

# Military Intervention in Niger Republic as a Form of Resistance to French Continued Influence in Africa

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## Abstract

This paper explores the phenomenon of military intervention in Niger Republic as a form of resistance to French influence and interference in the country's political and economic milieu. Over six decades after gaining formal independence, the former French colony in West Africa continue to experience military coups and interventions that are often framed as responses to neocolonial influence. This paper examines scholarly perspectives on the historical roots of French imperialism, the political and economic mechanisms of neocolonialism, and the role of military forces in challenging these influences. The analysis highlights recurring themes such as the strategic interests of France in Niger, the persistence of economic dependency, and the complex relationship between Niger military and its former colonial ruler. By synthesising findings from various sources, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how military interventions in Niger Republic serve as both a consequence of and a resistance to enduring French interference.

**Keywords:** Military; Military Intervention; Influence; Resistance; Politics; Coup d'état.

## 1. Introduction

The scourge of military intervention has become a major feature of African post-colonial politics. This situation can be attributed to several factors including among other things the corruption of indigenous politicians that took over reins of leadership from the colonial authorities; the naivety of some of the new leaders, which reflected on their incompetence; and the continued meddling of the former colonial powers on their former colonies. Many West African military coupists have cited the later as the cause of their continued intervention in the politics of their countries stressing the need for them to assert their total sovereignty. At this point, it has become necessary to interrogate the concept of military intervention.

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The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines military as relating to soldiers, arms or war [1]. Generally, the military is the armed forces group that is primarily mandated to defend the sovereignty of a state by protecting it from external aggression or internal insurrection. According to Alam and Alam “To ensure and protect sovereignty of any state military is considered as a unique and important organization.” [2]. Military intervention as term in defence or strategic studies has been defined in the *US DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* as “the deliberate act of a nation or a group of nations to introduce its military forces into the course of an existing controversy.” [3].

In the context of politics in less developed countries, military intervention is the involvement of the military in the politics of a country normally through force that can come in form of coup d'état, and is normally justified by the rot (real or perceived) in the existing incumbent civilian dispensation. Even though most of the developing countries practice democracy and it is an aberration for the military to participate in politics in developing countries, their intervention is normally premised on some undesirable vices or failings of the civilian leaders. Alam and Alam delineate the reasons for military intervention in politics as follows: low degree of social cohesion; the existence of fratricidal class; small, weak and non-consolidate middle class; lack of institutionalisation; civilian intervention in military; inept, ineffective and corrupt government; economic deterioration; and role of super powers [4]. This study focuses on the last item which is the role of super powers. Here, the imperial activities of the French across Francophone Africa are seen as the cause of military intervention in the politics of the countries.

The Republic of Niger, which is a former French West African colony, has experienced numerous military interventions, which came as military coup d'état since gaining independence in 1960. While these coups d'état were often portrayed as purely domestic struggles for power, they also reflect a broader narrative of resistance against continued French influence or what some scholars refer to as French imperialism. This influence, though primarily economic and political, also extends into military cooperation (especially in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel region), natural resource extraction (especially uranium), and cultural hegemony. The relationship between Niger and France is a complex web of post-colonial ties that have shaped Niger's political landscape. This article goes on to delve into the phenomenon of military interventions in Niger as a manifestation of resistance against French dominance, analysing historical, political, and socio-economic factors that underpin this dynamic. By focusing on key moments of military intervention and their broader implications, this article seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how post-colonial relationships, particularly with France, have contributed to the cyclical nature of military coups in Niger.

## **2. Methodology**

The type of research design employed for this study is the phenomenological research design. This type of research design allows for qualitative analysis focusing on exploring and understanding actual experience of individuals or groups as regards a particular phenomenon. In this case, the phenomena under study are French neo-colonial overtures and military intervention in Niger Republic. This type of research design would enable us understand the impact of the both French influence and military intervention on the people of the study area.

The research is based on primary, secondary and tertiary sources of data. However, considering the availability of extant scholarly works on French imperialism in Africa, the study is mostly secondary and tertiary-source dependent. The primary sources consist few interviews and excerpts from informal interactions. The secondary sources are books, journal articles, dailies and long essays. The tertiary sources are internet links, encyclopaedia and the dictionary.

The study is designed to make use of the qualitative method of analysis, which subjects data to non-numerical interpretations. The analysis is flexible and allows for adjustment of approach in the light of received data. The information that are presented are based on a synthesis of findings from the sources of data, with a focus on identifying other scholars' views on the causes of military interventions in Niger Republic.

### **3. Constraints/Limitations of the Study**

There are two basic factors that present constraints and limitations to the research efforts for this study. They are finance and time. Even though there are other constraints, most of them are subbed under the aforementioned basic factors.

**Finance:** Funding research of this enormity is actually an up-hill task. In as much as ample resources were made available for the research, during the process of data collection, it is discovered that there is need to source more funds to mobilise research assistants and also to provide remuneration. There is also the problem of inflation and concomitant unpredictability of costs of certain research materials such as books and journal articles.

**Time:** This study has a major limitation in time constraint. There are certain primary source data that could be obtained within a definite timeframe but due to wrong timing the researcher could not obtain them. For example, certain diplomats had days they were available which normally conflict with the time the researcher could reach the location. This caused breach and gaps in the study.

Finally, to ensure a rich work, a researcher needs ample time free of distractions and disruptions. However, because of the uncertainties of the society, time constraints were encountered in the course of this study, thereby presenting a conspicuous limitation to the study.

### **4. Historical Context of French Influence in Niger**

Niger, a landlocked country in West Africa, became a French colony in the early 20th century and remained under French rule until its independence in 1960. French colonialism left deep scars on Niger's political, social, and economic fabric, and despite formal independence, the relationship between the two countries remained intertwined. France's continued involvement in Niger has been facilitated through mechanisms such as economic aid, military agreements, and control over key resources like uranium, which is vital for France's nuclear energy industry [5].

After independence, France sought to maintain its influence in Niger and other former colonies through a policy known as "Françafrique." This policy, though unofficial, refers to France's reliance on its former colonies for

strategic economic and political benefits. In exchange, France would provide political, military, and financial support to regimes that favored its interests. According to Smith, this system often led to the establishment and maintenance of authoritarian regimes that relied on French backing to suppress dissent, maintain power, and enrich elites at the expense of national development [6].

## **5. The Rise of Anti-French Sentiment in Niger**

Indeed, there has been the lingering issue of French presence across West Africa and the resentment that it has been brewing. The French colonial administration in the sub-region was fought and, in the end, political independence came but same may not be said of economic independence. The French maintained their indirect influence on their former colonies and when their (former colonies) socio-economic conditions began to seriously deteriorate, the former colonial overlord caught a large share of the blame. As Jonathan Guiffard writes:

France's historical relations with West Africa positions it on the front lines opposite populations that are either experiencing a sharp deterioration in security or significant economic and development inequalities. Its central political and economic presence makes France a bogeyman [7].

In essence, it was a popular view that France had continued to enrich itself at the expense of its former colonies in West Africa, among which is Niger Republic. Therefore, from the foregoing, it would be safe to assert that the roots of anti-French sentiment in Niger date back to the colonial era, when France imposed its administrative and economic system on the country. Of course, this system primarily served the interests of the colonial power, with Niger's resources—especially uranium—being exported to fuel France's energy needs[8]. However, the post-independence period has seen a gradual evolution in public opinion, with growing resentment towards France's continued dominance in various sectors of Nigerien society. Njuafac Kenedy Fonju throws some light on the exigencies that made the resentment justifiable when he points out that Niger being rich in uranium, became the destination of multinational Corporations (MNCs) where they set up for what he terms the 3Es (Exploration, Expropriation and Exploitation)[9]. Fonju goes on to point out an obvious fact, which is that Niger Republic remains one of the poorest and underdeveloped countries of the planet for 63 years after independence. Expectedly, the situation succeeded in breeding long-standing grievances against the French, fostering and popularising anti-French stances.

The 2023 coup brought these long-standing grievances into sharp focus, as the coup leaders tapped into popular frustrations over France's perceived stranglehold on Niger's economy and politics. Public demonstrations following the coup frequently featured anti-French slogans and the waving of Russian flags, symbolising a desire for new alliances and alternatives to French influence[10]. The visible hostility towards French institutions and businesses in Niger also underscores a broader regional trend, where France is increasingly viewed as a neo-colonial power whose influence has done little to improve the lives of ordinary people.

Many Nigeriens view France's role in the country as exploitative, benefiting only a small political elite while leaving the majority impoverished. This is made possible because France being a more powerful nation set the terms of trade and economic relations between it and Niger. Yulek Murat, Saim Karabulut and Ali Osman Karci

contextualised this situation using the concept of neo-colonialism. According to the scholars, “neocolonialism leads to economic security issues for weaker nations, that make them a victim of unfair international trade, as the more powerful side of the exchange has the power to set terms.” [11].

Of course, as the stronger nation sets the terms of exchange in the vertical relationship, thereby exploiting the weaker nation, they often seem to attempt to shoulder some responsibilities which normally come in form of infrastructural development that in actual sense appears to basically be for the purpose of facilitating their exploitation. Therefore, despite France’s investments in infrastructure, education, and development, Niger continues to rank low on the Human Development Index, with persistent poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment[12]. The belief that France’s involvement has primarily served its own economic interests, particularly in the mining sector, has fueled calls for a more nationalist approach to governance—one that seeks to reclaim Niger’s sovereignty over its resources and decisions. In line with the belief that anti-French sentiments in Niger called for regime change and installment of leadership with more nationalist outlook, Fanny Pigeaud and Ndongo Samba Sylla write that the hostility towards the former colonial power across Africa had existed for several years in most French-speaking countries on the continent, and that it is the consequence of half a century of neocolonial domination, arrogance, and indifference [13].

## **6. Uranium Politics and French Economic Interests**

Niger’s uranium reserves are among the largest in the world, and France has been heavily involved in their extraction for decades. In fact, French presence and politics in its former African colonies have been closely associated with uranium exploration and exploitation. In line with the foregoing, Bruno Tertrais succinctly writes thusly:

In France, natural uranium is immediately associated with the relationship to African countries. Uranium has always fed rumours, fantasies and conspiracy theories set against the background of all the colourful stories of what is known in France as the “*Françafrique*”; the web of personal and economic relations between Paris and its former colonies [14].

From the foregoing, one can easily deduce that uranium became a commodity of exotic value to France, inspiring a zeal to hold on to a former colony that could be objectively referred to as a precious pearl on the French imperial crown. Of course, France being capitalist state, multinational companies from the former metropole state proceeded to lead the exploration and exploitation of the rich resource in the former colony. Led by Orano, French multinational companies dominated Niger’s mining sector, extracting large quantities of uranium that are crucial for France’s nuclear energy industry. France generates over 70% of its electricity from nuclear power, making Niger’s uranium a critical component of its energy policy [15]. This reliance has fostered a relationship of dependency, where Niger's economy has become tied to the export of a single resource, often at the expense of diversification and sustainable development. This problem has elicited scholarly attempts to explain it and such scholars include Peter Volberding and Jason Warner who present what they regard as two prevalent explanations that try to account for the discrepancy between Niger’s vast uranium deposits and its lackluster economic development. As written by Volberding and Warner:

The first of these is the resource curse. According to this paradigm, even though natural resources could provide important sources of revenue, factors ranging from an overvalued currency to rent seeking among national elites inhibit a country's potential to profit from its uranium deposits. In the case of Niger, these have included burdensome external debt, poor checks and balances in the government, and financial mismanagement [16].

The second prevalent explanation as averred by Volberding and Warner is the perceived asymmetric relationship with Areva, the French state-owned nuclear power company that has dominated Niger's uranium extraction industry since before independence. Volberding and Warner note that the proponents of this view contend that since Areva has locked Niger into a series of unfavourable procurement contracts that undervalue Niger's uranium exports, the country receives insufficient compensation to lift it out of underdevelopment[17]. We are particularly inclined to the second explanation, which appears to have played a prevalent role in the military intervention that took place in the country in 2023.

Therefore, for many Nigeriens, France's dominance in the uranium industry is emblematic of the broader problem of neo-colonialism. While uranium exports generate significant revenue, much of this wealth does not trickle down to ordinary citizens. Instead, it is concentrated in the hands of a small elite group, often with close ties to France. This inequitable distribution of wealth has been a key driver of social unrest and has featured prominently in the rhetoric of military coup leaders, who frequently promise to renegotiate mining contracts to ensure that Niger receives a fairer share of the profits [18].

The uranium issue has been a flashpoint in Niger's relationship with France, with successive governments—both civilian and military—attempting to assert more control over the sector. However, these efforts have been met with resistance, as French companies wield significant influence over Niger's economy. Despite repeated promises to reform the sector and redistribute wealth more equitably, little progress has been made, and Niger remains dependent on foreign companies for the extraction and sale of its most valuable resource.[19] This ongoing dynamic has reinforced perceptions that French influence is a major obstacle to Niger's sovereignty and development.

## **7. French Military Presence and Security Dynamics in the Sahel**

France's military presence in Niger is another critical aspect of its influence in the country. Since 2014, French forces have been deployed in the Sahel region as part of Operation Barkhane, a military operation aimed at combating Islamist insurgencies in Mali, Niger, Chad, and Burkina Faso. While the operation was initially welcomed by some Sahelian governments, including Niger, its long-term presence has become a point of contention [20].

The growing frustration with France's military role in Niger is rooted in the perception that Operation Barkhane has failed to bring lasting security to the region. Despite years of military intervention, the security situation in Niger and neighboring countries has continued to deteriorate, with jihadist groups such as Boko Haram, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) expanding their influence. This has led many Nigeriens to question the effectiveness of France's military strategy and its true motives for

maintaining a presence in the region [21].

The military's criticism of France's role in Niger's security challenges was a key factor in the 2023 coup. The coup leaders argued that President Bazoum's reliance on French military support had compromised Niger's ability to develop an independent security strategy. Moreover, there is a widespread belief that France's involvement in the Sahel is driven by its desire to protect its economic interests, rather than a genuine commitment to stabilising the region. This belief has contributed to a broader regional backlash against France, with similar sentiments being expressed in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad [22].

## **8. Military Coups as a Response to French Influence**

Military coups in Niger have often been linked to dissatisfaction with French influence and local governance failures. The first coup in 1974, led by Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Kountché, was a direct response to economic mismanagement and the perceived corruption of the civilian government under President Hamani Diori. The Diori regime had developed close ties with France, particularly in the uranium sector, where French companies dominated. Kountché's coup was seen as a pushback against Diori's inability to renegotiate more favorable terms for Niger in its dealings with France [23]. Although Kountché's government also maintained relations with France, it attempted to assert more autonomy, particularly over Niger's natural resources.

Subsequent military interventions, including the coups in 1996, 1999, and 2010, followed a similar pattern of dissatisfaction with the political elite's alignment with French interests. These interventions were often framed as a rejection of political corruption, economic stagnation, and the lack of progress in reducing Niger's reliance on foreign powers, particularly France [24]. Each military regime that came into power vowed to rectify these issues, but the persistence of coups suggests a deeper structural problem rooted in the nature of Niger's post-colonial relationship with France.

The 2023 coup in Niger, which ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, is the most recent instance of military intervention and highlights the ongoing tensions between Niger's military, civilian leadership, and foreign influence. Bazoum, a key ally of France in the Sahel region, was perceived by many in Niger as being too close to Paris, particularly in his handling of the country's security issues and natural resources [25]. The military, led by General Abdourahamane Tchiani, justified the coup by citing the government's failure to address the worsening security situation, particularly the threat of jihadist groups in the region, and its over-reliance on French military assistance [26].

At the heart of the 2023 coup is a growing resentment towards French military involvement in Niger, particularly the presence of French troops under Operation Barkhane, which was launched in 2014 to combat Islamist insurgencies in the Sahel. Although the French military presence was initially welcomed by some, as the security situation deteriorated, criticism mounted. Many Nigeriens felt that French military operations were ineffective, and some accused France of pursuing its own strategic interests in the region rather than genuinely helping Niger combat terrorism [27]. The coup leaders capitalised on these sentiments, framing their intervention as a move to reclaim national sovereignty and protect Niger's interests from foreign exploitation.

## **9. Popular Support for Military Interventions**

The cyclical nature of military coups in Niger raises questions about the role of the military as a political actor and its relationship with the public. While military interventions are often condemned by the international community as undemocratic, they have, at times, enjoyed a degree of popular support in Niger. This is particularly true when civilian governments are perceived as corrupt, ineffective, or overly aligned with foreign powers, especially France [28].

Military coups in Niger often frame themselves as corrective measures, designed to restore order and reclaim sovereignty. The 2023 coup, for example, was justified on the grounds that President Bazoum's government had failed to address the growing security crisis and was overly reliant on French military assistance [29]. The military's decision to oust Bazoum resonated with a significant portion of the population, who viewed his close ties with France as compromising Niger's independence.

However, the military's track record in addressing the underlying issues that drive unrest—such as poverty, inequality, and political corruption—remains mixed. While military regimes often promise reforms, they have struggled to implement lasting changes. Instead, many military leaders have found themselves forced to maintain close ties with France and other international actors in order to secure aid and maintain stability [30]. This has led to a recurring cycle where coups initially enjoy popular support but eventually face the same criticisms as their civilian predecessors, prompting further interventions.

## **10. Regional and International Repercussions of Military Coups**

The repercussions of military coups in Niger extend beyond its borders, as the country is a key player in the geopolitics of the Sahel region. Niger's strategic location, vast natural resources, and role in regional security make it an important country for both regional and international actors. However, military interventions disrupt the normal functioning of government, often leading to instability that reverberates throughout the region.

ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, has traditionally played a key role in responding to military coups in the region. Following the 2023 coup, ECOWAS imposed sanctions on Niger, calling for the restoration of democratic governance. However, the effectiveness of these sanctions is often limited, as military regimes in Niger have been able to survive by leveraging other alliances, both within the region and with external powers such as Russia [31]. International actors, particularly the European Union and the United States, have also expressed concerns over the military interventions in Niger. Both have strong strategic interests in Niger, particularly in terms of security cooperation and counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel. The military's increasing hostility towards France has raised concerns that Niger may pivot towards other international partners, such as Russia or China, in search of alternative sources of military and economic support. This would not only shift the balance of power in the region but could also complicate efforts to stabilise the Sahel [32].

## **11. Resistance to French Influence: Beyond the Military**

While military coups are the most visible form of resistance to French influence in Niger, they are not the only

avenue through which opposition is expressed. Civil society organisations, student movements, and grassroots political groups have also played an important role in pushing back against French dominance. These groups have often been at the forefront of protests, strikes, and other forms of civil disobedience aimed at challenging both the government's alignment with France and the broader system of economic exploitation that sustains it [33]. One of the most prominent examples of this resistance is the student movement in Niger, which has a long history of activism against French neo-colonialism. Students have frequently organised protests and strikes in opposition to government policies that they view as serving French interests. Their activism has helped to bring attention to issues such as uranium mining, resource exploitation, and the lack of investment in education and social services Reference [34]. In addition, Niger's intellectual and cultural elites have also contributed to the discourse around French influence, using literature, art, and public commentary to critique the legacies of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Through these cultural forms of resistance, Nigeriens have been able to articulate a vision for a more autonomous and sovereign future, free from the constraints of foreign domination [35].

## **12. The Future of Niger's Struggle for Sovereignty**

The cycle of military interventions in Niger, framed as resistance to French influence, reflects deep-seated frustrations with the country's post-colonial trajectory. Despite gaining independence more than sixty years ago, Niger remains entangled in a web of economic and political relationships that have prevented it from fully asserting its sovereignty. Military coups, while often justified as efforts to reclaim control over Niger's destiny, have thus far been unable to break this cycle.

To truly address the issues that have led to repeated military interventions, Niger must pursue deeper structural reforms that go beyond changes in leadership. These reforms must address the root causes of discontent, including economic inequality, political corruption, and overreliance on foreign powers like France. Moreover, the broader challenge of diversifying the economy, reducing dependence on uranium exports, and investing in sustainable development remains critical for Niger's long-term stability. While military coups have often promised to rectify these issues, meaningful progress requires the active participation of civil society, political actors, and the international community in fostering an environment where democratic institutions can thrive without foreign interference.

One of the primary issues driving military coups and anti-French sentiment in Niger is the country's economic dependency on a narrow range of exports, particularly uranium. This dependency has reinforced a relationship of exploitation, as Niger has remained heavily reliant on foreign investments and control in its most lucrative industries [36]. To break free from this cycle, Niger must pursue a strategy of economic diversification that reduces its reliance on any single resource and opens up avenues for development across various sectors.

Investing in agriculture, education, technology, and infrastructure will allow Niger to harness its potential beyond uranium mining. Furthermore, shifting focus to value-added industries, such as the local processing of raw materials, could enable Niger to retain more wealth from its resources. While these efforts will require initial investments, they could ultimately empower Niger to take more control over its economic future, reducing the leverage that foreign powers like France have held over the country's political and economic affairs [37].

Furthermore, renegotiating contracts with foreign companies, particularly in the mining sector, could enable Niger to secure fairer terms that prioritise the well-being of its population over the profits of multinationals. Although past regimes, both military and civilian, have promised to do this, these promises have often been hollow. A true commitment to economic sovereignty will require both political will and an empowered civil society that can hold leaders accountable to their promises [38].

Another key to breaking the cycle of military coups is strengthening Niger's democratic institutions. Historically, weak institutions, corruption, and elite capture of the political system have provided fertile ground for military interventions. Military regimes have frequently positioned themselves as guardians of the state, claiming to intervene to restore order and combat corruption. However, the weakness of Niger's democratic institutions has meant that these regimes, once in power, often fail to implement the reforms they promised [39].

To build a more resilient democracy, Niger must invest in the development of institutions that can effectively check executive power, combat corruption, and ensure transparency in governance. This includes strengthening the judiciary, legislative bodies, and anti-corruption agencies. Equally important is the protection of press freedoms and civil liberties, which would empower citizens to hold their leaders accountable. A robust civil society, free from intimidation or repression, can provide the pressure needed to ensure that democratic processes are respected [40].

Additionally, reforms in the electoral system, including ensuring free and fair elections, are crucial for restoring trust in civilian leadership. If citizens believe that their votes can bring about meaningful change, they are less likely to support military coups as a mechanism for addressing grievances. Niger's international partners, including France, the United Nations, and the African Union, must also play a role in supporting democratic reforms without imposing their own agendas [41].

The growing resentment toward France in Niger signals the need for a reevaluation of foreign relations. While Niger cannot simply sever ties with France, as the relationship has been deeply rooted for decades, it can seek to diversify its international alliances to reduce dependency on any single country. The shift towards new alliances, as evidenced by the display of Russian flags during the 2023 coup demonstrations, suggests a desire among Nigeriens for alternative partnerships that may offer different models of cooperation [42].

This does not necessarily mean that aligning with countries like Russia or China will solve Niger's problems. While these countries may offer alternative sources of economic and military support, their involvement can also come with its own forms of dependency or influence. Therefore, Niger must strike a careful balance in its foreign policy, seeking partnerships that allow it to retain its sovereignty while benefiting from international cooperation in a mutually respectful manner [43].

Regional cooperation, particularly through organisations like the African Union and ECOWAS, will also be essential in building a framework for Niger to engage with its neighbors on equal terms. By fostering stronger regional alliances, Niger can participate in collective efforts to address shared challenges, such as security threats, economic development, and political instability, without being overly reliant on external powers like France [44].

### **13. Addressing Security Challenges: Beyond Military Solutions**

Niger's security problems, particularly the threat of jihadist insurgencies, are a central issue in the country's political crisis. While military solutions are a critical component of addressing these threats, they are not sufficient on their own. The failure of operations like France's Barkhane, and the subsequent rise in anti-French sentiment, highlight the need for a more holistic approach to security that addresses the root causes of violence.[45] Of course, depending on external military forces to address the security challenges of a state is basically foolhardy. Aside the French military contributions, there have been collaboration and partnership with neighbouring African countries, which also had their pitfalls, leaving the Nigerien security situation unsolved. As explicated in an article in *International Crisis Group*, "despite direct support from Chadian troops since 2015 and improved collaboration with the Nigerian army, Nigerien forces have been unable to put a stop to attacks by insurgents, some of whom have links to the Islamic State (IS)." [46]. This situation calls for exploring other socio-economic conditions that have fueled and sustained the state of insecurity in Niger and finding ways to improve the conditions.

Indeed, the bad socio-economic conditions are the root causes of violence in Niger and these conditions include poverty, unemployment, and political marginalisation, particularly in rural areas where insurgent groups often find recruits. In line with this argument, Youssoufou Hamadou Daouda described how Boko Haram thrives on the sorry socio-economic conditions as mentioned when he writes thus:

The failure of the states in the region to efficiently handle the youth population's growth, problems of unemployment and resulting vulnerabilities explain the spread of the social and geographic base of Boko Haram. The poverty pervading the region has proved to be a factor in mobilising the Boko Haram insurgency, making it easier for the group to recruit among the unemployed, illiterate and beggars [47]. From the foregoing, it is clear that without addressing the socio-economic conditions that fuel radicalisation, Niger will continue to struggle with security challenges. Therefore, development programs that provide education, job opportunities, and social services must complement military efforts. A focus on improving governance and reducing corruption in the region is also essential for building trust between the governments and local populations [48]. There are various ways through which corruption and bad governance have fueled insecurity in Niger and indeed the entire Sahel region and the Boko Haram insurgency especially took advantage of the situation to advance. The effect of bad governance is easily seen in the porous borders between Niger and some other Lake Chad countries like Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon. Reacting to this unfortunate situation Kyari Mohammed observes that around 2014, when the Boko Haram terrorists were mostly decimated in the urban areas across northern Nigeria forcing them to move further into the more remote areas close to Niger Republic, the terrorist group had not yet gained the popularity, support and membership it later gained in Niger. However, border porosity led to high infiltration of Niger by the terrorist group and the concomitant increased recruitment that later made the insurgency a major security threat to the country [49].

In the final analysis, Niger must also invest in its own security forces to reduce its reliance on foreign military assistance. This will require not only better equipment and training but also reforms to ensure that the security sector is accountable, transparent, and respectful of human rights. A strong, capable, and independent security force can play a critical role in stabilising the country and preventing future military interventions [50].

## 14. Conclusion: Moving Forward

Niger's struggle for sovereignty and stability, particularly in relation to French influence, is far from over. The repeated cycles of military coups reflect deep-rooted structural issues that cannot be resolved simply through changes in leadership. Instead, Niger must embark on a path of comprehensive reform that addresses the economic, political, and security challenges at the heart of its instability. This includes diversifying the economy, strengthening democratic institutions, and building a more independent and accountable security sector.

At the same time, Niger must redefine its relationship with France and other international actors, seeking partnerships that prioritise its sovereignty and long-term development. While foreign support will remain important, it must be guided by Niger's own terms and interests, rather than those of external powers. The military's intervention as a form of resistance to French influence underscores the urgent need for a new approach to governance, one that empowers the people of Niger to determine their own future.

In the long run, the key to breaking the cycle of military coups lies in the ability of Niger's political system to respond to the needs of its citizens. Only by building a more inclusive, equitable, and democratic society can Niger move beyond its post-colonial struggles and towards a future of true independence and prosperity.

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