

# EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

## Reassessing Africa's New Post-Coup Landscape

Between 2020 and 2022, sub-Saharan Africa witnessed a substantial increase in the number of military coups. The military interventions in Guinea (September 2021), Mali (August 2020 and May 2021), Chad (April 2021), Sudan (April 2019 and October 2021), and Burkina Faso (January 2022) contributed to democratic backsliding and authoritarianism on the continent. In addition, Niger (March 2021) and Guinea Bissau (February 2022) saw failed coup attempts. As a result of these five coups and two failed coup attempts, media reports now ask whether coups are making a comeback in Africa. As the extant literature about civil-military relations in Africa reveals, military coups were never absent. But the recent number and frequency of coups has led to a greater awareness of the threat that militaries pose to civilian rulers from the Atlantic coast (Guinea) to the Red Sea (Sudan).

Over the last decade, several scholars have discussed the potential of military coups to initiate or facilitate democratization processes. For this to occur, military coups must usher in competitive elections and handover to democratically elected leaders within a given timeframe. Juntas need to outline and commit to electoral calendars, allow for multiparty contests, refrain from electoral rigging, and, at the appropriate time, vacate the seats of power. If juntas decide to remain in power through rigged elections or by postponing elections indefinitely, coups give rise to authoritarian governments.

This editorial examines the emergence of the post-coup political landscapes in Guinea, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Sudan on the basis of publicly available information. In all of these countries, military juntas suspended the constitution and dissolved the national legislature. Transitional charters regulate the exercise of power and summarize the procedures that will guide the drafting of new constitutions. All of the juntas have expressed their commitment to return the country to constitutional rule, yet questions

---

*African Studies Review*, Volume 65, Number 1 (March 2022), pp. 1–7

© The Author(s), 2022. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the African Studies Association.

doi:[10.1017/asr.2022.33](https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.33)

still remain. What were the factors that triggered the military interventions? Do the juntas appear to be willing to commit to the timeline of the transition period? Do outside powers, regional organizations, and domestic civil society pressure the juntas to hand over power to democratically elected civilian leaders? Are the juntas capable of uniting the national armed forces behind their course of action? Due to their similar background conditions, the Malian and the Guinean post-coup trajectories are examined jointly. As Chad and Sudan differ from Mali and Guinea in several ways, they are discussed separately. The most recent coup in Burkina Faso is discussed briefly, as its post-coup modalities are still uncertain.

Guinea's coup of September 2021 put an end to a year-and-a-half-long constitutional controversy. In March 2020, a constitutional referendum eliminated the presidential two-term limit and allowed President Alpha Condé to contest the presidential elections a third time. Marred by irregularities and citizen protests, the electoral contest of October 2020 resulted in Condé's reelection. The post-election period saw frequent clashes between the security forces and civil society. The Malian coup of August 2020 also occurred in response to an escalating political crisis. In the run-up to that coup, Bamako experienced several mass protests calling for the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, who had failed to resolve various crises. The dismal security situation in several parts of the country, doubts about the accuracy of the legislative elections in April 2020, and the unwillingness of the administration to make headway in the fight against corruption had caused a dramatic decline of trust in the government.

So far, the Guinean and the Malian juntas have failed to comply with their transitional charters. In Guinea, the junta has yet to announce an electoral calendar and to appoint a civilian-led government. According to junta leader Mamady Doumbouya, the implementation of the transitional charter will take until the end of 2022. In Mali, tensions between the civilian-led transitional government and the junta resulted in the removal of the civilian interim president Bah N'daw in May 2021, whereupon Assimi Goïta, the chairman of the junta, declared himself interim president. In December 2021, the Malian junta proposed a transition period lasting between six months and five years. These incidences have augmented fears that the two West African juntas intend to remain in power for the foreseeable future.

The African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) suspended the membership of both countries and called for a return to constitutional democracy within a clearly defined period. ECOWAS has imposed sanctions on members of both juntas. In response to the Malian junta's intent to prolong the transitional period, the regional body ramped up its sanctions against Mali. The European Union (EU) and the United States echoed ECOWAS' demands for a swift return to constitutional rule. The EU has followed ECOWAS' lead and imposed economic sanctions on Mali, all of which triggered nationwide mass demonstrations against the sanctions. The current situation enables the junta to benefit from growing anti-ECOWAS sentiment. It is possible that closer security and

diplomatic cooperation with Russia might undermine Mali's pro-democracy forces and keep the junta in power.

In Guinea, all major political parties and civil society organizations are calling for an immediate return to civilian rule. By contrast, Malian civil society is divided over the future role of the military in political decision-making. The Malian and the Guinean coups were led by junior officers, which could complicate the transition, as senior officers may decide to withdraw support from the junta's future course of action.

Chad has yet to experience meaningful democratic reform. The Chadian military was a key facilitator of President Idriss Déby's rule (1990 to 2021). Déby died on April 20, 2021, from injuries sustained in clashes between the Chadian armed forces and rebels in the north. Immediately thereafter, a transitional military council headed by Déby's adoptive son, General Mahamat Déby, assumed power. The Guinean and the Malian coups have derived some degree of public support from the fact that their respective civilian rulers displayed authoritarian tendencies. By contrast, the Chadian coup plotters intend to maintain the autocratic status quo. Chad's transitional charter does not exclude members of the military council from participating in the elections, which currently are scheduled for 2022. It is widely expected that Mahamat Déby will seek the presidency. Chad is not facing any pressure to return power to civilian rulers any time soon, and the AU has kept Chad in good standing. France implicitly supports the coup, citing Chad's role as a stabilizing force in an otherwise unstable region. In the past, Chadian civil society organizations had difficulty uniting behind a common goal. As a result, they failed to prevent authoritarian abuses such as Idriss Déby's third presidential term. External or domestic forces thus do not pose a serious obstacle to Mahamat Déby's rise to the presidency. In order to succeed, Déby must unite the various factions of the Chadian armed forces behind his candidature. The fact that the coup was led by a general indicates that Mahamat Déby currently has the backing of the military's core leadership.

In Sudan, the coup of April 2019 ended the long-term authoritarian rule of Omar al-Bashir, who had been in power since the military coup of June 1989. The removal of al-Bashir occurred after a series of months-long protests decrying the declining living conditions. The military initially agreed to a power-sharing arrangement with opposition leaders. According to Sudan's transitional charter, the center of executive power is the "sovereign council," which includes five representatives of the opposition, five members selected by the security services, and one civilian nominated by both the opposition and the security services. The charter specifies that the transitional period should last for 39 months. As in Guinea, Mali, and Chad, there are clear signs that the Sudanese military does not intend to vacate power. In June 2019, the security forces killed several protestors who were demanding an immediate return to civilian rule, whereupon the African Union suspended Sudan's membership. The suspension had no impact on the military's course of action. In October 2021, the military, under the leadership of

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, removed the civilian-led transitional cabinet, seized control of the government, and declared a state of emergency. Prominent Sudanese civil society organizations have maintained pressure on the military to include more civilians in the transitional government, but despite nationwide mass protests, the junta has not accommodated these demands. Important diplomatic partners including Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel back the junta. In recent weeks, a key force behind the citizen protests, the Sudanese Professional Association, has become divided over the extent to which the military should be involved in the transitional government. Senior officers planned and executed the coup, and there is little to no evidence that the Sudanese armed forces are divided over its current strategy.

It is too early to attempt to analyze the post-coup dynamics in Burkina Faso, as the coup of January 2022 occurred only a few weeks ago. As in Mali, the coup occurred over the escalating security situation resulting from the government's failure to contain the jihadi insurgency. In contrast to previous coups, Burkinabe civil society now is torn between those who might want to see the military return to the barracks as soon as possible and those who support the junta. ECOWAS immediately suspended Burkina Faso. However, sanctions by the regional organizations or Western nations might push the country closer to a non-Western partner such as Russia, where sources in Moscow have already expressed support for the coup. Although it is well known that there are deep divisions inside the Burkinabe army, it is unclear if and how these divisions might affect the country's post-coup trajectory.

The evolving post-coup dynamics in Guinea, Mali, Chad, Sudan, and Burkina Faso, as well as the failed coups in Niger and Guinea-Bissau, are a powerful reminder that scholars and policymakers should not underestimate the juntas' desire to rule; in all of these countries, the military juntas currently display little willingness to return power to democratically elected leaders. The intentions, actions, and outcomes of civil society organizations, regional organizations, and outside powers vary depending on their local context. At this stage, it seems most likely that the respective militaries will decide the future regime trajectories independently of other players.

Sebastian Elischer  
*Associate Editor*  
*University of Florida*  
*Gainesville, Florida, USA*

This March 2022 issue of *African Studies Review* contains a wonderful assembly of stimulating and creative research in agriculture, ecology, development economics, food studies, music, dance, history, anthropology, sociology, and political science. We are pleased to feature scholarship about Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Africa writ large as part of a special forum we have named "Lost in Translation: Pro-Poor Development in The Green Revolution for Africa" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.99>], edited by William Munro and Tom Bassett.

In the first of the forum's four articles, "Building an Ideational and Institutional Architecture for Africa's Agricultural Transformation" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.82>], William Munro and Rachel Schurman look at the big picture, exploring how transnationally networked actors have promoted a vision of transforming African agriculture. They demonstrate that while the Green Revolution was first conceived as a vehicle for poverty alleviation and development assistance, it has since shifted to become a motor of economic growth by integrating smallholders into markets and promoting agribusiness through multi-stakeholder initiatives. Munro and Schurman discern the architecture of an emerging governance regime for African agriculture whose long-term prospects are uncertain.

In "When Agronomy Flirts with Markets, Gender, and Nutrition: A Political Ecology of the New Green Revolution for Africa and Women's Food Security in Burkina Faso" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.74>], William Moseley and Melanie Ouedraogo critique the advocates of the Green Revolution for Africa (GR4A) through the lens of feminist political ecology. Advocates seek to address malnutrition by incorporating smallholders into the global food economy via value chains involving the use of improved inputs, production technologies, and access to markets. Among southwestern Burkina Faso's female rice farmers, Moseley and Ouedraogo explore the impact of the nutrition focus and the influence of gender roles on outcomes.

Thomas Bassett, Moussa Kone, and William Munro, in "Bringing to Scale: The Scaling-Up Concept in African Agricultural Value Chains" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.83>], turn their attention to the African agricultural development literature with a focus on Côte d'Ivoire. Scaling up generally refers to increasing agricultural production and quality, expanding farmer engagement with markets, and adding greater value to commodities, which benefits all actors. Bassett, Koné, and Munro critique the linear and progressive development model assumptions by evaluating the selling patterns of cashew farmers in OLAM's Sustainable Cashew Growers Program.

And in the final forum essay, titled "Serving 'the Uses of Life': Gender, History, and Food Security in a Cassava Value Chain Scheme" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.137>], Heidi Gengenbach, Alcino Come, and Justino Nhabinde historicize women's responses to another "value chain" cassava experiment in Mozambique. Inspired by Green Revolution goals, SABMiller aimed to reduce hunger by converting cassava into industrial use as beer, but women reacted unfavorably. Corporate efforts to remake an agrarian foodway with origins in the colonial epoch as a feminine

“subsistence” crop have struggled to achieve the planned food security objectives.

In “Mobilizing Home: Diasporic Agitations and the Global Remakings of Postwar Southeastern Nigeria” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.118>], Vivian Chenxue Lu considers the shifting global geographies of labor and concomitant political volatility. Nigerian migrant associations play a significant role in diasporic life, and Igbo associations emerge through dynamic diasporic mobilizations at particular events and crises. Reflecting on the significance of 1970s post-civil war reconstruction, Lu traces agile and multi-scalar diasporic organizations from Nigeria to China and Dubai, revealing how participants negotiate postcolonial politics and transnational capitalism.

Beth Ann Williams’ essay “‘Bananas are for Women, Coffee is for Men’: Gendered Narratives of Agricultural Histories on Mount Meru, Tanzania” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.120>] examines the history of coffee cultivation. While this story is traditionally narrated by men, Meru women associate coffee agriculture with gender inequality and social disorder. Williams’ use of oral histories provides a counterpoint to patriarchal and declensionist renderings of Meru agricultural history, centering women’s concern with labor exploitation challenging the meaning of coffee and sustainable cash crop agriculture.

In “Deliberations in Dance: Affecting Publics and the Politics of Ethnicity in Guinea’s Nascent Democracy” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.2>], Adrienne Cohen reevaluates Guinea’s earlier emphasis on national solidarity against more recent developments. Today, ethnic identity is increasingly mobilized by political interest groups. Just as ethnicity has resurfaced as an explicit political force, young urban performance artists in Conakry invent new genres of dance and ceremony as counterpoints to political engagement that de-emphasize ethnic belonging markers.

In a final trio of articles, the journal turns from dance to music and musicology and their relationship with alienation and globalization. In “Music as Socially Reproductive Labor: Murid Creative Practice in Dakar’s Médina” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.98>], Brendan Kibbee examines Murid Islamic Brotherhood disciple associations (*dahiras*). Although the Brotherhood is generally considered as prioritizing agriculture and industry, Kibbee reveals how the its members turn city streets into nighttime spaces of participatory performance. The Brotherhood’s valuing of creative musical activities mitigates against the stigmas of global economic exclusion experienced by many young Médina men.

Osei Alleyene’s essay, titled “Dancehall City: Zongo Identity and Jamaican Rude Performance in Ghanaian Popular Culture” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.147>], is centered on the explosion of Reggae-Dancehall in urban Ghana. Alleyene reflects on the influence of Jamaican-inspired popular culture and a particular Rastafarian subculture in zongos—internal migrant, largely Islamic, unplanned neighborhoods. The social alienation of

zongo artists has given rise to counter-hegemonic resistance in the form of Jamaican-inspired Rasta and rude identities.

Finally, in “Mbas Mi’: Fighting COVID-19 Through Music in Senegal” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.115>], Bamba Ndiaye and Margaret Rowley direct our attention to contemporary responses to the global pandemic. In the first months of COVID-19, Senegalese musicians addressed the virus directly with songs about prophylaxes, symptoms, mitigation practices, and abstract conceptions of disease vectors. This approach reflects a national strategy of containment and eradication, a form of COVID-literacy, and Ndiaye and Rowley reveal how music interlaces linguistic, traditional, and metaphysical tenets.

We are pleased to feature two review essays in this volume: Nimi Wariboko tackles “Theorizing the African Postcolony: Epistemology, Power, and Identity” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.123>], and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni offers “Unthinking Thinking and Rethinking African Future(s)” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.111>]. This volume also features an excellent collection of book and film reviews, all of which are available online and accessible freely.

Finally, on a personal note, this issue will be the last issue managed by our extraordinary Managing Editor, Kathryn Salucka. Kathryn has worked with the African Studies Association for nine years and has served as Managing Editor for almost five. Under her remarkable and meticulous management, the ASR has become a powerhouse for cutting-edge and inclusive scholarship, reaching a broader and more diverse audience than I could ever have imagined when I took over the reins in 2017. In my two decades of professional employment, I have never worked with anyone more capable and competent, more considerate and forthcoming, and more effective and professional. While the ASR’s editorial team is devastated to see her go, we all wish her the best in her new endeavors.

Benjamin N. Lawrance 

*Editor-in-Chief*

*University of Arizona*

*Tucson, Arizona, USA*

*[chiefeditor@africanstudiesreview.org](mailto:chiefeditor@africanstudiesreview.org)*