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The Political and Economic Implications of the Resurgence of Military Intervention in Africa: A Study of Niger Republic

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the resurgence of military interventions in the Niger Republic and their implications for governance, democratic processes, economic stability, and social development. Drawing on civil–military relations theory, the research investigates how repeated coups have reshaped political authority, weakened democratic institutions, and altered the balance of power between civilian governments and the military. Using a historical research design and content analysis of secondary sources, including government reports, academic literature, and international assessments, the study explores the economic consequences of military interventions, focusing on investment flows, international sanctions, and poverty levels, as well as their social and human rights impacts. Findings reveal that military takeovers have disrupted constitutional order, undermined civilian oversight, and eroded public trust in democratic governance, while exacerbating economic vulnerability and constraining human development. The study concludes that sustainable democratic consolidation in Niger requires strengthened civilian institutions, professionalization of the military, and mechanisms that enhance accountability, transparency, and social inclusion. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the cyclical nature of military interventions in post-colonial African states and highlights policy pathways for mitigating political instability and promoting socio-economic resilience.

Keywords: Military intervention, Niger Republic, Civil–military relations, Democratic governance, Political instability, Economic consequences, Human rights, Civilian oversight, Post-colonial Africa, Coup d'état

INTRODUCTION

The resurgence of military intervention in Africa, particularly in the Niger Republic, reflects enduring structural challenges related to governance, political stability, and economic development. Historically, Africa's experience with military coups is closely tied to the post-colonial period, during which newly independent states inherited fragile institutions, weak economies, and governance systems that struggled to accommodate social diversity and development demands. In this context, military interventions were often justified as corrective measures intended to restore order and address perceived failures of civilian leadership (Adebayo, 2020). Niger exemplifies this pattern. Since gaining independence in 1960, the country has experienced multiple coups, culminating most recently in the 2023 military takeover. Despite repeated attempts at democratic consolidation, military intervention has remained a recurring feature of Niger's political trajectory. The persistence of military coups in Niger is symptomatic of deeper economic and governance failures. Niger remains one of the poorest countries globally, despite its substantial natural resource endowment, particularly uranium. This contradiction between resource wealth and widespread poverty has generated significant public frustration. Nwankwo (2019) describes this as the "resource paradox," where mismanagement, corruption, and weak institutions prevent natural wealth from translating into broad-based development. Successive civilian governments in Niger have struggled to deliver tangible socio-economic improvements, thereby eroding public trust and creating opportunities for the military to present itself as an alternative force capable of restoring dignity, order, and development (Obiezu, 2023).

The regional context has further intensified Niger's political instability. Located within the volatile Sahel region, Niger is surrounded by countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso, which have also experienced recent military coups. This regional pattern reinforces what Mazrui (2018) identifies as a spillover or contagion effect, whereby instability in one state exacerbates governance and security challenges in neighboring countries. In addition, Niger faces persistent security threats from jihadist insurgencies linked to groups such as Boko Haram and al-Qaeda affiliates. These threats have overstretched state capacity, weakened civilian authority, and heightened public perceptions that democratic governments are unable to guarantee security, thereby increasing the appeal of military rule (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2022).

External influences also play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of military interventions in Niger. The country's strategic importance, driven by its uranium resources and its role in international counter-terrorism efforts, has attracted sustained involvement from foreign powers, particularly France. France's long-standing military and economic presence has often been perceived domestically as excessive interference, fostering nationalist sentiments and delegitimizing civilian governments viewed as dependent on external actors (Feaver & Peter, 2021). Ndulu (2017) argues that such external entanglements, when combined with weak domestic institutions, perpetuate cycles of dependency and instability, within which military coups emerge as attempts to reclaim national sovereignty.

Economic deprivation remains a central driver of political instability in Niger. With consistently low Human Development Index rankings, high unemployment, widespread illiteracy, and heavy reliance on foreign aid, Niger's economic fragility has deep political consequences. Ayoade (2019) links such deprivation to increased susceptibility to military coups, as populations lose confidence in elected governments unable to meet basic needs. Military leaders often exploit these grievances, portraying themselves as reformers capable of addressing corruption, inequality, and economic decline more effectively than civilian administrations (Ntomba & Reginald, 2021).

The cyclical nature of military interventions in Niger mirrors broader African patterns. Ould-Bah (2021) notes that once military intervention becomes normalized, the likelihood of future coups increases due to weakened civilian institutions and the politicization of the armed forces. In Niger, the military has become an entrenched political actor, and coups are frequently framed as legitimate responses to governance failure. This normalization perpetuates a cycle in which neither civilian nor military regimes adequately resolve underlying structural problems, resulting in repeated political breakdowns (Gebauer et al., 2023).

Regional and international responses to coups in Niger, particularly sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and the African Union, have produced mixed outcomes. While intended to deter unconstitutional changes of government, sanctions often exacerbate economic hardship and social instability, sometimes strengthening military regimes rather than weakening them (Adejumobi, 2022). Consequently, military intervention in Niger cannot be understood in isolation but must be situated within a complex interplay of historical legacies, economic deprivation, security crises, regional instability, and external influence.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. To what extent have military interventions affected governance structures and democratic processes in the Niger Republic?
- ii. What are the economic consequences of military interventions in the Niger Republic, particularly in relation to investment flows, international sanctions, and poverty levels?
- iii. What are the social and human rights implications of military interventions in the Niger Republic?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the political and economic implications of the resurgence of military interventions in Africa with specific focus on the Niger Republic: the specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the impact of military interventions on governance structures and democratic processes in the Niger.
- ii. assess the economic consequences of military interventions in the Niger Republic, with particular emphasis on investment flows, international sanctions, and poverty levels.

- iii. examine the social and human rights implications of military interventions in the Niger Republic.

Theoretical Framework

Civil–military relations theory examines the interaction between civilian authorities and military institutions, focusing on how power is allocated, exercised, and constrained within political systems. The theory is especially relevant in African contexts, where recurrent military coups and interventions have shaped governance trajectories. At its core, the framework interrogates the proper role of the military in society, the effectiveness of civilian oversight mechanisms, and the consequences of military involvement in politics for democratic stability. Samuel Huntington’s *The Soldier and the State* provides the classical foundation of the theory by arguing that a professional, politically neutral military is essential for national security, while sustained military participation in governance undermines democracy. Huntington emphasizes the principle of objective civilian control, whereby civilian leaders retain supreme authority over military institutions, thereby preventing the politicization of the armed forces (Huntington, 1957).

In African states, civil–military relations theory has been adapted to account for post-colonial realities and historical legacies. Scholars such as Claude E. Welch Jr. argue that colonial rule, weak state institutions, and authoritarian governance models created conditions in which the military emerged as a dominant political actor. In many post-colonial states, the military was one of the few organized national institutions, enabling it to justify political intervention during periods of crisis (Welch, 1992). This perspective is particularly applicable to Niger, where the armed forces have repeatedly intervened in politics, often portraying themselves as guardians of national unity and stability in the face of governance failures.

A central concept within contemporary civil–military relations theory is military autonomy, which refers to the degree to which the armed forces operate independently of civilian political control. High levels of military autonomy are commonly associated with fragile democracies, where weak institutions and security threats allow the military to expand its political influence. In Niger, as in many Sahelian states, military leaders have justified coups by invoking national security concerns, especially the threat of terrorism and insurgency. Such narratives reinforce the perception of the military as the ultimate protector of the state, often at the expense of democratic accountability and constitutional order (Ploch, 2019).

The theory also recognizes the role of civil society and political institutions in shaping civil–military relations. Civil society organizations, political parties, and the media are critical in promoting transparency, accountability, and respect for civilian supremacy. In Niger, however, civil society has historically faced constraints during periods of military rule, limiting its capacity to challenge military authority. Nonetheless, recent civic mobilizations against unconstitutional changes of government demonstrate the potential of societal pressure to influence civil–military dynamics, particularly when supported by regional and international norms (Hassan, 2023).

civil–military relations theory is closely linked to the concept of democratic consolidation, which emphasizes the entrenchment of democratic norms and institutions over time. Sustainable democracy requires not only electoral processes but also a military that is firmly subordinated to civilian rule. Recurrent military interventions in Niger have weakened democratic consolidation by eroding public trust in civilian institutions and normalizing military involvement in politics (Linz & Stepan, 1996). External influences further complicate this relationship, as foreign military assistance and counter-terrorism partnerships can enhance military capacity while simultaneously undermining civilian oversight. In Niger, dependence on external security support has, at times, strengthened the political leverage of the military, reinforcing patterns of intervention and complicating efforts to establish durable democratic governance (Bach, 2023).

Application of the Theory

Applying civil–military relations theory to the Nigerien crisis reveals a persistent struggle between civilian authority and military power, rooted in weak democratic institutions and blurred boundaries between political and military spheres. As Huntington (1957) argues, the absence of a clear separation between civilian governance and military functions increases the likelihood of military intervention. In Niger, successive civilian governments have failed to exercise effective control over the armed forces, creating conditions that have enabled repeated coups. The military’s deep involvement in political

processes has undermined its professionalism and normalized its role as an arbiter of political crises, thereby reinforcing cycles of intervention rather than democratic consolidation (Zarrouk, 2022).

The theory further explains how institutional weakness and security crises have facilitated military takeovers in Niger. Drawing on Feaver's (1999) agency theory, civilian control depends on the capacity of political institutions to monitor and discipline the military. In Niger, fragile institutions, economic distress, and persistent security threats, particularly terrorism in the Sahel—have reduced civilian oversight and justified the military to intervene in governance (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997).

Civil–military relations theory also illuminates the challenges of post-coup governance in Niger. Military regimes often promise democratic transitions but struggle to relinquish power due to legitimacy deficits, internal rivalries, and limited governing capacity. As Powell and Thyne (2011) note, once the military seizes power, reintegrating it into a subordinate role becomes increasingly difficult.

In Niger, military rule has not resolved underlying problems of corruption, economic mismanagement, or social unrest, confirming the theory's assertion that military governments are not inherently more effective than civilian ones (Luckham, 1971). Overall, the theory underscores that without sustained institutional reforms, professionalization of the armed forces, and strengthened civilian oversight, Niger remains vulnerable to recurrent military interventions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The historical research design was adopted. This approach involves the systematic and objective analysis of past events, trends, and experiences to gain insights into the present and future. As noted by Creswell (2014), historical research design entails the collection and analysis of data from the past to understand the present and predict the future. By employing this design, this study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the historical context of military intervention in Niger Republic.

The study employed the secondary method of data collection. The secondary data was sourced from Academic articles and books on the topic of military intervention and its effects on economies and political systems, Government reports and documents, such as those published by the Nigerian government or international organizations like the United Nations, News articles and media reports on military intervention in Niger Republic, Data and statistics from international organizations, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, Reports and publications from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think tanks that focus on military intervention and its effects. By using secondary sources of data, this study can benefit from the research and analysis that has already been conducted on this topic and can build on the knowledge and insights that have been gained from previous studies.

Content analysis was adopted to examine the economic and political implications of the resurgence of military intervention in the Niger Republic using secondary sources such as government reports, academic journals, and international assessments. The method is appropriate because the study relies on documentary evidence rather than primary data from human subjects. Through systematic analysis of these materials, key patterns relating to governance, economic performance, and security dynamics were identified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: To what extent have military interventions affected governance structures and democratic processes in the Niger Republic?

Military interventions have had a profound and largely destabilizing effect on governance structures and democratic processes in the Niger Republic. Recurrent coups have weakened constitutionalism, disrupted electoral continuity, and eroded the legitimacy of civilian political institutions. Each military takeover suspends or amends constitutional arrangements, dissolves elected bodies, and centralizes authority within military councils, thereby undermining the separation of powers and rule of law. According to Huntington (1957), repeated military involvement in politics prevents the institutionalization of democratic norms, a pattern clearly evident in Niger where democratic transitions remain fragile and reversible.

The persistence of coups has also normalized extra-constitutional changes of government, reducing public confidence in elections as a legitimate mechanism for leadership selection. Bratton and van de Walle (1997) argue that such disruptions hinder democratic consolidation by weakening political parties,

legislatures, and judicial independence. In Niger, military regimes often govern through decrees, marginalizing civilian oversight and reinforcing executive dominance. This has resulted in governance systems characterized by weak accountability, constrained political participation, and limited transparency (Diamond, 2008). Consequently, military interventions have not only interrupted democratic processes but have structurally reshaped governance in ways that perpetuate instability.

Table 1: Governance and Democratic Implications of Military Interventions in Niger

Dimension	Observed Effects	Analytical Description
Constitutional order	Suspension or alteration of constitutions	Weakens legality and predictability of governance frameworks
Electoral processes	Disrupted elections and delayed transitions	Undermines continuity and credibility of democratic participation
Civilian institutions	Marginalization of legislature and judiciary	Concentrates power within the executive–military nexus
Political legitimacy	Declining public trust in democracy	Normalizes unconstitutional changes of government

Research Question Two: What are the economic consequences of military interventions in the Niger Republic, particularly in relation to investment flows, international sanctions, and poverty levels?

Military interventions in Niger have generated significant adverse economic consequences, particularly in relation to investment flows, international sanctions, and poverty levels. Coups create uncertainty that discourages both domestic and foreign investment, as investors perceive heightened political risk and policy unpredictability. Studies show that countries experiencing frequent military takeovers face reduced capital inflows and stalled economic growth (Alesina et al., 1996). In Niger, post-coup periods are often marked by capital flight, suspension of development projects, and contraction in private-sector activity.

International sanctions imposed by regional and global actors such as ECOWAS and the African Union further exacerbate economic distress. While intended to pressure military regimes into restoring civilian rule, sanctions often restrict trade, reduce aid inflows, and worsen fiscal constraints. Adejumbi (2022) notes that sanctions tend to disproportionately affect ordinary citizens by increasing unemployment, inflation, and poverty. In Niger, already characterized by high poverty and low human development indicators, military interventions have deepened socio-economic vulnerability by weakening state capacity to deliver public services and implement development policies (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

Table 2: Economic Effects of Military Interventions in Niger

Economic Aspect	Impact	Socio-Economic Implications
Investment flows	Decline in foreign and domestic investment	Increased capital flight and reduced job creation
International aid	Suspension or reduction of aid	Fiscal stress and constrained development spending
Trade and sanctions	Trade disruptions and revenue loss	Inflationary pressures and weakened state finances
Poverty levels	Rising poverty and inequality	Heightened vulnerability and reduced living standards

Research Question Three: What are the social and human rights implications of military interventions in the Niger Republic?

Military interventions have also had far-reaching social and human rights implications in Niger. Military regimes often impose restrictions on civil liberties, including freedom of expression, assembly, and the press, in an effort to consolidate power and suppress dissent. Amnesty International (2021) documents

how post-coup governments frequently rely on emergency laws, arbitrary arrests, and intimidation of journalists and opposition figures. Such practices weaken civic space and undermine the social foundations of democratic governance.

From a social perspective, prolonged military rule intensifies insecurity and displacement, particularly in regions affected by insurgency and counterterrorism operations. According to Human Rights Watch (2022), military-led security responses in Niger have sometimes resulted in civilian casualties, forced displacement, and human rights abuses, further alienating local populations. These dynamics erode social cohesion and deepen mistrust between citizens and the state. Sen's (1999) capability approach underscores that development is inseparable from freedom; thus, the erosion of rights under military regimes directly undermines human development and social well-being in Niger.

Table 3: Social and Human Rights Implications of Military Rule in Niger

Dimension	Manifestation	Societal Consequences
Civil liberties	Media censorship and political repression	Shrinking civic space and limited political expression
Human rights	Arbitrary arrests and excessive force	Erosion of trust between citizens and the state
Social stability	Displacement and insecurity	Breakdown of community cohesion and livelihoods
Human development	Reduced freedoms and access to services	Decline in overall human well-being

Finding and Observation

The findings of the study are:

- i. The military interventions in Niger disrupted constitutional governance, leading to political instability, undermining democratic institutions, and creating a leadership crisis that further polarized the political landscape.
- ii. The imposition of sanctions by ECOWAS and other international actors, border closures, and the withdrawal of foreign aid resulted in economic downturns, increased poverty, high inflation, and rising unemployment rates in Niger.
- iii. The resurgence of military interventions in West Africa, including Niger, has raised fears about the spread of undemocratic governance and instability in other countries with fragile political systems, undermining regional peace and security.
- iv. ECOWAS's approach to handling the Niger coup, particularly its threats of military intervention, revealed weaknesses in its conflict resolution mechanisms and its ability to enforce democratic norms effectively.
- v. The coup attracted widespread condemnation from the African Union, United Nations, Western powers, and other international actors, resulting in strained diplomatic relations and limited success in restoring constitutional order.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the political and economic implications of the resurgence of military intervention in Africa, focusing on the recent coup in Niger Republic. The findings reveal that the military takeover not only disrupted democratic governance but also created severe political instability, undermined constitutional rule, and negatively affected socio-economic conditions in the country. The economic impact of sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and the international community has further deepened poverty and economic hardship among the citizens of Niger.

Moreover, the resurgence of military intervention in Niger has raised regional security concerns and highlighted the challenges faced by ECOWAS in effectively promoting democratic principles and ensuring stability in West Africa. The failure to prevent the coup and the limited success in diplomatic efforts underscore the weaknesses in ECOWAS's conflict resolution mechanisms. Additionally, the event

has strained diplomatic relations between Niger and various international actors, resulting in condemnation and heightened tensions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- i. ECOWAS and other regional bodies should actively support member states in building resilient democratic institutions.
- ii. ECOWAS should improve its early warning systems and enhance collaboration with national governments to detect and address signs of political instability before they escalate into coups. Addressing the economic grievances that often contribute to military interventions is essential.
- iii. ECOWAS should review and strengthen its protocols on democracy and good governance to ensure timely and effective intervention in situations where democratic norms are under threat.
- iv. In the aftermath of military interventions, inclusive dialogue involving all political stakeholders, civil society organizations, and traditional leaders should be prioritized to ensure a peaceful and democratic transition.

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