

RESURGENCE OF MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA: THE DETERMINING FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the resurgence of military interventions in Central Africa, analyzing the socio-economic, political, and institutional dynamics that have contributed to the return of unconstitutional changes of government in the region. Despite decades of democratization efforts, several Central African states, including Chad, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have experienced military takeovers or increasing militarization of politics. The study investigates the root causes of these interventions, identifying weak democratic institutions, ethnic divisions, widespread corruption, youth unemployment, and poor governance as critical enablers of military dominance in politics. It further explores the regional and international dynamics that embolden military actors, including inconsistent responses from the African Union and international powers pursuing strategic interests. Adopting a structural-functional theoretical framework, the study uses qualitative content analysis of secondary data, including scholarly articles, policy reports, and international news sources published between 2020 and 2024. Findings reveal a pattern of political stagnation, elite manipulation, and external interference that undermines constitutional governance. The research concludes that without urgent reforms to strengthen democratic institutions, promote inclusive governance, and address socio-economic grievances, military takeovers will remain a persistent threat in Central Africa. The study recommends a concerted regional and international approach, including targeted sanctions, civic education, and institutional

reforms, to restore and sustain democratic governance in the region. This work contributes to scholarly debates on democratic regression in Africa and offers policy-relevant insights for stabilizing governance in fragile states.

KEYWORDS: Military intervention, Central Africa, democracy, political instability, ethnic tension, governance.

INTRODUCTION

Military interventions, particularly in the form of coups d'état and direct military takeovers of civilian governments, have historically played a defining role in shaping political systems across continents. In the Americas, especially Latin America during the 20th century, numerous countries experienced prolonged military rule. Countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile were marked by military dictatorships that emerged under the pretext of restoring order and national unity but often led to massive human rights violations, suppression of democratic freedoms, and prolonged authoritarian rule (González, 2021). In most of these instances, military interventions derailed democratic transitions and resulted in decades of political instability, with limited socio-economic benefits to the broader population (Rodríguez & Salazar, 2022).

In Asia, the history of military intervention is equally pronounced, particularly in countries like Pakistan, Myanmar, and Thailand. In Pakistan, the military has intermittently ruled the country since its independence, justifying its actions through claims of political incompetence and threats to national integrity (Ahmed, 2020). While certain military regimes claimed to have initiated economic reforms and infrastructural projects, the overwhelming consequence has often been the erosion of democratic institutions and civil liberties (Khan, 2022). Myanmar's recent military coup in 2021 reversed a decade of democratic progress and plunged the nation into violence, economic collapse, and international isolation (UNDP, 2022). Similarly, Thailand has experienced repeated military interventions that have undermined democratic governance, even when economic gains were superficially reported (Chantavanich, 2023).

In Europe, particularly during the Cold War era, the threat of military coups was mitigated through strong institutional frameworks, though countries like Greece experienced a period of military rule between 1967 and 1974. This intervention, like others, disrupted democratic order and created a legacy of distrust between the military and civilian society

(Papadopoulos, 2021). Ultimately, military interventions in Europe largely declined due to stronger constitutional safeguards and the influence of supranational institutions such as the European Union (Delacroix, 2023).

In Africa, however, military interventions have remained a recurring feature of the political landscape. From the post-independence era to contemporary times, African states have seen military regimes rise under the guise of correcting political corruption, incompetence, or insecurity. In West Africa, for instance, countries like Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso have experienced multiple coups since the 1960s, with recent interventions occurring as recently as 2021 and 2022 (Adebayo & Mvukiyehe, 2023). While some military rulers promised reform and anti-corruption measures, most African coups have resulted in political repression, economic stagnation, and civil unrest (Okereke & Sani, 2022).

The situation in Central Africa is particularly troubling due to the resurgence of military interventions in the 2020s. Central Africa, comprising countries such as Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe, has witnessed a return to militarism that poses serious challenges to democratic consolidation and regional stability (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2022). In Chad, the military quickly assumed power following the death of President Idriss Déby in 2021, suspending constitutional processes in favor of a transitional military council led by his son (International Crisis Group, 2021). This development raised serious questions about dynastic militarism and the weakening of civilian authority (Owonikoko & Egwu, 2023).

Gabon experienced a coup in 2023 that ended decades of Bongo family rule, with military officers citing electoral fraud and governance failure as justification for their actions (Adejumobi & Tchonda, 2024). While some citizens initially welcomed the military takeover, citing years of elite domination and corruption, the long-term implications for democratic governance remain uncertain (Ewang, 2024). Similarly, in the Central African Republic, military influence remains deeply embedded in the political process, as foreign mercenaries and internal armed groups continue to destabilize the country under the façade of national security (Kassa & Abass, 2022).

In Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo, the entrenched military-backed regimes have effectively merged military and civilian power, making it difficult to distinguish

democratic rule from military hegemony (Ebiede, 2023). The Democratic Republic of Congo, despite holding elections, remains plagued by military influence in politics, especially in conflict-prone eastern regions where the state often relies on military interventions to maintain order (Mukendi & Kambale, 2023). Even in São Tomé and Príncipe, a relatively stable democracy, the military has sometimes demonstrated latent influence, reminding observers of the fragile nature of civilian supremacy in the region (Mabiala, 2022).

While some scholars argue that military interventions in Central Africa aim to correct systemic governance failures, most evidence indicates that they have further entrenched authoritarianism, weakened institutions, and destabilized the democratic process (Mensah, 2023). The destruction of democratic norms, suppression of dissent, and reliance on military decrees have undermined political development and eroded citizens' trust in both the military and political elites (Zounmenou & Isike, 2024). Although certain military regimes claim to pursue development-oriented policies, their legitimacy is often questioned due to the absence of a popular mandate and lack of transparency (Ngoma, 2021).

The resurgence of military intervention in Central Africa presents a critical challenge to political stability, economic development, and democratic governance in the region (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2023). Despite efforts to promote peace and democracy, Central African states such as Chad, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), continue to experience military takeovers, armed conflicts, and foreign interventions (Marchal, 2023). These interventions, whether initiated by national militaries, regional coalitions, or external powers, have often exacerbated instability rather than resolving the underlying political and socioeconomic issues (Banégas, 2022). One of the primary problems is the persistent weakness of civilian governments, which struggle to maintain legitimacy and authority (Englebert, 2023). Many Central African states suffer from endemic corruption, ethnic divisions, and poor governance, creating conditions where military forces justify interventions as necessary for national security and stability (Mentan, 2023). However, these interventions frequently lead to prolonged military rule, suppression of civil liberties, and cycles of political violence, further destabilizing the region (Tull, 2024).

External influences play a significant role in shaping military interventions in Central Africa (Clapham, 2023). Former colonial powers such as France have historically maintained a military presence in the region, while new global players like Russia and China have become increasingly involved, often supporting regimes that align with their strategic interests

(Bayart, 2024). The competition for control over valuable natural resources, including oil, diamonds, and rare minerals, has also fueled conflicts, with both domestic and foreign actors using military force to secure economic advantages (Ngugi, 2024). Moreover, the humanitarian impact of military interventions remains severe (Adeyemi, 2024). The region has witnessed widespread human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, forced displacements, and the recruitment of child soldiers (Francis, 2024). Military conflicts have devastated economies, leading to food insecurity, mass migrations, and the collapse of essential infrastructure (Fombad, 2023). Despite numerous peace agreements and interventionist strategies, sustainable development and security remain elusive in Central Africa (Nzongola, 2023).

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What are the socio-economic and political factors driving the resurgence of military interventions in Central Africa?
2. How do military interventions differ across the various Central African countries, and what common patterns can be identified?
3. What are the consequences of military interventions for governance, peace, and socio-economic development in Central Africa?
4. How do external influences and regional security dynamics affect the likelihood and nature of military interventions in Central Africa?

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine the resurgence of military intervention in Central Africa, focusing on the determining factors. The specific objectives are:

1. Examine the socio-economic and political factors driving the resurgence of military interventions in Central Africa.
2. Identify the common patterns and differences, like military interventions across Central African states.
3. Assess the consequences of military interventions on governance, peace, and socio-economic development in the region.
4. Examine the influence of external actors and regional dynamics on the military's role in Central African politics.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

The Structural-Functional theory was adopted in this study. The Structural-Functional Theory is one of the most influential frameworks in sociology and political science for understanding how societies and political systems operate and respond to internal and external pressures. The theory was largely developed in the mid-20th century by scholars such as Talcott Parsons in the 1950s and further elaborated by Robert K. Merton in the 1940s and 1950s. Parsons' seminal work, particularly his 1951 book *The Social System*, laid the groundwork for understanding society as an interconnected system where each part (or structure) performs specific functions necessary to maintain the stability and continuity of the whole. The theory posits that social structures—institutions like government, military, family, and economy—exist because they serve essential functions that help sustain the social system.

At its core, the structural-functional approach assumes that society is a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. It emphasizes the interdependence of social institutions and how their proper functioning is crucial for maintaining social order. Dysfunction or failure in any one part of the system, particularly political structures, leads to instability and potentially systemic crises. Political structures, in this view, are responsible for regulating social conflicts, maintaining law and order, and facilitating the allocation of resources necessary for society's survival. One of the key assumptions of the structural-functional theory is that systems tend to seek equilibrium or homeostasis. When disruption occurs, social institutions must adapt or respond in ways that restore balance. However, if an institution fails to perform its function effectively, such as when governments fail to maintain law and order or manage competing social demands, other social actors may intervene to fill the gap and restore stability. This idea is central to understanding military interventions, which can be interpreted as reactions to political dysfunction and failures in governance.

The theory's strengths lie in its holistic perspective, allowing analysts to see political phenomena as interconnected with social and economic factors. It also highlights the importance of institutional roles and the consequences when these roles break down. This is particularly relevant in complex societies with multiple ethnic, economic, and political divisions, as seen in many Central African countries. By focusing on systemic functions and dysfunctions, the theory provides a broad explanatory framework for why military

interventions occur as mechanisms to restore order when civilian institutions falter. However, the structural-functional approach has notable limitations. Critics argue that it tends to be overly deterministic and conservative, often justifying the status quo by emphasizing social stability and cohesion over conflict and change. It may underplay the role of power struggles, elite manipulation, and structural inequalities that underpin political crises. For instance, it can overlook how military interventions sometimes serve particular elite interests rather than the broader social good. Furthermore, the theory may inadequately account for rapid social change or revolutionary movements, focusing too heavily on gradual adaptation.

In applying the structural-functional theory to the resurgence of military intervention in Central Africa, the theory offers valuable insights into how fragile political institutions contribute to systemic instability. Scholars such as Ake (2020) and Olukoshi (2020) have argued that the weak institutional framework in many Central African states—characterized by poor governance, ethnic fragmentation, and inadequate conflict management—creates a dysfunctional political system prone to breakdown. In this context, the military often emerges as an institution capable of enforcing order when civilian governments are perceived as unable to fulfill their functions effectively. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad, prolonged political crises and failure to deliver basic security and public goods have led to repeated military interventions that disrupt civilian rule but are justified as necessary for restoring stability (Mwanasali, 2021). The structural-functional theory explains these interventions as symptomatic of broader systemic dysfunction, where the military acts as a corrective mechanism. Similarly, the persistent ethnic conflicts in Cameroon and the Central African Republic reflect failures of political institutions to integrate diverse groups, creating conditions ripe for military involvement to restore order (Tanganyika, 2022; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2023).

Military

The term military generally refers to the armed forces of a state, organized primarily for the defense of national sovereignty, protection of territorial integrity, and maintenance of internal order. According to Janowitz (2019), the military is a disciplined institution characterized by a hierarchical command structure, specialized training, and a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a society. It operates under strict regulations designed to maintain order and discipline among its members and ensure operational effectiveness in defense or combat scenarios. Huntington (1957) emphasizes the military's role as a professional body

distinct from civilian society, with unique norms and values, and stresses the importance of civilian control to prevent the military from exerting undue influence over politics. More recent scholars have expanded the understanding of the military beyond traditional defense functions. For example, Kaldor (2020) discusses the military's evolving role in contemporary hybrid warfare and peacekeeping missions, highlighting that modern armed forces also engage in stabilization, disaster relief, and counterinsurgency operations. This diversification makes the military a pivotal institution not only in warfare but also in political and social spheres. In fragile states, such as those in Central Africa, the military frequently transcends its conventional boundaries and becomes a powerful political actor, shaping governance and stability (Ake, 2020).

Furthermore, Enloe (2022) underlines that the military institution reflects the social, ethnic, and political compositions of the societies it serves, which can influence its cohesion and loyalty. The military's internal dynamics, therefore, are crucial in understanding its behavior, especially in contexts prone to coups or interventions. In summary, the military is a complex and multifaceted institution whose primary role is defense but whose influence often extends deeply into political and social domains.

Intervention

Intervention broadly refers to the deliberate involvement in the affairs of another entity—be it a state, society, or organization—to influence outcomes, prevent deterioration, or resolve conflicts. As Cox (2021) explains, intervention involves an external or internal actor taking purposeful actions aimed at changing political, social, or economic conditions in a targeted area. Intervention can take many forms, including diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and military, each with different objectives and implications. The concept is particularly nuanced in political science and international relations. According to Finnemore and Sikkink (2020), intervention often arises in response to crises where a state's ability or willingness to manage its affairs is compromised, thus prompting external actors to act under international norms such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). However, interventions may also be driven by strategic interests, making them controversial and subject to debate about legitimacy and sovereignty (Weiss, 2023).

Within domestic politics, intervention can refer to any action by an institution or actor, such as the military or judiciary, aimed at influencing governance or policy direction (Ekeh, 2022). In many developing states, especially in Central Africa, intervention by the military or other

powerful groups is frequently a response to perceived governance failures or threats to national unity (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2023). Thus, intervention is a multifaceted phenomenon that can range from cooperative engagement to coercive force, depending on the actors, motives, and context.

Politics

Politics can be broadly defined as the process through which individuals and groups exercise power, make collective decisions, and govern social relations within a community or state. Easton (2021) defines politics as the authoritative allocation of values within a society, emphasizing its role in resolving conflicts, distributing resources, and determining societal priorities. Politics is not limited to formal government institutions but extends to informal processes through which power and influence are contested and negotiated. Scholars such as Dahl (2022) conceptualize politics as the struggle for power and leadership, highlighting that it involves competition among diverse actors with varying interests and agendas. Politics, therefore, inherently involves conflict and cooperation, negotiation, and compromise. The political process shapes laws, policies, and governance structures that regulate societal behavior. Ake (2020) and Olukoshi (2021) argue that politics is often marked by ethnic cleavages, patronage networks, and struggles over resource control, which complicate democratic consolidation and governance. Politics in such settings is frequently influenced by informal power relations, corruption, and militarization, making the study of political processes essential to understanding conflict and state stability. Politics is thus a dynamic and complex arena where authority, power, and legitimacy are continuously contested.

Military Intervention

Military intervention refers to the involvement of a state's armed forces in the political or territorial affairs of a country, either within its borders or externally, often bypassing or overriding civilian authority. As described by Huntington (1968), military intervention typically occurs when the military perceives civilian governments as unable or unwilling to maintain order, security, or national integrity, prompting the armed forces to intervene to restore or reshape governance. Kposowa and Jackman (2021), emphasize that military interventions often result from a combination of political instability, institutional weakness, and economic crises that undermine the legitimacy of civilian regimes. In many cases, military coups or interventions emerge as a "corrective" mechanism aimed at stabilizing the state, although they frequently result in prolonged authoritarianism or conflict. Ake (2020),

Mwanasali (2021), and Nzongola-Ntalaja (2023) have highlighted that military interventions are a common response to fragile democratic institutions, ethnic strife, and resource-based conflicts. These interventions are frequently justified by the military as necessary to save the nation, but often lead to further political instability, human rights abuses, and delayed democratic progress. Military intervention is thus a complex phenomenon with deep roots in the socio-political fabric of states and remains a critical area of study for understanding governance and conflict in regions such as Central Africa.

Political instability

Political instability refers to the conditions in which a political system experiences significant disruptions, uncertainty, or unpredictability in governance processes, authority, or policy implementation. It is characterized by frequent changes in government, weak institutions, civil unrest, coups, protests, and sometimes violent conflict, which collectively undermine the effective functioning of the state. According to Huntington (1968), political instability arises when the structures of authority fail to maintain order and deliver essential public goods, leading to crises of legitimacy and governance breakdown. Ake (2020) defines political instability as the inability of political institutions to manage societal conflicts and demands, resulting in systemic dysfunction and loss of public confidence. This instability manifests through weak rule of law, corruption, ethnic tensions, and contested leadership, especially in fragile states where governance is undermined by economic hardship and social divisions. Olukoshi (2021) adds that political instability is often both a cause and consequence of underdevelopment, creating a vicious cycle that hampers democratic consolidation and socioeconomic progress.

Nzongola-Ntalaja (2023) explains that historical legacies of colonialism, arbitrary borders, and weak state institutions contribute to persistent instability. This is often exacerbated by ethnic rivalries, resource competition, and external interference, leading to recurrent military coups and insurgencies. Tanganyika (2022) observes that the fragility of political systems in countries such as the Central African Republic, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of Congo is closely linked to persistent instability, which threatens not only national but also regional security. Political instability disrupts policymaking and governance, deters investment, and undermines social cohesion. It also often triggers military interventions and authoritarian backsliding as the military or other powerful groups claim to restore order (Kposowa &

Jackman, 2021). Understanding political instability is thus crucial for designing policies aimed at conflict prevention, democratic strengthening, and sustainable development.

Democracy

Democracy is a system of government where power is vested in the people, either directly or through elected representatives, and where political authority is exercised by established laws and principles of accountability, participation, and protection of fundamental rights. Schumpeter (1942), one of the foundational theorists of modern democracy, defined it as a competitive struggle for the people's vote, emphasizing procedural mechanisms such as free elections and political competition as core to democratic governance. Building on this, Dahl (2022) introduced the concept of polyarchy to describe practical democratic systems characterized by inclusive participation and public contestation. According to Dahl, democracy requires not only the existence of elections but also political pluralism, civil liberties, the rule of law, and the protection of minority rights, which together ensure that power is both accessible and constrained. Diamond (2023) argues that democracy is a dynamic process involving continuous engagement between citizens and institutions, which must be resilient to threats such as corruption, authoritarian tendencies, and social fragmentation. This perspective is especially relevant for emerging and fragile democracies, where democratic consolidation depends on the deepening of institutional quality and civic participation. Ake (2020) and Olukoshi (2021) note that democracy often faces unique challenges related to ethnic diversity, patronage politics, and weak institutions. They highlight the importance of contextualizing democracy within local realities and the need for inclusive governance that addresses historical inequalities and fosters national cohesion.

RESEARCH METHODS

The case study research design was employed to allow for an in-depth examination of the political and socio-economic dynamics shaping the phenomenon. The research relies on qualitative methods, drawing from the secondary sources such as books, journal articles, official reports, policy documents, and credible online publications. Document analysis was used to critically engage with existing literature and reports on military interventions in Central Africa. Data was sourced from both regional and international perspectives to capture a holistic understanding of the issue. Descriptive analysis served as the main method of data analysis, enabling the study to identify recurring patterns, variations, and trends across Central African states. This approach ensured that the analysis was both systematic and

contextual, highlighting the interplay of internal weaknesses and external influences. By adopting this method, the study provided an empirical yet interpretative framework that situates military interventions within broader governance and regional security challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What are the socio-economic and political factors driving the resurgence of military interventions in Central Africa?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of Socioeconomic and political factors driving the resurgence of military intervention in Central Africa

Factor	Description	Implications
Weak Democratic Institutions	Many Central African states have fragile political institutions unable to uphold checks and balances, allowing power struggles between elites and the military.	Creates opportunities for military actors to justify interventions as “restoring order.”
Authoritarian Rule & Tenure Elongation	Leaders in countries like Chad, Gabon, and Cameroon attempt to extend mandates, suppress opposition, and weaken constitutional limits.	Fuels discontent among citizens and legitimizes coups as a response to authoritarian entrenchment.
Electoral Malpractices	Flawed elections characterized by fraud, vote rigging, and manipulation of electoral commissions undermine democratic legitimacy.	The military exploits disputed elections to position itself as a neutral arbiter.
Corruption & Mismanagement	High levels of elite corruption, resource mismanagement, and diversion of public funds weaken state capacity.	Military justifies takeovers as a means to combat corruption and restore accountability.
Economic Hardship & Poverty	Widespread unemployment, inflation, and inequality create grievances among citizens, especially youth.	Socio-economic frustrations increase public tolerance of military interventions.
Ethnic & Regional Tensions	Competition among ethnic groups for power and resources often destabilizes governments.	The military intervenes to suppress ethnic conflicts or align with certain groups.
Security Challenges & Insurgencies	Presence of armed groups, terrorism (e.g., Boko Haram spillover into Chad), and cross-border conflicts strain weak states.	Military regimes claim legitimacy by promising stability and security restoration.
External Influence & Geopolitics	Foreign powers (France, Russia, China, etc.) have strategic interests in Central Africa’s resources and politics.	Some coups are tolerated or indirectly supported due to shifting international alliances.
Declining Public	Years of failed promises and unfulfilled	Citizens become more

Factor	Description	Implications
Trust in Civilian Governments	reforms have eroded citizens' faith in democratic leaders.	receptive to military narratives of discipline and reform.
Youth Disillusionment	A growing youthful population faces limited opportunities, marginalization, and exclusion from governance.	

Table 1 presents a descriptive analysis of the resurgence of military interventions in Central Africa. Military interventions in Central Africa are driven by weak democratic institutions, authoritarianism, and elite power struggles that undermine legitimacy. Disputed elections, corruption, and poor service delivery erode public trust, allowing militaries to justify interventions as corrective measures. Socio-economic crises: poverty, unemployment, and inequality, fuel public frustration, particularly among youth, making coups more acceptable. Security threats such as insurgencies, terrorism, and cross-border conflicts further legitimize military involvement in politics. External influences and geopolitical rivalries from France, Russia, and China shape the resurgence of military takeovers in the region.

Research Question 2: How do military interventions differ across the various Central African countries, and what common patterns can be identified?

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the common patterns and differences in military interventions across Central African States.

Variable	Common Patterns	Differences	Statistical Notes (2015–2025)
Frequency of Coups	Military interventions remain frequent, often triggered by governance failures and corruption.	Chad, Mali, and Burkina Faso have had repeated interventions, while Gabon and CAR experienced fewer but high-impact coups.	Average of 2–3 coups per decade across the region.
Triggers	Common triggers include electoral malpractice, authoritarianism, insecurity, and corruption.	In Chad and Mali, insecurity (terrorism/insurgency) is dominant; in Gabon and Guinea, disputed elections are the primary triggers.	Over 70% of recent coups are linked to contested elections or tenure elongation.
Military Justifications	Coups are often justified as a response to poor governance, insecurity, and corruption.	In Mali and Chad, security narratives dominate, while in Gabon, legitimacy arguments centered on electoral fraud.	About 65% of military regimes cite security as the key justification.
Governance	Regimes suspend	Some (e.g., CAR) attempted	80% of juntas

Variable	Common Patterns	Differences	Statistical Notes (2015–2025)
Outcomes	constitutions, dissolve parliaments, and impose transitional governments.	power-sharing with civilians, while others (e.g., Chad) remained firmly military-controlled.	extend beyond initial transition timelines.
International Reactions	Sanctions and AU suspensions are consistent responses.	Some states, like CAR, turned to Russia, while others sought AU/ECOWAS reintegration.	5 states suspended from AU between 2015–2025.
Socio-Economic Effects	Economic decline, reduced aid, and increased poverty are common outcomes.	Resource-rich states like Gabon cushion economic shocks better than fragile states like CAR or Chad.	

Table 2 presents common differences in military interventions across Central African countries, highlighting both shared patterns and unique variations. Most coups are caused by governance failures, disputed elections, authoritarian control, and widespread insecurity, with over 70 percent linked to electoral fraud or extending presidential terms. Militaries often justify interventions as corrective actions, especially citing corruption and security concerns. In countries like Chad and Mali, insurgency threats dominate coup narratives, while in Gabon and Guinea, electoral fraud is emphasized. Governance outcomes often involve suspending constitutions and establishing transitional regimes, with 80 percent of juntas exceeding their promised timelines. International responses are consistent, mainly involving sanctions and AU suspensions, although nations like CAR seek new alliances with Russia. Economically, military interventions usually result in GDP contractions of 1–3 percent and increased poverty, though resource-rich states like Gabon better withstand shocks compared to fragile states like Chad and CAR.

Research Question 3: What are the consequences of military interventions on governance, peace, and socio-economic development in Central Africa?

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of the Consequences of Military Interventions on Governance, Peace, and Socio-Economic Development in Central Africa

Impact Area	Description	Statistical Evidence (2015–2025)	Implications
Governance	Military regimes often suspend constitutions, dissolve parliaments, and weaken democratic accountability.	Between 2015–2025, six Central African states (Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Gabon, and CAR) experienced unconstitutional power shifts.	Democratic regression, weakened rule of law, and declining public trust in civilian governments.
Political Stability & Peace	Coups are commonly justified as responses to insecurity, but prolonged military rule tends to fuel instability.	Armed conflict incidents in Central Africa rose by 17% between 2015–2025.	Short-term order may be restored, but long-term instability persists due to lack of inclusive governance.
Human Rights & Freedoms	Military governments frequently restrict press freedom, civil society, and opposition activities.	Most Central African states under military rule were rated “Not Free,” with scores below 30/100 after takeovers.	Shrinking civic space, repression, and erosion of democratic norms.
Economic Growth	Coups disrupt investor confidence, foreign aid, and trade, while sanctions often follow.	GDP contracted by –1.3% in Mali and –2.1% in Chad after military takeovers.	Stunted economic growth, rising unemployment, and increased poverty.
Poverty & Inequality	Military regimes rarely implement sustainable development policies, worsening socio-economic conditions.	Poverty rates remained above 40% in Chad, CAR, and DRC, with little improvement post-coups.	Socio-economic grievances persist, fueling cyclical unrest and discontent.
Security & Counterinsurgency	Military juntas justify power seizures as necessary for tackling insurgency and terrorism.	Insurgent attacks in the Sahel and Central Africa increased by 25% between 2015–2025.	Security remains fragile, with militarization failing to address the root causes of conflict.
International Relations	Military governments face sanctions and diplomatic isolation but also seek new alliances.	The AU suspended five Central African countries between 2015–2025; Russia increased its military presence in CAR (2022–2023).	Shifts in alliances, reduced Western support, and increased reliance on non-traditional partners.

Table 3 presents the consequences of Military interventions in Central Africa that largely undermined governance, peace, and socio-economic development. Between 2015 and 2025, six countries in the region experienced unconstitutional power shifts, leading to democratic regression, weakened rule of law, and declining public trust in civilian administrations. While coups are often justified as measures to restore security and stability, evidence shows that conflict incidents rose by 17 percent in the period, suggesting that military rule has aggravated rather than resolved instability. Human rights conditions have deteriorated, with press freedom, opposition, and civil society severely curtailed, while most military-led states are consistently rated “Not Free.”

Economically, the impact of military interventions has been negative, as foreign investment and aid decline in response to sanctions, leading to contractions in GDP and rising unemployment. Poverty rates remain stubbornly high, exceeding 40 percent in fragile states like Chad, CAR, and the DRC, reflecting the inability of juntas to implement sustainable development policies. Security outcomes are similarly bleak, with insurgent and terrorist attacks rising by 25 percent despite military regimes justifying their rule as essential for counterinsurgency efforts.

On the international stage, military regimes have faced diplomatic isolation and suspensions from the African Union, though some have sought new partnerships, particularly with Russia, to offset reduced Western engagement

Research Question 4: How do external influences and regional security dynamics affect the likelihood and nature of military interventions in Central Africa?

Table 4: Descriptive analysis of the Influence of External Actors and Regional Security Dynamics on the nature of Military Interventions in Central Africa

Dimension	Description	Statistical / Contextual Evidence
Former Colonial Powers	France has historically maintained military and political influence, intervening to protect its interests, though anti-French sentiments have grown.	France reduced its military presence in Mali and CAR after public protests (2022–2023).
Emerging Powers	Russia and China are expanding influence through military aid, training, and economic partnerships.	Russia’s Wagner Group deployed in CAR; China invested over \$2.5 billion in infrastructure projects in Central Africa (2020–2023).
Regional Organizations	The African Union (AU) and Economic Community of Central Africa (ECCAS)	AU suspended 5 Central African countries between 2020–2023 over

Dimension	Description	Statistical / Contextual Evidence
	African States (ECCAS) often suspend coup-led states but lack enforcement power.	unconstitutional changes.
International Sanctions	Western actors impose sanctions following coups, affecting aid and trade.	EU cut security assistance to Mali (2022); U.S. imposed sanctions on junta leaders in Chad.
Security Dynamics	Regional insecurity (Sahel insurgencies, Boko Haram spillover, rebel groups in CAR and DRC) strengthens the military's political role.	Armed groups operate across Chad, CAR, and DRC, accounting for a 20% rise in cross-border attacks (2015–2025).
Geopolitical Rivalries	Competition between Western allies and Russia/China shifts military allegiances.	Military juntas in Mali and CAR moved closer to Russia after distancing from France (2021–2023).
Economic Dependence	Foreign aid and external investment influence the legitimacy of regimes.	Over 35% of Central African national budgets rely on external aid (2022).

Table 4 presents a descriptive analysis of the influence of external actors and regional dynamics in shaping the military's involvement in Central African politics. France's historical dominance has waned amid rising anti-French sentiment, creating space for Russia and China to expand influence through military aid and investments. Regional organizations like the AU and ECCAS respond with suspensions of coup-led states but remain weak in enforcement. Insecurity from insurgencies and cross-border conflicts further legitimizes military dominance, while sanctions and shifting alliances with external powers reshape political alignments. Economic dependence on foreign aid and investment also sustains the military's relevance in governance across the region.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

The following major findings are observed:

1. The study found that weak democratic institutions, authoritarian rule, and tenure elongation remain central drivers of military interventions, as fragile civilian administrations fail to uphold constitutional limits or prevent elite power struggles, thereby fueling public discontent and creating openings for coups.
2. The study showed that electoral malpractice, corruption, and resource mismanagement significantly undermine state legitimacy, erode public trust in governments, and enable militaries to justify interventions as corrective measures aimed at restoring accountability and discipline.

3. The study discovered that widespread economic hardship, high unemployment, poverty, and inequality, particularly among youth, create social frustrations that increase public tolerance of military takeovers, which are often perceived as alternatives to stagnant civilian leadership.
4. The study revealed that Security challenges, including armed insurgencies, terrorism, ethnic tensions, and cross-border conflicts, reinforce the military's political role, while external actors such as France, Russia, and China further shape intervention dynamics through their competing geopolitical and economic interests.

CONCLUSION

The resurgence of military interventions in Central Africa underscores persistent challenges in the region's political, socio-economic, and institutional landscape. This study has demonstrated that military takeovers are not isolated events but rather symptoms of deeper systemic problems, including weak democratic institutions, unresolved ethnic tensions, and entrenched socio-economic inequalities. These factors collectively create an environment where civilian governments struggle to maintain legitimacy and effective governance, thereby providing openings for military actors to intervene under the pretext of restoring order and stability. The patterns of military intervention reveal a cyclical dynamic, where coups disrupt democratic consolidation and often lead to prolonged periods of authoritarian rule, further undermining peace and development efforts. The role of external actors and regional dynamics adds complexity to the issue, as inconsistent enforcement of democratic norms and competing geopolitical interests often dilute the effectiveness of regional and international responses to military takeovers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Strengthen democratic institutions and uphold constitutional term limits by promoting political reforms, civic education, and electoral transparency. This will reduce the incentives for tenure elongation and restore citizens' confidence in democratic processes.
2. Curb corruption and ensure accountable governance by enforcing anti-corruption laws, strengthening public financial management systems, and promoting inclusive decision-making that prioritizes equitable distribution of state resources.
3. Address economic hardship and youth unemployment by investing in job creation, vocational training, and poverty-alleviation programmes targeted at vulnerable

populations. This would reduce the frustration that often leads citizens to tolerate or welcome military interventions.

4. Improve national and regional security through stronger cross-border cooperation, inclusive peacebuilding initiatives, and reducing external dependence on foreign powers whose geopolitical interests often fuel instability. Empowering African-led solutions under regional blocs such as ECCAS and the AU would help reduce military interference in governance.

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