



UNSC



Topic: The Situation in Niger

Committee: United Nations Security Council

A. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six main bodies of the United Nations (UN) which stands as a predominant force on the global stage. It was first established as a principal organ under the United Nations Charter in 1945 with the objective of ensuring the security and the peace between the UN Member States. It consists of 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members, permanent members - also known as the P5 - are present in every session of the UNSC and are privileged to veto resolutions. On the other hand, 10 non-permanent members are chosen by the General Assembly for two-year terms. The UNSC holds regular meetings to assess global threats, and it is empowered to impose binding obligations on the UN Member States.

B. Introduction to the Agenda Item

Ever since its establishment as an independent state, Niger has been struggling with a flawed understanding of democracy among its people, the political instability of its neighbours and the unpredictable shifts in economic growth. On July 26, the elected president was overthrown, and taken hostage. The “coup” -in quotation marks as the U.S government does not formally recognise this military take over as a coup- disembodied the first government in the history of the nation under which there were significant improvements in military training and equipment, the economy, civic space, independent media outlets, transparency, and national sovereignty. The people, on the other hand, seemed quite illiterate to the advancements made, as the junta appears to have more popularity among the nation. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has decided to take initiative and impose sanctions against the junta, cutting the electricity supplies and hinting on possible use of force. Abdourahamane Tiani, the self proclaimed leader of the new military government, has voiced his ideals for the future of Niger, he also claimed that he is ready to defend his homeland, regardless of what it takes. During their statements, the junta has publicly accused France of destabilising the country and using the polarised political and armed groups to get their hands on Uranium resources. Other African nations governed by Juntas, such as Burkina Faso and Mali have stated that they would consider any military intervention by ECOWAS to be a threat against their respective countries, and implied taking military action against the ECOWAS. Since the coup, the gains made in aforementioned areas are quickly getting reversed, and Niger’s international dependency on basic needs and the imposed embargoes are decreasing the well-being of the population.

C. **Key Terms**

Coup d'etat: The sudden and often illegal change of governmental authority to a military government.

Military Junta: A government led by a council of military leader Abdourahamane Tiani

Sahel: A belt shaped area located above the equator and connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. The Sahel covers Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and Sudan. It is notorious for the political instability of the nations it covers and the armed insurgencies arising in the area.



(The Sahel: land of opportunities. (n.d.). Africa Renewal. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/sahel>)

Political Instability: The term used to describe the ongoing upheavals and uncertainties in Niger's political system, which is marked by frequent changes in the country's leadership, contentious elections and coups in its history.

ECOWAS: The Economic Community of West African States was formed after the Treaty of Lagos to promote economic and social integration across the region. Current Member states are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sénégal and Togo. The current chairman of authority is Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

National Council for the Safeguarding of the Homeland: The term that refers to the junta formed by the senior officers from various branches of defence and security forces of Niger.

Uranium: Uranium is a radioactive element that possesses great significance for both civil and military purposes. Because Niger does not have the infrastructure to process the raw resources and is responsible for 5-7 percent of the world's Uranium, its export does not directly help the dire economic situation in Niger. Uranium is also a crucial reason behind the involvement of many foreign powers, including France and the United States of America.

National Security: Many African states have faced issues of national security caused by insufficient military training and equipment. With the presence of jihadist or extremist groups, there are increased threats to the safety of the nation.

Political Transparency: Transparency is operating in a way that is understandable to and accessible by the public while holding the officials accountable for their actions. Transparency requires openness, communication, mutual respect, and interaction with the public.

Civic Space: Refers to the legislative, political, social, and economic environment which allows citizens to express their concerns by coming together to influence a certain political strategy or a group of people.

Jihadism: Jihadism is a form of extreme religious militancy. It is a term that is used to describe armed Islamic movements that are considered to be existentially aggressive and alarming in Western languages.

Economic Sanctions: Financial penalties imposed on a group, an establishment, and/or a government by one or more countries. The embargoes imposed on the junta are decreasing the overall quality of life in the nation especially because Niger is foreign-dependent in energy production and receives 75 percent of its electricity requirement from Nigeria.

The European Union Military Partnership Mission in Niger: A project created to enhance the military capabilities of Niger to help the nation protect its sovereignty and people

from the armed groups in the Sahel Region in compliance with International Humanitarian Law. Another aim of the mission was to promote peace in the conflict zone, however, after the military takeover in Niger, the mission was suspended indeterminately.

D. General Overview

Historical Background:

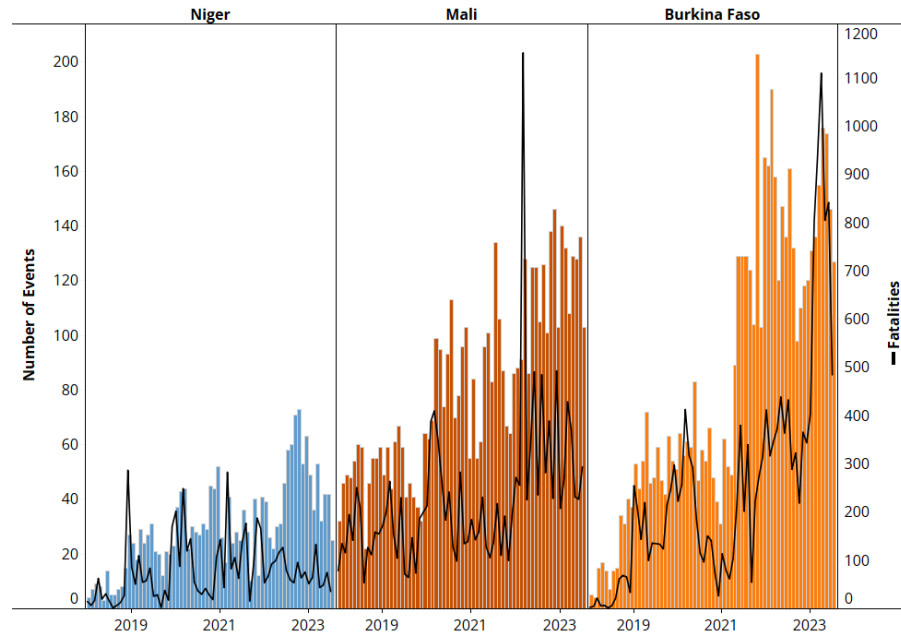
Niger formally gained its independence from France on August 3, 1960. Since then, just as many other ex-colonial states, it has struggled to establish a strong sense of democracy among its governmental officers or its people. In fact, the coup of 2023 marks the fifth coup d'état of Niger's sovereign history. This type of precariousness in authority is common in areas with colonial legacies as the interim colonial regimes do not allow for great political minds to improve themselves, out of fear of slowly losing control in the territory.

The instability of the government usually led to the lack of humanitarian needs within the country. The -very natural- incompetency of the leaders were not regarded well among the public and caused many groups of people to rise and revolt, starting a wave of religious extremist groups that further undermined the authorities with the damage they caused in large settlements. The insufficient resources were getting in the way of the government to provide necessary repairment to the settlements and conflict zones, and the already damaged reputation of the government was not getting any better with the local, independent news outlets constantly pointing out the flaws in the government's policies.

Damage caused by the jihadist groups reached their peak in 2022, under Mahamadou Issoufou, while the lethality of said insurgencies was in a consistent decline. The first half of 2023 saw a significant decrease in the number of illegal uprisings, with about a 39 percent rate when compared to the previous 6 month period. The attacks on civilians had dropped by 49 percent and lethalties as a result of these attacks decreased 19 percent. This was thanks to the 32 percent increase in interventions by the Nigerien defence forces. Niger was also making use of the American and French military bases in the country. Combined with the EU's military cooperation, the government achieved this considerable decrease in insurgent attacks. However, cases of looting and property destruction grew larger, and the inability to get a hold of these brought the end of Bazoum's regime. On July 26, 2023 his presidential guard, who swore to protect the president and his family, overthrew the government and confined the president, which was unexpected, not just by the regime but by the public, as the coup was not preceded by mass protests or civil unease.

Political Violence in Central Sahel

1 January 2018 - 28 July 2023



Nsaibia, H. (2023, August 23). *Fact Sheet: Military coup in Niger*. ACLED.

<https://acleddata.com/2023/08/03/fact-sheet-military-coup-in-niger/>

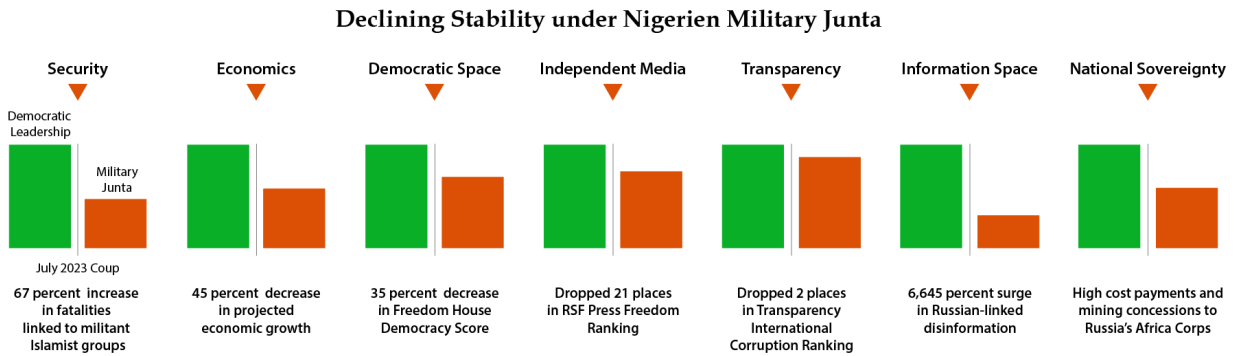
The junta claimed the rise of armed groups and the gradual and inevitable demise of the country required intervention before it got too late. The Bazoum regime saw dialogue to be more powerful than the use of force, which upset the military officials, regardless of Bazoum's intention and initiatives to enlarge the capacity of the army forces. That is not to say, however, that Bazoum was completely innocent. He was trying to formally contact the local heads of "Islamic State", and was signing non-aggression pacts with them, in the name of exhausting all peaceful options before military intervention. Many news outlets alleged that Bazoum was trying to keep the number of large scale attacks low, to increase his chances in the next election. Regardless of these allegations, the treaties he signed allowed for jihadists to freely use Nigerien soil to voice their propaganda and recruit new members. The military was also not happy with the nonchalant attitude of the Bazoum regime towards the juntas in Mali and Burkina Faso. They thought that there was no better time to make use of a joint military action with said nations, as the capabilities of the army were better than ever, thanks to the aid from various EU nations, and the United States of America. There were some operations, such as the "Taanli" and "Koural" operations with the junta in Mali. Yet, the involvement of Wagner Mercenaries in Mali's internal

affairs raised suspicion about the integrity and transparency of the operations, and those in charge; and therefore, further regional military collaboration was prevented.

Another reason behind the doubts about Bazoum’s regime was his opinion regarding polygamy. He claimed the cause of polygamy to be poverty, uncontrollable growth in population, and illiteracy. This raised greater issues in the more conservative factions of the public.

Socio-economic State and Well-being of the Public

It is quite ironic, and interesting that the military government, though they criticised Bazoum’s regime, did not adopt a strong democracy. The matters on which they criticised the previous regime became worse.



Mduerksen. (2024, May 30). *Niger Coup Reversing Hard-Earned gains – Africa Center for Strategic Studies*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/niger-coup-reversing-hard-earned-gains/>

This decline in the state of the nation was not entirely a direct result of the coup and the incompetence of the military officials in ruling the nation, but also caused by the fact that the sanctions imposed by the ECOWAS were much stronger than the ones the juntas in Mali and Burkina Faso had faced. The growing number of juntas in the Sahel was becoming a more prominent problem, and the ECOWAS wanted a resolution that was both fast and peaceful. The chairman of authority in the ECOWAS declared that a more decisive set of actions were required to put an end to the autocratic regimes in the region.

The stricter sanctions resulted in Niger losing most of its sources of electricity and they were unable to make use of the hydraulic energy production opportunity, since the company building the dams were ordered to halt the production by both the United States and the ECOWAS.

To avoid letting the situation get further out of hand, the junta placed stricter measures against civic space, media transparency, and democratic speech. Consequently, this enraged more

factions of the public and an increase in insurgencies were reported. Projections estimate that a 60 percent increase in insurgent activities will be recorded in the near future. In addition, demilitarisation and deradicalisation in the region was brought to a halt after the coup. Which meant that the civilians, when combined with the strict measures of the junta, were not only scared to go out to enjoy a nice time out, but they were prohibited to gather in large numbers, which is traditional of African communities.

The per capita income, which was expanded by 26 percent before the coup, decreased significantly, and the junta has missed 4 debt payments and now is in 519 million dollars of debt. While the World Bank had recorded 7 percent of economic growth in Bazoum's regime, a drastic 45 percent decline was noted since the coup. Also before the coup, despite the general rise in food prices throughout the world, Niger was able to keep its inflation rate as low as 4 percent, which is the lowest in the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union. Despite this, the grain prices after the military takeover increased by more than 10 percent, while rice prices went up by 35 percent.

While the independence of the press was generally respected during Bazoum's and Issoufou's regimes, post-coup experience for media outlets involved violence; the journalists have faced intimidation and had to put up with almost-constant surveillance, not just from the junta itself but the groups that supported it. The press members were not allowed to publish any news material that would undermine the authority of the new junta, and those who did faced investigation that usually did not end well for them. Likewise after the coup, the social media platforms in Niger were filled with propaganda from Wagner's mercenaries and general disinformation that linked back to Russian sources.

The Political State of the Junta

Although they never fell short on criticising the previous regime, the junta fell extremely short in even meeting the standards set by the Bazoum regime in terms of democratic space, transparency, and national sovereignty. While the international agreements with mining companies during Bazoum's regime created a considerable budget that was used to invest in education and health services, the Junta was not only incapable to continue these previous agreements, but also made decisions that were more detrimental to the Nigerien public than the international corporations and compromised the national security of the country. This endangerment of national security and sovereignty was likely caused by the restricted democratic voice of the public, and the repercussions of these restrictions from the jihadist groups.

After the takeover, the junta removed oversight laws that not only required transparency while operating but also accountability if and when something went wrong. Quite the contrary,

the Issoufou government was able to find a total of 120 million dollars in unaccounted expenditures in the security and defence sector, run by the same people who were sent to govern small towns once the officials of the Bazoum regime were arrested. Democratic space was diminished strongly, petitions by academics from universities in Niger were dismissed and the signatories were intimidated to keep shut. Almost all of the governors from the previous regime were arrested and instead, ex-military officials were appointed without elections. Furthermore, political relationships were improved with the other military juntas, against the wish of the public.

E. Major Parties Involved

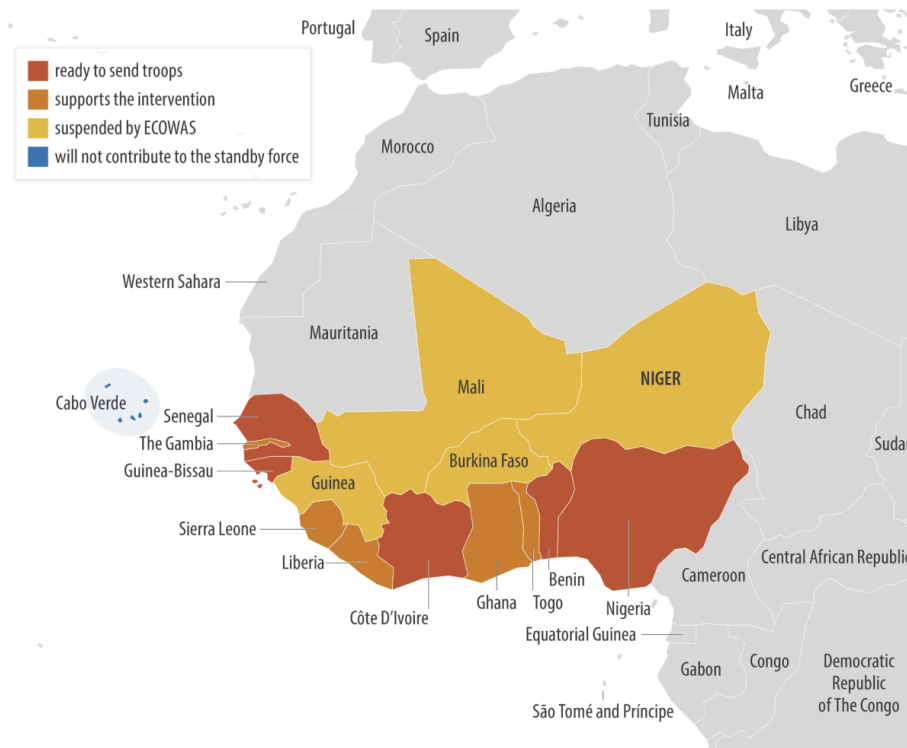
The United States: Niger had a promising relationship with the United States, with the Secretary of State Antony Blinken visiting Niger, the US government has shown interest for a possible strategic partnership. Especially since Niger's geopolitical location is an important location for US military bases, and there are plenty of oil resources in the country, the ties between the two nations have been getting stronger. The Joe Biden administration has not classified the takeover as a coup, in which case they would have to retreat their soldiers and revoke the rights of duty-free export, in accordance with the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act. Therefore, there are still US soldiers in the territory, and the exports are still ongoing, however, the United States has called for the reinstatement of Bazoum's presidency and are keen on keeping the ties with his regime strong.

France and the European Union: The French ties with Niger go back to the 1900s when the French started their military movement to gain more control over West Africa. Until 1960, Niger was not a sovereign nation, but a state under French rule. Before the coup, the French military bases were housing French soldiers, and there were French citizens inside Niger. After the takeover, France decided to evacuate all of its citizens that wished to do so. Not long after, the military junta decided to end all defence agreements with France, which meant that the soldiers were no longer authorised to stay in Niger. Back in 2013, during Operation Barkhane, the French soldiers were allowed to seek refuge in Niger. The scope of the said operation included Niger, however, most of the conflict was taking place on Malian soil. Mali had openly sided with the Russians, which led to the active presence of Wagner Mercenaries. Bazoum was clear in his policies that he was against military juntas, which allowed him to strengthen his relations with France, and become their most trustworthy political partner in the Sahel.

Just like the rest of Europe, getting a hold of the Uranium extracted in Niger was an important political agenda for the French government. Both the French government and the

European Union as a whole are heavily reliant on nuclear energy for their energy production. The European Union, as previously mentioned, held some military power in the area before the coup, therefore the return of President Bazoum is essential for the EU Member States. To enhance this strategic partnership with Niger, the European Union has launched several initiatives to improve Niger's poor socioeconomic and military condition. Such as the EUMPM. Another aim of the EU is to prevent illegal migrants to enter European soil, and Although the natives in Niger are not generally prone to migrating, Niger is at the crossroads for many people that do want to, or plan on migrating and it therefore is a valuable asset to the EU to be able to oversee the situation. The Union is also concerned with the humanitarian crisis in the region, about 13 percent of the population are severely food deprived. Not just because of the hyperinflation, but because the infrastructure is consistently getting damaged by the insurgent groups. A return to Bazoum's regime is therefore critical from a humanitarian perspective as well.

ECOWAS: The ECOWAS is essentially using this most recent coup to find a reliable way to limit the rise of autocratic regimes, which is why they started out with stronger-than-usual sanctions, and are trying to exhaust all other options before "using force". The Sahel, and the continent as a whole has seen some extremely violent coups and uprisings. It is crucial for the ECOWAS to find a dependable policy that would result in a fast, and safe demilitarisation of the government. If, however, the return to a constitutional order is not possible through peace, the ECOWAS claims to be ready for a military intervention. This might backfire, though, because as of the July Coup of 2023, 4 of the 15 members of the ECOWAS are governed by military juntas. And not all of the Member States who are rooting for a military intervention have agreed to send troops to support the military action. The legality of such action is also questionable, as Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are still officially considered as members, regardless of being suspended from all sessions. ECOWAS members have previously agreed to not to use military force to each other, therefore, such an option would require almost two thirds of the members to be in favour. Which, when the fact that 4 of the members are already suspended, makes it harder to initiate a military operation. A military option would also damage European ties within the continent, which would be detrimental to the flow of economy between Niger, and the Neighbouring continents, and Europe.



Source: Samy Chahri, EPRS. Data sources: [Al Jazeera](#), 17 August 2023; [RFI](#), 18 August 2023.

The Military Juntas of Mali and Burkina Faso: After the military government in Niger cut its ties with the governing bodies and the allies of the previous regime, they decided to establish a stronger alliance with the other military governments in the Sahel. Policies in combating the jihadist groups among the three juntas were similar, and the authorities from Burkina Faso and Mali have openly stated that they would consider any use of force by the ECOWAS as an act of war, and would be authorising military action to help support the cause of the junta in Niger. This could mean that an intracontinental war could start, if the peaceful ways to a resolution are exhausted too quickly or thoughtlessly. As seen in the figure above, the ECOWAS has suspended the military juntas from its meetings, until the elected presidents return to office.

The African Union: The African Union has suspended Niger from all activities after the coup, and is concerned about the Russian presence in the Sahel. The African Union has been in cooperation with the ECOWAS since the coup, and is anti-war. Imposing “grave” sanctions is a more widely-accepted option, as further destroying the infrastructure in Niger would be greatly detrimental to the fight against the extremist Islamist groups, since Niger has US and French military bases inside the country.

People’s Republic of China: The PRC is favouring the Bazoum government, mostly because of their economic interest in the Uranium and Oil resources in Niger. The China National Petroleum Corporation was involved in the construction of an oil pipeline between Niger and Benin, which is estimated to increase the daily oil extraction to 110.000 barrels. The PRC has also proposed to be a mediator for a peaceful political resolution.

Russian Federation: The Foreign Minister of Russia has officially and openly called for the restoration to the constitutional order. It should be noted, however, that Russia is completely against foreign military intervention. In contrast, the private Wagner group has welcomed the new military government through social media, and offered the group’s help if necessary. The Bazoum government was in military cooperation with Russia, but kept its distance with the Wagner group. It is estimated that the junta will keep their relations with Russia and the Wagner mercenaries stronger, at the expense of weakening the political cooperation with the Western nations. Russia, trying to increase its presence in the Sahel, has been making anti-French propaganda in the area, through the Wagner group. In the eyes of the public, Russia is also seen as the last defender of the moral Islamist values, like the importance of marriage, and respect to religion.

F. Timeline of Key Events

December 27, 2020	The first round of presidential and legislative elections are held. 5 days later, militants attack the villages of Tchombangou and Zaroumdareye in western Niger, resulting in the death of 100 citizens.
February 21, 2021	Seven members of Niger’s electoral commission are killed when their vehicle hits a landmine in the Tillabéri region in western Niger on the day of the 2nd round of presidential elections. Mohamed Bazoum of the PNDS is elected president with 56 percent of the vote.
March 1, 2021	Government authorities, including the presidential guard, charge the opposition leader Hama Amadou with trying to overthrow the government.

March 21-23, 2021	The Constitutional Court of Niger confirms the presidency of Mohamed Bazoum. Consequently, militants attack the villages of Intazayene, Bakorat and Wistane in the Tahoua region in southwestern Niger, resulting in the deaths of 137 individuals. UN Secretary-General António Guterres condemns the attack against civilians in the Tahoua region.
March 31, 2021	A coup d'état attempt against Mohamed Bazoum occurs.
July 26, 2023	Niger's own presidential guards surround the presidential palace -which is the Bazoum's official residence- and detain him. The coup leaders announce that the country's borders are closed.
July 27, 2023	General Abdourahmane "Omar" Tchiani, commander of the presidential guards, appoints himself the head of the country's new military government. In the meantime, Bazoum declares that democracy will prevail in the country.
July 30, 2023	The ECOWAS bloc implements financial sanctions on the coup leaders and the country, freezing "all commercial and financial transactions" between Member States and Niger, one of the world's poorest nations.
August 1, 2023	Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to the Ukrainian president, accuses Russia of being behind the coup.
August 4, 2023	ECOWAS military chiefs agree to a plan for a possible military intervention to respond to the crisis, with the armies of countries including Senegal and Ivory Coast saying they are ready to participate.
August 18, 2023	ECOWAS agrees on a "D-day" for possible military intervention to restore democracy in Niger, as military chiefs hold a second day of talks in Ghana. Eleven of the bloc's 15 member states agree to commit troops to the operation.

G. Possible Solutions

Neither the UN nor the EU has made definitive progress on the matter, but the path to a resolution relies on dialogue and mutual compromise. It might seem cliché, however, military intervention would almost definitely lead to an extremely destructive conflict within the continent. Especially, this gets furthered by the predicament that the members of the ECOWAS might struggle with initiating a military operation due to aforementioned reasons. And the military juntas would have advantage with their recently upgraded and trained militaries, and familiar terrain. Increasing the economic sanctions imposed would lead the military government to a certain end. Nevertheless, it should be noted that further sanctions would severely worsen the already dire humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region. Delegates are expected to be thorough with their solutions, and take the civilian repercussions of their ideas into account.

H. Links for Further Reading:

1. <https://www.thecable.ng/timeline-from-coup-to-ecowas-intervention-how-has-niger-crisis-unfolded/>
2. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/753951/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)753951_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/753951/EPRS_BRI(2023)753951_EN.pdf)
3. https://www.swp-berlin.org/assets/afrika/publications/policybrief/MTA_PB20_Tschorner_Niger_Coup.pdf

I. Bibliography:

University of Central Arkansas | UCA. (n.d.).

<https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/niger-1960-present/>

Jazeera, A. (2023, August 20). Timeline: What has happened in Niger since the coup? *Al*

Jazeera.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/8/20/timeline-what-has-happened-in-niger-since-the-coup>

The Niger coup's outsized global impact. (n.d.). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2023/08/the-niger-coups-outsized-global-impact?lang=en#Uranium>

Nsaibia, H. (2023b, August 23). *Fact Sheet: Military coup in Niger.* ACLED.

<https://acleddata.com/2023/08/03/fact-sheet-military-coup-in-niger/>

Mduerksen. (2024b, May 30). *Niger Coup Reversing Hard-Earned gains – Africa Center for Strategic Studies.* Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/niger-coup-reversing-hard-earned-gains/>