# EXAMINING WEST AFRICAN MODELS OF COUP PREVENTION AND THEIR APPLICABILITY TO EAST AFRICA

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## Abstract

Political instability has been a persistent issue in Africa since the 1960s, with significant repercussions across the continent. Although East Africa has not experienced the same level of political turbulence as West Africa, the latter's turmoil has had a profound impact on regional security. Since the Cold War's end, West Africa's path toward democratization and economic stability has been marred by various forms of violence, including civil wars, ethnic conflicts, military coups, and secessionist movements. The challenges of ineffective governance, nepotism, poverty, and high unemployment rates are often cited as key drivers of these military coups. This study explores the nature and impact of these issues, focusing on how West Africa's experiences with political instability can offer valuable insights for East Africa. By analysing the drivers of coups and other forms of violence in West Africa, this research aims to provide a framework for understanding and addressing similar challenges in East Africa, ultimately contributing to regional stability and security.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the African continent's political turbulence in the have sparked significant concern. Although these events 1960s, changes in the political situation in West Africa occurred outside of East Africa, their impact was felt across borders and had a profound impact on the region's security situation (Yoroms, 2022). Since the end of the Cold War, West Africa's journey to democratization and long-term socioeconomic prosperity has been impeded by a variety of forms of violence, including fatal civil wars, ethnic conflicts, coups, and secessionist insurgencies (Marc, 2015). Ineffective governance, nepotism, destitution, and unemployment are frequently identified as primary drivers of military coups in West Africa (Daffeh, 2024). These elements cause instability, discontent, and dissatisfaction among the population, potentially leading to a loss of public trust in governmental and democratic institutions. Military coups may then be viewed as a manner of resolving complaints and effecting change, albeit through undemocratic means (Powell, 2020).

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The historical emergence of French dominance in West Africa has had a considerable impact on the number of military coups in the region (McGowan, 2001). Colonial legacies have entrenched authoritarian governance and economic exploitation, resulting in long-lasting tensions. Despite independence, neo-colonial influences persist, eroding sovereignty and increasing dependency, particularly from France. French meddling in domestic affairs, military presence, and resource exploitation intensify anti-French sentiments and instability, making them more susceptible to coups. Addressing colonial legacies, supporting inclusive governance, and encouraging economic independence are critical to stability. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has helped manage some conflicts, but the region continues to face new security threats, including coups that threaten member states' legitimacy and territorial integrity.

This research undertakes a comprehensive examination of the ramifications of political instability and coups d'état in West Africa, serving as a paradigm for understanding regional security dynamics within the East African Community (EAC). By conducting an intricate analysis of the nexus between political upheavals in West Africa and security imperatives in East Africa, this scholarly article elucidates the cascading effects engendered by coups d'état in West Africa, significantly influencing regional security within the EAC. The principal objective of this article is to furnish a scholarly framework for crafting a regional security strategy in East Africa aimed to mitigate challenges akin to those precipitated by political unrest in West Africa, which imperil the security landscape of the entire region. The research delves into the impact of coups d'état in West Africa on East African security apparatus and accentuates the role and methodologies adopted by the East African Community in confronting such occurrences. This study aims to inform policymakers and stakeholders within the East African Community (EAC) about the interconnectedness of security challenges across the continent, highlighting the necessity for proactive regional cooperation in mitigating Haruna these threats.

The research provides a comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical interconnections and security imperatives facing Africa, emphasizing the critical role of regional bodies in pre-emptively tackling these challenges. Collaborative efforts and continental synergy are crucial to achieving lasting peace and stability.

The postcolonial era ushered in a wave of optimism and aspirations for self-determination and democracy across West Africa. However, alongside these hopes emerged a period characterized by political turbulence and instability. In the early ages of independence, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, numerous West African nations embarked on the journey to establish enduring democratic institutions (Boafo-Arthur, 2008). Paradoxically, these efforts rendered them susceptible to military intervention and coup attempts. While the early 2000s witnessed a significant decrease in military interventions, the frequency of coups surged in subsequent years. In 2020, only one coup was recorded, occurring in Mali. However, the year 2021 witnessed military involvement in five nations, namely Chad, Mali, Guinea, Sudan, and Niger (Beardsworth et al., 2022). In 2022, there were only five coup attempts, two of which succeeded—in Burkina Faso in January and September 2022—while a third attempt failed in September 2023 (Hansen, 2024). In 2023, coups took place in Niger and Gabon, accompanied by an unsuccessful coup attempt in Sierra Leone. These incidents have ignited concerns across the African continent, impacting communities far removed from the focal points of conflict (Hansen, 2024).

The upsurge in coup attempts in West Africa can be attributed to a multifaceted interplay of factors, encompassing issues such as governance deficiencies, political volatility, economic challenges, and regional intricacies (Elamin, 2023).

Moreover, external actors, notably former colonial powers, wield significant influence in shaping the region's political landscape (Mattheis, 2024). Neo-colonial pressures, economic dependencies, and military collaboration agreements with external entities have collectively perpetuated political instability and heightened the susceptibility of West African governments to military intervention (Cohen, 2003). Furthermore, the reverberations of coups in West Africa extend beyond the confines of the region, impacting neighbouring nations and the broader African continent. The recurring occurrence of coups emphasizes the imperative of tackling the underlying causes of political instability and advancing inclusive governance, socio-economic progress, and regional collaboration to cultivate stability and resilience not only within West Africa but also in a wider context. East Africa is embroiled in deep geopolitical complexities and multiple security concerns caused by a combination of domestic and external sources (Rwengabo, 2014).

Great Lakes complex are particularly important, as they have a significant impact on the East African Community's security strategies. This analysis seeks to investigate the intricate interplay between these sub regional complexes and their far-reaching implications for the security landscape. Recently there has been an increase in diplomatic tensions among important EAC countries, as evidenced by rising issues between Kampala and Kigali in January 2024, which forced Burundi to seal its border with Rwanda in the most recent regional spat (Ngendakumana, 2024). These tensions are characterized by charges ranging from espionage to political killings and trade disruptions. Such conflicts highlight bigger strategic concerns, like conflict over resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (here and after refer to "DRC") and recurrent instability in Somalia, which acts as a focal point for non-traditional security challenges posed by groups such as al-Shabaab. Furthermore, South Sudan's fragile geographical location, typified by recurring violence and civil war, exacerbates regional security dynamics (Nyadera, 2018). While efforts to establish power-sharing arrangements provide glimpses of stability, on-going uncertainty exacerbates the region's fragility. Geopolitically, East Africa is inextricably linked to adjacent regions and exposed to global dynamics, including interventions by Gulf States. The region's vulnerability is seen in its high levels of insecurity, with DRC, Somalia, and South Sudan among the world's least secure countries (Komey et al., 2013). Furthermore, recent coups in Sudan, as well as simmering ethnic tensions in Ethiopia and South Sudan (Odigbo et al., 2023), highlight the fragility of governing institutions throughout the sub-region.

To summarize, the cascading effects of West African coups on regional security strategy within the East African Community highlight the importance of proactive efforts to address the root causes of instability and encourage cooperation among member states. Recognizing the interconnection of security concerns throughout the continent and implementing comprehensive measures will allow the East African Community to better navigate the complicated geopolitical terrain and maintain regional stability.

**Brief overview of recent coup in West Africa**

Recent research has heightened our knowledge of coup outcomes, indicating that coups can act as catalysts for democratization in autocracies (Thyne et al., 2016). Coups improve the possibility of transferring to democracy because violent turnovers between autocratic rulers frequently open the way for democratization, with coup-initiated transitions being the most common route to democracy (Miller, 2014). There are three main avenues that connect coups to democratic reforms: international pressure for democratic reform, the requirement for legitimacy after capturing power, and the potential consequences for leaders who lose power. Thus, enacting democratic reforms may provide leaders with a road to legitimacy and stability following a coup (Omotola, 2011).

The political landscape of the region is characterized by periodic crises and a dire need to reevaluate social contracts. The 2012 military coup in Mali, the accompanying political instability, and repeated military coups in 2020 and 2021 are all examples of this volatile situation (Hansen, 2024). Similarly, Burkina Faso saw President Blaise Compaoré deposed in 2014, followed by ongoing unrest and two military coups in 2022. In Chad, the death of President Idriss Deby in 2021 resulted in the establishment of a military council rather than following constitutional procedures, causing further upheaval and brutal crackdowns on opposition protesters (Vogel, 2024). This pattern of coups and military elites consolidating power highlights the region's ongoing instability and illegal rule.

Coups in West Africa are not independent phenomena, but rather interconnected, driven by a convergence of political, economic, and social elements (Jackson, 2006) that have defined the region's history since colonialism. African countries have experienced common coup conditions, such as poverty and low economic performance. When a country experiences one coup, it is frequently a precursor to subsequent coups. Understanding the historical context and recurring themes of coups in these countries is crucial to understanding the intricacies of West African politics as well as the difficulty of establishing and maintaining democratic governance. Figure 1 shows the coup attempts in West Africa from the 1960s to 2023.

**Importance of regional stability in Africa**

From a political standpoint, maintaining regional stability is critical in building solid governance frameworks characterized by accountability and transparency (Siddiqi et al., 2009), thereby creating favourable circumstances for the advancement of democracy and the preservation of human rights. Furthermore, stable conditions foster economic integration and development efforts, promoting the free flow of trade, investment, and resources throughout adjacent states. Furthermore, regional stability promotes social cohesiveness and cultural exchange, encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance, and solidarity among diverse populations (Alkaramov, 2023).

Additionally, regional stability is crucial in dealing with transnational threats to security like terrorism, criminal networks, and the spread of conflict (Smith, 2015). Collaborative security systems and information sharing improve collective resilience and reaction capacities, reducing the negative consequences of cross-border instability. Furthermore, regional stability facilitates peace building initiatives and conflict resolution procedures, hastening the process of restoring peace and encouraging reconciliation in war-affected regions.

Looking ahead, achieving regional stability will require collaborative efforts from national governments, regional bodies, civil society organizations, and foreign partners. Strengthening institutional capacities, adopting conflict prevention techniques, and encouraging sustainable development initiatives are all critical components of a holistic plan for Africa's regional stability. Furthermore, promoting inclusive government systems, reducing socioeconomic gaps, and advancing regional integration agendas are critical steps in boosting community resilience and cohesiveness across the continent.

Ultimately, the importance of regional stability in Africa cannot be emphasized because it serves as the foundation for the continent's common objectives for peace, prosperity, and long-term development. African nations may successfully manage complex problems and fulfil their full potential as vibrant and resilient civilizations within a secure and prosperous regional environment by prioritizing regional partnership, conflict resolution, and inclusive development initiatives.
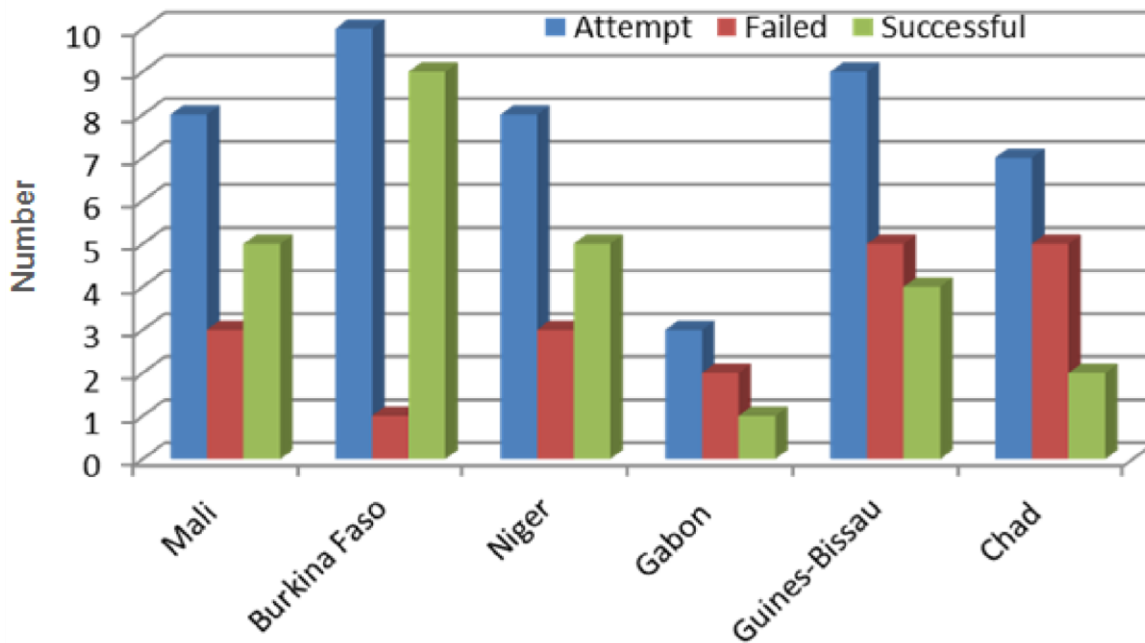
**Figure 2.** Coup attempts in West Africa from the 1960s to 2023.

**Purpose and scope of the article**

*Purpose*

This article explores how coup attempts in West Africa can serve as crucial lessons for maintaining stability and security in East African communities, with a special focus on the East African Community (EAC). By examining the broader implications of political instability in one region on the security landscape of another, this study highlights the interconnectedness of regional security dynamics. We delve into how instability in West Africa reverberates through East Africa and evaluate the EAC's strategies and actions in addressing these transnational security concerns. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the discourse on regional security cooperation and governance in Africa.

*Scope*

The study's scope will include an examination of the different channels through which West African instability affects East Africa, such as transnational security risks, economic ramifications, and socio-political effects. Furthermore, the study will assess the EAC's response mechanisms and activities for preventing security challenges resulting from political upheavals in West Africa. The study will cover previous coup attempts and political crises in West Africa, with an emphasis on events from the last two decades till the present. To provide a thorough understanding of the subject, the study will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as a literature review, case studies, and policy document analysis. Overall, the paper aims to provide insights on the interconnectedness of regional security dynamics in Africa, as well as the role of regional organizations in responding to transnational security threats.

# UNDERSTANDING WEST AFRICA'S COUP AND ITS IMPACT

## Background of the coup

Recent coups, exemplified by those in Mali in 2020 and Sudan in 2021, have often been accompanied by promises of elections and reform. However, it is widely acknowledged that coups typically result in heightened repression and the entrenchment of autocratic regimes, even when the ousted autocratic rulers are replaced (Akinkugbe, 2024). Regardless of their outcome, all coups underscore deep divisions within the ruling regime and underscore enduring challenges within political systems. The occurrence of coups not only increases the likelihood of further coups but also exposes underlying elite or regime fractures, which may in turn fuel increased popular mobilization. Moreover, coups rarely establish durable autocratic regimes, with most coup leaders facing significant insecurity and short expected tenures.

Despite their initial success in seizing power, often fail to establish long-lasting autocratic regimes. The statistics suggests that a majority of coup leaders face challenges in maintaining their grip on power, with a significant portion being ousted within a relatively short period (Dahl and Gleditsch, 2023). In response to heightened insecurity, leaders may resort to measures such as increased repression, purges, and attempts to stifle opposition, thereby exacerbating the autocratic nature of political institutions. To realize the broader implications, it is necessary to first understand the core causes and repercussions of coups in West Africa.

## Causes and actors involved

### Causes of the coup in West Africa

**(1)    Weak democratic institutions:** Many West African countries have struggled to establish robust democratic institutions. Weak legislatures, ineffective judiciaries, and underdeveloped electoral systems often create power vacuums and opportunities for coups. In an effort to extend his 27-year tenure, former president Blaise Compaoré in Burkina Faso lifted term limits in 2014 (Siegle and Cook, 2021). Compaoré had seized power in a military takeover in 1987, and despite enacting some initial democratic changes (such as term limits) (Moestrup, 2019), his tenure was characterized by extreme authoritarianism. Apart from the ruling class, few people in the nation saw their conditions the years while he was president, and it continued to be one of the least developed nations in the world. In order to defend themselves from coups, some African political leaders have gone "on offense," changing the command structures of their armed forces in an effort to prevent a takeover. President Bazoum of Niger utilized this strategy before he was toppled (Korotayev et al., 2024).

Years of authoritarian rule by elected leaders or small elites have debilitated political parties, hollowed down judicial systems, constrained independent news media, and hampered the free functioning of civil society in far too many countries. These democratic deteriorations such as impair governments' ability to respond to their people's needs and grievances, damage state legitimacy, and ironically demolish the democratic shields that are supposed to safeguard elected leaders. As a result, they encourage violent eruptions, such as fanaticism, insurgencies, and coups. The coup threat confronts both civilian-governed and military-ruled countries.

**(2)    Economic challenges:** The enigma of West African countries being abundant in natural resources while still facing high levels of poverty is a complicated and diverse issue. Economic hardship, high unemployment rates, and income disparity can all contribute to popular unrest. Countries such as Gabon, which has abundant resources such as oil, manganese, iron ore, and uranium, and has an annual mineral

production worth $10.92 billion, is one of the top ten African countries that export the most natural resources in 2022 (Mozambique, 2023) and, as a result, generate the most wealth from its abundant reserves.

Despite possessing all of these natural resources, Gabon has a third of its population living in poverty. One source of frustration is the country's high level of corruption: it ranks 136th in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (Pellegrin, 2023). Burkina Faso is another West African country rich in mineral resources, producing significant amounts of gold, zinc, copper, manganese, phosphate, and limestone. It also has diamond, bauxite, nickel, and vanadium reserves, which are mainly untapped. Despite accounting for only 8% of government revenues, the mining sector accounted for 75% of exports in 2019 (Pokorny et al., 2019). Though having all of these natural resources, Burkina Faso remains as one of the world's poorest countries, ranking 184 out of 189 countries in 2022, with over 40% of the Burkinabe living below the poverty line, and the country ranking 144th out of 157 countries in the World Bank's Human Capital Index (Soré, 2023). Niger, a nation with major industrial mining potential for uranium, gold, salt, calcium, phosphates, cassiterite, and gypsum, experienced a coup d'état on July 26, 2023. In addition to these other minerals, Niger also produces cement, coal, gypsum, limestone, salt, silver, and tin. Since the country's economy is not well diversified and agriculture accounts for 40% of its GDP, these susceptible resources did not play a significant role in ensuring the reduction of poverty. In 2021, more than 10 million people (41.8% of the population) (Peter, 2023) were considered to be extremely poor.

Support for military involvement may grow as a result of the belief that the administration is failing to address these concerns. Furthermore, poverty, political tyranny, corruption, and foreign interference have transformed the expectations of the majority of West Africans for an economically integrated and politically united West Africa into a daily nightmare (Adebajo, 2002).

**(3)     Authoritarian rule:** Authoritarian government in the region frequently results in the concentration of power among a select few, causing considerable public discontent and fury (Lynch, 2014). Opposition parties and opposing voices are often silenced in such regimes, leaving few legal alternatives for voicing political opposition or displeasure. The obstruction of nonviolent political reform prompts some individuals or groups to consider coups as a means of seizing power.

Authoritarian leaders frequently rely on the military to maintain control and suppress opposition, which can lead to the militarization of politics, with the military serving as a key power broker (Rashed, 2017). This relationship becomes especially volatile when the military believes the ruling system no longer serves its interests, raising the risk of a coup as a means of protecting its own stakes. Furthermore, constraints on political liberties, such as voting rights, the opportunity to create political parties, and the right to peaceful protest, intensify citizens' dissatisfaction with feeling alienated and silenced.

This sense of exclusion and disenfranchisement can incite discontent and destabilize the political landscape, creating an environment suitable for dramatic measures such as military coups. On August 30, 2023, mere hours subsequent to the official confirmation by Gabon's election commission of President Ali Bongo Ondimba's victory for a third term, a contingent from the elite presidential guard staged a dramatic takeover. The military faction detained President Ondimba within the confines of his palace. Later that same day, the orchestrators of this takeover appointed General Brice Oligui Nguema as the chairman of the transitional government. This sudden shift in power prompted the opposition candidate to characterize the event not as a traditional coup d'état but as a "palace revolution," asserting it was a strategic move to thwart his ascendancy to the presidency of Gabon (Jordan, 2023).

Efforts to promote democracy in West Africa have been on-going, with regional organizations like ECOWAS playing a role in mediating conflicts and promoting democratic norms. However, the historical legacy of authoritarian rule in some countries has made the transition to stable and democratic governance a complex and on-going process.

**(4)      Ethnic and religious confrontations:** The intricate ethnic and religious diversity of West Africa often serves as a catalyst for inter-group conflicts. Opportunistically, coup plotters may exploit these societal rifts to garner support. In Burkina Faso, the government's failure to quell an escalating Islamist insurgency precipitated a coup in January 2022 (San José Ortiz de Zárate, 2023).

Initially, the coup received broad approval from the populace, disgruntled by the previous administration's inability to effectively address the insurgency. However, the new regime also struggled to subdue the insurgents, subsequently losing further territory to jihadists and other extremist factions (Eizenga, 2023). This escalating insecurity led to another seismic political shift on September 30, 2022. Captain Ibrahim Traoré, a 34-yearold commander of an artillery battalion within the Armed Forces of Burkina Faso, orchestrated a second coup and declared himself the head of state, displacing Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, the junta leader who had himself seized power earlier in January 2022. Captain Traoré cited the worsening security conditions as his primary motivation for the coup, despite Damiba's initial promises to resolve the nation's security dilemmas. This cycle of power shifts underlines the deep-seated challenges facing Burkina Faso's governance and its ongoing struggle with instability.

**(5)      Historical precedents:** Coups have become part of the political tradition in various West African countries (Engels, 2023). Because of the history of military engagement in governance, coups may appear to be a feasible instrument of regime change. Burkina Faso has been the victim of multiple coups throughout its history. Captain Thomas Sankara was deposed in 1987 by his close colleague, Blaise Compaoré, in one of the most remarkable coups (Kumah-Abiwu, 2023). Compaoré governed for nearly three decades before being deposed in 2014 by a public uprising (Bertrand, 2022). Following coup attempts and political instability, the country experienced a coup in 2022, followed by an unsuccessful coup attempt in September 2023. Gabon has also experienced coup attempts in the past, including a notable one in 1964 (Tordoff and Young, 1999). Recent coup attempts, such as in 2023, highlight the country's persistent political difficulties and power disputes. Military interventions have had a profound impact on Mali's political landscape, with coups taking place in 1968, 1991, 2012, 2020, and 2021. The 2021 coup, in particular, had far-reaching implications, aggravating the country's already serious political and security challenges (Matei, 2021). This pattern of military coups reveals deep-rooted governance issues and has resulted in a cycle of instability that continues to impede Mali's progress. Similarly, since gaining independence, Niger has been plagued with coups, which occurred in 1974, 1996, 1999, 2010, 2021, and as recently as 2023 (Adefisoye and Braimah, 2023). This pattern of periodic military interventions has maintained an environment of political instability, hampering efforts to develop long-term democratic institutions and effective governance. The military's constant interference in politics has hampered political growth while also contributing to a widespread sense of uncertainty and instability, which impedes socioeconomic development. Both countries demonstrate the enormous effect that military entrenchment in politics may have on stability and progress. The periodic coups in these nations highlight the importance of fundamental reforms aimed at strengthening democratic institutions and developing a culture of civilian government, which can pave the path for long-term stability and development.

These military takeovers not only undermine governance structures, but they also frequently result in extensive human rights violations and major economic disruptions. Furthermore, such tactics frequently elicit international censure, culminating in sanctions that can alienate coup leaders and worsen a country's geopolitical and economic isolation. Regional organizations, particularly ECOWAS, play an important role in tackling this cycle. ECOWAS has a track record of intervening to restore constitutional order and promote democratic governance in its member countries following coups. The organization's operations include diplomatic attempts, targeted sanctions, and, in some situations, military actions to restore overthrown governments.

To successfully mitigate the allure of military takeovers as a mechanism of regime transition, it is critical to address the underlying causes of regional political instability. Key challenges include rampant corruption, poverty, and poor government. Addressing these difficulties requires a comprehensive plan that includes policy reform, better democratic institutions, and improved public services. By addressing these underlying challenges, West African countries can create a more secure and wealthy environment that reduces the attractiveness of coups while encouraging sustainable development and democratic governance.

*Key stakeholders: Wagner group and France's role in the Sahel region*

Originally, West African states such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger requested assistance from France, their former colonial power. In 2013, France launched Operation Sérval, which effectively reduced the threat of violent extremism in Mali's northern areas (Roberto et al., 2013). In August 2014, the operation was expanded into Operation Barkhane, which included Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania (Larivé, 2014). However, Barkhane lacked a unified counterterrorism policy, resulting in a large military presence in the region. Despite France's continuous attempts to support military and socioeconomic operations in the Sahel region, violent extremism persisted, particularly in Mali.

The continuous insurgencies fuelled resentment of Western engagement, which exacerbated diplomatic tensions. Following military coups in West Africa, France's relations with the West Africa deteriorated (Erude and Agiri, 2023). The newly created Junta governments defended their takeover of power by claiming French army shortages and the previous administration's incapacity to adequately battle terrorist groups (Soucy, 2021). Diplomatic tensions reached their zenith when Mali and Burkina Faso demanded the departure of French soldiers in 2022 and 2023 (Engels, Popular struggles and the search for alternative democracies, 2022), respectively. Consequently, French and British soldiers withdrew from Mali in 2022, and United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) planned a gradual withdrawal from Mali in June 2023 (Paillard Borg, 2024). Despite keeping a presence in Niger, the junta terminated military accords with France, resulting in the evacuation of French forces.

After the withdrawal of French forces, the Wagner Group attempted to fill the security vacuum. Wagner Group moved to fill the security void, focusing its operations primarily in the Central African Republic (CAR), Libya, Mali, and Sudan (Pokalova, 2023). These regions maintain strained relationships with the West, particularly France, owing to colonial legacies and inherent political disparities. Employing anti-colonial discourse, Wagner contends that France bears responsibility for the security challenges plaguing the region (Mohamedou, 2024). Since its deployment in Mali in 2021, the Wagner Group has transitioned from civilian defense to strategic objectives (Murgia, 2023), asserting itself against perceived French neo-colonialism, which it argues has destabilized the region's economic and security frameworks.

Some West African nations have embraced Wagner's presence, hailing it as pivotal in spearheading and fortifying what they perceive as a liberating military transformation. Notably, in Niger, coup leaders have

sought Wagner's assistance amid looming pressure from the West African regional bloc to restore the deposed president or face potential military intervention (Kumar, 2023). Consequently, certain ECOWAS member states, such as Mali and Burkina Faso, have shifted their diplomatic allegiances towards Russia, the parent entity of the Wagner Group, while distancing themselves from France, historically the preeminent power in West Africa.

**Analysis of the political, economic, and social fallout**

Coup attempts in West Africa have historically posed substantial challenges to regional stability, with consequences that reach beyond politics into business and culture (N'Diaye, 2011). This examination digs into the multidimensional aftermath of West African coups, examining the political, economic, and social consequences both domestically and regionally.

*Political fallout: Implications of coup attempts*

West African coup attempts cause severe political unrest and seriously jeopardize democratic governance and institutional integrity. The subversion of constitutional order erodes the basis of successful governance and erodes voters' faith in democratic principles. Furthermore, the effects of political unrest transcend national boundaries, creating an atmosphere of ambiguity that topples adjacent administrations and hinders attempts at regional collaboration.

The consolidation of power by authoritarian regimes following successful coups exacerbates these concerns, frequently resulting in an increase in repressive tactics and flagrant human rights violations. Such events intensify regional political tensions, jeopardizing the chances for peaceful cohabitation and collaborative regional projects. As a result, the fallout from coup attempts in West Africa extends far beyond the immediate political environment, posing long-term challenges to regional stability and democratic government.

*Economic fallout: The cost of political instability*

Coups in West Africa have severe economic consequences, with far-reaching implications for both national and regional economies. Political instability caused by coups discourages foreign investment and disrupts economic activity, resulting in lower productivity and stunted economic growth. The instability creates an environment of uncertainty, which is particularly unappealing to both existing and prospective investors. Furthermore, international sanctions are frequently imposed following coups, exacerbating the affected countries' economic misery. These sanctions can isolate national economies from global markets, limit access to international financial systems, and worsen pre-existing economic problems (Balima, 2020). The resulting economic isolation puts further strain on already vulnerable economies.

Regional trade suffers as well, as political upheaval affects cross-border trade, undermining aspirations for economic integration. This interruption impedes the movement of products and services across borders, impacting supply chains and limiting market access throughout the area. The cumulative effect of these processes is a severe hindrance to economic recovery and progress, exacerbating the socioeconomic issues confronting West African countries.

*Social fallout: Disruption and displacement*

Coup attempts in West Africa inevitably create an atmosphere of instability and uncertainty, resulting in societal unrest and mass displacement. The disruption of law and order in the aftermath of a coup frequently leads to increased crime rates and violence, posing serious threats to public safety (Boakye, 2023). This collapse not only jeopardizes human well-being, but also puts enormous strain on public resources and social services. Political unrest frequently drives people to relocate, either internally or across borders, worsening social pressures in host communities and escalating pre-existing tensions, especially in neighboring nations

that suffer the brunt of refugee influxes. Such huge movements put a burden on local infrastructure and social services, frequently resulting in humanitarian catastrophes requiring international action. Furthermore, the erosion of social cohesiveness and diminishing trust in government institutions impede efforts to restore national unity and civic life. Coups' cumulative social effects, which range from disrupting community life to severing social relationships, erode society's fabric and pose enormous hurdles to nation-building and social recovery.

Given the widespread political, economic, and social consequences of West African coups, it is critical for domestic stakeholders and the international community to work together closely. Understanding the multiple repercussions of these upheavals allows policymakers to adopt targeted solutions that not only minimize immediate damage but also establish the framework for long-term stability, prosperity, and peace in the region. To enable a comprehensive recovery and long-term regional stability, effective response plans must address the underlying causes of instability, support democratic government, create economic resilience, and promote social reconciliation.

## EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITIES: OVERVIEW AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS

### Evolution and expansion

The EAC is one of the world's oldest customs unions and the most integrated regional economic community. Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda established a customs union under British colonial administration as early as 1927 (Nasubo, 2017a). The EAC was relaunched in 1967 by the three newly independent republics, disintegrated in 1977, and was reconstituted in 2000 (Mshomba, 2017). The EAC currently comprises eight member countries: the DRC, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, Somalia and the United Republic of Tanzania (EAC, 2024). The EAC included the East African Court of Justice, an East African Legislative Assembly, and a regional Secretariat. Even today's European Union lacks an institutional framework as extensive and powerful in decision-making as the EAC had before it been disbanded in 1977 (Mwapachu, 2010).

The EAC was established in the early twentieth century through collaboration between Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. This collaboration resulted in the foundation of major institutions such as the East African Monetary Board in 1919 and the subsequent formation of the East African Monetary Authority between Kenya and Uganda in 1917. Tanzania later joined the monetary union in 1927 (Chemelil, 20216). Over time, this cooperative framework evolved through different organizational phases, from the East African High Commission (EAHC) (1948-1961) to the East African Common Services Organization (EACSO) (1961-1967), culminating in the foundation of the East Community in 1967 (Vidmar, 2015).

The expansion of the EAC continued with the inclusion of Burundi and Rwanda in July 2007 (Nasubo, 2017b). Subsequently, South Sudan signed the accession treaty in April 2016, officially becoming a member on September 5, 2016 (Charalambides, 2017), thereby facilitating the organization's enlargement. DRC joined the EAC on March 29, 2022, bringing a West African coastal port into the geographical purview of the EAC. Somalia's official accession to the EAC Treaty on November 24, 2023, further bolstered the regional presence of the bloc, with the treaty's formal ratification occurring at the Presidential Palace in Kampala, Uganda, on December 15 of the same year (EAC, 2023).

The primary objectives of the regional organization encompass the advancement of economic integration, fostering peace, and ensuring stability within the region. Functioning as a cohesive regional entity, the EAC has implemented a range of conflict resolution mechanisms, undertaken peacekeeping missions, and engaged

in diplomatic endeavors aimed at mitigating cross-border conflicts and fostering collaborative efforts at the regional level (Kenyaggia, 2016). The EAC, with an estimated population of 301.8 million individuals, of who over 30% reside in urban areas, spans an expansive area of 5.4 million square kilometers. With a total GDP amounting to US$312.9 billion, the organization holds significant strategic and geopolitical importance, eliciting anticipation for its rejuvenation and enhancement (EAC, 2024).

The EAC views coups in West Africa as security threats for several reasons, despite the geographical distance between the two regions. While the specific circumstances and dynamics that lead to coups vary by region, there are some underlying causes and risk factors that apply universally across the African continent, including both West and East Africa. These common elements show that, while the EAC faces unique challenges, it is not immune to the same issues that have contributed to West African coups. Corruption, poverty, misuse of state assets, political repression, deep polarization, and violent extremism are among the prevalent conditions that make even democratically elected governments prone to military coups, such as those in Gabon and Niger. In such cases, huge sectors of the populace lose faith in democracy and their government, becoming increasingly apathetic to the military's actions.

Except for Tanzania on the mainland and South Sudan, practically all of the countries in the East African region have a history of military coups, both successful and unsuccessful. Burundi has had eleven coups since independence, the most recent of which failed on May 13 to 15, 2015, headed by General Godefroid Niyombare against President Pierre Nkurunziza (Vandeginste, 2015). Uganda has experienced five coups with three successful, the most famous being Idi Amin's deposition of Milton Obote on January 25, 1971, and Yoweri Museveni's deposition of Tito Okello Lutwa on January 26, 1986 (Kasule, 2022). Since then, Museveni has been known as one of the African politicians who served as president for an extended period of time. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced five coup attempts, with two successful overthrows. The most recent success occurred on May 16, 1997, when Laurent-Désiré Kabila deposed Mobutu Sese Seko, igniting the First Congo War (Tshileu N'Kolomona, 2002). More recently, on May 19, 2024, an unsuccessful attempt aimed to overthrow President Felix Tshisekedi. (Msoshi, 2024) These events underscore the persistent instability and highlight the urgent need for robust political and security measures in the region. Figure 2 shows the coup attempts in East Africa community from the 1960s to 2015.

**Economic and political relationships within the EAC**

The economic and political relationships within the EAC are multifaceted and dynamic, encompassing a range of collaborative efforts aimed at fostering regional integration, economic growth, and political stability. The following is an overview.

*Economic relationships: Strengthening regional cohesion*

The EAC is increasing regional cohesiveness and improving its members' ability to respond effectively to both regional and global economic issues. This integrated approach is projected to result in increased economic stability and prosperity for every member state of the community.

**Firstly, intra-regional trade dynamics**

The partner states of the EAC are keen to bolster industrial development within the region, foster collaboration in both intra-regional and inter-regional trade, and ultimately integrate the regional economy into the broader global economic landscape (Umulisa, 2020). This collaboration is supported by the EAC Customs Union and Common Market procedures, which help to reduce trade barriers and harmonize regional trade policy (Mmari et al., 2022). These measures are intended to enhance the free movement of commodities, services, capital, and labor, hence improving economic integration and mutual growth among member states.
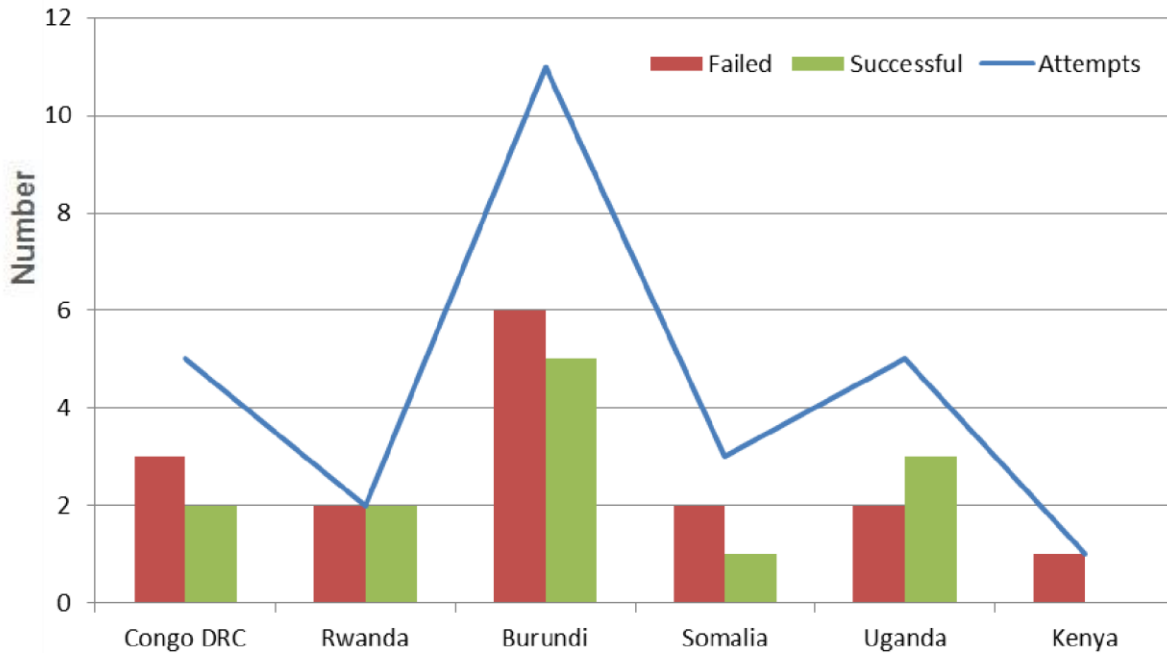
**Figure 2.** Coup attempts in East Africa community from the 1960s to 2015.

**Secondly, investment promotion objectives**

EAC member states are dedicated to attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) as a critical component of their economic development and industrialization goals. The area works together to provide an attractive investment atmosphere for international investors. This includes improving infrastructure, encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, and establishing supportive regulatory frameworks. These policies are intended to increase investor confidence and stimulate economic activity across a variety of sectors.

**Thirdly, collaborative infrastructure development**

With an emphasis on vital industries like telecommunications, electricity, and transportation, infrastructure development is a major area of collaboration within the EAC. Collaborative activities in these domains aim to enhance the connectivity within the region, simplify and optimize trade, and bolster efforts towards wider economic integration. In addition to strengthening the economic ties between the member states, these initiatives are essential in laying the groundwork for long-term economic expansion and development in the area. By strengthening these economic ties, the EAC aims to achieve prosperity and stability for all of its member states in the future while also enhancing regional integration and navigating global economic problems.

*Political relationships: Enhancing governance and stability*

The EAC's steadfast commitment to cultivating political connections and fortifying governance institutions serves as a cornerstone for the region's journey towards heightened stability and seamless integration.

**First, institutional synergy**

The EAC member nations cooperate extensively through important organs and institutions such as the Summit, Council of Ministers, Legislative Assembly, and Secretariat (ABUBAKAR, 2020). These bodies play critical roles in enabling political discussion, structuring decision-making processes, and guiding the implementation of regional policies and initiatives. This organized framework promotes a methodical approach to governance and improves the effectiveness of regional integration efforts.

**Second, consolidating peace and security**

The EAC's mandate includes promoting regional peace and security. This dedication is reflected in comprehensive conflict prevention measures, strong peace building activities, and coordinated peacekeeping missions aimed at settling disputes and maintaining peace among member states. These initiatives are critical in establishing a secure environment that promotes political and economic success.

**Third**

The EAC encourages on-going political discourse among its member states to address common concerns and strengthen democracy, good governance, and human rights adherence. The EAC seeks to develop agreement and improve regional political stability through regular meetings and constructive engagements on political issues. This on-going communication is critical for resolving emerging concerns and coordinating national policies with regional goals.

**Fourth, the strategic importance of economic and political links**

The interaction of economic and political links within the EAC is critical to regional integration, economic progress, and political stability. Persistent engagement and cooperation among member states are critical to realizing the EAC's full potential. By achieving these common goals, the EAC hopes to ensure a prosperous and peaceful future for all of its citizens. These enhanced political connections demonstrate the EAC's commitment to increasing regional integration and governance, laying the groundwork for long-term growth and stability in East Africa (Munyao, 2013).

## EXISTING SECURITY CHALLENGES IN EAST AFRICA

East Africa faces a variety of security challenges, both traditional and emerging, which pose significant threats to the stability and well-being of the region. Some of the key existing security challenges in East Africa include:

*Terrorism dynamics: Persistent threats and regional instability*

East Africa continues to face considerable risks from terrorist actions; Eastern Africa has two primary terrorism hotspots which are mostly orchestrated by groups like AlShabaab in Somalia (Nyesiga, 2017), as well as Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from Uganda (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999). In East Africa, Al-Shabaab is designated as the most active terrorist group, having pledged allegiance to Al-Qaida in 2012 (Bacon and Muibu, 2019). It predominantly conducts attacks within Somalia but also extends its operations to neighboring states. Al-Shabaab exhibits high adaptability, as evidenced by its increased use of indirect fire attacks against aircraft and airfields in 2021. Moreover, since 2016, the group has perpetrated significant, intricate, and lethal attacks beyond Somalia, notably in Kenya (Gvilia, 2021). Ongoing concerns revolve around recruitment and radicalization activities associated with Al-Shabaab. Furthermore, similar to the situation in Somalia, the eastern part of DRC has emerged as a source of instability following the country's civil war, which lasted from 1997 to 2003 (Clément, 2004). This territory, marked by a lack of effective governance, has served as a safe haven for over 100 rebel and terrorist organizations. Entities such as Uganda's ADF and LRA, which are under siege by Ugandan security forces, have established a presence in the eastern DRC (Nairobi/Brussels, 2024). These phenomena emerged following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, adding to the region's difficult security scene. These organizations launch systematic attacks against citizens, government institutions, and foreign agencies, frequently resulting in large casualties and significant instability of regional security. Such acts of terrorism severely hamper socioeconomic progress, posing formidable challenges to efforts to promote long-term peace and stability in the region. The persistence of terrorist groups exploits flaws in national security frameworks, emphasizing the necessity for

more cooperative security measures across East African governments. Strengthening intelligence sharing, enhancing border security, and building community resilience are critical steps toward reducing the consequences of terrorism. Furthermore, resolving the underlying socioeconomic inequities and political grievances that contribute to radicalization is critical to long-term peace and security in East Africa.

*Inter-state conflicts: Catalysts for regional instability*

Tensions and conflicts between neighboring states in East Africa, such as contentious border disputes between the DRC and Rwanda, the Burundi and Rwanda border closure (Ngendakumana and AL Jazeera, 2024), and the protracted maritime boundary conflict between Kenya and Somalia, have the potential to quickly escalate into armed confrontations.

These disputes have the potential to worsen regional instability, hamper the smooth flow of trade, stymie economic growth, and cause community dislocation, laying the groundwork for future conflicts and insecurity throughout the region.

The frequency of inter-state disputes highlights the critical necessity for proactive and successful diplomatic interventions to prevent them from spiraling into larger regional crises. The establishment of dispute resolution methods, such as mediation and arbitration sponsored by regional or international organizations, is critical. Furthermore, strengthening diplomatic ties and encouraging conversation aimed at resolving underlying issues can assist to reduce tensions (Salacuse, 2022).

Improving the efficiency of regional cooperation frameworks, such as those offered by the EAC and the African Union, is critical for monitoring and resolving border disputes, as well as creating a climate conducive to peaceful conflict resolution. These actions are critical not just for resolving ongoing crises, but also for building the groundwork for long-term peace and stability in East Africa.

*Internal conflicts*

A number of East African nations, notably the DRC (Sylvia, 2023), South Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, and Burundi, have been plagued by prolonged internal crises stemming from intricate political, ethnic, and social grievances. These conflicts manifest as widespread violence, often involving armed factions and government forces, leading to significant population displacements and severe humanitarian crises. The persistent instability detrimentally impacts local economies, devastates infrastructure, and impedes access to essential services such as healthcare and education, exacerbating the plight of affected populations. The recurrence of these conflicts underscores the urgent need for holistic conflict resolution strategies that address underlying root causes while also endeavoring to reconstruct and reconcile fragmented communities.

*Transnational criminal activities and maritime piracy*

East Africa's strategic geographical position makes it a pivotal transit hub for a variety of transnational criminal activities, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and wildlife poaching (Orina, 2021). These illicit enterprises, often orchestrated by sophisticated criminal syndicates with global connections, significantly undermine the governance structures of the region. They exacerbate corruption within key institutions, eroding public trust and impeding effective policy implementation. Moreover, the proceeds from these criminal activities provide financial fuel for further insecurity, enabling the proliferation of armed groups and contributing to the cycle of violence and instability in the region. Effective countermeasures require regional cooperation and the strengthening of cross-border legal frameworks to disrupt these criminal networks and restore security and stability in East Africa.

Maritime piracy persists as a significant threat in the waters off the coast of Somalia, jeopardizing critical international maritime trade routes and undermining the security of vessels operating within this strategic corridor (Hassabou, 2016).

Despite concerted international naval efforts and the implementation of advanced maritime security protocols, piracy incidents continue to disrupt shipping and pose substantial risks to crew safety, cargo security, and maritime logistics.

The economic ramifications are profound, affecting not only the direct costs associated with ransoms and Haruna increased insurance premiums but also the broader economic activities dependent on stable and secure sea lanes. Enhanced multi-lateral cooperation and the strengthening of maritime surveillance and response capabilities remain imperative to effectively mitigate the threats posed by piracy and ensure the safety of maritime commerce and navigation in the region.

### *Prolonged militancy and regional destabilization: The M23 threat in DRC*

The return of armed groups, particularly the M23 rebel movement in the DRC, has dramatically increased instability across the country, casting a long shadow over the East African region's security trajectory. The M23 has been active for decades, disrupting peacekeeping attempts and undermining regional stability. After a hiatus, this group reappeared in 2022, strengthening its military operations, and by July 2023, it had taken control of significant territory in North Kivu province (Yuksel, 2023).

This resurgence has been hampered by international disagreement. Kinshasa has levelled serious allegations against Kigali, accusing it of financing and assisting M23's fresh offensives—charges that have received support from the African Union, the European Union, and the United States (Byiers et al., 2023). In retaliation, Kigali has accused Kinshasa of backing Hutu extremist militias, escalating tensions and resulting in greater military deployments in DRC (Denisova and Kostelyanets, 2023). The recent clashes between Congolese military and M23 have exacerbated an already grim situation, forcing tens of thousands of civilians to evacuate their homes and worsening the region's long-running security and humanitarian catastrophe. The on-going fighting has not only resulted in heart-breaking deaths, but it has also damaged local communities, disrupted livelihoods, and put a strain on humanitarian resources (Cojocaru, 2022).

Addressing the M23 threat requires a coordinated regional response that includes diplomatic efforts, strategic security measures, and strong international backing to restore peace and promote long-term stability in the region. Strengthening governance and regional collaboration to address the core causes of rebellion, such as economic disenfranchisement and ethnic tensions, is also critical to breaking the cycle of violence and assuring East Africa's future security.

### Assessing the impact of West Africa's coup on East
### Africa community
### *Interconnectedness*

Interconnectedness is a fundamental aspect of continental governance, exemplified by the African Union (AU), an organization representing 55 member states across Africa. Central to its mandate is the facilitation of peace, security, and political stability throughout the continent. The AU employs a range of mechanisms for conflict prevention, resolution, and peacekeeping, notably through bodies like the Peace and Security Council (PSC), tasked with monitoring and addressing security concerns (Moolakkattu, 2010). Given the integration of African regions through entities like the AU and economic cooperation agreements, political upheaval in one area of the continent can reverberate, exerting ripple effects on regional stability.

*Economic ties*

Economic ties play an essential role in African regional dynamics. Economic communities and cooperation agreements have been established across the continent to encourage trade, integration, and development. The EAC, ECOWAS, and SADC are all key players in this effort. These economic associations serve as routes for trade and collaboration, encouraging member countries to become more interdependent (Oloyede et al., 2021). Inter-regional economic linkages are particularly significant, with East African countries forging economic ties with West African equivalents through trade, investment, and participation in regional economic communities. However, disruptions such as coups in West Africa can disrupt established trade channels, jeopardize regional market stability, and stifle economic growth in East Africa.

African countries' interconnectivity goes beyond economics to include shared resources including rivers, lakes, and trans boundary ecosystems. Effective management of these resources requires collaboration and agreements among adjacent countries. However, political instability has the potential to undermine the management of shared resources, raising tensions and causing violence. Initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) seek to create a united market for products and services across the continent, in line with attempts to promote economic cohesion (Chimaobi et al., 2023). However, the success of such programs is dependent on cooperation and stability. Political instability can stymie progress toward economic integration, highlighting the complex interplay between political dynamics and economic development in Africa.

*Regional organizations' responses*

Regional Organizations' Responses ECOWAS, actions in response to coups, such as imposing sanctions or deploying peacekeeping missions. These responses have regional implications and influence diplomatic relations (Chigozie and Oyinmiebi, 2022). The most recent illicit government transitions in Africa are the coups in Niger and Gabon on July 27 and August 30, respectively. Since 2020, Africa has seen 10 successful coups, with six taking place in ECOWAS member nations and two in Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) member states (Hudson and Towriss, 2023).

Furthermore, coups in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan, as well as Gabon and Niger, have resulted in sanctions and other forms of global censure. The AU, ECCAS, and ECOWAS's coordinated responses to coups in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, and Mali have not resulted in any serious moves toward the restoration of civilian authority.

In each case, the juntas first promised to hand over power to civilian-led transitional administrations. As history demonstrates, the most notorious military dictators in history, such as Idi Amin of Uganda, Joseph Mobutu of DRC, and others, routinely issue such first assurances. And, like previous military rulers, contemporary juntas have shown an unwillingness to return to the barracks. Following initial optimism, there were more coups, stretched timetables, and, more simply, the entrenchment of military control through significant roles in government (Powell and Chacha, 2019).

## DEVELOPING REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Regional plans with active diplomacy as a significant component are required for the EAC to effectively manage security issues stemming from West African coups and contribute to peace and stability throughout the greater African environment.

*Early warning and conflict prevention framework*

An Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Framework for the EAC to address military coups involve a systematic approach to detect, assess, and prevent coup attempts and coup-related crises. ECOWAS has

established the Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) to gather and analyse data and publish timely updates on potential developing crises, on-going crises, and postcrisis transitions. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as FEWER-Africa, which focuses on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Ituri region, and the Timor-Leste Early Warning and Early Response Project (EWER) have also developed their own early warning systems (Defontaine, 2019). Bottom-up solutions frequently have a limited reach with no traction or connection to the higher level.

First, the EAC must establish a Regional Early Warning Center (REWC) to collect and analyse information on potential security threats; second, the region must develop early warning indicators specific to the EAC region; and third, the EAC must establish regular risk assessments and the publication of reports outlining potential security challenges. Fourth, the EAC must develop a diplomatic engagement strategy with member states facing new security concerns, supporting discussion and conflict prevention.

In light of recent developments in West Africa, the EAC is confronted with an imperative to glean pertinent lessons from the experiences of neighbouring states and fortify its defences against the spectre of military coups. The EAC's strategic response hinges upon prioritizing the implementation of proactive mechanisms, notably the Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Framework, as a cornerstone of its resilience-building strategy vis-à-vis the prevalence of military coups across the African continent.

Central to this discourse is the recognition that the EAC stands at a pivotal juncture, where pre-emptive measures must be adopted to pre-empt and mitigate the potential ramifications of political upheavals akin to those witnessed in West Africa. This entails a paradigm shift towards a proactive stance, wherein the EAC adopts a forward-looking approach predicated on leveraging early warning systems to identify and address nascent threats to regional stability.

The Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Framework emerge as a linchpin of the EAC's strategy, offering a structured mechanism for timely detection and intervention in situations conducive to military coups. By cultivating a culture of vigilance and information-sharing among member states, the framework enables the EAC to harness collective intelligence and anticipate potential flashpoints, thereby enhancing its capacity to avert crises before they escalate.

Crucially, the efficacy of the Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Framework lies not only in its ability to detect incipient threats but also in its emphasis on preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. By deploying diplomatic interventions and mediation efforts at the earliest signs of instability, the EAC can foster dialogue, mitigate tensions, and facilitate peaceful resolutions to underlying grievances, thus pre-empting the resort to coercive measures such as military coups.

Moreover, the EAC's commitment to the Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Framework underscores its proactive engagement in addressing the root causes of political instability and insecurity across the region. By investing in conflict prevention mechanisms, promoting good governance, and strengthening democratic institutions, the EAC not only mitigates the immediate threat posed by military coups but also fosters a conducive environment for sustainable peace and development.

In conclusion, the imperative for the EAC to draw lessons from West Africa's experiences and fortify its defences against military coups underscores the pressing need for proactive and coordinated action. By prioritizing the implementation of the Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Framework, the EAC can enhance its capacity to detect, prevent, and resolve conflicts, thereby safeguarding the collective security and prosperity of its member states in an increasingly turbulent geopolitical landscape.

*Mediation and conflict resolution mechanism*

The EAC Mediation and Conflict Resolution Mechanism is critical in facilitating diplomatic efforts to peacefully resolve problems within and between member states. The goal of this mechanism is to foster communication, negotiation, and reconciliation in order to avoid disagreements from escalating and to ensure regional stability (Ganza, 2022). In early December 2017, the EAC convened a new round of discussions in Arusha Tanzania with the goal of reaching an agreement to end the Burundian crisis. This round of discussions is part of the EAC-led process to mediate and foster dialogue among Burundians in order to end the country's two-yearlong crisis. In the DRC's conflicts, the EAC's presidents issued a declaration calling for "an immediate ceasefire by all parties in late 2022" and the removal of "all foreign groups" from eastern Congo (Soumahoro et al., 2023). They also directed the defence chiefs of the bloc's seven members to establish new timelines for the withdrawal of rebel forces, while repeating previous calls for all parties to de-escalate tensions and use established regional, continental, and international mechanisms to resolve any disputes.

The East African community's remaining task is to strengthen and sustain the Arbitration and Resolution Procedure for Conflicts Affecting East African Member Communities. As a result, the community and its members will be protected from foreign interference and military invasion (military coup) as a violation of democracy, as was the case with the West African Community ECOWAS.

*Crisis management and response plan*

Since inception in 1999, the EAC has taken bold steps to create a framework and structures to address issues of Peace and Security. However, the effectiveness of the structures has been hampered by the absence of clear strategic direction on the critical areas of co-operation (Kaniki, 2022). The EAC Crisis Management and Response Plan is critical in protecting its member states from military coups. This comprehensive approach prioritizes preventive, early warning systems, diplomatic initiatives, and military involvement as a last resort. It enables rapid and coordinated reactions to coup attempts, promoting regional stability and democracy. The plan acts as a proactive defence against coup risks by improving democratic institutions, encouraging coordination among member states, and emphasizing public awareness.

The EAC's commitment to this strategy demonstrates its commitment to upholding peace, democratic governance, and the common security of its member states.

At the heart of the Crisis Management and Response Plan lies a commitment to proactive defence against coup attempts, bolstered by a multifaceted approach. Central to this strategy is the enhancement of democratic institutions, which serve as bulwarks against political instability and authoritarian encroachments. Moreover, the plan emphasizes the importance of fostering coordination among member states, facilitating information-sharing, and streamlining collaborative efforts to pre-empt and counteract coup threats effectively.

The utilization of early warning systems stands as a pivotal component of the EAC's crisis management strategy, enabling swift detection of potential coup risks and facilitating pre-emptive action. By leveraging these systems, the EAC can proactively identify and address underlying grievances, defusing tensions before they escalate into full-fledged crises. Additionally, diplomatic initiatives play a central role in the Crisis Management and Response Plan, providing avenues for dialogue, mediation, and conflict resolution to mitigate the drivers of political instability.

Importantly, the crisis management and response plan underscore the principle of military involvement as a measure of last resort, reflecting a commitment to upholding democratic governance and respecting the rule of law. This approach prioritizes civilian-led responses to coup attempts, thereby preserving the integrity of democratic institutions and safeguarding the rights and freedoms of citizens.

In essence, the EAC's commitment to the crisis management and response plan epitomizes its dedication to promoting regional stability, democratic governance, and the collective security of its member states. By adopting a proactive stance against coup risks, investing in preventive measures, and fostering collaborative partnerships, the EAC demonstrates its resolve to uphold peace and security within the East African region.

*Cross-border cooperation and security alliances*

The EAC emphasizes the need of cross-border cooperation and security alliances in protecting its member states from military coups. These programs strengthen member state unity, allowing them to respond to security challenges collectively. Cross-border cooperation improves stability by promoting economic integration and harmonizing policies, so minimizing possible coup triggers. Security alliances improve the region's ability to quickly coordinate and respond to coup attempts, resulting in a more secure environment. In essence, EAC's dedication to these efforts is critical in preventing and lowering the possibility of military coups, as well as ensuring democratic stability within the society. The EAC and The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) commit to strengthen their collaboration on February 23, 2023, to contribute in the restoration of peace and security in Eastern DRC (Mahatsangy et al., 2023). Following the recent Mini- Summit of Heads of State and Governments on Peace and Security in Eastern DRC in Addis Ababa, Hon (Dr.) Peter Mutuku Mathuki, Secretary General of the EAC, met with the Executive Secretary of the ICGLR to discuss areas of cooperation between the two organizations in supporting the restoration of peace and security in Eastern DRC (Owaka, 2023).These and other collaborations undertaken by the East African E.A.C community are aimed to collaborate on cross-border crimes, auto theft, drug trafficking, terrorism, money laundering, and other crimes in order to provide a good and conducive environment in which PEACE can flourish and SECURITY of persons and property can be guaranteed, thereby fostering DEVELOPMENT. As long as the East African Community has not committed to strategies and countermeasures for defeating the military coup, now is the moment to commit so that they do not experience the consequences of what happened in West Africa.

## CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES

### Highlighting successful interventions in past crises

*Intervention in the Burundi crisis*

In 2015, the EAC successfully mediated the political crisis in Burundi (Sabala, 2023). Through diplomatic efforts and regional dialogue, the EAC facilitated negotiations between conflicting parties, resulting in the Arusha Agreement, which aimed to address governance issues and restore peace in Burundi.

*Somalia peacekeeping mission*

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), with contributions from East African countries, has played a crucial role in stabilizing Somalia (Williams, 2018). AMISOM's peacekeeping efforts, alongside Somali government forces, have helped combat Al-Shabaab insurgency, restore government control, and create conditions for political reconciliation.

### Comparative analysis with other regional organizations

*Comparative analysis with ECOWAS*

Assessing the success of the EAC's actions, notably during the Burundi crisis (Murigi, 2021), provides insights when compared to interventions by the ECOWAS in the
West African setting. Both regional agencies have demonstrated expertise in conflict resolution, strategic deployment of peacekeeping missions, and the promotion of regional peace.

However, differences in their operational settings and techniques have resulted in varying outcomes, emphasizing the importance of specialized strategies for effectively addressing regional difficulties (Dal, 2023).

While both regional organizations have been competent in tackling regional concerns, differences in their operational contexts and approaches have resulted in disparate outcomes. This emphasizes the significance of tailoring methods to each region's unique settings and dynamics. Moving forward, harnessing the strengths and learning from the experiences of both the EAC and ECOWAS can improve the efficacy of regional operations and contribute to long-term peace and stability in Africa.

*A comparative analysis of EAC and SADC*

The EAC and SADC use different conflict resolution processes, reflecting their differing objectives to regional stability and integration. While the EAC promotes diplomatic mediation and conversation to foster confidence and cooperation among member states (Kenyaggia, 2016), SADC's methods cover a broader range, including diplomatic initiatives, sanctions, and the odd military action (Bukae, 2012). Since its inception, the EAC has deployed a regional force in Eastern Congo for the first time in 2022 to confront the M23 insurrection. However, just over a year later, the DRC government decided not to extend the mandate of the East African Community Regional Force beyond its December 8, 2023 deadline (Huguet, 2023). The DRC government cited reasons such as the force's ineffectiveness and allegations of collusion with rebels, despite the EAC's explanations being ignored. The departure of the EAC Regional Force revealed flaws in the regional bloc's dispute resolution systems, stressing the need for a rethinking of its strategy. This emphasizes the importance of the EAC's diplomatic engagement over military intervention, as well as the need for more nuanced strategies to address complex regional conflicts. While both organizations seek to foster regional stability, the EAC takes a more flexible and adaptable approach, customizing measures to unique settings and requirements. Both organizations prioritize collaboration and coordination among member governments, emphasizing their shared commitment to addressing common challenges and keeping peace in their particular regions.

**Lessons learned and best practices**

*Regional ownership and leadership*

Successful interventions in previous crises have shown that regional ownership and leadership are critical to effective conflict resolution. The EAC exemplifies this notion by taking proactive steps to address regional concerns. By taking on a leadership position and taking ownership of conflict resolution activities, the EAC demonstrated the importance of local players driving the process of finding solutions to regional concerns. This strategy not only strengthens the legitimacy of interventions, but also promotes a sense of ownership and commitment among member states, boosting the chances of long-term peace and stability. Moreover, regional leadership permits a more nuanced knowledge of the complex dynamics at play, as well as personalized actions that are sensitive to the region's unique circumstances. Overall, the emphasis on regional ownership and leadership is a best practice in conflict resolution, demonstrating the success of locally led efforts to promote peace and security.

*Dialogue and mediation*

Diplomatic dialogue and mediation stand out as successful strategies for resolving issues within the EAC region. The noteworthy results of interventions in Burundi and other crises underline the essential role played by discourse, consensus-building, and inclusive peace processes in obtaining sustainable solutions. By promoting a climate conducive to open discussion and negotiation, diplomatic dialogue allows competing parties to air their complaints, discover common ground, and strive towards mutually acceptable settlements.

Moreover, mediation permits the involvement of unbiased third parties who can help encourage communication, bridge divisions, and steer parties towards settlement. The EAC's emphasis on dialogue and mediation encourages peaceful dispute resolution while also reinforcing the concepts of inclusivity, transparency, and respect for varied viewpoints. As such, these practices are critical components of the EAC's supply for supporting regional stability and fostering long-term peace.

*Collaboration and coordination*

Collaboration and coordination among member states, regional organizations, and foreign partners are crucial for effective conflict resolution and peace building activities within the East African region. The EAC's strategic alliances with important stakeholders such as the AU, United Nations (UN), and other relevant bodies have considerably improved its capacity to solve difficult regional concerns collectively. By harnessing the experience, resources, and diplomatic networks of these partners, the EAC has been able to undertake comprehensive plans and activities aimed at encouraging peace, stability, and development across its member states (Bar, 2019). Through collaborative action, information sharing, and mutual support, the EAC and its partners have been able to pool their resources and address the core causes of disputes, lessen security risks, and promote long-term peace in the area.

The case studies and examples gathered from the East African Community provide persuasive evidence of successful interventions in previous crises. Comparative analysis with other regional organizations provides significant insights into the various methods to conflict resolution, while lessons gained highlight the need of implementing best practices for future peace building initiatives in the region. By embracing collaboration, dialogue, and proactive engagement with partners, the EAC is well positioned to overcome complex security concerns while advancing its goals of regional integration, prosperity, and peace.

## CONCLUSION

### Synthesis of principal insights

The paper thoroughly investigates the rippling impacts of West African coups on East Africa, implementing light on important variables such historical inter-regional dynamics, economic ramifications, security vulnerabilities, and humanitarian consequences. Through the prism of case studies and comparative techniques, the analysis methodically dissects successful responses in earlier crises within the EAC and similar regional organizations. From this extensive study, key lessons have been retrieved and best practices delineated in the areas of conflict resolution and peace building techniques, delivering invaluable insights for future endeavours in the region.

### Reiterating the importance of EAC's role

The EAC plays a pivotal role in resolving and mitigating regional concerns, with influence and impact that reach far beyond its borders. One of the most persuasive examples of its importance is its successful interventions in crucial situations such as the Burundi crisis. The EAC has played an important role in promoting regional peace, stability, and cooperative dynamics through its strategic and well-coordinated initiatives. Its dedication to diplomatic engagement has been consistent, acting as a foundation for settling conflicts and enabling conversation between opposing parties.

Furthermore, the EAC's mediation efforts have helped to de-escalate tensions and keep confrontations under control. Furthermore, the organization has formed strategic connections with global stakeholders, reinforcing its status as a vital participant in conflict resolution activities. By exploiting these collaborations, the EAC has been able to increase its impact and successfully solve difficult regional issues. In summary, the EAC's proactive approach to diplomacy, together with its ability to foster collaboration and consensus-building,

demonstrates its critical position as a catalyst for regional integration and a cornerstone in fostering peace and stability throughout East Africa.

**Strategic forecast and policy recommendations for enduring stability**

Looking forward, the imperative for the EAC to augment its capabilities in conflict prevention, management, and resolution remains paramount. This strategic enhancement involves substantial investments in early warning systems, the refinement of diplomatic mediation frameworks, and the intensification of regional collaboration on security dynamics.

Moreover, addressing the foundational triggers of conflict, including governance inadequacies, socioeconomic inequalities, and systemic marginalization, is critical for the attainment of long-term stability in East Africa.

Policy recommendations are directed towards the promotion of inclusive governance models, the support of robust economic development initiatives, and the fortification of institutional frameworks. These measures are aimed at building regional resilience and catalyzing sustained peace.

In summation, the East African Community holds a crucial position in spearheading efforts towards peace, stability, and prosperity across East Africa. By drawing on historical insights, fostering inter-regional cooperation, and executing focused strategic interventions, the EAC is well-positioned to drive the region towards a more stable and prosperous trajectory.

**Comparing perspectives on West African coups from**

**East Africa's lens**

The recent political upheaval in West Africa has provoked a wide range of responses across the African continent, most notably contrasting the perspectives of the EAC with their West African counterparts. The concept of Coups has always been associated with negative connotations, such as anarchy and confusion (Kaplan and Rieff, 2000). However, in West Africa, this phenomenon is being recast as a sign of liberation from socioeconomic oppression.

In West Africa, the public's attitude of military involvement in governance has altered considerably. These military coups are increasingly seen as critical in fighting inherent concerns such as poverty, unemployment, and systematic corruption, rather than a spiral into chaos. These difficulties are especially acute among the youth group, which faces high unemployment rates and limited economic opportunities despite the region's great natural resources, which include minerals, fertile agricultural land, and a wealth of untapped raw materials (Gutteridge, 2023). The disparity in views of political transitions between East and West Africans can be traced to their distinct historical and political experiences with government and stability. For many West Africans, the revolutions are a critical liberation struggle, fuelled by the populace's dissatisfaction with democratically elected authorities who have failed to use the region's resource richness for public benefit. In essence, the phenomenon unfolding in West Africa represents a profound shift in the societal and political landscape, driven by citizens' demand for more equitable resource redistribution and a governance system that truly reflects their aspirations and addresses their basic needs. As a result, the developing events continue to generate significant grassroots support, representing a common desire for radical change and a break from the status quo.

In the study, a survey was done through social media to analyse East Africans' perceptions on West African military coups. According to the data, East Africans approve of these coups 85% of the time, and they want similar operations in their own countries. This overwhelming support arises from widespread dissatisfaction with current leaders who have failed to alleviate socioeconomic challenges or improve the overall well-being

of their people. The primary causes for supporting military coups in West Africa are keenly felt by the EAC population. They see such significant political transformations as instruments for re-establishing values of fairness and competent government. The people want leaders that embody the attributes of revered figures like as Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania, Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, Patrice Lumumba of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Modibo Keïta of Mali and others. These historical figures are honoured for their contributions to campaigning for autonomy and pioneering significant governance improvements in their respective countries.

This study identifies a crucial socio-political trend in East Africa: a communal desire for revolutionary leadership that may resurrect the values of equity and accountability. The predominant mood among East Africans indicates a strong preference for leaders who can inspire societal transformation and establish an atmosphere in which governance coexists with the care and development of the people. This highlights a strong congruence in political goals across the continent, indicating a shared urge for revolutionary reforms that can address current governance problems.

**Lessons and the imperative for regional stability in EAC**

*Navigating the path to stability*

The transition from West African coups to East African challenges underlines the critical necessity for regional strategies and joint actions to maintain Africa's peace and democracy. The EAC faces its own security dangers, including the possibility of military coups, but it is apparent that preventive measures and collaboration are critical to effectively tackle these difficulties. As East Africa evolves, the EAC's dedication to formulating and executing regional security plans is critical. Lessons from West Africa highlight the importance of aggressive diplomacy, robust early warning systems, and rapid crisis response protocols, resulting in valuable resources for the EAC.

*The urgent need for constitutional reform in Tanzania*

Tanzania's call for a new constitution stems from a desire to avert political turbulence and coup attempts while also maintaining democratic stability in the country (Minde, 2023). The present 1977 constitution, while fundamental, contains substantial flaws that fuel political conflicts and hinder governance. Historical and contemporary assessments show that certain constitutional provisions increase coup risks by restricting political pluralism and concentrating executive power. These limits constrain varied political views, impede inclusive governance, and exacerbate societal differences. Furthermore, concentrated executive power undermines checks and balances, allowing for power abuse and public discontent. A new constitution may promote inclusive governance; strengthen checks and balances, and increase transparency and accountability. Tanzania can create a constitution that reflects society values, reduces the possibility of coups, and ensures long-term peace and prosperity through a democratic process.

*The risk of overlooking regional causes: Insights from Tanzania*

Ignoring regional causes can have dire consequences for individual EAC member countries, potentially leading to military coups. Take Tanzania, for example: a port privatization issue escalated into a major crisis, amplifying dissent from political opposition, civilians, and religious leaders. The controversy surrounding the port contract with a Dubai-based company raised significant concerns about national sovereignty and security. Catholic bishops openly opposed the agreement, while the government condemned the relinquishing of control (Pelaji, 2023). This situation heightened tensions, sparking protests and the threat of civic unrest. If not managed properly, such crises could ultimately trigger a coup.

*Kenya's unrest: A warning sign for stability*

Kenya saw severe unrest on July 20, 2023, when protests broke out over hikes in taxes and rising living costs. The incident escalated, with police measures ending in almost 20 fatalities (Jefferson and Thomas, 2023). The protests were spurred by displeasure with the president's unfulfilled campaign pledges, who promised to improve living circumstances but failed to deliver, heightening public anger. President Ruto disregarded the critiques throughout the 2023 demonstrations, which culminated in an enormous June 2024 protest against plan tax hikes and exacerbating hardships for Kenyans. The protests resulted in human rights violations, including the deaths of about 39 civilians (Maina, 2024). This discontent signaled a hazardous situation that, if left uncontrolled, may result in military intervention and a revolution.

*Uganda and Rwanda: Stability or stagnation?*

Surprisingly, Uganda and Rwanda remain unaffected by the recent coups in West Africa, each interpreting democracy in its unique way. Uganda's Yoweri Museveni has held the presidency since 1986 (Museveni, 2000), making him the longest-serving leader in East Africa (Wekesa, 2023). Similarly, Rwanda's Paul Kagame, in power since 2000, has amended the constitution to extend his rule, recently announcing his intent to run for a fourth term in 2024 (Ignatius and Cara, 2023). The critical question is whether these leaders have learned from the West African coups. Why are they so reluctant to ensure a smooth transition of power? Ignoring the lessons from the ECOWAS region could invite similar instability and coups within the East African Community.

*EAC on alert: Learning from Tanzania, Kenya, and the DRC*

Examining socio-political tensions in Tanzania and Kenya underscores the potential risk of military coups, similar to the recent attempt in the DRC. While Uganda and Rwanda appear stable, their long-serving leaders' reluctance to ensure peaceful transitions of power raises concerns. Drawing lessons from the ECOWAS community's experiences, it's urgent for the EAC to address underlying grievances and implement robust security measures to prevent coups within its borders.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research is mostly based on secondary sources, which may not completely reflect the most recent political and socioeconomic changes in the East African Community (EAC), restricting the use of real-time data and firsthand testimonies. Furthermore, substantial historical, cultural, and political variations between West Africa and the EAC may limit the direct adoption of coup prevention tactics, as each EAC country has its own setting. Furthermore, the ever-changing political landscapes in West and East Africa mean that techniques that worked in West Africa in the past may not be appropriate for the current or future circumstances of the EAC.

## RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The study examines coup prevention techniques in West Africa and the EAC, shedding light on how effective West African strategies might be adopted for the EAC. It emphasizes the necessity of regional collaboration in promoting political stability and security. Practical policy recommendations are made to EAC states and regional authorities, based on West African experiences to help guide proactive and preventative steps against coups. Furthermore, the study provides a new viewpoint on transferring security strategies across regions, emphasizing the importance of learning from neighbors in order to address shared difficulties.

**AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future research should prioritize empirical studies within the EAC to validate the applicability and effectiveness of West African coup prevention techniques. Gathering primary data through interviews, surveys, and fieldwork can provide deeper insights and stronger conclusions. Indepth case studies focused on specific EAC countries can help tailor strategies to their unique contexts and challenges, identifying country-specific factors influencing the success or failure of coup prevention efforts. Longitudinal studies tracking political stability and security measures over time in both West Africa and the EAC can offer a dynamic understanding of how coup prevention methods evolve. Embracing interdisciplinary approaches that integrate economics, sociology, and political science can provide a comprehensive understanding of coup dynamics and effective preventive measures, acknowledging the multifaceted causes of coups.

Further exploration into the role of foreign governments, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies in coup prevention efforts can enhance comprehensive strategies to mitigate coup risks.

**CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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