The Re-emergence of Military Coups in Africa

An Analysis of the African Union Response to the Unconstitutional Change of Government in Chad in 2021

Mamadou Jawo
Abstract

In April 2021, the military in Chad seized power upon the death of its President Idriss Deby whiles in the field fighting the rebel group Fighters of the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT). By the end of 2021, soldiers had toppled elected governments in Mali, Guinea Conakry, and Sudan. The African Union and its relevant sub-regional organizations reacted by suspending all the countries above from participating in its activities as provided for in its constitutive act with a curious exception of Chad. Using a qualitative content approach of the African Union Peace and Security Council communiques and press releases, this research investigates the factors that influenced this inconsistent response of the AU. The central argument that is defended in this research is that the African Union put security considerations ahead of good governance by considering the unique security challenges in the Sahel region and Lake Chad Basin and the importance a stable Chad plays in the sub-regional fight against violent extremism. This is reinforced by the influence of France’s support to the military in Chad, the silent of the sub-regional economic community of Central Africa on the ongoing situation in Chad and a divided Peace and Security Council of the African Union. This thesis employs constructivism and rational choice theory as a theoretical framework.

Keywords: Chad, Suspend, Sanction, Intervention, Constitutive act, Pragmatism, Principle

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

On January 24th, 2022, the military in Burkina Faso overthrew President Roch Marc Christian Kabore’s government and in the preceding 18 months, military leaders have toppled the governments of Mali, Chad, Guinea, and Sudan. Mali Experienced two military coups between August 2020 and May 2021 (Maclean, 2022). The latest one of these waves of coups was the Burkina Faso’s which took place on 24th January 2022. One month later, in February, the African Union held its 35th summit in Addis Ababa and decided to suspend all the countries mentioned above with a curious exception of Chad. Curious because instead of suspending Chad, the AU opted to go against its long-standing anti Unconstitutional Change of Government (UCG) normative stance by accepting the Transitional Military Council of Chad 18 months’ timetable to organize elections and hand over power to a civilian government. It is this inconsistent response by the AU that informed the basis of this thesis.

Souare (2014) has credited the decline of military coups in Africa to the adoption of the Lomé declaration in 2000 (which took a tough stance against unconstitutional changes of government). However recent events (2021 to 2022) suggest a re-emergence of military coups in the continent. This is evident in the words of Bankole Adeoye, head of the AU’s Peace and Security Council whiles speaking to reporters at the 35th AU summit. While emphasizing the Union’s position on military coups, he said “Do your research: at no time in the history of the African Union have we had four countries in one calendar year, in 12 months, been suspended. Every African leader in the assembly has condemned unequivocally the wave of unconstitutional changes of government” (African Union condemns ‘wave’ of military coups, 2022). It is obvious that this statement shows that there is a re-emergence of military coups in Africa and that dealing with such unconstitutional change of government is back to the top of the Union’s agenda.

Even though the context and circumstances in which the unconstitutional change of government in Chad, in 2021, occurred is unique to all the other countries mentioned above, what is similar though is that they both did not follow constitutional provisions resulting in military governments. This thesis seeks to analyze the African Union response to the foregoing
unconstitutional change of government in Chad. Instead of suspending Chad, at its 1016th meeting, the Peace and Security Council of the AU expressed satisfaction in the progress made by the Transitional Military Council thus far. Noting that, ‘there can be no sustainable military solution’ to the crisis in Chad and urge the transitional regime to respect the 18-month transition period (PSC/PR/COMM.1016(2021), 2021). This has raised a lot of question as to why the AU did not suspend Chad after the military seized power, suspended the constitution and dissolve both the cabinet and parliament. This thesis will delve into the reasons behind this decision.

For the purposes of this thesis, the terms: military coups and unconstitutional changes of government will be used interchangeably but they only refer to an ascension to political power (government in this case) that does not follow constitutional provisions as a result, halt normal democratic processes. This definition is adopted from the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which define UCL as a putsch, or coup d’état against a democratically elected government; interventions by mercenaries directed at replacing a democratically elected government; armed dissidents or rebels replacement of a democratically elected government and the refusal to relinquish power by incumbent government to a winning candidate after free, fair and regular elections (African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance- Article 23 (1-4)). This is only done so in order to avoid confusion and should be read as referring to the same.

1.1 Background

The involvement of the military in civilian political affairs in the African continent is as old as the continent itself. Post-independence came with the advent of a wave of military coups. Soldiers changing their military attire for civilian clothes become common. The military took center stage in civilian political processes and the culture of coups outlived the arm struggle for independence. Even though the military constitute an important part of a state, democracy requires that as an institution, the military is discouraged from interfering in civilian political affairs (Phakathi, 2018: p. 130).

Military coups have been so prevalent throughout the political history of Africa, post-independence, such that non acceptance of undemocratic change of government has become a
particular African notion of democracy protection and promotion which differs substantially from other regions (Julia, 2015).

A total of eighty-eight successful military coups occurred in Africa between 1952 and 2012 out of which, only ten of those coups occurred after the adoption of the Lomé Declaration in July 2000 by the defunct Organization for African Unity (OAU) which effectively ban military coups and use sanctions against regimes that came to power through unconstitutional means. These statistics led to the argument that military coups are on the decline (Souare, 2014).

Realizing the challenges military coups pose to the continent’s security, economic and social stability, and the inadequacy of the OAU which in its founding charter focused on five thematic areas: promotion of unity and solidarity amongst member states, facilitating cooperation amongst member states to better the life of Africans, eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa and promote international cooperation, the African Union (AU) was launched in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002- two years after the signing of the Constitutive Act (the framework through which the AU will conduct itself). The prominence and emphasis placed on the establishment of peace, security and stability and the promotion of democratic principles and institutions, popular participation, and good governance in the Constitutive Act signaled a fundamental shift in terms of the role(s) the new African Union will play in transnational governance in the continent (Phakathi, 2018).

Arguably, the African Union came to be partly because of the numerous security challenges that the continent was faced with couple with the unending culture of overthrowing democratically elected governments by the military. It is against this backdrop that “The Constitutive Act not only provides for the condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of government (Art. 4(p)) but gives the Union teeth to take action against such regimes by enabling it to prohibit essentially illegitimate governments from participating further in its activities (Art. 30)” (Packer et al, 2002).

Collectively, the constitutive act and the African charter on democracy, elections and governance were all adopted by member states to empower the African Union to enforce constitutional order of governance and change of government throughout the African continent. For one month (11th April to 9th May 2021), a rebel group called the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) started an insurgency in northern Chad. This insurgency started on
the day of a high-stake Presidential election held on 11th April 2021. Nine days later, the incumbent President, Idriss Deby was killed visiting soldiers in the besieged region bringing to an end a Presidency that spanned three decades. On the same day, the Chadian military led by General Mahamat Idriss Deby (son to the late President) took over the government. He suspended the constitution, dissolved the parliament and cabinet, and named a Transitional Military Council (TMC) composed of fifteen Generals headed by a civilian Prime Minister. In Chad, this move was condemned with mass civilian protests. The African Union Peace and Security Council in reaction, convened in Ethiopia on the 22nd of April 2021 and in their communique expressed ‘grave concern with respect to the establishment of the Military Transitional Council’ (PSC/BR/COMM.2(CMXCIII), 2021). The communique went further to urge them (the Chadian defense and security forces) ‘to respect the constitutional mandate and order’ of Chad.

Transnational efforts to curb the phenomenon of military coups in Africa led by the African Union since its founding in 2001 has been a subject of many studies. The work of Issa K. Souare (2014) argued how the anti-coup norm of the AU has helped to reduce the occurrence of military coups in Africa. Mlungisi Phakathi (2018) studied the AU’s response to the coups in Burkina Faso in 2015 and Zimbabwe in 2017 with a view to assess the Union’s consistency in its response to unconstitutional change of government. He argued that inconsistencies in the AU response to such situations has a potential of creating instability in Africa.

“By declaring unconstitutional changes of government unacceptable, anachronistic and undesirable, the AU was creating or entrenching the norm of democratic political change” (Phakathi, 2018: p. 129).

Since the adoption of the Lomé declaration, the constitutive act and the African charter on democracy, elections and governance, the AU has taken different measures within the provisions of the act and charter in its attempt to restore constitutional order in member states where this process is violated.
1.2 The African Union Policy Position on Unconstitutional Change of Government

The AU recognizing the challenges that unconstitutional change of government poses to the overall security and stability of the African continent adopted various mechanisms to cope with this unwanted and unconstitutional means of changing governments usually through military coups. It is in this spirit that the Union adopted the Lomé declaration also called the constitutive act in July 2000 and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in January 2007.

By definition, the Lomé Declaration and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance considers four situations ‘as constituting instances of’ unconstitutional change of government and these are: “Military coup d’état against a democratically elected government; intervention by mercenaries to replace a democratically elected government; replacement of democratically elected governments by armed dissident groups and rebel movements and the refusal by an incumbent government to relinquish power to the winning political party after free, fair and regular elections. Article 23(5) of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance adds a fifth situation: ‘Any amendment or revision of the constitution or legal instruments, which is an infringement on the principles of democratic change’” (Souare, 2009: p. 2).

The African union, cognizant of the fact that it is not just enough to define what constitute an unconstitutional change of government in its drive to eradicate the culture of removing democratically elected governments through unconstitutional means, went further to elaborate on the decisive stance the Union should take in such situations as contain in its Lomé Declaration and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. These steps are: the current chairperson of the AU should immediately release a statement condemning the UCG publicly on behalf of the Union and request for consistent actions from all partners including sub-regional actors; as a matter of urgency, the Peace and Security Council of the AU should meet and discourse the issue; the country where the UCG happened should promptly be suspended from participating in the activities of the Union and the ‘new authorities’ should be given a maximum of six months to organize elections and handover power; in an attempt to get the new authorities to cooperate with the AU to restore democratic order, the AU will remain in close contact with them; if at the expiration of the six months, the new authorities refuse to organize elections and handover power, the AU should then proceed
to sanction the regime. To avoid a situation of ‘auto-legitimation’, the African Charter on Democracy and Governance adds that ‘the perpetrators of unconstitutional change of government shall not be allowed to participate in elections held to restore the democratic order or to hold any position of responsibility in political institutions of their state’ (Souare, 2009: p. 3).

‘Auto-legitimation’ was so prevalent in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) era that a significant number of heads of states in the continent were considered to retain power through what the charter refers to as ‘auto-legitimation’. The military often overthrew democratically elected governments, run a transition period, and organize and participate in elections that they end up emerging as winners. This was the situation in Gambia in 1994, in Ghana in 1981, in Chad in 1982, in Libya in 1969 known as the al-Fateh Revolution and so on. This phenomenon is an indication of the reason behind the banning of ‘auto-legitimation’ in the African Charter on Democracy and Governance. Even though this provision has had significant effect on transitions to constitutional order in countries going through unconstitutional change of government, the African Union has been frustrated in some instances. The case of Francois Bozize in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2005 and Marc Ravalomanana in Madagascar in 2002 is a good example. Bozize came to power through military coup in 2003, organized elections in 2005 in which he participated and won. The African Union failed to prevent this and remain silent over this ‘auto-legitimation’. However, in Mauritania in 2008, the AU through its Peace and Security Council took a position to prevent the perpetrators of the military coup from participating in elections by laying down conditions to accepting the transition period. The efficiency of the AU in implementing its policy framework against unconstitutional change of government was again questioned with the view that the Union is inconsistent in its application of its policies (Souare, 2009). While Souare (2009) and Phakathi (2018) are critical of the AU inconsistencies when responding to situations of unconstitutional change of government and contend that this inconsistency has rendered the Union inefficient in its drive to eliminate the culture of changing governments through unconstitutional means, they have not looked at the complexity of this situation and the multiplicity of factors that the Union is faced with when deciding how to respond to these situations.

The table below shows the African Union decisions on instances of unconstitutional change of government for the past two decades since its inception through the Constitutive Act.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Nature Of the Change in Power</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>PSC Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>Francois Bozize, with the help of mercenaries overthrows President Andre Kolingba</td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>At the death of Gnassingbé Eyadema, Faure Gnassingbé comes to power with the support of the military and after a controversial revision of the constitution</td>
<td>February 2005</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>A military junta led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall overthrows President Maaouïya Ould Taya</td>
<td>August 2005</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>Sidi Ould Cheick Abdallah is overthrown by Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, head of the presidential guard</td>
<td>August 2008</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>Captain Moussa Dadis Camara takes power following the death of Lansana Conté</td>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>Suspension within five days at a second meeting of the PSC on Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>Part of the army overthrows president Marc Ravalomanana and brings Andry Rajoelina to power</td>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>Mamadou Tandja is overthrown by soldiers</td>
<td>February 2010</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Soldiers overthrow president Amani Toumani Touré</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>Soldiers overthrow interim president Raimundo Pereira</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>Rebels overthrow president François Bozizé</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
<td>Immediate suspension and sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Soldiers led by Marshal Abdel Fattah el-Sisi overthrow president Mohamed Morsi</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>General Gilbert Diendéré and elements under his command briefly overthrow transitional president Michel Kafando</td>
<td>September 2015</td>
<td>Immediate suspension and sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>The Military deposed Omar al-Bashir</td>
<td>April 2019</td>
<td>Delayed suspension. Eventually suspended after 60 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Soldiers deposed Ibrahim Boubacar Keita</td>
<td>August 2020</td>
<td>Immediate suspension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ISS/PSC Report, 2021
1.3 Relevance of the Research

In 2020, Africa recorded one military coup. This occurred in Mali in August 2020. Up from one, four successful military takeovers happened across the continent in 2021. These events have sparked a debate on the resurgence of military takeovers in African politics (Durmaz, 2021) and the AU’s role in continental level efforts to curb the resurgence of military coups. The rise of this military takeovers has provoked responses from the international community. The African Union continue to take a leading role in this regard.

There is a general assumption that military coups and military regimes decreases the level of democracy, heightens human rights violations, and undermines the peace and stability of the African continent. However, these are values upon which rest the very foundation of the African Union according to its founding documents and other charters. The resurgence of military coups has then threatened the fundamental ideals of the very foundation of the AU. Even though the African Union has been virtually involved in terms of response and interventions in all these military coups, the Union failure to suspend Chad after soldiers took over the government has prompted various criticisms directed at the AU in what has been termed as double standard and inconsistency on the part of the Union. As a student of Global Politics, there has not been a more interesting time to study transnational processes aimed at responding to unconstitutional change of government in the African continent.

It is the goal of this thesis to contribute to the growing academic literature on the African Union and its numerous interventions but with particular focus on the factors that influence the AU decision to intervene or not to intervene in such situations.

1.4 The Research Question

The recent upsurge of unconstitutional change of government through military coups in Africa have provoked debate among scholars, commentators, and media outlets on the future of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism in the continent. While this debate is on, the Economist in an article titled ‘As Sudan’s government wobbles, coups are making a comeback’ observe that 2021 has seen more coups than “the previous five years combined” (The Economist, 2021). Faucon et al (2021) in their article for the Wall Street Journal, ‘Military
Coups in Africa at Highest Level Since End of Colonialism’, contend that coups in Africa have reached their “highest level since end of colonialism” (Faucon et al, 2021). These occurrences have put the African Union under sharp scrutiny once again. While these debates continue, this thesis seeks to answer the vital question:

1). What are the factors that influence the African Union decision to not suspend Chad after the military takeover?

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in five chapters. In chapter one, I present an introduction to the thesis covering the recent re-emergence of military coups in Africa and how the African Union has responded to them so far. This chapter sets the scene and introduce the puzzle that this thesis is investigating. In addition, in order to ensure this section creates a clear focus and direction of the thesis, a brief history of how events unfolded in Chad leading to the death of its former President which culminated in the military seizure of power is also explained. This subsection is followed by a close look at the African Union policy towards unconstitutional change of government highlighting the relevant provisions that should guide the Union in its response to such situations. This part is intended to expose that the AU response to the unconstitutional change of government in Chad was inconsistent with its normative provisions as enshrined in its policy documents. The chapter concludes with a close look at the relevance of the study to the field of Global Politics and the research question at the center of this thesis.

In chapter two, I presented the literature review. The existing literature surveyed is presented in three thematic areas base on ongoing debates. Intervention by the AU or the lack of it is a well contested area in academic debates. The three themes identified from the existing literature where: interventions and state sovereignty, intervention and its negative consequences and the lack of political will affecting the African Union intervention ambitions. This chapter concludes by observing the gap in the existing research and aim to fill it by addressing the factors that influenced the AU response in the foregoing unconstitutional change of government in Chad. I argue that the AU operates in a volatile and complex environment, and it is important to measure the Union’s action in the context in which they are produced. Chapter three looks at the theoretical framework. It highlights the two theories that I utilize to help aid my analysis, the reason why I use them and their criticism. In Chapter four, I present the
research design and methodology of this thesis. It covers the source of data and how this data was analyzed and also the limitation of the method of choice. In chapter five, I present the analysis of the findings of the thesis by looking at the factors that influenced the nature of the African Union response to the unconstitutional change of government in Chad. This chapter ends with a conclusion that summarizes the major findings of the thesis and how that contributes to the academic literature on the African Union interventions.
2.0 Introduction

Whether it is in times of civil war or military coups, insurgencies by armed militia’s or disputes arising from election results, the African Union has intervened widely in member states domestic affairs throughout its two decades of existence now. Just as its many interventions, there is equally huge volume of literature on these interventions. In order to fully grasp why the AU fail to suspend Chad after the military coup in 2021, it is important to review some of the research conducted by various scholars on the AU’s numerous interventions but most importantly, to situate it in the ongoing debates around the Union’s interventions. Recent debates on the African Union interventions revolves around the challenges of intervention. Taking a closer look at these literatures, these challenges can further be categorized into three thematic areas: interventions and state sovereignty, intervention and its negative consequences and lack of political will. The following sections will explore these thematic areas in detail.

This thesis is with the view that as a continental actor, the African Union with all its mandate to intervene in member countries when the need arises, its intervention ambitions is influenced by numerous factors. Notwithstanding, it is still useful to present the scholarly views around existing debates on the African Union interventions to enlighten our position and views.

2.1 Intervention and State Sovereignty

Former Secretary General and now late, Kofi Annan, once argued that: if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica – to gross and systemic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity? (Millennium report 48, 2000, cited in Jennifer et al, 2002). Sovereignty and intervention have been a long-contested idea in modern international society since the advent of the treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Even though the United Nations loudly echoes the idea of ‘sovereign equality’- in this case state sovereignty in articles 2(1), 2(4) and 2(7), “in its preamble and article 1(3) and elaborated in subsequent declarations and conventions, suggests that individual rights are inalienable and transcend sovereign frontiers” (Jennifer et al, 2002). Consequently, the debate revolts around ‘right versus responsibility. In their article ‘The Responsibility to Protect: Assessing the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty’, Jennifer et al (2002) argues that when external interventions are viewed as ‘rights versus responsibility’ and when states are unwilling
or unable to protect their citizens, “coercive external engagement inside a state no longer appears illegitimate” (Jennifer et al, 2002: p. 493). Penelope C. Simons in his article ‘Humanitarian Intervention: A Review of Literature’ echoed similar view that “… human rights can no longer be considered a purely domestic concern and the concept of sovereignty cannot be used by governments to shield themselves from responsibility for gross violations of these rights, or from shirking their obligations with respect to the protection and treatment of civilians in situations of intra-state conflict” (Simons, n.d.). This is to say that while sovereignty of states remains a cornerstone of the international system, it cannot be use by states to shield themselves from being held responsible for the wrongs that happen within the confinement of their borders. The ‘Responsibility to Protect’ citizens is undoubtedly a mandate of states but where they fail, the international community is obliged to act. The ‘non-indifference’ approach of the African Union to its member countries domestic crisis as enshrined in the constitutive act of the AU is the African equivalent of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ norm.

2.2 Interventions and Its Negative Consequences

Aning and Salihu (2011) in their study of “Accountability for Intervention” argued that even though interventions by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States are premised on the responsibility to protect civilians in conflict situations, there has been widespread human rights violations meted on civilians by interveners with little to no accountability mechanisms. The authors pointed out that in Liberia and Sierra Leone, violations such as sexual exploitation and abuse, arbitrary deprivation of life, human trafficking, corruption, illegal arms deals, selling fuel and other supplies in the local black market, and stealing or looting of properties of locals by peacekeepers were pervasive. This has provoked a debate on the negative consequences of interventions of the AU and the organization’s lack of mechanisms to hold its peacekeepers accountable. (Anning and Salihu, 2011).

Another interesting perspective of the debate around intervention and its negative consequences hails in Dursun Peksen (2012) work ‘Does Foreign Military Intervention Help Human Rights?’ In this article, the author developed two hypotheses, namely: ‘Supportive interventions increase the level of human rights abuses in target countries’ and ‘Neutral interventions contribute to the rise of human rights abuses in target countries’. Peksen (2012),
citing the South Africa and Botswana interventions in the Lesotho crisis in 1998 contend that human rights violations increase significantly with ‘supportive interventions’. The author argued that such interventions give target governments political credibility and increases a target government ‘coercive capability’. In the case of Lesotho, this led to gross human rights violations which “reportedly included arbitrary detentions, arrests, and extra judicial killings of the members of the opposition parties (Amnesty International, 1998, cited in Peksen, 2012).

Regarding the second hypothesis, Peksen citing the case of Rwanda contend that the failure of the United Nations to act decisively to intervene in the Rwanda and Bosnia crisis, emboldened the perpetrators to become more aggressive. Failure to intervene decisively creates a mindset in the perpetrators that the ‘international community is unlikely to punish them through military means in the event of mass murder and violence (Peksen, 2012: p. 560).

Peksen (2011) argued further in his work, ‘Foreign military intervention and women’s right’, that whiles ‘policymakers in the USA and other Western capitals’ often contend that interventions are meant to protect or in some instances restore women’s rights as was the case in President George W Bush’s State of the Union Address in January 2002 by arguing that the dire situation of women in Afghanistan necessitated the US invasion. However, the author argued that when it comes to ‘unilateral interventions’ ‘gender-based’ literature holds a different view arguing that interventions can be ‘counterproductive and further diminish women’s vulnerable status through intensification of violence and the militarization of society (Enloe, 2000; Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002; Tickner, 2002; Bunch, 2002; Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002; Al-Ali, 2007, Cited in Peksin, 2011: p. 456).

Unlike ‘unilateral interventions’ where a state intervenes directly in another state’s domestic affairs, Peksun (2011) argued further those interventions sanctioned by International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) are ‘less detrimental to women’s status’ because of its international nature and multiple participants that are more concern with the protection of women’s right. Because of this awareness and commitment to women fundamental human rights, target governments are constantly pressured to uphold basic fundamental human rights and more so the rights of women’s by ‘transnational advocacy groups and international organizations’ (Sikkink, 1993; Moravesik, 1995; keck & Sikkink, 1998; Joachim, 2003; Adams & kank, 2007; Murdie & Davis, 2011, cited in Peksin, 2011: p. 458).
2.3 Lack of Political Will

Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, submitting a report to the UN General Assembly in 1999 “identified political will as the fundamental barrier to intervention in the Rwandan genocide” (Wheeler, 2000, cited in Tesfaye, 2012).

Aaron Tesfaye in his work “The African Union, State Sovereignty, and the Responsibility to Protect Civilians” alluded to the lack of political will on the side of African leaders in committing the necessary personnel and resources required by the African Union and its sub-regional organizations in situations that requires the AU’s intervention. Further buttressing on the reason for the lack of political will, the author posited that “political will is often lacking because most leaders have skeletons in their closets and do not want to be next in line for intervention” (Tesfaye, 2012). Tieku (2007) offer similar view arguing that repressive regimes with poor human rights records in Africa are less supportive of the AU’s interventions in crisis situations (Tieku, 2007: p. 33)

Meanwhile, the author of “The African Union, R2P and the Challenges of Capability”, Ebere R Adigbuo (2019) echoed similar sentiments of lack of political will from African leaders. Quoting the Mauritanian President, Mohammed Ould Abdel Aziz’s refusal to commit troops to the AU’s intervention mission in Mali citing the complexities of the situation as a reason for his position, Adigbuo argued that interventions by the AU are beset by a lack of political will (Adigbuo, 2019).

Tim Murithi (2012) in his work ‘Between Reactive and proactive interventionism: The African Union Peace and Security Council’s engagement in the Horn of Africa’ postulate that while the AU through its framework to manage and prevent conflict is not just Pan-Africanist but a useful way to solve the many crises the African continent is faced with, “it will only be achieved if there is the genuine political will to do so”. By way of illustration, Murithi argued that “While the AU PSC’s interventionism is laudable, the cases of Somalia and Sudan reveal that member states of the African Union have not always committed sufficient resources to ensure and conduct robust operations” (Murithi, 2012: p. 108). The commitment of the African Union to resolve conflicts in Africa through the adoption of the non-indifference principal - a normative
shift from the non-intervention posture of the OAU to the ‘responsibility to protect’ as
contained in the constitutive act of the AU – and the interventions of the AU in Mali, Guinea
Conakry, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Somalia, Darfur and so on is a testimony to the Union’s
willingness to intervene in crisis situation. But the African Union does not exist in vacuum.
The Union and its organs are created and made up of its member states. It draws resources from
its members and the failure of these missions is a testament to the lack of commitment to the
very principles and ideals that Heads of member states sign and continue to disregard (Murithi,
2012).

It is also important to underscore that the Capacity of the AU to intervene in any political crisis
depends largely on the capacity and willingness of its member states to provide the necessary
personnel and resources for such interventions (Sharamao and Ayangafac, 2011: pp. 5) and
since most African states are at the risk of and battling instabilities in the form of civil wars
and rebellion, such domestic commitments affects states political will to commit extra
resources towards other AU interventions. This is further affected by powerful states, such as
Ethiopia, Nigeria, Algeria, and South Africa struggles with internal political struggles. The
instability and domestic challenges of these states further weaken their political commitment
to contribute personnel and finance to other interventions of the AU (Moller, 2009).

Economic weaknesses couple with other domestic crisis led Sesay (2008) to question the ability
of African states to generate the needed resources ‘to create domestic cohesion on matters of
political power and economic distribution and at the same time pursue regional and continental
goals’

2.4 Conclusion

Even though the foregoing debates are important, they have not touched on the factors that
influence the AU decision to suspend a country or otherwise in the wake of an unconstitutional
change of government. It is in this context that this thesis seeks to investigate the rationale
behind the AU’s decision to not suspension Chad after the military take over in 2021 and by
doing so, this research will be filling this gap in the existing academic literature.
Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

3.0 Introduction

In order to adequately investigate why the African Union fail to suspend Chad and in order to explore this question in relation to the factors that influenced this decision of the AU, this thesis will utilize two theories to help me in my analysis.

First, this thesis will take an in-depth look at Constructivism theory. This theory will help in understanding the ideational aspect of the decisions to intervene or not. The second theory that this thesis will utilize is the Rational Choice Theory. This theory will help to explain the choices made by the African Union in relation to the subject of the thesis. In order to avoid shallow analysis as I seek answers to the AU decision to suspend Chad, these two theories will be useful in giving an adequate insight to the findings of this research.

3.1 Constructivism

In order to have an adequate appreciation of constructivism, it is important to first present briefly its contrast but also dominant theories in international relations; neorealism and neoliberalism. As a background, I present the basic assumptions of these two models before proceeding with the actual theory I will rely on for the purpose of this thesis.

Unlike constructivism which focuses to a considerable extent on consciousness and its influence in international relations, neorealists posits that the international system is characterize by the distribution of material power such as military and economic capabilities (Jackson and Sorensen, 2006). According to Baylis (2005), neorealist see cooperation as a means through which powerful states dominate weaker states. Baylis (2005) and Baldwin (1993) argued that since states naturally pursue their interest and that these states composing the international system have narrow selfish interest leading them to pursue material power, cooperation amongst and between states if not impossible, is at least difficult to sustain.

Neoliberalism which gained prominence around the end of the eighteenth century shares the view of realism that a state’s behavior is influence by her material interests in general but
economic interests in particular. Neoliberalists argue in line with the rationalist view that states pursue cooperation over competition only if they all stand to benefit from that cooperation (Hurd, 2008). They argue that states will voluntarily cooperate in as much as that cooperation will not leave them worst off by calculating the costs and benefits. Even though self-interest is a cornerstone in the international system, neoliberalists still place emphasis on states pursuing cooperation rather than competition because the former is more favorable (Keohane, 1988).

Constructivism was introduced to the study of International Relations by Nicholas Onuf. Onuf, who coined the term constructivism in his book World of Our Making (1989) and Alexander Wendt are the leading proponents of this theory. At the heart of constructivism is the argument that significant aspects of international relations are shaped by ideational and not material factors and that these factors are constructed historically and socially.

For constructivist, the international system is not to be understood and studied as something ‘out there’ like the solar system because it does not exist on its own. It is a human invention of an ideational kind. And since the international system is shape by ideas and thoughts, international relations change if the very ideas and thoughts that shape the system change. This is the “… insight behind the oft-repeated phrase by constructivist Alexander Wendt: anarchy is what states make of it (1992)” (Jackson and Sorensen, 2010: p. 160).

According to Stefano Guzzini (2003), “constructivism emphasizes three major inspirations of recent theorizing, namely the interpretivist, sociological and linguistic turns in the social sciences” (Guzzini, 2003: p. 2). He argued that it is on the basis of this ‘triple’ facets that constructivism’s commitment can be understood. In line with the interpretivism version of constructivism, actions that counts as significant in the social world can only be understand if they are interpreted (Guzzini, 2003: p. 2).

In his work Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics, Wendt (1992) illustrates succinctly how ideas influence international relations. To be more precise, he argued that ‘500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons’ (Wendt 1995: p. 73). At the center of this claim is the way perception takes precedents over material power and how it influences relations. The United States in Wendt’s analogy is more wary of the insignificant number of nuclear weapons in North Korea’s position- 5 compared to the 500 nuclear weapons in the British possession.
This according to Wendt is made possible because the US perceive Britain as a friend and North Korea as a foe. Wendt’s conclusion is that such a view emanates from the historical, rhetorical, and behavioral interpretations of the US social relations with Britain, on the one hand, and North Korea on the other. Therefore, material factors are only influential depending on the context of the idea in which they exist. And that historical and behavioral factors are important in how actors relate in the international system.

A critical element about actors in the lens of constructivism is identity and to a certain extent, this identity shape the actions of actors. According to Hopf (1998) contends that identities forms the interest of an actor in a given situation with respect to other actors and that this interest is reflected in choices actors take (1998: p. 175). The AU has created a norm and an identity as a non-tolerant to unconstitutional change of government regional body over the years.

Just like anyother theory, constructivism has also received a fair share of criticisms. Steans et al (2010) argued that most of the concepts that constructivism operates with, concepts such as norm, identity and institutions are hard to seperate and most of the times unclearly defined (Steans et al, 2010).

3.2 Rational Choice Theory

The Rational Choice Theory (RCT) emerged in the eighteenth century and can be traced back to political economist and philosopher, Adam Smith. Primarily, this theory was used to understand economic and social behavior but also, it can be used as a way of understanding human behavior in a wider context including in political science. At the center of this theory is the investigations of behavior(s) and how choices are arrived at.

According to Satz and Ferejohn (1994), a rational choice or action is one that involves an agent taking an action that reflects the agent’s beliefs and preferences out of the available option. This view of the Rational Choice Theory is sometimes individualistic or better still internalist. Taken at this level, it seeks to explain the mental thought process of an actor in making a decision. This makes the model also psychological (Satz & Ferejohn, 1994: p. 71). However, there is also a vital component or factor to this model and that is the environment. This is the
externalist feature of the Rational Choice Theory. The features of the environment in which the actor is determines the psychological decision-making process of the actor. In order words, “the psychology of the agent in such cases is an entirely imputed one: preferences are derived on the basis of an agent’s location” (Satz & Ferejohn, 1994: p. 72). Therefore, the authors posit that the RCT is most plausible in environments where the actors action is constrained and the theory in itself gets more power from structure-generated interest and not from actual individual psychology.

The choice of interpretation of Rational Choice Theory depends on the question that is been addressed and to a significant extent, the circumstances in which actions are been viewed. However, for this research, I choose to use the externalist approach of the RCT. This is because “the externalist approach to understanding an agent’s interests provides the most useful way to proceed for explanatory purposes. Externalism can illuminate structural relations and causes” (Satz & Ferejohn, 1994: p. 86)

It is true that rationality is fundamental to the Rational Choice Theory, but it does not denote that a person doing what he prefers most. If this surface interpretation of ‘rationality’ is adopted, then that means even a madman can be classified as been rational. “Defining rationality involves very difficult issues of information. Rationality could be defined in such a way that the proposition of rational choice is irrefutable in principle” (Keohane, 2002: p. 308). However, the contention to the Rational Choice Theory is that if rationality equates to actors pursuing actions that meet their preferred goal(s), then a terrorist pursuing his goal of committing mass murder is rational as far as his actions commensurate with his goals. This is however a misconception of the RCT. Beliefs and goals are key components to the RCT but only when put in context as to the process that an actor goes through before arriving at a decision to pursue these beliefs. “An action, to be rational, must be the final result of three optimal decisions. First, it must be the best means of realizing an individual’s desires, given his beliefs. Next, these beliefs must themselves be optimal, given the information available to him and finally, the person must collect an optimal amount of evidence – neither too much nor too little” (Elster, 1989, cited in Keohane, 2002, p. 308).

According to Miles Kahler (1998), “rational choice provides a means to explore the most efficient means to pursue national ends, to attain collectively desirable international outcomes, and to avoid disastrous ones” (Kahler, 1998: p. 941)
In terms of the limitations of the Rational Choice Theory Raymond Boudon (1998) in his work ‘Limitations of Rational Choice Theory’ contend that even though the RCT appears to be an easy and direct theory since an explanation that “subject X has done Y rather Z because Y was more advantageous, we need to know nothing more” (Boudon, 1998: p. 817). However, this does not mean the theory is general and can be used in all studies. According to Boudon (1998), RCT assumes that individual actions are instrumental meaning that an action is explained by the actors’ will to reach a desired goal. When actions are instrumental, they mobilize beliefs and these beliefs need to be explained but according to Boudon, 1998), the RCT is normally unable to explain them suggesting however that “beliefs are the product of self-interest” (Boudon, 1998: p. 818). The constructivism theory is however able to cover this inadequacy as it argues that the social world is a product of ideas and beliefs, and this shape to a considerable extent actors behaviors in a given context.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the theoretical foundation which will help in analyzing the findings of this thesis. The theoretical framework adopted will help to explain the ideational consideration of the African Union and reveal what factors influenced the AU respond to the Unconstitutional Change of Government. At the heart of this decision lies serious considerations and factors that the AU considered. Is it a question of pragmatism over principles that influence the AU’s decision not to suspend Chad after the military takeover? This will be answered in chapter 5, findings, and analysis.
Chapter Four: Method and Research Design

4.0 Introduction

The choice of method and design of a research depends on the research question(s) that is been asked. Since this thesis aims to explore the factors that influenced the African Union decision not to suspend Chad after the unconstitutional change of government that occurred in 2021, the significance of the use of qualitative data to explain these factors cannot be overemphasized. Since inception, The African Union has responded consistently to unconstitutional change of governments in Africa and for the most part with suspensions and sometimes such suspensions are upgraded to sanctions.

This thesis will be pursued from an explanatory approach. According to Halperin and Heath (2020), “explanatory questions generally ask about what is causing or has caused an outcome, or why something exists or has happened” (Halperin & Heath, 2020: pp. 109). Since this thesis intends to find out the factors that caused the nature of the response of the African Union to the on-going unconstitutional regime in Chad, an explanatory approach to answering the research questions is most suitable.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section looks at how data was collected, the second section covers how the collected data was analyzed, the third section looks at the challenges I encountered during this thesis project and the fourth section concludes the chapter.

4.1 Material / Data Collection

Research in general is a process of understanding phenomena or problem. In order to understand these phenomena or problems that are researched, one has to collect data to support his/her argument. Therefore, data remains to be a key component that helps researchers in their analysis.

According to Halperin and Heath (2020), there are a number of issues one must consider when collecting data for research. First, the issue of validity should never be compromised, and that the data collected should actually be able to ‘measure what we claim it does.’ The second
prominent issue to consider is that a valid data is good and useful only if it is recorded ‘accurately.’ And even though data collected is never perfect, one should endeavor to take steps and make the data as good as possible. According to them, the researcher should avoid instances of ‘measurement error’ and this refers to a “a difference between the true value of our variable of interest and our recording of that value” (Halperin & Heath, 2020: pp. 186-187). Another issue to consider when collecting data is that the document which serves as the source should be accessible (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). In this thesis, I utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources consist of official communiqués and speeches of Presidents and Ministers. The secondary sources used in this research is mainly online newspaper articles, publications from selected organizations/groups and official reports of the United Nations.

4.1.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

This thesis used qualitative content analysis as a strategy for data collection using primarily official documents from the Peace and Security Council of the African Union which includes communiques and press releases. These documents were collected from the official website of the African Union in June 2021. Since I am interested in uncovering the latent content of these documents, I selected my recording unit as ‘sentence or paragraph.’ Also, since the AU have avoided labelling the situation in Chad as an ‘unconstitutional change of government’ and since it is the focus of this thesis to find out the reason for this, I looked out for any expression in the documents that expresses any kind of consideration or justification for their decision.

The choice of qualitative content analysis as a data collection strategy for this thesis was because after interacting with a particularly respectable number of the data that was relevant to the puzzle that this research is investigating, I came to realize that most of the data is contain in documents which makes qualitative content analysis a useful strategy. Halperin and Heath (2020: p. 374) contend that if the ‘evidence’ to the research question being investigated is ‘embodied in texts’, content analysis is then a useful strategy to collect data.

“Content analysis involves the systematic analysis of textual information” (Halperin & Heath, 2020: p. 373). My main sources of data as above is from official documents, reports, and publications. As argued by Halperin and Heath (2020: p. 374), one of the advantages of using
content analysis is that it is an ‘unobtrusive method’. This means that it is an efficient and not a conspicuous method of data collection. Content analysis limits biases in data collection significantly. Moreover, “researchers can use content analysis to get material on decision-making without interviewing the decision-makers” (Halperin & Heath, 2020: p. 374). Combined with the difficulty of getting respondents from the African Union for interview-based data collection and the shortage of time for the thesis project, the content analysis method became the most viable for the accomplishment of this project.

4.1.2 Primary Data

As mentioned above, the primary sources of data for this research are communiqués and speeches. During this phase of the research project, I extracted official communiqués of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union from the official website of the AU. The Peace and Security Council of the AU is the branch of the Union that is mandated to mediate and intervene in crisis in AU member states. More so, the Constitutive Act of the African Union mandate the Council to meet and discourse whenever a situation of an unconstitutional change of government occurs immediately. Further to this mandate is the production of a joint communiqué to be released immediately after the meeting. These communiqués should highlight the decision that the Council take in relation to the situation at hand. Since it is established that the AU fail to suspend Chad and since I am interested in researching why this decision, the communiqués provided a useful information but also serve as a reliable source. Another source of the primary data was from speeches and interviews. In this category, I looked at the speeches made by the French President, Emmanuel Macron, and his Foreign Minister Jean – Yves Le Drian. The reason for analyzing these statements and interviews was to assess the possible influence France’s support to the Military Transitional Council of Chad had on the African Union decision on how to approach the situation in Chad. France on top of being a major western power in Africa is also a key actor in the Sahel region in the fight against terrorism. This role means France’s position could have an enormous impact on major policy decisions of the African Union towards Chad.

4.1.3 Secondary Data

As mentioned above, the secondary data utilized in this research include online news articles and publications from organizations/groups.
In order to address issues of reliability, I carefully selected the news outlets that I relied on for opinion. Therefore, I collected news articles from BBC Africa, BBC, DW, RFI, Reuters and France 24. These news outlets are reputable source with strong editorial policies and to a considerable extent independent.

The order secondary sources I utilize for data collection is reports from the Institute for Security Studies and the International Crisis Groups. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) has four offices in four African countries namely: in Addis Ababa, Cape Town, Pretoria, and Nairobi. The ISS is a policy think-thank with a focus on regional human security. The institutes research focuses on conflict prevention and analysis, peace keeping training, terrorism, organized crime, and money laundering and so on. The institute have worked with and through the African Union and other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the above research areas. The ISS also work closely with the UN as a member of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Network (PNI). With independent researchers around Africa, the institute produce critical reports on issues facing the African continent. The ISS is also the only think-thank in Africa that produce regularly what they dub as the ‘Peace and Security Council Report’ through its secretariat in Addis Ababa. This report produces research-driven information and analysis of the activities of the Peace and Security Council of the AU. This report of the ISS is widely used by the media, the international community and civil society organizations. It is this expertise of the ISS coupled with the limit AU documents on the situation in Chad that informed my decision to utilize their reports in my data collection.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) was founded in 1995. The group is often used by policy makers and researchers in conducting research. The group came to be as a response to the horrors in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Somalia. The ICG research is focused mostly on conflict with a reputation of serving as an alert system to potential conflicts through the group’s publications. The ICG’s publications are a product of rigorous field research and analyses. The group is managed by an independent board. Just like the Institute for Security Studies, the International Crisis Group also possess a wealth of expertise in the field of security and terrorism in Africa. These two organizations have published insightful reports on the AU response to the ongoing situation in Chad.
4.2 Data Analysis

As alluded to above, this research employs qualitative content analysis as a research strategy. With primary data as the main source of data, I used secondary data to corroborate the findings I generated from the primary data. While this was done to tackle validity issues, I also triangulated the data generated from the two strategies to be able to answer the research question objectively.

4.3 Challenges

For every research, there exist challenges. The extent of the challenges faced vary from research to research. The first challenge I encountered in doing this research was my inability to continue with my initial planned method of data collection. Primarily, I heard wanted to do interviews as my primary source of data. With this ambition, I sent out couple of emails to the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa explaining my thesis project and soliciting to have an interview with some staff of the Peace and Security Council. These emails were never responded to. I also went further to use my contacts at my country’s (The Gambia) Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help put me through with some of their contacts at the AU, but this effort also yielded nothing. This back and forth took a considerable period of my time however, it also encouraged me to use the qualitative content analysis approach. Another challenge I encountered during the course of my data collection was that since the puzzle that is at the center of my investigation happen very recently, April 2021, the data around it was extremely limited. This reduced the amount of primary data I was able to gather to work with. However, I use secondary data as much as possible to complement the shortage of the primary data. Despite of the difficulty in getting data for this research, I still proceeded as I am not only enthusiastic about the research focus of this thesis but also, I believe that it will serve as a foundation for future research.

4.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explain the decisions I took throughout this project. As highlighted, the data for this thesis was collected from two sources: primary and secondary data. The data collection method I employed was qualitative content analysis. The primary
sources of data were official communiqués and speeches and the secondary sources constituted online news articles, reports and publications from groups and organizations. The secondary sources were used to corroborate the findings from the primary sources primarily to aid my analysis.
Chapter Five: Analysis of Why the African Union Failed to Suspend Chad After its Unconstitutional Change of Government

5.0 Introduction

This is the concluding chapter of this thesis project where I present the findings and analysis of this research using constructivism theory and rational choice theory. The chapter is divided into four sections; the first section explores the ‘indispensable’ nature of Chad’s role in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism in the Sahel region. This section gives a brief review of the security crisis in the Sahel region and Lake Chad area and situate the role that Chad plays in the African Union security strategy towards the Sahel. This context helps in the qualitative content analysis of the African Union’s Peace and Security Council communiqués and other data sources. According to Halperin and heath (2002: p. 387), in qualitative content analysis, text can only be understood through ‘discursive context’. In this section, I argue that the AU had two options: either to suspend Chad as provided for by its policy framework or to allow the Military Transitional Council stay in power. By going with the latter option, I contend that the African Union decision to put security considerations over its policy position on unconstitutional change of government was a case of a ‘rational choice’. A rational choice or action is one in which the agent takes the best available action given her preferences and believes (Satz & Ferejohn, 1994: p. 71).

The second section presents the influence other key players in Chad have on the AU intervention decision. In this section, I present the position of France and the surprising silent of the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC) in the ongoing crisis in Chad. In this section, I argue that the African Union risked going all alone if they decided to suspend Chad. Something that the Union lack the capacity to do in its current format.

The third section looks at a divided African Union Peace and Security Council in its attempt to respond to the situation in Chad and the last section concludes this research with a summary of the findings of the thesis and the contribution made to the existing academic literature.
5.1 Chad: An Indispensable Security Partner in the Sahel Region and the Lake Chad Basin

The Lake Chad Basin area and the Sahel region in general continue to be rattled with insecurity and the rise of terrorist organizations. Over the years, Chad have been a very crucial ally to the African Union and other foreign actors (France, the UN) who are involved in this battle against terrorism and the rise of insurgencies in the Sahel region. Sharing borders with six countries (Libya, Sudan, Central African Republic, Nigeria, and Niger) who are all beset with internal conflicts by terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram have made Chad an indispensable ally to the African Union’s overall peace and security agenda.

According to the International Crisis Group report number 246, attacks by the Nigerian Boko Haram have killed hundreds and displaced in excess of 100,000 since 2015 (International Crisis Group Report No. 246, 2017). This situation damaged the regional economy of the Lake Chad basin. This Nigerian terrorist group, Boko Haram, is found within the Lake Chad which exist in Chadian territory, in the northern part of Nigeria and in Niger. Chad, through the Multinational Joint Task Force continue to play a leading role in the fight against the rise of Boko Haram together with her neighbors, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria.

The rise of the Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin prompted the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in April 2012 with an initial membership of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. The MNJTF is a subregional initiative with a mandate to put an end to the Boko Haram terrorist group and in 2015, the AU, UN, EU, and ECOWAS reviewed the task force by giving it more clear mandate and operational guideline (Albert, 2017). In principle, the MNJTF was now mandated to stop the Boko Haram group from accessing borders of countries in the Lake Chad area in order not to launch attack and to limit their expansion. This review of the task force moved its headquarters from Baga in Nigeria to N’Djamena in Chad.

As countries in the Lake Chad area launch attacks on the Boko Haram, they are pushed to run and look to resettle in the borders of other countries. Denying the Boko Haram refuge in these countries by shielding them off from the ability to move within borders was now the principal responsibility of the Multinational Joint Task Force. This is so far the only regional task force
which is dedicated to the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the Sahel region. While on one hand, Chad serves as a crucial ally in the fight against and containment of terrorism emerging from Libya from spreading to West Africa, it is also spearheading the fight against Boko Haram through the MNJTF. In terms of military personnel contribution to the task force, Chad comes second with three thousand soldiers. This commitment from and role Chad plays has made it an indispensable ally to the fight against terrorism and insecurity in the Sahel.

Confronted with the military seizure of power in Chad and the key role Chad play in the overall African Union security agenda in the Sahel region, the Union had to choose pragmatism over principle and on the 22nd of April 2021 the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU convened for its 993rd meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to discuss the situation in Chad. As customary, the meeting ended with the production of a communiqué. In this communiqué, the PSC instead of suspending or announcing sanctions against Chad and in addition to requesting support from sub-regional organizations, the UN and the EU, noted the following:

“Mindful of the significant contributions of Chad to the overall AU peace and security agenda, particularly the fight against terrorism in the lake Chad Basin area and the Sahel region, within the overall framework of the overall strategic objective of silencing the guns in the continent” (PSC/BR/COMM.2(CMXCIII), 2021) and further urge all stakeholders and the Chadian military to work towards restoring constitutional order by handing over political power to a civilian authority, accepted the eighteen month transitional period proposed by the Transitional Military Council (TMC).

In another statement, the PSC of the AU reaffirmed the significant role Chad play in its fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel region. In its 14th May 2021 statement of its 996th meeting on the consideration of the report of the fact-finding mission to the republic of Chad, the Council noted “…that Chad has been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and in the lake Chad Basin. It also serves, by virtue of its geographical position, as a natural barrier which, if it were to give way, would further expose West Africa, and even Central Africa, to the Chaos emanating from Libya” (ISS/PSC report, 2021). Here I argue that the African Union puts the importance of the strategic geographical location of Chad in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin area into consideration as a result Chad was not suspended. As Chad shares boarder with several other countries battling terrorist
organizations such as Nigeria, Cameroon and Niger and serving as a buffer that holds of terrorist fighters in Libya from spreading to West Africa, the decision not to suspend Chad was aimed at attaining “… collective desirable international outcomes, and to avoid a disastrous situation” (Kahler, 1998: pp. 941)

“Deeply concerned about the evolving situation in Chad and the potential threat to its peace, security and stability, as well as to the entire region, and the continent” (PSC/BR/COMM.2(CMCXIII), pp: 1).

The Peace and Security Council of the AU continue to express its ‘security’ concerns in the Sahel region and Lake Chad area in the wake of the unconstitutional seizure of power in Chad. I argue that the volatile security nature of the Lake Chad area and the fear of the effects sanctions and suspension from the AU could have on Chad and its sub-region, the Union opted not to suspend Chad but accept the eighteen-months transitional period proposed by the transitional military council.

The AU through its Peace and Security Council recognizes the strategic role Chad plays in its security campaign in the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel region. Suspending Chad and imposing sanction on the military transitional council will only weaken them which could then inadvertently empower and embolden the multiple rebel groups within Chad and around the subregion. such a situation will have severe consequence on the already volatile security situation the African Union is grappling with in the Sahel region. In fact, according to the International Crisis Group, Chad has even benefitted diplomatically in playing this role. “Chad’s military engagements and its role in the fight against terrorism – around Lake Chad and elsewhere in the region – have brought significant diplomatic gains, most recently the appointment of Foreign Minister Moussa Faki as chairperson of the African Union Commission” (International Crisis Group Report No. 246, 2017). This appointment was greatly influenced by the role Chad play in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel region.

From the Libya crisis in 2011 to the fall of instability in Sudan fueled by the ousting of Omar al- Bashir in 2019 in Sudan to the mayhem Boko Haram continue to commit in the Lake Chad area and to the near statelessness of the Central African Republic (Gnanguenon, 2021), Chad under Derby managed to use this situation to gain greater status within the AU and projected itself as a “guarantor of stability in a country that is a strategic pillar for North Africa, Central Africa and the Sahel” (Gnanguenon, 2021: pp: 8). It is my argument that this history of fighting
violent extremism and terrorism around Africa by Chad earns it the ‘indispensable ally’ status and that since the actions of actors in international relations are to be understood as been shaped by consciousness and ideational factors and that this factors are historically and socially constructed according to Nicholas Onuf (1989), I argue that the AU decision not to suspend Chad reflected the collective consciousness of not just the security challenges in the Lake Chad area but also the important security role Chad plays within the sub-region and around the continent.

The idea that Chad is indispensable for the security of the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin explains why some actors in the international community “… seem to see Chad only as a provider of soldiers for the fight against violent extremism in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin – to the detriment of democracy and good governance” (Handy & Hoinathy, 2021).

If the African Union decided to suspend Chad however, that will also translate to suspending all the Chadian troops participating in critical peace operations around the Sahel region. This means that Chad will not be able to keep its troop in the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin, the peace operations in Mali, its troops battling terrorism and jihadist movements in the Central African Republic and so on. this is because as provided by the AU constitutive act, a member country suspended due to an act of unconstitutional change of government will not be allowed to participate in the Union activities until when constitutional order is restored.

I further argue that the fact that the African Union, by adopting the security assessment of its fact-finding mission to Chad and referencing “several legal instruments in its decision not to suspend Chad: the OAU convention for the elimination of Mercenarism in Africa; the AU Non-Aggression and Common Defense Pack; and the Convention on the Prevention and Combating Terrorism” (Handy and Djilo, 2021) carefully balanced their options in responding to the military seizure of power and opted to choose pragmatism over principles.

5.1.2 Chad and the Fight against the Tuareg and other Terrorist Groups in Mali

Mali has been labelled as the epicenter of terrorism in the Sahel and Macky Sall, the current Chairman of the African Union and President of Senegal have pleaded with Germany to keep

After a brief period of democratic stability, Mali experienced a military coup in 2012. Soldiers overthrew then President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. The situation deteriorated rapidly with the re-emergence of the Tuareg rebel group in the north of Mali. In April 2013, the United Nations adopted Security Council resolution 2100. This resolution established the MINUSMA mission in Mali. The main mandate of this mission amongst other things is to ensure security, promote stability and protect civilians. In 2012, the Tuareg separatist group, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) laid siege on the northern part of Mali in an attempt to create an independent northern Mali. This group together with Ansar Dine, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa created a massive humanitarian and security crisis in Mali and threatened the peace and stability of the Sahel and West Africa sub region. Few months later, April 2012, the group captured the whole of the northern territory of Mali and declared it independent. Faced with this challenge, the African Union and ECOWAS spearheaded a campaign to stabilize the dire situation in Mali. This campaign was climaxed with the establishment of the MINUSMA mission. For this mission, Chad is the third biggest military contributor globally and the top amongst the participating African countries. Its military personnel amount to 25 percent (more than 1,400 soldiers) of the overall military troops in the mission as of April 2022 (MINUSMA Fact Sheet, 2022). This is a significant contribution from Chad. Chad is also the first Sahel country and the only African country outside the ECOWAS sub-region to intervene in the crisis in Mali (MINUSMA Fact Sheet, 2022).

Chadian troops have been in Mali since 2013, in the Central African Republic in 2012 to 2014 and in the Lake Chad Basin since 2015 helps in creating an image for Chad as a major security player in Africa (Gnanguenon, 2021).

The role Chad plays in the fight against Islamist extremism and terrorist groups in the Sahel is not only recognize by the African Union, the UN, and the EU. Dr. Christopher Fomunyoh of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs posit that “Chad has played a very instrumental role in combating violent extremism across the Sahel, with the military deployed in other countries, such as Mali Nigeria and Niger Republic” (Nebe, 2021).
5.2 France’s Support to the Military Transitional Council

Chad is a former colony to France. Just like all the other former colonies of France, the two countries have a close relationship since gaining independence in August 1960. Chad has been a close ally of France in its fight against terrorism in the Sahel.

At the funeral of the late Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno in April 2021, the French President Emmanuel Macron remarked: “France will not let anybody put into question or threaten today or tomorrow Chad’s stability and integrity”. Later in his speech, President Macron expressed his support to the Military Transitional Council in the following words: “France will also be there to keep alive without waiting the promise of a peaceful Chad creating a place for all of its children and components… the transition will have this role to play: stability, inclusion, dialogue and democratic transition. We are and will stand alongside you” (Reuters, 2021). The French foreign minister Jean – Yves Le Drian echoed in a television interview with France 2 television that “there are exceptional security circumstances” that Chad is face with and as a result, the reason for France accepting the Military Transitional Council.

So even though the African Union through its normative instruments for the maintenance of constitutionalism empowers it to punish those who embark on unconstitutional means to access political power, the AU opted not to suspend Chad after its soldiers grab power, dissolve the parliament, and suspend the constitution. The AU have so far cited the crucial role Chad plays in the Union’s overall security agenda in the Sahel. However, I argue that the decision of France to approve the Military Transitional Council of Chad is one of the factors that influenced the African Union decision not to suspend Chad. Macron’s statement quoted above is a clear indication of France’s position on the situation and Chad. Such a backing is significant. Contrasted with the situation in Mali where soldiers seized power, a clear picture of France’s influence is displayed. After the military coup in mali in 2021, President Macron condemned the coup and called it ‘unacceptable’ and went further to threatened sanctions saying: “we are ready in the coming hours to take targeted sanctions” (Fisayo-Bambi, 2021). The AU and ECOWAS sanctioned Mali a week later.

It is also important to understand that France’s main military mission in the Sahel area is stationed in Chad. Operation Barkhane started operation in 2014 and since then, France have use Chad as a base to further its military operations in the Sahel region. This have earn Chad a
valuable link with France and since France is a major security player in Africa with military bases in Mali and Chad fighting Boko Haram and other terrorist groups I argue that the African Union will not like to take a position that puts it directly at odd with France. In fact, the AU have not responded so far to any military coup in Africa that France have supported.

5.3 The Silence of the Economic Community of Central African States

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) unlike other sub-regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) does not have a ‘binding democracy and governance protocol’ that the regional body could hold their member states accountable to (Handy & Djilo, 2021). As a result, the ECCAS did not make any pronouncement on the military seizure of power in Chad. The sub-regional body remain mute on the situation in Chad. the ECCAS to date fail to convene a single meeting to discuss the crisis and offer a plan to restore constitutional order. This I argue contributes to the African union decision of not suspending Chad. The AU have so far avoided intervening in instances of constitutional changes of government where sub-regional bodies, the regional economic communities, fail to take a position. If the African Union were to suspend Chad and sanction it, the ECCAS as the regional economic community of Central Africa buy in is fundamental. For any economic sanction against Chad to make sense, the ECCAS will be the body to implement such a decision from the AU.

5.4 A Divided Peace and Security Council

“Of course, the council was divided with some thinking that the text and protocols of the Peace and Security Council should be applied immediately others say that we should examine the situation and give it more time because the situation does not only concern Chad but a much larger group” (Africa new, 2021). Even though the PSC does not publish votes from its meeting, this statement from Mohammed Idriss Farah, the chairperson of the AU PSC and who served as the head of the AU fact-finding mission to Chad reveals that members of the PSC were divided on whether to suspend Chad or not. Countries such as Nigeria and Cameroon share a lot of security challenges with Chad and a suspended Chad will also weaken them in their ongoing fight against violent extremism and terrorism in their sub-region.
5.5 Conclusion and Recommendation for Future Studies

This thesis sets out to investigate the factors that led to the African Union decision to not suspend Chad after the unconstitutional change of government. Using official documents from the AU, reports from the Institute of Security Studies and the International Crisis Group helped me to answer the research question adequately. The use of qualitative content analysis helped me in extracting data from the data sources of this thesis. The use of the constructivist and the rational choice theory helped in analyzing the findings of this thesis. It is the conclusion of this thesis that the African Union put security consideration ahead of good governance and the rule of law in their decision-making process to respond to the unconstitutional change of government in Chad. The constant reference to security and stability over constitutionalism, law and order in the PSC communiques on the situation of Chad exemplifies my conclusion. This security concern is reinforced by the influence of France’s recognition of the Transitional Military Council, a silent sub-regional economic community of Central Africa and a much divided AU Peace and Security Council. While this thesis cannot make general conclusions on the factors that influence the AU decisions to intervene or not since it is only focus on Chad and also with limited data, it has laid the foundation for future expanded studies.
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