Military Coups in West Africa and the Challenges of Constitutional Order: A Study of Niger Republic

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https://doi.org/10.56201/jpslr.vol.12.no10.2026.pg132.149

Abstract
The resurgence of military coups in West Africa has raised serious concerns about the stability of democratic governance and the durability of constitutional order in the region. The July 26, 2023 military coup in Niger Republic, which led to the removal of President Mohamed Bazoum and the suspension of the constitution, represents a significant challenge to democratic consolidation in the Sahel. This article examines the resurgence of military coups in West Africa with particular focus on Niger Republic. It considers the political, socio-economic, and security factors associated with the 2023 coup, the implications for constitutional order and democratic governance, the responses of regional and international organisations, and the socio-economic and humanitarian consequences of the crisis. The study adopts a historical research design and relies on secondary data from academic literature, policy reports, government and institutional documents, and credible media publications. The data are analysed through qualitative content analysis. The study identifies weak democratic institutions, governance deficits, insecurity, socio-economic hardship, constitutional manipulation, and contested external influence as interconnected conditions associated with the resurgence of military coups. It further finds that military interventions disrupt constitutional continuity, weaken democratic institutions, generate regional tensions, and can impose substantial socio-economic costs. The article argues that strengthening constitutional institutions, accountable governance, professional civil-military relations, and regionally coordinated preventive mechanisms is central to addressing the structural conditions associated with military intervention.

Keywords: *military coups; West Africa; Niger Republic; constitutional order; democratic governance; ECOWAS; civil-military relations*

1. Introduction

The resurgence of military coups in West Africa, particularly the July 2023 coup in Niger Republic, presents one of the most serious challenges to democratic governance and constitutional stability in the region. Despite decades of democratization efforts and regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, West Africa has witnessed a relapse into military authoritarianism. The overthrow of President Mohamed Bazoum in Niger not only disrupted a democratically elected government but also signaled a crisis of legitimacy for constitutional order in the Sahel region (Sowale, 2024). This development is deeply troubling because Niger had been regarded as a model of democratic resilience in an otherwise unstable neighborhood. The coup therefore raised urgent questions about why, despite institutional reforms and regional protocols, democratic governance in West Africa remains vulnerable to military intervention.

The problem lies primarily in the fragile nature of constitutionalism and the persistent governance deficits that plague West African states. In Niger, as in several of its neighbors, the constitution has repeatedly been suspended or manipulated to serve political ends. Each transition to civilian rule has been followed by renewed authoritarian tendencies, elite corruption, and ineffective governance, which erode citizens' faith in democratic institutions (Obinna & Semudara, 2024). The recurrence of coups reflects the deep-rooted failure of postcolonial states to establish enduring checks and balances, an independent judiciary, and professionalized civil-military relations. Instead, governance has often been personalized, politicized, and characterized by weak accountability structures, making the state vulnerable to extra-constitutional disruptions. The inability of civilian leaders to uphold democratic principles and deliver socio-economic dividends has thus provided justification for military adventurism.

Furthermore, the 2023 Niger coup exposed the paradox of democracy in the region — where constitutional governments often exhibit undemocratic tendencies, and military regimes claim to act in defense of popular sovereignty. Sowale (2024) argues that contemporary coups in Africa are increasingly rationalized as correctives to "constitutional autocracy," in which elected leaders manipulate the law to perpetuate their rule. In Niger, although President Bazoum's administration came to power through elections, his government struggled with public perception of elitism, corruption, and dependence on Western powers. The junta capitalized on these grievances, portraying its seizure of power as a patriotic act to rescue the nation. Such narratives have found resonance among a frustrated population, thereby blurring the distinction between democracy and authoritarianism. This ideological confusion represents a serious challenge to the restoration of constitutional order because it weakens popular resistance to illegitimate rule. Insecurity and socio-economic hardship have further compounded the problem. Persistent terrorist attacks, particularly from jihadist groups operating in the tri-border area of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, have overstretched the state's capacity to maintain security and governance. The government's inability to control vast ungoverned spaces or provide protection for civilians undermined its legitimacy, while poverty, unemployment, and inflation deepened popular discontent (Abdulrahman, Taiwo, & Nazifi, 2025). In such conditions, the military is often perceived as a stabilizing force, even though history shows that military regimes rarely deliver the security or development they promise. The recurrence of coups thus reveals a cycle of fragility in which insecurity justifies authoritarianism, and authoritarianism perpetuates insecurity.

2. The Resurgence of Military Coups: West Africa

Military intervention has remained one of the most defining features of political development in West Africa, profoundly influencing the trajectory of state formation, democratic governance, and

constitutional stability in the sub-region. From the early years of independence to the contemporary period, West African states have witnessed repeated military coups and unconstitutional changes of government, which have consistently challenged the consolidation of constitutional order. The persistence of military intervention reflects not only leadership failures but also deeper structural, institutional, and historical factors embedded in the political economy of the region. The historical roots of military intervention in West Africa are closely linked to the colonial experience. Colonial administrations established centralized and authoritarian political structures designed primarily for control and economic exploitation rather than democratic governance. These structures weakened indigenous political institutions and limited the development of participatory governance and accountable leadership. As Mamdani (2021) observes, colonial rule created bifurcated states characterized by authoritarian central authority and manipulated traditional systems, which later undermined the prospects of constitutional democracy. Consequently, at independence, West African states inherited fragile political institutions and security forces that were inadequately subordinated to civilian authority.

The post-independence period in West Africa was marked by widespread optimism and expectations of rapid socio-economic development and political stability. However, these expectations were quickly eroded by poor governance, corruption, ethnic and regional divisions, economic stagnation, and the concentration of power in the hands of political elites. Ake (2022) argues that the failure of civilian governments to establish inclusive political systems and deliver meaningful development created legitimacy crises that weakened constitutional rule. Within this context, the military increasingly perceived itself as a corrective force capable of restoring order and rescuing the state from political decay.

The first wave of military coups in West Africa emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, with countries such as Nigeria (1966), Ghana (1966), Sierra Leone (1967), Mali (1968), and Burkina Faso (1983) experiencing military takeovers. These coups were often justified on grounds of corruption, mismanagement, and political instability. However, rather than stabilizing governance, military regimes frequently entrenched authoritarianism, suspended constitutions, and weakened democratic institutions. Omilusi (2024) notes that military rule institutionalized a culture of political intervention that normalized unconstitutional changes of government across the sub-region. During the Cold War era, external powers significantly influenced the trajectory of military interventions in West Africa. Both Western and Eastern blocs supported military regimes that aligned with their ideological and strategic interests, thereby legitimizing authoritarian rule and undermining democratic processes. Abdulrazaq (2023) contends that foreign support for military governments not only sustained authoritarian regimes but also deepened the militarization of politics in West Africa. This period witnessed the consolidation of military dominance in governance and the erosion of constitutional norms.

The end of the Cold War ushered in a new wave of democratization across West Africa in the 1990s, leading to the restoration of multiparty systems and constitutional governance in many states. Nevertheless, the transition to democracy did not eliminate the underlying causes of military intervention. Weak state institutions, electoral malpractice, persistent corruption, economic inequality, insecurity, and governance deficits continued to undermine democratic consolidation. As a result, military intervention re-emerged in various forms, including coups, military-backed civilian regimes, and unconstitutional power transfers. In the twenty-first century, West Africa has experienced a resurgence of military coups, particularly in the Sahel region. Countries such as Mali (2020, 2021), Guinea (2021), Burkina Faso (2022), and Niger Republic (2023) have witnessed military takeovers that disrupted constitutional order. These coups have been driven by

a combination of factors, including deteriorating security conditions, public dissatisfaction with civilian governments, economic hardship, and external geopolitical pressures. Okereke (2022) argues that the recurrence of coups in the sub-region underscores the fragility of democratic institutions and the persistent inability of civilian governments to fully subordinate the military to constitutional authority.

The experience of military intervention in West Africa provides a critical framework for understanding the challenges confronting constitutional order in the Niger Republic. Niger's 2023 coup reflects broader regional patterns of democratic erosion, security crises, and civil military tensions. The similarities between Niger and other West African states highlight the systemic nature of military intervention in the sub-region and underscore the need for a comprehensive analysis of the structural and institutional factors that perpetuate coups. Therefore, a historical examination of military interventions in West Africa reveals that coups are not merely episodic events but manifestations of deeper crises in state-building, governance, and constitutionalism. Understanding this historical trajectory is essential for analysing the resurgence of military coups and the challenges of constitutional order in the Niger Republic and the wider West African sub-region. The relationship between the military and development in West Africa has remained a central issue in the political and socio-economic evolution of the sub-region. Since independence, military interventions have significantly influenced governance structures, economic policies, institutional development, and social transformation in West African states. While military regimes have often emerged during periods of political instability and governance failure, their impact on development has been largely ambivalent, producing limited short-term gains but undermining long-term democratic consolidation and sustainable development. Historically, the emergence of military rule in West Africa is closely linked to the post-independence challenges faced by newly sovereign states. Weak political institutions, ethnic and regional divisions, electoral malpractice, corruption, and economic crises created fertile conditions for military intervention. In many West African countries, the military justified its involvement in politics as a corrective response to civilian incompetence and national disorder.

Okunade (2021) observes that military regimes in the sub-region often portrayed themselves as agents of reform and modernization. However, these interventions frequently resulted in the suspension of constitutions, erosion of civil liberties, and disruption of democratic processes, thereby constraining sustainable development. From an economic perspective, military regimes in West Africa have produced mixed development outcomes. Some military governments initiated infrastructural projects, industrialization efforts, and public sector reforms aimed at promoting national development. For instance, military regimes in Nigeria and Ghana undertook large-scale infrastructural and state-building projects that contributed to short-term economic growth. Nevertheless, these achievements were often undermined by poor policy implementation, corruption, and excessive military expenditure. Owusu (2021) argues that the prioritization of defense spending under military rule diverted scarce resources from critical sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and social welfare, thereby limiting inclusive development and widening socio-economic inequalities.

The militarization of governance has also had profound implications for institutional development in West Africa. Military regimes typically operate through centralized and authoritarian decision-making structures that marginalize civilian institutions and weaken mechanisms of accountability and transparency. Kolo (2022) contends that prolonged military rule erodes the autonomy of political and bureaucratic institutions, making democratic consolidation difficult even after transitions to civilian governance. Mbaku (2021) further notes that the dominance of military elites

in political and economic spheres discourages private sector development and economic diversification, thereby constraining the transformative potential of West African economies. In the social sphere, military rule has often undermined human capital development in West Africa. Military governments frequently prioritized national security and regime survival over investments in education, healthcare, and social services. Amadi (2021) observes that under military regimes, limited investment in human development has hindered the emergence of a skilled workforce essential for innovation and economic growth. Consequently, military rule has produced development patterns characterized by short-term stability but long-term stagnation and social inequality. The impact of military regimes on regional development and integration in West Africa has also been significant. On the one hand, West African militaries have contributed to peacekeeping operations and conflict management initiatives within the framework of regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). On the other hand, recurrent coups and unconstitutional changes of government have undermined regional stability and disrupted collective development strategies. Kandeh (2023) argues that military interventions weaken trust among member states and hinder regional economic integration. Ndiaye (2022) further contends that military-led governments often prioritize regime survival over regional cooperation, thereby impeding coordinated infrastructural and economic development across the sub-region. The resurgence of military coups in West Africa in the twenty-first century has further complicated the relationship between military rule and development. Recent coups in Mali (2020, 2021), Guinea (2021), Burkina Faso (2022), and Niger Republic (2023) illustrate the persistent vulnerability of constitutional order in the sub-region. These interventions have been driven by a combination of security crises, economic hardship, public dissatisfaction with civilian governments, and external geopolitical pressures. The disruption of constitutional governance in these countries has had adverse implications for development, including economic uncertainty, suspension of international aid, and weakened institutional capacity. In the specific context of Niger Republic, the 2023 military coup reflects broader regional patterns of civil–military tensions and governance deficits in West Africa. The inability of civilian governments to effectively address insecurity, poverty, and institutional fragility created conditions that facilitated military intervention. This underscores the argument that sustainable development in West Africa is inseparable from constitutional governance, democratic accountability, and effective civil–military relations. Therefore, the experience of West Africa demonstrates that military intervention, while sometimes producing short-term stability or infrastructural gains, often undermines the democratic and institutional foundations necessary for sustainable development. Understanding the role of the military in West Africa's development is thus essential for analysing the resurgence of military coups and the challenges of constitutional order in Niger Republic and the wider West African sub-region. Military interventions in West Africa are rooted in a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, social, and external factors that have persistently undermined constitutional governance in the sub-region. Understanding the causes of military coups in West Africa requires a multidimensional analysis that accounts for both internal governance failures and external influences shaping state politics. Scholars widely agree that military interventions in the sub-region are not isolated events but manifestations of deeper structural crises within post-colonial states. One of the primary causes of military intervention in West Africa is political instability arising from weak state institutions, poor governance, and leadership crises. As Pierre (2022) notes, fragile political institutions and ineffective governance structures create conditions in which the military perceives itself as a stabilizing force. In many West African states, contested elections, electoral fraud, constitutional manipulation, and

widespread corruption have generated political crises that undermine public trust in civilian governments. Such crises often provide justification for military intervention under the pretext of restoring order and safeguarding national stability (N'Dombassi, 2023).

Closely related to political instability is the erosion of political legitimacy among civilian regimes. Haruna (2022) argues that the failure of post-colonial governments to deliver economic development, social welfare, and inclusive governance leads to declining public confidence in political leadership. In countries such as Nigeria, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger Republic, prolonged misrule, authoritarian tendencies, and failure to address security challenges have triggered widespread dissatisfaction. Azikiwe (2021) contends that this legitimacy deficit creates a political vacuum that the military often exploits, presenting itself as the only institution capable of rescuing the state from collapse. Military leaders frequently justify their interventions as efforts to protect national unity, combat insurgency, and defend the public interest. External influences have also played a significant role in shaping military interventions in West Africa. During the Cold War, global powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union supported military regimes that aligned with their ideological and strategic interests. Leblanc (2023) observes that foreign involvement not only strengthened authoritarian regimes but also normalized military rule in the sub-region. Even in the post–Cold War era, external actors, including former colonial powers and emerging global players, continue to influence West African politics through military assistance, economic aid, and security partnerships. Musharraf (2022) argues that such external support can embolden military elites to seize power under the guise of counterterrorism or national security, particularly in the Sahel region. Economic factors constitute another critical driver of military intervention in West Africa. Persistent poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, and mismanagement of national resources have contributed to social unrest and political instability. Dembélé (2021) notes that competition over control of natural resources, such as oil, gold, and other minerals, often fuels power struggles among political elites and military actors. In resource-rich countries like Nigeria and Ghana, economic grievances and disputes over resource allocation have sometimes created conditions conducive to military intervention. Similarly, in Sahelian states such as Mali and Niger, economic marginalization and underdevelopment have exacerbated security crises and weakened civilian authority, thereby facilitating military takeovers.

Social and ethnic divisions also play a significant role in the persistence of military interventions in West Africa. Ndjido (2022) argues that colonial boundaries and divide-and-rule policies entrenched ethnic and regional cleavages that continue to shape political competition. In many West African states, political power is often perceived through ethnic or regional lenses, leading to exclusionary governance and communal tensions. Military elites, who frequently originate from particular ethnic or regional groups, may intervene in politics to protect perceived group interests or maintain political dominance. Moumouni (2023) notes that while military interventions are often justified as efforts to preserve national unity, they frequently exacerbate ethnic tensions and deepen societal divisions. The failure of democratic governance and the weakness of political institutions further explain the recurrence of military coups in West Africa. Owusu (2022) argues that the absence of strong democratic institutions, independent judiciaries, and credible electoral systems undermines civilian authority and encourages military intervention. In environments characterized by electoral malpractice, political repression, and concentration of power in the hands of ruling elites, the military is often perceived as an alternative political actor. Ajayi (2021) observes that military leaders frequently present themselves as saviours who can restore order and re-establish the rule of law, despite the authoritarian nature of their regimes.

The militarization of politics in West Africa has also contributed to the normalization of military intervention. Over time, repeated coups have institutionalized the political role of the military, transforming it from a professional security institution into a political actor. Taha (2023) notes that in countries such as Nigeria, Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, prolonged periods of military rule entrenched a culture of military dominance in politics. This normalization of military involvement has created a vicious cycle in which coups beget further coups, thereby weakening constitutional governance and democratic consolidation. Regional dynamics further shape the causes of military interventions in West Africa. Instability in neighbouring states often generates spillover effects in the form of cross-border insurgencies, refugee flows, arms proliferation, and transnational crime. Diop (2022) argues that regional security challenges, particularly in the Sahel, have intensified civil–military tensions and encouraged military takeovers under the justification of protecting national sovereignty. The interconnected nature of security threats in West Africa means that coups in one country often influence political developments in neighbouring states, as evidenced by the recent wave of military takeovers in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger Republic. Military interventions in West Africa are the product of interrelated political, economic, social, and external factors that collectively undermine constitutional governance. The persistence of these factors explains the resurgence of military coups in the sub-region and highlights the fragility of democratic institutions. Understanding these causes is essential for analysing the challenges confronting constitutional order in Niger Republic and the broader West African political system.

3. Method of the Study

For this study, the historical research design was adopted. The historical research design focuses on the analysis of past events, actions, and developments, drawing on archival data, historical documents, and other sources to reconstruct and interpret past occurrences (Yin, 2018). This allows researchers to examine the causes. context, and consequences of military interventions in the region and explore how these interventions have shaped the current political and social landscape. One of the primary reasons for selecting the historical design is the study's focus on understanding the resurgence of military intervention in West Africa. Military interventions in the region have been recurring over several decades, and studying past interventions will allow the researcher to identify trends, patterns, and common factors contributing to military involvement. By examining the historical context of these interventions, the study can provide insights into why military forces have been deployed in the region, how these interventions have unfolded, and what their long-term effects have been on regional stability and governance (Boudreau,2018).

This study adopts a historical research design. The design is appropriate because the study examines the resurgence of military interventions in West Africa by tracing their historical development, causes, and changing patterns over time. It enables the researcher to examine past events, political developments, and relevant historical records in order to understand the factors responsible for the resurgence of military interventions in the region. The design is therefore suitable for achieving the objectives of the study, which require an understanding of both historical and contemporary developments in West African military politics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study adopts secondary sources of data. This is appropriate because the study focuses on the historical development and resurgence of military interventions in West Africa, requiring information from existing and documented sources. Data will be obtained from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government publications, official reports, newspapers, archival materials, and publications of relevant international and regional organizations. These sources provide the historical and contemporary information required to examine the causes, patterns, and

implications of military interventions in the region. The use of secondary data is also suitable for a historical study because it enables the researcher to examine events and developments that have already occurred (Saunders et al., 2019).

4. Theoretical Framework (Structural Functionalism of Talcott Parsons, (1951)

The theoretical framework adopted for this study to map systemic institutional collapse is Structural Functionalism propounded by Talcott Parsons in the year 1951. This macro-sociological and political framework was originally developed by the American sociologist Talcott Parsons in the year 1951 within his seminal text *The Social System*, and it was later systematically adapted and translated into contemporary political science by Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell in the year 1966 through their foundational work, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*. Structural Functionalism posits that every sustainable political system is an organic, open entity existing within a broader domestic and international environment (Almond & Powell, 1966). The system itself is composed of distinct, specialized institutional structures—such as the executive, parliament, civilian judiciary, political parties, and the state bureaucracy—each of which must perform specific, non-negotiable functions necessary for the preservation, adaptation, and overall equilibrium of the state (Parsons, 1951). Almond and Powell (1966) categorize these vital systemic operations into three interconnected functional levels:

- **System Functions:** Comprising political socialization, political recruitment, and political communication, which maintain or transform the political culture over time.
- **Process Functions:** Encompassing interest articulation (how citizen demands are formulated), interest aggregation (how disparate demands are combined into coherent policy alternatives), rule-making (the legislative enactment of laws), rule-enforcement (the executive application of laws), and rule-adjudication (the judicial interpretation of laws).
- **Policy Functions:** Representing the extractive, regulative, and distributive capabilities of the state as it outputs decisions back into the environment.

For any constitutional democratic order to maintain structural stability, its differentiated institutions must process the environmental inputs meaning the raw demands and support of its citizens and convert them into functional, legitimate outputs (Almond & Powell, 1966; Scribd, 2015). When these specialized organs fail to perform their assigned roles efficiently due to institutional corruption, administrative weakness, or elite capture, the entire political system enters a state of structural disequilibrium (Parsons, 1951). If the systemic inputs vastly exceed the output capabilities of the state structures, the political system experiences an acute institutional overload. This operational paralysis renders the formal constitution functionally impotent and creates a systemic vacuum that leaves the state vulnerable to sudden, violent reorganizations (Scribd, 2015; Iocchi & Baldaro, 2024).

Relevance of Structural Functionalism to the Study

The relevance of Structural Functionalism to this study lies in its capacity to diagnose the deep-seated institutional collapse that triggered the July 26, 2023 military coup in Niamey. Following its transition to civilian democratic governance under the 2010 Constitution of the Seventh Republic, Niger was widely heralded by international partners as a resilient democracy in the Sahelian sub-region (Gilles, 2023; Falola, 2022). However, a rigorous structural-functional analysis reveals that beneath this formal democratic architecture, the internal structures of the Nigerien state were suffering from profound functional failures that alienated the civilian populace long before the military emerged from the barracks (GGA, 2022). The domestic and geopolitical

environment of the Sahel subjected Niger's political system to a series of overwhelming inputs. These included a cascading jihadist insurgency led by affiliates of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, severe climate-driven food insecurity, high economic underdevelopment, and mass youth unemployment (Bøås & Strazzari, 2020; Idrissa, 2023). According to the core tenets of Almond and Powell (1966), a stable political system must absorb these demands and generate effective outputs in the form of security provision, economic regulation, and equal resource distribution.

In Niger Republic, the civilian structures of the Seventh Republic failed catastrophically at this conversion process:

1. The political party system and the national legislature failed in their function of **interest aggregation**. Instead of channeling the security grievances of rural populations into cohesive defense policies, they became mechanisms for elite self-enrichment, exclusionary coalition building, and the systematic suppression of major opposition figures, such as the legal disqualification of Hama Amadou from the 2021 elections (Omotola, 2011; Odigbo et al., 2023).
2. The civilian executive and bureaucracy failed in their function of rule-enforcement and security management. Huge swaths of Niger's peripheral and border regions fell entirely outside the administrative reach of the capital, creating vast governance vacuums where the state could no longer exercise its legitimate monopoly over the instruments of force (Bøås & Strazzari, 2020; Iocchi & Baldaro, 2024).
3. The judiciary failed in its function of rule-adjudication. It routinely ignored structural corruption within the ruling elite, which severely eroded the normative legitimacy of the 2010 Constitution in the eyes of the general public (Odigbo et al., 2023; Vanguard, 2023).

By failing to perform these core operations, the civilian organs produced an extreme institutional overload. The system could no longer maintain internal equilibrium. While the civilian structures under President Mohamed Bazoum deteriorated functionally, the armed forces specifically the National Armed Forces and the Presidential Guard under Brigadier General Abdourahamane Tchiani—remained the only highly differentiated, functionally cohesive, and structurally disciplined institution within the entire state apparatus (Idrissa, 2023; Gilles, 2023).

When the functional failure of the civilian elite reached a critical tipping point, the military stepped directly into the administrative vacuum. The National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) arrested the executive leadership, suspended the 2010 Constitution, and dissolved all civilian institutions (Idrissa, 2023). They did this not merely as an isolated act of rebellion, but as a structural move to centralize all rule-making, rule-enforcement, and rule-adjudication functions under a singular military junta (Falola, 2022). Structural Functionalism is therefore highly relevant because it demonstrates that the resurgence of military coups in West Africa is not a random occurrence. Instead, it is a predictable structural reaction to the functional bankruptcy of formal democratic institutions that prove incapable of processing survival-level societal demands (Omotola, 2011; Vanguard, 2023).

5. The Causes of the Niger Military Coup

The data reveal several interrelated factors contributing to the resurgence of military coups in Niger and West Africa more broadly.

a. Weak Democratic Institutions: Many West African states, including Niger, exhibit fragile democratic institutions that lack the capacity to enforce constitutional provisions effectively. Electoral irregularities, judicial weaknesses, and limited checks and balances create opportunities for military intervention (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

b. Poor Governance and Corruption: Corruption and mismanagement of public resources have eroded public trust in civilian governments. In Niger, allegations of corruption and inefficiency have often been cited by the military as justification for intervention (Transparency International, 2022).

c. Insecurity and Terrorism: The rise of insurgent groups, particularly in the Sahel region, has significantly undermined state authority. Niger faces threats from extremist organizations such as Boko Haram and Islamic State affiliates, which have strained the government's capacity to maintain security (UNDP, 2023). The inability of civilian administrations to effectively address these threats has increased public support, or at least tolerance, for military takeovers.

d. Constitutional Manipulation: Attempts by political leaders to extend their tenure through constitutional amendments have also contributed to instability. The 2010 coup in Niger is a clear example, where President Tandja's efforts to remain in power triggered military intervention (Decalo, 2011).

e. External Influences: Geopolitical dynamics, including the involvement of foreign powers and shifting alliances, have influenced political developments in Niger. The presence of foreign military forces and competition for strategic resources have added complexity to the country's political environment (Hagmann & Péclard, 2010). The data indicate that constitutional order in Niger has been repeatedly disrupted by military interventions. While the country has adopted several constitutions over the years, their implementation has often been undermined by political instability and elite manipulation (Villalón & Idrissa, 2020). One of the major challenges is the lack of institutional continuity. Each coup typically results in the suspension of the constitution, dissolution of legislative bodies, and establishment of military-led transitional governments. This disrupts democratic processes and weakens public confidence in constitutional governance. Additionally, the judiciary and other oversight institutions often lack independence, limiting their ability to enforce constitutional provisions effectively. This institutional weakness creates an environment where unconstitutional actions, including coups, can occur with limited resistance.

6. The Role of ECOWAS in the Niger Military Coup

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) plays an important role in promoting constitutional governance, democratic stability, peace and security among its member states. Established in 1975, the organisation has gradually expanded its responsibilities beyond economic integration to include conflict prevention, regional security and the promotion of democratic governance. Its involvement in political crises across West Africa reflects the recognition that unconstitutional changes of government in one-member state can threaten regional peace, weaken democratic institutions and undermine cooperation among neighbouring countries. The military coup of 26 July 2023 in Niger Republic presented a significant challenge to ECOWAS and its commitment to constitutional order. The coup resulted in the removal of President Mohamed Bazoum by the Presidential Guard, led by General Abdourahamane Tchiani. Following the takeover, the military authorities announced the suspension of the constitution and the establishment of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland. The development raised concerns about the protection of democratic institutions and the effectiveness of regional mechanisms for preventing military intervention in politics.

6.1 ECOWAS and the Promotion of Constitutional Governance

One of the major roles of ECOWAS is to promote democratic governance and discourage unconstitutional changes of government in West Africa. The organisation's Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, adopted in 2001, establishes principles relating to constitutional convergence, democratic elections, separation of powers and civilian control of the armed forces. These principles provide a regional framework for responding to military coups and other violations of constitutional order. The 2023 coup in Niger tested the application of these principles. ECOWAS condemned the overthrow of the elected government and called for the restoration of constitutional order. Its response demonstrated the organisation's formal opposition to military seizures of political power. However, the occurrence of the coup also raised questions about the effectiveness of preventive mechanisms and the ability of regional institutions to address political and security problems before they result in unconstitutional changes of government.

6.2 ECOWAS Sanctions and Diplomatic Measures

Following the coup, ECOWAS adopted a series of measures intended to pressure the military authorities to restore constitutional governance. At its extraordinary summit on 30 July 2023, the organisation demanded the restoration of President Bazoum and announced economic and financial sanctions against Niger. It also imposed restrictions on certain transactions and called for the closure of member states' borders with Niger, subject to the measures announced at the time. In addition, ECOWAS issued an ultimatum to the military authorities and indicated that it was prepared to consider further measures, including the possible use of force, if constitutional order was not restored. These actions demonstrated ECOWAS's willingness to use diplomatic and economic pressure in response to a military coup. The sanctions were intended to increase the political and economic costs of continued military rule and encourage the authorities to negotiate a return to constitutional governance. Nevertheless, the measures also raised concerns about their effects on ordinary citizens, cross-border trade and economic activities. The Niger case therefore illustrates the difficulty of applying regional sanctions in a way that places pressure on military authorities without worsening the living conditions of the wider population.

6.3 ECOWAS Mediation and Negotiations

In addition to sanctions, ECOWAS pursued diplomatic engagement with the military authorities in Niger. Regional leaders sought opportunities for dialogue and considered possible arrangements for restoring constitutional governance. Mediation was important because the crisis involved not only the future of Niger's political leadership but also the security and diplomatic relationships between Niger and its neighbours. However, negotiations faced considerable difficulties. The military authorities resisted ECOWAS's demand for the immediate restoration of President Bazoum, while disagreements persisted over the duration and conditions of a political transition. The crisis also generated differences among regional governments regarding the appropriate balance between sanctions, negotiation and possible military intervention. These difficulties demonstrated that regional mediation depends not only on the formal authority of ECOWAS but also on the willingness of the parties involved to negotiate and comply with agreed arrangements.

6.4 ECOWAS and the Challenge of Military Intervention

The Niger coup also raised the possibility of military intervention by ECOWAS. Following the July 2023 summit, the organisation directed that measures be taken to prepare for a possible regional military operation if its demands were not met. The proposal generated significant debate

about the legal, political, security and humanitarian implications of using force to restore constitutional order. A military operation would have involved substantial practical difficulties, including the risks of armed confrontation, civilian casualties, wider regional instability and the possible disruption of counterterrorism cooperation in the Sahel. It could also have created diplomatic tensions with states opposed to external military intervention. Consequently, the possibility of force illustrated the limitations confronting ECOWAS when attempting to enforce its democratic principles in a complex security environment. The debate further showed that the defence of constitutional governance must be considered alongside the principles of sovereignty, peaceful settlement of disputes and the protection of civilians. Although ECOWAS possesses regional mechanisms for responding to unconstitutional changes of government, the implementation of such measures depends on political agreement, institutional capacity and an assessment of their likely consequences.

6.5 Challenges Confronting ECOWAS in Restoring Constitutional Order

Several challenges affected ECOWAS's response to the Niger coup. First, the military authorities refused to comply promptly with the organisation's demand for the restoration of the elected government. This limited the immediate effectiveness of diplomatic pressure and sanctions.

Second, the coup occurred within a wider regional security crisis involving armed extremist groups, border insecurity and the limited capacity of several Sahelian states to exercise effective control over their territories. These circumstances complicated the prospects of military intervention and increased the risks associated with prolonged political instability.

Third, differences among regional governments and the wider diplomatic consequences of the crisis complicated the search for a coordinated response. The formation of closer ties among Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso under military-led governments further affected relations with ECOWAS. In January 2024, these three countries announced their intention to withdraw from the organisation. Their withdrawal took effect on 29 January 2025, following the notice period and subsequent transitional arrangements announced by ECOWAS. This development raised important questions about regional cohesion, the future of cooperation on security matters and the ability of ECOWAS to maintain a common approach to constitutional governance.

Finally, the effects of sanctions on the population presented an additional challenge. Although sanctions were intended to pressure the military authorities, restrictions on economic activities could also affect households, businesses and vulnerable groups. This highlights the need for regional responses that combine the defence of constitutional principles with humanitarian considerations and sustained diplomatic engagement.

6.6 Implications of the Niger Crisis for ECOWAS and Constitutional Order in West Africa

The Niger coup revealed both the significance and the limitations of ECOWAS as a regional institution. Its condemnation of the coup, sanctions and diplomatic initiatives demonstrated a continuing commitment to constitutional governance. However, the failure to secure an immediate restoration of the elected government showed that regional declarations and punitive measures do not automatically produce compliance. The crisis also raised questions about the consistency and credibility of regional enforcement mechanisms. The effectiveness of ECOWAS in preventing coups depends not only on its response after a military takeover but also on its capacity to encourage accountable civilian governance, credible elections, respect for constitutional limits and professional civil-military relations. Preventive diplomacy and institutional support are therefore important complements to sanctions and other enforcement measures.

The Niger experience suggests that the defence of constitutional order requires sustained cooperation among ECOWAS member states, national political institutions, civil society and relevant international partners. Regional action is more likely to achieve lasting results when it addresses the political and socio-economic conditions associated with instability while maintaining clear opposition to unconstitutional seizures of power.

In summary, ECOWAS played a central diplomatic and political role in responding to the 2023 military coup in Niger Republic. Its actions demonstrated the importance of regional institutions in defending constitutional governance, while the difficulties encountered revealed the limitations of sanctions, mediation and threatened military intervention when confronted with determined military authorities and broader regional divisions. The case therefore underscores the need to strengthen preventive diplomacy, improve the consistency of regional enforcement and support inclusive, accountable and constitutional governance throughout West Africa.

7. Effect of the Military Coups in Niger

The data further reveal significant implications of military coups for governance and regional stability. Firstly, coups undermine democratic norms and institutions, reversing progress made toward democratic consolidation. Frequent interruptions of civilian rule hinder the development of stable political systems (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Secondly, military regimes often face legitimacy challenges both domestically and internationally. This can result in sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and reduced foreign aid, which negatively impact economic development (ECOWAS, 2023). Thirdly, coups contribute to regional instability by encouraging similar actions in neighboring countries. The concept of "coup contagion" has been observed in West Africa, where successful coups in one country can inspire military interventions in others (Powell & Thyne, 2011). While some coups are initially welcomed by segments of the population, long-term outcomes often fail to address the underlying issues of governance and security, leading to cycles of instability.

Several factors work against the resurgence of military intervention in Africa, particularly in efforts to preserve constitutional order, democratic governance, and political stability. One major factor is the growing commitment to democratic norms and constitutional governance across African states. Since the 1990s, many African countries have adopted multi-party systems and constitutional frameworks that emphasize civilian control over the military. Regional bodies such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have also established clear anti-coup norms, including sanctions against unconstitutional changes of government (Souaré, 2014). These frameworks discourage military takeovers and promote democratic transitions. The findings of this study reveal that the resurgence of military intervention in Africa is a multifaceted issue driven by political, economic, and institutional factors. The analysis shows that while military coups are often presented as solutions to governance failures, they tend to exacerbate the very problems they claim to address. One finding is that weak governance and fragile institutions are major drivers of military intervention. The study demonstrates that countries with ineffective leadership, corruption, and lack of accountability are more vulnerable to coups. This supports the argument that poor governance creates opportunities for military actors to intervene in politics (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997).

The study also finds that military intervention undermines democratic consolidation. Rather than strengthening governance, coups disrupt democratic processes, weaken institutions, and reduce public trust in democracy. This aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes that repeated military interventions create cycles of instability and hinder democratic development (Lindberg, 2006). Another important finding is the role of elite power struggles and internal political

dynamics. The competition among political elites for power and resources often leads to instability and, in some cases, encourages military involvement. This confirms the view that political instability in Africa is not only institutional but also deeply rooted in elite competition and patronage politics (Bayart, 2009). The study further highlights the influence of foreign interests and external actors. External involvement, whether for economic or strategic reasons, has contributed to political instability in some African countries. This finding supports the argument that global geopolitical interests continue to shape domestic political outcomes in Africa (Hagmann & Péclard, 2010). In addition, the findings show that military intervention has negative socio-economic consequences. Political instability resulting from coups leads to reduced investment, economic decline, and social disruption. This reinforces the argument that sustainable development cannot be achieved in the absence of political stability and good governance (Collier, 2009). However, the study also acknowledges that public dissatisfaction with civilian governments has contributed to the resurgence of coups. In some cases, citizens initially support military intervention due to frustration with corruption, insecurity, and poor governance. Despite this, such support is often temporary, as military regimes fail to deliver long-term solutions. Overall, the findings suggest that addressing the resurgence of military intervention in Africa requires a comprehensive approach. Strengthening democratic institutions, improving governance, promoting transparency, and addressing socio-economic challenges are essential steps toward preventing future coups. The study emphasizes that military intervention is not a sustainable solution to Africa's governance challenges. Instead, long-term stability and development depend on democratic consolidation, institutional strength, and inclusive governance.

8. Conclusion

This study has examined the resurgence of military intervention in West Africa, with particular emphasis on its implications for constitutional order, governance, regional stability, and democratic consolidation. The analysis clearly shows that military coups are not isolated incidents but are deeply rooted in structural weaknesses within many African states. The study concludes that poor governance, weak institutions, corruption, insecurity, and elite power struggles are the major factors driving the re-emergence of military coups. In countries such as Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, the inability of civilian governments to effectively address socio-economic and security challenges has created conditions that make military intervention more likely.

Furthermore, the study concludes that military intervention undermines constitutional governance and democratic consolidation. Rather than providing lasting solutions, military regimes often weaken democratic institutions, restrict civil liberties, and create cycles of political instability. This disrupts the process of building strong and sustainable democratic systems in Africa.

The study also finds that military coups have serious implications for regional stability. The spread of unconstitutional changes of government weakens regional cooperation and poses challenges to collective security frameworks, particularly within organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Instability in one country often has spillover effects, contributing to insecurity across the region.

The study concludes that military intervention negatively affects economic and social development. Political instability discourages investment, disrupts economic activities, and weakens public service delivery. As a result, development efforts are slowed, and poverty levels may increase. Overall, the study establishes that military intervention is not a sustainable solution to Africa's governance challenges. Instead, long-term stability and development can only be

achieved through strong democratic institutions, effective governance, respect for constitutional rule, and active citizen participation.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

African governments should focus on building strong and independent institutions, including the judiciary, electoral bodies, and anti-corruption agencies. Strong institutions will reduce the likelihood of military intervention by ensuring accountability and good governance. Governments must address corruption, improve transparency, and ensure effective service delivery. When citizens see improvements in governance, public trust in civilian rule will increase, reducing support for military coups.

There is a need to professionalize the military and reinforce its subordination to civilian authority. Clear legal frameworks and training programs should be established to ensure that the military remains apolitical and focused on national secure. Governments should prioritize policies that reduce poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Economic hardship often fuels public dissatisfaction, which can create an enabling environment for military interventionRegional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union should enforce stricter measures against unconstitutional changes of government. This includes timely sanctions and coordinated diplomatic efforts to restore democratic rule.

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