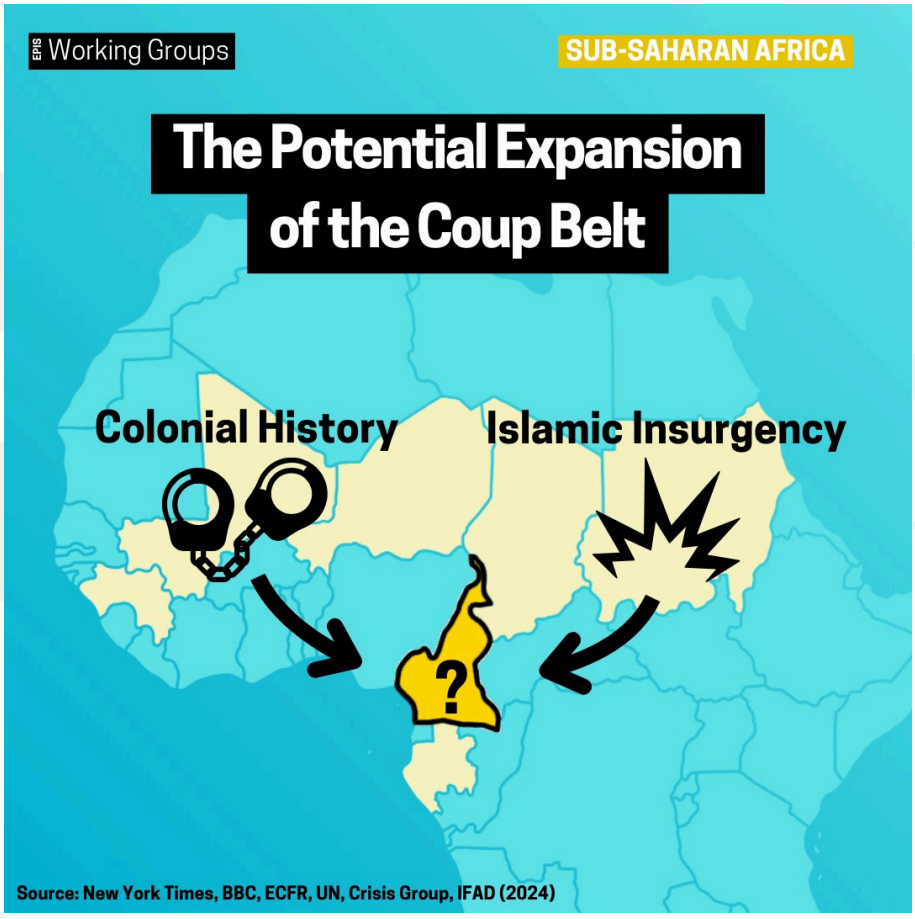
The Potential Expansion of the Coup Belt

12 DECEMBER 2024

Hannes Romare



'The Coup Belt' is a geopolitical term, used to describe the region of West Africa, Central Africa, and the Sahel where countries with a high prevalence of coup d'états are located. The coup belt is composed of Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Sudan. Between 2020-2023, all of the 7 countries experienced successful coup d'états. Together, they form a continuous 'belt' that crosses Africa from the west coast to the east coast. Cameroon, who shares borders with Chad and Niger, is approaching a societal and political crossroad where there may be a risk of an escalation

of violence and social unrest. Is there a risk of Cameroon becoming a new member of the Coup Belt?

Underlying factors

To be able to predict the risks of, and to be able to prevent a potential coup d'état, one can look at the underlying factors behind the coup d'états within the Coup Belt. While local factors play a part in each separate country's coup d'état, there are some factors that they have in common:

The countries within the Coup Belt have been plagued by islamic insurgencies within their borders. All of the coups were led by members of the national military armed forces.who justified their undemocratic take-over of power with a failure of the government in handling and combating the islamic insurgencies within the country. All countries, except Sudan, are former French colonies, with the coup makers expressing resentment over western influence over African governments. Instead, the putschists turn to countries such as Russia or Saudi Arabia for support, allowing them to increase their influence in the region as part of an effort to expand their power in a changing global order. All states, except Gabon, had a Human Development Index below 0.500, indicating a low human development within the countries.

Cameroon

Looking southwards, one can look for similarities within Cameroon. Cameroon is a former French colony. France and Cameroon hold long-standing and extensive relations covering areas such as economy, security, and technology. Cameroon is currently involved in intra-state warfare, both in the south-western part of the country in the form of an anglophone separatist movement, and in the far north with increased jihadist insurgency activity in the area. While Cameroon holds an HDI score of 587, one should also take into account the potential unrest that could arise when its 91 years old President Paul Biya one day passes away. Having served as president since 1982, there is no clear successor to the 'Lion Man'.

Through a neo-patrimonial system, Biya has created a situation that can pave the way for chaos the day he passes away. In such a case, where local elites scramble for power and access to the country's rich reserves of natural resources, unstable and erratic governance may follow. Then, there may be a risk of the military seizing power under the guise of 'stability' and 'a failure of the government to battle insurgency within the country'.