



West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network

STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA

**LEVERAGING THE POWER , INFLUENCE, AND RESOURCES OF CREATIVES TO
PROMOTE AND DEFEND DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA**

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PAUL OSEI-KUFFOUR, NETWORK COORDINATOR, WADEMOS

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Democratic Context
- Effects of Democratic Recession in West Africa
- Opportunities for Democratic Renewal (Is there hope for Democracy?)
- Creatives for Democracy

CONTEXT

Democracy has had its own dimensions

- 1950s and Early 1960s, post colonial independence era - African Countries adopted liberal democracies
- Mid 1960s – 1980s – autocratic governance characterized by civilian or military rule in the form of one-party rule, one-person rule, and military rule
- 1990s – Early 2000s – “the third wave of democratization” characterized by the return of multi-party democracy, popular struggles for fundamental rights,
- Since mid – 2000s, the democratization wave has been in reverse gear –there is a general downward spiral in democracy and a concomitant upward trend towards autocracy.

MANIFESTATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC RECESSION IN WEST AFRICA:

- Military Coup
- Constitutional Coup
- Declining Election integrity
- The contradictory role of digital and social media

MILITARY COUP

- Since the AU inception in 2002, and despite its zero tolerance for UNCG, military coups remain pervasive
- Between 2002 – 2023, 26 successful military coups have occurred in Africa
- The majority of the military coups have occurred in West Africa (13), followed by Central Africa (5), Northern Africa (4), Eastern Africa(3), and Southern Africa (1)



MILITARY COUP

- Since 2019 (last 5 years) 10 successful military coups have occurred in seven countries in Africa:
- 6 of these military coups took place in West Africa
 - Mali (2020; 2021)
 - Guinea (2021)
 - Burkina Faso (Feb, 2022; Sept 2022)
 - Niger (2023)
- In addition, there have been unsuccessful military coups in in Niger (2021); Guinea Bissau (2022; 2023); Mali 2022, The Gambia (2022), Burkina Faso (2023) and Sierra Leone (2023)



CONSTITUTIONAL COUP (TERM ELONGATION)

- A more complex phenomenon of democratic recession has been the executive coups that take the form of **manipulation of constitutions by incumbent heads of states to lengthen their stay in power**
- Between 2002 and 2023, there have been 35 amendments to constitutions in 24 Africa countries (
- The Amendments were successful in 29 cases in 18 countries (that is 80% of the countries) and failed in only 6 cases in 5 countries
- In WA, constitutional manipulation of term limit have taken place in Cote d' Ivoire (2020), Guinea (2020), and Togo (2019 / 2024) causing violence due to protest and closing the space for competitive electoral politics



DIMINISHING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

- Politicization of EMBs remains the single most dangerous threat to electoral integrity and a major trigger for democratic decline (Trust in EMBs is all time low according to the Afrobarometer)
- Often, elections in Africa tend to be violent resulting in loss of lives and destruction of property



DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM

- Digital and social media are a double-edged sword: they open up the space for broader citizens participation, but they also facilitate distortion of the democratic process through misinformation, disinformation, fake news, deep fakes and hate speech



EFFECTS OF DEMOCRATIC RECESSION

Worsening HR Situation and Civic Space

- In Burkina Faso, we are seeing the compulsory deployment of activist to the battle field to fight terrorist and insurgents for expressing any form of dissent
- In march this year, Human Rights Watch reported that soldiers killed at least 223 villagers including at least 56 children in two attacks on February 25 in Burkina Faso
- Suspension of several international media outlets, including the BBC, Deutsche Welle, The Guardian, Voice of America, Le Monde, and others, due to their coverage of a HRW report accusing the army of attacks on civilians in the battle against rebels.
- In Mali, we are witnessing the suspension of all political parties activities following demands from numerous political parties and civil society groups for presidential elections to restore constitutional order

EFFECTS OF DEMOCRATIC RECESSION

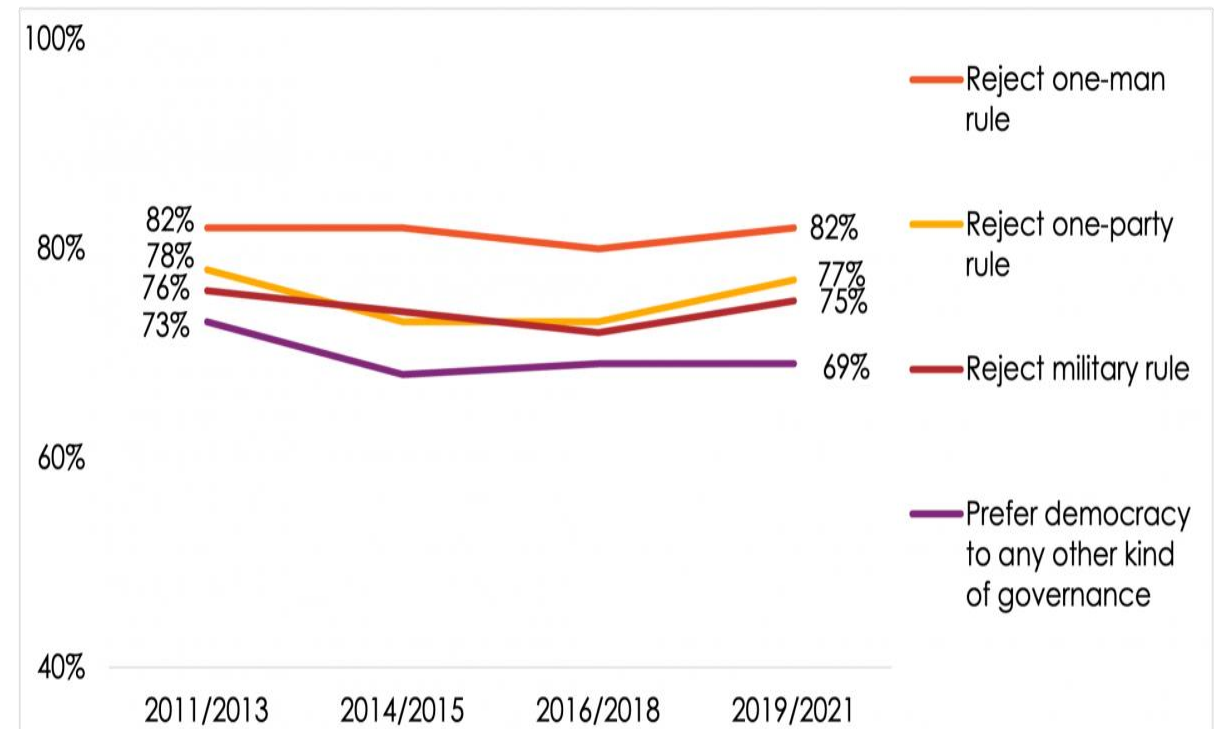
GEO-POLITICAL INTEREST

- Russian – French Rivalry in West Africa and the Sahel undermining effective coordination of peace and security in the Sahel and coastal West Africa
- Dominance of the Wagner Group (now Africa Corps) in the Sahel with implications for security and human rights concerns.
- Proposed “Sahel Exit” threatens regional integration and weakening the legitimacy of ECOWAS (stalled transitions)



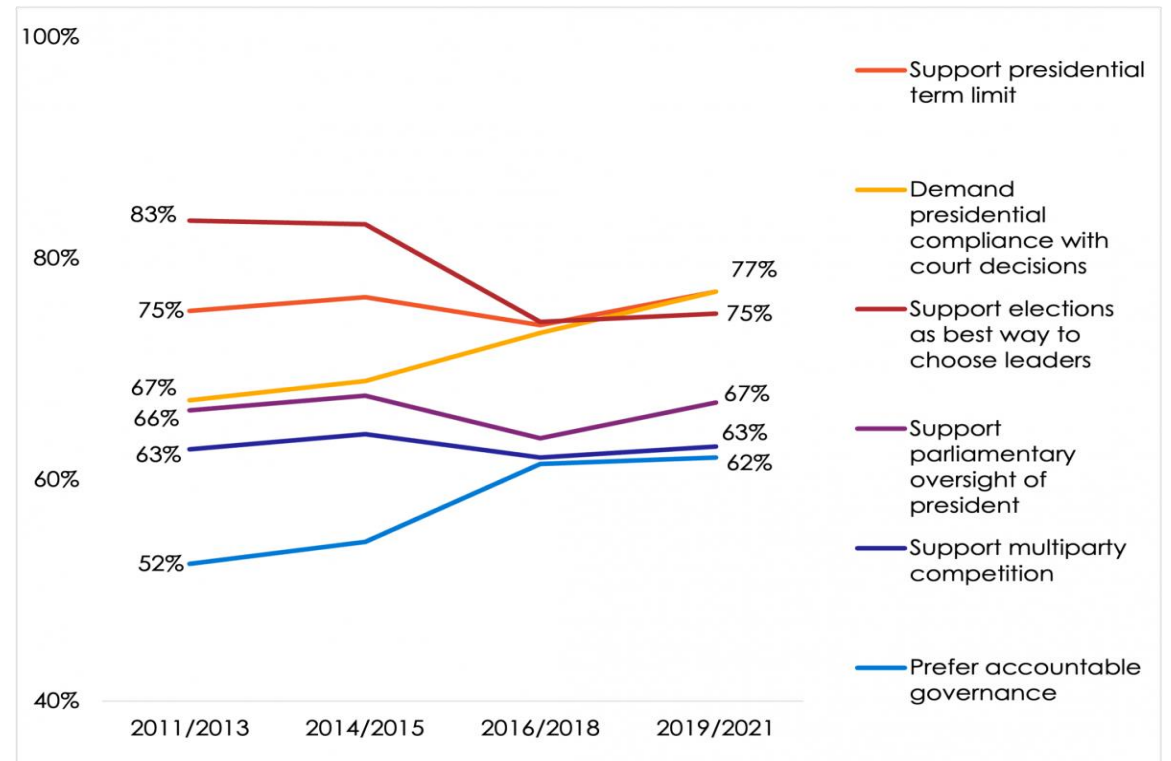
IS THERE HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA?

- Democracy continues to remain the preferred form of governance despite the challenges (Afrobarometer)



IS THERE HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA?

■ Support for Democratic Norms and Institutions



IS THERE HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA?

- Successful electoral outcomes in Liberia and Senegal. Both elections witnessed the peaceful transfer of power to the opposition in these countries



IS THERE HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA?

- ECOWAS intention to review its Protocols and Normative Frameworks to strengthen capacity and resilience for democracy, peace and security in West Africa (Term Limit)
- Interventions and efforts towards mediating the exit of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS



IS THERE HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA?

- Active Youthful Population willing to engage meaningfully in democratic processes including the use of the digital space for activism



CREATIVES FOR DEMOCRACY

- DEMO-CREATIVES have been part of the democratic struggle
- WADEMOS as a Solidarity Movement for Democracy
- Mobilizing and harnessing the resources, voice and power of CSOs, Young People, Diaspora, Social Movements, DEMOCREATIVES to promote and protect democratic norms and values - human rights and respect for the rule of law, gender rights, disability rights, peace and security and advocacy against corruption and bad governance



CREATIVES FOR DEMOCRACY

- CREATIVES are critical to this partnership as they connect individuals with their community, create conversations, raise awareness, and, most of all, speak against the ills of their government using various platforms and content



CONCLUSION

- Fela Aníkúlápó Kuti – *“if you are in England, music can be an instrument for enjoyment, you can sing about love, you can sing about whom you are going to bed with. But in my own environment, my society is underdeveloped because of an alien system on our people, so there is no music enjoyment, there is nothing like love. There is something like struggle for people’s existence”*

