

What Went Wrong in Guinea? Lessons for Africa

by



Vladimir Antwi-Danso (PhD)

dean@gafcscmil.edu.gh/vladanso@yahoo.com

**Director/Dean of Academic Affairs
Ghana Armed Forces Command & Staff College
(GAFCSC)**

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Outline

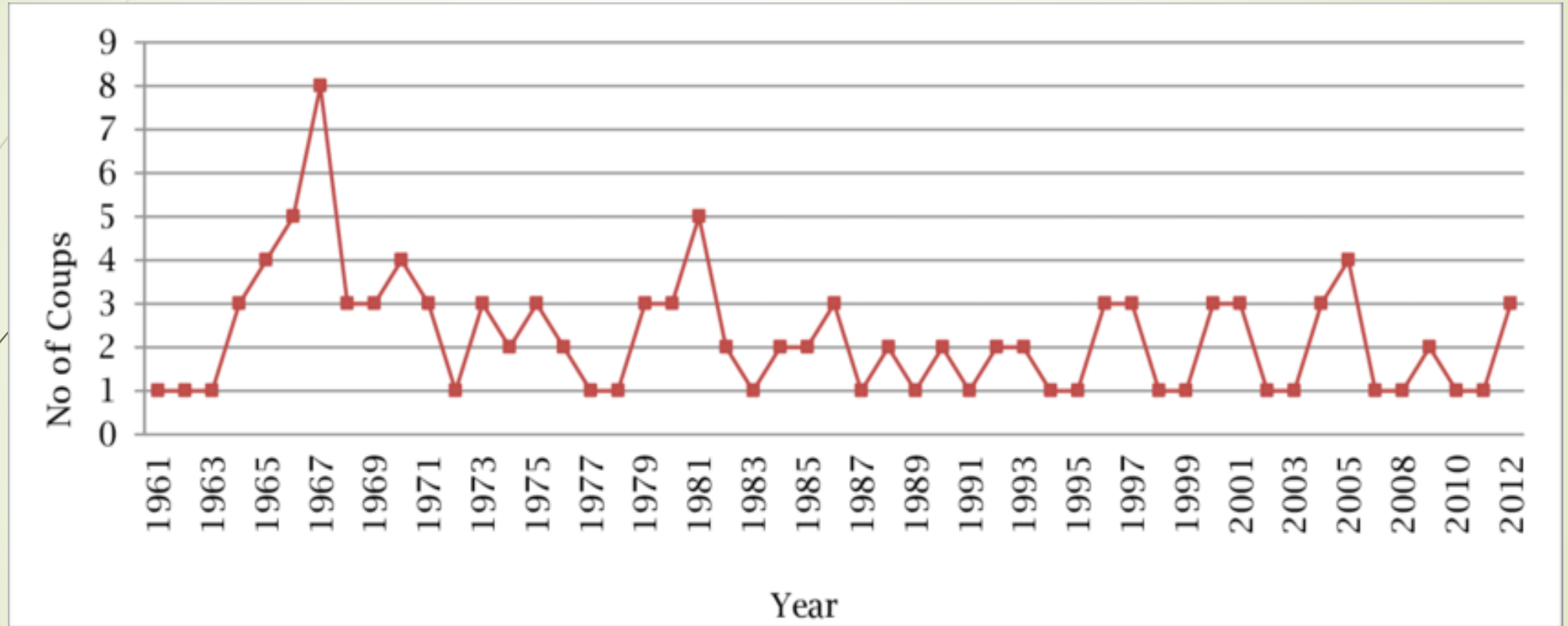
- Introduction
- Guinea – the Historical Setting
- Governance in Guinea
- From Conte to Conde
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- Reactions to the Coup - A Discussion
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- Lessons for Africa

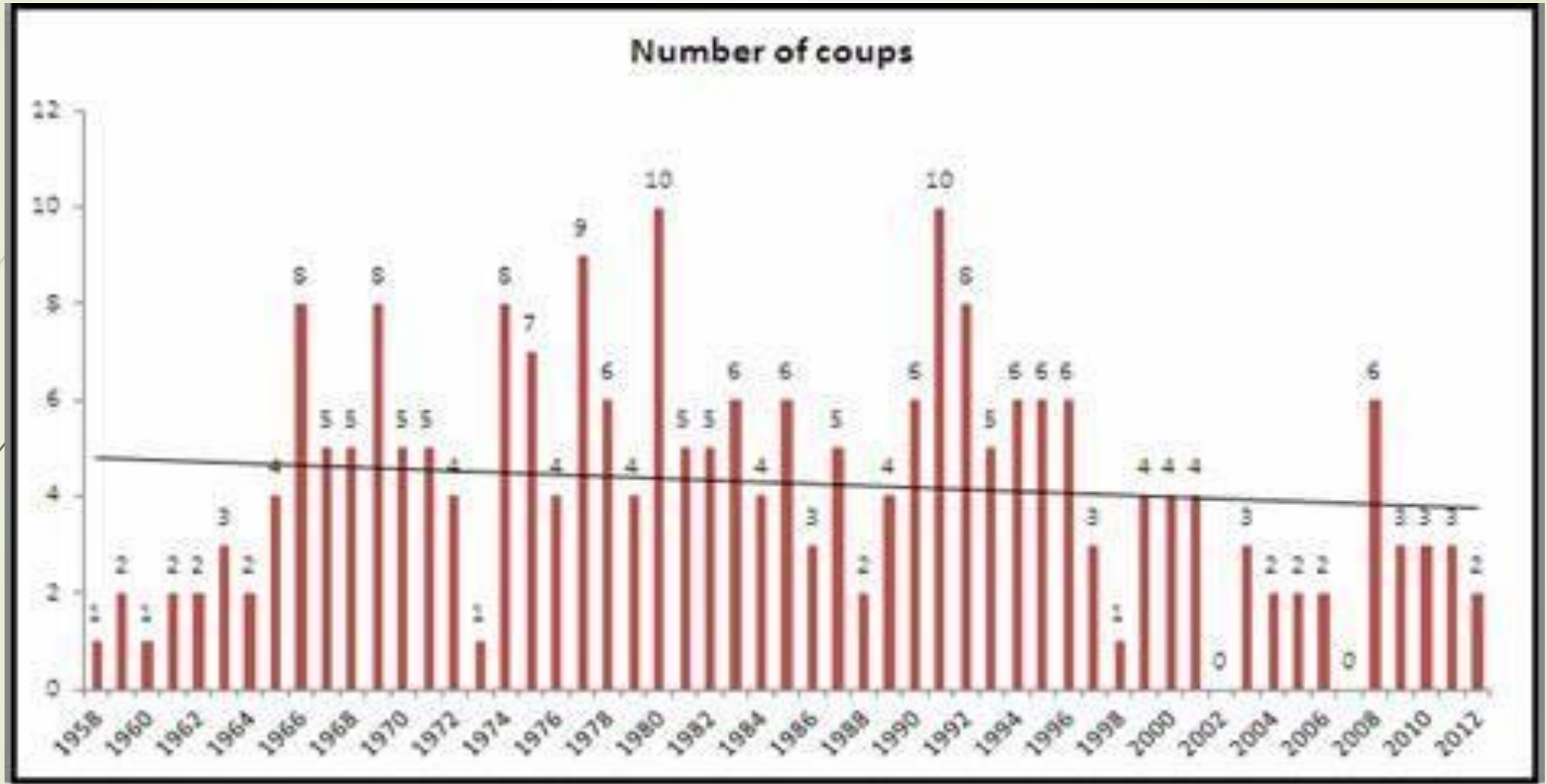


Introduction: A Coup? – A Common Feature in African Governance

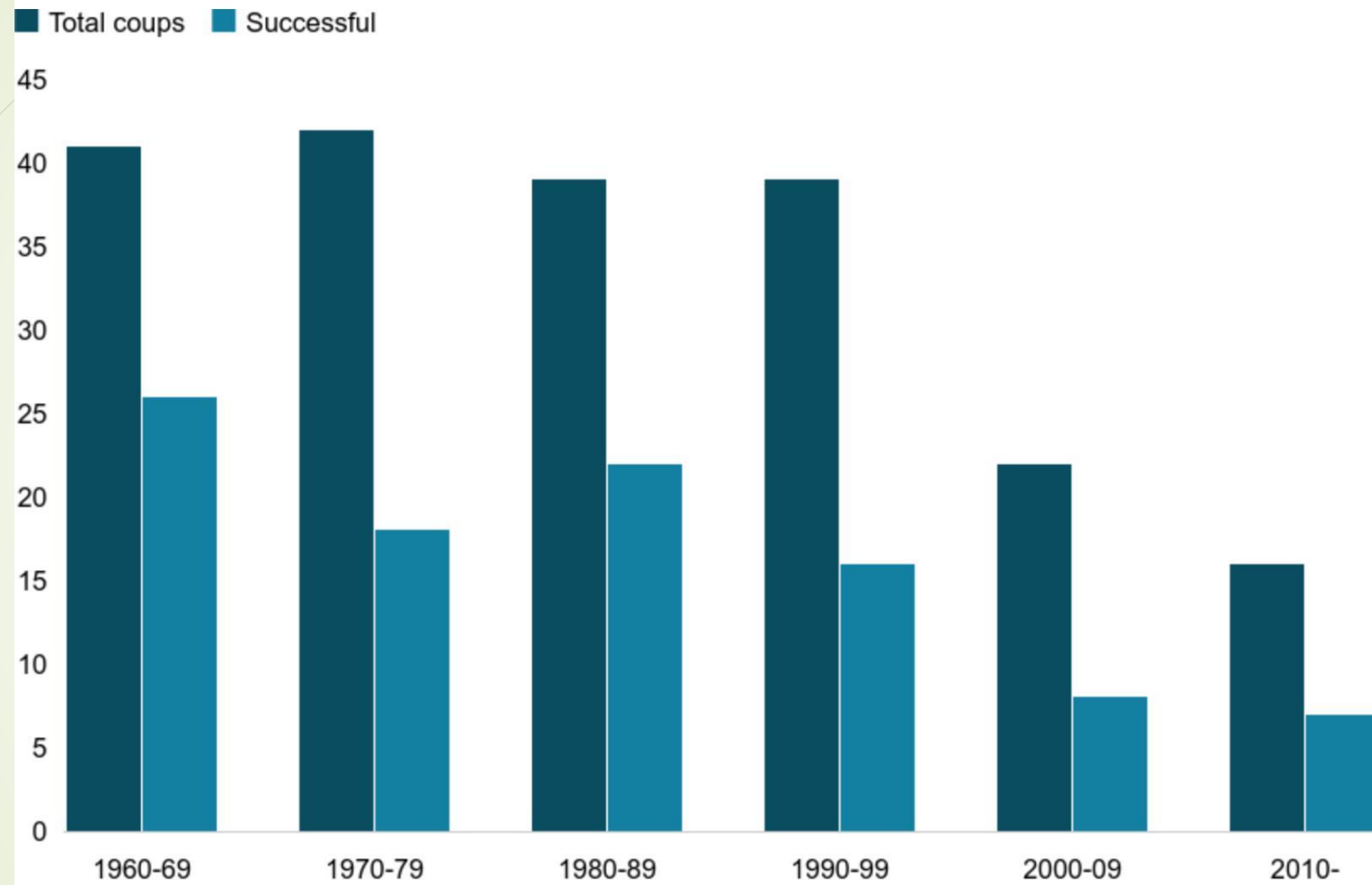
- A coup d'état involves the sudden, often violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group – in contrast to 'revolutions' achieved by large numbers of people working for basic social, economic and political change.
- Thus, a coup is a change in power from the top that always results in the abrupt replacement of leading government personnel, but may or may not alter a state's fundamental social and economic policies or entail a significant redistribution of power among political groups.
- Coups are usually conspiratorial and mostly involve the military. In Africa, coups have been rampant
- Although not a new phenomenon in Africa, military takeovers or coups occurred with disturbing frequency

Military Coups in Africa





Military coups in Africa

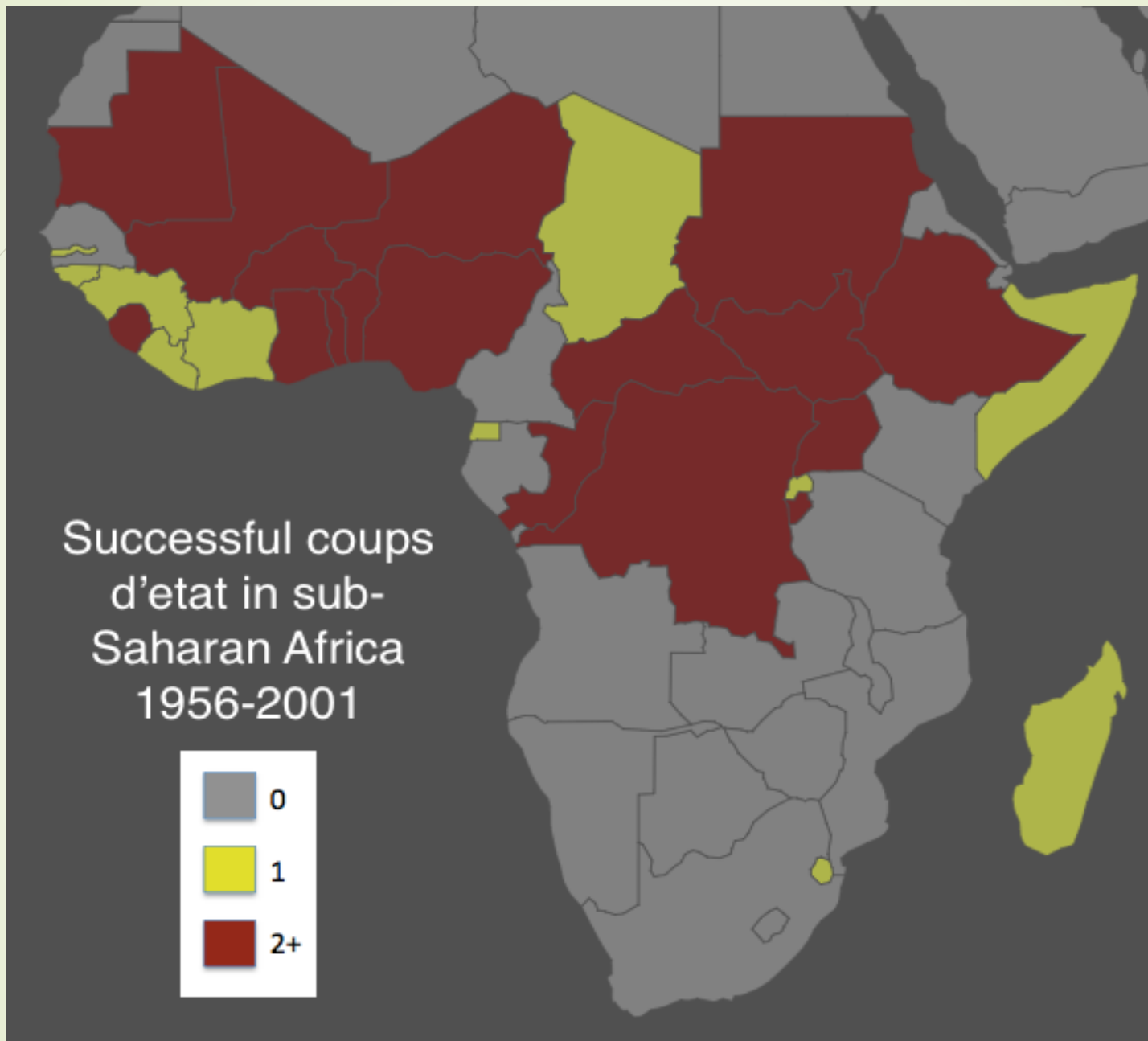


Source: Research by Florida and Kentucky Universities

Coups d'état in Africa

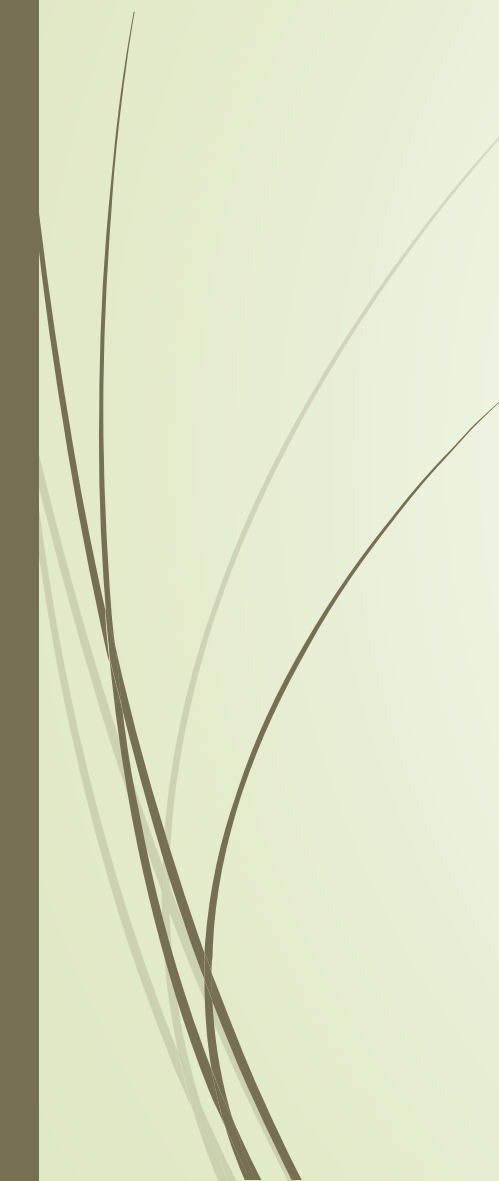
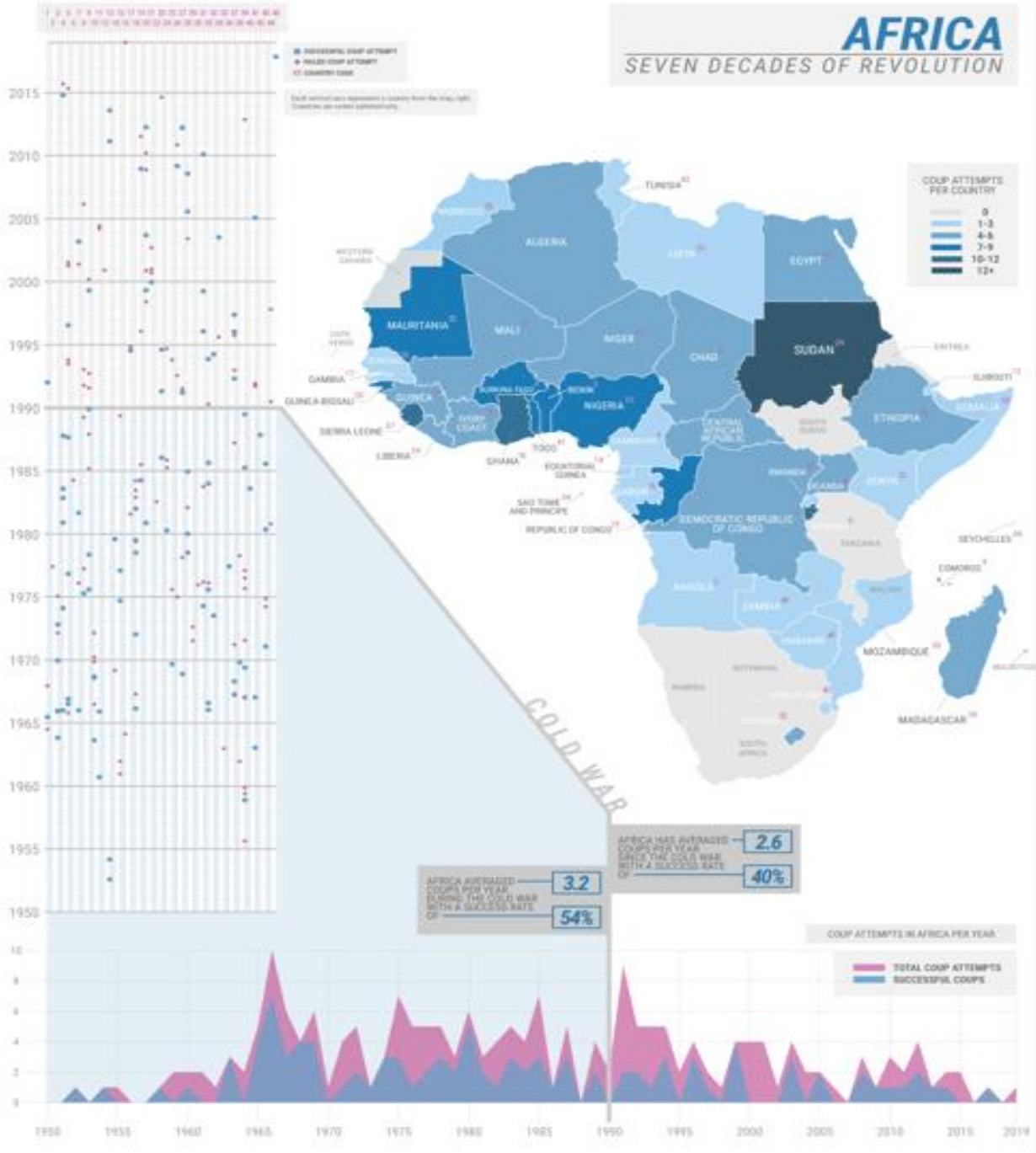


Successful coups
d'etat in sub-
Saharan Africa
1956-2001

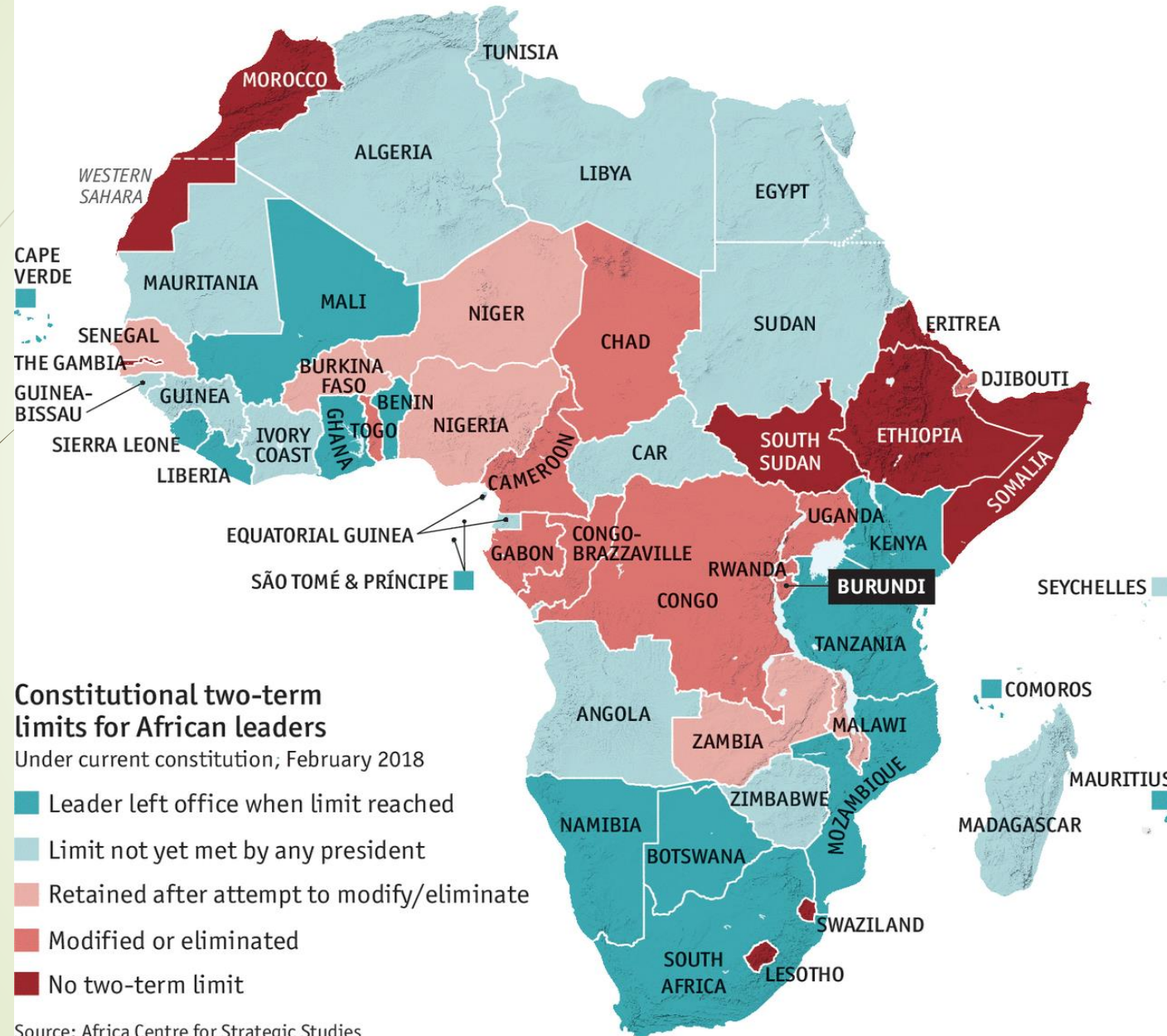


AFRICA

SEVEN DECADES OF REVOLUTION



Africa – Constitutional Arrangement for Transfer of Power



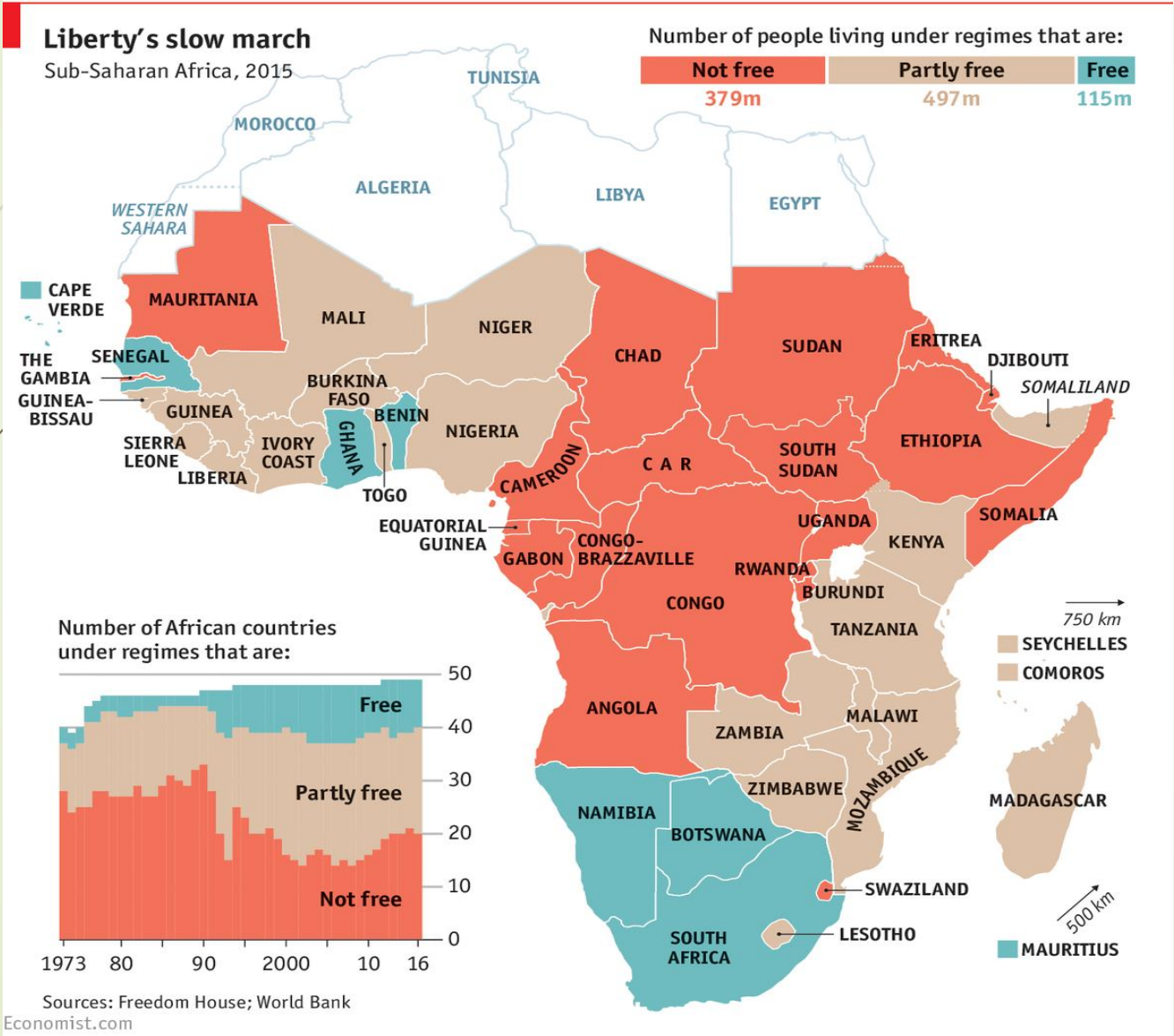
Constitutional two-term limits for African leaders

Under current constitution; February 2018

- Leader left office when limit reached
- Limit not yet met by any president
- Retained after attempt to modify/eliminate
- Modified or eliminated
- No two-term limit

Source: Africa Centre for Strategic Studies
Economist.com

Africa's Liberty Map

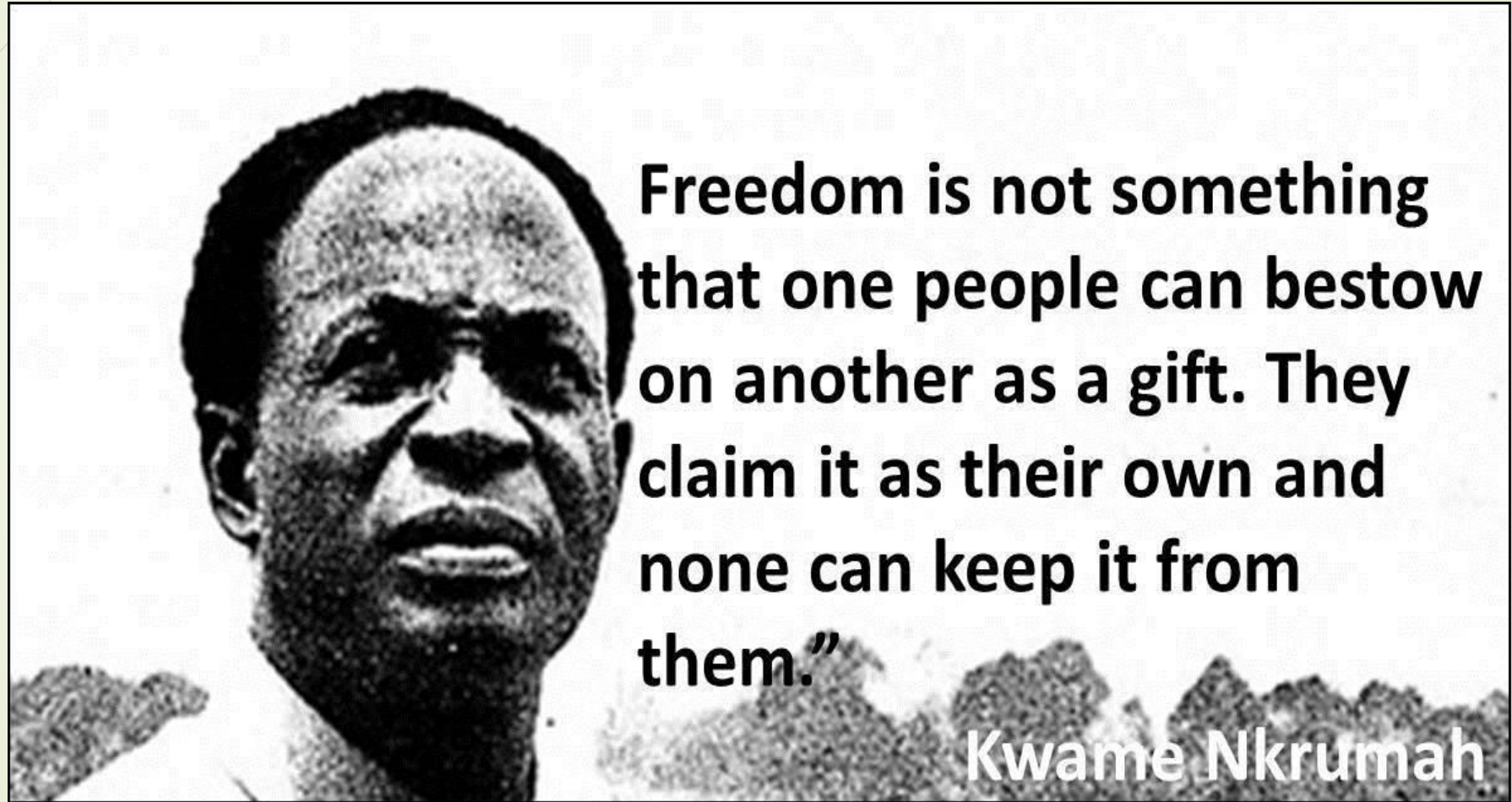


It is clear that very few countries in Africa have strong indications of not lending themselves to coups

Guinea – the Historical Setting

- In 1958, Sekou Toure, who prides himself as the great grandson of Samori Toure, the leader of a 19th-century Islamic state whose heroic armed resistance against the French was legendary, openly defied then-French President Charles de Gaulle's plans to keep all of France's former African colonies under its wing through a constitutional referendum that would have subordinated much of their sovereignty to Paris, as a way of sustaining France's ambitions to remain a first-rank global power.
- Speaking that year in front of the visiting French leader, whose trip amounted to an unobvious nudge to urge Guinea to remain within the French fold, Toure boldly proclaimed: ***“Between voting ‘Yes’ to a constitution which infringes on the dignity, unity and freedom of Africa, and accepting, as General de Gaulle says, immediate independence, Guinea will choose that independence without hesitating. We do not have to be blackmailed by France. We cannot yield on behalf of our countries to those who threaten and put pressure on us to make us choose, against heart and reason, the conditions of marriage which could keep us within the complex of the colonial regime.”***

And Nkrumah Urges Sekou on with these words:





Senegal

Guinea-Bissau

Mali

Guinea

Conakry ★

Sierra Leone

Côte d'Ivoire

Liberia

North Atlantic Ocean





Guinea – the Historical Setting II

- ▶ Toure predictably then led Guineans to reject the French proposed constitution and chose independence.
- ▶ What immediately followed was one of the ugliest incidents of the independence era, when France sought to make a cautionary example of Toure and Guinea's will to independence.
- ▶ Virtually overnight, Paris famously withdrew all of its colonial administrators from the country, including civil servants, doctors, teachers, military trainers, and advisers. And anything the French couldn't carry away with them, they took care to vindictively smash and burn.
- ▶ When Toure moved into the governor's residence as the newly independent country's first leader, the furniture was gone and even the dishes had been trashed.

Consequence for Governance & Democracy

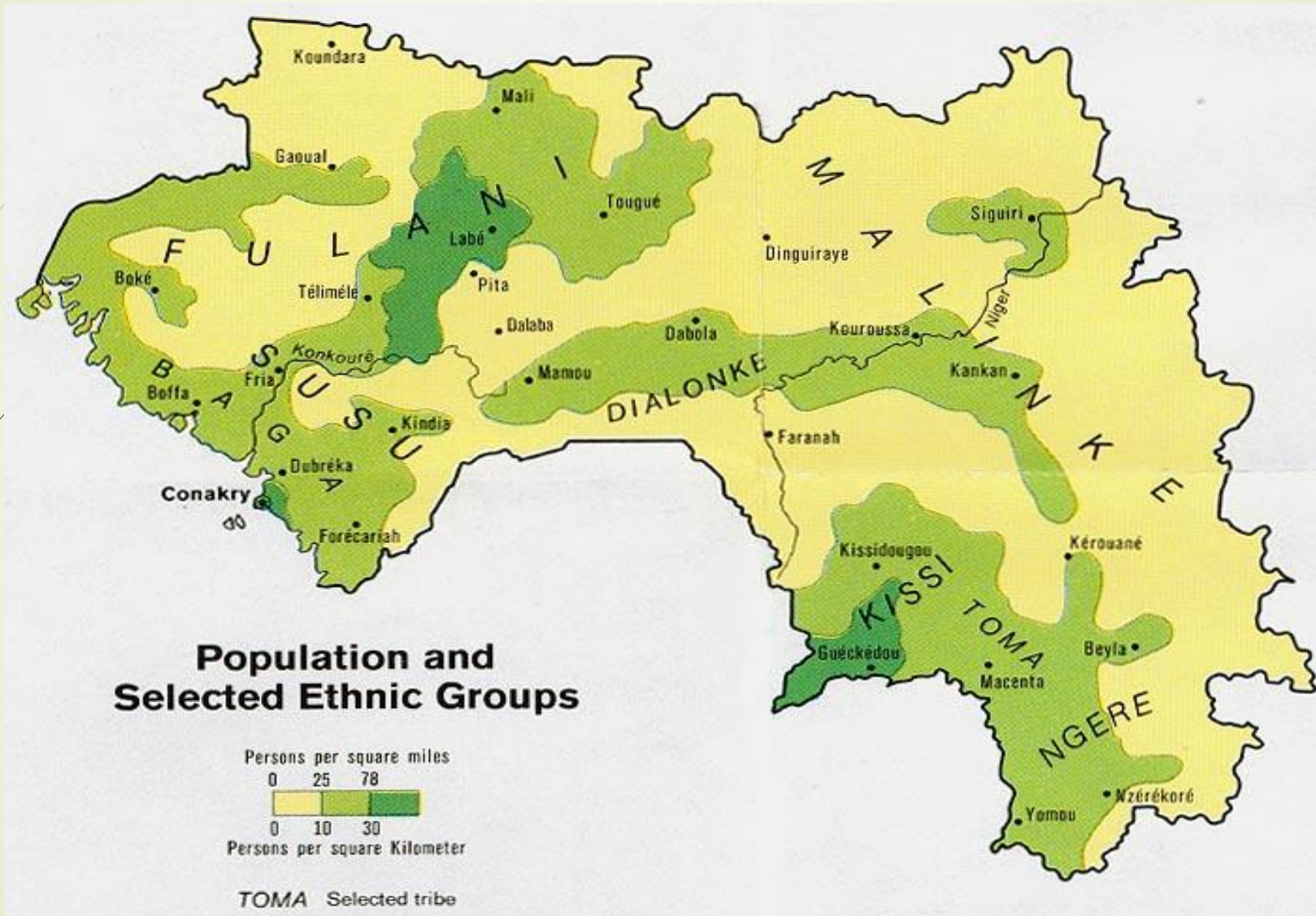
- France's decision to punish Guinea had dire consequences for the development of democracy and good governance in Guinea.
- In breaking with Guinea, France dismantled its administrative apparatus, destroyed records and office equipment, withdrew economic and technical assistance, and attempted to isolate Guinea diplomatically from its Francophone African neighbors.
- France's brutal break with Guinea left the country without competent personnel to run the state and pushed it into close ties with the Eastern Bloc and set the stage for the emergence of the Party-State
- It also set the stage for institutional weakness, reliance on loyalty, and ethnic politics.

Consequences

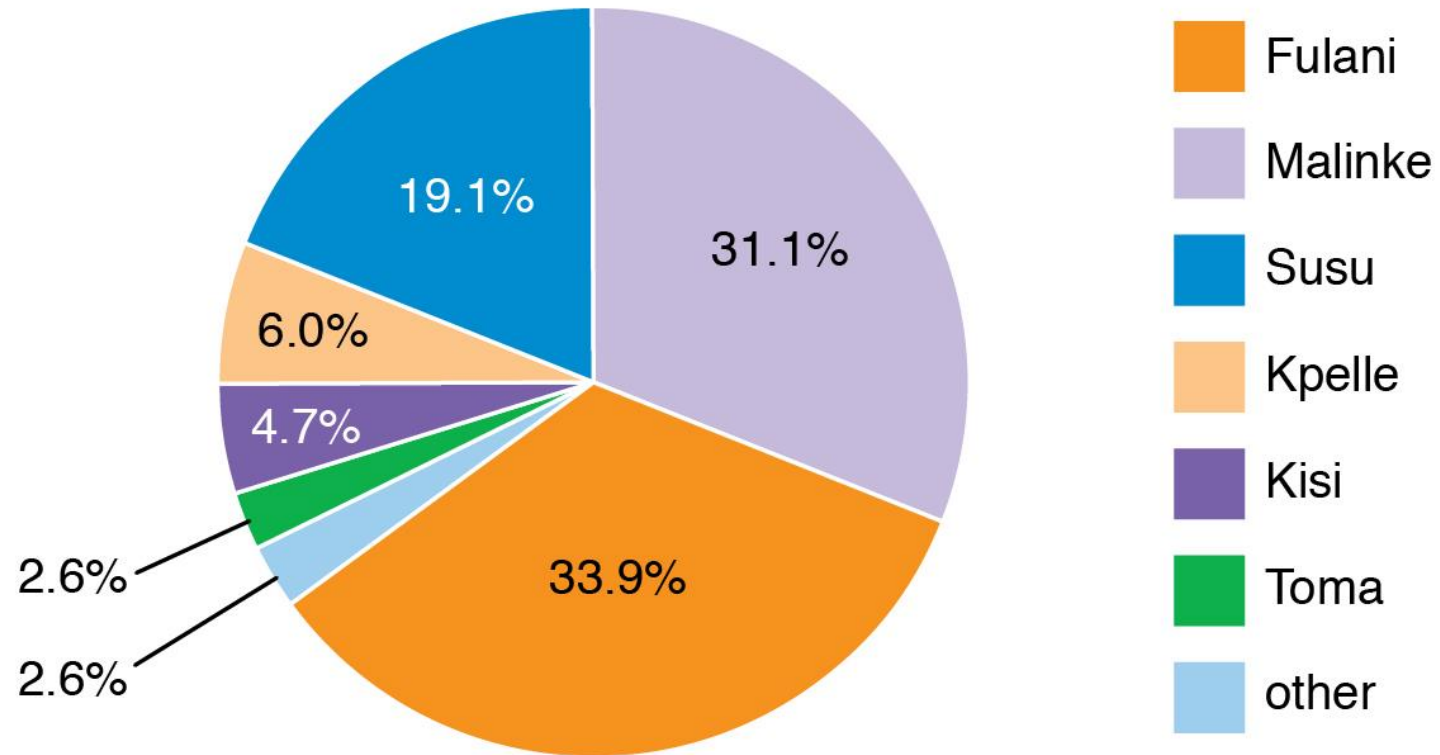
- ▶ Shortly after independence, the Parti démocratique de Guinée (PDG) absorbed the two Fulani-based parties in the opposition and created a one-party state. The party replaced the colonial administration as the main institution for controlling the population.
- ▶ Under Sekou Toure, Guinea's one-party state was based on **democratic centralism** and socialist principles, which eventually evolved into a repressive and arbitrary personal dictatorship.
- ▶ It must be noted though that, various real and alleged plots to overthrow the regime and the abortive 1970 invasion from Portuguese Guinea (Guinea Bissau) reinforced the regimes' tendency towards repression, tight control of its people, and isolation from the West.
- ▶ Following in the footsteps of Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure chartered a path of planned economy, refusing to auction off the country's unparalleled wealth in bauxite and iron to foreign companies
- ▶ He once paraphrased Nkrumah's popular agitation: "**We prefer Self-Government with danger to Servitude in Tranquility**" saying "**We prefer freedom in poverty to opulence in slavery**"

Lansana Conte

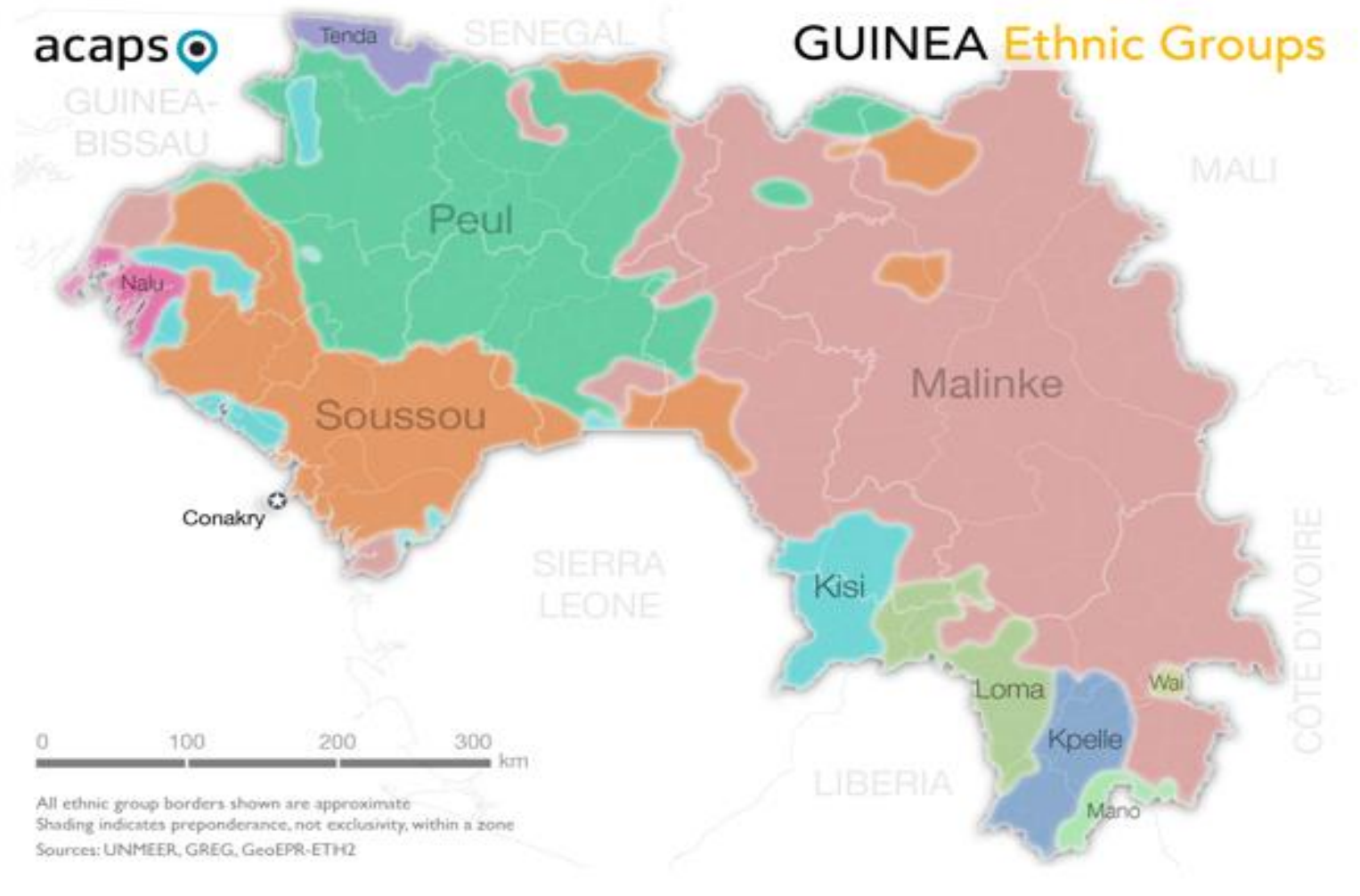
- The Toure regime came to an end in 1984, when he suddenly died of heart failure.
- Arrangements towards his replacement as per the constitution was almost complete when Guinea experienced its first coup. It was led by Col. Lansana Conte
- In 1985 Conté took advantage of an alleged coup attempt to arrest and execute several of Sékou Touré's close associates, including Ismael Touré, Mamadi Keita, Siaka Touré, former commander of Camp Boiro; and Moussa Diakité
- History seemed to have repeated itself as just six hours after Conté's death was announced and arrangements for his replacement was almost complete, a statement was read on television announcing a *coup d'état*.
- The statement was read by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara on behalf of a group called the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD)



Ethnic composition (2012)



Ethnic Groups





Historical Socio-Communitarian Values of Guinean Society

- ▶ **Traditional Values and Political Behavior:** Many of the informal values or working rules, which shape Guinean political behavior, are rooted in tradition.
- ▶ Though deeply embedded in Guinean society, these values are dynamic and changing in response to evolving political, economic, and social conditions.
- ▶ Power and authority are hierarchical and based on unequal social relationships. Guinean society is comprised of stratified sub-societies which can be identified in terms of historic ethnic differences and differences in social status.
- ▶ The four main ethnic groups (Malinke, Peul or Fula, Soussou, and the Forest People) are organized around principles of hierarchy with the forest peoples having the least hierarchical structures of the four groups and the Fulani and Malinke the most stratified structures





The Coup in Guinea

- ▶ A Guinean army unit seized control of the country Sunday, September 5, 2021 and announced it had deposed President Alpha Conde. The soldiers expressed frustration over widespread poverty and corruption in Guinea.
- ▶ After Conde's first win in 2010, citizens hoped he would bring stability to Guinea, which had suffered decades of rampant corruption.
- ▶ Tensions peaked in 2020, when the 83-year-old president changed the constitution to allow himself to seek a third term. After he won, violent demonstrations erupted across the country.
- ▶ That really created heavy tension. Civil society organizations, the opposition parties, and other political forces contested his decision. They also contested his elections.
- ▶ But, incidentally, the military was on his side, able to quell the demands of the people. So the stage was almost set for political instability.
- ▶ The button was set, when violent demonstrations (which were severely repressed) greeted Conde's Third Term investiture.



The Coup in Guinea II

- ▶ During the September 5 statement aired over Guinea TV, Doumbouya proclaimed that: ***“Our action is not a coup d’etat. It only reflects the legitimate aspiration of people to want to live in an environment where basic human needs can be met.”*** He continued with a list of complaints regarding the Conde administration accusing the former president of ***“the trampling of citizens’ rights, the disrespect for democratic principles, the outrageous politicization of public administration, financial mismanagement, poverty and endemic corruption.”***
- ▶ Some opposition parties and civil society organizations welcomed the coup largely as a result of the repressive apparatus installed by Conde who won the 2020 elections amid charges of voter suppression and electoral fraud.
- ▶ What occurred in Guinea was, however, not a popular uprising like those seen during the Arab spring. Rather, it was a *coup* executed by a small group of elite military forces.
- ▶ Of course, waning public support for Condé’s regime likely played into the calculus of the coup plotters.

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- “The personalisation of political life is over. We will no longer entrust politics to one man, we will entrust it to the people,” Doumbouya had said after the take-over.
 - It means that Conde had been considered a dictator



Lieutenant Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, leader of the latest coup in Guinea, waves to the crowd as he arrives at the Palace of the People in Conakry on September 6, 2021, ahead of a meeting with the Ministers of the Ex-President of Guinea, Alpha Conde. Photo: Cellou Binani/AFP

The Coup in Guinea III

- The overthrow of President Alpha Conde in Guinea capped a steady slide from grace for the veteran opposition leader and human rights professor who critics say failed to live up to pledges to deliver **democratic restoration** and **ethnic reconciliation**
- The coup came a week after the parliament had voted an increase in budget for the presidency, but a “substantial decrease” for civil servants and members of the security services.
- The putsch came less than a year after Conde won a third presidential term in a violently disputed election in October, 2020 following the adoption of a new constitution in March 2020 that allowed him to sidestep the country’s two-term limit, provoking mass protests.
- **“Alpha Conde is one of the politicians who worked over 40 years for democracy in Guinea. Once in power, he totally destroyed it,”** Reuters
- Conde has previously denied accusations of human rights abuses. Echoing other African leaders who altered constitutions to hang onto power, he said he needed more time to realise his vision of a modern Guinea.



Conde

- ▶ Until then, Conde had been the chief critic of a succession of leaders: Ahmed Sekou Toure, who ruled from independence in 1958 until he died in 1984; Lansana Conte, who seized power in a coup after Toure's death; and Moussa Dadis Camara, who led a coup after Conte's death in 2008.
- ▶ His advocacy earned him a death sentence under Toure, forcing him into exile in France, where he became an assistant professor of human rights at the Sorbonne.
- ▶ He lost presidential elections to Conte in 1993 and 1998. In 1998, he was arrested on the eve of the vote, accused of plotting to overthrow the government and jailed for the next two years.
- ▶ In 2010 he won elections on a promise: ***"The restoration of social cohesion and national unity requires a collective look at our painful past."***

A President in Captivity





Reactions to the Coup in Guinea

- ▶ Nigeria condemned the coup and ECOWAS threatened that Guinea would face sanctions unless the president is immediately released.
- ▶ The U.S., France, the African Union (AU), and the U.N. Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, condemned the seizure of power
- ▶ These condemnations respond to existing Protocols of the respective multilateral organizations.
- ▶ Sanctions were immediately imposed
- ▶ The sanctions included border closures and a ban on commercial trade and financial flows but not basic necessities, drugs, equipment to fight coronavirus, fuel or electricity. They also include travel bans on Junta members.

The AU Lomé Declaration

- At the 2000 summit in Lomé, the Assembly of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted a **Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government**, - the Lomé Declaration.
- With the launch of the African Union in 2002, this framework was integrated into the new African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).
- The Lomé Declaration defined four situations as unconstitutional changes of government:
 - (1) a “military coup d’état against a democratically elected government,”
 - (2) “intervention by mercenaries to replace a democratically elected government,”
 - (3) “replacement of a democratically elected government by armed dissident groups and rebel movements,” and
 - (4) “the refusal of an incumbent government to relinquish power to the winning party after free, fair and regular elections.”

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The AU Lome Declaration

- ▶ The Lomé Declaration thus only addressed cases of unconstitutional power accession and **remained silent with regard to the conduct of governance by incumbent governments.**
- ▶ It nevertheless prescribed a reaction mechanism starting from a statement of condemnation followed by the suspension of the member state through the Peace and Security Council (PSC).
- ▶ Within a period of up to **six months**, the coup plotters should be engaged to return the member state to constitutional order, a process which, given their non-commitment, would automatically lead to the application of limited and targeted sanctions
- ▶ The sanctions included border closures and a ban on commercial trade and financial flows but not basic necessities, drugs, equipment to fight coronavirus, fuel or electricity. They also include travel bans on Junta members.

ECOWAS Protocol

- ▶ In like manner, the 2001 *ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* defined common constitutional principles and rejected any “**power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means.**”
- ▶ Article 45 of the protocol states, “**In the event that democracy is abruptly brought to an end by any means or where there is massive violation of Human Rights in a Member State, ECOWAS may impose sanctions on the State concerned.**”
- ▶ Until the coming into force of the *AU Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance*, the ECOWAS protocol clearly went beyond the continental policy framework.
- ▶ Article 2(1) entailed a provision against constitutional manipulations, and it more explicitly aligned unconstitutional changes of government to human rights, freedom of expression, and the rights of citizens to choose their government.
- ▶ It is therefore, surprising that, ECOWAS would be mute over manipulation of the constitutions of Niger, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea, and also over human rights abuses until coups happen

The Toothless Bulldog

- ▶ However, is it acceptable to ignore the factors that drive coups, only to condemn them when they happen? The African Union condemned the coups in Mali and Guinea and even suspended Mali from the union. In the same vein, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) condemned the military takeover in Guinea and suspended the country from membership.
- ▶ Yet these same bodies remained silent amid extreme economic hardship in Guinea and Conde's controversial attempts to stay in power. The regional bodies remained unmoved when Mali suffered wanton corruption, nepotism, and worsening extremist activities leading to the 2020 and 2021 coups.
- ▶ When CAR experienced dictatorial rule, corruption, and severe political instabilities, prompting at least **ten coups** within a decade, regional bodies remained silent.
- ▶ Military coups in Africa have tended to follow a familiar pattern. The military often takes advantage of protests by disgruntled young people to arrest and depose members of the ruling elite.
- ▶ After a coup, one might imagine that any subsequent military or civilian administration would do whatever it takes to avert future coups by addressing the underlying factors that gave rise to them, yet that rarely happens because the original goal of gaining power is achieved.

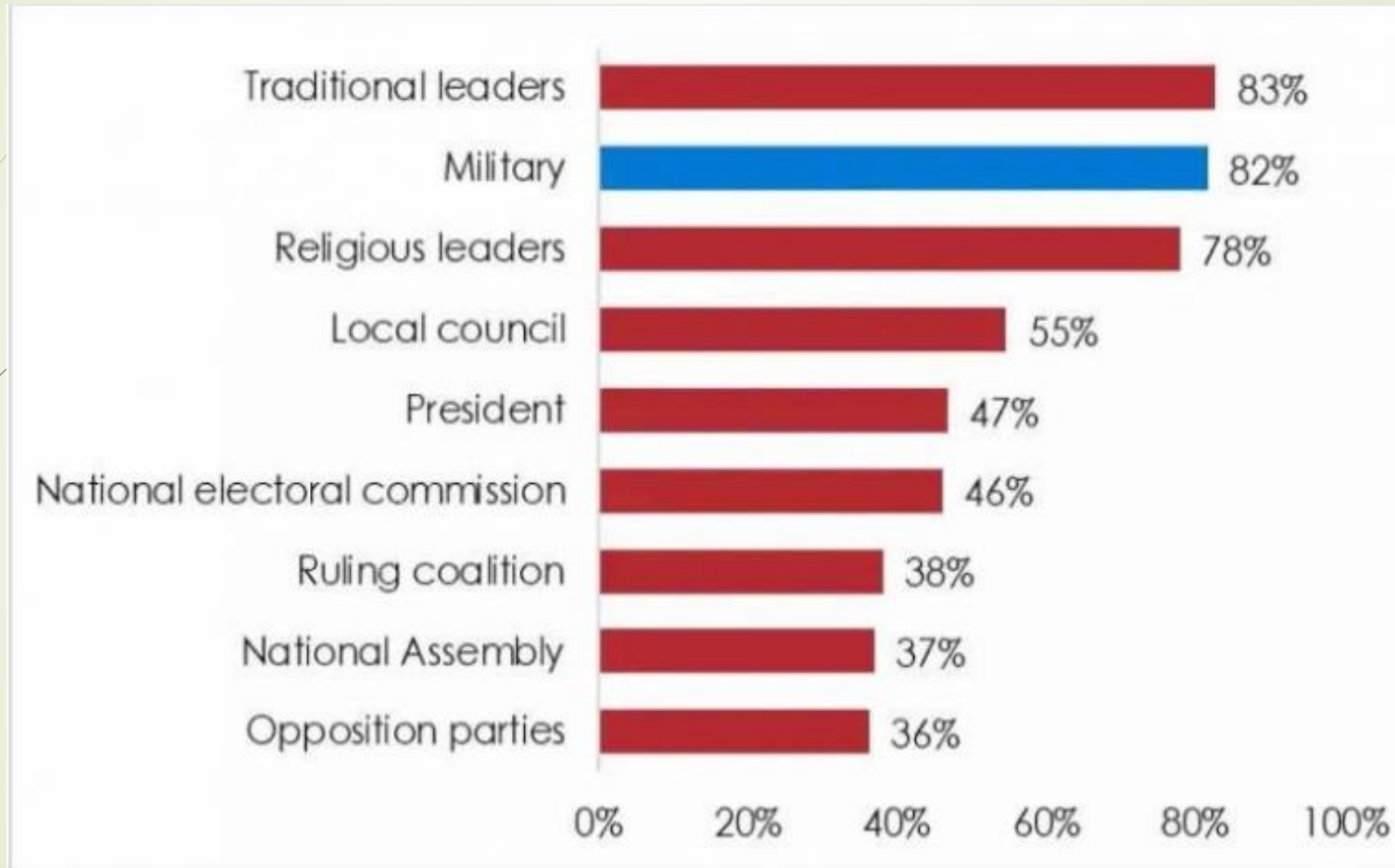
Mali as a Litmus Test

- Mali's 2020 coup came after months of protests over the country's armed rebellion, economic struggles, and chronic inter-ethnic violence.
- ECOWAS called on the transitional authorities to release all remaining detainees arrested since the August 18 coup, when democratically elected President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was forced to resign after the junta surrounded his home and fired shots into the air.
- Both ECOWAS and the AU quickly condemned the coup and asked for a return to civilian rule. The Junta gave an 18-month timeline. ECOWAS insisted on a six-month period. So a transitional arrangement was put in place by the Junta.
- The regional bloc had insisted that the transitional government be headed by civilians, though junta leader Colonel Assimi Goita was staying on as vice president.
- Prime Minister Moctar Ouane announced the government of 25 ministers, four of them military officials. Those positions are the ministries of defense, security, territorial administration and national reconciliation.
- Incidentally, both the ECOWAS and the AU then quickly accepted this arrangement and withdrew the sanctions earlier imposed.


A Successful Coup in Mali 2020



Many Malians Supported the 2020 Coup



Many Malians supported the 2020 coup. Credit: Afrobarometer

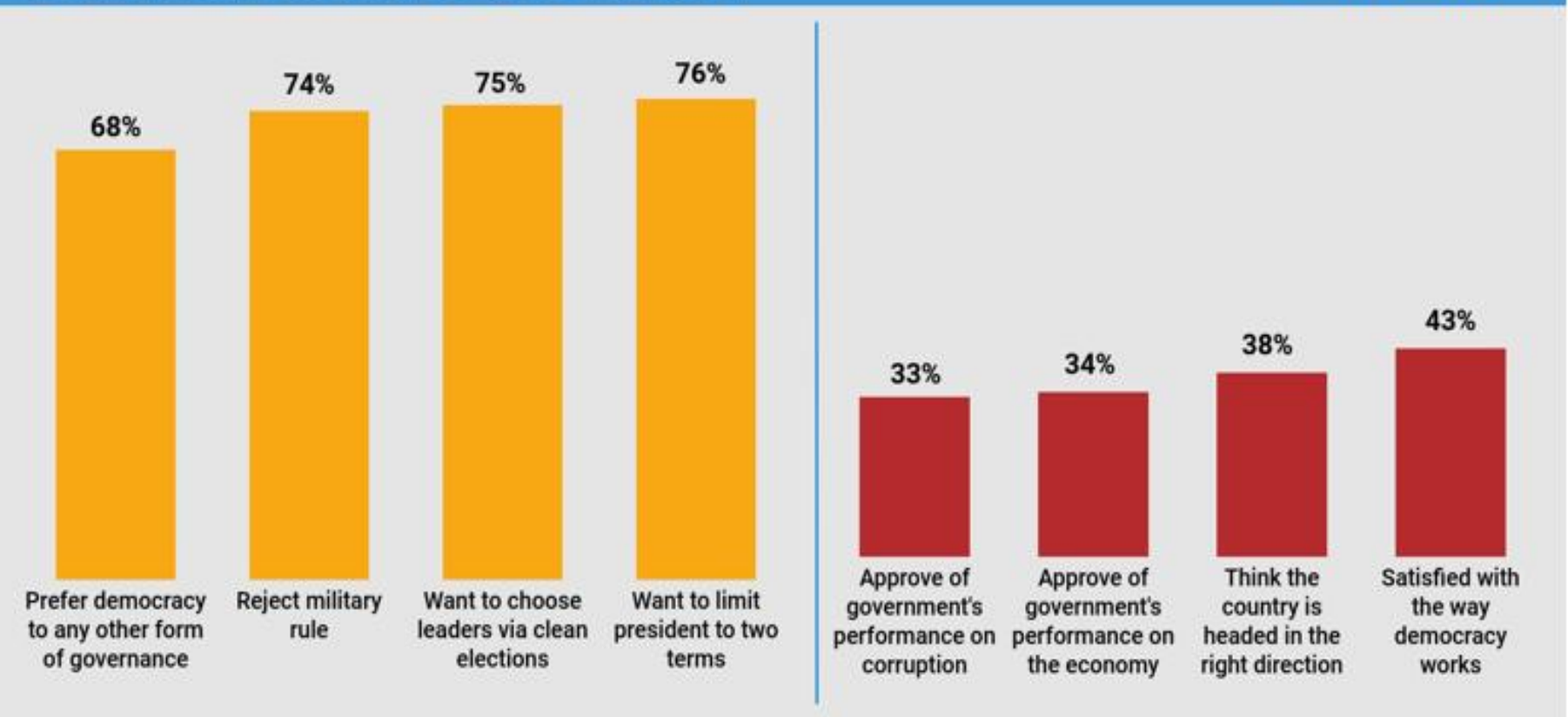
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- The African Union lifted its suspension of Mali which went into effect after a military coup toppled the West African nation's government in August 2020.
 - The decision comes three days after the West African regional bloc ECOWAS announced it was ending its tough post-coup sanctions on Mali, saying it wished to back the country's return to civilian rule.
 - In a communique, the regional heads of state cited "significant advances" toward a return to democracy in Mali, noting the selection of a civilian president and prime minister to head the process.
 - "The Peace and Security Council, in view of recent positive political developments, has decided to lift the suspension it had imposed against Mali,"
 - Yet, another coup occurred in 2021

Lesson on Democracy

- ▶ While experts argue that democracy is backsliding or shrinking in Africa, recent developments prompt the question: were democratic values ever really embedded in African governance?
- ▶ Democracy is not only about elections and the transfer of power. Africa's problem is not merely democratization; it is primarily the lack of trait, transformational leadership that understands good governance and development. They rather emphasize elections as a vehicle for merely accessing political power.
- ▶ Coups are not surprising in countries where the social contract between the state and the citizens is either weak or broken. In cote d'Ivoire, the onstitution was ignored after the death of Houphet Boigny, thereby throwing the country into chaos that is yet to abate; In Mali, rising insurgency, corruption, floundering economy, and the poor handling of the COVID-19 pandemic pushed protesters to the streets in 2020 and 2021, leading to military intervention. In Chad, the military disregarded the constitution following Idris Deby's death and appointed his son (a general) to head the country. In Guinea Conakry, "poverty and endemic corruption" drove soldiers to remove President Alpha Conde from office. Conde manipulated the constitution last year to perpetuate his stay in office. Similarly in Togo, Senegal, Niger, Cote d' Ivoire, Burundi... manipulation of constitutional term limits had caused some political upheavals.
- ▶ Some might suggest that military takeovers under such circumstances constitute "a good coup."

But Africans Know What They Want

Democratic ideals vs. (dis)satisfaction with reality | 34 African countries | 2019/2021



Africans are supportive of democratic ideals, but often disillusioned with the political reality. Credit: Afrobarometer.

The Myth of Reforms

- ▶ Despite the complex political landscape, the USAID reported that, “the Government of Guinea is making progress to implement decentralization reforms and this has created opportunities for USAID’s support for democratic reforms at the grassroots level”.
- ▶ USAID’s Building Electoral and Accountability Capacities, Orderly Norms, and Democratic Governance (BEACON-DG) – an activity to strengthen civil society and media capacities to foster fact-based and issue-oriented discourse and train newly elected officials in representing constituent interests.
- ▶ **Cultural Cohesion for Peace and Prosperity Project (C2P2):** The Cultural Cohesion for Peace and Prosperity activity works to promote peaceful coexistence among groups in conflict and to promote sustainable relationships in the target communities by strengthening social cohesion.
- ▶ **Strengthening Democratic Control and Budget Transparency:** The Strengthening Democratic Control and Budget Transparency activity improves transparency by increasing the ability of government officials and the public to access and understand government budget information.
- ▶ Were they achieved? How did the coup come then?



Lessons: Coup proofing & Spoiling Militaries

- ▶ In recent years countries throughout West Africa have witnessed a surge in unconstitutional third-term bids as well as a rise in coups.
- ▶ **Studies** of leaders' strategies to “coup-proof” their regimes have found that, while “spoiling” militaries with organizational resources is expected to reduce their willingness to intervene, increased organizational resources can also increase their capability, thereby increasing the likelihood of a *coup*'s success.
- ▶ In this sense, President Condé's establishment of the GSF as a well-resourced and **highly-trained** praetorian guard in 2018, may have been a miscalculation in *coup*-proofing himself ahead of his controversial decision to seek a third term in office.

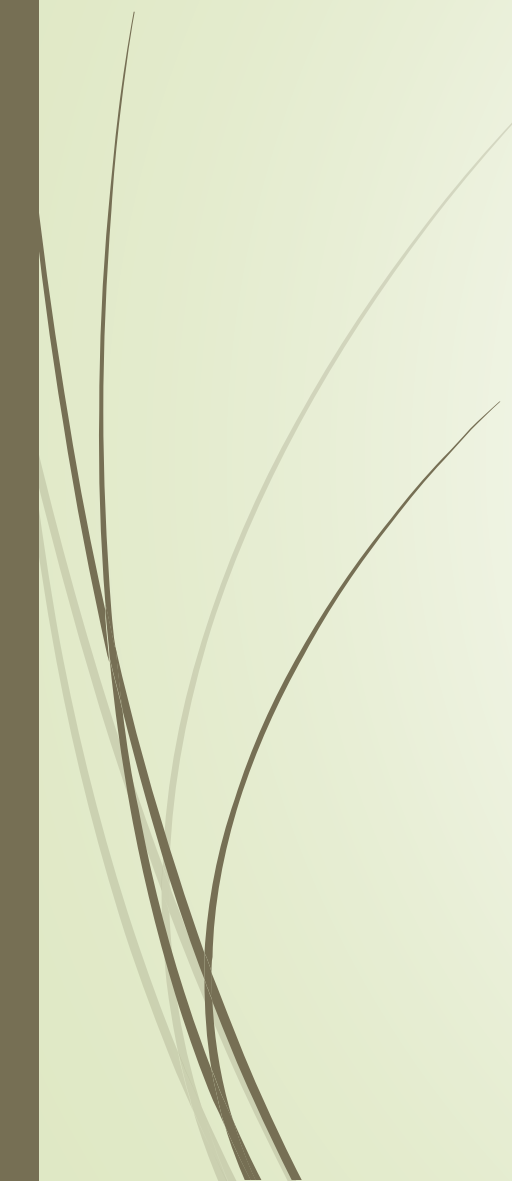


Lessons: Train & Equip Failures

- ▶ For years, foreign troops (especially US and French) have deployed around the world to train and advise foreign forces.
- ▶ These **train-and-equip programs** start with lofty goals, but they often fail and have unintended consequences. (Iraq, Afghanistan, CAR, Mali, Guinea etc., are cases in point)
- ▶ The truth is that **Defence Doctrines** are imposed and **Defence Policies** are drawn, using some politico-security calculus of the benefactor nations. The militaries of the receiver nations are, thus, alienated from their local/national specificities
- ▶ There is a long list of **train-and-equip failures** ranging from the Bay of Pigs crisis in Cuba to arming the Mujahedeen against the Soviets in Afghanistan, some of whom were the precursor to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali, and others are recent examples
- ▶ So, we must find out why such foreign assistance programs exist and reflect, if they support the core national-security interests of our countries (in Africa) or those of the benefactor nations (in Africa, mostly the US and France).



Military Partnership

- ▶ Like many diplomatic and national security initiatives, military partnerships contain ***train and equip*** programs.
 - ▶ They often start from lofty goals - nurturing a fledgling democracy, enabling others to fight crime and terrorism, or expanding the benefactors' influence and alliances.
 - ▶ The complexities of Africa's socio-political terrain and global geo-politics make it difficult to assure success. Note the French withdrawal from Mali, setbacks in the CAR etc. Note also the influence of Wagner in Africa
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Reaction

- It must be noted that reactions to unconstitutional changes of government are nobody's hegemonic territory. Rather, they usually bring together a variety of actors with different interests, mandates, and social or material resources – The AU, ECOWAS, the UN, the US, the EU, neighbouring countries
- This makes reactions to coups d'état a highly political and complex field of policy implementation.
- The lack of convergence in both concepts and practices in reaction to coups creates a coordination vacuum
- By convergence is meant a process of alignment, in which actors together occupy a common field to reach a common goal resulting in a more unified system of complex but also dispersed responsibilities and tasks.
- There is the need for a critical analysis of both inherent limits as well as those consequences that might even run counter to the original, officially stated aims of such interventions.
- This points to the fact that the policy framework's normative foundations and practical implications are today still in the making: first, because the diversity of situations constantly produces new normative and practical challenges, and, second, because despite numerous policy frameworks and declarations, fundamental norms of political order are still highly contested within both within various countries and among multilateral organizations.



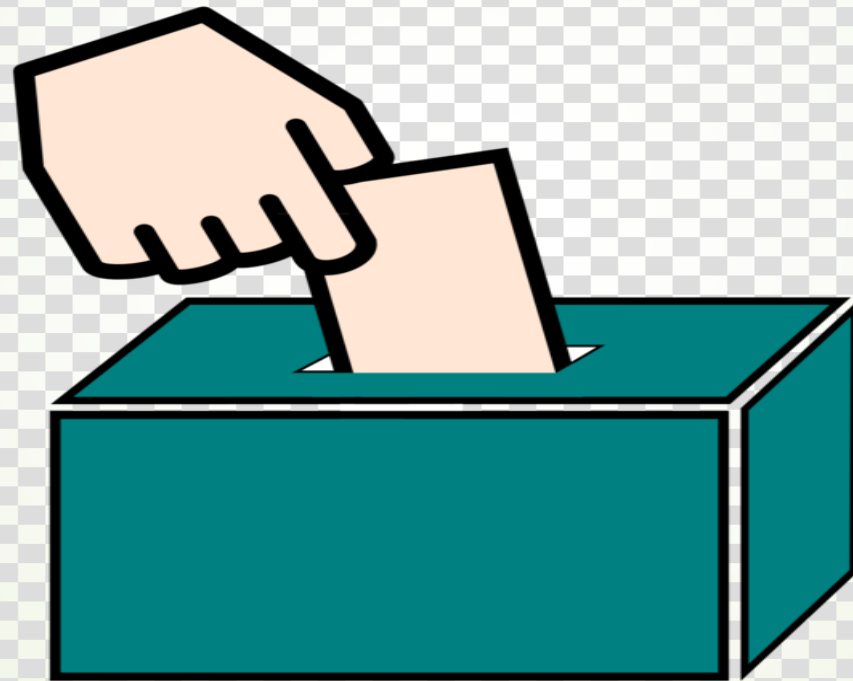
Convergence of Reactions

- ▶ Over the past decade, numerous international actors have developed policy frameworks to address and ultimately prevent the resurgence of coups d'état in Africa. But this trend has not necessarily engendered a convergence in practice.
- ▶ Thus we see a struggle over defining the terms of such interventions, first with regard to how to re-build legitimate political orders and second in relation to the definition of roles and hierarchies that emanate from multiple and sometimes conflicting mandates to address such situations.
- ▶ Furthermore, while convergence is understood as generally ambiguous in its consequences, it is suggested here that, even successful convergence in practice comes with fundamental costs that can compromise the preventive aims of such interventions.



Democracy is not
an *Event*; It is a
Process

The Ballot does not Necessarily Engender Democracy



Indeed,
the **Ballot**
does Not
Stop the
Bullet

The Confusion

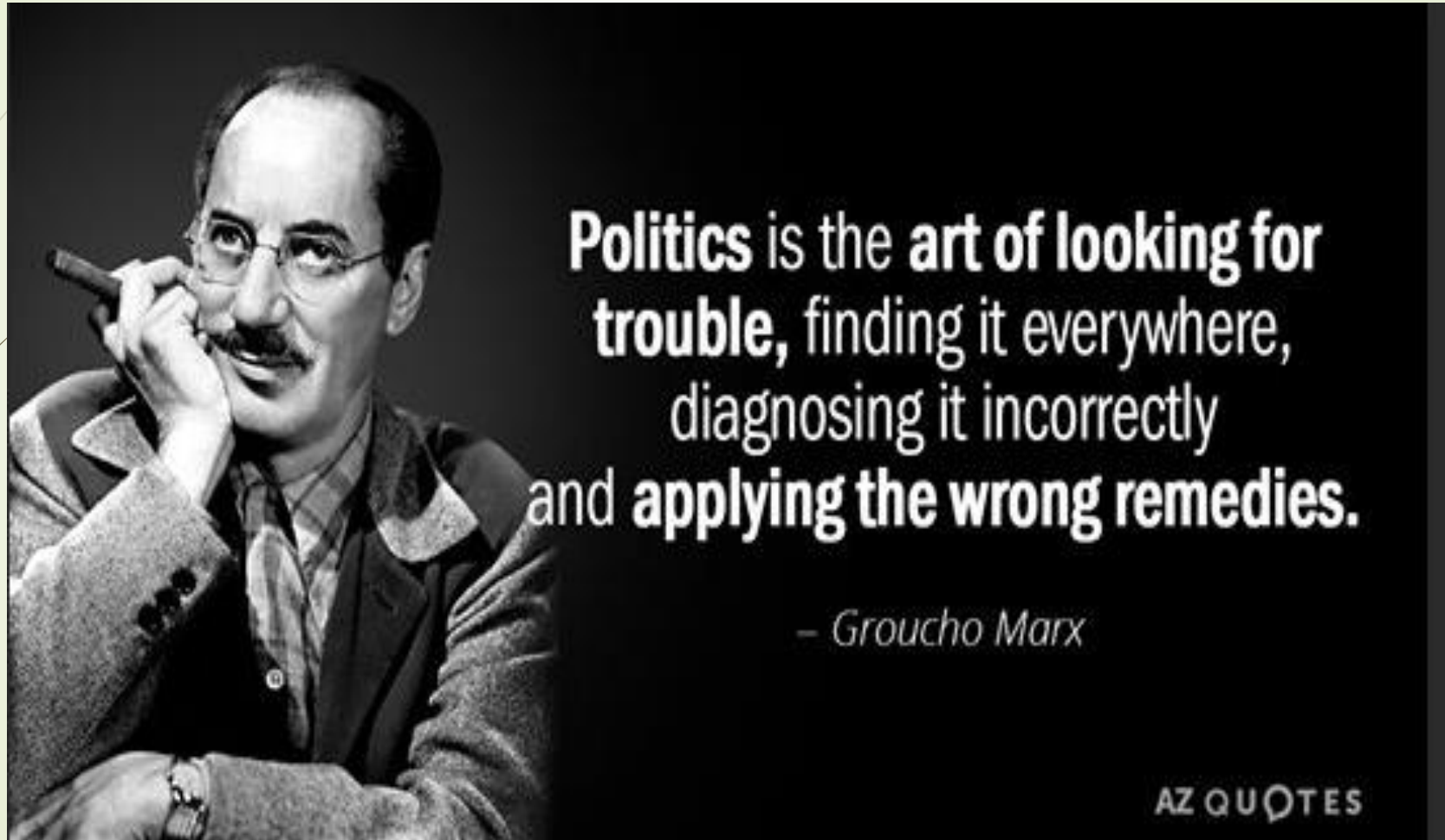
▣ DEMOCRACY

- ▣ Constitution
- ▣ Separation of Powers
- ▣ Institutions of Governance
- ▣ Freedoms and rights (of speech, association, etc)
- ▣ Frequent, Effectively Free and Doubtlessly Fair Elections

▣ GOOD GOVERNANCE

- ▣ The Presence of Democracy *PLUS*
- ▣ Good, Visionary , Trait, and Transformational Leadership
- ▣ Constitutionalism
- ▣ Institutionalism
- ▣ Prudence in Economic governance
- ▣ Probity and accountability
- ▣ Dialogue and Transparency
- ▣ Participation in the process by the socio-economic partners in development
- ▣ Adherence to global best practices

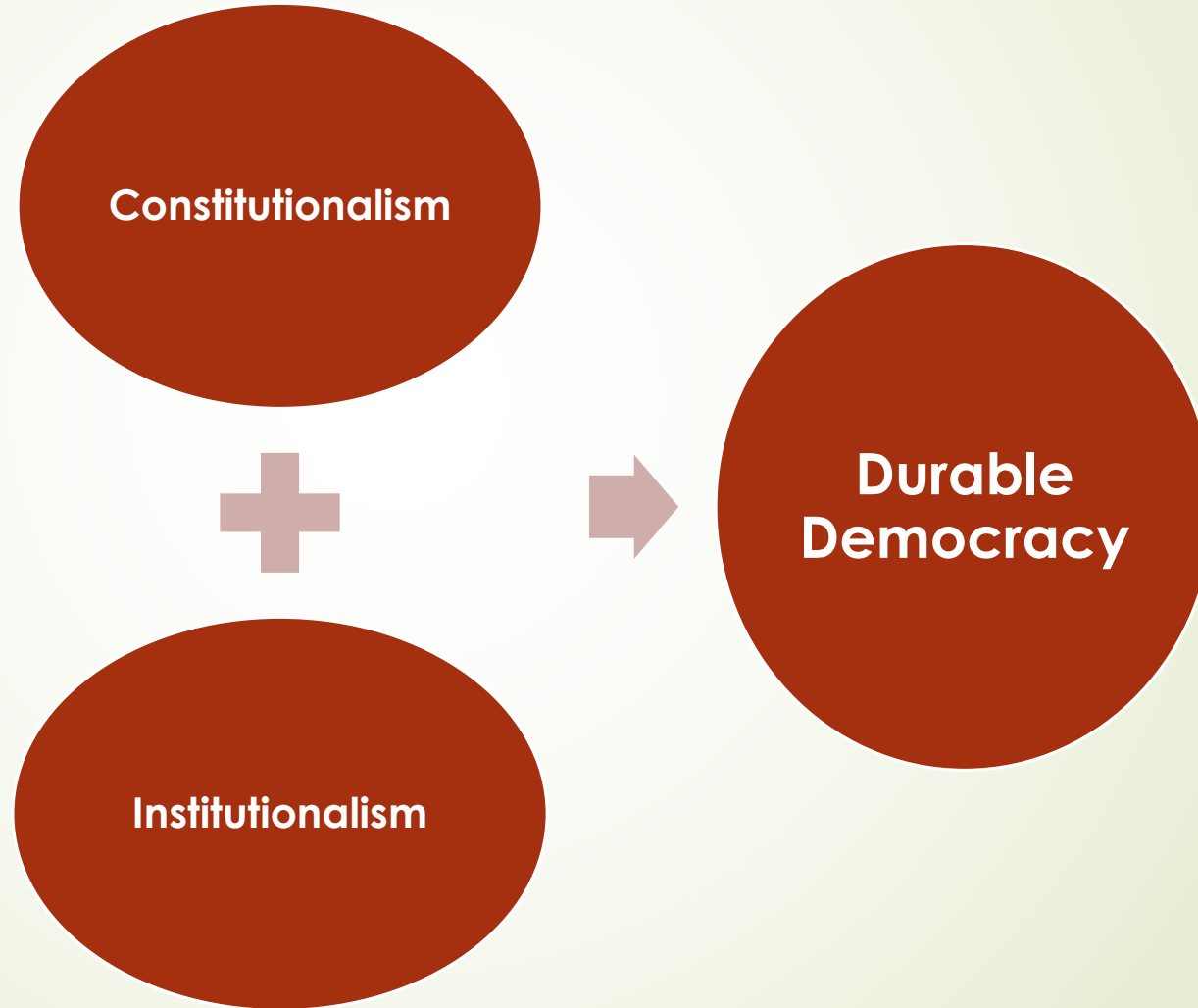
Democracy is Politics of Remedies



Concluding Remarks

- To end or at least reduce the frequency of coups, African leaders and their international counterparts or partners must tackle the poor quality of leadership by fostering and incentivizing legitimate governance and democratic values, such as robust socioeconomic opportunities, respect for constitutional term limits, to address and avert the resentments that prompt the kind of protests exploited and co-opted by soldiers to overthrow the incumbent regime.
- The African Union and other regional bodies should be proactive, instead of being exclusively reactive, in identifying and responding to the warning signs of insurrection, such as a lack of socioeconomic opportunities for youth, manipulation of the constitution, and rising insecurity.
- Otherwise, coups in Africa will remain a recurring phenomenon.
- Specific to Guinea and Mali, we need to be pragmatic and not stampede the juntas to hand over. The belief that the ballot (civilian administration) engenders democracy is a myth.
- What is needed is ensuring democratic culture through constitutionalism and institutionalism

Pivots of Durable Democracy





Thank You

A decorative graphic featuring the words "Thank You" in a cursive, red font with a gold outline. The text is surrounded by vibrant red roses and green foliage. Two white doves are positioned above the letters, one near the 'T' and one near the 'Y'. The entire graphic is set against a white background.

