

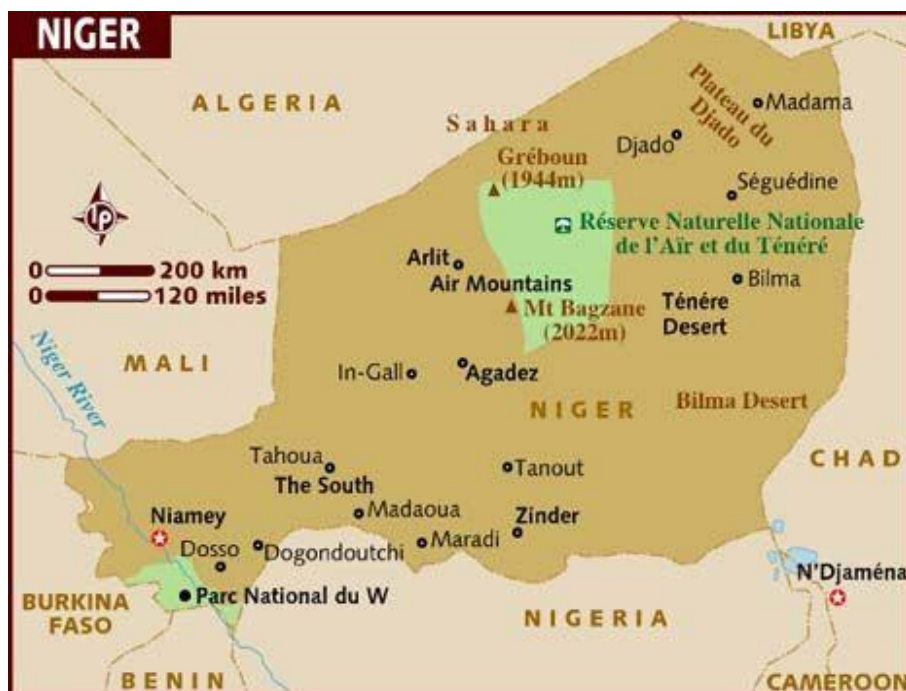
Dynamics of Political Struggle and Transition: Unraveling the 2021 Coup Attempt in Niger Republic

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Abstract: *The Niger Republic is located right in the heart of the Sahel and shares borders with Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Algeria, and Libya. Since its independence in 1960, Nigér has been directly or indirectly found itself confronted by many conflicts and natural challenges, such as drought, political manipulation, and leadership struggles amongst the political classes, before the advent of the religious and violent extremist groups in its Southern border, Nigeria; separatist and militant movements in the northern border, Mali, and the State collapse in Libya which causes proliferation of arms and ammunitions from about 2011. As the result of Niger's dynamic but complex political system with its various actors trying to balance themselves out, there is always competition due to class, status, and interest. These constantly become the driver of struggle amongst the actors which include the lifetime politicians, the military, the Sheikhs, and some selected traditional rulers. For this, and coupled with external involvements, Nigér has between 1960 and 2010 witnesses not less than seven Republic with four coup d'états. Notwithstanding, the coup that overthrew Tandja in 2010, one can say without contradiction that the regime of Tandja from 1999 sets Nigér on the democratic path which continues with the transition from one democratically elected President handing over to another in 2021. This paper argues that the coup d'état of 2021 can neither be blamed on bad governance nor insecurity but rather on the political profiteers who feel annihilated by the Centre. This paper adopts a qualitative research methodology, and the research is done based on a case study strategy of inquiry because the topic is bounded by time and activities. The data was conducted based on desktop - verified secondary data collection using publications, periodicals, archival materials, foreign electronic media, and materials from the world bank and other regional organisations whose reports are relevant to this work. Theoretically, the paper anchors its explanation of the topic on the theory of violence and argues in its conclusion that neither bad governance nor insecurity accounted for the attempted coup of 2021 that took place just at the behest of handing over to another democratically elected government in an election adjudged by both local and international observer as free, credible, fair and said to have to conform substantially with World best practices.*

Keywords: Bad Governance, Insecurity, Coup d'état, Nigér



Map of The Republic of Niger taken from the online open source

1. Introduction

Nigér is a multiethnic country with an estimated population of twenty million people according to the Nigér 2012 population figures, with a land mass of 1, 267, 000 sq km2

(World Bank 2017), making it the largest landmass in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region. Nigér is landlocked and the closest Seaport to it, Cotonou, is about 1000 km. The country equally has 5, 700 Km land borders, with a high proportion of its sparsely populated shares with Nigeria (World Bank 2017) being

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roamed by, and majorly controlled by separatist jihadists, and other criminal gangs and bandits in its border with Northern Mali; while intercommunal and State collapse in southern Libya borders constitute insecurity challenges and hard to govern. This is more made difficult when the majority of Nigér's over twenty - five million population live in the south, where the arable land is located. The major ethnic groups are Hausa, which constitutes over fifty percent of the population; the Songhai/Zerma, the Fulani (Peulh), Tuareg/Buzu, and the Kanuri. This situation will ordinarily present that ethnicity is a significant political factor that should tilt towards the ethnic group that has the population advantage, however, the Zerma/Songhay, which constitute the minority has dominated the political space since World War II (Richard Higgott and Finn Fuglestad, 1975). Notwithstanding, within the span of 62 years, Nigér has witnessed five attempted coup d'état and about four successful militaries overthrown of the sitting Presidents since 1974. This paper titled "Bad government and insecurity as catalysts for military coup d'état: an examination of Nigér coup of 2021" intends to explore the reasons behind the foiled coup attempt of March 31, 2021, which astonishingly, takes place during the transition period of an outgoing President and the incoming one, especially when Nigér does not seem to be under any obvious threat. Nigér Republic becomes independent from France in 1960, and before the coup d'état of 2021, Nigér experienced four other coups – 1974, 1996, 1999, and 2010. This means Nigér was under military rule for twenty - three years before returning to democratically elected governments in 2011. The first coup which overthrows President Hamani Diori, who holds power since independence in 1960 was carried out on 14 April 1974 and was led by Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Koutche. The explanations that were given by the coup plotters to justify their coups, relate to corruption by the ruling elites, economic crises, insecurities, contagion, etc. (Richard Higgott and Finn Fuglestad 1975). Notwithstanding various reasons advanced by various coup leaders for their interventions, scholars have argued that there are always underlying reasons driving the coups. For example, the 1974 coup was triggered by some underlying conflicts which have their foundation in pre - 1960 independence. President Hamani's regime was not as strong, notwithstanding the popular votes in the 1970 elections; worst still, was the French presence and involvement in all the political and economic lives in Nigér, to which the army took great exception as anachronistic, and thus, the focal source for resentment argues (Higgott and Finn 1975). Hamani's inability to moderate that relationship, especially concerning the French military presence was a major driver for the first coup. A twelve - member Supreme Military Council (SMC) with Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Koutche as the Chairperson was formed to oversee the administration of the country after the coup. On August 2, 1975, the Vice Chairman of the SMC, Major Sani Souna Sido, was arrested for planning a military rebellion; between 14 - 15 March 1976, the Niger Government suppressed another rebellion led by Major Bayare Moussa and Captain Sidi Mohammed that recorded about fifty fatalities with five other leaders, plus Major Moussa and Captain Mohammed executed for their roles.

November 10, 1987, The Head of State, Major General Kountche died leading to the appointment of Major General Ali Seybou as the President of SMC. However, the emergence of the new administration marks the begging of another attempt at democratic engineering as the Head of State transmuted to an elected position as the President of the Republic of Nigér, in an election of the 10 of December 1989 winning with over 99% of votes cast. From 1991 July, the political terrain was filled with intrigues and manipulations that already creates an unstable crisis situation that is ripe for another rebellion. An alliance of oppositions leads to the establishment of an Alliance Forces for Change (AFC) in February 1993. In the second round of the Presidential elections, Mohammed Ousmane was elected the President with 54% of the total vote cast. There was discontentment among the population, with unpredictable dynamics which comes to a height in Naimey between April 16 - 17 1994, leading to some fatalities. The escalation of the crisis among the political actors between July 1991 and 1995 leads to another rebellion in 1996 and the termination of another democratic dispensation by the Military Communities.

By the year 1997, there are indications that the nescient political dispensation was in jeopardy considering the escalating crisis among the politicians which leads to the arrest of some opposition leaders accused of plotting to assassinate President Minassara. There are clamped down on protesters which leads to fatalities, as the mutiny was suppressed by the security agents. On 9 April 1999, President Bare and four others were assassinated by the members of the Presidential guards. Then the Prime Minister, Mayaki immediately dissolves the Parliament and suspends Political party activities. On 11 April 1999, Major Daouda Malam Wanke becomes the Chairman of the 14 members National Reconciliation Council (NRC). By July 18, 1999, a new constitution re - establishing a multi - party was approved through a referendum. Elections are held, and Mamadu Tandja of the Mouvement National pour la Societe du Development (MNSD) was elected the President of the Republic of Niger haven secured 60% of the vote cast in the second round of the Presidential elections that took place on the 24 November 1999.

Between July 31, 2002, to August 9, 2002, Government soldiers suppress four mutinies of soldiers. Two of the mutinies took place in Diffa, on July 31, 2002, and 2 August 2002 respectively. The third mutiny took place in Niamey on August 4 - 5, 2002, and the fourth took place in Ngourtou on August 9, 2002. These are indications of an unstable government battling with intractable conflict issues. Notwithstanding the conflict issues, President Tanja was re - elected in the second round of the Presidential Election held on 4 December 2004 with 60% votes. As a result of wranglings between the ruling and opposition parties, the sit - tight attitude of the leadership, following the referendum of 4 August 2009 that gave 99% votes in favour of Tanjan to contest for the third term, the boycotted legislative elections by the opposition parties coupled with the unstable political situation of the country, and the imposition of sanctions by some members of international Community, on January 18, 2010, President Mamadou Tandja was overthrown in another military coup d'état led by Major Adamou Harouna. On

December 27, 2020, the first round of the Presidential and Legislative Elections was held; and the second round was held on February 21, 2021, which produces Mohamed Bazoum as the President - elect with 56 percent of the total votes cast. However, the opposition leader Mahamane Ousmane's claim of victory led to post - election violence. On March 31, 2021, before President Bazoum was sworn - in on April 4, 2021, the Government Security agents suppressed an attempted military coup against outgoing President Tandja. These are the historical background of the series of failed and successful coup d'états in the Niger republic and why there is a need to understand the phenomenon so as to fill the seeming gap extending from other studies.

Apart from the coup d'états which become latent from 2010, until 31 March 2021, terrorist attacks, which are ravaging the Sahel regions of which Niger is a part, have dominated the insecurity discourses since 2009. Boko Haram on the southern border with Nigeria, and its disgruntled allies like the Islamic State (IS) group, Islamic State in the Great Sahara (ISGS), and al Qaeda who are very active around the semi - arid, stretching from south of the Sahara Desert which includes Mali, Chad, Niger, Burkina - Faso, and Mauritania and has constituted a haven for launching attacks on the countries mentioned. According to BBC Africa Live, there exists an upsurge in the activities of jihadist violence with estimated 300 fatalities in 2021. Over 137 death tolls are recorded as the result of coordinated attacks by the Jihadists on three villages just a week before the swearing - in of the incoming President.

2. Concept Definition

Bad governance, insecurity, and coup d'état are briefly conceptualised as they are used in this paper to highlight how bad governance and, or insecurity play roles through the instrumentality of coup d'état in an attempt to overthrow a legitimate government in the Niger Republic in March 2021.

2.1. Bad Governance

Governance as a concept is made popular by International Organisations, like the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, and the World Bank in the 1990s to emphasise the significance of institutional rules and frameworks for building prosperous, peaceful states and societies. Accordingly, the rules and mechanisms are critical links by which states seek to promote representation, accountability, participation, and probity for the fulfillment of common objectives (Zartman 2002), all of which include such indexes as transparency, and become standard indicators for measuring good governance. Governance as a tool highlights the weakening of the state - centric view of power and how states' activities could be re - engineered to handle better the problematic public system through partnerships and collective participation with private organisations, to help correct the failure or ineffectiveness of some developing nation - states that could not provide their citizens with basic and necessary services (Christopher, 2005). Governance according to scholars, therefore, is the political, economic, and administrative tools used by the government in authority

to manage the resources and excises control over a given society (Adeyeye 2007). Christopher and Torfing (2022) opine that governance is a popular but equally slippery term, and this is evident by the fact that the word "governance" is often used as conjunction with a qualifying prefix. "governance" therefore is hardly a standalone word and it could either be good when public institutions' performances are toward the public good. For example, Abbas (2018) agrees with the binary assumption of the concept of "governance" that "corruption has taken a seriously destructive dimension thereby undermining the establishment of good governance." Abbas further argues that the major causes of conflict in most Nigerian communities are "Poor governance as manifested in corruption, mismanagement, leading to incompetence, inefficiency, impunity, injustice, failure to deliver basic services, and overall insecurity (Abbas 2018). Bad governance, flowing from scholarly opinions will be the ineffectiveness or failure of some developing nation - states to provide their citizens with basic common goods and services and the indicators will be those that are the antithesis of good governance and will be measured by indicators that centre around lack of transparency, corruption, arbitrariness in policy - making, lack of accountability, and implementation of unfair policies that badly affect citizens.

2.2 Insecurity

The concept of insecurity means different things to different people, it could just be a state of physical vulnerability to danger to some, while to others, it goes beyond just physical vulnerability, but relates to economic, food, health, environmental, community, and political insecurity. Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpan - Robaro (2013) opine that insecurity entails peril, deathtrap, dearth of fortification, and lack of security. Some scholars have further argued that insecurity is a state of being vulnerable to danger or threat of danger; a state of anxiety or risks of losing one's life and properties due to the absence of protection, and a state of helplessness and being subject to danger or threat (Adegbami, 2013; Beland, 2005; Udo, 2015; Ajodo - Adebajo and Okorie, 2014). Notwithstanding, in classical State - centric scholarly works though, insecurity was seen from the angles of threat between the superpowers or one sovereign and another, leading to the struggle for accumulation of arms for defense against external aggressions (Ajodo - Adebajoko and Walter, 2014).

Saliu, Luqman, and Abdullahi observe that the post - war era later changes the norms to the centre States as the result of deluges of aggrieved rebels within the military and security rising against the States, especially in developing countries, where military wrestle powers, against the norms, with the barrels of guns in coup d'état. This prompts scholars to perceive insecurity from globalist worldviews, as a threat to the human race (2007). In the opening paragraph, the aspect concerning human insecurity is briefly mentioned. There is a need to look at insecurity from the human security perspective. From the human security perspective, there are two forms of violence associated with human beings i. e., direct violence that leads to killing swiftly through war and other physical attacks, and indirect violence which kills

slowly through invincible means such as poverty, hunger, disease, and repression. The primary concern is how the unjust structural component, i. e., economic, political, and food insecurities have played together to influence the military to intervene in the governance through coup d'état. The scholarly perspectives on the discourse on insecurity bring to the fore, how insecurity in combination with bad governance serves as the catalyst for a coup d'état. This becomes more obvious when we consider the concept of coup d'état below.

2.3 Defining Coup d'état

A coup d'état seeks to replace a legitimate sitting government by using a group of the country's armed forces, and on very rare occasions, mercenaries to forcefully removed the government from power. Luttwak (1979, p.26 - 7) refers to coup d'état as the "infiltration of a small but critical segment of the State apparatus which is then used to displace the government". Clayton Thyne defines coup d'état as overt and illegal attempts by the military and other elites working with the state apparatus to forcefully unseat the sitting executive. Scholars, however, argue that a coup hardly removes other government public or civil functionaries, except those found to be accomplices of corrupt practices. Huntington, S. P. (1968), opines there are three recognised types of coups:

- 1) The breakthrough coup which is the most common of all coups involving a group of opposing civilians or military overthrows a sitting government and installs a leader for the nation;
- 2) The veto coup: involves the military stepping in to prevent radical political change.
- 3) The guardian coup: this involves when one elite group seizes power from another elite group basing its justification on the broader goods of the nation. This happens when an army overthrows a President to avoid the nation from sliding into anarchy.

All the coups d'état that happens in the Nigér Republic since 1974 can be classified under the three categories identified above.

2.4 Literature Review

There are causal relationships between bad governance and insecurity, which to an extent, coupled with other natural phenomena, can account for the incessant coup d'état in the Nigér Republic. Higgott and Finn (1975), say that in spite of the challenges of analysing such violent changes like the coup d'état in Nigér, explanations, and different reasons that coup plotters always give as their reasons for the coups are associated with corruption by ruling elites, economic crises, contagion, etc. Outlining the major causal elements of the coup d'état, Higgott, and Finn examines four major underlying reasons that can account for the 1974 coups as (i) That the pre - 1960 independence underlying conflict factors which existed in Nigér were still crucial in 1974, and despite Hamani Dior's unanimous re - election in 1970 and aural of the statesmanship of the President, his regime was not as popular as implied by the unanimous election; (ii) that throughout the life of the regime, French was involved in all aspects of the political, economic and military life of the

nation, which incurs resentment for the citizens, especially from the military which was attributed as the major downfall of the regime; (iii) that the socio - economic and political pressures on the regime had grown to a previously unexperienced level, and (iv), the belief of the army that it needed to protect its own 'corporate self - interest' (Samuel 1996). Higgott and Finn further argue that the minority Zerma/Songhay, a pre - colonial society of warriors who occupy the Western Nigér, are more receptive to the French, and both become great allies because of the undignified services rendered to the colonialist powers than the rigid Hausas of the Eastern Nigér, who have over 50% of the population.

The benefits of Western closeness to the French, are that the educated few who indulged in politics after 1946 were majorly Zerma / Songhay who forms the bulk of the Political Party *parti progressiste nigérien*, PPN, the local branch of the *Rassemblement démocratique africain*, while the Hausas on the other hand look for economic opportunities in the farm for the production of groundnuts, which increased steadily and continue to pay higher taxes than the West (1975). The rigidity of the party to change and becomes more inclusive as well as not allowing other political party activities are major grievances that lead to widespread unpopularity in part, and the inability to solve the economic problems, coupled with corruption makes a perfect excuse for the army to intervene and overthrow the regime after fifteen years (1975). Suleiman and Onapajo (2022), categorise the causes of coups in ECOWAS into two factors: inward factors which are those they claim emanated from the challenges of national governance. This will include governance deficits such as tampering with the constitution with the intention of staying longer in power, "non - fulfillment of entitlements of citizenships, frustrated masses (most of whom are young) and growing insecurity". The outward - looking factors, on the other hand, are those concerning global dynamics with a significant impact on governance and security. For example, foreign intervention and influences in domestic issues and strategic competitions have made coups more likely to occur and even resulted in a successful military takeover of governments. For example, Russia is cited in the 2021 and 2020 coups in Mali as well as that of Burkina Faso to exert prominent roles in States that are traditional "French" which scholars are already branding as geopolitical successes for Russia and lost French.

President Mamadou Tandja was democratically elected in 1999 and was overthrown in 2010 by a coup d'état. The President is associated with progressive developments in The Niger Republic and wins accolades from ECOWAS and the African Union for statesmanship. The coup is triggered by the President's decision to elongate his presidency by another three years at the end of the second five years term in office by revising the Constitution that provides for a five - year term but with eligibility to contest for another five years term only (Baudais, V. and Gregory Chauzal 2011). Despite Tandja's impressive reputation, the idea of constitutional revision even through referendum and election victories alienated both the old political partners and equally the army and the international community. On 18 February 2010, President Tandja and the government were overthrown and the President and the members were arrested and

detained by the military. On the same day 18 February 2010, the junta formed “the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy, have suspended the Constitution of the Republic, and dissolved all the democratic institutions. On 23 February, a former Cabinet Minister, Mahamadou Danda appointed a new Prime Minister, and on 1 March 2010, a 20 - member transitional Government was formed; in October a new constitution that reversed the 2009 elongation clause introduced by President Tandja was approved through votes. In the second run - off of the Presidential elections held on 12 March 2011, The Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le socialisme - Tarayya (PNDS) (Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism – Tarayya) candidate Mahamadou Issoufou won the election. The PNDS Presidential candidate Mahamadou Issoufou equally wins the election for a second term and secured the highest votes in the second round on March 20, 2016.

Joseph Sany commenting on the attempted coup d'état in Guinea - Bissau of 1 February 2020 and the coup in Burkina - Faso which appears in the United States Institute of Peace publications of 2 February 2022 opines that the West African region is the most visible center for a global crisis that the author blames on poor and authoritarian governance which breeds and transnational criminality and extremism that ignite violence and undermine efforts to build democracy. Expressing fears over the ability of the G5 Sahel, of which Niger is a member, to secure the region from performing joint military operations effectively due to incessant coups in the region, Joseph Sany holds that coup d'état will further weaken the joint efforts of the countries in the Sahel region to fight against the Islamist extremist which is already affiliates of the al - Qaeda and the ISIS and doubted the possibility of the joint military efforts to effectively sustains its missions with the high tension, especially with the suspension of two of the Member States, Mali, and Burkina - Faso among the five countries over coup d'état; which further risks the ability to sustain the military cooperation against terrorism around the Sahel and which can further aggravate the insecurity that triggered the coup d'état in the first place, especially with the increase anti - French positions in the Sahel region which is causing bad relations between the militaries and the French forces.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

It is important to establish a theoretical framework for this paper. However, the paper is not claiming that a single theory is capable of explaining any conflict - related discourse, and coup d'état is another way of referring to a violent conflict involving overthrow, or an attempt to illegitimately takeover powers through violence. The coup d'état that takes place on 31 March 2012 can be anchored or explained by different theories including that of structural violence. Notwithstanding this position, we can briefly examine a few opinions of scholars on coup d'état.

Ogueri II argues that coups d'état is managed by the embittered and most disgruntled and disaffected class who are willing to make the supreme sacrifice in order to save the nation and its people (1973). However, in order for the military to legitimise their holds, the successive military government emerges and invites the civilians to join the

ranks of their governments. Ogueri II goes further to argue that “Military takeover of civilian government could conceivably be, but is hardly an exclusive affair of the members of armed forces (1973, p.8)”. Ogueri II argues further that “On a closer examination, though, one discovers that political entrepreneurs from within and outside the very government might directly or indirectly be involved (1973, p.8).” By implication, it is evident that the interests of individuals actor are of significance and far above every other reason for the coup. Then there are the modernisation theorists amongst whom is Huntington, who see military rule as more suitable to govern the new nations than the civilian government. This position opines Huntington, is informed by the quality of leadership rating of the military that is favourable to development and modernisation. Pye (1966) as cited by Wiking (1983) argues that Military rule is self - sacrificing with dynamic leadership that is committed to progress, and with the task of modernising societies that have been subverted by the corrupt practices of politicians and are in transitional modes.

The key to this progress according to modernisation theorists, rests squarely on the military officer corps who are particularly responsive to foreign ideas of nationalism and progress in developing countries. “The officers developed managerial and technical skills, and together with university students, especially those who studied abroad, they constitute the most modern and progressive group in the society” (Huntington, 1968, p.201). To justify the modernity of this middle class, Pye gives examples of how the military is involved in the construction of roads, bridges, and schools. Huntington shares these views while maintaining that only the military, apart from the politicians have the ability to rule as the military establishments constitute the group that can remain above ethnic conflicts. “In theory, consequently, the more effective leadership in the institutional - building should come from groups which are not so directly identified with particular ethnic or economic strata. In some measure, students, religious leaders, and soldiers may fall into this category” (Huntington, 1968, p.239). However not so many agree with Huntington on this framing. Price's theories as discussed in Tibi (1972) counter Huntington and argues that once officers identified themselves with foreign reference groups, they lost the legitimacy to represent an autonomous nationalism in their country of birth.

3. Theory of violence

There are multidimensional opinions of what constitutes violence. DeRosis, (1971, p.355) defines violence as the “use of force with destructive intent...includes warfare, bombings, and murder at one extreme street, or family brawls at the other.... The concept of violence may also be associated with the feelings which gave rise to thoughts of annihilation”. Other scholars equally define violence as the use of means of force to achieve goals (Langness, 1972); it can be any event involves rapid destruction of structures (Wright, 1967); “the threat or use of physical force which could lead bodily injury (Ball - Rokeach, 1872). Bardis (1973), summaries opinions of other scholars on typologies of violence which includes: physical or verbal; from the point of actors may involve individual, small group, or

collective (institutional); “structured, expressive behaviour, with origins, a particular content, for specific goals or purposes” (Lowry and Rankin, 1972) among others. Bardis equally argues that there is much confusion regarding the countless theories of violence, and there are equally some overlaps since mutual exclusiveness is not always possible among the theories of violence (1973). Considering the overlaps among theories, this paper adopts structural violence theory to best explain the attempted coup d'état that takes place in the Niger Republic on 31 March 2021 at the behest of transitioning from one democratically elected president to another.

4. Findings

Burak Ercoskun while quoting the 1969 work of Galtung, states that structural violence is caused by “political mechanisms, processes, and institutions that ensure the satisfaction of identity, reputation, and security needs” (Ercoskun 2021, p.3). The violence theory propounded by Galtung, therefore, sees a “social system as a system of units in interaction and multidimensionally stratified according to a number of rank - dimensions... The theoretical basis is the differential treatment and relative deprivation that follows from rank - disequilibrium, the resources that the high status provides the unit with which to improve his low status, and the sense of self - righteousness that easily develops” (Galtung, 1971. P.289). Niger Republic is built on complex political settlements based on social systems and stratifies according to rankings. Among the key actors in the social groups are the lifetime politicians, the military, the powerful traders and traditional leaders, Sheiks, and religious leaders. The political class creates “a political settlement that presides over an uneducated, uninformed population with limited voice due to the need to associate oneself with powerful principals to protect against shocks” (World Bank 2017, p.3). Nigér’s history of constant political uprising, political settlements, and military coup d'états, before the current insecurity challenges, has been a source of concern to scholars and the international community. However, these stories are to be rewritten by President Mamadou Tandja’s regime (1999 – 2010) whose period receives a lot of accolades for anchoring a new Nigér on a progressive path, transparency, sustainable development, institutional building, anti - corruption policies, and these stood the President out as a perfect symbol for democratic good governance. Contrary to the old narratives, therefore, Tandja carried out much infrastructural development, and economic growth are witnessed and citizens were commending his presidency for good infrastructural development. There was development everywhere, and so, in terms of good governance and economic development, Tandja put Nigér on the path of development. However, the problem with President Tandja was his unwillingness to hand over power after those accolades from the public who see him as the country’s messiah. Thus, President Tandja carries out amendments to the constitution to perpetrate himself in government. This led to the brief intervention by the military following the International Community pressure through sanctions, to remove the regime in a coup d'état, in 2010, but then, power quickly returns to civilians through the election that sees President Mohamadou Issoufou inaugurated as the seventh Republican President in 2011.

For those politicians who are in other political parties and some of the military officers whose interests are threatened by the achievements of the ruling party, the sense of being underprivileged relatives to those in government is enough driver to persuade the like minds in opposition to persuade some disgruntled middle - rank military officer for an appropriate time to strike.

Issoufou’s regime (2011 - 2021) was a continuation of Tandja’s progressive governance as the new President equally sustains Tandja’s economic and infrastructural developments, even despite the huge institutional challenges like corruption, clientelism, rural backwardness, and, other structural institutional obstacles that persisted and inherited from Tandja. For example, virtually all the insecurity challenges like terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, etc. started shortly before the 2011 elections. The challenges notwithstanding, the World Bank reports on Nigér are regarded as encouraging. The report states that there “has been a marked and encouraging improvement in a number of areas of governance over the past 15 years, with improvements in voice and accountability, economic management, social inclusion and equity, and anticorruption, changes that are associated with more inclusive policies” (November 2017). This World Bank report further lays credence to the fact that Nigér is gradually moving away from where the country was before 1999 in terms of bad governance to embrace good governance, a position one could rightly articulate to justify why coup d'état is no more popular in the Nigér Republic. Issoufou’s Presidency has equally been inclusive in the governance of the rural community through the 3N program that aims at “reducing widespread food insecurity by improving agricultural productivity and an evolving decentralisation process with citizens gradually becoming more involved in municipal councils and school governance structures” (The World Bank, 2017, p.51). Despite all the developments, the World Bank report observed that the declines in governance indicators associated with political instability, violence, and terrorism are still present in the Niger republic. There are security issues along Niger borderline countries like Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso with militant groups and terrorists consistently carrying out attacks on civilians and military information.

The fundamental question therefore will be that despite the insecurity challenges in the Niger Republic, would it be justified to see insecurity as a catalyst for a coup d'état in Niger? Just like the issue of bad governance as the very unconvincing trigger as dispels in the finding, this paper is equally not tempted to agree with the narrative of insecurity as a possible trigger for the March 31 2021 coup d'état. Niger is located in the heart of the Sahel region, like all the countries of the Sahel, Niger has been plagued by its own fair share of jihadist and terrorist - related attacks both within its territorial sphere and its international boundaries. But unlike the other Sahel countries, despite the fact that the majority of the ruling class has come from minority groups, there has never been any major ethnic - related violence nor are there any separatist conflict - related issues that appear to be a threat to the unity of the Republic. This helps in stabilizing the country and help in the growth as reported by the World Bank Report. Secondly, the election results that

produced the President of the Republic under the Nigerian Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS), (in which the author of this paper was part as an Election Observer for ECOWAS) from 2011 to 2021 won the elections. For example, the PNDS Presidential Candidate Mohamed Bazoum won the election with 55.67% as against Democratic and Republican Renewal (RDR), and Mohamane Ousmane with 44.33%. It is instructive that the Presidential candidate of RDR out rightly rejected the result and declared himself the winner. It is therefore curious that an attempted coup d'état was crushed a few days before the transition of power to the incoming President.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper believes, based on the arguments presented above relating to the contemporary situation in Niger, that the attempted coup d'état that takes place on the 31st March 2021 can neither be justified on the premise of bad governance nor insecurity but can aptly be explained by the concept of violence associated with thoughts of possible annihilation by some of the opposition parties who are already losing out of governance after more than twenty years of PNDS in the controlling seat of the government of Niger republic. Based on the institutional frameworks, the fight against corruption, and the development programs that Niger is currently carrying out, and as supported by the World Bank report on Niger Republic, the paper holds that neither bad governance nor insecurity could be advanced as the possible trigger for the March 2021 coup d'état.

As a postscript and a way of validating the position exposes in this paper that neither bad governance nor insecurity is the possible trigger for the 2021 March, coup d'état, the government of President Mohamed Bazoum was overthrown through another coup d'état on 26 July 2023 without any form of unrest since the assumption of power in 2021.

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