

**Social Dominance Theory as a Lens: Understanding the Reemergence of Coups in
Francophone African Countries and the Relative Stability of their English-Speaking
Anglophone Counterparts**

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Master of Science in Conflict and Dispute Resolution

Title: Social Dominance Theory as a lens: Understanding the Reemergence of Coups in Francophone African Countries and the Relative Stability of their English-Speaking Anglophone Counterparts

This study applies Social Dominance Theory (SDT) to explain the divergent resurgence of military coups in Francophone and Anglophone African countries. Through a comparative analysis of Mali, Niger, Ghana, and Nigeria, it finds that military coups persist in Francophone states because hierarchy-enhancing institutions, centralized governance, elite-military alliances, and external security partnerships, are reinforced by powerful legitimising myths that portray the military as national saviours defending sovereignty against foreign interference. In contrast, Anglophone countries have developed stronger hierarchy-attenuating institutions, including decentralised political systems, civilian control of the military, and active civil societies, supported by myths of democratic legitimacy and constitutional order. According to this research, these differences in institutional structure and dominant narratives explain why Mali and Niger have seen repeated coups, while Ghana and Nigeria have largely resisted them. The study also finds that regional and international actors, such as ECOWAS and France, can unintentionally or intentionally reinforce domestic hierarchies when their involvement is reframed as neo-colonial intrusion. While SDT explains the persistence of group-based inequality and elite control, it underemphasizes shifting economic incentives, evolving myths, and the agency of non-state armed groups. Theoretically, this research extends SDT into post-colonial state-building, showing how historical hierarchies adapt over time.

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DEDICATION

To my late mom, Abeke Oluwafunmilayo Oluwatoba.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	11
1.1 Background.....	11
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 History of Coups.....	13
2.2 Colonial Systems of Governance and their Influence on Colonies in Africa	17
2.2.1 British Indirect Rule.....	17
2.2.2 French Assimilation	19
2.2.3 Comparative Analysis: Indirect Rule vs. Assimilation	21
2.2.4 Colonial Rule and Military Formation.....	23
2.2.5 Post colonial involvement and military interventions	26
2.3 Current Explanations of Military Coups.....	30
2.4 Gaps in Current Explanations	33
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	36
3.1 Social Dominance Theory.....	36
3.2 Social Dominance Theory and Coups/Instability	37
3.3 Research Question	38
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY	39
4.0 Research Philosophy.....	39
4.1 Research Approach	39
4.2 Case Study Design	39
4.3 Data Collection	39
4.4 Data Analysis	41
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS	42
5.1 Brief Overview of the Countries: Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, and Niger.....	42
5.3 Findings based on the SDT Framework.....	46
5.3.1 Ghana	46
5.3.2 Nigeria.....	50
5.3.3 Niger	54

5.3.4 Mali	58
5.5 Differences in Dominance Structures and Legitimising Myths across the Countries	66
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION	69
6.1 Interpretation of Findings	69
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	73
7.1 What SDT Leaves Unaddressed	76
7.2 Theoretical Implications	77
7.3 Policy Implications	79
7.4 Study Limitations.....	80
APPENDIX: THEMATIC CODING TABLE	82
REFERENCES CITED	123

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Coup d'états in Africa, 2020-2023 (Source: Mo Ibrahim, 2023).....	12
Figure 2: Africa's coup map since 1950 (Source: Al Jazeera, 2023)	14
Figure 3: Coup d'etat success rate in Africa from 1950-1959 (Source: Duzor & Williamson, 2022)	15
Figure 4: Coups in Africa since 2020 (Source: Omilusi, 2024).....	16
Figure 5: Military Interventions by France and Britain in Former African Colonies from 1960 to the Present (Source: Bade, 2013).....	27
Figure 6: Traditional drivers of internal violence (Source: Cilliers, 2018).....	33

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Tabular representation of the comparison between the British and the French Rule.....	25
Table 2: Secondary Sources and Country Focus.....	40
Table 3: Colonial Background and Military Coup Histories	43
Table 4: Tabular representation of SDT themes across each country	63
Table 6: Difference in Dominance Structures and Legitimising Myths between the countries ...	66

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Almost since the inception of their independence, African countries have witnessed an alarming trend of military coups, significantly reshaping the continent's political landscape and hindering its developmental prospects (Souare, 2024). Between 1950 and 2022, 40% of the 242 successful military coups that have occurred globally have occurred in Africa, with 45 of the 54 African countries having experienced at least a coup attempt within the same timeframe (Al Jazeera, 2023). The period between 1949 and 1999 had the most number of successful coups in Africa, with 84 successful coup attempts (Duzor & Williamson, 2022). However, since 2000, coups in Africa had been declining until 2019, when coups reemerged.

Recent times have witnessed a significant resurgence of military coups across Africa, with a striking geographic pattern: eight successful coups have occurred since 2020, with seven taking place in the Sahel region which are largely Francophone countries (Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Gabon), and only one in an Anglophone nation (Sudan) (Duzor & Williamson, 2022). This pattern raises important questions about the divergent trajectories of post-colonial political stability between French-speaking and English-speaking African countries. With the exception of Sudan and Gabon, these coups have taken place in Western Africa.

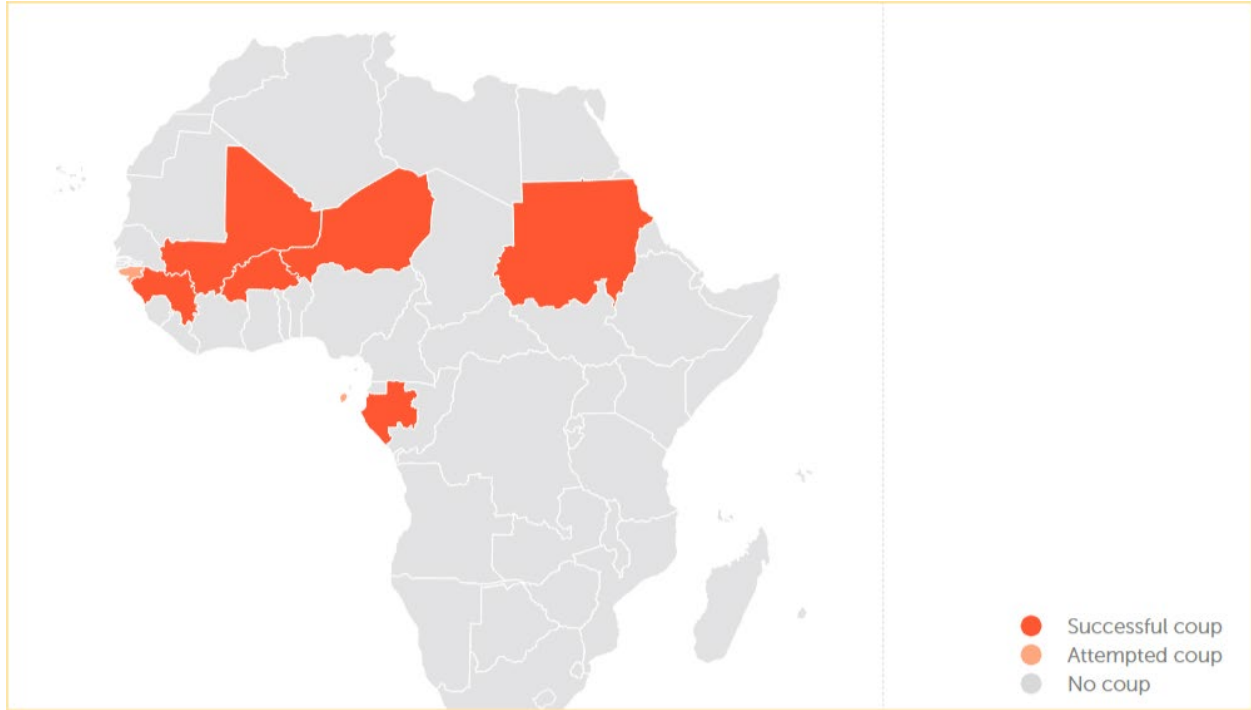


Figure 1: Coup d'états in Africa, 2020-2023 (Source: Mo Ibrahim, 2023)

Traditional explanations for coups often focus on economic factors, ethnic tensions, or security threats (Okeke & Ahmed, 2023). While these variables certainly contribute to coup vulnerability, they inadequately explain the specific regional concentration observed in recent years. This research proposes Social Dominance Theory (SDT) as a more comprehensive and multilevel framework for understanding this divergence.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of Coups

The resurgence of military coups in several West African countries has revitalized academic interest in the causes and dynamics of military involvement in politics. While definitions of coups vary across the literature, they generally refer to the illegal overthrow of an existing government by a small group, typically from the military or other elites within the state apparatus (Powell & Thyne, 2011). Military coups represent a particularly distinct form of unconstitutional government change, characterized by the direct meddling of armed forces in political processes, resulting in the forceful removal of the incumbent leadership (Luttwak, 2016; Singh, 2014). Unlike civilian-led revolutions or insurgencies, military coups leverage existing state institutions and often claim to act in the national interest while fundamentally undermining democratic processes (Geddes et al., 2018).

To be clear, coups are not limited to African countries, nor are they a distinctive feature of the African continent. There have been coups in Europe, Asia and America. However, of the 450 attempted or successful coups documented around the world since 1950, Africa accounts for 220, about 49% of Global coups (Duzor and Williamson, 2022). The continent also holds the record for the most successful coups since 1950 (Yemisi, 2024). Although the number of successful coups globally has significantly dropped, including in Africa since the 2000s, coups have not completely faded away (Yemisi, 2024).

Coup Trends before the 2000s

The post-independence period in Africa has been punctuated by numerous military coups in politics, with over 200 coup attempts recorded since the 1960s (Collier & Hoeffler, 2005; McGowan, 2003). The development of these coups has not been uniform across the continent, with several distinct waves identifiable across different periods and regions.

The first wave of coups (1960s-1970s) occurred shortly after independence, as newly formed countries struggled with the legacies of colonial rule, weak institutions, and the challenges of nation-building (Decalo, 1990). During this period, approximately 27 African countries experienced at least one successful coup, with Ghana's 1966 overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah representing a watershed moment that inspired similar actions elsewhere (McGowan,

2003). The second wave (1980s-1990s) coincided with economic crises, structural adjustment programs, and the early stages of democratization pressures (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). This period saw coup attempts in 29 countries, though with decreasing success rates as international norms shifted against military coups (Powell & Chacha, 2016).

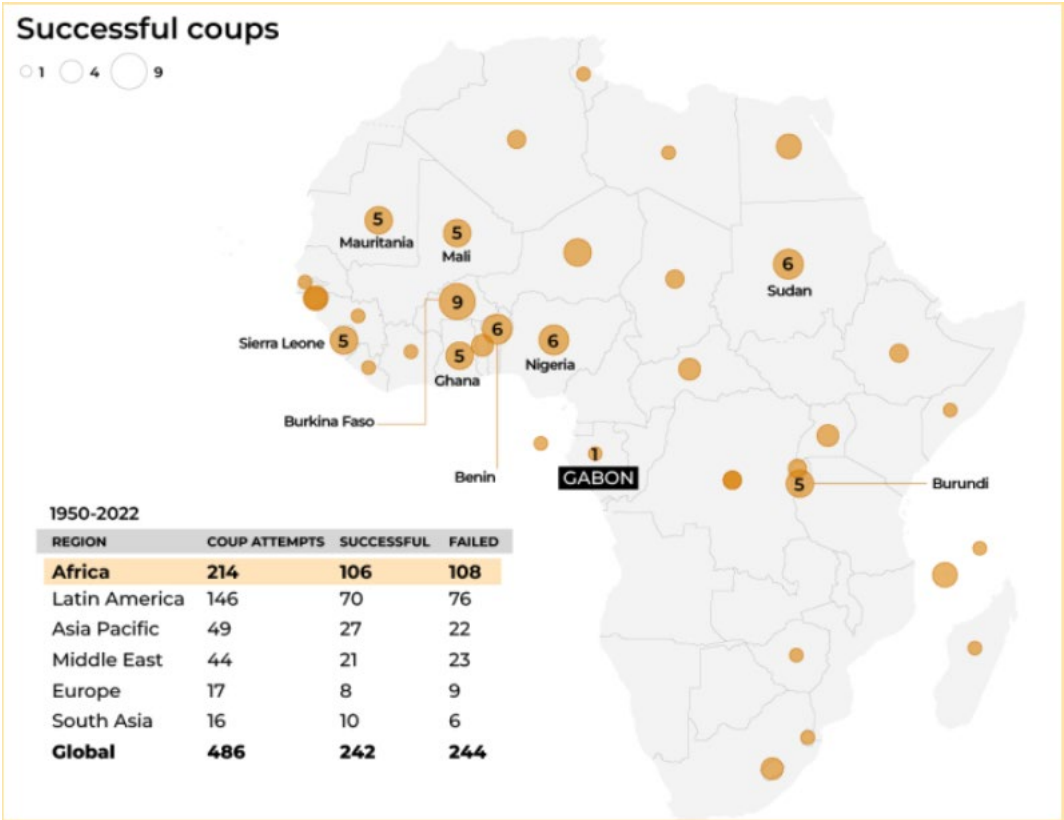


Figure 2: Africa's coup map since 1950 (Source: Al Jazeera, 2023)

Post 2020

After a period of relative decline in coup frequency during the early 2000s, a third wave has emerged since 2020, concentrated primarily in the Sahel region and almost exclusively in Francophone countries (Powell et al., 2023). In the last 5 years, Africa has seen a rise in the number of coups, with an average of 1 successful coup per year since 2020. As noted by Duzor & Williamson (2022), although coup attempts have become less frequent globally, those carried

out in the past decade have been more effective and successful than in previous decades. This indicates that the recent resurgence of coups requires urgent attention.

Decade	Total coup attempts	Successful	Success rate
1950-1959	6	3	50%
1960-1969	41	25	61%
1970-1979	42	18	42.9%
1980-1989	39	22	56.4%
1990-1999	39	16	41%
2000-2009	22	8	36.4%
2010-2019	17	8	47.1%
2020-2023	14	9	64.3%

Figure 3: Coup d'etat success rate in Africa from 1950-1959 (Source: Duzor & Williamson, 2022)

As illustrated in Figure 3, by August 2023, following the Gabon coup, 45 of the 54 African nations had experienced one or more coup attempts, averaging four attempts per country. Notably, Sudan has undergone 17 coup attempts, including two in 2021 (Ani, 2021; Chin and Kirkpatrick, 2023). Since 2020, there have been nine successful coups and five attempted coups in sub-Saharan Africa, more than in the last two decades, two of which were classified as "coups within coups" (Omilusi, 2024). The successful coups occurred in Mali (August 2020 and May 2021), Chad (April 2021), Guinea (September 2021), Sudan (October 2021), Burkina Faso (January and September 2022), Niger (July 2023), and Gabon (August 2023) (Omilusi, 2024). In the decade before this recent wave, Africa saw seven popular uprisings leading to government changes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya (all in 2011), Burkina Faso (2014), Zimbabwe (2017), and Algeria and Sudan (2019) (Omilusi, 2024).

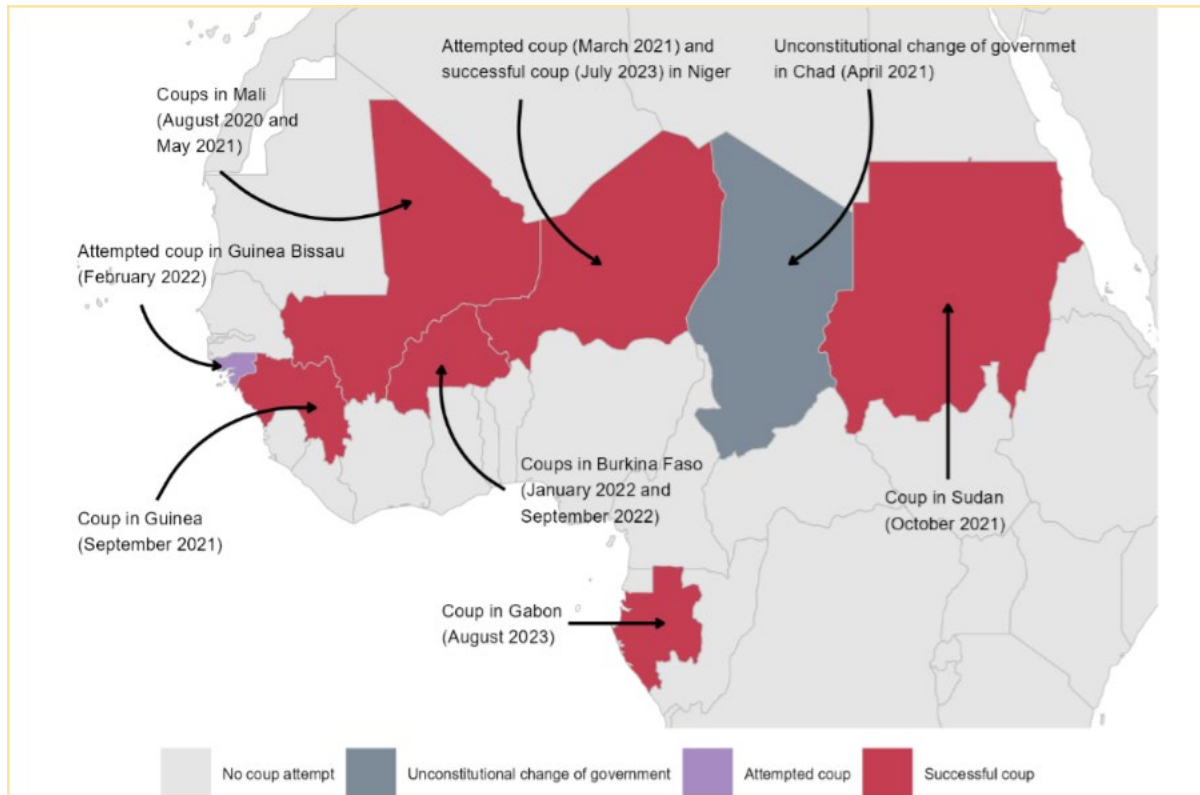


Figure 4: Coups in Africa since 2020 (Source: Omilusi, 2024)

A pattern to the coup

From independence through 2023, Francophone African countries have experienced, on average, 1.7 times more coups per country than Anglophone countries (Barka & Ncube, 2022). While coups have decreased across the continent since the democratic transitions of the 1990s, this decline has been more pronounced and sustained in Anglophone regions (Powell & Chacha, 2019).

A striking pattern has emerged in recent years: while much of the African continent has seen democratic consolidation and decreased coup frequency since the 1990s, Francophone African countries have experienced a notable resurgence in military takeovers. Between 2020 and 2023, successful coups occurred in Mali (twice), Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Gabon, all former French colonies, while their Anglophone counterparts have demonstrated comparative stability (Powell et al., 2023). This disparity invites deeper theoretical interrogation beyond

conventional explanations focused solely on economic factors, ethnic diversity, or institutional weakness. Perhaps an investigation into their colonial roots might offer some perspectives.

2.2 Colonial Systems of Governance and their Influence on Colonies in Africa

Colonial systems of governance left indelible marks on the political, economic, and social landscapes of former colonies. Among these systems, the British model of indirect rule and the French policy of assimilation stand out as distinctive approaches to colonial administration.

The British Empire's indirect rule and the French policy of assimilation represented fundamentally different philosophical approaches to colonial management. While the British generally preferred to govern through existing indigenous authorities and institutions, maintaining traditional power structures while exerting control from above, the French sought to transform colonial subjects into Frenchmen through cultural, linguistic, and administrative assimilation. These divergent approaches have led scholars to question whether they may have contributed differently to post-colonial political instability and the incidence of military coups.

2.2.1 British Indirect Rule

The British system of indirect rule emerged largely as a pragmatic response to the challenges of governing a vast empire with limited resources. Lord Frederick Lugard, often credited with formalizing this approach during his tenure in Northern Nigeria, articulated the principles of indirect rule in his work "The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa" (1922) (Acemoglu et al., 2014). Indirect rule was predicated on the idea that colonial objectives could be achieved more efficiently by working through, rather than dismantling, existing indigenous political structures (Acemoglu et al., 2014).

From Bolt and colleagues (2022) perspective, indirect rule was fundamentally a system of decentralized despotism that created a bifurcated state, one governed by civil law for colonial settlers and another by customary law for indigenous populations. This division was central to the British colonial project of control and resource extraction (Bolt et al., 2022). The British preference for indirect rule was also influenced by the prevailing anthropological perspectives of the era, which viewed indigenous cultures as developmentally distinct from European civilization and therefore requiring distinct governance approaches (Bolt et al., 2022).

Economic considerations also played a significant role in the British preference for indirect rule. As Müller-Crepon (2020) noted, indirect rule was considerably less expensive to implement than direct administration, requiring fewer British personnel and allowing for more cost-effective governance.

2.2.1.1 Implementation Across Different Regions

The implementation of indirect rule varied considerably across different British colonies, adapted to local conditions and existing power structures. In Northern Nigeria, Lugard's model relied heavily on the pre-existing emirate system, where emirs maintained significant authority over local administration, taxation, and justice, albeit under British supervision (Muller-Crepon, 2020). The emirs, stripped of independent military power, became administrative agents of the colonial government while maintaining their traditional status and much of their authority over their subjects (Muller-Crepon, 2020).

Indirect rule was not implemented uniformly even within individual colonies. On the one hand, in Ghana (then Gold Coast), for example, Boampong (2013) documents how indirect rule operated differently in the coastal areas compared to the Ashanti regions, reflecting variations in pre-colonial political structures and the timing of colonial incorporation. In parts of East Africa like Uganda, indirect rule operated through a system where traditional chiefs were transformed into salaried officials of the colonial government (Bolt et al., 2022). This often involved the creation or reorganization of traditional authorities to suit colonial administrative needs, sometimes inventing traditions or elevating previously minor authorities to positions of greater power.

In India, the princely states represented another variation of indirect rule, where over 500 states maintained nominal independence under British paramountcy (Sarkar, 2014). The ruling princes retained control over internal affairs while acknowledging British supremacy in external matters and defence.

2.2.1.2 Consequences of Indirect Rule

The indirect rule had several impacts on post-colonial governance among its colonies. First, as Acemoglu & colleagues (2014), indirect rule tended to ethicize political identity and freeze ethnic boundaries that had previously been more fluid. Traditional authorities were

defined along ethnic lines, and their power was reinforced by colonial recognition, cementing ethnic divisions that would later challenge nation-building efforts.

Second, indirect rule often reinforced or even amplified authoritarianism within indigenous political systems. Bolt & colleagues (2022) argues that by making chiefs accountable primarily to colonial administrators rather than their people, indirect rule undermined traditional checks and balances on chiefly power. This transformation of traditional authority figures into colonial agents often delegitimized these institutions in the eyes of educated elites and younger generations (Bolt et al., 2022).

Third, as Adisa (2016) contends, indirect rule created a fragmented political landscape that complicated post-colonial efforts at centralized state-building and national integration. The system produced what Adisa (2016) terms two publics - the civic public tied to colonial administration and the primordial public connected to indigenous systems - which fostered divided loyalties and administrative inconsistencies.

Finally, Lange (2009) provides empirical evidence suggesting that British indirect rule produced varying institutional legacies depending on the depth of colonial involvement. Where British presence was more substantial, indirect rule could foster relatively effective bureaucratic structures and legal systems. However, in areas of minimal British presence, indirect rule often led to fragmented authority and weak central governance capacity (Lange, 2009).

2.2.2 French Assimilation

The French policy of assimilation emerged from Enlightenment ideals of universal rights and the revolutionary principle of equality. Assimilation reflected the French civilizing mission, which presupposed that French civilization represented the pinnacle of human achievement and that colonial subjects could and should be elevated to this level through education, cultural transformation, and political incorporation (Letsa & Wilfahrr, 2020).

Unlike the British cultural relativism that underpinned indirect rule, French colonial ideology was characterized by its universalist assumptions. As Letsa & Wilfahrr (2020) argue, the French believed in the potential universality of their civilization and the possibility that colonial subjects could become fully French through appropriate education and cultural

adaptation. This approach aligned with broader French Republican ideals that emphasized citizenship based on shared values rather than ethnic or religious identity (Letsa & Wifahrt, 2020).

The theoretical justification for assimilation also served pragmatic political purposes. Assimilation provided moral legitimacy to French colonialism by framing it as a benevolent project aimed at uplifting colonial subjects rather than merely exploiting them (Kehinde, 2024). The assimilation rhetoric further helped France justify its colonial empire to domestic constituents and international observers, particularly after World War I when colonialism faced increasing scrutiny (Kehinde, 2024).

2.2.2.1 Implementation Across Different Regions

Despite its prominence in colonial rhetoric, the actual implementation of assimilation varied considerably across French colonies and over time. In the "Four Communes" of Senegal (Dakar, Saint-Louis, Gorée, and Rufisque), residents held French citizenship rights, including the right to elect a representative to the French parliament (Brushci, 2010). However, as Smith (2017) points out, these rights were exceptional rather than typical of French colonial rule.

In practice, assimilation was often limited to urban centers and primarily affected a small, educated elite. In most of French West Africa, full implementation of assimilation policies was considered too expensive and potentially destabilizing (Oyabebeba and Buku, 2016). Instead, a more pragmatic approach emerged which incorporated elements of indirect rule while maintaining the rhetoric of eventual assimilation (Oyabebeba and Buku, 2016).

In Indochina, assimilation took yet another form, with the French creating a hybrid administrative system that preserved Vietnamese mandarins as bureaucrats while imposing French oversight and controls (Gojosso, 2015). As Oyabebeba & Buku (2016) notes, the adaptation of assimilation policies across different colonies reflected both ideological compromises and practical limitations on French administrative capacity.

Heilbrunn (2014) observes that in many territories, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, assimilation became increasingly focused on creating a cadre of *évolués* or "evolved" Africans who would serve as intermediaries between the French administration and the broader

population. This approach created a distinctive educated elite whose political and cultural orientation was primarily toward France.

2.2.2.2 Consequences of the French Assimilation Approach

The French assimilation policies has been criticized for its impact on post-colonial governance among its colonies. According to Kehinde (2024), assimilation created a colonized elite alienated from their own cultural traditions yet never fully accepted as equals by the colonizers. This neither/nor status produced psychological alienation and complex identity conflicts that would later manifest in post-colonial politics.

Another consequence of assimilation is that centralized administrative power is exercised to a much greater extent than indirect rule. Letsa and Wilfahrt (2020) argued that this centralization created more unified but also more fragile state structures that were vulnerable to capture by single individuals or groups. This administrative centralization, combined with the cultural emphasis on Cartesian rationality and bureaucratic uniformity, producing a highly centralized administrative machine that proved difficult to democratize after independence (Thelma, 2024).

The French's assimilation emphasis on French language and culture in education and administration also deepened the divide between the educated elite and the majority of the population (Thelma et al., 2024). This division complicated post-colonial efforts at building national identity and fostering democratic participation.

Finally, as Bruschi (2010) demonstrated, the partial and inconsistent implementation of assimilation created expectations of equality and citizenship that were rarely fulfilled in practice. This gap between rhetoric and reality fostered disillusionment among colonial subjects and contributed to the anti-colonial movements that eventually brought down the French empire.

2.2.3 Comparative Analysis: Indirect Rule vs. Assimilation

Administrative Structures and State Formation

A key distinction between British indirect rule and French assimilation emerges in their differential impacts on administrative structures and state formation. British colonies generally

developed more decentralized administrative systems with greater local autonomy compared to their French counterparts (Kehinde, 2024). This decentralization created more access points for local participation but also potentially weakened central state capacity.

In contrast, French colonial administration generally produced more centralized state structures with clearer hierarchies and more uniform administrative practices (Kehinde, 2024). This centralization potentially facilitated more coordinated policy implementation but also concentrated power in ways that made it more vulnerable to capture.

Lee and Schultz (2011) offer empirical support for these distinctions through their study of administrative outcomes in territories that were split between British and French control. Their research on Cameroon demonstrates significant and persistent differences in administrative practices along the former colonial boundary, with the French side exhibiting greater centralization and the British side showing more local autonomy and pluralism.

Legal Systems and Rule of Law

Another important area of comparison concerns the legal systems established under these different colonial models. Tamanaha (2021) argues that British indirect rule typically incorporated elements of common law tradition alongside customary law legal pluralism. This approach preserved more indigenous legal practices but also created multiple, sometimes competing, sources of legal authority.

French assimilation, in contrast, typically imposed civil law systems that sought to standardize legal practices across colonial territories. As Time (2000) demonstrates, these differences in legal systems correlate with significant variations in rule of law indicators, with former British colonies generally scoring higher on measures of judicial independence and legal protections.

However, Lee and Schultz (2011) caution against simplistic attributions of post-colonial legal outcomes to British versus French colonial systems, arguing that the nature of colonial settlement and economic extraction often played more decisive roles than administrative policies in shaping institutional quality.

Education and Elite Formation

Oyabebefa and Buku (2016) highlighted that British indirect rule typically produced more diverse educational experiences, with missionary schools playing a significant role alongside government institutions. This diversity potentially fostered greater pluralism in elite formation but also created more fragmented national leadership.

French assimilation, as Thelma et al. (2024) document, placed greater emphasis on standardized curriculum and centralized control of education, aimed at creating colonial subjects who could function within French administrative structures. This approach potentially created more cohesive elite groups but also ones more disconnected from indigenous cultural contexts.

Oyabebefa and Buku (2016) noted that French colonial education placed greater emphasis on linguistic and cultural transformation while British approaches more often accommodated local languages and customs.

2.2.4 Colonial Rule and Military Formation

The activities of the colonial masters in West Africa also influenced the trajectory of the development of its military. Colonial military recruitment practices across African territories were often shaped by constructed notions of martial identity and ethnic stratification (Salihu, 2016). These practices typically involved the deliberate conscription of minority ethnic groups, often from peripheral or northern regions of the colonies, into the colonial armies (Ejiogu, 2007). This recruitment strategy was designed to counterbalance dominant ethnic groups historically associated with political power and to ensure a reliable force capable of repressing anti-colonial resistance, particularly in southern regions where colonial influence had become most deep-rooted. Such patterns entrenched structural ethnic bias within the security sector (Ejiogu, 2007).

Rather than dismantle or reform these colonial-era military configurations after independence, many post-colonial African regimes retained and repurposed them (Ejiogu, 2007). Efforts to restructure military doctrine, recruitment standards, and institutional mandates were minimal. Instead, ruling elites often manipulated inherited military structures to secure regime survival. This included the institutionalisation of ethnically skewed recruitment and promotion systems, the use of patronage networks within the armed forces, and the creation of parallel security bodies, such as elite presidential guards, tasked with protecting incumbent power.

In the immediate post-independence period, the entrenchment of such practices contributed to the emergence of politicised militaries, increasingly aware of their central role in governance (Welch, 1970). The implications for civil-military relations and national stability have been mixed. For example, states like Senegal, which invested in professionalising and institutionalising civil-military relations, were able to maintain constitutional order. By contrast, countries such as Ghana, which failed to implement structural reforms, experienced repeated cycles of military coups and counter-coups during the first three decades following independence (Hutchful, 1997).

Colonial rule had a profound and enduring impact on the trajectory of civil-military relations in post-independence West Africa. Colonial administrations, whether British or French, did not prioritize the development of professional, nationally representative military institutions (Salihu, 2016). Instead, colonial militaries were established primarily to serve the political and economic interests of the metropole, including the suppression of internal dissent and the protection of colonial authority (Salihu, 2016). Consequently, principles such as accountable governance and constructive civil-military engagement were absent from the colonial military agenda.

The legacy of this approach continued beyond independence, as the military formations inherited by new African states were structurally and ideologically rooted in colonial imperatives rather than democratic norms (Salihu, 2016). Scholars have argued that both British and French colonial systems effectively embedded military dominance within the post-colonial state apparatus, thereby undermining the prospects for balanced and democratic civil-military relations in the decades that followed (Salihu, 2021). Even after independence, the former colonial powers, particularly France, continued to intervene militarily in African affairs, albeit through different modalities (Bade, 2013). While British post-colonial engagement was more restrained, France retained active military footprints in several of its former colonies, often reinforcing incumbent regimes or intervening during crises (Salihu, 2021). This sustained external interference, combined with the militarised structure of the post-colonial state and the early pattern of military involvement in governance, has arguably contributed to the persistent cycle of authoritarianism and renewed military involvement in African politics (Salihu, 2016).

Table 1: Tabular representation of the comparison between the British and the French Rule

Dimension	British Indirect Rule	French Assimilation
Colonial Administrative Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralized governance through existing traditional authorities. - Local chiefs co-opted into colonial administration. • Colonial objectives implemented via indigenous institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized bureaucracy imposed from the metropole. - Aim to culturally and politically “transform” subjects into French citizens. • Uniform administrative practices with less regard for local structures.
Military Recruitment Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment focused on northern minorities or perceived "martial races" to counterbalance dominant ethnic groups. • Designed to suppress local uprisings and enforce control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruited a small, educated elite (évolués), often urban-based, to serve as intermediaries. • Centralized forces with loyalty to the French state.
Legal System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal pluralism combining customary and British common law traditions. • Chiefs adjudicated based on local customs under colonial oversight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imposition of French civil law; legal uniformity emphasized. • Customary law largely sidelined except in isolated areas.
Education and Elite Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missionary and government schools created fragmented, localized elite. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on French language, culture, and citizenship ideals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local languages and customs partially retained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced culturally alienated elite loyal to France.
Post-Independence Military Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethnicized and factionalized military inherited. Weak central control in early independence. Coups occurred but gave way to stable civilian transitions in many cases (e.g., Ghana, Nigeria). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong centralized militaries continued post-independence. Limited reforms. High frequency of post-colonial military interventions and authoritarian persistence.
Post-Independence Foreign Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited post-independence British military presence or intervention. Gradual disengagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued French military presence and interventions (e.g., Operation Barkhane). Military ties persisted beyond independence
Impact on Civil-Military Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some reforms led to professionalization in select cases (e.g., Senegal). Mixed outcomes, with early instability followed by eventual civilian consolidation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military dominance often preserved. Centralized institutions easier to capture by juntas. Frequent post-independence coups (e.g., Mali, Niger).

2.2.5 Post colonial involvement and military interventions

Drawing on insights from Bade (2013), the striking divergence in the frequency of military interventions by Britain and France in their former African colonies since independence constitutes a central puzzle. Up until 2013, France had intervened dozens of times in Africa while Britain had done so only once. Since decolonization, France has undeniably been more

active in its former African empire compared to the British approach, which has been relatively hands-off. France has often orchestrated coups, supported rebellions, and bolstered dictators across Africa. As a result, its post-colonial reputation on the continent is markedly different, and rightly so, from that of the British.

French		British	
Invaded Country	Years	Invaded Country	Years
Mauritania	1958-1963	Uganda	1964
Congo-Brazzaville	1963	Tanganyika	1964
Gabon	1964	Sierra Leone	2000-ongoing
Chad	1968-1972		
Biafra/Nigeria	1969		
Côte d'Ivoire	1970		
Mauritania/Western Sahara	1977-78		
Djibouti	1977		
Zaire	1977		
Chad	1978		
CAR	1979		
Niger	1981		
Cameroon	1981		
Chad	1983-84		
Togo	1986		
Chad	1989-2007		
Gulf of Guinea	1990-ongoing		
Comoros	1990-1989		
Rwanda	1990-93		
Gabon	1990		
Togo	1991		
Benin	1991		
Zaire	1991		
Djibouti	1991		
Djibouti	1992-93		
Zaire	1993		
Cameroon	1994		
Rwanda	1994		
Rwanda	1994		
Comoros	1995		
CAR	1996		
Congo-Brazzaville	1997, March		
Congo-Brazzaville	1997, June		
Congo-Brazzaville	1997, June		
Côte d'Ivoire	2002-2007		
Chad	2006		
CAR	2006		
Côte d'Ivoire	2011		
Mali	2013-ongoing		

Figure 5: Military Interventions by France and Britain in Former African Colonies from 1960 to the Present (Source: Bade, 2013).

The foundation of this disparity lies in the fundamentally different characters of the British and French Empires and their approaches to rule and decolonization in Africa. The British adopted a system of indirect rule, often described as less intrusive, and did not value their African empire as highly as other possessions, such as India (Bade 2013). Their decolonization process was modelled on the Commonwealth, a formal structure intended to foster links and best

practices among members rather than perpetuate British hegemony. The British approach generally involved granting self-rule and then largely withdrawing. This resulted in weaker, less formalized bilateral relationships compared to France (Bade, 2013).

In contrast, the French empire, despite aspirations to assimilate colonial peoples, often varied its administration, but held a stronger, more ideological attachment to its overseas possessions, viewing Africa as central to a colonial myth. Smarting from losses in Algeria and Indochina, France was more reluctant to fully disengage from Africa after independence. Crucially, while the French president has no formal role in former colonies like the British monarch has in the Commonwealth, France established a network of informal ties, often run through the presidency, bypassing the Foreign Ministry, and characterized by deeply personalized relations with African leaders. This system, widely criticized and dubbed *Françafrique*, aimed to ensure Africa remained an area of French influence across political, economic, cultural, military, and expatriate spheres (Bade, 2013).

The core rationale for France's frequent military interventions is thus directly rooted in these persistent, multifaceted legacies, particularly the structure of *Françafrique*. A primary driver has consistently been the protection of French expatriates. With significant French populations residing in former colonies, particularly in economic hubs like Côte d'Ivoire, their safety during periods of instability became a compelling trigger for military action. This was often the explicitly stated initial objective for interventions (Bade, 2013).

Beyond protecting citizens, interventions were seen as a tool to maintain French influence and strategic interests, upholding the Great Power Myth. This ideological desire is seen as inextricably linked with French foreign policy (Bade, 2013). Economic ties were also significant; underwriting currencies like the CFA Franc and having substantial French business interests meant that instability in former colonies could directly impact French economic well-being. The source points out that the international community, aware of France's capabilities and historical links, often expected France to take the lead in crises within its former sphere.

Crucially, France maintained a robust military presence in Africa after decolonization, including troops, bases, and defence treaties. These military institutions and capacities were not only a legacy of empire but also facilitated interventions when decided, making France the

obvious candidate among foreign powers to act. Despite proclaiming the end of Françafrique in the 1990s and early 2000s, French forces intervened twice in Côte d'Ivoire during the twenty-first century. French troops were already on the ground in Côte d'Ivoire before interventions, and reinforcements could be easily deployed from regional bases (Bade, 2013).

In 2002, following an attempted coup, the initial French reaction was cautious, framing it as an internal affair, but concerns for the fifteen thousand French expatriates quickly led to the deployment of troops for protection and evacuation (Opération Licorne). While presented as protection, this operation incidentally prevented the fall of the government. The subsequent deeper involvement was linked to providing logistical support under a defence treaty. The 2011 intervention to remove President Laurent Gbagbo, who refused to concede elections, again highlighted the protection of French nationals as a primary concern. This intervention, though later framed as supporting a UN resolution, was facilitated by the continued presence of Opération Licorne forces established in 2002, demonstrating how a prior intervention could enable subsequent ones. Both cases underscore the convergence of protecting a substantial expatriate population, safeguarding economic interests, and leveraging existing military infrastructure, all legacies of the close post-colonial relationship formalized through structures like Françafrique (Bade, 2013).

The intervention in Mali in 2013 is another example of a unilateral French action, supported by the Malian government, to counter Islamist rebels threatening the north. While President Hollande framed this as distinct from older forms of Françafrique, focusing on counter-terrorism and protecting France/Europe from transnational threats, the author suggests it is better understood as an evolution of Françafrique. The fact that France was the one doing the "heavy lifting" despite the threat potentially impacting other European nations highlights the continued unique role France plays in its former sphere (Bade, 2013).

For Britain, the picture is starkly different, characterized by a single post-colonial intervention in Africa. The Sierra Leone intervention in 2000, while framed by Prime Minister Tony Blair's "Doctrine of the International Community" with subtle neo-imperial undertones, was primarily justified on humanitarian grounds (stopping atrocities/genocide) and the need to protect British nationals (Bade, 2013). Although there were mentions of extra responsibilities as

a former colonial power, the official justification leaned heavily towards international norms and multilateralism (operating under a UN mandate). The shift from an initial evacuation mission to broader involvement highlights the evolving objectives, but the rationale was framed differently from the French reliance on protecting national interests and maintaining historical influence. A key distinction is that Britain, having largely vacated Africa, lacked the military capacity and logistical ease for interventions compared to France, making military operations significantly more difficult (Bade, 2013).

Bade (2013) compellingly argued that the vast difference in British and French military intervention patterns in former African colonies is a direct consequence of their divergent imperial histories and the nature of the post-colonial relationships they fostered. France's cultivation of deep, often informal, ties through *Françafrique*, the maintenance of a significant military presence, a consistent interest in protecting a large expatriate population, and an ideological commitment to preserving its status as a great power explain its frequent willingness and capacity to intervene. Britain, conversely, with a less vested interest in its African empire, a preference for multilateralism, and a lack of sustained military infrastructure on the continent, has largely refrained from intervention, sometimes even actively avoiding it due to concerns about perceived neo-colonialism or difficult historical legacies. While the justifications for French interventions may be evolving towards international norms, the underlying capacity and propensity for action remain rooted in the strong, enduring legacies of empire.

2.3 Current Explanations of Military Coups

Conventional explanatory frameworks for coup occurrence have typically emphasized structural factors such as economic performance (Londregan & Poole, 1990), military organizational interests (Huntington, 1981), ethnic fragmentation (Roessler, 2011), and institutional weakness (Belkin & Schofer, 2003). More recent literature has highlighted the role of international factors, including foreign military presence (Dwyer, 2017), regional contagion effects (Miller et al., 2018), and shifting international norms as explanations for coup legitimacy (Shannon et al., 2015).

According to McCargo (2016), the likelihood of the reoccurrence of coups can be attributed to three factors. The first factor speaks to whether there had been successful coups in that country. A military that has previously executed a coup is significantly more likely to attempt a subsequent seizure of power. Some countries become trapped in a cyclical pattern wherein past coups, perceived as successful, foster a belief among both the military and certain civilian groups that coups are a viable, or even acceptable, means of conducting political affairs (McCargo, 2016). This perception often hinges on the rationale that such power grabs are a necessary evil aimed at averting crises and rescuing the nation from hardship. Consequently, coups acquire an inherent momentum and can perpetuate themselves.

A second factor relates to economic development. Some researchers largely attribute the phenomenon of coups to this aspect. The assertion is that as countries advance and their citizens experience improved living standards, political institutions will strengthen, ultimately making military coups unnecessary (Cebotari et al., 2024). Evidence for this claim is evident in Latin America, where economic growth has been accompanied by a reduction in military coups (McCargo, 2016). Since 2010, with the exception of a failed attempt in Ecuador, there have been no successful coups in the region. McCargo (2016) noted that over 70% of the 29 coups that have occurred in Africa since 2010 occurred in bottom-tier countries. It further stated that the majority of recent reemergence of military coups have also occurred in the very poor countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (McCargo, 2016).

This position aligns with Duzor & Williamson (2022) claim too. Analysing the recent rise in coup attempts and success in Africa, they attributed the rise to poverty noting that “Coups have become increasingly limited to the poorest countries in the world, and the recent wave of coups fits into that.” According to Duzor & Williamson (2022), countries like Niger, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali and Chad which have all experienced coups in the last 5 years all had a GDP of less than \$22 billion compared to Latin America with \$7.1 trillion GDP in 2023 (WorldBank, 2023).

Thailand is an exception to this claim. Although the country has an history of coups with about 20 coups since 1932, the country has since become one of the fastest-growing economies of the world (McCargo, 2016). However, the country experienced a reemergence of coups in

2006 and 2014. According to McCargo (2016), this reemergence cannot be attributed to economics but to politics especially with the rise of anocracies in Thailand. Anocracies is the form of politics that mixes elements of democracy with authoritarianism (Pate, 2020). This form of politics leads to electoral populism, alienation between the masses and the elites, and comes with the propensity for street protests and mass rallies (Pate, 2020). Based on this, it seems that a greater level of anocracy is associated with a higher likelihood of military coups (Pate, 2020). This may explain why countries that practice anocracy like Sudan, Niger, Guinea and Burkina Faso and Mali have been prone to the reoccurrence of coups (Cillier, 2018). However, from Yemisi's (2024) perspective, determining the exact causes of coup resurgence across West Africa and the Sahel can be tricky because each coup is unique.

From a post-colonial perspective, scholars have attempted to identify relationships between colonial administrative systems and the incidence of military coups in post-colonial states. Mehrl & Choulis (2021), in their study of coups d'état, identify colonial legacy as a significant predictor of military intervention in politics, with French ex-colonies showing a higher propensity for military coups compared to British ex-colonies. Similarly, McGowan (2003), in his comprehensive study of coups in West Africa from 1956-2001, finds that Francophone states experienced more coup attempts than their Anglophone counterparts.

However, as Mehrl and Choulis (2021) argue, these relationships must be interpreted cautiously, as they may reflect confounding variables such as geographical factors, resource endowments, or pre-colonial political structures rather than direct causal effects of colonial administrative systems.

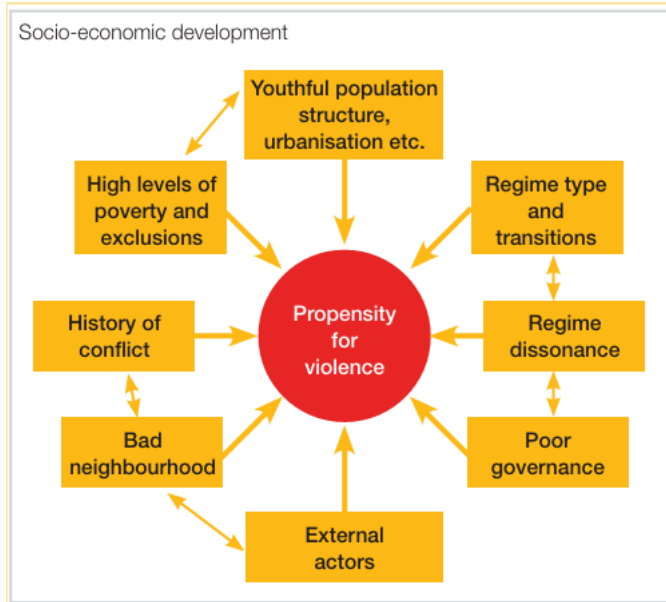


Figure 6: Traditional drivers of internal violence (Source: Cilliers, 2018)

2.4 Gaps in Current Explanations

Between 2020 till 2025, Francophone countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, and Chad have witnessed multiple coups, while Anglophone West African countries have remained largely stable despite sharing similar histories of military coups. This regional pattern raises critical questions about the adequacy of conventional explanations. Traditional explanations, such as the coup trap theory, argue that countries with a history of successful coups are predisposed to further military coups (Hansen, 2024). However, while both Francophone and Anglophone countries have experienced coups in the past, the post-coup trajectories diverge markedly. In many Anglophone countries, earlier coups did not set a perpetual pattern of instability; instead, they often served as catalysts for institutional reform and gradual democratic consolidation (Hansen, 2024). In contrast, the persistent recurrence of coups in some of the Francophone countries suggests that historical precedent alone cannot account for the observed disparity. Ghana and Nigeria, for example, had multiple coups from the 1960s to the 1980s. Yet, both have transitioned into stable democracies. Meanwhile, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger remain trapped in repeated cycles of military coups.

Similarly, economic development models posit that poverty and underdevelopment erode institutional robustness, thereby fostering an environment conducive to military coups (Gassebner et al., 2016). Yet, this explanation also falls short upon closer scrutiny. While many coup-prone Francophone countries are indeed economically disadvantaged, several Anglophone countries, despite facing similar economic challenges, have not experienced the same cycle of military overthrows (Gassebner et al., 2016). This inconsistency indicates that the link between economic hardship and political instability is moderated by deeper, structural forces that traditional models do not fully capture.

As an alternative, this research adopts the Social Dominance Theory to shed more light on the geographical disparity in coup resurgence in the two regions. Social Dominance Theory (SDT) offers a multilevel analytical lens by foregrounding the enduring influence of hierarchical power structures and the legacies of colonialism. Under SDT, societies are seen as inherently stratified with two opposing social forces operating within a social system: hierarchy-enhancing (HE) and hierarchy-attenuating (HA) (Sidanius et al., 2016). HE forces consist of individual predispositions favouring social hierarchies, along with attitudes and behaviours of dominant groups that endorse systemic inequalities, often supported by institutions and ideologies (Aiello et al., 2018). Conversely, HA forces challenge these inequalities through motivations for egalitarianism, the existence of welfare organizations, and universalist ideologies like global human rights (Sidanius et al., 2016). These forces, whether HA or HE are supported by legitimizing myths which operate as powerful narratives that normalize inequality, making hierarchical structures appear natural and inevitable rather than constructed and contestable (Sidanius et al., 2016). These myths play a critical role by providing moral and intellectual rationalizations for why some groups should hold power over others.

In many African countries, separate institutional structures and historical narratives have stemmed from distinct colonial legacies, shaping the interplay of hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating forces in different ways. In certain regions like the Francophone countries, institutions have evolved to concentrate power within narrow elite circles, thereby reinforcing narratives that justify and perpetuate existing inequalities (Kohnert, 2022). Such legitimizing myths normalize dominance and support a political culture in which the military is frequently positioned as the arbiter of national stability and the guardian of an established hierarchy. In

other regions like the Anglophone countries, however, more decentralized and pluralistic institutional frameworks have emerged (Kohnert, 2022). These settings may foster ideologies and legitimizing myths that promote egalitarian values, consequently constraining military influence and reducing the propensity for recurrent coups.

From the perspective of Social Dominance Theory, as long as powerful hierarchy-enhancing myths remain compelling and are bolstered by robust, dominance-maintaining institutions, the prevailing social order may persist despite underlying inequalities (Sidanius et al., 2016). Conversely, when these narratives lose their grip or when institutions fail to effectively mediate power relations, the social hierarchy may become destabilized, paving the way for coups (Sidanius et al., 2016). This study seeks to determine whether SDT can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the geographical disparities in coup recurrence by examining how differing colonial legacies have produced distinct institutional arrangements and legitimizing myths in various regions of Africa.

This study aims to examine the utility of Social Dominance Theory in explaining the reemergence of coups in Francophone African countries compared to the relative stability of their Anglophone counterparts. It is hoped that this theoretical lens may provide insights into how post-colonial power structures, intergroup dynamics, and legitimizing myths have evolved differently in Francophone versus Anglophone African contexts, potentially explaining recent divergent coup trajectories.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Social Dominance Theory

Social Dominance Theory (SDT), developed primarily by Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (2001), offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how group-based social hierarchies form, persist, and are legitimized within societies. At its core, SDT posits that all human societies tend to organize themselves into group-based social hierarchies, with dominant groups enjoying disproportionate social value (such as power, status, and resources) compared to subordinate groups (Sidanius et al., 2016).

The theory identifies three primary stratification systems: age-based hierarchies, gender-based hierarchies, and arbitrary-set systems based on socially constructed categories such as race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or other group distinctions (Pratto et al., 2006). In the context of post-colonial African states, arbitrary-set hierarchies are particularly relevant, as colonial powers established and reinforced ethnic, regional, and class-based stratification systems that often persisted after independence (Sidanius et al., 2010).

A central concept within SDT is Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), which represents an individual's preference for group-based hierarchy and inequality (Ho et al., 2015). Research has consistently found that individuals with higher SDO tend to support policies, practices, and ideologies that enhance or maintain existing hierarchies, while those with lower SDO tend to support more egalitarian social arrangements (Ho et al., 2015).

Legitimizing myths is another critical component of SDT. This refers to the beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideologies that provide moral and intellectual justification for social practices that confer social values (Sidanius et al., 2016). These myths can be hierarchy-enhancing (supporting greater inequality) or hierarchy-attenuating (promoting greater equality). In post-colonial African contexts, examples of hierarchy-enhancing myths might include ethnonationalist ideologies privileging certain ethnic groups, meritocratic narratives that ignore historical disadvantages, or security discourses that justify military control of politics (Sidanius et al., 2016).

SDT also has an institutional dimension, and these can function as hierarchy-enhancing or hierarchy-attenuating institutions (Pratto et al., 2006). Hierarchy-enhancing institutions such as the military, economic systems, or legal frameworks, disproportionately allocate resources to dominant groups and legitimize existing inequalities. Conversely, hierarchy-attenuating institutions, including certain democratic processes, civil society organizations, or social welfare systems, work to reduce inequalities between groups (Sidanius et al., 2004).

Despite its strengths, SDT has faced several critiques. Some scholars argue that it overemphasizes the stability of hierarchies and underestimates the agency of subordinated groups in challenging dominance structures (Reicher, 2004). Others suggest that the theory's focus on group-based hierarchies may obscure important individual-level factors and intra-group dynamics (Turner & Reynolds, 2003). Additionally, some researchers question whether findings primarily derived from Western contexts can be directly applied to African societies with different historical trajectories and cultural frameworks (Nkomo, 2011).

3.2 Social Dominance Theory and Coups/Instability

The application of Social Dominance Theory to understanding instability and conflict represents an emerging analytical approach that has gained increasing attention in recent literature. While SDT was not originally developed specifically to explain military coups in politics, its framework provides valuable insights into the group-based power dynamics that often underlie coup events (Sidanius et al., 2016).

Coups can be understood within the SDT framework as attempts to maintain, enhance, or recalibrate group-based hierarchies within society (Lee, 2018). When existing dominance structures are threatened, whether by democratization processes, rising subordinate groups, or external influences, military coups may serve as hierarchy-enhancing mechanisms to preserve elite advantages (Houle, 2016). As Sidanius and colleagues (2016) argue, institutions like the military can function as hierarchy-enforcement mechanisms when dominant groups perceive threats to their status.

Empirical research applying SDT to coup contexts has identified several relevant patterns. McGowan's (2006) analysis of West African coups demonstrates how military coups often reflected attempts by marginalized ethnic or regional groups to challenge existing

dominance hierarchies. Similarly, Harkness (2018) documents how post-independence African leaders deliberately constructed ethnically homogeneous military institutions as a hierarchy-maintenance strategy, while Dwyer (2017) illustrates how coup leaders frequently employ legitimizing myths regarding national unity or anti-corruption to justify hierarchy recalibration.

The relationship between Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and support for military coups has been empirically established in several contexts. Levin and colleagues (2012) found that individuals with higher SDO scores were more likely to support military coups that maintained existing social hierarchies. Similarly, Henry and colleagues (2005) demonstrated that military officers typically score higher on SDO measures than civilian counterparts, particularly in post-colonial contexts where armed forces have historically served as hierarchy-enforcement mechanisms.

Legitimizing myths play a crucial role in how coups are justified and perceived. Coup leaders frequently employ hierarchy-enhancing myths, such as appeals to national security, anti-corruption narratives, or ethnonationalist ideologies to legitimize their coups (Chacha & Powell, 2019). These myths serve to frame military takeovers not as self-interested power grabs but as necessary corrections to systemic imbalances or threats (Lee, 2018). The success of these legitimizing narratives often depends on their resonance with existing societal beliefs about group-based inequalities and the proper distribution of power. Based on their colonial experiences, Anglophone and Francophone Africa reflect inherited hierarchies which makes it fitting for the application of SDT. However, the disparate resurgence of coups between the two regions requires further investigation perhaps SDT can offer perspectives beyond the existing theoretical explanations.

3.3 Research Question

Based on the preceding analysis, the following research question emerges: *How does Social Dominance Theory explain the divergent resurgence of military coups in Francophone and Anglophone African countries?"*

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.0 Research Philosophy

This research adopts a constructivist philosophical approach which views social realities has been constructed through social interactions and experiences (Adom, 2016). By emphasising the importance of social constructs, this approach aligns well with Social Dominance Theory and enables a critical investigation of how legitimising myths are constructed and interact with historical and current institutions to shape hierarchies in African countries.

4.1 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach is employed because it aligns with the constructivist view. This approach allows for a rich, in-depth examination of the underlying social hierarchies that characterize each context (Spencer et al., 2014). The study utilized a comparative case study design, focusing on selected countries that exemplify the dynamics within Francophone and Anglophone Africa. The comparative case study design is suitable for this study because it is useful for examining how different contexts affect outcomes (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). It also enables triangulation of data, which enhances the understanding of phenomena through multiple lens (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

4.2 Case Study Design

The case study featured two French-speaking countries, Niger and Mali, and two English-speaking countries, Ghana and Nigeria. These countries have been selected based on their varying histories of military coups, political cultures, and colonial legacies, which will facilitate comparative analysis of the factors at play. For example, while Ghana and Nigeria have maintained relative political stability, Mali and Niger has seen a resurgence of coups. (Elischer & Lawrance, 2022).

4.3 Data Collection

The study relied on secondary data to answer the research question. The researcher collected secondary data from credible online academic databases to save time and the cost of travelling to the countries. Historical, empirical, and contemporary documents related to political events, military coups, and governance structures in the selected countries were analysed to

identify patterns and underlying factors contributing to coups. Five papers were reviewed per case study country. Only studies published in English language were included in the study. The study included recent papers, not older than 10 years (2015-2025), to guarantee recency. This ensured that research findings are relevant and reflective of current coup trends, patterns, and conditions (Cheong et al., 2023). A total of 15 papers were reviewed as some of the papers focused on more than one country.

Table 2: Secondary Sources and Country Focus

Source	Country Focus
Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu (2018)	Ghana
Faluyi (2018)	Nigeria
Norman (2024)	Ghana, Nigeria
Obikaeze et al. (2023)	Nigeria
Nartey (2019)	Ghana
Abdulsalami (2019)	Nigeria
Salihu (2020)	Ghana
Kohnert (2022)	Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana
Boisvert (2019)	Mali
Miroiu & Alecu (2024)	Mali
Baudais (2024)	Mali, Niger
Braimah (2023)	Niger
Zambakari (2023)	Niger
Boas & Haavik (2025)	Mali
Nweke & Enwere (2024)	Niger

4.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of secondary collected was through thematic content analysis. Qualitative data derived from document analysis were thematically coded using the SDT concepts as codes. Narratives and descriptive content were collected from the secondary data and analyzed to uncover recurrent patterns and key themes related to social hierarchies, institutional arrangements, and legitimizing myths (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). The coding table is attached as an appendix.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5.1 Brief Overview of the Countries: Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, and Niger

The four countries, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, and Mali, are West African states with distinct colonial histories. Ghana and Nigeria are Anglophone countries colonized by Britain, while Niger and Mali are Francophone countries colonized by France.

In Ghana and Nigeria, British colonial administration was primarily based on a system of indirect rule, where existing traditional political structures were utilized to govern on behalf of the colonial authority. This model preserved certain indigenous institutions, although they were often adapted to serve colonial economic and political interests.

In Niger and Mali, French colonial governance followed an assimilationist model, aiming to impose French language, culture, and administrative practices more directly on the colonized populations. Local political institutions were weakened or replaced, and a strong centralized colonial administration was established.

Each of these countries has also experienced a history of military coups since independence. Following independence, all four states experienced military coups, but their patterns and intensities vary. Ghana and Nigeria underwent cycles of military rule during the 1960s - 1980s, followed by relatively stable transitions to civilian governance by the 1990s (Ghana in 1992; Nigeria in 1999). While both countries still contend with military influence and politicization of security services, they have not experienced successful coups in over two decades, with Ghana particularly lauded for democratic resilience.

Conversely, Niger and Mali illustrate a more persistent pattern of military coups. Despite brief periods of democratic governance, both countries have suffered recurrent coups, often justified by insecurity, corruption, and neocolonial grievances. Since 2020, there has been a notable resurgence: Mali witnessed two military takeovers (2020 and 2021), and Niger fell to a military coup in 2023.

Table 3: Colonial Background and Military Coup Histories

Country	Colonial Legacy	Colonial Power	Brief Military Coup History
Ghana	Indirect rule through traditional authorities. Existing indigenous structures adapted for colonial administration.	Britain	1966: Military coup overthrew Kwame Nkrumah. 1972: Coup led by Ignatius Acheampong. 1978: Palace coup against Acheampong. 1979: Jerry Rawlings' first coup. 1981: Jerry Rawlings' second coup; military rule until 1992. 1992–2025: No military coups; stable constitutional democracy.
Nigeria	Indirect rule utilizing emirates, chiefdoms, and traditional councils. Centralized colonial administration over diverse regions.	Britain	1966: First coup followed by counter-coup; Biafran War. 1975: Coup against Gowon regime. 1976: Coup following assassination of Murtala Mohammed. 1983: Muhammadu Buhari's military

			<p>takeover.</p> <p>1985: Ibrahim Babangida's palace coup.</p> <p>1993: Annulment of elections; interim military rule.</p> <p>1999–2025: No military coups; civilian rule sustained.</p>
Niger	French assimilation model with centralized control. Weak development of indigenous political institutions.	France	<p>1974: Military coup ousted President Hamani Diori.</p> <p>1996: Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara seized power.</p> <p>1999: Coup leading to Maïnassara's assassination.</p> <p>2010: Coup removed President Mamadou Tandja.</p> <p>2023: Coup overthrew President Mohamed Bazoum; military junta installed.</p> <p>2023–2025: Ongoing military rule.</p>
Mali	French assimilation system emphasizing administrative centralization and suppression of traditional authority.	France	<p>1968: Military coup removed Modibo Keita.</p> <p>1991: Amadou Toumani Touré led coup</p>

		<p>against Moussa Traoré.</p> <p>2012: Coup amid Tuareg rebellion and Islamist insurgency.</p> <p>2020: Coup removed Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta.</p> <p>2021: Internal coup consolidated Assimi Goïta's power.</p> <p>2020–2025: Military-led transitional government in place.</p>
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5.3 Findings based on the SDT Framework

5.3.1 Ghana

Ghana's contemporary civil-military relationship can be understood as the product of a longstanding popular aversion to authoritarian rule, institutionalized through a robust constitutional framework and reinforced by successive waves of democratic consolidation. Historical resistance, epitomized by the Bond of 1844 and the formation of the United Gold Coast Convention, created an enduring norm against military intervention in politics (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018). Following five successful coups in the 1960s - 1980s, the Fourth Republic's 1992 Constitution explicitly subordinated the Ghana Armed Forces to civilian authority, embedding mechanisms such as the Armed Forces Act, parliamentary oversight via the Select Committee on Defence, and an independent judiciary (Nartey, 2019). Concurrently, Ghana's leadership cultivated extensive participation in United Nations peace-keeping operations, externalizing the military's operational focus and reducing domestic opportunities for politicization (Norman, 2024). Nevertheless, formal indemnities granted to past junta members and the president's near-complete appointive control over the Armed Forces Council reveal residual hierarchy-enhancing legacies that temper the republic's democratic gains (Salihu, 2020; Kohnert, 2022).

Hierarchy-Attenuating Myths in Ghana

Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu (2018) identify a foundational attenuating myth rooted in Ghana's early resistance to concentrated power. As they observe, "there is irrefutable evidence that Ghanaians have consistently rejected any form of abuse of power and dictatorial rule," exemplified by initiatives such as the Bond of 1844 and the formation of the United Gold Coast Convention. This narrative establishes a long-standing popular commitment to contesting authoritarianism.

Nartey (2019) and Salihu (2020) document how lived experience under military regimes has further weakened any legitimizing appeal of hierarchical rule. Nartey notes that the "abysmal records of past military regimes" and their "not very impressive role in politics" have deflated myths of military superiority. Moreover, many military officers conclude that "their needs are better attended to by civilian leadership in the Fourth Republic," thereby undercutting claims that

military rule benefits even the armed forces themselves. Salihu (2020) adds that military officers were “not particularly proud” of the outcomes of past juntas, recalling how participants became focused on “amassing wealth” rather than serving the public interest.

Norman (2024) highlights how constitutional design reinforces these popular and insider critiques. The consensus that “the military did not belong in politics after the negative experiences of military rule (post-1992)” functions as a powerful legitimizing myth, as does the belief that “democratically elected leaders must rule” and the principle of “civilian supremacy embedded in the 1992 Constitution.” Together, these doctrines anchor Ghana’s democratic identity and delegitimize any military claim to authority.

Kohnert (2022) extends this analysis by pointing to economic evolution as an attenuating force on hierarchical privilege. He suggests that “higher growth rates in Anglophone Africa (like Ghana) might indicate an erosion of the persistence of colonial investments,” implying that the colonial-era economic advantages once used to justify elite dominance are gradually dissipating. This economic dimension further undergirds the overarching myth that civilian, egalitarian governance is both desirable and sustainable.

Hierarchy-Enhancing Myths in Ghana

Frimpong and Agyeman-Budu (2018) describe a strong belief among Ghanaians that their country is a “beacon of democracy and hope” in West Africa. This belief acts as a hierarchy enhancing myth by promoting the idea that Ghanaian leaders are naturally suited for democratic leadership. They also note how past military regimes like the National Liberation Council (NLC) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) are sometimes praised for having “ushered in new eras of constitutional governance,” which gives those regimes a form of historical legitimacy and strengthens the myth that military intervention can be a positive force for political change.

Nartey (2019) points to the belief that the military was “drawn into Ghanaian politics for the first time” by others, not because of its own ambition. This supports a hierarchy-enhancing myth that frames military involvement as reluctant and justified. He also highlights the view that the military did “the honorable thing by not deciding to stay” after the first coup, reinforcing the idea that their role was temporary and necessary, not power-hungry.

Salihu (2020) shows how public trust in the military adds to hierarchy-enhancing myths. The military is widely seen as a “prestigious institution,” with over half of Ghanaians saying they trust it. Soldiers are often described as “highly skilled” and “disciplined,” and many citizens believe the military should play a larger role in national development. These beliefs help to justify and maintain the military’s high status in society.

Norman (2024) explores how some Ghanaians believe past military takeovers were justified because they responded to “civilian maladministration” and corruption. These justifications serve as hierarchy-enhancing myths, supporting the idea that military rule can be a necessary correction. Norman also examines the fear that the military has a “power-grabbing mentality,” which ironically supports another myth: that military hierarchy must always be under civilian control. He adds that Kwame Nkrumah’s shift toward an “authoritarian socialist system” contributed to the belief in a strong, central political authority, another form of hierarchy-enhancing myth that favors powerful leadership over democratic checks and balances.

Kohnert (2022) brings in the historical impact of colonialism, noting that colonial investments in Anglophone Africa were “more unequally distributed across districts.” This created regional imbalances that continue to shape power structures today. The idea that certain regions are more “deserving” because of these past advantages functions as a spatial version of a hierarchy-enhancing myth, reinforcing the dominance of specific groups or areas in Ghana’s political and economic systems.

Hierarchy-Attenuating Institutions in Ghana

Ghana’s long fight against unchecked authority began with the Bond of 1844 and the United Gold Coast Convention, early hierarchy-attenuating institutions formalizing resistance to oppressive rule (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018). Its written 1992 Constitution then set clear limits on power, making the President Commander-in-Chief but legally subordinating the military to civilian control, and embedding the Armed Forces Council within a civilian-military decision-making framework (Nartey, 2019; Salihu, 2020).

Civil society organizations, think-tanks, and a free press serve as vital extra-institutional checks on military power. Investigative reports and public campaigns, like the media exposés of

defense spending irregularities, have pressured both government and military leaders to explain their actions, reinforcing the idea that no institution is beyond public scrutiny (Norman, 2024).

Professionalization and ethics training in Ghana's armed forces further embed civilian control. Military academies and in-service programs now emphasize human rights, democratic norms, and respect for civilian oversight, often in partnership with UN and ECOWAS peacekeeping missions, which helps internalize these values across all ranks (Salihu, 2020). International peace-keeping duties also draw Ghana's armed forces outward, reducing the temptation to intervene in domestic politics (Norman, 2024).

Hierarchy-Enhancing Institutions in Ghana

Ghana's legal framework contains several hierarchy-enhancing institutions that protect military regimes and concentrate power in the presidency. Under the 1979 Constitution, a key hierarchy-enhancing institution forbade courts from questioning actions taken by the Armed Forces Ruli Council (AFRC), blocking any judicial review of the military government's decisions (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018).

The 1992 Constitution embeds even stronger hierarchy-enhancing institutions through its indemnity clauses. Section 34 grants sweeping immunity to officials of former military regimes and removes court jurisdiction over their acts, while Section 37 bars Parliament from ever amending those protections. Together, these constitutional provisions institutionalize impunity for past military leaders (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018).

At the top of Ghana's current system sits the presidency, a classic hierarchy-enhancing institution. Nartey (2019) describe the Fourth Republic's president as "hegemonic," because the constitution gives him power to appoint over 80% of the Armed Forces Council (AFC), name the Chief of Defense Staff and all Service Chiefs, and make final decisions on senior promotions. This centralization ensures the political hierarchy controls the military hierarchy.

The AFC itself functions as a hierarchy-enhancing institution by blending civilian appointees and top military officers. Salihu (2020) notes that this council, responsible for defense policy, procurement, and promotions, is virtually politicized by presidential appointments, opening the door to partisan influence at the highest level.

Beyond formal laws, additional hierarchy-enhancing institutions and practices have shaped Ghana's power structure. Every military regime (NLC, AFRC, PNDC, etc.) served as a direct institution of elevated military authority over civilians (Norman, 2024). Nkrumah's Preventive Detention Act of 1958 also stands out as an early hierarchy-enhancing institution, using detention without trial to silence dissent and strengthen executive control. Informally, "Protocol Placement" in military recruitment favors personal connections over merit, embedding patronage within the armed forces (Kohnert, 2022). Even the British colonial administration left behind institutional patterns that privileged certain regions, reinforcing group-based hierarchies after independence (Kohnert, 2022).

5.3.2 Nigeria

Nigeria's federal architecture and constitutional mechanisms serve to diffuse power and reinforce civilian supremacy over the military; yet in practice, resource centralization and politicized security structures have preserved elite dominance. The 1999 Constitution enshrines civilian control of the armed forces and establishes the Independent National Electoral Commission, federal, state, and local tiers of government, and a Supreme Court empowered to adjudicate intergovernmental disputes (Faluyi, 2018; Abdulsalami, 2019). These provisions coexist with entrenched myths: coups repeatedly cast themselves as corrective interventions against corrupt civilian administrations, while discourses of "national unity" and age or wealth-based entitlement (gerontocracy, "contractocracy") legitimize elite hegemony (Obikaeze et al., 2023; Norman, 2024). The federal government's monopoly over oil revenues channels vast patronage resources to the center, and security agencies are routinely deployed to uphold incumbent interests, thus reinforcing rather than attenuating hierarchical power structures (Abdulsalami, 2019; Obikaeze et al., 2023).

Hierarchy-Attenuating Myths in Nigeria

Faluyi (2018) highlights federalism itself as a founding myth: by dividing authority between national and state governments, it supposedly prevents any one level from becoming too dominant.

Obikaeze and colleagues (2023) present democracy and credible elections as myths that empower citizens to choose leaders, shifting away from military rule, and endorse "subjective

civil–military controls,” the idea that even discretionary civilian oversight is better than unchecked military ambition. Abdulsalami (2019) adds two related myths: popular sovereignty under the rule of law, which should erode hierarchies of birth or wealth, and “development for all,” the belief that security and opportunity must extend to every social class.

Norman (2024) points to the 1999 Constitution as a myth of legal supremacy over the military, embedding civilian command in the law and making the President Commander-in-Chief. Finally, Kohnert (2022) notes Nigeria’s Anglophone status and higher economic growth as an economic myth of broadly shared prosperity, reinforced by Nigeria’s pushback against France’s ‘eco’ plan, which itself becomes a myth of national unity and fairness.

Hierarchy-Enhancing Myths in Nigeria

Faluyi (2018) identifies a set of hierarchy-enhancing myths around Nigeria’s internal borders and national unity. One claims that the military’s role in creating new states was purely to integrate minorities, when in fact it often served elite political interests and shifted loyalty from the nation to individual states. Closely linked is the idea, especially strong in parts of the North, that calls for restructuring are a southern agenda threatening existing power and resource shares. Finally, the belief that national unity justifies the use of force or central control reinforces a myth that strong, top-down authority is needed to hold the country together.

Obikaeze and colleagues (2023) describe hierarchy-enhancing myths justified by political actors. Many treat state resources and offices as spoils of power, a practice framed as normal even as it deepens elite privilege. Politicians also claim that ethnic or religious identity alone grants legitimate representation, cementing group-based hierarchies. The military’s own narrative, that coups are necessary to correct civilian corruption, serves as another myth, elevating military power despite its own record of abuse.

Abdulsalami (2019) and Norman (2024) highlight how the rhetoric of national security and unity becomes a hierarchy-enhancing myth. Leaders invoke a politics of security to prioritize their own group’s safety and interests, diverting attention from development needs. The repeated insistence that “the unity of Nigeria is not negotiable” justifies suppressing separatist or reform movements by force. These narratives legitimize both a powerful central government and the military’s intervention in politics.

Kohnert (2022) points to more subtle hierarchy-enhancing myths rooted in social norms and history. “Gerontocracy” suggests that age or seniority alone entitles one to rule, while “contractocracy” normalizes wealth from questionable government deals as a path to power. Nigeria’s past experience with soldier-presidents also fuels a myth that the military itself is a necessary political actor, reinforcing calls for even “subjective” civilian oversight to keep the armed forces in line.

Hierarchy-Attenuating Institutions in Nigeria

Faluyi (2018) points to Nigeria’s federal system itself as a core hierarchy-attenuating institution. By constitutionally dividing power among federal, state, and local governments, it prevents any single level from dominating. The Supreme Court is empowered to resolve inter-governmental disputes, and the National Assembly offers a forum where regions can influence national legislation, at least in principle (Faluyi, 2018).

Obikaeze and colleagues (2023) highlight democratic bodies and processes as hierarchy-attenuating institutions. Elected legislatures and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) are designed to place civilian rule above force or patronage. A free press and active civil society, exemplified by movements like #EndSARS, serve as extra-constitutional checks, exposing abuses and mobilizing public pressure (Obikaeze et al., 2023).

Abdulsalami (2019) emphasizes institutional mechanisms aimed at rebalancing power. National dialogue efforts such as the 2005 Constitutional Conference (CONFAB) offer a structured way to address systemic imbalances, while the Amnesty Programme for militants seeks to reduce the hierarchy based on armed control by reintegrating former combatants into civilian life (Abdulsalami, 2019).

Norman (2024) underscores the 1999 Constitution as a hierarchy-attenuating institution that firmly places the military under civilian command. Its provisions mirror those in other democracies by defining the President as Commander-in-Chief and embedding civilian oversight of the armed forces.

Kohnert (2022) adds an economic dimension: the rise of the Dangote Group in Francophone markets and Nigeria’s leadership in the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ), notably its pushback against France’s unilateral ‘eco’ plan, serve as institutional challenges to

legacy economic hierarchies dominated by former colonial powers. These shifts foster a narrative of indigenous capacity and broader economic inclusion (Kohnert, 2022).

Hierarchy-Enhancing Institutions in Nigeria

Nigeria's political framework contains several hierarchy-enhancing institutions that concentrate power at the center and reinforce elite control. Faluyi (2018) describes the Federal Government as "Almighty" in its post-military form, overriding states and local councils through centralized procedures. Control over oil and other mineral resources is likewise monopolized by the federal center, and the State/Local Government Joint Account, managed by governors, often diverts funds before they reach local communities (Faluyi, 2018).

Obikaeze and colleagues (2023) highlight how formal public institutions become vehicles for illegitimate gain when oversight is weak. Elections, instead of reflecting voters' will, are marred by violence, intimidation, vote-rigging, and even collusion by security forces, turning them into tools for maintaining incumbent power. Security agencies themselves are politicized to serve ruling elites rather than the public interest (Obikaeze et al., 2023).

According to Abdulsalami (2019) and Kohnert (2022), the military institution remains a core hierarchy-enhancing institution. Originating to protect colonial interests, it has a long history of sectionalism and coups that "militarize democracy" by imposing leadership. This legacy embeds the military's influence at the top of Nigeria's power structure (Abdulsalami, 2019; Kohnert, 2022).

Norman (2024) points to political parties as formal institutions that deepen group-based hierarchies. By organizing campaigns around religion and ethnicity and even arming militias, parties formalize divisions and mobilize votes along identity lines, reinforcing elite control (Norman, 2024).

Finally, Kohnert (2022) notes that while federalism is meant to spread authority, in practice it fragments power to the benefit of powerful actors. Overlapping responsibilities between federal and state levels create loopholes for patronage and elite capture, leaving ordinary citizens with limited recourse (Kohnert, 2022).

5.3.3 Niger

Niger's recurring military overthrows are framed by discourses that depict civilian governance as having failed to secure public safety and economic welfare, thereby justifying juntas as sovereign restorers. In each coup, most recently in 2023, the leadership invoked rampant insecurity, grinding poverty, and endemic corruption under elected administrations to legitimize military rule (Baudais, 2024). Anti-French and anti-neocolonial rhetoric is a central pillar of this narrative, portraying long-standing French involvement, particularly in uranium extraction, as predatory and diminishing Nigerien dignity (Kohnert, 2022). Institutional continuities, however, persist: France remains Niger's principal import partner and retains major stakes in uranium mining through Orano, reinforcing elite networks that benefit from the status quo (Zambakari, 2023). Emerging countervailing forces include the Alliance of Sahel States, bypassing ECOWAS mechanisms, and the entry of Bharti Airtel into the telecommunications sector, signalling nascent diversification of economic and security partnerships (Nweke & Enwere, 2024).

Hierarchy-Attenuating Myths in Niger

In the case of Niger, military leaders have used several hierarchy-attenuating myths to justify their coups and challenge the existing power structure. These myths help present the military as acting on behalf of the people against corrupt and oppressive elites, both local and foreign.

One major myth is the claim that the coup was necessary because of growing insecurity in the country. Braimah (2023) reports that the military justified its actions by pointing to worsening insecurity, economic failure, and social hardship affecting ordinary people. Similarly, Zambakari (2023) notes that the military accused the civilian government of failing to protect citizens and manage the economy. Allegations of corruption, embezzlement, and poor leadership were used to further weaken the government's legitimacy (Zambakari, 2023).

Another powerful myth is the idea that foreign powers, especially France, continue to exploit Niger. Nweke & Enwere (2024) explain that military leaders framed their actions as a response to neocolonial influence, especially from France. They argued that France was still controlling Niger's economy and politics for its own benefit, particularly through uranium

extraction, while most people in Niger remained poor. This belief that France enriches itself at the expense of the masses has become a common story used to challenge both foreign and local elites (Nweke & Enwere, 2024).

Baudais (2024) shows how criticism of Western military operations in Niger, such as the French-led Operation Barkhane, helped build this anti-foreign myth. Groups like the M62 Movement opposed the presence of foreign troops and questioned the government's cooperation with Western powers. These public frustrations created a narrative that the civilian government was not only corrupt but also working with outsiders against national interests. Finally, Kohnert (2022) points out that anger over poor governance and insecurity under the civilian regime allowed the military to present itself as the only group capable of fixing the country. This myth helped shift blame away from the military's own role in the country's instability and instead positioned them as saviours responding to the will of the people.

Hierarchy-Enhancing Myths in Niger

A central hierarchy-enhancing myth identified is the military as a corrective force stepping in when civilian rule has failed. Zambakari (2023) notes that General Abdourahamane Tchiani, after declaring himself head of state, framed his actions as a needed intervention to address a deteriorating situation. Similarly, Braimah (2023) highlights how the junta justified its actions by claiming to be reclaiming control of the country and its resources from foreign domination, especially France and its local allies. This narrative enhances the military's image as saviors of the nation.

Nweke & Enwere (2024) further explain that military takeovers are often presented as responses to the "rot" within civilian governments, with the military positioned as uniquely capable of restoring national stability and morality. The idea that civilian leaders, many of whom inherited power from colonial structures, are inherently corrupt and incompetent serves to justify the military's role as guardians of the state.

Baudais (2024) also notes the use of strong nationalist rhetoric by the junta, which includes affirmations of sovereignty and a desire to break away from dependence on traditional Western allies. This narrative helps to reinforce their legitimacy and appeal to popular anti-colonial sentiments.

Finally, Kohnert (2022) points to broader regional developments that challenge some of the myths underpinning French influence, such as the rise of non-French companies like Bharti Airtel. Nevertheless, the military continues to capitalize on the perception that Francophone African countries remain economically disadvantaged and politically manipulated, further legitimizing their actions as necessary for true independence.

Hierarchy-Attenuating Institutions in Niger

In Niger, several institutions are portrayed as weakening established power structures and foreign dominance. Braimah (2023) viewed ECOWAS as an attenuating force once it lifts sanctions; arguing that ending “foreign troops (especially French), meddling in internal affairs, and demands to reinstate the deposed government” would reopen political space for negotiation. Linked to this, the junta’s new supply alliance with Algeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali is presented as an alternative trade channel that blunts the impact of ECOWAS penalties and lessens dependence on former partners.

Zambakari (2023) and Nweke & Enwere (2024) describe the Nigerien military as an institution that disrupts the old order by challenging civilian elites aligned with foreign influence. Although the army imposes its own chain of command, its takeover is framed as a bid for a “second independence,” undermining the hierarchy sustained by external actors. Yet Baudais (2024) notes that the military itself is fragmented, marked by “enmities, and regional and military rivalries,” which limits its ability to entrench a single, unchallenged hierarchy.

A range of domestic non-state actors also function as hierarchy-attenuating institutions. Nweke & Enwere (2024) highlight civil-society organizations, student movements, and grassroots groups that contest exploitative economic policies. They add that intellectual and cultural elites who publicly critique neo-colonial legacies help erode the dominant narrative that justifies foreign leverage. Baudais (2024) points to protest networks such as the M62 Movement as visible street-level challengers of both military and foreign power, even when the regime tries to suppress them.

Kohnert (2022) identifies the arrival of Bharti Airtel, a non-French telecommunications multinational, as an institutional challenge to long-standing French commercial dominance in Niger’s economy. By diversifying ownership in a strategic sector, Airtel offers jobs, services, and

investment outside the traditional Franco-Nigerien patronage network, thereby loosening one more strand of the hierarchy that has tied Niger to its former colonial power.

Hierarchy-Enhancing Institutions in Niger

Hierarchy-enhancing institutions are deeply rooted in colonial legacies and are sustained by contemporary political and economic structures that reinforce the dominance of both foreign powers and domestic elites. French colonialism established centralized systems of governance that continued post-independence, concentrating authority in the hands of a few political and military elites (Braimah, 2023; Zambakari, 2023). These institutions were designed to serve colonial interests and, after independence, evolved into mechanisms that maintained asymmetric relationships between Niger and its former colonizers.

Economic institutions play a central role in maintaining this hierarchy. French multinational corporations, particularly Orano, a 90% French State-owned nuclear energy company with substantial stakes in Niger's uranium sector, exemplify how resource extraction remains under foreign control (Zambakari, 2023; Nweke & Enwere, 2024). These economic arrangements are reinforced through skewed trade relations. France continues to be Niger's main source of imports, creating a dependency that benefits a narrow elite involved in import-export businesses (Kohnert, 2022). Similar structures exist in agriculture, where national cotton companies, formed from French subsidiaries, retain foreign influence and channel significant profits and decision-making power to French and elite Nigerien stakeholders (Kohnert, 2022).

Military and political institutions further enhance hierarchy. Foreign military bases, particularly those of France and the United States, are perceived by both the military junta and segments of civil society as instruments to protect external interests rather than national development (Braimah, 2023; Zambakari, 2023). Internally, the Nigerien military has consolidated its power through restrictions on political parties, civic space, and the media (Baudais, 2024). The establishment of the Alliance of Sahel States with Burkina Faso and Mali creates a new regional institutional framework aligned with military regimes, bypassing traditional multilateral institutions like ECOWAS and entrenching a militarized governance structure (Baudais, 2024).

5.3.4 Mali

Mali's political landscape has been reshaped by a potent convergence of anti-neocolonial and anti-elite discourses, manifested in a sequence of coups that dismantled successive civilian governments. The 2020 and 2021 juntas capitalized on widespread perceptions that French, ECOWAS, and UN interventions had failed to curtail jihadist violence or deliver governance, thereby casting external actors as perpetrators of "colonial and racial logics" (Boas & Haavik, 2025; Boisvert, 2019). Concurrently, revelations of "large-scale corruption" within the Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta administration intensified public disenchantment, rendering liberal democracy itself suspect (Miroiu & Alecu, 2024). To cement its authority, the Goïta regime cultivated hierarchy-enhancing mythologies, evoking Sunjata epic motifs and dozo hunter-warrior traditions to present Colonel Goïta as a necessary strongman, and institutionalized control through a military-appointed National Transition Council and strategic partnerships with the Russian Wagner Group and the Alliance of Sahel States (Baudais, 2024; Kohnert, 2022). Protest movements (M5-RFP, Yèrèwolo) and the withdrawal of Barkhane and MINUSMA forces have, however, attenuated external hierarchies, leaving Mali's future political order contingent on the outcome of an envisioned inter-Malian dialogue (Boas & Haavik, 2025).

Hierarchy-Attenuating Myths in Mali

Several hierarchy-attenuating myths have emerged, challenging both internal state authority and external influence. These myths serve to delegitimize established political and international hierarchies and justify alternative sources of authority.

A dominant myth is the narrative of failed international interventions. External actors such as France, MINUSMA, the EU, and ECOWAS are widely perceived as perpetuating neo-colonial agendas rooted in colonial and racial logics (Baudais, 2024; Boas & Haavik, 2025). These interventions are framed not as support, but as domination, undermining Mali's sovereignty and dignity. This myth erodes the legitimacy of both international institutions and the Malian governments that partnered with them.

A second key myth is the narrative of corruption and failure in previous democratic regimes, particularly under President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. Popular frustration over widespread corruption and lack of development fuels the belief that democracy, as previously practiced, failed the people. This narrative portrays the democratic elite as self-serving and

disconnected, weakening the ideological foundation of electoral legitimacy (Boisvert, 2019; MIROIU and ALECU, 2024).

There are also grassroots and protest-driven myths, such as those advanced by the M5-RFP and Yèrèwolo Debout sur les Remparts movements. These groups challenged both the domestic elite and the international presence, reinforcing the view that the state had become an agent of foreign interests rather than a servant of its citizens.

In the military sphere, rumors and conspiracy narratives, such as claims that the government was “selling Mali” or hiding weapons, spread among civilians and soldiers. These narratives legitimized the coup as a necessary act to save the nation from betrayal, further undermining the hierarchy of the existing civilian and military command (Boisvert, 2019).

Non-state armed groups, such as JNIM, contribute their own attenuating myths, portraying the state as absent, corrupt, and ethnically biased. By positioning themselves as protectors or mediators in local disputes and resource conflicts, these groups present themselves as more legitimate alternatives to the state in the eyes of many communities (MIROIU & ALECU, 2024).

On the economic front, Mali’s participation in the Cotton Four (C4) protest against unfair global cotton subsidies represents a broader attempt to challenge international economic hierarchies. This myth frames Malian farmers as victims of unjust global systems and supports a vision of economic justice that bypasses both state and international elite control (Kohnert, 2022).

Hierarchy-Enhancing Myths in Mali

Baudais (2024) highlights the military junta’s use of nationalism and sovereignty as central themes in its legitimation strategy. The regime constructs a narrative in which its seizure of power is framed as a necessary act of emancipation from neocolonial influence, particularly that of France. This narrative reinforces the perception that military rule is a vehicle for reclaiming national dignity, thereby establishing a moral hierarchy that places the military above civilian institutions.

Boas & Haavik (2025) expand on this framework by analyzing how the Goïta regime cultivates symbolic narratives to entrench its authority. Central to this strategy is the construction of a “strongman” myth, in which Colonel Assimi Goïta is depicted as an exceptional hero, uniquely equipped to lead Mali through crises. This narrative draws heavily on cultural resources, including the Sunjata epic and the myth of the dozo (hunter-warrior), both of which valorize figures who emerge during societal breakdown to restore order, often through violent means. By aligning Goïta with these mythic archetypes, the regime not only situates itself within a culturally resonant tradition but also normalizes authoritarian rule as historically grounded and morally justified. The discourse of anti-neocolonialism further complements this narrative, portraying the regime as resisting external threats to sovereignty, while concurrently demonizing internal dissenters, such as political elites, rebels, and human rights advocates, as enemies of the state. The invocation of Thomas Sankara’s legacy serves a similar function, particularly among younger populations, by linking the junta to broader pan-African ideals of resistance and self-reliance.

Boisvert (2019) similarly identifies the strategic use of anti-elite and anti-foreigner rhetoric by the junta, particularly in its confrontation with regional bodies such as ECOWAS. By casting these actors as corrupt and complicit in the exploitation of Mali’s resources, the military positions itself as a legitimate guardian of national interests. This narrative resonates with a broader postcolonial myth, that African militaries have an inherited duty to correct civilian political failure. Such a belief serves to elevate the military’s status above that of democratically elected institutions and reinforces a vertical structure of authority underpinned by presumed competence and moral clarity.

Miroiu & Alecu (2024) further contextualize these developments by noting how military and quasi-military actors present themselves as alternative governance providers. In environments where state capacity is weak or absent, the provision of basic services and security is framed as evidence of legitimacy. This narrative creates a hierarchy-enhancing myth of necessity and competence, portraying the military not merely as a temporary caretaker but as a preferable, even permanent, governing authority. A similar dynamic is observed among jihadist groups like JNIM, who draw upon religious law, specifically the enforcement of Sharia, as a

basis for establishing social order and hierarchical control. Such ideological justifications reinforce structured inequality and moral superiority within their controlled territories.

Lastly, Kohnert (2022) identifies a subtler form of hierarchy-enhancing myth within the economic domain. The continued dependence of Mali's cotton industry on French-dominated trade systems is underpinned by a belief that prosperity is only achievable within this legacy framework. This myth naturalizes external economic hierarchies, legitimizing the influence of former colonial powers and the local elites aligned with them. It simultaneously discourages structural reform or economic autonomy, thereby preserving existing patterns of dominance.

Hierarchy-Attenuating Institutions in Mali

In Mali, several hierarchy-attenuating institutions have emerged to challenge both domestic and external concentrations of power. Street protests and grassroots movements played a crucial role in contesting the authority of previous military and civilian regimes, signaling popular demand for accountability and more inclusive governance (Baudais, 2024). Following the coups, international sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and other bodies failed to force an immediate return to civilian rule; instead, they highlighted the limits of external coercion and opened space for domestic actors to press for dialogue (Boas & Haavik, 2025).

The proposed Inter-Malian Dialogue, designed as an inclusive forum for consensus-based solutions, represents a potential institutional mechanism for diffusing centralized power and rebuilding social cohesion, though its efficacy remains to be tested (Boisvert, 2019). Similarly, the withdrawal of foreign missions, France's Operation Barkhane and the UN's MINUSMA, was portrayed by the junta as a national victory. This exit not only attenuated the hierarchy imposed by international forces but also underscored popular resentment toward external intervention (Baudais, 2024).

Mali's defiance of ECOWAS, and the subsequent withdrawal alongside Niger and Burkina Faso from its frameworks, further weakened regional institutional authority over the country (Boas & Haavik, 2025). At the same time, the UN-supported Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces and Security Services aims to redefine the military's role around human rights and civilian integration, offering a formal check on its autonomy (MIROIU & ALECU, 2024). Beyond official channels, non-state armed groups have set up parallel governance structures,

dispensing justice, mediating disputes, and providing services, directly competing with state institutions and highlighting official failures (MIROIU & ALECU, 2024). Finally, Mali's participation in the 'Cotton Four' protests at the WTO emphasized small farmers' demands for fairer trade terms, using global institutional platforms to challenge economic hierarchies inherited from colonial arrangements (Kohnert, 2022).

Hierarchy-Enhancing Institutions in Mali

In Mali, the military itself has become the main institution that strengthens top-down power. By seizing control in 2020 and cementing its rule in 2021, the junta reshaped the state around its own chain of command (Boas & Haavik, 2025). The National Transition Council, a body that makes laws during the handover, is entirely appointed by the military leader and filled with officers, ensuring that key decisions stay under army control (Baudais, 2024).

Despite Mali's fragile institutions, the regime relies on its exclusive right to use force to keep opponents silent. Through regular security operations and new alliances, such as the Alliance of Sahel States with Burkina Faso and Niger, and ties to the Wagner/Africa Corps, the government sidesteps regional bodies like ECOWAS and deepens its hold on power (Baudais, 2024; Boas & Haavik, 2025).

Inside the state, informal networks based on personal loyalty, sometimes called a "flexnet", have become official channels for influence. High-ranking officers and connected civilians use these networks to distribute favors and jobs, reinforcing their own status above formal rules (Boisvert, 2019). Coup-proofing measures, like deliberately under-equipping parts of the army and fostering rivalries, further weaken standard institutions and tie loyalty directly to the regime's leadership.

Outside the official state, armed groups such as JNIM set up parallel structures. They run their own courts based on Sharia, provide basic services, negotiate with local chiefs, and control smuggling routes. These actions create a competing order that also relies on force and patronage (Miroiù & Alecu, 2024). Economically, Mali's cotton sector remains shaped by a colonial legacy. State-run cotton companies grew out of former French businesses but still share control and profits with French partners. This arrangement benefits a small elite and preserves old trade hierarchies (Kohnert, 2022).

Table 4: Tabular representation of SDT themes across each country

Theme	Ghana	Nigeria	Niger	Mali
Hierarchy-Attenuating Myths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular rejection of coups since 1844; military rule viewed as anachronistic (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018) • “Only elected leaders”—civilian supremacy in 1992 Constitution (Nartey, 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federalism & elections as sole source of legitimacy; “development for all” ideal (Faluyi, 2018) • Anti-CFA/eco-challenge to narrow monetary elite (Kohnert, 2022) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coups as popular rescue missions from insecurity and corruption (Baudais, 2024) • Anti-neocolonial sovereignty reclaiming national resources (Kohnert, 2022) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failed international interventions characterized as “neo-colonial” betrayals (Boas & Haavik, 2025; Boisvert, 2019) • Outrage at IBK regime’s “large-scale corruption” delegitimizing previous elites (Miroiu & Alecu, 2024)
Hierarchy-Enhancing Myths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Beacon of democracy” retrospectively valorizes past juntas as constitutional catalysts (Salihu, 2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coups portrayed as anti-corruption purges; unity narrative suppresses restructuring (Obikaeze et al., 2023; Norman, 2024) • Gerontocracy/contractocracy entitlements (Abdulsalami, 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junta as sole credible restorer of order; hero narrative (Baudais, 2024) • Sovereignty rhetoric used to justify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongman cult around Goïta invoking Sunjata/dozo epics (Baudais, 2024) • Demonization of ECOWAS, NGOs, and “corrupt elites” to

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High public trust in military as disciplined guardians (Norman, 2024) 		<p>suppression of dissent (Zambakari, 2023)</p>	<p>consolidate military rule (Boisvert, 2019)</p>
<p>Hierarchy-Attenuating Institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1992 Constitution & Armed Forces Act: parliamentary and judicial oversight (Nartey, 2019) • UN peace-keeping deployments externalize military focus (Norman, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of powers (federal–state–local tiers; Supreme Court arbitration) and INEC (Faluyi, 2018; Obikaeze et al., 2023) • Civil society movements (e.g. EndSARS) as informal checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AES regional alliance bypassing ECOWAS; Bharti Airtel entry diversifying telecom sector (Zambakari, 2023; Nweke & Enwere, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M5-RFP & Yèrèwolo street protests; Barkhane/MINUSMA withdrawals; ECOWAS standoff (Boas & Haavik, 2025) • Planned Inter-Malian Dialogue offering a forum for consensual governance (Boas & Haavik, 2025)
<p>Hierarchy-Enhancing Institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional indemnities shielding past junta members (Salihu, 2020) • Presidential appointment hegemony over AFC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized oil-revenue control funding patronage networks (Abdulsalami, 2019) • Politicized security agencies deployed for elite protection (Obikaeze et al., 2023) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France as top import partner; Orano’s uranium concessions; colonial-era cotton company structures sustaining elite rents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military-appointed National Transition Council sidelining democratic process (Baudais, 2024) • Wagner Group & AES partnerships creating parallel

	(>80% control) (Kohnert, 2022)		(Kohnert, 2022; Zambakari, 2023)	security structures (Kohnert, 2022)
Group-Based Hierarchies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonial spatial legacies: coastal vs. northern districts (Kohnert, 2022) • Professional elites (military officer corps vs. civilian bureaucracy) shape power distribution (Nartey, 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethno-religious federal cleavages (North–South, Muslim–Christian) underpin political patronage (Norman, 2024) • Class-based “contractocracy” concentrates wealth among business and political elites (Abdulsalami, 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban/rural divide: uranium-linked urban elites vs. impoverished rural majority (Zambakari, 2023) • Military elite’s control over state resources distinguishes them from marginalized civilians (Baudais, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuareg caste and southern political elite tensions shape rebellion dynamics (Boisvert, 2019) • Jihadist groups (JNIM) forge alternative local orders along ethnic lines, competing with state authority (Miroiu & Alecu, 2024)

5.5 Differences in Dominance Structures and Legitimising Myths across the Countries

The comparative analysis reveals clear contrasts between Anglophone and Francophone West African cases in both the structure of political dominance and the myths that legitimize authority. On the one hand, Anglophone contexts, formal democratic and federal frameworks, rooted in British-inherited soft institutions, create multiple, if imperfect, checks on power. Legitimizing myths emphasize popular sovereignty, the rule of law, and national integration, even as latent spatial and ethno-religious cleavages endure. Francophone cases feature a more coercive postcolonial state legacy, strong centralized hierarchies, and persistent economic dependencies on France. Here, sovereignty myths are explicitly anti-neocolonial, and strongman narratives draw on both modern and traditional symbols to validate military rule. Across these dimensions, group-based hierarchies, whether coastal vs. hinterland in Ghana, North–South divisions in Nigeria, urban-rural divides in Niger, or ethnic-caste tensions in Mali, shape whose interests are protected or challenged.

Table 5: Difference in Dominance Structures and Legitimising Myths between the countries

Dimension	Anglophone (Ghana & Nigeria)	Francophone (Niger & Mali)
Dominance Structure	<p>Decentralized yet elite-driven.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional federalism in Nigeria distributes authority among Centre, states, and localities, albeit with a strong central purse (Abdulsalami, 2019). • Ghana’s 1992 Constitution embeds civilian oversight bodies (Defense Committee, judiciary), yet presidential appointment powers over the Armed Forces Council remain 	<p>Centralized and militarized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niger’s successive juntas consolidate power in the presidency and military hierarchy, reasserting direct control over security and resources (Baudais, 2024). • Mali’s military regimes operate through a junta-appointed Transition Council and hybrid security alliances (Wagner, AES), effectively bypassing civilian

	extensive (Nartey, 2019; Kohnert, 2022).	institutions (Boas & Haavik, 2025; Kohnert, 2022).
Core Legitimizing Myths	<p>Sovereignty through democracy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghanaian discourse valorizes periodic elections as the sole legitimate transfer of power, delegitimizing coups (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018). • Nigeria’s “development for all” and anti-CFA narratives frame civilian rule as both just and essential for economic inclusion (Faluyi, 2018; Kohnert, 2022). 	<p>Sovereignty through anti-neocolonialism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nigerien coups are justified by invoking French exploitation of uranium and security failures, depicting military rule as necessary to reclaim national dignity (Kohnert, 2022; Baudais, 2024). • Malian juntas legitimize themselves as heirs to the Sunjata epic, casting strongman leaders as modern heroes rescuing the nation from foreign and corrupt domestic enemies (Baudais, 2024; Boisvert, 2019).
Institutional Mechanisms	<p>Mixed attenuating/enhancing clauses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal/state/local dispute resolution (Nigeria’s Supreme Court) and parliamentary defense committees provide formal checks, while INEC and civil society (EndSARS) offer informal oversight (Obikaeze et al., 2023). 	<p>Parallel institutions of coercion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niger maintains ECOWAS-style regional forums but often ignores their mandates, instead forming the AES with like-minded juntas (Zambakari, 2023). • Mali’s Inter-Malian Dialogue remains tentative, while the National Transition Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghana’s Indemnity Act shields ex-junta figures, even as the Armed Forces Act codifies civilian control (Salihu, 2020; Norman, 2024). 	<p>and Wagner pacts institutionalize military authority (Miroiu & Alecu, 2024; Kohnert, 2022).</p>
Group-Based Cleavages	<p>Spatial and ethnoreligious divides tempered by electoral politics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghana’s coastal–northern district disparities persist but are mediated through parliamentary representation (Kohnert, 2022). • Nigeria’s North–South and Muslim–Christian cleavages inform but do not wholly obstruct federal power-sharing (Norman, 2024). 	<p>Ethnic, caste, and rural–urban fissures exploited by juntas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Niger, uranium-wealth urban elites remain insulated from rural poverty, reinforcing military alliances with urban actors (Zambakari, 2023). • Mali’s Tuareg caste and Fulani ethnic tensions are instrumentalized by armed groups to challenge the state and underpin alternate governance orders (Boisvert, 2019; Miroiu & Alecu, 2024).

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Interpretation of Findings

This study reveals all four countries inherited deeply hierarchical orderings from their different colonial, but only Ghana and Nigeria have managed to stabilize these hierarchies, whereas Mali and Niger remain engulfed by recurring coups. In the Anglophone countries, British indirect rule froze ethnic and regional identities but dispersed authority among chiefs, emirs, and emerging political parties (Lange, 2009; Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018). By the 1990s, this approach granted civilian leaders multiple avenues to co-opt or defuse local grievances. On the back of this, Nigeria's federal system institutionalized North–South and Muslim–Christian cleavages as electoral bargaining cards (Faluyi, 2018; Obikaeze et al., 2023), while Ghana's party politics and judiciary channeled northern–southern tensions into legislative debate (Nartey, 2019).

In Mali and Niger, however, French assimilation dismantled indigenous institutions in favor of a monolithic bureaucracy ruled by elites powered by foreign influences (Letsa & Wilfahrt, 2020). Rural groups, most famously the Tuareg noble caste in northern Mali, found themselves stripped of patronage and security, fueling cycles of rebellion, jihadist insurgency under JNIM, and ultimately legitimizing the military as the only credible vehicle for redressing exclusion (Boisvert, 2019; Miroiu & Alecu, 2024).

These divergent legacies have been reinforced by several legitimizing myths. In Ghana and Nigeria, the myth of civilian supremacy gained normative force through the 1992 Constitution and the establishment of independent electoral bodies such as INEC, creating a moral barrier to military intervention even when coups in the 1970s and 1980s were once celebrated as necessary cleansers (Salihu, 2020; Abdulsalami, 2019). Although coup plotters at some point in these states invoked anti-corruption or national unity tropes, the prevailing belief in “democracy as destiny” gradually eroded popular sympathy for military rule (Salihu, 2020; Obikaeze et al., 2023).

In Mali and Niger, hierarchy-enhancing myths of anti-neocolonial liberation and strongman salvation remain dominant. Coups are routinely framed as liberations from “corrupt puppets” beholden to foreign powers, a narrative that resonates because the centralized elites

appear unaccountable and external intervention has often failed to deliver security (Boas & Haavik, 2025; Kohnert, 2022). When Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta's government collapsed under security pressure, the Goïta regime invoked Sunjata epic motifs to cast itself as a cultural heir to Mali's warrior traditions, an image that proved resilient despite shifting foreign partnerships from France to Russia's Wagner Group (Baudais, 2024; Boisvert, 2019). Similarly, Niger's 2023 coup leaders justified their takeover as necessary to reclaim uranium wealth from French exploitation (Kohnert, 2022). Unlike Anglophone attenuating myths, these hierarchy-enhancing myths have not been displaced by equally powerful democratic narratives, leaving military takeover perpetually plausible.

The architecture of formal institutions further explains the divergent experiences in these regions. Ghana's 1992 Constitution and its Armed Forces Act instituted multiple civilian check-points on military power, parliamentary oversight, judicial review, and statutory prohibition of political activity by soldiers (Nartey, 2019). Nigeria's federalism and independent electoral commission (INEC) similarly dispersed authority across levels of government, making any single actor's coup ambitions harder to pursue (Abdulsalami, 2019; Faluyi, 2018). In practice, these attenuating mechanisms have weathered coups and political crises, even as hierarchy-enhancing clauses, presidential indemnities, revenue monopolies - persist.

While both countries retain hierarchy-enhancing features, presidential appointment powers, revenue control, indemnity clauses, their hierarchy-attenuating mechanisms have proved resilient enough to marginalize episodic enhancing clauses. In Mali and Niger, however, attenuating institutions such as Inter-Malian Dialogue or AES regional pacts remain weakly anchored, easily sidelined by military decrees (Boas & Haavik, 2025; Zambakari, 2023). Compounding this fragility, ex-colonial defense treaties and ongoing French or Wagner presence have institutionalized military autonomy, enabling juntas to bypass or co-opt nascent democratic checks.

Finally, the pattern of external hierarchies, that is, the post-colonial relationships with former colonial masters and new patrons, has either attenuated or reinforced domestic dominance structures. Britain's relatively hands-off stance after decolonization, channeled through the Commonwealth and UN peacekeeping, allowed Ghanaian and Nigerian militaries to develop professional identities oriented toward constitutional mandates rather than regime protection

(Bade, 2013; Norman, 2024). In contrast, France's enduring Françafrique networks, repeated interventions (Operation Barkhane), and defense accords have supplied Malian and Nigerien armies with resources and legitimacy outside civilian control, perpetuating a cycle in which coups become a normalized tool of statecraft (Bade, 2013; Kohnert, 2022). Additionally, the arrival of new external patrons, such as Russia's Wagner Group or the Alliance of Sahel States, has done little to break this pattern, instead substituting one hierarchy-enhancing framework for another (Baudais, 2024). In Niger and Mali, armies remain politicized and segmented (Salihu, 2016; Boisvert, 2019).

This chapter has addressed the research question: How does Social Dominance Theory explain the divergent resurgence of military coups in Francophone and Anglophone African countries? By comparing two Francophone and two Anglophone countries, this study shows that hierarchy-enhancing myths, for example, beliefs in French superiority and reliance on colonial-era defense pacts and centralized, colonial legal institutions predispose Francophone states to coup risk. In contrast, Ghana and parts of Nigeria illustrate how strong hierarchy-attenuating institutions, such as robust civilian oversight of the military foster stability.

Based on this study, it is inferred that addressing the hierarchy-enhancing myths and institutions left over from French colonial rule is crucial to improving stability in Francophone states. This can be achieved by reducing French influence and scaling back direct military training, to weaken the myth that France is the guarantor of national sovereignty. In contrast, Ghana's experience demonstrates how a perception of external non-interference, combined with strong constitutional checks on the military, fosters hierarchy-attenuating norms and increases the likelihood of peaceful handovers (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu 2018; Norman 2024).

However, reducing French influence too abruptly also carries risks. In Niger's July 2023 coup, the abrupt withdrawal of French troops and advisers created a short-term security vacuum that the junta seized upon, igniting a popular nostalgia for French assistance and ultimately strengthening the military's grip. Therefore, a gradual approach that phases out French forces while simultaneously strengthening local oversight bodies (e.g., Parliament's Defence Committee) and supporting emerging hierarchy-attenuating institutions (NGOs, community justice forums) is recommended. In practice, this would mean revising defence agreements to shift the stationing of full combat brigades to EU-led or ECOWAS-led regional training centers

rather than on-the-ground French battalions. This would also require investing in and supporting civil societies to propagate hierarchy-attenuating messages of popular sovereignty and constitutionalism, as seen in Ghana's robust free press and parliamentary oversight in the bid to counter narratives that position French as the saviour.

Furthermore, this research also revealed contrasting nature of hierarchy-attenuating responses between Anglophone and Francophone African countries. In Anglophone countries such as Ghana and Nigeria, actions taken to challenge group-based inequality and assert social change tend to be largely non-violent, often through democratic processes, civic organizing, and electoral reforms. In contrast, in Francophone countries like Mali and Niger, hierarchy-attenuating myths and institutions frequently manifest in more confrontational and violent forms such as military coups or mass uprisings. This pattern suggests that the prevailing social narratives and institutional structures in Francophone countries not only fail to provide peaceful avenues for reform but may escalate existing inequalities and tensions.

To address this, Francophone countries must begin investing in non-violent civic institutions and reframe dominant social myths that associate change with force. This includes reforming education systems to emphasize democratic values, creating inclusive political platforms, and promoting national identities less tied to colonial legacy and military strength. Decolonization, in this context, must go beyond severing formal political ties with France it must involve reshaping narratives and institutions to empower citizens through peaceful participation and legitimate representation.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Social Dominance Theory (SDT) provides a powerful lens for explaining the divergent resurgence of military coups in Francophone and Anglophone African countries. At the core of SDT is the idea that societies organize themselves around group-based hierarchies, which are maintained through a mix of institutions and legitimizing myths. These can either support dominance (hierarchy-enhancing) or challenge it (hierarchy-attenuating). When applied to Mali and Niger on one hand, and Ghana and Nigeria on the other, this framework reveals why military rule has returned in some contexts and lost legitimacy in others.

In Mali and Niger, SDT helps explain the reassertion of military dominance through the consolidation of hierarchy-enhancing institutions. The military is not only the central political actor but also the primary source of law-making and coercion. In Mali, the National Transition Council is entirely appointed by the junta, reinforcing vertical control. The state operates through deeply embedded neo-patrimonial networks, where loyalty and personal connections override formal rules. Armed groups such as JNIM further extend hierarchical control by creating parallel institutions, courts, governance systems, and economic structures, that reinforce exclusion and power concentration.

These structures are underpinned by powerful hierarchy-enhancing myths. Military regimes in both countries present themselves as defenders of sovereignty and national pride, using narratives of “resistance to neocolonialism” to justify authoritarian control. France, international peacekeeping forces, and ECOWAS are framed as external threats, allowing juntas to co-opt regional and international pressure into their own legitimacy. For example, when ECOWAS imposed sanctions after the 2021 and 2023 coups, these measures, intended as hierarchy-attenuating checks, were instead reinterpreted by the regimes as imperialist aggression. This narrative turned opposition into proof of their patriotic cause.

Economic institutions further reinforce this dominance. In Niger, uranium and gold, and in Mali, cotton revenues, remain controlled through legacy structures that benefit elites and foreign interests. The junta’s promises to reclaim these resources for the people draw on popular frustration with inequality while effectively consolidating elite and military control. In SDT

terms, these are material institutions that sustain group-based inequality while cloaked in myths of liberation and justice.

Yet, even in these Francophone states, hierarchy-attenuating forces exist. Street protests, civil society groups, and proposals for inclusive national dialogues (such as the Inter-Malian Dialogue) reflect ongoing efforts to distribute power and restore accountability. However, these forces have so far been sidelined by stronger institutions and myths that continue to legitimize military rule. Their marginalization does not indicate the absence of resistance but highlights the power imbalance between competing narratives and institutional authority, a key insight from SDT, which stresses that hierarchies persist when attenuating voices are institutionally and discursively suppressed.

In contrast, Ghana and Nigeria offer examples where hierarchy-attenuating institutions and myths have been more successful in preventing the return of military rule. In both countries, constitutional governance, an active press, independent courts, and competitive electoral systems provide multiple avenues for contesting power. These institutions distribute authority and make it more difficult for any single actor, especially the military, to dominate the political landscape. Myths of democratic progress and civilian supremacy, reinforced through regular elections and peaceful transitions, have taken root and delegitimized military involvement in politics.

While Nigeria has seen episodes of political instability and security challenges, the dominant narrative has shifted away from the military as a corrective force. Instead, democracy is seen, even with its flaws, as the legitimate route to reform. In Ghana, this consensus is even stronger, with decades of stable civilian rule reinforcing a cultural and institutional rejection of authoritarian alternatives.

SDT reveals that the resurgence of coups in Francophone countries is not simply the result of political failure, but of the dominance of hierarchy-enhancing institutions, military councils, patronage networks, resource monopolies, and the legitimizing myths that present such arrangements as necessary and just. Meanwhile, in Anglophone countries, the presence of functioning, if imperfect, hierarchy-attenuating institutions and pro-democratic narratives has limited the appeal and feasibility of military takeovers.

In sum, this study sought to understand why military coups have resurged in Francophone African countries such as Mali and Niger, while Anglophone counterparts like Ghana and Nigeria have experienced relative political stability. Using Social Dominance Theory (SDT) as a guiding framework, the research examined how group-based hierarchies are maintained or challenged through institutions and legitimizing myths in each context.

The study employed a qualitative, comparative case study approach based on secondary data drawn from recent peer-reviewed sources (2015–2025). Fifteen papers were reviewed across the four countries, focusing on colonial history, political events, governance systems, and patterns of military intervention. A qualitative comparative analysis was conducted using secondary data sourced from recent peer-reviewed publications (2015–2025). A total of fifteen studies, selected based on relevance and language (English), were reviewed across the four case study countries. These sources offered historical, empirical, and contemporary insights into patterns of military intervention and governance structures.

Findings reveal that all selected countries exhibit group-based hierarchies. However, in Mali and Niger, even under civilian rule, hierarchy-enhancing institutions and myths—such as militarized elections and neocolonial influence (particularly the continued presence of *Françafrique*) coupled with widespread corruption and persistent poverty, created conditions ripe for military takeovers. These coups were further legitimized through nationalist narratives portraying juntas as defenders of sovereignty. Conversely, Ghana and Nigeria have maintained hierarchy-attenuating systems such as democratic elections, civilian supremacy, and a free press, which have weakened the appeal and feasibility of military rule.

Additionally, enhancing myths are more actively promoted in Francophone countries, and even when attenuating institutions and narratives emerge, they tend to be more violent or reactive in nature. In contrast, Anglophone countries promote attenuating myths and institutions through more peaceful, institutionalized means—though hierarchy-enhancing forces still exist there as well.

Overall, the study concludes that the persistence or prevention of coups in these countries hinges on the relative strength of institutions and social narratives that either reinforce or resist group-based dominance, aligning with the core principles of SDT.

7.1 What SDT Leaves Unaddressed

While Social Dominance Theory (SDT) offers a framework for analyzing how long-standing group-based hierarchies are maintained through institutions and legitimizing myths, the findings of this study reveal several areas where the theory proves less responsive. These limitations do not undermine SDT's value but highlight the need for its refinement when applied to complex political settings such as post-colonial African states.

First, SDT does not fully address the material drivers of political instability, particularly the role of resource competition. In countries like Niger, Mali, and Nigeria, access to uranium, cotton, and oil is not merely symbolic but generates concrete incentives for elite and military actors to seize power. These resource rents fuel competition that is often immediate and tactical, rather than structured around enduring group-based identities. For instance, military coups may intensify during moments of economic downturn or commodity price volatility, dynamics that SDT's emphasis on ideological narratives and group hierarchies cannot fully capture. While myths about national wealth or anti-elite populism can legitimize these seizures of power, the underlying motivation is frequently material. As such, SDT needs to account more explicitly for how economic interests intersect with and sometimes override the cultural narratives it prioritizes.

Second, the theory's binary classification of institutions as either hierarchy-enhancing or hierarchy-attenuating leaves little room to account for the rise of non-state armed groups and their hybrid forms of governance. The emergence of jihadist groups such as JNIM in Mali represents a form of authority that is neither purely state-based nor elite-driven but is instead rooted in local grievances, religious narratives, and transnational networks. These actors construct alternative hierarchies through violence, service provision, and ideological legitimacy. SDT lacks the tools to incorporate these fluid and adaptive formations, which challenge traditional understandings of institutional power and often operate outside the framework of formal state-society relations.

Third, SDT tends to downplay the agency of individual actors and the importance of internal factionalism. Military takeovers are not always the result of broad group-level dynamics but are often driven by intra-elite rivalries, personal ambition, and opportunism. In Mali, the rise of Assimi Goïta was facilitated not only by the broader failure of democratic institutions but also by his own cultivation of a strongman persona and his ability to manipulate factional divisions within the armed forces. Similarly, in Nigeria, patron-client networks within key sectors such as oil security operate according to logics of personal gain and factional bargaining, which do not fit neatly into SDT's group-based hierarchy model. These examples suggest that SDT would benefit from greater attention to micro-political agency and the ways individuals strategically engage with, or exploit, existing hierarchies.

Furthermore, SDT tends to treat legitimizing myths as relatively stable and deeply embedded cultural scripts. However, the findings from Mali and Niger show that these myths can shift rapidly in response to political and economic shocks. Security setbacks, foreign troop withdrawals, and shifting geopolitical alliances all serve as catalysts for new discourses of sovereignty, nationalism, or religious purpose. For example, anti-French sentiment in Niger has quickly evolved from a background narrative to a core justification for military rule. Similarly, jihadist groups recalibrate their messaging in response to battlefield losses or changing public sentiment. SDT's framework would be strengthened by integrating a more dynamic understanding of how myths evolve, fracture, and are strategically reassembled in times of crisis.

Finally, while Social Dominance Theory remains a powerful tool for explaining how social hierarchies are reproduced over time, its current formulation underplays key dimensions of political life in the African context. To fully engage with the realities of military coups and governance in West Africa, SDT must expand its attention to resource-driven power struggles, the hybrid authority of non-state actors, the role of individual agency and factionalism, and the rapid transformation of legitimizing narratives. Addressing these gaps would not only make the theory more empirically robust but also more responsive to the contingent and contested nature of dominance in post-colonial states.

7.2 Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of this study lie in its extension of Social Dominance Theory (SDT) into the realm of post-colonial African political development, particularly the resurgence

of military coups. By applying SDT to the cases of Mali, Niger, Ghana, and Nigeria, the study not only affirms key propositions of the theory but also expands its explanatory power beyond its traditional Western and individual-level applications. It demonstrates that SDT is not only relevant for understanding intergroup relations within societies but also for analyzing the broader institutional and historical forces that shape regime stability and contestation in post-colonial states.

The findings support SDT's core idea that societies organize around group-based hierarchies, often maintained through both material structures and legitimizing narratives. In Francophone West Africa, colonial-era cleavages along ethnic, regional, and class lines have persisted into the post-independence era and remain embedded in elite-military alliances. These arbitrary-set hierarchies continue to shape access to power and resources. What SDT calls hierarchy-enhancing myths, such as the idea of the military as a patriotic guardian or the portrayal of foreign powers as threats to national sovereignty, have been strategically deployed to justify military rule, especially in contexts where formal democratic institutions have failed to deliver security or material welfare.

Importantly, the study highlights how institutions can function either to reinforce or challenge these hierarchies. In Ghana and Nigeria, decentralized governance, electoral competition, and civil society engagement have developed into hierarchy-attenuating mechanisms. These institutions do not eliminate group-based inequality but provide legitimate channels for contesting power. In contrast, the legacy of French assimilation in Mali and Niger has resulted in highly centralized political systems where state power is easily captured by dominant military or elite groups. This institutional design makes it more difficult for attenuating forces, such as protest movements or independent courts, to shift the balance of power, reinforcing SDT's claim that institutions are key instruments in maintaining or resisting social dominance.

Moreover, the study contributes to SDT by demonstrating how historical and international dimensions interact with domestic hierarchies. Post-colonial governance choices and patterns of international alignment, particularly with external security partners like France or Russia, have played a role in reproducing internal dominance structures. This reinforces the idea that hierarchies are not only domestic phenomena but are also sustained through transnational

arrangements. It also shows that the reappearance of coups is not merely a symptom of democratic failure but a reflection of the persistence and adaptability of dominance structures and legitimizing myths that outlast formal transitions.

7.3 Policy Implications

The findings of this study carry significant policy implications, especially when examined through the lens of Social Dominance Theory (SDT), which emphasizes how institutions and cultural narratives maintain or challenge group-based hierarchies. If military coups persist in Francophone African states due to the strength of hierarchy-enhancing institutions and legitimizing myths, then meaningful reform must target both structural arrangements and the myths that uphold them.

One major implication is the need for a deliberate shift toward institutional decentralization and the formal subordination of the military to civilian authority. In Anglophone countries like Ghana and Nigeria, the presence of federal systems, independent courts, and multi-layered checks on executive power have created structural barriers that prevent any one group, especially the military, from monopolizing authority. Replicating such hierarchy-attenuating institutional designs in Francophone states could weaken elite dominance and make political systems more inclusive and resilient. However, this cannot be a mechanical transplantation of models but must involve context-sensitive strategies that build domestic legitimacy over time.

Beyond institutional design, SDT reminds us that hierarchies are sustained as much by narrative as by law. In Francophone contexts, nationalist myths that frame the military as defenders of sovereignty against neocolonial interference have become powerful tools of legitimation. These myths naturalize military dominance and discredit civilian opposition by presenting it as foreign-aligned or corrupt. Therefore, policy efforts must also focus on narrative interventions. Regional bodies like ECOWAS, along with international partners, should invest in civic education, independent media, and historical memory initiatives that promote alternative, democracy-affirming narratives. These interventions can weaken the discursive foundations of authoritarianism and elevate voices that favor inclusive governance.

The study also calls into question the nature of international partnerships. In Mali and Niger, alliances with external actors such as France and Russia's Wagner Group have been

absorbed into domestic power hierarchies. These relationships often reinforce military dominance and economic exclusion, especially where they are tied to extractive industries or security arrangements. International actors must therefore reassess how their engagements either challenge or reinforce social hierarchies. Partnerships should prioritize transparency, civic oversight, and broader participation to ensure that they do not become tools for sustaining elite or military control.

Finally, targeted support is needed for hierarchy-attenuating institutions that already exist but remain underdeveloped or marginalized. This includes independent judiciaries, protest movements, local governance mechanisms, and consultative processes like the proposed Inter-Malian Dialogue. While these institutions may currently lack power, they offer pathways for peaceful dissent and inclusive decision-making. Strengthening them could help redistribute power more equitably and reduce the military's perceived necessity as the sole guardian of national order.

7.4 Study Limitations

A number of limitations should be acknowledged in this study. First is the data constraints. The study relies on secondary data, which, while diverse and rich, may lack the real-time nuance or locally specific interpretations that fieldwork or ethnographic methods could offer. Second is the study's temporal timeframe (up to 2025), which, although it captures current patterns, is insufficient for predicting long-term trajectories, especially as international alliances and domestic protests evolve. Third is the number of studies included in the review. A review of more studies might have provided more insight into the study. Fourth, although SDT offers a robust framework, it may not fully account for short-term triggers of coups (e.g., economic shocks, elite rivalries, jihadist insurgencies), which also shape immediate coup decisions. Also, SDT does not adequately account for the increasing influence of external actors beyond France, notably Russia and private military firms such as the Wagner Group. In Mali, Wagner's provision of security training and logistical support has reshaped elite calculations and influenced public perceptions of who can uphold national sovereignty. These alternative external patrons often interact with existing narratives that reinforce hierarchical structures, leading to their modification rather than their disappearance. SDT lacks a clear framework for analyzing how

competing foreign powers recalibrate local hierarchies or how these new alliances may reinforce or challenge colonial-era narratives.

Finally, while Social Dominance Theory remains a valuable tool, future research should aim to integrate SDT with approaches such as political-economy models, network analyses of armed actors, and individual behavioral studies. Such integration would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics underlying coups.

APPENDIX: THEMATIC CODING TABLE

MALI

SDT Concepts	Baudais (2024)	Boas and Haavik (2025)	Boisvert (2019)	MIROIU and ALECU (2024)	Kohnert (2022)
Hierarchy Attenuating Myths	A prominent narrative is that of failed international interventions by actors like France, MINUSMA, the EU, and ECOWAS This narrative frame these interventions as perpetuating "colonial and racial logics" and a "neo-colonial external powers" agenda ..., leading to perceived	Narrative of Failed International Interventions and Neocolonialism: A key narrative that significantly attenuates the legitimacy of previous regimes and external actors is the perception of failed international interventions (by France, the UN's MINUSMA, the EU, and ECOWAS) This narrative frame these interventions,	Rumours circulated among soldiers and civilians persistently suggested a plot by the government to " sell Mali " or hide weapons. These rumours functioned as legitimizing myths for the coup plotters by undermining the legitimacy of the existing government and military hierarchy in the eyes of certain groups within the military	Leveraging local grievances against the state is a key tactic used by groups like JNIM to strengthen their position and garner local support This highlights the state's failures, undermining its claim to legitimate authority. ▪ Presenting themselves as protectors and arbiters in conflicts over resources creates a narrative that the state	As part of the 'Cotton Four' (C4) group, Mali participated in the protest against unfair cotton subsidies . This collective action challenging global trade practices reflects a desire to alter economic hierarchies. By advocating for fairer terms for cotton, a crucial income source for millions of small farmers, this action supports a narrative that benefits a large group

	<p>indignity and undermining Mali's dignity. This myth delegitimizes the authority and influence of external powers and the previous governments that collaborated with them.</p> <p>The narrative of corruption and failure of previous democratic regimes, particularly the government of Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, is a significant</p>	<p>particularly those led by France, as being based on a "colonial (i.e. French) rationality", a "neo-colonial external powers" agenda, and a perpetuation of "colonial and racial logics". This widespread belief... exploited by the Goïta regime, acts as a powerful myth that delegitimizes the authority and influence of external powers in Mali and the previous governments that collaborated closely with them</p>	<p>and civilian population.</p> <p>The coup contained a narrative of saving the state from a corrupt elite ..., which, while arguably complex, framed the actions of the involved military group as legitimate in the face of perceived illegitimacy at the top of the state hierarchy.</p>	<p>is absent or ineffective in these roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highlighting the state's corruption and inefficient administration serves as a legitimizing myth for the armed groups as a preferred alternative. ▪ Capitalizing on ethnic grievances against the state and other ethnic groups ... delegitimizes the state in the eyes of marginalized communities. 	<p>within Mali's population, potentially attenuating internal economic disparities stemming from unfair trade systems.</p>
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	<p>attenuating myth</p> <p>Public anger over "large-scale corruption" among "corrupt political elites" challenged the legitimacy of the former democratic hierarchy.</p> <p>Critiques of the Western "fiscal contract" model, suggesting it doesn't fit non-Western contexts, implicitly challenge the universal legitimacy of this hierarchical basis for state-society relations.</p>	<p>Narrative of Corruption and Failure of Previous Democratic Regimes:</p> <p>The source notes public anger and despair at "misguided international interventions" and the perceived failure of democracy to deliver security, development, and a less corrupt political system The narrative that the previous democratically elected government of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was characterized by "large-scale corruption" and</p>			
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	<p>Narratives from protest movements like the M5-RFP and Yèrèwolo Debout sur les Remparts also acted to attenuate the legitimacy of the previous regime and international presence.</p>	<p>"corrupt political elites" acts as a strong delegitimizing myth against the established democratic hierarchy that existed before the coups.</p>			
<p>Hierarchy Enhancing Myths</p>	<p>A core narrative is the strong reaffirmation of nationalism and sovereignty The military junta frames its actions as a quest for independence from traditional Western</p>	<p>The Goïta regime actively cultivates narratives and symbolic resources that serve to legitimize and strengthen its hierarchical position as the ruler of Mali.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Strongman/Hero Narrative: The regime 	<p>The junta's strategy of framing the government and foreign actors (like ECOWAS) as a corrupt elite was a narrative aimed at sustaining its own legitimacy by positioning themselves as the rightful authority</p>	<p>Presenting themselves as alternative governance actors who fill the vacuum left by the state ... creates a myth of necessity and competence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Claiming legitimacy by providing services and security that the state 	<p>Mali was part of the Francophone African cotton production system where income from cotton supported millions of small farmers. While this provided crucial income, the system itself, built on the transformation of French subsidiaries with</p>

	<p>partners, particularly France.</p> <p>Perceptions surveys indicate that local populations appear to support the juntas and believe they can improve security, despite contradictory realities.</p> <p>The narrative of an all-out war against terrorism and the necessity of the military's rule to protect the country against armed groups serves as a</p>	<p>portrays Colonel Assimi Goïta as an "exceptional hero" and a "strongman" ... capable of leading Mali through its security and economic crises</p> <p>Invocation of Malian Myths and Traditions: The regime leverages narratives rooted in Malian history and myths, such as the Sunjata epic and the dozo (hunter-warrior) myth These myths portray a hero who emerges in</p>	<p>.... The anti-foreigner rhetoric, framing ECOWAS and the international community as planning to "weaken" Mali to steal resources ..., served to legitimize the junta's resistance to external pressure and reinforce their position against perceived threats to the state.</p> <p>The concept that African armies inherited the belief that their mission includes fixing the political system of their nation ... can act as a myth legitimizing</p>	<p>fails to deliver ... establishes them as capable rulers in the eyes of the population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For groups like JNIM, enforcing Sharia law provides a powerful ideological basis for their authority and the structure of their social order. 	<p>retained influence, supported a narrative of dependence on this established structure.</p> <p>The underlying myth could be that prosperity in the cotton sector is only possible within this framework, which benefits specific companies and elites connected to the management and trade structures</p>
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	<p>major legitimizing myth The military portrays itself as being on the front line and capable of addressing insecurity, a perceived failure of the previous civilian regime.</p>	<p>times of crisis to save his community through difficult, even violent, actions... Goïta is depicted as a modern embodiment of this figure, an "agent of disequilibrium" needed in a chaotic environment to "save, but re-calibrate, society"... This provides a cultural and historical legitimacy for his authoritarian rule and the sacrifices required.</p> <p>Anti-Neocolonialism and Sovereignty Discourse: The regime's central</p>	<p>military intervention and hierarchical control over civilian authority. This positions the military as a group with a higher purpose and authority.</p>		
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		<p>narrative is one of reclaiming national sovereignty and dignity from perceived "neo-colonial external powers"</p> <p>Demonizing Opponents: The regime strengthens its narrative by identifying clear enemies, primarily "corrupt political elites, rebel groups and neo-colonial external powers"⁸. Framing human rights advocates as enemies of the state also reinforces Goïta's strongman image</p>			
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		<p>Legacy of Thomas Sankara: For younger Malians, the regime draws on the myth of Thomas Sankara, seen as a symbol of opposition to Franceafrique and advocating for African self-reliance</p>			
<p>Hierarchy Enhancing Institutions</p>	<p>the militarization of state institutions is a key characteristic, with the military taking precedence over other concerns.</p> <p>The National Transition Council (NTC), the legislative body, is</p>	<p>The Military Regime: The military junta itself is the primary institution of hierarchical rule... By seizing power unconstitutionally in 2020 and consolidating its position in 2021, the military established a new, hierarchical state structure.</p>	<p>The postcolonial military institution itself is described as persistent despite being portrayed as incomplete and dysfunctional. Its adaptation of neo-patrimonialist practices is a key institutional feature reinforcing hierarchical</p>	<p>Implementing their own pattern of justice and enforcing Sharia law establishes their own legal and judicial institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintaining control through a dual strategy of violence and governance ... solidifies their authority 	<p>Mali was part of the historical cotton production system where French subsidiaries were transformed into national companies while the original French company retained shareholding and influence. This institutional structure-</p>

	<p>appointed by the military head of state and includes significant military representation, reinforcing military control over the transition process</p>	<p>State Apparatus (Coercive Power): Although described as a "weak state" with a "deteriorating institutional environment", the regime utilizes its "(partial) control over violence to suppress opposition and dominate the political landscape"</p> <p>Control over Narrative and Discourse: The regime's "key narrators", such as former Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maïga and Foreign</p>	<p>control through personal loyalty rather than formal rules.</p> <p>Personal networks ("flexnet") and power relationships are deeply integrated within the state apparatus and are central to how the system functions This institutionalized networking reinforces hierarchies based on access and influence.</p> <p>Coup-proofing strategies, such as wilful depletion of the armed forces and strategies that caused</p>	<p>through both coercion and service provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their involvement in local governance, including negotiation and cooperation with local leaders, integrates their influence into local structures. ▪ Utilizing coercive strategies in integration into local governance directly enforces their hierarchy. ▪ Control over smuggling routes and engagement in illicit trade not only funds operations but 	<p>maintained market control and influence, ensuring that significant value and control remained within the hands of the national company's management and its French partner (Geocoton), thus reinforcing a group-based hierarchy within the cotton sector.</p>
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		<p>Minister Abdoulaye Diop, and spokesperson Colonel Abdoulaye Maïga, act as institutional voices, disseminating the regime's narrative through press conferences, speeches at the UN, and state television.</p> <p>Relationships with New Partners: Establishing the Alliance of the Sahel States with Burkina Faso and Niger and partnering with the Wagner Group/Africa Corps are institutional shifts</p>	<p>sociological fractures.. were an "obsession of the Malian government" and led to inward-looking institutional strategies While intended to prevent coups, these practices undermined formal institutional cohesion ..., potentially strengthening fragmented, network-based power structures.</p>	<p>integrates them into local economic networks, further entrenching their influence and potentially creating economic hierarchies dependent on the group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their ability to adapt and reconfigure strategies in response to military pressures demonstrates institutional resilience. ▪ Military operations to take over military bases and project power are direct actions reinforcing their 	
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		that strengthen the regime's position by providing alternative security and political alliances outside of traditional Western/ECOWAS frameworks.		position relative to the state's hierarchy.	
Hierarchy Attenuating Institutions	Protest movements and street-based opposition played a role in challenging the previous regime's hierarchy. international sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and others following the coups did not have the expected outcome of forcing	Inter-Malian Dialogue (Potential): The planned inclusive inter-Malian dialogue, described as an initiative to restore peace and social cohesion through consensual solutions ..., could potentially function as an institution that allows for broader participation and	The Code of Conduct of the Armed Forces and Security of the Republic of Mali , developed with support from the United Nations..., is a formal institutional document aimed at redefining the role of the Armed Forces to integrate them into national construction, harmonize relations	The creation of parallel, overlapping, or alternative social orders by non-state actors directly challenges the state's monopoly on governance and order... ▪ Establishing themselves as alternative governance actors in areas where state presence is weak or	Mali , as a member of the 'Cotton Four' (C4), utilized the institutional platform of the WTO Ministerial Conference to protest unfair subsidies

	<p>a rapid return to civilian rule.</p>	<p>consensus-building, which might, in theory, attenuate centralized hierarchical power.</p> <p>Withdrawal of International Missions: The withdrawal of French troops (Operation Barkhane) and MINUSMA, while framed by the regime as a victory ..., represents the failure and ultimate removal of external institutional structures that were part of the international intervention hierarchy in Mali... This</p>	<p>with civilians, and ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.</p> <p>Young democracy.</p>	<p>absent diminishes the state's institutional reach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivering security, public goods, governance, and their own pattern of justice in controlled territories creates competing institutions that bypass or replace state structures. ▪ Mediating disputes and enforcing justice themselves... supplants state judicial and conflict resolution mechanisms. ▪ 	
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		<p>withdrawal, partly due to public discontent..., attenuated the hierarchy imposed by these external actors, although it was a complex outcome that the regime leveraged.</p> <p>Defiance of Regional Blocs (ECOWAS): The regime's standoff with ECOWAS and the eventual decision by Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso to withdraw... represents a challenge to the regional institutional hierarchy and the authority of ECOWAS ... This act of defiance,</p>		<p>Their ability to operate and thrive where the state is unable to provide security highlights the failure of a core state institution.</p>	
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		backed by popular support, attenuated ECOWAS's influence over Mali			
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NIGER

SDT Concepts	(Braimah, 2023)	(Zambakari, 2023)	(Nweke and Enwere, 2024)	Baudais (2024)	Kohnert (2022)
Hierarchy Attenuating Myths	<p>The military coup plotters justified their action on the ever-worsening insecurity situation in the country...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ They also cited bad social and economic mismanagement... 	<p>The military coup leaders justified the overthrow with troubling security and economic issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The military voiced concerns that the civilian government was not doing enough to address security threats. 	<p>Military interventions are framed as responses to neocolonial influence and a need to assert total sovereignty against former colonial powers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Coups are justified by the perceived failures or corruption of 	<p>Critiques of the Western presence, particularly the redeployment of French Operation Barkhane and EU task force Takuba, fueled narratives that challenged the legitimacy of collaborating with traditional partners...</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Reasons given for the coup included rising insecurity affecting the people of Niger, abject poverty and misery of the masses, economic mismanagement, corruption, fraud, and cronyism.... ◦ Another justification was the exploitative nature of the country by foreign powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Allegations of embezzlement and the mismanagement of public funds strengthened perceptions of government corruption, contributing to the likelihood of a coup d'état. ◦ Concerns about the lack of economic development and high unemployment rates also fueled discontent. ◦ The military junta cited the "continually deteriorating security situation" and "poor 	<p>civilian governments, especially their alignment with foreign powers like France...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Anti-French sentiment, rooted in the colonial era and exacerbated by perceived continued dominance and economic exploitation (particularly concerning uranium), is a strong legitimizing myth for challenging the existing power structure ... This view holds that France has continued to enrich 	<p>The M62 Movement, for instance, opposed the presence of foreign forces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Public anger over the deteriorating security situation and poor economic and social governance under the previous civilian regime, similar to Mali, acted as a myth undermining its legitimacy and paving the way for the coup 	
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		economic management" as main reasons for the recent coup.	itself at the expense of Niger, benefiting only a small elite... ◦ The military, particularly in the 2023 coup, taps into popular frustrations over France's perceived "stranglehold" on the economy and politics, portraying the intervention as a move to reclaim national sovereignty and protect against foreign exploitation...		
Hierarchy Enhancing Myths	General Abdourahamane Tchiani declared	General Abdourahamane Tchiani declared	Military intervention is sometimes justified simply by the	The Nigerien junta uses a strong affirmation of	The expansion of Bharti Airtel, a non-French multinational,

	<p>himself head of state after seizing power.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The military junta's actions are implicitly legitimized by their stated goal to "take control of our country and its resources from the French and its surrogates" 	<p>himself head of state after seizing power, framing his action as a necessary takeover</p>	<p>presence of "rot" (real or perceived) in the civilian dispensation, presenting the military as a corrective force capable of restoring order.</p> <p>Coups are framed as responses to the corruption and incompetence of indigenous politicians who took over from colonial authorities. This myth positions the military as guardians of the state necessary to step in when civilian leadership fails.</p>	<p>sovereignty and nationalism to justify its actions and build popular support1 They assert their desire for independence from traditional partners.</p> <p>Justification for the coup included citing deadly attacks on armed forces and questioning the previous government's response to insecurity This narrative positions the military as necessary to address the security</p>	<p>into countries including Niger challenges the myth of Francophone Africa being an exclusive preserve for French businesses</p> <p>Francophone countries are generally worse of</p>
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<p>Hierarchy Enhancing Institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ French colonialism is described as having established a system where power was centralized, continuing post-independence. ◦ The source argues that France still has "enormous" control and direction of its former colonies through mechanisms like supporting election/installation of puppet 	<p>French colonialism established a system whereby power was centralized in the hands of a few elites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The system of direct and later indirect rule, with local chiefs appointed as intermediaries, continued after independence, concentrating power in a small group of politicians and military officials. ◦ France continued to exploit Niger's rich mineral resources even after independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ French colonialism and the systems it imposed on Niger's political, social, and economic fabric served to establish a power hierarchy... ◦ Post-independence mechanisms like economic aid, military agreements, and control over key resources facilitated continued French influence. ◦ The unofficial policy of "Françafrique" describes France's reliance on former 	<p>The militarization of state institutions is evident, with the state apparatus under the military's control.</p> <p>Restrictions on political party activities, civic space, and media freedom are used to muzzle opposition and consolidate the military's authority.</p> <p>The establishment of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) with Burkina Faso and Mali creates a new regional structure driven by military</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ France is listed as the top source of imports for Niger, accounting for a significant percentage. This major trade dependency reinforces economic links that can disproportionately benefit specific import-export businesses and the groups (often elites) connected to them, maintaining a form of group-based hierarchy tied to international trade flows. ◦ Niger was part of the historical cotton production system
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	<p>governments and financing budgets...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ French and United States military bases are established in Niger These are argued by Niger putschists, press, CSOs, and victims to be for protecting foreign national interests, such as the extraction of gold and uranium. ◦ Skewed investments by foreign powers in African mineral resources are 	<p>through various agreements and partnerships...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Orano, a 90% French State-owned nuclear energy company, has major stakes in three uranium mines in Niger, demonstrating economic hierarchy. ◦ French rule left a legacy of weak institutions and limited governance capacity in Niger. ◦ The US, through the War on Terror framework, prioritized security concerns, 	<p>colonies for strategic benefits, often supporting authoritarian regimes that favor French interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ French multinational companies, like Orano, dominating the uranium mining sector represent a significant economic hierarchy, perceived as setting unfair terms of trade and contributing to neocolonial exploitation... ◦ Political elites who are closely aligned 	<p>regimes, bypassing traditional mechanisms like ECOWAS</p>	<p>where national cotton companies were created from French subsidiaries, with the original French company often retaining shareholding and influence. While this system provided income to millions of small farmers across the region, the <i>structure</i> of the institution, with retained foreign influence and control, likely channelled significant benefits and control to the management of the national company and its French partner, thus</p>
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	<p>presented as a mechanism for control...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The dependency on former colonial masters for 'survival' maintains an asymmetrical relationship creating wealth for France while former colonies remain poor 	<p>providing a great deal of military aid and training over development support, which strengthened security forces</p>	<p>with French interests and benefit from the existing system are part of this hierarchy...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Operation Barkhane, the French military operation in the Sahel, represented a physical manifestation of French presence and influence, intended to combat insurgency but also perceived as maintaining a hierarchy of power 		<p>reinforcing a group-based hierarchy where specific actors profit from the agricultural sector's structure.</p>
Hierarchy Attenuating Institutions	<p>Lifting economic sanctions by ECOWAS, withdrawal of</p>	<p>The military, by challenging the civilian government and perceived foreign</p>	<p>The military, in its role as challenger of perceived foreign dominance and</p>	<p>Internal disunity within the military was evident during the coup itself and</p>	<p>The presence and operation of Bharti Airtel (non-French multinational) in</p>

	<p>foreign troops (especially French), cessation of meddling in internal affairs, and ceasing demands to reinstate the deposed government are conditions suggested by respondents for the military junta to potentially reconsider their position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The military junta's alliance with Algeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali to provide 	<p>influence, acts as an institution disrupting the existing hierarchy.</p>	<p>corrupt/aligned civilian governments, acts as a hierarchy-attenuating force, albeit one that imposes its own hierarchical structure...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Civil society organizations, student movements, and grassroots political groups challenging government policies and the system of economic exploitation are key attenuating institutions... ◦ Intellectual and cultural elites who 	<p>studies indicate the junta is not homogeneous, marked by "enmities, and regional and military rivalries.</p> <p>Protests and opposition from civil society organizations, like the M62 Movement, and political parties, even if suppressed, represent forces challenging the military hierarchy</p>	<p>Niger provides an alternative institutional actor in the telecommunications sector, diversifying the market. This challenges the historical dominance of French/European firms and can potentially offer services or employment outside the traditional hierarchy-enhancing networks.</p>
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	<p>essential goods counteracts ECOWAS sanctions.</p> <p>Military takeovers themselves are presented as attempts by "putschist states to take control of their nations and redefine their 'second independence'" from neocolonial policies</p>		<p>critique neocolonial legacies through their work contribute to attenuating the dominant narratives and power structures</p>		
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GHANA

SDT Concepts	Frimpong and Agyeman-Budu (2018)	Nartey (2019)	Salihu (2020)	Norman (2024)	Kohnert (2022)
Hierarchy Attenuating Myths	<p>There is irrefutable evidence that Ghanaians have consistently rejected any form of abuse of power and dictatorial rule¹. Historical agitations like the Bond of 1844 and the formation of the United Gold Coast Convention signify resistance to oppressive rule</p>	<p>The past "abysmal records of past military regimes" and their "not very impressive role in politics" have served to deflate any legitimizing myth of military superiority in governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Members of the military themselves have experienced life under both military and civilian leadership and 	<p>The idea that the military is an inherently oppressive or lawless institution, stemming from colonial and coup-prone periods, is a perception the military is actively trying to change through reprofessionalization and improved public relations</p>	<p>The consensus that the military did not belong in politics after the negative experiences of military rule (post-1992)... serves as a powerful legitimizing myth for attenuating military hierarchy in the political sphere.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The belief that democratically elected leaders must rule is a foundational 	<p>The note that higher growth rates in Anglophone Africa (like Ghana) might indicate an erosion of the persistence of colonial investments could imply that any initial colonial advantage (which might have benefited specific groups) is diminishing.</p>

		<p>conclude their needs are better attended to by civilian leadership in the Fourth Republic... This weakens the idea that military rule is beneficial for the military itself.</p> <p>Military discussants and officers were "not particularly proud" of the outcomes for those involved in past military governments, noting that participants ended up focused on amassing wealth</p>		<p>myth of the current constitutional order, directly challenging the legitimacy of military hierarchy in governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <p>The principle of civilian supremacy embedded in the 1992 Constitution ... is a core legitimizing myth for attenuating military power relative to civilian authority.</p>	
Hierarchy Enhancing Myths	Ghana was initially regarded as a " beacon of	The idea that the military was "drawn into Ghanaian politics	The officer corps is considered the "embodiment of its	The " power-grabbing mentality " of the military , seen	Colonial investments in Anglophone Africa were "more unequally

	<p>democracy and hope" in sub-Saharan Africa. This established a national aspiration and myth of democratic leadership potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The narrative that military regimes like the NLC and AFRC "ushered in" new eras of constitutional governance ... can paradoxically lend them some historical legitimacy as catalysts for 	<p>for the first time" by others, implying their initial intervention was not due to internal ambition but external factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The defense that the military did the "honorable thing by not deciding to stay" after the first coup, suggesting their initial interventions were temporary and well-intentioned. 	<p>unique status" and is expected to meet "higher professional and moral requirements", implicitly legitimizing their leadership position.</p> <p>The military is widely regarded by Ghanaians as a prestigious institution and is among the most publicly trusted institutions, with "more than half of Ghanaians (56%) say they trust the military"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 	<p>as similar to that of their civilian counterparts historically, reflects a myth that the military is inherently predisposed to seeking political hierarchy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Narratives used to justify military coups (e.g., civilian maladministration, corruption) ... acted as legitimizing myths for imposing military hierarchy as a necessary corrective force. ◦ Nkrumah's move towards an 	<p>distributed across districts" compared to Francophone Africa. While this refers to spatial inequality rather than specific social groups benefiting from the post-colonial system, it points to a historical spatial dimension of group-based hierarchy (certain districts/regions benefiting more than others) stemming from the colonial era.</p>
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	<p>democratic transitions.</p>		<p>Military personnel are often seen as highly skilled, disciplined... and a more reliable source of security than the police.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Some citizens believe the military should be given more opportunity to contribute to national development because they possess requisite skills 	<p>authoritarian socialist system...</p> <p>established a legitimizing myth of a single, centralized political authority (presidential/party hierarchy) overriding other institutions and individual autonomy...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The fear that the military might abuse their power if given autonomy ... contributes to a myth that inherent military hierarchy needs constant subjective civilian control to prevent it from 	
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				becoming politically dominant.	
Hierarchy Enhancing Institutions	<p>The transitional provisions of the 1979 Constitution that forbade courts from questioning actions taken by the AFRC ... protected the military regime's actions from judicial review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The indemnity provisions (Section 34) of the 1992 Constitution grant sweeping indemnity to officials of former 	<p>The Constitution of the Fourth Republic is seen as creating a "hegemonic president" with overwhelming appointing powers over the public service, including appointing over eighty percent of the members of the Armed Forces Council (AFC)⁶ This institutional design concentrates significant power at the top of the political hierarchy over the military.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 	<p>The constitutional mandate vests final decisions on major policy matters, including promotions of senior officers and appointments, with the President (Commander in Chief). These decisions often follow recommendations from the Armed Forces Council (AFC)...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The Armed Forces Council (AFC), composed of top 	<p>Military administrations themselves (e.g., NLC, NRC, SMC, AFRC, PNDC) ... were direct institutional embodiments of enhanced military hierarchy over civilian government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Nkrumah's CPP and the use of legislation like the Preventive Detention Act of 1958... were institutions that enhanced executive 	<p>While the British approach in Ghana was 'soft', it still represents a form of post-colonial institutional influence. However, the source uses this comparison primarily to highlight the more 'coercive' and hierarchy-enhancing nature of the French approach and doesn't detail specific institutional mechanisms within Ghana reinforcing group-based hierarchies in the same way it does for</p>

	<p>military regimes and oust court jurisdiction over related acts... Section 37 also prohibits Parliament from amending these provisions. These provisions institutionally enshrine impunity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The Constitution of the Fourth Republic creates a "hegemonic president" with overwhelming appointing powers, including over eighty percent of 	<p>The President's power to appoint the Chief of Defense Staff, Service Chiefs, and other officers gives the head of the political hierarchy direct control over the military's leadership hierarchy.</p> <p>The structure and composition of the Armed Forces Council (AFC), where the President appoints most members (including political ministers and top military leaders), is described as "virtually politicis[ing]" the Council and leaving</p>	<p>political elites and military leaders, serves as a key decision-making body for major defense policies, procurement, senior promotions, and appointments This structure institutionalizes decision-making at the highest levels of both civil and military hierarchies.</p>	<p>and party-political hierarchy, silencing opposition and attenuating the autonomy of other groups...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The practice of "Protocol Placement" in military recruitment is an informal institutional practice that enhances hierarchies based on political and filial connections over merit within the military recruitment system. 	<p>Francophone countries (e.g., the CFA zone, "messieurs Afrique" network, specific import dependencies.</p>
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	<p>the members of the Armed Forces Council (AFC) [previous response]. The President's power to appoint the CDS and Service Chiefs also enhances the political hierarchy's control over the military</p>	<p>room for partisan interests</p>			
<p>Hierarchy Attenuating Institutions</p>	<p>The Bond of 1844 and the formation of the United Gold Coast Convention were institutional expressions of resistance to oppressive hierarchy.</p>	<p>The 1992 Constitution establishes a de jure framework for democratic control over the military ..., setting the legal basis for military subordination to civilian authority.</p>	<p>The 1992 Constitution and the Armed Forces Act 105 of 1962 and its amendments provide a legal and institutional framework that guides civil-military relations</p>	<p>The 1992 Constitution ... is the primary institutional framework establishing democratic control over the military and attenuating its political hierarchy by</p>	<p>The British approach to post-colonial rule, exemplified by Ghana, is characterized as 'soft' Postcolonialism, contrasting with the French 'coercive' model. A 'soft'</p>

	<p>◦ Ghana operates under a written constitution, which, unlike the British system of parliamentary supremacy, provides a framework for constitutional limitations on power, intended to attenuate unfettered authority.</p> <p>◦ The 1992 Constitution establishes a de jure framework for democratic</p>	<p>◦ The President's constitutional role as Commander-in-Chief formalizes civilian leadership at the apex of the military structure.</p> <p>◦ The Armed Forces Council (AFC), despite its politicization, serves as a formal institutional body for major decision-making involving both civilian and military leadership, facilitating interaction and civilian input at high levels...</p> <p>◦ Government institutions and</p>	<p>and establishes the principle of civilian control, contributing to harmonizing the relationship between military and political authority.</p> <p>◦ The internalization of democratic principles and the values of civilian control within the military's professional ethics, partly through training and exposure ..., represents an institutional effort to embed norms that subordinate the military hierarchy to civilian authority.</p>	<p>legally defining its subordination and role....</p> <p>◦ The structures of civilian control over the military, such as the Minister of Defense and the Armed Forces Council, are institutional mechanisms for attenuating military hierarchy in areas like administration, budgeting, and promotions.</p> <p>◦ The principle of Separation of Powers among the Executive,</p>	<p>institutional legacy is less likely to rigidly enforce structures that exclusively benefit a narrow, connected elite group compared to a 'coercive' model designed to maintain control and privilege for specific actors. This institutional difference implicitly favours a less entrenched group-based hierarchy linked to the former colonial power.</p>
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	<p>control over the military and sets the legal basis for military subordination to civilian authority</p>	<p>political channels such as Parliament (via the Select Committee on Defense), the judiciary, and other bodies provide formal avenues for civilian oversight and input into military affairs, even if their effectiveness is debated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The existence of government institutions and political channels for the citizenry to participate in discussions regarding military size, budgets, and recruitment 	<p>Parliament, and Judiciary is an institutional design that disperses political authority, acting as a check on the potential for any single entity, including the military, to establish unchallenged hierarchy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Interior provides civilian oversight, acting as an institutional check on the military's power and hierarchy. ◦ 	
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				<p>Participation in international Peace-keeping missions serves as an institutional function for the military that directs its operational focus externally, potentially attenuating its internal political focus and hierarchy.</p>	
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NIGERIA

SDT Concepts	(Faluyi, 2018)	Obikaeze et al. (2023)	Abdulsalami (2019)	Norman (2024)	Kohnert (2022)
Hierarchy Attenuating Myths	The principle of Federalism itself, as a design to maintain unity while preserving diversity and allowing constitutional division of power between independent and coordinate levels of government	The core principle of democracy itself is presented as a system intended to empower citizens through political rights to choose their leaders via credible elections, moving away from military oppression	The fundamental concept of democracy itself is presented as a system intended to entrench the rule of law and represent the will of the people, moving away from autocratic military rule.... This ideal of popular sovereignty and equal citizenship is a myth that <i>should</i> attenuate existing hierarchies based on birth, military power, or wealth. ◦	The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, like Ghana's, makes provisions for the armed forces. This suggests a legitimizing myth of constitutional supremacy and the legal subordination of the military hierarchy to the civilian one. The choice for "Subjective Civil-Military controls" in common law West African nations like Nigeria..., based on volatility, implies a	Nigeria is noted as an Anglophone country suggested to be generally better off than those previously under French rule... This broadly applies to the nation, but improved overall conditions can imply benefits are more widely distributed across different societal groups compared to countries with less favorable outcomes. ◦ Nigeria is mentioned for having

			<p>The idea of "development for all" requires security and an enabling environment for all classes, implying a myth of a just society where governance benefits everyone equally, challenging the hierarchy based on wealth and class division.</p>	<p>legitimizing myth that civilian control, even if subjective, is necessary to prevent the enhancement of military hierarchy through takeovers.</p>	<p>higher economic growth rates.</p> <p>Nigeria's sharp protest against France and Ivory Coast's unilateral declaration regarding the 'eco' challenges the legitimacy of continued French monetary control, which is linked to benefiting a specific network of elites... This challenge can be seen as supporting a narrative favoring broader national or regional interests over those of a connected few.</p>
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<p>Hierarchy Enhancing Myths</p>	<p>The military's claim (and subsequent constitutional embedding) that state creation was done for national integration and to accommodate minority groups, while serving elite political requests and increasing allegiance to states over nationhood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The notion, particularly from the North, that agitations for restructuring are 	<p>The myth that political power justifies appropriating state apparatuses and resources for personal or group gain... This behavior, though framed as problematic by the authors, functions as a <i>de facto</i> legitimizing principle for the actions of the political elite.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The belief that political representation and power are legitimately based on ethnic or religious affiliation..., used by politicians to gain power, reinforces group-based hierarchies. ◦ 	<p>The "politics of security" is used by Nigerian political leaders to benefit themselves and the groups they represent, diverting attention from developmental issues ... This implies a myth that prioritising the security and interests of one's group justifies the use of political power and maintains a hierarchy benefiting the ruling elite and their affiliates.</p> <p>The mention of "gerontocracy" implies a legitimizing</p>	<p>Nigeria, like Ghana and others, has had negative experiences with professional soldiers as heads of state. This history itself implies periods where narratives legitimized military hierarchy's political role, potentially based on perceptions of civilian government failures.... The move towards subjective civilian control ... can also be seen as a response to the perceived inherent hierarchy-enhancing potential of the military itself.</p>	
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	<p>solely a southern agenda and should be opposed to preserve existing power/resource distribution...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The belief that the unity of the country justifies using force or central control, potentially overriding regional autonomy. 	<p>The military's repeated claim that their coups are necessary to correct the excesses and corruption of politicians is a myth used to justify military rule and enhance the military's power relative to civilians, even while the military also engages in corruption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The government's insistence that the "unity of Nigeria is not negotiable" serves as a legitimizing myth for using force to suppress separatist agitations, thereby maintaining the existing state structure 	<p>myth where age or seniority justifies holding power, reinforcing existing hierarchies based on age or historical position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "Contractocracy" points to a system where wealth gained through potentially illicit contracts determines political power, legitimizing a hierarchy based on corrupt economic influence. 		
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		and the power hierarchy within it.			
Hierarchy Enhancing Institutions	The Federal Government as an institution, particularly in its post-military form, which became "Almighty" and exerts hegemony over states and local governments... It arbitrarily empowers the Centre due to centralized operational procedures	The " civic public (formal public institutions) " as described by Ekeh... serving as avenues for illegitimate economic gain ("primitive accumulation" ...) due to lack of accountability, reinforcing the hierarchy of wealth and power. ◦ The electoral process , despite its intended purpose, is described as being systematically manipulated, characterized by violence, intimidation,	The military institution itself, initially created to protect colonial interests and later characterised by sectionalism and "lopsidedness" among officers contributing to coups. Its historical role in shaping the "militaristic nature of Nigeria's political culture" and "militarising democracy" by imposing candidates makes it a primary	The military institution in Nigeria, like others, is inherently hierarchical. The historical instances of military rule highlight the military acting as an institution that enhances its own political hierarchy. The source also notes Nigeria's federalist system, suggesting a governmental structure with multiple levels (federal and state) where authority,	

	<p>The Over-centralization of Mineral Resources, particularly oil, and the federal government's control over them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The State/Local Government Joint Account, which is controlled by state governors and acts as a "conduit for corruption," preventing funds from reaching local governments 	<p>"thuggery", "votes robbery" facilitated even by security operatives, resulting in "damagingly discredited outcomes" that do not reflect the people's will... This turns elections into a tool for reinforcing the power of those capable of manipulating them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Politicized security agencies 	<p>institution reinforcing hierarchical control.</p> <p>Political parties are highlighted for adopting religion and ethnicity in campaigns and arming militia groups ..., acting as institutions that formalise and mobilise group divisions for political power, thereby enhancing group-based hierarchies.</p>	<p>potentially including military control, might be fragmented, creating complexities in how hierarchy is maintained or challenged compared to a unitary system</p>	
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<p>Hierarchy Attenuating Institutions</p>	<p>The Federal System itself, in principle, as designed to divide power constitutionally and recognize multiple levels of government acting directly on the populace...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The Constitutional Division of Powers between levels of government ◦ The existence of a Supreme Court intended to settle 	<p>Democratic institutions, in principle, such as elected bodies and the electoral process (despite its failures), are designed to allow for civilian rule and popular participation, challenging power based on force or birth... ◦ The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is institutionally intended to be an impartial umpire for elections ..., although its actions have sometimes been perceived as partial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The press/media, by informing the public and scrutinizing power, can act as a check on 	<p>Democratic institutions, in principle, are designed to be hierarchy-attenuating by allowing for civilian rule, popular participation, and adherence to the rule of law... This includes elected bodies like the Legislature (Senate) which confirms appointments, providing a theoretical check on executive power.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mechanisms for constitutional review, such as the 2005 CONFAB, represent 	<p>The 1999 Constitution, with articles similar to Ghana's regarding the armed forces, serves as a key institutional framework designed to attenuate military hierarchy by embedding civilian control.</p>	<p>The expansion of the Nigerian multinational Dangote Group into Francophone markets represents an emergence of African economic players challenging historical dominance. While the source doesn't detail internal effects in Nigeria, the success of a major African enterprise can potentially foster a narrative of indigenous capability and offer alternative economic structures, potentially challenging the power</p>
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	<p>disputes between levels of government ... although its rulings are not always immediately obeyed by the executive.</p> <p>◦</p> <p>The National Assembly as a central legislative chamber where regions can have input...</p>	<p>hierarchical abuses. ◦</p> <p>Civil society can organize and challenge state power. ◦ Citizen actions like the EndSARS protests ... represent collective efforts through informal institutions to challenge state brutality and hierarchical power.</p>	<p>an institutional pathway to address systemic issues and potentially restructure governance in a way that could attenuate existing power imbalances, although such efforts can be undermined.</p> <p>◦</p> <p>The Amnesty Programme for militants, while a response to conflict, is an institutional attempt to reintegrate armed groups, potentially reducing the hierarchy of power based on control of violence and</p>	<p>base of groups tied exclusively to the French-linked network. ◦ Nigeria's role as a key member of the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) and its protest against the unilateral 'eco' move signifies an institutional challenge to the French-backed monetary system... Since this system is linked to the "messieurs Afrique" network that benefits specific elites... the challenge to the institution indirectly works against the</p>
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			<p>providing alternative pathways for former combatants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <p>The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as the body responsible for elections, is institutionally designed to facilitate democratic participation and reflect the popular will, thus potentially attenuating the power of entrenched elites or military influence by allowing for democratic transitions</p>	<p>group-based hierarchy it supports.</p>
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