



Weakened Democracy and Military Intervention: The 2023 Niger Republic Coup

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the effect of Weakened Democracy, Military Intervention and the 2023 Niger Republic Coup. The resurgence of military coups in French West African countries, particularly highlighted by the 2023 coup in Niger Republic, raises critical questions about the interplay between French interests and democratic governance in the region. The objective of the study was to analyse the ways Weakened Democracy and Military Intervention undermine democratic and triggered the military take-over in Niger Republic. The study adopted Fragile State theory and explanatory research design. A qualitative methodology, hinged on explanatory research design, documentary method of data collection and content analysis were used to assess the historical context. Findings indicated that French interests have significantly influenced the political landscape in Niger, often at the expense of democratic principles. This discontent has contributed to the recent wave of military coups, as seen in Niger. The study recommended that Niger should establish a framework for transparent and accountable governance that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of its citizens over foreign interests. This can be achieved through the implementation of participatory democratic processes. Strengthening civil society organizations and promoting political pluralism will help create a more resilient democratic environment that is less susceptible to external manipulation. France should reassess its partnerships in West Africa for a more supportive role in promoting democratic reforms and good governance. West African nations should renegotiate resource extraction agreements to ensure that economic benefits are equitably distributed, ultimately fostering stability and reducing the likelihood of future coups.

Keywords: French interests, Democratic Principle, Democratic Governance, Fragile State Military Coup d'état

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Introduction

The scourge of military interference 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 (Nwekea & Enwereb, 2024). The journey to independence for French West African states was shaped by a complex interplay of colonial experiences, nationalist struggles, and the strategic recruitment of indigenous people. The legacy of colonialism continues to influence the political, social, and economic dynamics of these countries today. Understanding this history is crucial for comprehending the on-going challenges faced by post-colonial states in the region (Hoffman, 2015; Chin & Kirkpatrick, 2023).

Hence, the struggle for independence in French West Africa was a multifaceted process that evolved over several decades, culminating in the mid-20th century. The emergence of nationalist movements was influenced by various factors, including the impact of World War II, the rise of Pan-Africanism, and the weakening of colonial powers (Hoffman, 2015). In 1944, the Brazzaville Conference marked a turning point in French colonial policy, as it recognized the need for political reforms in the colonies. However, the promised reforms were minimal, prompting increased agitation among African leaders. The African Democratic Rally (Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, RDA) emerged as a significant political force advocating for independence across French West Africa (Ake, 1981).

By the late 1950s, mass protests and strikes became common as various nationalist movements gained momentum. Key figures such as Léopold Sédar Senghor in Senegal and Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Ivory Coast mobilized popular support for independence. The French authorities initially responded with repression, but growing international pressure and the decolonization wave sweeping across Africa eventually led to negotiations for independence (Boahen, 1987). Most French West African countries achieved independence in 1960. The independence dates for these countries are as follows: Guinea: September 28, 1958 (the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence); Senegal: April 4, 1960; Mali: September 22, 1960; Ivory Coast: August 7, 1960; Niger: August 3, 1960; Burkina Faso: August 5, 1960; Benin (formerly Dahomey): August 1, 1960; and Mauritania:



November 28, 1960 (Hoffman, 2015). The process was relatively peaceful compared to other African nations, but it was not without its challenges, including political instability and the struggle to establish viable post-independence governance structures (Hoffman, 2015).

However, Kohnert (2022, p. 1) assert that “Francophone Africa has been dominated to date by the political, economic and cultural consequences of France’s colonial rule. A major instrument to assert France's interests was the upkeep of a common monetary policy and currency, the CFA Franc.” Although this has been increasingly resented by African politicians and economists, who wanted to replace it with a West African currency (the 'Eco') the CFA still prevails, due to the social network of French and African political leaders, the „messieurs Afrique” who benefit from the system. The controversial international discussion concentrates on questions of sovereignty and formal political and economic questions. However, the rules of the informal sector proved to be at least as crucial in structuring the CFA-zone as the institutions and policies of the formal economic sector, including its monetary institutions.

At the time of independence, with the exception of Sekou Toure in Guinea and Sylvanus Olympio in Togo, all the other territories of the French Empire south of the Sahara were led by loyal French allies (Bancel 2002; Pigeaud & Sylla 2024a). Despite the reduction in its military troops in Africa from 30,000 in 1960 to 15,000 in the 1980s (Luckham 1982; CDEF 2015), France relentlessly deployed its imperial suffrage: its right to choose who should govern in the territories of its former colonial empire. Between 1960 and 1989, as the gendarme of the West in its own sphere of influence (Vallin 2015), Paris intervened militarily on nearly 40 occasions in 16 African countries, to restore its protégés to power, overthrow undesirable leaders and, more generally, defend its interests (Rouvez 1994; Schmidt 2013, ch. 7).

Thus, the phenomenon of military coups d’état in French West African countries has a complex historical origin, deeply rooted in the colonial legacies and the inherent weaknesses of post-colonial governance (Chin & Kirkpatrick, 2023). In the aftermath of World War II, many African states began to seek independence, which was often accompanied by a struggle for political legitimacy and stability. The legacy of colonial rule, characterized by arbitrary governance and the use of military force to maintain order, laid the groundwork for military



involvement in politics post-independence. French West African countries, including Niger, inherited not only the colonial administrative structures but also the militarized means of governance (Mbembe, 1990; Adeoye & Ratidzo, 2024).

Hence, the first military coup in Niger Republic occurred on April 15, 1974, when Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Kountché overthrew the civilian government of President Hamani Diori. The coup was justified by Kountché and his supporters as a necessary action to address rampant corruption and inefficiency within the government. Following the coup, Kountché established a military regime that ruled until his death in 1987, during which he implemented policies aimed at stabilizing the economy and consolidating power (The Defence Post, 2021; Choudhury, 2023).

The second coup took place after a brief period of democratic governance in the early 1990s, Niger experienced its second coup on January 27, 1996. This coup was led by Major Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, who ousted the democratically elected President Mahamane Ousmane. Maïnassara's regime was marked by authoritarian rule and political repression, leading to widespread discontent. In 1999, he was assassinated in a coup that was partly fueled by opposition to his government's oppressive tactics (Afrobarometer, 2021). The third coup occurred on February 18, 2010, when a group of military officers, led by Salou Djibo, overthrew President Mamadou Tandja. Tandja had attempted to extend his presidency beyond the constitutional limit, prompting the military to intervene. Djibo's junta promised a return to democratic governance, and elections were held in 2011, leading to the election of Mahamadou Issoufou (Choudhury, 2023; Simura, 2023).

In March 2021, an attempted coup occurred in Niger amid tensions from a presidential electoral run-off. The sitting president rejected the outcome but was persuaded to relinquish power peacefully (France 24, 2021). The attempted coup was condemned by the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, and Algeria, highlighting fears of political instability in the context of Niger's fight against terrorism and inter-ethnic violence (Maurouf-Araibi, 2021). Despite the relatively stable political climate in Niger, the coup reflected deep socio-economic fissures within society, with rising dissent against foreign military presence and calls for the withdrawal of French forces (Simura, 2023).



Albeit, the fourth coup, which is the most recent coup took place on July 26, 2023, when President Mohamed Bazoum was detained by members of his presidential guard. General Abdourahamane Tchiani, the commander of the presidential guard, proclaimed himself the leader of a new military junta shortly after the coup was executed. This coup was part of a broader trend of military takeovers in the Sahel region, reflecting on-going challenges related to governance, security, and public dissatisfaction with civilian leadership. Thus, the coup was said to be heavily supported by the civilians and people of Niger (Choudhury, 2023; Simura, 2023; Adeoye & Ratidzo, 2024).

Essentially, the post-independence period in Niger was marked by a series of political upheavals, including multiple coups and attempts at democratic governance, which often failed to gain the trust of the populace. The military's influence became entrenched as successive governments struggled to establish legitimacy, leading to a cycle of instability that has characterized the political landscape in Niger and other French West African states (Choudhury, 2023 Simura, 2023).

The French West African states have experienced a complex history of coups and political instability since gaining independence. Despite Africa's advancement towards democratisation, there exist resurgent of militarism which still occasionally emerge in Africa, especially in French West African states and Niger in particular. While some countries, like Senegal and Benin, have managed to maintain relative stability, others, such as Mali and Burkina Faso, and Niger have faced repeated military interventions. The underlying causes of these coups especially in Niger Republic, often relate to governance issues, failure of democratic institutions, public dissatisfaction, development issues, and security challenges, reflecting broader trends in the region (Choudhury, 2023; Simura, 2023; Simura, 2023).

From the foregoing, military intervention has been a consistent element of politics in Niger since it achieved its independence from France in 1960 (Aljazeera, 2023). The July 2023 coup in Niger, according to Choudhury (2023), was a mix of simmering tension and historical underpinnings. Since Niger's independence from its colonial power France in 1960, the military has shaped the country's political history. Domestic political crises have been the reason and/or catalyst for past military interventions. As recently as 2010, the army overthrew then-President Mamadou Tandja after he tried to unlawfully extend his term in



office a third time. That coup paved the way for a new democratic beginning (Tschörner, 2023).

However, the threat of military coups lingered even with the election of Mahamadou Issoufou in 2011 and Niger's first democratic change of government in 2021, which saw Issoufou's long-time party colleague Mohamed Bazoum assume the presidency. Despite regular personnel rotations within the military elite, several coup attempts were thwarted during Issoufou's and Bazoum's presidencies. Nevertheless, the coup d'état on 26 July 2023 came as a surprise to many observers, as it was not preceded by mass protests, unlike the military takeover in Mali in 2020, nor had the army recently suffered heavy losses, as in Burkina Faso in 2022 (Tschörner, 2023). The coup and the support it got from the population informed of the deep socio-economic fissures that were inherent in Nigerien society. While the ousted president was praised for having reduced terrorist attacks and brought stability, there were still a few recorded cases leading to displacement. There was also rising and growing dissent against the French army personnel in the country which attracted some isolated protests from members of the public for the withdrawal of French forces and French domination (Simura, 2023). It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the dynamics of French interests, weakened democratic principles and the 2023 military coup d'état in Niger Republic.

Conceptual Clarification

French interests

Interests are self-sustaining motives that lead people to engage with certain objects, activities, or ideas for their own sake (Silvia, 2001).

French interests encompass France's political and economic objectives, particularly in post-war Europe. These interests included preventing German rearmament and preserving its imperial influence. In a religious context, French interests are tied to protecting associations and progress in Algeria Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Niger. Suggesting that those who seek to undermine these efforts are acting against the well-being of the people (Hiemstra, 2019).



France's African policy can be described as France's capacity to influence Africa. Through actions and decisions, the French state relies on its former colonies that have become independent to increase its international influence and establish its place on the international scene. There has been an emergence of a desire to reinvent the French presence in Africa, all against a backdrop of the preservation of French interests. The links between France and the overseas territories are constituted by the two fundamental aspects which are under consideration in the European project: a free trade area which implements free circulation of goods, services, capital and people, and duty free imports within the Community which triggers a system of reciprocal preferences' (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1956). The same document even stated that the Union Française was a more achieved model than the European one because members of the Franco-African community shared a common currency. There were three major French objectives. Firstly, achieving a non-discriminatory economic relationship between Europe and associated territories. Secondly, strengthening the institutional and economic cohesion of the Union Française through the spill over effect generated by the creation of the common market. And thirdly, compatibility with the GATT rules (Schreurs, 1994).

Democratic Principle

Essentially, the term democracy appeared in the 5th century BC in Greek city-states, notably Classical Athens, to mean "rule of the people", in contrast to aristocracy, meaning 'rule of an elite' (Wilson, 2006). Etymologically, democracy (from Ancient Greek, demos 'people' and kratos 'rule') is a form of government in which state power is vested in the people or the general population of a state. Under a minimalist definition of democracy, rulers are elected through competitive elections while more expansive definitions link democracy to guarantees of civil liberties and human rights in addition to competitive elections (Dahl, Shapiro, & Cheibub, 2003).

In a direct democracy, the people have the direct authority to deliberate and decide legislation. In a representative democracy, the people choose governing officials through elections to do so. Who is considered part of 'the people' and how authority is shared among or delegated by the people has changed over time and at different rates in different countries. Features of democracy oftentimes include freedom of assembly, association, personal



property, freedom of religion and speech, citizenship, consent of the governed, voting rights, freedom from unwarranted governmental deprivation of the right to life and liberty, and minority rights.

The notion of democracy has evolved over time considerably. Throughout history, one can find evidence of direct democracy, in which communities make decisions through popular assembly. Today, the dominant form of democracy is representative democracy, where citizens elect government officials to govern on their behalf such as in a parliamentary or presidential democracy. Most democracies apply in most cases majority rule, but in some cases plurality rule, supermajority rule (e.g. constitution) or consensus rule (e.g. Switzerland) are applied (Anderson, Bol, & Ananda, 2021).

Democracy is principally built on certain underlying values and practices meant to ensure the protection of fundamental human rights. Democratic principles are reflected in all eligible citizens being equal before the law and having equal access to legislative processes. For example, in a representative democracy, every vote has (in theory) equal weight, and the freedom of eligible citizens is secured by legitimized rights and liberties which are typically enshrined in a constitution (Hénaff, & Strong, 2001; Dahl, Shapiro, & Cheibub, 2003). Other uses of democracy may encompass direct democracy, in which the citizens vote on issues directly.

One of the postulations of democracies holds that democracy requires three fundamental principles: upward control (sovereignty residing at the lowest levels of authority), political equality, and social norms by which individuals and institutions only consider acceptable acts that reflect the first two principles of upward control and political equality (Kimber, 1989). Legal equality, political freedom and rule of law are often identified by commentators as foundational characteristics for a well-functioning democracy (Kimber, 1989). Though the term "democracy" is typically used in the context of a political state, the principles also are potentially applicable to private organizations, such as clubs, societies and firms (Kopstein, Lichbach, & Hanson, 2014).



Democratic Governance

When considered as political processes that exist in between formal institutions, Governance has been defined to refer to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation. Democratic governance therefore is an open participatory governance process in which the citizens are part of the decision-making process that responds to their individual needs and that of the business environment (Igot, 2023). Democratic governance as a new movement which pursues to mobilise citizens to make decisions, overcome conflicts and solve critical public complications. The quality leadership in democratic governance plays a vital role in determining the level of development. The concept of modern development includes improvement of the economic, health, cultural, environmental and political aspects of the society and people are usually at the center of development, particularly when it involves meeting their basic needs such as food, clean drinking water, education, health care services and so forth (Leister ,2008; Lawal &Tobi ,2006).

Hence, Bujus (2021) & E-Collaborative for Civic Education (2020) posit that democratic governance is characterised by respect for human rights, individual freedom, rule of the law, transparency, accountability processes and institutions, social justice, equality in political processes as well as effective people participation in development process. The strength of democracy depends on the character and intelligence of her citizens provided by the education system. Through education the citizens are exposed to their basic rights and responsibilities. A functional education system is expected to increase the productive capabilities of the individuals to contribute to the development of the economy as well as



create informed and courageous citizenry to know their civic rights and responsibilities and empowers the people to deal with social and economic issues. In the democratic trajectory, effective education system opens up the democratic space and respect for human rights, safety of voters: void of fear and intimidation. Igot (2023) further state that democratic governance is representative in nature where the citizens elect officials to rule, make political decisions on their behalf, formulate laws, and implement the programmes for the good of the general public as well as ensure equity and fairness to all. These representatives are expected to establish an effective link between the government and the governed. Kalu (2016) states that it is difficult for Niger to derive the dividends of democracy due to her inability to curtail corruption leading to poverty and election violence as jobless and desperate youths are used as thugs and body guards of political office holders. Kalu further identified other challenges as lack of adherence to ethos, rule of law and constitutionality, ethnicity and maladministration. Similarly, Igbokwe (2012) identifies the challenges of democratic governance to include lack of transparency and accountability, lawlessness, under development, economic instability and human rights violations. Democratic governance is the quality of a political system where it consistently generates legitimate governments, elected through fair and transparent voting, capable of effectively promoting inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic and social progress.

Okafor (2004) in Odusanya (2013) equates democratic government with good governance and identifies the attributes of democratic government to include: (a) Democratic rule, which provides for constitutional government and legitimizes division of power among the executive, legislature and judiciary; (b) Legislative oversight and independence of the judiciary; (c) Transparent and accountable government and public service; (d) Human right,



freedom of expression and association; (e) Rule of law and equality of all citizens before the law; (f) Predictable and transparent framework of rules, and institutions for the conduct of public and private business; (g) Sustainable development; and (h) Active civil society (Organizations) participating in public affairs under the rule of law. Good governance in its own right implies collective participation, consensus building, accountability, transparency, responsibility, equitability, inclusiveness, and more especially, it must be built on the rule of law

Coup d'état

Etymologically, the term comes from French coup d'état, literally meaning a 'stroke of state' or 'blow of state'. A coup is typically an illegal and overt attempt by a military organization or other government elites to unseat an incumbent leadership. A self-coup is when a leader, having come to power through legal means, tries to stay in power through illegal means (Powell, & Thayne, 2011; Chin, Carter, & Wright, 2021).

A coup d'état involves the sudden, often violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group – in contrast to 'revolutions' achieved by large numbers of people working for basic social, economic and political change. Thus, a coup is a change in power from the top that always results in the abrupt replacement of leading government personnel, but may or may not alter a state's fundamental social and economic policies or entail a significant redistribution of power among political groups (McGowan, 2003).

Coups d'état are sometimes defined as “seizure by action of a small group of physical and political control of the State machinery. Coups d'état initially target the prime governmental centers of command, decision, and administration, and later the whole State apparatus” (Sharp, 2005, p.544). Many factors may lead to the occurrence of a coup, as well as determine the success or failure of a coup. Once a coup is underway, coup success is driven by coup-makers' ability to get elites and the public to believe that their coup attempt will be successful. The number of successful coups has decreased over time (Powell, & Thayne, 2011). Failed coups in authoritarian systems are likely to strengthen the power of the



authoritarian ruler. The cumulative number of coups is a strong predictor of future coups, a phenomenon referred to as the coup trap (Timoneda, Escribà-Folch, & Chin, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Fragile State theoretical framework. Fragile state is similar to failed, weak or collapsed states, is an analytical category that originated in the work of Migdal Joel in 1988, and gained prominence from the mid1990s onwards and got further traction after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in United States. Fundamentally, proponents of the theory, policy-makers, and academics alike hold that the potential for contemporary conflict is harboured within the state, not between states (Midgal, 1988, Emegha, 2022). Proponents of the theory include: David Carment; Stewart Prest; Yiagadeesen Samy; Lewis, Alexandra; Siqueira, Isabel Rocha De; Balamoune Lutz; Robert, H.J. and Carl, G.R. etc.

Migdal (1988, p. 270), enunciated some conditions or propositions of the theory as: (1) world historical timing that encourages concentrated social control; (2) military threat either from outside or within the country; (3) the basis for an independent bureaucracy; (4) skillful top leadership that would take advantage of all the above conditions in the state.

A fragile state is a country characterized by weak state capacity and/or weak state legitimacy leaving citizens vulnerable to a range of shocks. Some states are trapped in vicious cycle of violent conflict and poverty or suffer from a natural resource 'curse'; others face a legacy of poor governance; many of which are emerging from crisis and cannot deliver even the most basic services to their citizens. In terms of dynamics, fragile states have the character of: (i) post-conflict/crisis or political transition situations, (ii) deteriorating governance environments, (iii) Situations of gradual improvement, and (iv) situations of prolonged crisis or impasse. A fragile state is significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its sub-systems. It is a state that is particularly vulnerable to internal and external shocks and domestic and international conflicts. In a fragile state, institutional arrangements embody and perhaps preserve the conditions of crisis (Robert, & Carl, 1989).



Methodology

The pattern adopted by the researcher in this study is qualitative design which suits the description of the study under investigation. Niger Republic is located in the Sahel.

The data for this study were drawn from secondary sources, such as published articles, books, electronic, print media, and other internet materials related to the subject matter under investigation.

The study adopted documentary method of data collection. Data were collected in the form of word documents, and existing figures, which are published in books, journals, articles and internet

The study adopted content analytical method of data analysis to analyse data that were generated from documentary sources in order to interrogate and explain the topic-French Interests, Weakened Democratic Principles and the 2023 Military Coup D'état in Niger Republic.

Discussion of Findings

French political interests in Niger are deeply entrenched in a historical context that dates back to colonial rule. Following Niger's independence in 1960, France has sought to maintain a level of influence that ensures its strategic interests in the region are safeguarded. This influence is manifested through various mechanisms, including military cooperation, political alliances, and diplomatic engagements. The state of democratic governance in Niger has been precarious, characterized by a series of political transitions and military interventions. Since the return to democracy in the early 1990s, Niger has witnessed multiple coups, with the most recent occurring in 2023. This instability has resulted in a weakened institutional framework, where democratic practices such as free and fair elections, accountability, and transparency are often compromised. Researchers like Adekoya (2023) point out that rampant corruption, political patronage, and a lack of effective governance have eroded public trust in democratic institutions. The political landscape is further complicated by socio-economic challenges, including poverty and unemployment, which fuel discontent among the populace. As military regimes position themselves as saviors in times of crisis, the prospects for democratic

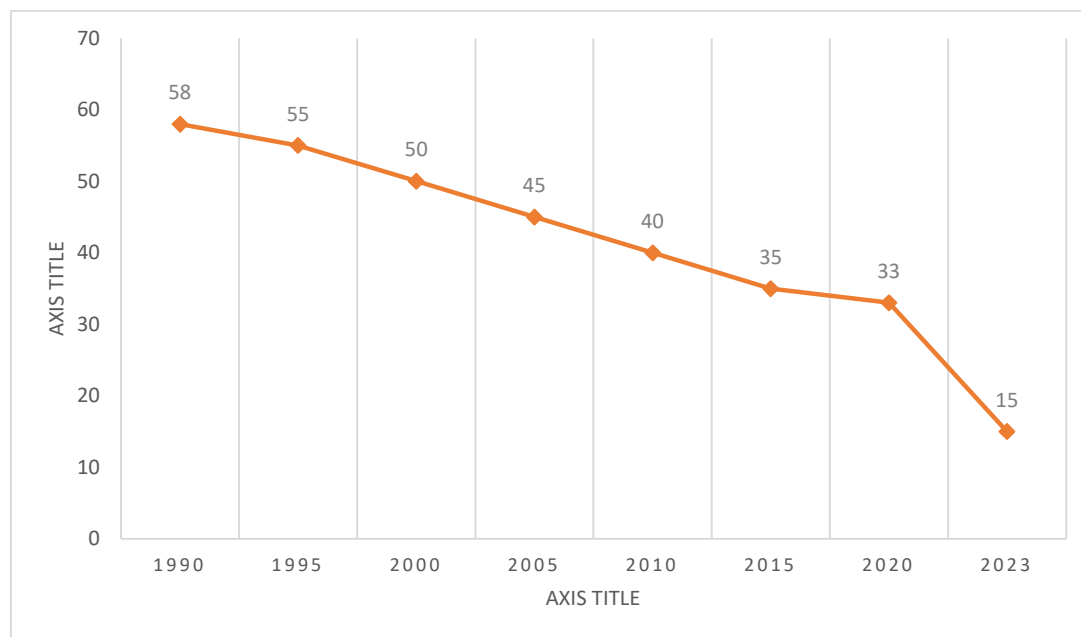


governance diminish, leading to a cycle where coups become a normalized response to governance failures. The fragility of democracy in Niger underscores the need for a robust civil society and institutional reforms that prioritize accountability and citizen engagement.

Diplomatically, France has attempted to recalibrate its approach in response to growing anti-French sentiment in the region. Initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue and cooperation with local governments (Hagberg, 2020).

Hence, the graph beloved illustrates more on negative perception towards French involvement in Nigerien government over the years.

Figure 1: Percentage (%) Public Sentiment Towards French Involvement in Nigerien Government and Politics



Source: International Crisis Group (2020); Al Jazeera (2024); modified by the author.

The graph above depicts a decline in positive sentiment, and increase in negative perceptions over the years. As at the year 1990 public sentiment of French Involvement in Nigerien Government and Politics were 58 per cent. In the year 1995 it went down to 55 per cent. In the year 2000 it went down to 50 Per cent. In the year 2005 it went down to 45 per cent. In the year 2010 it slopes to 40 per cent. In the year 2015 it went down 35 per cent. In the year 2020 it went down to 33 per cent and finally in year 2023 it slants to 15 per cent. The steady slope



is an indication of the negative effect of French Interests on Democratic Principles in Niger Republic. Hence, the above figure helps in understanding the evolving political dynamics in Niger Republic regarding French influence.

Table 1: Presence of French Military Advisors in Niger (1990-2023)

Year(s)	Estimated Presence of French Military Advisors	Key Events/Context
1990-2012	Likely a smaller, consistent presence	General military cooperation.
2013-2022	Significant increase	Deployment linked to Operation Barkhane and the fight against Islamist terrorism.
2022-July 2023	High presence (around 1,500 troops)	Niger became a key base after the withdrawal from Mali.
Post-July 2023	Rapid decrease to zero	Following the military coup and the demand for French troop withdrawal.

Source: Transparency International. (2022); The Guardian (2023); Modified by the Author.

From the table above, it was deduced that in 1990 to 2013, there were some levels of military cooperation and potentially advisors present between France and Niger. From 2013 to 2022, it witnesses significant increase and from 2022 to July 2023 it witnesses High presence (around 1,500 troops) as Niger became a key base of French military after the withdrawal from Mali. This number included advisors and counter-terrorism specialists. Finally, from Post-July 2023 French military present became rapid decrease to zero.

However, the military coup in Niger from July 2023 led to a significant shift. The new military junta adopted an anti-French stance and ultimately demanded the withdrawal of French troops that decrease to zero. This marked the end of a substantial French military presence, including advisors. This kind of French interest demonstrated in French military advisors has affected democratic governance in Niger.

The resurgence of military coups in Niger can be attributed to a combination of internal instability and external influences, particularly from France. The military often presents itself



as a stabilizing force in the face of growing insecurity from terrorist threats, using this narrative to justify interventions. Adekoya (2023) argues that military actors leverage public fears to gain support, positioning themselves as protectors of national sovereignty. However, this reliance on military solutions can perpetuate cycles of instability, as military regimes often lack the legitimacy and capacity to address the underlying socio-economic challenges facing the country. The complicity of foreign powers, including France, in supporting military regimes further complicates the landscape, as it undermines the prospects for a democratic transition. The normalization of military interventions as a solution to governance failures poses a significant threat to the entrenchment of democratic principles in Niger, as successive regimes may prioritize their interests over those of the citizenry. French interests have significantly influenced the political landscape in Niger, often at the expense of democratic principles. The standard of living of her citizens and security of lives condoning corrupt regimes, ongoing economic dependencies have resulted in a governance model that prioritizes foreign interests over local needs. The military coup in 2023 was a manifestation of widespread discontent with corrupt political leadership, which was perceived as complicit with French economic objectives. The coup leaders framed their takeover as a necessary response to foreign interference and internal corruption, indicating a potential shift towards a more nationalist governance approach (Smith, 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interplay between French interests and the political, economic, and social landscape of Niger Republic reveals a complex and often detrimental relationship that has significantly impacted the country's stability and governance. This study has underscored a critical theme: the effect of French interests on democratic principles and the ramifications for security in Niger.

French interests have played a pivotal role in undermining democratic principles in Niger. The historical legacy of colonialism and on-going economic dependencies has fostered a political environment where foreign interests take precedence over the aspirations of the Nigerien people. This misalignment has culminated in widespread dissatisfaction with corrupt governance, ultimately leading to the military coup in 2023. The coup can be viewed as a response to not only local grievances but also the perceived complicity of external



powers, most notably France, in perpetuating a system that fails to prioritize democratic accountability and citizen welfare (Smith, 2023).

Recommendations

Hence, the relationship between French interests and the myriad challenges facing Niger Republic is fraught with complexities that demand critical examination. For Niger to move toward a more stable and democratic future, it is essential to recalibrate its relationship with foreign actors, ensuring that national sovereignty and the welfare of its citizens are prioritized. Addressing the root causes of poverty, corruption, and insecurity will require a concerted effort to foster inclusive governance and sustainable development that genuinely reflects the needs and aspirations of the Nigerien people.

The specific recommendations of the study are thus:

1. It is crucial for Niger to establish a framework for transparent and accountable governance that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of its citizens over foreign interests. This can be achieved through the implementation of participatory democratic processes, where citizens are actively involved in decision-making and policy formulation.
2. Strengthening civil society organizations and promoting political pluralism will help create a more resilient democratic environment that is less susceptible to external manipulation.
3. Strengthening democratic institutions, like independent judiciary, free and fair elections and parliamentary oversight will help to stabilize democracy.

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