



## **PRESIDENT MOHAMED BAZOUM'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND MILITARY INTERVENTION IN NIGER REPUBLIC**

**Ekanem Asukwo Ekanem (Ph.D.), Dangana Faith Ekwaseh, and Baba Mohammed**

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Federal University Wukari, Taraba State.

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study on “President Mohamed Bazoum’s Political Leadership and Military Intervention in Niger Republic” aimed at explaining how President Mohamed Bazoum’s political leadership triggered military intervention in Niger Republic. Ex Post Facto design that depended on the judgmental sampling technique was adopted in the study. Secondary sources (books, journal articles, conference papers, monographs and internet materials) of data collection were sourced from Nigerian libraries and the internet. These documentary data were subjected to content validity before being analyzed qualitatively into the study. Notwithstanding the fact that environmental theory has deepened knowledge on the fundamentals for military intervention in Niger Republic, the study identified corruption, economic hardship, insecurity, self-interest and infrastructural deficit as factors that were responsible for the forceful removal of President Mohamed Bazoum on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023. The coup d’état has resulted in food insecurity, inflation, termination of infrastructural projects, border closure as well as sanctions by the Economic Community of West African States. France recalled its Ambassador and withdrew all military assistance including troops from Niger Republic. The United States and the European Union have stopped budgetary and development assistance to the Niger Republic. The military junta has entered into a security partnership with Mali, Burkina Faso and Wagner Group. The possibility of a future coup d’état is undoubted, according to findings. In order to avert counter coup, the study recommends the adoption of a non-military approach to insecurity in Niger Republic, provision of essential public services, establishment of anti-graft agencies, as well as entrenchment of constitutional order. These measures should receive immediate attention if the present military government hopes to survive.*

**KEYWORDS:** Military, Intervention, Niger, Sahel, State, Region, Leadership, Democracy, Theory, Sanction.



## INTRODUCTION

Niger Republic is a landlocked state that is located in the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa. It is bounded on the Northwest by Algeria, Northeast by Libya, East by Chad, South by Nigeria and Benin Republic and West by Burkina Faso and Mali. It has a landmass of about 1,267,000 kilometre square as well as an estimated population of about 24 million people as of 2023 (Tschorner, 2023). Like many other West African countries, Niger Republic has a history of colonialism. The state got her independence from France on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1960. Regrettably, the political history of Niger Republic has been unstable since independence. Hoffman and Meily (2015) added that the state has a fragile economy, with a high rate of population growth, constant risk of drought and, above all, it depends heavily on Nigeria for her food security. Again, it should be recalled that the Niger Republic had experienced military rule until 2011 when General Salou Djibo decided to hand over to President Muhammadu Issoufou. In 2021, President Bazoum was sworn in as the newly elected president of Niger Republic. Regrettably, on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023, President Bazoum lost power. General Abdomahamane Tchiani emerged as the new Head of State through coup d'état (International Crisis Group, 2023).

However, this ugly incident is the remainder of the major characteristics of the first decade post-independence West African state. Arifalo (1982) described it as the “decade of military coup d'état and counter-coups” (p.151). Togo was the first West African country that experienced a military coup on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1963, while her neighbour, Republic of Benin, became next in line on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1965. On 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1966, Guinea Bissau had its turn. Nigeria also experienced a military coup on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966; Ghana had its share on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1966. Togo joined the military rule on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1967 while Sierra Leone joined the bandwagon on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1967 (Ajayi & Olu-Adeyemi, 2015). One would have expected that the new wave of democracy that had started in the early 1990s must have been consolidated in West Africa. This was not the case; hence, on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2021, Colonel Assimi Goita forcefully took over power from President Bah N'daw through a coup d'état. Captain Ibrahim Traore also dethroned President Paul Henri Bandaojo Damiba of Burkina Faso on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2022. The junta alleged that President Damiba was incapable of eradicating Islamist insurgents (Centre for Preventive Action, 2024). Though incapability is a serious issue that should not be ignored, there are other factors that have to be considered. These factors include among others, “...the inability of the post-independence civilian administrations to fulfil their campaign promises thereby dashing the hopes of the people...” (Ajai & Olupajimo, 2009, p.176).

Whatever may be the reason, military coup should not be encouraged. Accepting a military coup in the West African region would lead to isolation from the international community. This is why the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in its 1993 Revised Treaty includes provision for it, to intervene in intrastate crises through mediation, election observation or peacekeeping. In addition, ECOWAS 1999 mechanism permits the deployment of fact-finding and mediation missions, as well as all forms of intervention “including military intervention” (Mathur, 2024, p.2). The 2001 Protocol, which is supplementary to the 1999 mechanism, “elaborates progressive sanctions, culminating in membership suspension that ECOWAS can impose during political crises” (ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, 2001, p.56).

Therefore, Niger's coup of 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 cannot survive without resistance from ECOWAS in view of the fact that Niger is a signatory to all its protocols. ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Abdel-Fatau Musah, hinted that “this coup is one too many” (cited in Mathur, p.3); therefore, there must be a stop to this nonsense. On 30<sup>th</sup> July,



ECOWAS Head of States met in Abuja, under the Chairmanship of Nigerian President, Ahmad Tinubu. In their final communique from the summit, “ECOWAS leaders threatened to use force to restore constitutional order in Niger if the coup leaders did not hand over power back to Bazoum within one week” (ECOWAS Commission, 2023, p.3). The Authority of Head of States further directed ECOWAS Committee of Chief of Defense Staff (CCDS) to strategize for the deployment of troops to Niger Republic in case of failure to hand over power to Bazoum within one week. ECOWAS equally imposed diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions on Niger.

The United States and France withdrew their military cooperation with the Niger Republic. Prior to the coup, the United States regarded Niger Republic as the regional partner in its global war against terrorism in the Sahel region. It had deployed both men and equipment in Niger for the purpose of fighting terrorism in the Sahel region. However, the emergence of General Tachiani as the new Military Head of State constitutes a setback to the United State’s foreign policy. The United States does not associate with non-democratic governments. Similarly, France, which had more than 1,500 French soldiers in Niger, had to reconsider a new location for Operation Barkhanes’ headquarters. It has lost its presence in Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and now Niger. It should be recalled that Nigeriens openly demonstrated against France presence in its country. According to Marc Otte (2023):

Since the coup, relations with Paris have deteriorated. Incidents during a demonstration in front of the French embassy ... led to the emergency evacuation of 577 French people. Protests continued and broadcasting of French media was cut off on the day of celebration of the 63 years of the independence of Niger from France. Access to the French embassy and other nearby chancelleries was blocked by Nigerien Security Forces” (p.3).

These domestic supports emboldened the Niger military junta and hence bluffed ECOWAS and its allies—the United States and France. The plotters threatened the Nigerien lead regional organization (ECOWAS) with the use of force. General Tchiani insisted that, “...any aggression or attempted aggression against the state of Niger will see an immediate and unannounced response by the Nigerien Defense and Security Forces...” (cited in Marc Otte, 2023, p.2). Added to this, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger had entered into a treaty tagged “Confederation of the Alliance of Sahel States” (AES). The objective of the treaty was to ensure collective security of the member states. An attack on one is an attack on all. The three countries threatened to withdraw their membership from ECOWAS. Military leaders in Niger Republic also entered into a defence pact with Wagner Group, a private military organization in Russia. The Wagner Group is currently present in Mali and the Central African Republic. The private military organization was expected to fill the vacuum created by the departure of France and United States’ forces. According to Oladiran (2023), “Niger’s junta reportedly sought Wagner’s support ... Evidence suggests that a significant part of Niger’s population also supports the coup and deployment by Wagner...” (p.3). Pertinent questions that need immediate answers are:

- (i) Which theoretical framework can adequately explain President Mohamed Bazoum’s political leadership and the military intervention in Niger Republic?
- (ii) How did President Mohamed Bazoum’s political leadership trigger the military intervention in Niger Republic?



- (iii) How did the military intervention impact the Niger Republic?
- (iv) How did the international community respond to the military intervention in the Niger Republic?

Structurally, the study is classified into five sections. The first section deals with the theoretical framework while the second section explains how President Mohamed Bazoum's political leadership triggered military intervention in the Niger Republic. The third section analyzes the impacts of military intervention on Niger while the fourth section explains the responses of the international community to the military intervention in the Niger Republic. The fifth section, which is the last, contains the conclusion and recommendations as well as references.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

This study on "President Mohamed Bazoum's Political Leadership and Military Intervention in the Niger Republic" adopted the ex post facto design that relies on secondary sources (books, journal articles, monographs, internet materials, conference papers, etc) of data collection. These documentary materials were obtained from Nigerian libraries and internets, and subjected to content validity before being analyzed qualitatively into the study. The qualitative approach assisted the researcher to embark on an in-depth study of President Mohamed Bazoum's political leadership and how it triggered military intervention in the Niger Republic.

The population of the study was drawn from ECOWAS member states: Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Benin Republic, Sierra Leone and Togo. Non ECOWAS member states such as Chad, France, United States, Russia as well as the European Union were also included in the study. However, the sample of the study is limited to Niger Republic. The choice of Niger Republic was judgmental in view of the fact that it is a signatory to ECOWAS 1999 Mechanism that permits sub-regional body intervention in internal affairs of a member state. Regrettably, the military junta warned ECOWAS member states against intervention and signed an agreement with the Wagner Group for protection.

### **Environmental Theory of Military Intervention in Niger Republic**

The environmental theorists (Huntington, 1957; Finer, 1962; Janowitz, 1970; Woddi, 1977; Putnam, 1967) were the first group of scholars that assembled building blocks that assisted in explaining the fundamentals for military intervention in third world countries. Their explanations centered on environmental issues like socio-economic factors, political culture, professionalism as well as foreign influences as major factors that triggered coup d'état in developing countries. Samuel Huntington (1957), for instance, argued that whenever the socio-economic conditions of the people get worse, there is a likelihood for military intervention. In a situation where there is high unemployment rate, high inflation rate, low per capita income, decaying infrastructures, corruption and deteriorating standard of living, the citizens must surely appeal for military intervention. This confirms McGowan and Johnson (1984) rigorous research on military intervention in sub-Saharan Africa between 1956-1984. McGowan and Johnson (1984) discovered that, "...the lower the economic growth and level of industrial unemployment, the higher the incidence of military intervention" (cited in Smith, 2003, p.184). Smith (2003) explained further that the economic stagnation of most developing countries that





causes unemployment, high cost of living and infrastructural deficit came as a result of mono culture and low productivity. A country that has low productivity is bound to have an import driven economy which is detrimental to growth and development. Military intervention in civilian political leadership is seen as a messiah that can salvage the state from total collapse.

Edward Finer (1962) on his part argued that the military intervention occurred in a state that lacked institutionalized political culture, and suffered economic hardship as well as social division. Political culture exists in a society where stability in civilian rule is not in doubt. The norms and values of the state are transmitted from one generation to another without reversal whatsoever. The institutions are strong, separation of power is enshrined in the constitution and the citizens are aware of their obligations to the state. Again, Finer (1962) categorized political culture into four (4): mature, developed, low and minimal. "Each level is related to the propensity of the military to intervene and kinds of military intervention" (Smith, 2003, p.185). A mature and high political culture exists in a state where the military plays an important role in defense policy making, but does not develop value, interest or expectation for intervention. This is common in the western world, where the military gives full support to the civilian regime and effectively participates in defence policy making. Low and minimal political culture exists in a state where legitimacy of the civilian regime is totally lacking. The civilian government could be removed at any time and replaced by the junta without notice. African states (Nigeria, Ghana, Gabon, Benin Republic Niger, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, etc) are good examples of this typology. The people often accept the disruption of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism based on the fact that their basic needs are not provided by the civilian authority. As Finer (1962) posited, "where public attachment to civilian institutions is strong, military intervention in politics will be weak ... by the same token, where public attachment to the civilian institution is weak or non-existence, military intervention in politics will find wide scope – both in manner and substance" (p.21).

Furthermore, Moris Janowitz (1970) anchored his explanation on military intervention in Third World Politics on patriotism, nationalism and professionalism. Thomson (2010) hinted that "the military is forced to intervene in the political process in the absence of other social groups with the ability to govern effectively ... cannot sit idly while civilians destroy the state..." (p.136). The organizational structure of the military gives it an advantage over the civilian regime. The military believes in command, control and obedience before complaint. The junior officer is duty bound to carry out command without hesitation. In his words, Smith (2003) argued that it has a clear chain of command, with a well understood and rigorously observed set of superior-subordinate relationships. Decisions are obeyed not debated until some consensus is reached" (p.186). The division that often exists among the civilian ruling class, coupled with the military's monopoly of the use of instruments of violence, give them an advantage over civilian authority. As Pye (1971) confirmed, "rational structures, capable of relating means to ends and associated with rapid technological development and special skills, enabled them to be viewed as "possible saviours" where there is a sense of failure in the country" (p.283). The military can communicate effectively to the people. Again, their communication skill often focused on the ill of the society caused by the civilian regime. Such information endeared them to the people, and hence attracted public support. Similarly, the use of modern technology and the professional discipline which the military possesses give them an advantage over politicians. In addition, Jane Woddis (1977) identified foreign influence as a strong factor for military intervention in third world politics. Foreign powers (France, Britain,



the United States and Russia) through overt or covert means often instigate military intervention in third world politics. According to Woddis (1977):

Through “covert operations” involving political advice subsidies to political organizations and individual’s propaganda, training, economic interventions, paramilitary support to domestic groups, and infiltration and co-option of local agents and allies in trade unions, corporations, political parties, the media and the military itself, foreign influence has penetrated deeply into third world society (pp.56-60).

Added to this, is Robert Putnam’s (1967) “Contagion Hypothesis” which highlights the possibility of spillover of military intervention from one neighbouring country to another. Supporting Putnam’s (1967) view, Smith (2003) hinted that, “there have been times when it appeared as if some states experienced coups because neighbouring states had shown how easily it could be done and what advantages occurred to the armed forces as a result” (p.189).

Relating the above theoretical postulations to the empirical facts, one is bound to believe that the socio-economic conditions of the Nigeriens triggered the military intervention. Though Niger Republic is a landlocked state with a high rate of poverty, the civilian government of former President Bazoum made the situation fertile for military intervention. It should be recalled that during the regime of his predecessor, President Mahamadou Issoufou, the then government introduced the “Renaissance Development Plan.” The main objective of this plan was aimed at embarking on reforms that could improve education and health care, create job opportunities for the teeming youths, consolidate democratic institutions as well as fight hunger (International Crisis Group, 2015). Regrettably, this laudable programme was abandoned by President Bazoum. Hence, health, education, employment and food security suffered under President Mohamed Bazoum’s watch. As International Alert (2018) posited, “unemployment and under-employment affect a significant proportion of communities, including young people. Precarious living conditions lead to the risk of social marginalization due to lack of money; for young men, this can easily lead to questioning the way society is organized economically and morally...” (p.27). Arguably, Niger is a good example of state failure. The basic institutions of the state had failed and the government of President Bazoum was not ready to fix the basic infrastructure (especially schools, hospitals, roads, railways, airport, etc), which triggered anger. International Crisis Group (2015) declared that:

The quality of public schools is desperately poor: Up to 80 percent of teachers are not trained ... Added to this is gender based violence and discrimination. The state insists on education for girls but many are said to be “constantly harassed and often sexually abused at schools and on their way home. This together with economic difficulties has led some 2.1 million to drop out of primary or secondary school education since 2000 (p.6).

Therefore, when General Tchiani overthrew the government of President Bazoum, the locals saw the incoming military government as a Messiah that would correct the socio-economic wrongs, which Samuel Huntington (1957) postulated as the major cause of the military intervention. Again, Finer (1962) linked military intervention to the level of political culture. Like other African countries (Nigeria, Chad, Ghana, Togo, Benin Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, etc), Nigeriens are people with low and minimal political culture. General Tchiani was seen as a saviour who would salvage his people from the corrupt government of President Bazoum. Niger Republic is an oil producing state. Regrettably, the oil brought curse and misery instead of blessing to the people. As Abba (2023) stated, “...for a population of nearly 25



million, Niger should take advantage of the oil windfall to strengthen its health system, for example, the construction of a national hospital in each of the eight regions...” (p.5). Unfortunately, corruption had prevented the state from achieving a good health care delivery for the people of Niger Republic. Therefore, when the junta struck on 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2023, the people of Niger Republic had no other option than to receive the military with jubilations. The Nigeriens hated President Bazoum and his government. They alleged that Mohamed Bazoum’s government was autocratic. Tschorner (2023) equally confirmed that “while promising democracy, he actually established a quasi-one party system that politicized both the public administration and the judiciary” (p.4).

Furthermore, Janowitz (1970) linked military intervention to professionalism, patriotism and nationalism. The situation of the Nigeriens could be ascribed to self-interest. It should be recalled that, in February 2017, the National Security Council was against Bazoum’s proposal to initiate peace-talks with the Islamist groups (Tschorner, 2023). The military regarded the proposal as a spite on their profession which would never happen. President Bazoum equally admitted in 2022 that the Islamist groups had superior fire power over the Nigerien army. This admission infuriated the military who could not endure the humiliation. Added to this was the rumour that General Tchiani, the former presidential guard, who is presently the Nigerien Head of State, was about to be removed by the former President Bazoum. In order to save his job, General Tchiani had to act first. According to Fact Sheet (2023), “this underlying dissatisfaction may have set the stage for the recent military coup, given the swift alignment of other senior military officers” (p.2). Finally, Putnam (1967) postulated the contagion hypothesis as another major reason for military intervention in third world politics. The contagion hypothesis is associated with foreign influence which scholars like Woddis (1977) had emphasized. The truth is that the Niger Republic was able to shame ECOWAS because of the support she got from Burkina Faso and Mali. These two states (Burkina Faso and Mali) which are currently under military rule promised to support Niger Republic should ECOWAS intervene militarily. Tschorner (2023) hinted further that “with the so-called Liptako-Gourma Charter, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso have created a new military alliance – the Alliance of Sahel States. The military junta of the three countries have pledged to support each other in the event of an attack on sovereignty and in the fight against rebellion and terrorism” (p.8).

### **Mohamed Bazoum’s Political Leadership That Triggered Military Intervention in the Niger Republic**

The first military coup that would have stopped the swearing in of former President Bazoum occurred on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2021. Immediately Bazoum defeated Mahamane Ousmane in a keenly contested presidential election, there was a false rumour that Bazoum was not a Nigerien. The military was supported by the opposition parties – National Movement for Development of Society (MNSD) and Patriotic Movement of the Republic (MPR) – to take over power. The then president, Issoufou had to use the presidential guard to abort the coup d’état. However, a section of the military was still nursing the animosity against President Bazoum and his government. Notwithstanding the fact that President Bazoum did not enjoy support from all the segments of Nigerien society, his leadership style was highly contested. The military junta that took over power on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 cited “poor economic and social governance, along with deterioration in the security” (International Crisis Group, 2023) as the major reasons for the forceful change of government.



The truth is that Niger Republic is one of the poorest countries in the Sahel region. The citizens of Niger hoped to have a change that could impact positively on their daily lives. They wanted to have good health care delivery, good education, better infrastructure, modern communication facilities, among others. Regrettably, the change of leadership from Issoufou to Bazoum brought anger and despair to the Nigeriens. As Pita and Signe (2023) put it, “one of the challenges faced is sometimes the mismatch in terms of governance effectiveness, in terms of public service delivery, in terms of security...” (pp.1-2).

Nigeriens have not benefitted from President Mohamed Bazoum’s government economically; the living conditions of the people were worse than the era of President Issoufou. Even before the departure of President Issoufou, Niger survived through foreign donors. The loans it got from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank could not salvage the country from economic woes but rather worsened its condition. The country continued to be plagued by extreme poverty, unsustainable and inefficient public spending, widespread illiteracy, as well as a rapidly growing population. “Over the course of the last decade, Niger’s debt has worsened considerably with the debt burden now totaling around half of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP)” (BTI 2024 Country Report, p.4).

Fact must be told: President Bazoum inherited the debt from his predecessor. This debt affected his ability to deliver good governance to his people. The government continued servicing debt instead of building roads, hospitals, schools, railways, airports, among others. It would not have been so bad if not because agriculture, the main-stay of Nigerien economy, failed due to climate change. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018) reported that:

Climate change is causing increasingly irregular rainfall, raising temperatures and desertification which impact agricultural productivity and food insecurity. While only 12.5 percent of land is arable, nearly 80 percent of the population work in agriculture and pastoralism, making this sector particularly vulnerable to climate-related hazards. As a result, Niger is among the countries most at risk of drought worldwide ... The high sensitivity of the agricultural sector to agro-climatic hazards and the high poverty rate are the main sources of Niger vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition (cited in REAP Country Case Study Niger, 2003, p.1).

This is therefore a reality; coup d’état cannot change the above narrative. The climate change has made Niger poor, and the attempt by previous governments to borrow from international donors for the purpose of revamping the economy had complicated issues for the country. General Tchiani that took over power as a result of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, hunger, diseases, among others, should be ready to live with these realities, since the fundamentals for economic growth are still absent in Niger Republic.

Again, the military junta also alleged that former President Bazoum exhibited bad governance during his tenure. President Bazoum should not be defended. The root cause of bad governance in Niger is corruption. The cabinet members and military contractors in the previous government of President Issoufou, namely Aboubacar Hime and Aboubacar Charfor, were not tried by the government of President Bazoum. Even Tschorner (2023) maintained that “Mohamed Bazoum’s political room to maneuver was severely limited. Civil Society Organizations criticized the inadequate investigation of the case of alleged massive embezzlement of state fund in connection with arms purchase under Issoufou’s government” (p.4). The judiciary, which is expected to be the last hope of a common man, was also corrupt





under the leadership of former President Bazoum. Though a former minister of communication, Mohammadou Zada, was arrested and prosecuted for corruption during the regime of President Bazoum, the general perception was that the individual must have fallen out of favour with the president. The Nigerien Police collect money to prosecute cases while magistrates sell justice to the highest bidders. A survey conducted by Afrobarometre in 2022 indicated that “71% of the population believe that most magistrates are corrupt. Fighting for one’s rights in a court of law can be expensive” (cited in BTI 2024 Country Report, p.9).

Unlike Nigeria, where public officers are mandated to declare their assets before Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), and further expected to appear before Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) including Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) whenever corruption issues arise, Niger does not have these anti-graft bodies. Though Nigerien public servants are expected to declare their assets before swearing in (before the constitutional court), the expectation is that a body should be created by the government to confirm the authenticity of the declaration. Unfortunately, such a body is absent. The constitutional court that supervises the declaration does not check the authenticity of the assets declared by the public officials. This inefficiency gives room to the high level of corruption in the Niger Republic. As Afrobarometre (2022) confirmed, “67% of the Nigerien population believe that some or most government officials are involved in corrupt activities. A total of 45% of the population said that the level of corruption in the country had increased substantially” (cited in BTI 2024 Country Report, p.10). It should also be recalled that in May 2022, a Nigerien non-governmental organization filed a legal suit against President Mohamed Bazoum’s government alleging that about \$99 million public funds could not be accounted for by the government. The audit report of Niger 2020 public procurement was attached as evidence. Unfortunately, President Bazoum did not hear the end of the case before he was removed on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 (Al Jazeera, 2022).

Added to this was the issue of human rights abuse. The dictatorial tendencies of President Bazoum was inherited from President Issoufou. The political space was not open for all citizens of Niger Republic to participate. The activities of civil society organizations were monitored and media censorship was a major characteristic of Mohamed Bazoum’s government. President Bazoum used security forces to enslave and torture political opponents (Hama Amadou, Moussa Kaka, among others). As BTI 2024 Country Report insisted, “security forces have beaten and abused civilians in the context of the fight against terrorism in the border regions with Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Mali. Members of the security services can often act without fear of being held accountable for their actions” (p.10). In the same vein, Tschorner (2023) reported that in February 2012, President Bazoum issued a decree that hindered the operation of non-governmental organizations. In June 2022, a coalition of Nigerien non-governmental organizations documented the banning of demonstrations as well as arrest and torture of journalists and activists who were critical of Mohamed Bazoum’s government. This could be the reason why the Nigerien Civil Society organization, journalists, activists, youths and the general public welcomed General Tchiani and said goodbye to President Bazoum. As Idrissa (2023) posited “...the coup does not just mark the violent end of democracy, but rather reflects a failed democracy” (cited in Tschorner, 2023, p.4). A democracy that does not respect human rights, rule of law, as well as freedom of association is not fit to exist.

Furthermore, Niger Republic was at the edge of collapse. The Islamic extremist groups (Jama’at usrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Shara (ISGS), Ansaru, Islamic State in the West African Province (ISWAP), including Boko Haram) had



taken advantage of weak governance to launch indiscriminate attacks on the government and the people of Niger. Since 2015, Niger has declared a state of emergency in the Diffa region, where Boko Haram, Ansaru and Islamic State of West African Province have inflicted a series of harms on innocent people. Unarguably, Tahoua region is presently under the control of Islamic State in the Greater Shara while Tillaberi region witnesses frequent attacks by Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) as well as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM). The state is helpless despite international security partnership to curtail the activities of the extremist groups. Strategic partners, such as France, the United States, European Union, Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) have come to help; yet the havoc committed by the Islamist is unabated. According to BTI 2024 Country Report:

In 2022, there were a total of 169 terrorist attacks on Nigerien territory; in 2021, there were 142 attacks; and in 2020, there were 232 attacks. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 253 individuals in 2022, 603 people in 2021 and 239 individuals in 2020. Although there has been a slight decrease in the number of attacks compared to the previous period, Jihad-Salafi groups continue to pose a significant threat to Niger's stability (p.21).

Regrettably, President Bazoum who had suggested the establishment of dialogue to former President Issoufou, when he was interior minister, was now in charge of affairs. The establishment of dialogue was rejected by the former President Issoufou and the military chiefs. The Nigerien military chiefs regarded dialogue as weakness, and hence rejected it outrightly. This same suggestion came up again immediately after Bazoum was sworn in in 2021. Bazoum proposed an "outstretched hand policy" that aimed at establishing dialogue as well as demobilizing and integrating the jihadist groups into Nigerien society. Tschorner (2023) further added that "Bazoum's open admission that he had released prisoners and received them for talks in the presidential palace as part of his "outstretched hand policy" or in an interview in which he described "terrorists" as "stronger and more battle-hardened" than the army were perceived as contemptuous of the army, both in military circles and by the public" (p.3).

The military could not endure the disgrace; hence, he had to vacate power for them to rule.

### **Impacts Analysis of Military Intervention on Niger Republic**

Unarguably, the forceful removal of President Bazoum from power by General Tchiani on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 has impacted negatively on Niger as well as the international community. The ECOWAS sanctions and border closure with immediate neighbours, especially Nigeria and Benin Republic, have resulted in untold hardship in Niger Republic. Niger Republic, a landlocked state, can only access seaports through Nigeria (Lagos) and Benin Republic (Cotonou). The land border closure restricts Niger Republic's access to seaports, thereby denying Nigeriens basic goods, such as cement, fuel, pharmaceutical products, food stuffs, fertilizer, cottons, to mention but a few. Those who had access to these goods bought them from smugglers at outrageous prices. Confirming this point, International Crisis Group (2023) maintained that:

... the borders with Benin and Nigeria, the two countries from which Niger imports food and other key necessities, remain closed. As a result, residents are grappling with shortages of medicine, cereals, and imported food stuffs like sugar, powdered milk and vegetable oil. In mid-August, the prices of rice surged by 21 percent ... by mid-October, the price of a 25 kg (55



pound) bag of rice had jumped over 50 percent over a two-month period ... the junta is making life difficult ... Niger's authorities have refused entry to trucks from Benin (p.2).

Again, Niger Republic had more than 60 percent of its power supply from Nigeria. However, the decision of President Tinubu's government to disconnect Niger Republic from Nigeria's national grid has crippled the Nigerien economy. Hospitals, schools, factories, ministries and private residences remain dark for some months now, without electricity. In addition, major cities, such as Niamey, Maradi and Zinder are having prolonged blackouts and power rationing. Businessmen in these cities are using generators that work for a few hours, due to lack of fuel (International Crisis Group, 2023). Expectedly, this lack of electricity must surely affect the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), thereby impacting negatively on the internally generated revenue of the state. According to Abba (2023) in August 2023, custom authorities in Niger Republic were able to generate only 4 billion CFA Francs, as compared with the monthly revenue of between 15 and 17 billion CFA Francs before the coup d'état. Prior to the coup d'état, the tax authorities collected 50 billion CFA Francs monthly; however, in August 2023, only 30 billion CFA Francs was collected. Abbas (2023) further lamented that:

As a result, the government of Niger is finding it extremely difficult to meet its payroll. It is not certain that it will be able to pay out salaries in the coming months if the ECOWAS sanctions are maintained as they stand ... in any event, if the situation persists, it could well undermine the esteem and support enjoyed by the military government among the people of Niger (p.4).

The Associated Free Press (2023) recalled that the European Union had allocated 503 million Euro (554 million Dollars) for improvement of governance, education and sustainable growth in Niamey, capital of Niger Republic. The funds were to be implemented in the 2021-2024 budgets. The overthrow of President Bazoum warranted France to halt the full release of that fund for the year 2024. "Niger has received just \$82 million (0.55 percent GDP) in development aid this year, against the expected \$625 million (3.6 percent of GDP)" (Associated Free Press, 2023, p.1). The reduction in foreign aid that affected Niger's budget triggered food inflation in major cities (Niamey, Maradi, Zinder and Agadez). "Within two months following the coup d'état, there was a sharp rise in the price of basic foodstuffs, including rice, which jumped from CFA Francs 11,000 per sack to CFA Francs 15,000, an increase of nearly 30%" (Abba, 2023, p.4). The price increase will surely bring poverty. As World Bank (2023) stated, "the extreme poverty rate is expected to reach 52% in 2023 due to negative per capita growth and rising inflation. Four hundred and three (403) million people or 17% of the population require humanitarian assistance in Niger compared to 3.7 million in 2022" (p.1).

Expectedly, Niger's immediate neighbours, especially Nigeria that shares 1,600 km land borderline with them, cannot escape from the negative impacts of ECOWAS's sanctions on Niger Republic. Following the forceful removal of President Bazoum, Nigerian citizens from Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina that traded with Nigeriens also bear the brunt of the sanctions. United Nations Food and Agriculture (2023), cited in International Crisis Group (2023), had maintained that the coup d'état has rendered 3.3 million people in the North Eastern state of Nigeria (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) hungry. It has also brought hunger to 2.9 million people in the North Western states of Nigeria (Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Jigawa). "It also projected that these numbers could rise to 4.4 million and 4.3 million respectively if urgent action was not taken" (International Crisis Group, 2023, p.3). The truth is that these Nigerian states are ravaged by insecurity caused by Islamist extremist groups



(Boko Haram, Ansaru, Islamic State of West African Province) as well as banditry. Farmers from these states cannot access their farmlands despite all efforts by the government. It seems insecurity has overwhelmed the regime; therefore, there is nothing the people could do than to depend on Niger Republic for the supply of foodstuffs.

Even Cadre Harmonize (2023) had advised the Nigerian government to be cautious regarding the Nigerien issue, since “political crises in Niger (and presumably related measures such as the border closure) could have a “huge” impact on food security and malnutrition in both the North East and North West regions of Nigeria” (cited in International Crisis Group, 2023, p.3). The bilateral agreements on infrastructural projects that would have been beneficial to both Nigeria and Niger have been affected negatively. It should be recalled that in 2021, the Nigerian government under the leadership of the then President Buhari signed a 2 billion Dollars agreement with Mota Engil Group. This agreement was aimed at constructing a 284 km railway from Nigeria (Kano) to Niger (Maradi). The projection was that the railway would have the capacity to transport thousands of passengers and cargos from Nigeria to Niger on daily bases. Funding for the project was expected to come from Credit Suisse Group, Africa Finance, as well as German Development Bank (KfW). The project had made progress until General Tchiani overthrew President Bazoum on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023. Regrettably, “EU suspended financing to Niger in the wake of the coup and it is unclear whether these leaders will honour their commitments as long as Niger remains under military rule” (International Crisis Group, 2023, p.3).

Similarly, the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline Project which was abandoned in the 1970s, but later re-initiated by Nigeria, Niger and Algeria in 2022, also suffers as a result of coup d'état in Niger Republic. The 4,100 km pipeline project was supposed to run from the Nigerian Coast through Niger to the Algerian Coast, for the purpose of supplying 30 billion cubic metres of natural gas yearly to Europe. The European nations (France, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Greece, etc) need these gas in order to stop the importation of the product from Russia, following her invasion of Ukraine. “The coup and ECOWAS’s stringent sanctions have now cast doubt on the project ... as long as the Niamey junta remains in power” (International Crisis Group, 2023, p.4). Even Beri (2023) was skeptical about the Trans-Saharan Pipeline Project. The continuation of the project cannot be guaranteed since the junta does not want to have anything to do with Europe. As Beri (2023) posited, “the Niger military junta does not seem to be keen towards continuing any connection with Europe, leaving the future implementation of this vital gas pipeline project in a limbo” (p.5).

### **Responses to Military Intervention in Niger Republic**

The resurgence of military intervention in African politics is a disturbing phenomenon. In 2021, Guinea, Mali and Chad experienced coup d'état, while Burkina Faso ceased to be a democratic state in 2022. Gabon and Niger Republic also had their turn in 2023. In order to avert contagion hypothesis, ECOWAS had to evoke its 1999 mechanism which empowered the sub-regional body to intervene in the internal affairs of the member states. Niger republic was a litmus test of the 2019 mechanism. As Ambassador Musah stated, “We must draw a line in the sand” (cited in Mathur, 2024, p.7). In order not to give credence to the military junta, ECOWAS refused to describe the Niger’s political crisis as “coup d'état.” It rather advises the disgruntled elements to turn the path of peace. According to Mathur (2024), “ECOWAS’s first response was condemnation and a commitment to restore order ... labelled the takeover as an attempted coup, fearing that calling it a coup would accord a degree of recognition to the junta” (p.5).





The military leader, General Tchiani, was not ready to concede power, or even negotiate with ousted President, Bazoum. This refusal promoted an Extraordinary Summit of ECOWAS Head of States in Abuja on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2023. A date line of one week was given to General Tchiani to restore President Bazoum back or be ready for sub-regional military intervention in Niger. The Authority of Head of States further directed the Committee of Chief of Defense Staff (CCDS) to work out modality for the deployment of troops in Niger Republic.

ECOWAS's threat of military intervention in Niger Republic attracted series of condemnations. According to Abba (2023), Nigerien political parties such as National Movement for the Development of Society (MNSD), Patriotic Movement for the Republic (MPR), Congress for the Republic (CPR), Nigerien Democratic Movement for African Federation (MODEN/FA), and even the ruling party, Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS), opposed ECOWAS's position vehemently. Civil society groups, activists and media rejected ECOWAS's intervention in Niger. The junta on its part, "within a week arrested many members of the old government, appointed a civilian-military transitional government and deepened their relations with the military governments in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea" (Tschorner, 2023, p.6). Youths in Niamey maintained nocturnal checkpoints throughout the entire capital city. "Thousands also responded to a call in early August to volunteer for the defense of the country" (Tschorner, 2023, p.6).

President Tinubu, the chairman of the sub-regional bloc received a lot of attacks from Nigerians. The Nigerian Senate, where his party, All Progressive Congress (APC), constitutes the majority, did not support sub-regional military intervention in the Niger Republic. The Muslim umbrella organization led by the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar II and the President of Nigerian Catholic Bishops Conference, Bishop Lucius Ugorji, advised the Nigerian government to desist from sub-regional military intervention in Niger Republic. Prominent sons of the northern Nigeria, such as Nasir El-Rufai, the former Governor of Kaduna State and Senator Ali Ndume, the senator representing Borno South Senatorial District, described Niger as "blood brothers"; hence, ECOWAS's military intervention would result in "war between brothers" (Mathur, 2024, p.7). Algeria, a non ECOWAS member state, but a northern neighbour to Niger, cautioned ECOWAS against the use of force. Even the Committee of Chief of Defence Staff (CCD) was not prepared for military intervention, but appeared to favour diplomacy (New Atlanticist, 2023). Unarguably, Nigeria, the sub-regional leader has its internal issues, especially economy and insecurity, which are unabated. Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal are presently facing economic crises; therefore, a leading state in the ECOWAS bloc that would sponsor the intervention is unavailable. As New Atlanticist (2023) stated, "Tinubu is politically weak and facing significant pushback domestically. His recent decisions aimed at improving Nigeria's economy are unpopular and causing disruption to the economy. At the same time, Nigeria is struggling with its own insurgencies in Northern Nigeria, and Northern Nigerians and Southern Nigeriens are more or less the same people" (p.1).

Condemnations associated with proposed military intervention in Niger Republic forced the Authority of Head of States to change its position on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2023, during the Extra Ordinary Summit held in Abuja. Though ECOWAS insisted on the use of force (pretense), the body imposed a series of sanctions on the Niger Republic. The sanctions included the closure of land and air borders with the ECOWAS members' states, the suspension of financial and banking transactions with Niger, and the perpetrators of the coup including anyone that associates with them (Abba, 2023). In order to moderate the hash impacts of ECOWAS's



sanction, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso entered into Liptako-Gourma Charter, popularly known as the “Alliance of Sahel States.”

The truth is that ECOWAS was not ready to expand the scope of the Nigerien crisis, and hence opted for diplomacy, even though it continued threatening the junta with the use of brute force. President Patrice Talon of Benin Republic was mandated by the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Tinubu, to persuade the junta to vacate the seat of power which they forcefully occupied since 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023. Mahamat Deby, Chadian Head of State (a non ECOWAS member) met with General Tchiani on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2023. The outcome of the meeting was not disclosed to the general public. ECOWAS further mandated the Nigerian former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar (rtd), and the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa’ad Abubakar, to meet with General Tchiani on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2023. Regrettably, the junta rebuffed the ECOWAS delegates, and rather accepted meeting Muslim clerics from Nigeria on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2023. The Muslim clerics met with Bazoum though their discussions were not disclosed to the general public. “Tchiani eventually expressed regret over his refusal to talk with the ECOWAS envoys, which he claimed, ... owing to anger over ECOWAS’s seven-day ultimatum” (Mathur, 2014, p.9). General Tchiani however announced a three-year transition to constitutional order in Niger Republic, which ECOWAS promptly and vehemently rejected.

The Western partners, especially France, the United States, European Union and Russia responded differently, even though they unanimously rejected forceful change of government in Niger Republic. France, the former colonial master of Niger Republic, regarded the state as its major economic base. Niger is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest producer of uranium, a key mineral used in the production of nuclear energy. As Beri (2023) stated, “Europe is dependent on Niger for the region’s nuclear energy production. Niger is the second largest supplier of uranium to the European Union and contributes 25 percent of uranium supplies to their countries. France in particular generates around 70 percent of the country’s electricity through nuclear energy (p.4).

Therefore, Niger’s military leaders’ decision to ban uranium exports to Europe and France sent shock waves to the Western world. Despite this, France did not reserve its condemnation of the military coup. As International Crisis Group (2023) maintained, “French President Emmanuel Macron’s lengthy standoff with the junta hindered other European Union member states from articulating a path forward on how to engage with authorities” (p.4). Following the emergence of General Tchiani on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the bilateral relations between France and Niger have turned sour. It should be recalled that President Macron warned Nigeriens to desist from attacking France’s interest, else there would be repercussions. The French embassy was attacked on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2023. The protesters forcefully entered the embassy and demanded immediate repatriation of all the embassy staff including the French Ambassador, Sylvain Itte. The protesters also demanded the withdrawal of French troops from Niger Republic. According to Beri (2023), there have been “several pro-military junta demonstrations in Niger; the demonstrators have raised the Russian flag and chanted “down with France” (p.6). President Macron does not want direct confrontation with President Putin; hence, International Crisis Group (2023) confirmed that “France has withdrawn its ambassador after a bitter standoff and will pull its 1,500 troops out of Niger by the end of the year” (p.1).

Furthermore, President Bazoum was a close ally to the United States. Bazoum’s effort towards eliminating terrorism and extremism was highly appreciated by President Biden of the United States. Abba (2023) hinted that there are about 1,100 American soldiers stationed in Niger Republic. The troops are based in Agadez, Niamey and Ouallam. Unlike France that supported



a forceful replacement of General Tchiani, the United States opted for a pragmatic approach towards the putschists in Niamey, in order to maintain the option of military cooperation in the fight against terrorism” (Tschorner, 2023, p.7). This pragmatic approach cannot last long since America’s foreign policy does not agree with the military regime. Presently, the United States has started withdrawing its troops from Niger Republic.

Beri (2023) reported that “France stopped its development assistance of US \$130 million. Similarly, the European Union and the United States stopped development assistance of US \$544 million and US \$100 million respectively” (p.4). Furthermore, the response of Russia is unknown. Russia has condemned the removal of President Bazoum but has also rejected ECOWAS’s option for the use of force. As Beri (2023) rightly explained, “Russia has not supported Niger’s coup; it has warned that any military action by ECOWAS in the region may lead to “protracted confrontations” in the region” (p.6). Though Russia may not directly intervene in Niger’s political crisis, the presence of the Wagner Group (Russian private military organization) in Niger Republic should not be treated lightly. This is why Marc (2023) posited that, “Russia is eager to prove that it is not isolated, after the international response to the war in Ukraine. It has used Africa to circumvent western economic sanctions and rebuild its forces via the Wagner Group, which is active in the Central African Republic and Mali” (p.5).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The unconstitutional removal of President Bazoum from power by General Tchiani on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 could be attributed to bad governance. Findings revealed that President Bazoum was unable to tackle corruption which he inherited from his predecessor, President Issoufou. In the same vein, the Islamist extremist groups did not allow the government to exercise control over its territory. The little the government generated from foreign donors, oil revenue, uranium and taxation was channeled towards war against terrorism. This adversely affected President Mohamed Bazoum’s government, and hence incapacitated it from building good roads, airports, hospitals, schools, and providing water and communication facilities to the rural areas. Though these inadequacies could be seen as remote factors that triggered the coup d’état, the personal interest of General Tchiani should not be ignored as an immediate factor. In view of his removal, the best option for General Tchiani to save his job was to remove President Bazoum.

Furthermore, the military coup has led to food insecurity, inflation, the suspension of funding on Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline Project and Nigeria-Niger Railway Project development aids, and, above all, the emergence of Alliance of Sahel States. Undoubtedly, the Alliance of Sahel States has threatened ECOWAS despite sanctions and border closure with the Niger Republic. France has withdrawn its Ambassador, Sylvain Itte, and troops while the United States and European Union have suspended their foreign assistance to Niger Republic. Like Mali and Burkina Faso, the Wagner Group has entered into security cooperation with Niger Republic, according to findings. The fact is that there is a possibility of another military coup in the Niger Republic. The fundamentals that led to the forceful removal of President Bazoum still persist unabated. Centre for Preventive Action (2024) had hinted that, “extremist violence has surged across the Sahel. The first seven months of 2023 saw at least 7,800 civilian deaths, a significant increase from 2022 ... This contradicts claims by the military juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger that they are effectively tackling insecurity” (p.12). Added to this, the current economic



hardships Nigeriens are facing are worse than in Mohamed Bazoum's era. Prices of foodstuffs have increased uncontrollably. "...If the situation persists, it could well undermine the esteem and support enjoyed by the military government among the people of Niger" (Abba, 2023, p.4). Even Suleiman (2023) had warned that "each coup creates a new vacuum and adds new layers to the environment of distrust ... Military juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger do not have the support of all their militaries. This creates an environment for additional coups and counter coups" (p.5).

In order to avert this catastrophe, the study recommends:

- (i) **Provision of essential public service:** The military government of General Tchiani should ensure that the basic public services, such as schools, hospitals, water and energy are provided for the people of Niger Republic. Government should not shy away from this responsibility. Every citizen must have access to essential services. This will bring meaningful life and deter further coup in Niger Republic.
- (ii) **Establishment of anti-graft agency:** It is unfortunate that a poor country like Niger Republic could be enmeshed in a corruption scandal. This has affected foreign donors and bred distrust in governance. Those that got involved in this crime should not go scot-free. There must be an end to looting of public treasury through the establishment of an anti-graft agency.
- (iii) **Adoption of non-military approach:** The military should re-assess their performance towards eliminating extremism in Niger Republic. Military approach, frankly speaking, is not working. The extremists are getting stronger due to the assistance they are having from international terrorists' organizations. It is time to call a spade a spade. The present government should jettison its ego and enter into negotiation with all the extremist groups. Government should also be ready for 3R – Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Resettlement. The extremist groups need to be reconciled, rehabilitated and resettled. The resettlement could be the provision of alternative livelihood.
- (iv) **Entrenchment of Constitutional Order:** The military junta could only be assisted by international communities if there is a concrete plan and assurance of immediate return to constitutional order. Democracy is a global practice; Niger Republic cannot be exempted. The fundamental rights of the citizens, rule of law, growth and development could only be guaranteed in a democratic regime. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, the military government should constitute a transition committee with a specific timeline within which the Niger Republic would return back to a democratic society.





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