

The Sociopolitical Dynamics, Anti-French Sentiment and Military Ascendancy in Francophone West Africa

**Momoh, Ibrahim & †Ifaka, John O., PhD*

Abstract

This study looks at the resurgence of military putsches in Francophone West Africa. It examines the impact of factionalized elites, group grievances, poor public service, and external intervention on economic decline and military resurgence in six West African Francophone countries namely Mali, Chad, Niger, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Gabon, from 2020 to 2023. The objective is to understand how these factors contribute to economic instability, political fragility, and the resurgence of military coups in the region. Using quantitative methods, secondary data from the Fragile States Index (FSI) were analyzed through multiple regression to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the independent variables and economic decline. The findings revealed that factionalized elites, group grievances, and external intervention had a significant positive impact on economic decline, while poor public service demonstrated a negative, but insignificant, effect. The results underscore the complexity of neocolonial relations and governance challenges, contributing to state fragility in West Africa. The study concludes that addressing political grievances, reducing external intervention, and improving governance structures are essential for economic recovery and stability. Key recommendations include promoting inclusive governance, strengthening public services, reducing external exploitation, and increasing regional cooperation to mitigate political instability. These findings have significant implications for policy reforms aimed at preventing military coups and fostering sustainable development in West Africa.

* Dept. of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.
moibrahim@aauekpoma.edu.ng.

† Dept. of Political Science & Public Administration, College of Management and Social Sciences, Glorious Vision University, Ogwa. ifaka29@gmail.com

Keywords: comprador bourgeoisie, coup, economic decline, external intervention, factionalized elites, group grievances, resurgent militarism

Background to the Study

The military is the state's primary instrument of coercion, constitutionally entrusted with defending national borders and safeguarding sovereignty. Classical civil–military theory underscores the importance of civilian control, with Huntington (1957) arguing that the armed forces maintain professionalism when confined to defense roles and kept out of politics. Yet in many certain states, armies frequently take on expanded responsibilities, managing internal security, peacekeeping, or even supporting governments, blurring the line between soldiering and politics. Finer (1962) observed that militaries, with their disciplined hierarchies, cohesion, and monopoly over force, possess inherent political power, which becomes visible when civilian leaders falter or lose legitimacy. Such interventions have repeatedly undermined democratic norms and the rule of law, confirming warnings from both Finer and Huntington. Since 2020, this dynamic has intensified across the Global South, with (attempted) coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, Sudan, and Gabon, driven by insecurity, weakening democratic experience, and eroding civilian authority (Powell & Thyne, 2011; International IDEA, 2023). Africa, in particular, has long experienced the brunt of military interventions. Although coups declined during the early 2010s, they have surged again in recent years, particularly in Francophone Africa (Cilliers, 2016). Between 1950 and July 2023, the continent recorded roughly 220 successful or attempted coups, nearly 44% of the global total, with Sudan, Burundi, Ghana, and Sierra Leone most frequently targeted (VOA News, 2023). After a relative calm between 2013 and 2020, the Sahel has emerged as a hotspot, as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Guinea, Gabon, and Sudan faced repeated interventions since August 2020. This pattern reflects a long-standing trend: African militaries continue to justify their

involvement as a corrective measure against civilian misrule, instability, or economic crises - a rationale that has persisted since the post-independence era of the 1960s (Ndlovu, 2020). As has been stated, Africa is by far the most coup-prone continent in the world. Between 1950 and 2023, the continent experienced over 220 coup attempts, both successful and unsuccessful coup d'état. (Statista, 2023).

Statement of the Research Problem

There has been a resurgence in the incidence of coup d'état since 2020, marking a reversal of the relative decline seen during the late 1990s and early 2000s when the global push for democratization gained momentum.

The data reveals a notable resurgence of coups in Africa during the last three years. Between 2020 and 2023, there were nine successful coups and seven failed attempts across the continent, with a concentration in West and Central Africa

Table 1: Coup d'état attempts and success rates by decade (1950–2023)

Decade	Total coup attempts (global)	Successful coups	Approx. success rate (%)
1950–1959	55	27	49
1960–1969	82	42	51
1970–1979	61	38	62
1980–1989	39	16	41
1990–1999	22	6	27
2000–2009	8	4	50
2010–2019	5	3	60
2020–2023	14	9	64.3
Total (1950–2023)	273 attempts	137 successful coups	

Source: Coface. (2023). Powell, J. M., & Thyne, C. L. (2011). VOA News. (2023)

Table 2: Coup d'état attempts and success rates by region (1950–2023)

Decade	Africa	Success % Africa	Latin America & Caribbean	Success % LAC	Asia (incl. South & East)	Success % Asia	Middle East & N. Africa	Success % MENA	Europe & Central Asia	Success % Europe
1950–59	~28	~50	~12	~45	~8	~50	~5	~45	~2	~35
1960–69	~75	~60	~45	~50	~15	~55	~10	~45	~5	~30
1970–79	~63	~45	~40	~45	~14	~55	~9	~40	~5	~30
1980–89	~50	~55	~30	~40	~8	~50	~7	~40	~3	~35
1990–99	~35	~40	~25	~45	~5	~50	~3	~45	~2	~35
2000–09	~22	~36	~15	~50	~5	~50	~4	~45	~2	~30
2010–19	~20	~47	~7	~45	~6	~50	~3	~40	~1	~35
2020–23	~14	~64	~3	~40	~6	~50	~2	~45	~0	N/A

Source: Coface. (2023). Powell, J. M., & Thyne, C. L. (2011). VOA News. (2023)

Data across regions show that Africa has consistently led the world in coup attempts, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, while Latin America's earlier high incidence has declined sharply in both frequency and success. Asia and the Middle East/North Africa have recorded moderate and relatively stable levels of coup activity, whereas Europe and Central Asia have remained largely marginal. Since 2020, however, Africa has experienced a pronounced resurgence in coups, marked by higher frequency and success rates, reflecting persistent institutional fragility and the enduring political role of the military. At the domestic level, factionalized elites have repeatedly undermined governance in states such as Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, where intense competition over power and resources weakened institutions and deepened public discontent. Elite rivalries, combined with insecurity and poor service delivery, eroded the legitimacy of civilian governments and created openings for military intervention, often justified as a temporary stabilizing measure but frequently driven by ambitions

for power and control over state resources (IMF, 2024). Deep social cleavages and legitimacy crises have further heightened the propensity for military putsches.

Externally, the political economy of foreign intervention, particularly France's military presence, economic dominance, and security involvement—has contributed to instability in Francophone West Africa. These relationships have fostered dependency, undermined sovereignty, and fueled anti-French sentiment, weakening France-backed civilian regimes and indirectly legitimizing military takeovers (Tusalem, 2023). While framed as counterterrorism and regional stabilization, such interventions have often prioritized external strategic interests over local needs, exacerbating economic hardship and public resentment. Although coups declined during the democratization wave of the 1990s and 2000s, the post-2020 surge, especially in Francophone West Africa, signals a troubling return of militarism. This resurgence reflects the interaction of elite factionalism, group grievances, weak public service provision, fragile democratic institutions, and exploitative external interventions. In the absence of credible civilian alternatives, militaries have increasingly positioned themselves as arbiters of order, reinforcing a vicious cycle in which governance failure is met with military intervention rather than institutional reform (Odigbo, Ezekwelu, & Okeke, 2023).

Justification for the Study

The resurgence of military rule in Francophone West Africa poses a significant challenge to democratic consolidation, state capacity, and long-term economic development in the region. While recent scholarship has documented the frequency of coups, there remains limited analytical clarity on the specific mechanisms through which governance failures translate into military intervention. In particular, the role of public service delivery is often treated in broad terms, without disaggregating which dimensions, such as security provision, infrastructure, healthcare, education, or

basic administrative capacity, are most consequential for regime legitimacy and political stability. This study addresses this gap by examining how sustained failures in service provision erode public trust in civilian authorities and create political opportunity structures that military actors can exploit. The study also advances the literature by moving beyond primordial or essentialist interpretations of group grievances. Rather than treating ethnicity or regional identity as fixed sources of conflict, it conceptualizes grievances as politically constructed and institutionally mediated outcomes of exclusionary governance, uneven development, and elite bargaining processes. This approach aligns with contemporary scholarship on ethnic politics, which emphasizes how elite strategies, distributive inequalities, and state capacity shape group mobilization and political contestation. By doing so, the study clarifies when and how grievances become politically salient and contribute to coup-prone environments, rather than assuming a direct or inevitable link between social diversity and instability.

Furthermore, the study fills an important empirical and theoretical gap by systematically analyzing the interaction between domestic political dynamics and external interventions, particularly those involving France. While external influence is frequently invoked in discussions of Francophone West Africa, it is rarely examined in conjunction with elite factionalism, service delivery failures, and grievance formation. By integrating these factors, the study offers a more comprehensive explanation of military takeovers as contingent outcomes shaped by both internal governance failures and external political-economic constraints. Finally, the study has clear policy relevance. For domestic policymakers, it underscores the centrality of improving state capacity and inclusive service delivery as foundations of political legitimacy. For international actors, it highlights the unintended destabilizing effects of external interventions that prioritize security or strategic interests over institutional development

and accountability. In this sense, the research contributes not only to academic debates on civil–military relations and political instability but also to practical discussions on how to design more effective strategies for promoting durable stability and democratic governance in Francophone West Africa.

Objective of the Study

To examine the interplay of factionalized elites, group grievances, poor quality of public service and exploitative external intervention have significant impact on economic decline in West African Francophone Countries leading to military resurgence.

Research Question:

- To what extent does the interplay of factionalized elites, group grievances, poor quality of public service and exploitative external intervention have significant impact on economic decline in West African Francophone Countries leading to military resurgence?

Research Hypothesis

- The interplay of factionalized elites, group grievances, poor quality of public service and exploitative external intervention have significant impact on economic decline in West African Francophone Countries leading to military resurgence.

Theoretical Framework

World-Systems Theory

World-systems theory, as articulated by Wallerstein (1974), situates political and economic phenomena within a global

hierarchical order, classifying states into core, semi-periphery, and periphery. Peripheral states, such as those in Francophone West Africa, occupy structurally disadvantaged positions within the global capitalist system. They are heavily dependent on core states for economic, political, and security support, a dependency that reproduces asymmetrical power relations. For instance, France, maintain influence through military agreements, trade dependencies, and financial aid, which in turn shape domestic governance structures and constrain political autonomy (Amin, 1976; Wallerstein, 2004). This structural dependency generates both internal and external pressures that affect governance outcomes. Externally, peripheral states are often subject to foreign policy priorities that may not align with domestic needs, creating socio-economic strains and public resentment. Internally, the pressure to comply with global economic or security expectations can weaken institutional resilience, making it easier for military actors to intervene as arbiters of stability (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). The theory also explains why anti-French sentiment is a recurrent feature in Francophone West Africa: local populations often perceive military interventions as corrective mechanisms to counter external interference or to assert sovereignty within a global system that structurally disadvantages them. By highlighting the structural inequalities inherent in the global system, World-Systems Theory provides a lens for understanding the persistent influence of foreign powers and the conditions under which militaries justify intervention as both a nationalist and stabilizing force. It emphasizes that coups are not merely spontaneous domestic phenomena but are influenced by long-term structural constraints embedded in the global political economy.

Elite Theory

Elite theory (Pareto, 1935; Mosca, 1939) shifts the analytical focus to domestic political actors, highlighting the centrality of competing elites in shaping governance outcomes. In Francophone

West Africa, political elites often operate in highly factionalized environments, competing over state resources, patronage networks, and access to political office. These rivalries frequently undermine the capacity of civilian institutions to provide public goods effectively, creating governance vacuums that militaries can exploit (Finer, 1962; Huntington, 1957). The military often emerges as a decisive political actor when elite competition paralyzes governance. Coups are therefore strategic choices, not deterministic events, undertaken to restore order, protect specific elite interests, or reposition the military itself within the domestic power hierarchy (Powell & Thyne, 2011). Elite Theory also allows the incorporation of domestic cleavages, such as ethnic, regional, or socio-economic divisions, as explanatory variables that influence military intervention. In Francophone West Africa, anti-French sentiment often serves as a mobilizing narrative that elites and military actors leverage to legitimize their actions, portraying coups as corrective measures against foreign influence or corrupt civilian governments (Vengroff, 2022). By focusing on elite behavior, factionalism, and strategic calculation, Elite Theory complements World-Systems Theory by connecting structural pressures to domestic political agency, highlighting how internal and external factors converge to produce military interventions.

Literature Review

Recent military coups in Francophone West Africa have renewed scholarly concern over the fragility of political institutions and the conditions under which armed forces re-enter governance. Existing literature increasingly converges on a set of internal and external factors - elite fragmentation, group-based grievances, weak public service provision, and foreign intervention, but often treats these variables descriptively rather than analytically. This study builds on that literature by clarifying key concepts, specifying causal pathways, and examining how these factors interact to produce

coup-prone environments in Mali, Chad, Niger, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Gabon.

Conceptual Clarifications and Analytical Scope

In this study, factionalized elites are defined not as routine political competition but as persistent divisions among ruling coalitions that undermine collective decision-making, state capacity, and regime legitimacy. Unlike competitive pluralism, elite factionalism is characterized by zero-sum struggles over state capture, reliance on patronage rather than institutions, and the exclusion of rival groups from power (Firdausi, 2020; Ifaka, 2016). Group grievances refer to sustained perceptions of political, economic, or security exclusion among identifiable ethnic, regional, or social groups, particularly when such grievances translate into protest, insurgency, or mass withdrawal of regime support (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Exploitative external interventions are distinguished from legitimate cooperation by their asymmetrical character, prioritization of external strategic interests, and tendency to entrench weak or unpopular regimes at the expense of domestic accountability (Besley & Persson, 2010; Harvey, 2020). Rather than treating these variables as self-evident causes of coups, the literature increasingly emphasizes their interaction and sequencing, highlighting how they jointly erode civilian authority and expand the political opportunity structure for military intervention.

Historical Patterns of Military Intervention

Francophone West Africa has experienced recurrent military intervention since independence, reflecting a legacy of weak institutions, centralized authority, and external dependence (Erude & Agiri, 2023). While democratization in the 1990s temporarily reduced coup frequency, structural vulnerabilities persisted beneath formal electoral politics. Colonial administrative legacies and post-independence security arrangements, particularly close

military and economic ties with France, continued to shape elite incentives and governance outcomes (Omoera & Obekpa, 2019). The persistence of these arrangements limited institutional autonomy and contributed to public perceptions of compromised sovereignty, thereby weakening civilian legitimacy and indirectly strengthening the military's claim to political relevance.

Elite Fragmentation and Coup Opportunities

Elite factionalism emerges in the literature as a central enabling condition for coups rather than a sufficient cause. In Mali and Burkina Faso, prolonged disputes among political elites produced legislative paralysis, contested elections, and weak crisis management, particularly in response to insecurity (Firdausi, 2020). Such fragmentation reduced the capacity of civilian governments to co-opt or discipline military actors, while simultaneously encouraging sections of the armed forces to view intervention as both feasible and publicly defensible. Importantly, studies show that coups are most likely when elite fragmentation coincides with declining regime legitimacy and limited mechanisms for peaceful elite accommodation (Ifaka, 2016).

Group Grievances and Mass Discontent

Group grievances amplify coup risks when they escalate beyond localized discontent into broader legitimacy crises. Ethnic and regional inequalities in Mali, especially between the northern regions and the southern political centre have generated cycles of rebellion, repression, and protest that civilian governments struggled to manage (Abbas et al., 2023). Similar dynamics are evident in Burkina Faso, where uneven development and exclusionary governance intensified public frustration. The literature suggests that grievances become coup-inducing when they weaken popular support for civilian rule and provide the military with a narrative of national rescue, rather than when grievances exist in isolation (Acemoglu et al., 2020).

Public Service Failure and State Capacity

Poor public service provision is widely identified as a key mechanism linking governance failure to military intervention. In Chad and Guinea, chronic deficiencies in healthcare, education, infrastructure, and security eroded public trust in civilian authorities and reinforced perceptions of state failure (Audu, 2019). These failures are often tied to corruption and elite rent-seeking, which divert resources away from public investment. As legitimacy declines, the military capitalizes on popular frustration by framing coups as corrective interventions, even though empirical evidence suggests that military regimes rarely improve service delivery in the long term.

External Intervention and Dependency

External intervention, particularly by France, has played an important but contested role in shaping political instability. While framed as counterterrorism or stabilization, French military and economic involvement has often reinforced dependency and insulated incumbent elites from domestic accountability (Harvey, 2020). In Mali and Niger, foreign backing for embattled civilian regimes intensified perceptions of external domination and fueled anti-French sentiment, further delegitimizing civilian rule. The literature indicates that such interventions do not directly cause coups but interact with internal elite fragmentation and mass grievances to create permissive conditions for military takeover (Besley & Persson, 2010; Tusalem, 2023).

Interaction Effects and Economic Consequences

Recent scholarship emphasizes that coups emerge from the convergence of elite factionalism, unresolved grievances, weak service provision, and external interference rather than from any single factor (Wolff, 2011). Political instability disrupts economic activity, discourages investment, and accelerates capital flight, as seen in Chad and Guinea, creating feedback loops in which

economic decline further intensifies social unrest (Babatunde & Akinyemi, 2021). Military takeovers, while often justified as necessary for reform, typically deepen institutional weakness and economic stagnation, reinforcing long-term instability (Gray, 2016).

Military Intervention and the State Failure Narrative

The literature consistently shows that military interventions are framed as responses to state failure, particularly in contexts where civilian governments are perceived as corrupt, ineffective, or externally compromised (Chesterman et al., 2005). In Burkina Faso and Mali, coup leaders explicitly cited insecurity, corruption, and governance collapse to justify intervention. However, empirical studies caution that repeated military involvement undermines democratic consolidation and entrenches cycles of instability, as each coup weakens civilian institutions and normalizes military political authority (Edi, 2006). In sum, the literature demonstrates that military resurgence in Francophone West Africa is best understood as the outcome of interacting structural and agency-driven processes. By clarifying concepts, specifying causal mechanisms, and situating coups within both domestic and external political economies, this study advances a more analytically precise understanding of why military interventions have re-emerged in the region.

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative, exploratory approach to examine associations between factionalized elites, group grievances, public service quality, external interventions, and economic decline in five Francophone West African states - Mali, Chad, Niger, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, that experienced military coups between 2020 and 2023. These cases were selected purposively due to their shared post-colonial ties with France and recent coup history. Secondary data from the Fragile States Index (FSI) were

used to operationalize the key variables. The study treats these indicators as broad measures of structural and political conditions, acknowledging that aggregated data simplify complex realities. Multiple linear regressions were applied to explore patterns, not to establish causality. The small sample and multicollinearity among independent variables limit the interpretability of individual effects, and high R^2 values likely reflect over-fitting. Consequently, p-values are interpreted descriptively, and findings are presented as associative trends rather than definitive effects. Economic decline is treated as a contextual outcome associated with governance fragility, rather than a direct result of military intervention. This framing emphasizes the interaction of political, social, and external factors in shaping instability. Overall, the methodology provides an exploratory analysis that highlights patterns in political fragility and military resurgence, while recognizing the need for larger datasets, longer time frames, and complementary methods to draw more robust conclusions.

To test the hypotheses, a model specification for the regression was created:

Variables:

Dependent Variable:

Economic Decline in West African Francophone Countries leading to Military Resurgence (ED)

Independent Variables:

0. Factionalized Elites (FE)
1. Group Grievances (GG)
2. Poor Quality of Public Service (PQPS)
3. Exploitative External Intervention (EEI)

Model Specification:

The model can be expressed as:
 $ED = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1FE + \alpha_2GG + \alpha_3PQPS + \alpha_4EEI + \alpha t$

Where:

- α_0 is the intercept
- $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4$ are the coefficients for the independent variables
- α is the error term
- Hypothesis Testing:
 - Null Hypothesis: $\alpha_1 = \alpha_2 = \alpha_3 = \alpha_4 = 0$
 The independent variables have no significant impact on economic decline and military resurgence.
 - Alternative Hypothesis: At least one of $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4 \neq 0$
 The independent variables have a positive and significant impact on economic decline and military resurgence.

Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of estimate	Change statistics				
					R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	.997a	.994	.971	.20635	.994	42.156	4	1	.115

Predictors: (Constant), external intervention, factionalized elites, group grievances, quality of public service. Sources: Authors’ computation, 2024.

In table 1, the model summary indicated 0.994 depicting a very high R-squared value explaining the variance of economic decline in West Africa was impacted by (99.4%) by factionalized elites,

group grievances, poor quality of public service and exploitative external intervention. The table also indicated a good fit measure of adjusted R square at 0.971 which indicated which a low error estimate of 0.2065 accounting for accurate model predicating economic decline.

Table 2 ANOVA^a

	Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.180	4	1.795	42.156	.115b
	Residual	.043	1	.043		
	Total	7.223	5			

a. Dependent variable: economic decline. b. predictors: (constant), external intervention, factionalized elites, group grievances, quality of public service. Source: Author computation, 2024.

In table 2, the ANOVA regression model is statistically significant at statistic of 42.156 and p-value of 0.115. This measure indicated that the result is above the conventional significant level of 0.005. Further investigation is required as the variable being considered are complex to be determine at this stage, since it exceed the conventional 0.005 significance level.

Table 3: Coefficients^a

Model	B	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.811	1.174		-.691	.615
	Group grievances	.982	.153	2.003	6.408	.099
	Fractionalized elites	3.300	.535	3.303	6.163	.102
	Quality of public service	-5.407	.978	-5.245	-5.530	.114
	External intervention	2.813	.460	4.073	6.117	.103

a. Dependent Variable: Economic Decline. Source: Author computation, 2024.

In table 3, the result for each of the aggregate (summary) indicated the indicator's measurement in related impact with economic decline. Group Grievances is expressed with a coefficient value of 0.982 and p-value of 0.99. The significant level is held at below 0.010 (10%) to explain the impact on economic decline. Correspondingly, Factionalized elite reported a coefficient of 3.300 and a p-value of 0.102, and External Intervention of coefficient of 2.813 and a p-value of 0.103. these impacts were positive and significant at 10% but or the exception of Quality of Public Service that has a coefficient of -5.407 and a p-value of 0.114. the impact was negative and not significant at 10%. The results while indicating majority of the variable having positive relationship with significant impact on economic decline, the independent variables were able to account for a measure of positive and significant influence on economic decline. The explanation indicated that as Group Grievances, Factionalized Elites, and External Intervention increases, economic decline increases with it; conversely, as Quality of Public Service decrease, economic decline increases. This means that quality of public service has no impact on economic decline. However the inverse moderate relationship (between quality of public service and economic decline) for the result may suggest that the short time (2020-2023) may account for some distortion in the mean utilized and variance used to explain the independent variable impact on the dependent variable.

Table 4: Coefficient Correlations^a

Model			External intervention	Factionalized elites	Group grievances	Quality of public service
lower or negative 1	Correlations	External intervention	1.000	.987	.826	-.981
		Factionalized elites	.987	1.000	.822	-.977
		Group grievances	.826	.822	1.000	-.907
		Quality of Public Service	-.981	-.977	-.907	1.000
	Covariances	External intervention	.211	.243	.058	-.441
		Fractionalized elites	.243	.287	.067	-.512
		Group grievances	.058	.067	.023	-.136
		Quality of Public Service	-.441	-.512	-.136	.956

a. Dependent Variable: Economic Decline. Source: Author computation, 2024.

In table 4, the coefficient correlation result showed strong positive relationship among the independent variables, with the exception of quality of public service that has strong negative relationship with economic decline. Also, the covariances result showed some fluctuating relationship indicating stronger relationship with some variable and relationship.

Quality of public service shows a consistently negative association with the other variables, with effects ranging from low to moderate in strength. The hypothesis test therefore yields only partial support, as positive relationships are observed for all variables except public service quality. This suggests that improvements in service delivery alone may not offset broader political and structural pressures. Extending the time frame of analysis and introducing political stability as a moderating variable

would likely provide a clearer and more reliable understanding of these relationships

Discussion of Results

The regression analysis provides important insights into the relationship between factionalized elites, group grievances, public service quality, external intervention, and economic decline in Francophone West African states that experienced military coups between 2020 and 2023. The high R-squared value (0.994) indicates that these variables jointly explain a substantial proportion of the observed variation in economic decline, underscoring the close association between political instability and economic outcomes in contexts of weak institutional capacity. Consistent with earlier studies, the positive relationships between factionalized elites, group grievances, external intervention, and economic decline reinforce the argument that political fragmentation and contested authority exacerbate economic vulnerability in post-colonial states with fragile governance structures (Akhaine, 2003). The positive association between external intervention and economic decline also aligns with neocolonial perspectives that emphasize the continuing influence of former colonial powers on domestic governance and economic performance. Empirical work suggests that France's military and economic engagement in Francophone Africa has, in some cases, reinforced dependency and institutional weakness, contributing to cycles of instability that heighten the risk of coups and economic disruption (Tusalem, 2023). Similarly, the strong relationship between elite factionalism and economic decline reflects patterns of power concentration, rent-seeking, and institutional erosion that undermine developmental outcomes.

By contrast, the negative relationship between public service quality and economic decline, though statistically insignificant at the 10 per cent level, suggests that improvements in service delivery alone are insufficient to offset broader political and institutional dysfunction. This finding is consistent with research

showing that public sector reforms in Francophone West Africa often have limited impact when underlying elite conflicts and grievance structures remain unresolved (Amin, 2014; Audu, 2019).

Insights from the Results

The findings underscore the structural fragility of West African states and their susceptibility to military intervention. The strong influence of factionalized elites and group grievances highlights the urgency of governance reforms that reduce elite power concentration and address the exclusion of marginalized groups. The results reinforce the view that political instability is a central driver of economic decline, suggesting that sustainable economic recovery is unlikely without confronting these underlying dynamics. This interpretation is consistent with empirical evidence showing that unresolved identity-based tensions and exclusionary politics significantly increase the risk of coups and instability in West Africa. The analysis also draws attention to the destabilizing role of external intervention. The observed association between foreign involvement and economic decline points to the continuing impact of former colonial powers on domestic governance and development trajectories. Existing studies demonstrate that external engagement, particularly France's political and military involvement has often reinforced dependency and institutional weakness, thereby deepening political and economic crises (Harvey, 2004; Yende & Ntini, 2022). These findings suggest that limiting external interference is important for long-term stability and growth.

Finally, the negative effect of poor public service quality underscores the importance of institutional capacity-building. However, the results indicate that improvements in service delivery alone are insufficient to resolve state fragility. A more integrated strategy that links institutional strengthening with political reforms aimed at reducing elite conflict and group grievances is therefore essential.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between elite factionalism, group grievances, public service quality, external interventions, and economic decline in selected Francophone West African states. Using regression analysis from a small sample of five countries, the findings point to associations rather than firm causal claims. Group grievances, fragmented elites, and external interventions are positively linked to economic decline, while stronger public service provision shows a negative association. Given the limited dataset and the region's complex political economies, these results should be interpreted cautiously. Rather than suggesting that any single factor drives decline, the analysis indicates that these conditions tend to overlap in settings marked by weak institutions and political instability. In this sense, economic decline and military resurgence appear to emerge from interacting governance constraints rather than deterministic processes.

The conclusions are therefore best understood as exploratory. Even so, the study adds value by empirically illustrating how domestic political fragmentation and external dependence often coincide with economic vulnerability in Francophone West Africa. It provides a useful foundation for future research that can test these relationships more rigorously using broader datasets and comparative designs.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Drawing from the findings, several tentative policy implications emerge. Reforms that reduce elite fragmentation, such as inclusive governance, power-sharing arrangements, and decentralization may help ease governance failures and economic pressures. While causality cannot be established, the observed patterns suggest that elite cohesion and effective institutional bargaining deserve policy attention. Similarly, addressing group grievances through inclusive development and fair political representation appears important, particularly in contexts where exclusion and inequality

coincide with economic decline. Reducing regional and social disparities may strengthen legitimacy and lessen the political conditions that make military intervention appealing.

The link between external intervention and economic decline also points to the need to reassess security and economic partnerships that weaken domestic accountability. Strengthening sub-regional mechanisms, including ECOWAS-led approaches to conflict management and economic coordination, may reduce overreliance on external actors. Finally, improving public service delivery, especially in infrastructure, security, and basic social services, remains essential, but the findings suggest that such efforts are unlikely to succeed on their own. Service improvements must be accompanied by broader political and institutional reforms if they are to translate into lasting economic and political stability. Overall, these recommendations are indicative rather than prescriptive and should be refined through further empirical research that can better establish causal pathways and inform context-sensitive policy design.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, H. S. M., Xu, X., & Sun, C. (2023). Dynamics of group grievances from a global cohesion perspective. *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, 87, 101606. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2023.101606>
- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. Profile Books.
- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2019). *The narrow corridor: States, societies, and the fate of liberty*. Penguin Press.
- Acemoglu, D., Robinson, J. A., & Torvik, R. (2020). The political agenda effect and state centralization. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 48(4), 749–778.
- Acemoglu, D., Ticchi, D., & Vindigni, A. (2010). A theory of military dictatorships. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 2(1), 1–42.

- Aisen, A., & Veiga, F. J. (2011). How does political instability affect economic growth? IMF Working Papers, 2011(12). <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781455211906.001>
- Akhaine, S. O. (2003). The political economy of Claude Ake. In S. Oloruntoba & T. Falola (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of African political economy* (pp. 487–503). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Amin, S. (1976). *Unequal development: An essay on the social formations of peripheral capitalism*. Monthly Review Press.
- Amin, S. (2014). *Capitalism in the age of globalization: The management of contemporary society*. Zed Books.
- Audu, J. (2019). State failure, poor governance and restructuring: Interrogating the trilogy in the Nigerian state. *Zamfara Journal of Politics and Development*, 2(2), 1–11.
- Babatunde, M. A., & Akinyemi, F. O. (2021). Political instability and foreign direct investment in Nigeria: A sectoral analysis. *Journal of International Economics*, 18(3), 102–120.
- Besley, T., & Persson, T. (2010). State capacity, conflict, and development. *Econometrica*, 78(1), 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA8073>
- Bøås, M., & Torheim, L. (2013). *The military and the state in Africa: The case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Routledge.
- Chesterman, S., Ignatieff, M., & Thakur, R. (2005). *Making states work: State failure and the crisis of governance*. United Nations University Press.
- Cilliers, J. (2016). *The military and democracy in Africa: A comparative perspective*. Institute for Security Studies.
- Coface. (2023). *Focus on Africa: Political risk and coups update 2023*. Coface Group.
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2000). Greed and grievance in civil war. In *Conflict, political accountability and aid* (pp. 91–111). Routledge.
- Edi, E. (2006). Pan-West Africanism and political instability in West Africa. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 1(3).
- Erude, S. U., & Agiri, J. E. (2023). Military junta in Francophone West Africa. *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*, 29, 474–483. <https://doi.org/10.47743/jopaf-2023-29-39>

- Feaver, P. D. (2003). Armed servants: Agency, oversight, and civil–military relations. *Armed Forces & Society*, 29(3), 375–395.
- Finer, S. E. (1962). *The man on horseback: The role of the military in politics*. Praeger.
- Firdausi, N. I. (2020). Varieties of authoritarianism matter: Elite fragmentation, natural resources, and economic growth. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 75, 147–154.
- Gray, C. S. (2016). *Strategy and politics*. Routledge.
- Harvey, D. (2004). *The new imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2020). *The anti-capitalist chronicles*. Pluto Press.
- Hiroi, S., & Omori, K. (2015). The role of social fragmentation in military coups. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(2), 123–137.
- Huntington, S. P. (1957). *The soldier and the state: The theory and politics of civil–military relations*. Harvard University Press.
- Luckham, R., et al. (2001). *Democracy and development in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- McGowan, P. J. (2003). African military coups d'état, 1956–2001: Frequency, trends and distribution. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(3), 339–370.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2015). *The decolonial Mandela: Peace, justice and the politics of reconciliation*. Routledge.
- Nordlinger, E. A. (1977). *Soldiers in politics: Military coups d'état in comparative perspective*. Prentice Hall.
- Odigbo, J., Ezekwelu, K. C., & Okeke, R. C. (2023). Democracy's discontent and the resurgence of military coups in Africa. *Journal of Contemporary International Relations and Diplomacy*, 4(1), 644–655.
- Omoera, O. S., & Obekpa, E. E. (2019). Neo-colonial dependence and dualistic development models. *Journal of Society and Media*, 3(2), 178–194.
- Pareto, V. (1935). *The mind and society*. Harcourt, Brace.
- Pigeaud, F., & Sylla, A. (2024). Military coups in Africa: A continuation of politics by other means. *ACCORD*.
- Powell, J. M., & Thyne, C. L. (2011). Global instances of coups from 1950 to 2010: A new dataset. *Journal of Peace Research*, 48(2), 249–259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343310397436>

- Tusalem, R. F. (2023). The colonial foundations of state fragility and failure. *Polity*, 48(4), 445–495.
- Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. Academic Press.
- Wallerstein, I. (2004). *World-systems analysis: An introduction*. Duke University Press.
- Wolff, S. (2011). The regional dimensions of state failure. *Review of International Studies*, 37(3), 951–972.
- Yende, N., & Ntini, E. (2022). Underdevelopment of the underdeveloped. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 12(2), 207–227.