemployment, and poor leadership continued to affect several states within the sub-region.

The recent resurgence of military coups within West Africa therefore reflects the persistence of these deeper structural problems. In many countries, democratic governance failed to produce the level of economic development, security, and institutional stability expected by citizens. As public frustration increased, confidence in civilian governments gradually weakened.

One major root cause of military intervention within the region is poor governance. In several West African states, political leaders have been accused of corruption, abuse of power, and ineffective leadership. Public resources are sometimes mismanaged while large sections of the population continue to experience poverty, unemployment, and poor social conditions. These governance failures contribute to widespread dissatisfaction and weaken public trust in democratic institutions.

Insecurity has also become a significant factor contributing to political instability. Terrorist insurgencies, armed banditry, ethnic conflicts, and violent extremism have placed enormous pressure on civilian governments within the Sahel region. Countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso have struggled to contain armed groups responsible for attacks against civilians and military personnel. The inability of civilian governments to address insecurity effectively has strengthened public support for military intervention in some situations.

Another major factor is weak democratic institutions. Electoral commissions, judicial systems, anti-corruption agencies, and legislative institutions often lack independence and effectiveness. Political interference within these institutions weakens accountability and undermines democratic legitimacy. Elections characterized by fraud, intimidation, violence, and constitutional manipulation

further increase political tensions within many states.

Economic hardship also contributes significantly to democratic instability. Rising unemployment, inflation, food insecurity, and economic inequality continue to affect many citizens within the region. Under such difficult conditions, public confidence in democratic governance declines, particularly when political elites are perceived as disconnected from the realities facing ordinary people.

External influence and geopolitical competition have equally contributed to instability within the region. Foreign powers pursuing strategic, economic, or security interests sometimes influence domestic political developments within African states. Such external involvement can complicate internal political crises and weaken national sovereignty.

The resurgence of military rule in West Africa therefore reflects a combination of governance failures, insecurity, weak institutions, economic hardship, and declining public confidence in democratic systems. Although military coups violate constitutional governance principles, their recurrence demonstrates that democratic consolidation within the region remains incomplete and vulnerable to political instability.

Table 4.3 Heads of State of Upper Volta / Burkina Faso (1960–Present)

Years in Power	Leader	Regime Type
1960–1966	Maurice Yaméogo	First independence government.

1966–1980	Sangoulé Lamizana	Military officer who ruled for 14 years across multiple transitions.
1980–1982	Saye Zerbo	Seized power in a military coup.
1982–1983	Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo	Came to power via a subsequent internal military coup.
1983–1987	Thomas Sankara	Marxist-Revolutionary President; assassinated in 1987.
1987–2014	Blaise Compaoré	President; ousted by a popular uprising after 27 years in office.
2014–2015	Various Transitional Leaders	Short interim military/civilian caretaker administrations
2015–2022	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	Democratically elected President; overthrown in a military coup.
Jan 2022–Sept 2022	Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba	Military Junta Leader; overthrown.
Sept 2022–Present	Ibrahim Traoré	Military Interim President.

4.2.2 Political Instability and Institutional Weaknesses

West Africa - Political Challenges Political instability constitutes one of the foremost challenges confronting the consolidation of democratic regimes in West Africa. A number of countries in the region ostensibly operate within the framework of a democratic governance system. However, the reality of internal political conflict, fragile institutions, electoral disagreements, corruption and failures in governance have continued to undermine democratic processes.

It is, as such, an enabling environment for constitutional governance which tends to falter, thus exposing such a nation to coup attempts.

Weak Institutions One significant failure among several West African countries is that most of their core democratic institutions do not function in autonomy. These Institutions includes elections commission, courts, security agencies and anti-corruption outfits. When any of these institutions fails to remain independently and continues to be subject to the control of political actors, the public interest in

democracy and constitutionalism wanes. Electoral **Manipulation** A Recurring theme among many West African states is the problem of malpractice during the electoral processes.

Votes, intimidation, rigging, corruption and violence regularly feature as the order of events during these elections, which is commonly followed by protests by opposition groups that accost the ruling governments of using public resources and the security apparatus in ensuring electoral victory.

Malicious constitutionalism In the region, some politicians make a concerted effort at extending the duration of their tenures at power through, either manipulating the constitutional amendments processes or through creative interpretative processes of existing constitutional provisions and legal texts that circumvent democratic practices. This typically ignites protests by the masses against the state and consequently, erodes confidence of people into political and administrative structures. **Weak Judiciary** Another aspect of weak governance in West African countries, it remains, the weakening state institution like that of the judiciary which at times cannot even remain autonomous and is subject to the whims and the desires of the ruling class; this significantly weakens confidence in any pursuit of justice and constitutional order.

Corruption This is another crucial issue in the region, in as much as resources are concerned, it is usually the case that the management of public resources has always been marred by corruption which leads to abuse of the office, Briberies and lack of transparency thereby weakening administrative efficiency and also corroding public confidence in government. In security, due to the ineffectiveness and inefficient state security institutions, coupled with the lack of cohesion between the state and its people, this has allowed for the entrenchment of terrorist organizations to

establish base and carry out its operations, in a number of countries, especially in the Sahell region such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Governments, as a result of the worsening of security in those environments have continue to face immense pressure of collapse due to civilian resistance. Relationship between Government and Citizens Several countries, in spite of the long existence of democratic system have continued to suffer from issues of disconnect between the government and its people; citizens of many such countries continue to feel disfranchised economically and politically which has led to disgruntlement and frustration among the citizenry. Failure of governments to address key developmental issues like youth unemployment and poverty leaves room for political dissatisfaction to brew. External influence on the other side, also play crucial role in the West African politics. Geographically well positioned, the West African region also endowed with rich natural resources, which attract external actors due to growing security challenges such as terrorists Insurgence. Various external powers has been a key player in West Africa. France has historically had direct political and security ties with a number of its former colonies in West Africa. Paris actively engaged in counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel region, albeit its involvement generated increased discontent with foreign presence. The rise of Russian power across West Africa, where the country supports several military governments, has been under international radar as well. Several countries in the region have enhanced cooperation with Russia in security matters and are allegedly receiving services from the private Russian security groups after being facing political instabilities and difficulties in dealing with the Western countries.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The aim of this study was to analyze the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and assess how it has contributed to managing the re-emergency of military rule in West Africa. Specifically the study seeks to establish to what extent regional democratic frameworks have been instrumental in the sub-region's efforts to prevent unconstitutional changes of government and promote political stability. The findings of the study show that ECOWAS has established a strong normative and institutional framework aimed at promoting democracy, constitutional governance, and Political Stability in the West African sub-region.

The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance signed in 2001 emphasizes the norms such as Constitutional Rule, credibility of Elections, division of Power and separation of Powers, respect for human rights, and zero tolerance for military coup.

However, in spite of the establishment of such frameworks, military coup d'état has continued to re-emerge and manifest itself in several member states of ECOWAS like Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Niger, which shows a clear deviation of democratic principles. The analysis shows that most often the main drivers of Political instability are often internal Governance challenges ranging from weak institutions, corruption, insecurity, poor Leadership, joblessness and hardship that weaken democratic and civil society Institutions which consequently reduce the level of confidence in Civil

Leadership. ECOWAS responses to the political crisis including sanctions, suspension of member states, Diplomatic Engagement have also generated varied results. Though it demonstrates commitment to the norm of democracy it remains weakly enforced due to the divergent Political interest of its member states, the complicated Nature of crises, and weak solidarity among member states. With the ECOWAS protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the research on the Burkina Faso case study reveals that institutional and governance failure combined with a heightened sense of insecurity contributed significantly to the political crises in 2014 and 2022. ECOWAS interventions have played a Role in managing the crisis in the region to the best of its abilities; however they have not been Sufficient enough to dissuade Military rule to persist to the sub-region.

5.2 Conclusion

The study has established that ECOWAS plays a significant Role in promoting democratic governance and has put in place an impressive Framework in the fight against unconstitutional changes of government in West Africa. In spite of ECOWAS efforts through its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to set clear standards for the sub-region in relation to democratic conduct, the reemergence of military coups demonstrate the limits of regional frameworks to enforce compliance and maintain democratic transitions in member States. ECOWAS framework remains largely a moral and legal framework that often fails to address inherent structural governance deficits that are at the heart of recurrent political instability and coups. These deficits include weak Institutions, corrupt practices, escalating insecurity, lack of Economic opportunities, and persistent mistrust by citizens in their Governments. In Conclusion, the present study concludes that ECOWAS efforts to prevent unconstitutional change of Government in West Africa continue to face tremendous

challenges that stem not only from weakly enforced mechanisms but rather more profoundly from domestic issues prevailing in the respective member states which threaten Political Stability of the Sub-region.

5.3 Recommendations

Therefore, the study recommends ECOWAS take pragmatic and concrete measures:

1. Consistent and Uniform Application of Protocols Sanctions imposed on countries engaging in coup should be implemented consistently and uniformly across all member states of ECOWAS in order to ensure deterrence and preserve the credibility and relevance of the organisation's democratic principles.
2. Reforming Decision-Making Processes ECOWAS decision-making mechanisms concerning democratic governance, elections, and coups should be reviewed to enhance inclusivity, objectivity, neutrality, and collective responsibility among member states.

Power dynamics and the political interests of influential states should not compromise the integrity and effectiveness of the organization's interventions in safeguarding democracy and human rights in the sub-region.

REFERENCES

- Adebajo, A.Z. (2024). The Role of ECOWAS in Promoting Democratic Governance in West Africa". *Journal of African Political Studies*, 12(3),45-60
- Adejumobi, S. (2015). "Elections and Democratic Consolidation in West Africa." *African Affairs Journal*, 114(456), 1–18.
- African Union (2007). *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*. Addis Ababa: African Union.
- African Union (AU). *Governance and Democracy Portal*.
- Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and Development in Africa*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution.
- Al Jazeera (2023). "*Military Takeovers and Political Instability in the Sahel.*"
- Aning, K. (2018). "*Security Challenges and Military Coups in West Africa.*" Paper presented at West African Peace and Security Conference, Accra.
- BBC News Africa (2022–2024). *Reports on Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger political crises*.
- Bratton, M. (2013). "*Civil Society and Democratic Transitions in Africa.*" In *Democracy in Africa*.
- Bratton, M., Mattes, R, & Gyimah – Boadi, E (2005). *Public opinion, democracy and marketing reforms in Africa*". Cambridge University Press.
- Bratton ,M ,& van de Walle, N(1997). "*Democratic experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative prespective*". Cambridge University Press.
- Brich,S.(2011). "*Electoral malpractice*". Oxford University Press.
- Collier, P. (2009). *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*. London: Harper.
- Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. Yale University Press.
- Decalo, S (1990). "*Coups and army rule in Africa: Motivations and constraints*". (2nd ed.). Yale University Press.

- Diamond, L. (2008). *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World*. New York: Times Books.
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). *Official Website*.
- ECOWAS (2001). *Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance*. Abuja: ECOWAS Secretariat.
- ECOWAS (2019). *Conflict Prevention Framework Report*. Abuja: ECOWAS.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman University of Oklahoma Press
- Ikpe, V. (2000). The Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Africa". *African Journal of Political Science*, 5(2),146-160.
- International Crisis Group. Sahel Reports.
- International IDEA (2020). *Democratic Stability in Africa: Conference Proceedings*. Stockholm: IDEA.
- Schedler, A. (Ed.). (2006). *Electoral authoritarianism: The dynamics of unfree competition*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Joseph, R.(1998). Africa,1990_1997: From Abertura to Closure". *Journal of Democracy*, 9(2),3-17
- Jaye, T. (2018). "Diplomatic and Political Interventions in West Africa: Evaluating the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance Amidst the Resurgence of Military Rule." *Journal of African Peace and Security*.
- Kelley, J. (2009). D-minus elections: The politics and norms of international election observation. *International Organization*, 63(4), 765-787.
- Kelley, J. G. (2012). *Monitoring Democracy: When International Election Observation Works, and Why It Often Fails*. Princeton University Press.
- Levitsky, S. & Way, L. (2010). "Competitive Authoritarianism in Africa." *In Hybrid Political Regimes*. Cambridge University Press.
- Linz, J. J., & Stepan, A. (1996). "*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*". Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Lindberg, S.(2006). *Democracy and elections in Africa*". Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mozaffar, S. (2002).Patterns of electoral governance in Africa's emerging democracies. "*International Political Science Review*, 23(1),85-101.
- Omotola, J. (2011). "Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa." *Journal of African Elections*, 10(1), 1-22.

Schedler, A.(1998).What is Democratic Consolidation? *Journal of Democracy*, 9(2)",91-107.

Schumpeter, J.A.(1976). *Capitalism, Socialism and democracy*" (5th ed.).George Allen &Unwin.(Original work published 1942).

Souaré, I. (2014). *"The African Union and Military Coups in Africa."* African Security Review, 23(2), 1–15.

Sesay, A. (2003). *"West African Military Interventions in the 1990s: The Case of ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone."*In L. Du Plessis & M.

The Conversation Africa (2021–2024). *Articles on ECOWAS and democracy in West Africa*. Undergraduate research projects on ECOWAS and military coups in West Africa (various institutions).

University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Department of Political Science Seminar Papers*.

Yusuf, H. (2018).ECOWAS and the Promotion in West Africa". *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 8(1),45-67

APPENDIX

This study is based on a qualitative and documentary research design. The data used for analysis were derived from secondary sources including ECOWAS official documents, African Union governance frameworks, peer-reviewed journal articles, books on West African politics, and reports from credible international organizations and media platforms.

Given the nature of the study, which focuses on regional governance structures and political developments in West Africa, no primary data collection instruments such as questionnaires or structured interviews were employed. This is because the research relied on already existing documented materials that provide sufficient empirical and analytical insight into the subject matter.

Therefore, no questionnaire, interview guide, or field survey instrument is attached as an appendix to this study