



# SCENARIO ANALYSIS: NIGER'S POST-COUP FUTURE

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## Summary:

The political landscape of Niger has undergone a significant transformation following the military coup led by General Abdourahamane Tchiani. The coup has not only reshaped the country's internal governance but has also introduced multifaceted geopolitical implications for the Sahel region and the international community. The following scenarios provide a comprehensive assessment of potential trajectories for Niger in the aftermath of the coup:

■ **Scenario 1: Stability Under Military Government with External Support:** The junta consolidates power with external backing from countries such as Russia. Regional neighbors like Burkina Faso and Mali offer support, while Western powers, including the US and Europe, adopt a pragmatic approach, prioritizing regional stability and counterterrorism efforts over democratic norms.

■ **Scenario 2: Western-backed Regional Military Intervention:** Perceiving the coup as a potential shift of Niger into Russia's sphere of influence, Western powers, notably France and the US, support military intervention by ECOWAS. The objective is to restore the ousted government and counterbalance Russia's growing influence.

■ **Scenario 3: The Coup Faces Internal Resistance and Fails to Persist:** The junta encounters significant internal resistance from the civilian populace and within its military ranks. Public unrest coupled with internal military disagreements challenge the junta's authority, leading to potential political realignments.

■ **Scenario 4: Mediation and Peaceful Transition:** The international community, spearheaded by ECOWAS, initiates a diplomatic mediation process. The aim is to broker a peaceful transition back to democratic governance, ensuring stability and averting potential conflict.

Each scenario presents its unique set of challenges and risks. The evolving dynamics within Niger, influenced by regional and global actors, will shape the country's future, with profound implications for the Sahel region and beyond.

## Introduction:

Niger has emerged as a focal point of geopolitical interest and concern, primarily due to the unexpected military coup led by General Abdourahamane Tchiani on 26 July. This development has not only disrupted Niger's internal political stability but has also sent ripples across the Sahel region and the broader international community. The drivers

behind the coup can be traced back to internal disagreements within the military ranks and perceived governance challenges under the ousted President Mohamed Bazoum. However, the implications of this power shift extend far beyond domestic politics.

From a regional perspective, the coup in Niger has been met with apprehension. ECOWAS, the primary regional body, has historically taken a firm stance against unconstitutional changes in government. Their potential interventions, whether diplomatic or military, could significantly shape Niger's political trajectory in the coming months. Moreover, the Sahel region, already grappling with challenges posed by militant groups, views the instability in Niger as a potential exacerbating factor that could compromise regional security efforts.

Internationally, major powers have been quick to recalibrate their strategies and stances in response to the coup. France and the US, traditional allies of Niger, are particularly concerned about the junta's potential alignment with Russia. Such a geopolitical realignment could challenge their strategic interests in the region, especially given Niger's significance in counterterrorism operations and its rich uranium reserves. The potential for a shift in Niger's foreign policy alignment, coupled with the junta's approach to governance, presents a complex matrix of economic and security risks. These risks are further compounded by the junta's potential responses to internal resistance and the broader populace's stance on the unfolding political scenario.

In understanding these dynamics, this position paper aims to explore the potential paths Niger might take in the aftermath of the coup. By examining key driving factors, uncertainties, and their implications, the analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the potential risks and challenges that lie ahead for Niger and the region.

### **Scenario 1: Stability of the Military Government Backed by External Support**

In this scenario, the military junta led by General Tchiani successfully consolidates power in Niger, achieving a semblance of stability. The junta's efforts are significantly bolstered by external support, both from neighbouring countries and international powers. Burkina Faso and Mali, both grappling with their own internal challenges, see

the stability of Niger as crucial for regional peace and extend their support, possibly in the form of diplomatic endorsements or even material aid.

On the international front, Russia emerges as a key ally of the junta. Given Russia's sympathetic stance towards the coup and the potential involvement of the Wagner Group, it is plausible that Russia provides both diplomatic backing and possibly military assistance, further strengthening the junta's position. This alignment with Russia could manifest in economic agreements or intelligence sharing. While the US and Europe initially condemn the coup, *realpolitik* takes precedence over idealism. Recognizing the strategic importance of Niger, especially in the context of counterterrorism efforts and the broader stability of the Sahel region, both the US and European powers adopt a more pragmatic approach. Instead of isolating the junta, they engage in dialogue, aiming to ensure that their security interests in the region are not compromised. This could involve continued joint military operations against militant groups and intelligence sharing.

Despite its initial condemnation of the coup and its traditional stance against unconstitutional changes of government, ECOWAS finds itself in a complex situation. Given the external support the junta receives, especially from Russia, ECOWAS might opt for a more diplomatic approach, pushing for negotiations and a potential roadmap for a return to civilian rule. The regional body could also play a mediating role between the junta and international powers, ensuring that Niger's stability doesn't compromise the broader peace of the West African region.

Domestically, the junta might focus on strengthening its grip on power. This could involve purges within the military to remove potential dissenters, the establishment of a state-controlled media apparatus to shape public opinion, and efforts to co-opt or neutralize political opposition.

The junta's consolidation of power, backed by external support, could lead to a period of relative stability in Niger. However, this stability might come at the cost of greater political repression. The alignment with Russia could lead to increased Russian influence in the region, potentially making Niger a focal point in the larger geopolitical contest between the West and Russia. The pragmatic engagement by the US, Europe, and ECOWAS might ensure the continuation of their security operations in Niger, but it could also draw criticism. Regionally, the Sahel might witness a period of calm, but underlying issues such as economic challenges, climate change impacts, and militant activities would still persist.



Driving Factors		Uncertainties
▲ Russia's geopolitical interests in expanding its influence in Africa and countering Western dominance.		▼ The extent and nature of Russia's support for the junta, especially in terms of military assistance and economic aid.
▲ The strategic importance of Niger for the US., Europe, and ECOWAS, especially in terms of counterterrorism operations and regional stability.		▼ The potential for internal dissent within the military and among the populace, challenging the junta's rule.
▲ AU's and ECOWAS's mediating role in ensuring a balanced approach to the situation, pushing for negotiations and a potential return to civilian rule.		▼ ECOWAS's long-term stance on the junta, especially if the body faces divisions among its member states on the approach to Niger.
▲ The junta's need for legitimacy and consolidation, leading to efforts to secure external support and suppress internal dissent.		▼ The response of militant groups like Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa Province to the changing political landscape.
▲ The broader geopolitical contest between the West and Russia, with Niger becoming a potential battleground for influence.		▼ The junta's long-term vision for Niger, especially in terms of governance, economic policies, and foreign relations.
Implications	▶ The junta's rule, even if stabilized, might face ongoing questions of legitimacy, leading to potential political tensions and unrest within Niger.	
	▶ Strengthened ties with Russia and other non-traditional allies could lead to a reorientation of Niger's foreign policy, impacting relations with Western powers.	
	▶ The junta's approach to counterterrorism and its collaboration with specific international partners could reshape the fight against militant groups in Niger.	
	▶ The coup and subsequent alignment with certain external powers might create uncertainty for foreign investors and international financial institutions, affecting Niger's economic prospects.	
	▶ The junta's approach to governance might lead to human rights challenges, including potential crackdowns on opposition, media, and civil society, with implications for Niger's international reputation.	

## **Scenario 2: Western-backed Regional Military Intervention**

In this scenario, the military junta's consolidation of power and alignment with Russia raises significant concerns for Western powers, particularly France and the US. Viewing the coup as a potential shift of Niger into the Russian sphere of influence, these powers assess the situation as a significant geopolitical loss. As a result, they decide to back a regional military intervention, primarily through ECOWAS, to restore democratic governance in Niger.

The initial stages of this scenario might see covert intelligence operations by Western powers to gauge the strength and capabilities of the junta, as well as the potential for internal resistance. Simultaneously, diplomatic channels would be activated, with France and the US lobbying within ECOWAS and the African Union to build a consensus for military intervention.

As the primary regional body, ECOWAS would be at the forefront of this intervention. Given its historical stance against unconstitutional changes in government, ECOWAS would mobilize a multi-national force, possibly under the banner of its standby force, to intervene in Niger. The intervention's primary objectives would be to disarm the junta, restore the ousted government, and oversee a transition to democratic governance.

Domestically, the junta, recognizing the combined might of ECOWAS and its Western backers, might attempt to rally domestic support, portraying the intervention as foreign interference in Niger's sovereignty. This could lead to pockets of resistance, especially if sections of the population view the junta as a stabilizing force against militant threats.

The intervention could lead to a range of outcomes. On one end of the spectrum, a swift and successful intervention could see the restoration of the ousted government and a return to democratic norms. However, this might come at the cost of short-term instability and potential clashes. On the other end, a prolonged intervention could lead to a drawn-out conflict, with the junta leveraging guerrilla tactics and potentially seeking further support from Russia or other allies. The intervention's success could also be influenced by the broader populace's stance in Niger. If significant sections support the junta, ECOWAS forces might find themselves in a challenging counter-insurgency operation. Conversely, widespread public support for the intervention could hasten the junta's downfall.

Driving Factors		Uncertainties
▲ Geopolitical interests of Western powers, particularly France and the US., in preventing Niger from aligning too closely with Russia.		▼ The extent and nature of Russia's support for the junta in the face of a Western-backed intervention.
▲ ECOWAS's historical stance against unconstitutional changes in government and its commitment to democratic norms in the region.		▼ The willingness and capability of ECOWAS member states to commit troops and resources for a prolonged intervention.
▲ The junta's potential alliances, especially with Russia, which could provide material and strategic support against the intervention.		▼ The potential for other regional players, such as Algeria, to get involved, either diplomatically or militarily.
▲ Public sentiment in Niger, which could sway either in favor of the junta or the intervening forces.		▼ The junta's response to the intervention, especially in terms of military strategy and diplomatic efforts.
▲ The broader geopolitical contest between the West and Russia, with Niger becoming a potential battleground for influence.		▼ The potential for militant groups to exploit the situation.
Implications	► A military intervention could lead to a protracted conflict within Niger, with significant humanitarian and economic challenges.	
	► The intervention's outcome could reshape the balance of power in the Sahel region, influencing other countries' political trajectories.	
	► The intervention and its aftermath could lead to a reassessment of the role of the military in Niger's politics, potentially prompting reforms or restructuring.	
	► The intervention could disrupt trade, agriculture, and foreign aid, leading to economic hardships within Niger.	
	► The intervention might influence the activities and strategies of militant groups in the region, affecting Niger's internal security dynamics.	

### **Scenario 3: The Coup Faces Internal Resistance and Fails to Persist**

In this scenario, the military junta, despite its initial success in orchestrating the coup, begins to face significant internal resistance. This resistance emerges not just from the civilian populace but also from within the military ranks. The junta's consolidation efforts are hampered by divisions within the army, with factions opposing Gen. Abdourahamane Tchiani's leadership and the direction he is steering the country towards.

Early signs of cracks within the junta become evident. Senior military officials, perhaps those who were initially supportive of the coup, start expressing reservations about the junta's policies, its alignment with external powers, or its handling of domestic issues. These disagreements could stem from ideological differences, personal ambitions, or genuine concerns about Niger's future. As these internal rifts widen, they weaken the junta's ability to govern effectively and present a united front. This internal discord provides an opportunity for both domestic and international actors to exert pressure on the junta, further destabilizing its hold on power.

As whispers of dissent grow louder, public protests erupt in major cities across Niger. These protests, reminiscent of the pro-democracy movements seen in other parts of the world, call for the restoration of the ousted government and a return to democratic norms. The junta's attempts to suppress these protests through force only galvanize the opposition further.

Sensing the junta's weakening grip on power, ECOWAS takes on a more proactive role. Instead of military intervention, the regional body pushes for diplomatic solutions. Delegations from ECOWAS member states engage with both the junta and leaders of the resistance, aiming to broker a peaceful transition of power. The regional body might also impose economic sanctions on the junta, further squeezing its resources. Internationally, countries like France, the US, and even Russia closely monitor the situation. While they might have their own geopolitical interests, the overarching desire is to prevent a complete breakdown of order in Niger, which could have ripple effects across the Sahel region.

The internal resistance, compounded by disagreements within the junta, could lead to a range of outcomes. A best-case scenario sees the junta stepping down peacefully, leading to the restoration of the ousted government or the formation of a unity government. However, if the junta decides to cling to power, Niger could descend into civil unrest or even civil war. The



involvement of external powers, either in support of the junta or the resistance, could further complicate the situation.

The success of the resistance could also be influenced by its ability to present a united front. If various factions within the resistance have differing visions for Niger's future, their infighting could provide the junta with an opportunity to regain control.

Driving Factors		Uncertainties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ Internal divisions within the military, challenging the junta's authority and legitimacy.</li> <li>▲ Public sentiment in Niger, with widespread protests demanding a return to democracy.</li> <li>▲ ECOWAS's diplomatic efforts to broker a peaceful transition of power.</li> <li>▲ Economic pressures, especially if sanctions are imposed on the junta.</li> <li>▲ The broader geopolitical interests of major powers, influencing their stance on the unfolding situation in Niger.</li> </ul>	▼ The junta's response to growing resistance, especially in terms of its willingness to use force.	
	▼ The potential for external powers to intervene, either in support of the junta or the resistance.	
	▼ The unity and vision of the resistance, influencing its ability to challenge the junta effectively.	
	▼ ECOWAS's long-term stance on the situation, especially if the body faces internal divisions.	
	▼ The potential for militant groups to exploit the situation, further destabilizing Niger.	
Implications	► Internal resistance to the junta could lead to civil unrest or even civil war within Niger, with significant humanitarian challenges.	
	► Unrest could disrupt trade and agriculture, leading to economic hardships and uncertainty for foreign investors in Niger.	
	► The internal divisions within the military could prompt a reassessment and potential reform of Niger's security apparatus, affecting its internal security dynamics.	
	► Depending on which factions gain prominence, there could be a recalibration of Niger's foreign relations, impacting ties with both Western powers and countries like Russia.	
	► The situation could be exploited by militant groups, further destabilizing Niger and impacting its counterterrorism efforts.	

#### **Scenario 4: Mediation and Peaceful Transition**

In this scenario, the international community, led by ECOWAS and supported by major powers, prioritizes a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Niger. Recognizing the potential for prolonged instability and its ramifications for the Sahel region, a concerted effort is made to mediate between the junta and the ousted civilian government.

ECOWAS, with its history of promoting democratic norms in West Africa, takes the lead in mediation efforts. The regional body convenes emergency summits, bringing together leaders from the junta, representatives of the ousted government, and other key stakeholders. The objective is clear: to chart a roadmap for a peaceful transition back to democratic governance.

As the mediation process unfolds, several confidence-building measures are proposed. These might include the release of political prisoners; the lifting of any media restrictions imposed by the junta and guarantees of safety for all parties involved in the dialogue.

Internationally, major powers such as France, the US., and even Russia express support for the mediation process. Their roles, while primarily diplomatic, also involve exerting pressure on the junta to engage constructively in the dialogue. Economic incentives or sanctions might be used as levers to ensure compliance.

The mediation process could lead to a range of outcomes. A successful mediation might see the establishment of a transitional government, comprising members of the junta, the ousted government, and other key stakeholders. This government would be tasked with organizing free and fair elections within a stipulated timeframe.

However, challenges might arise if either party remains intransigent or if there are disagreements over the terms of the transition. Trust deficits, given the recent coup, could hinder open dialogue. Yet, the collective pressure from ECOWAS and the international community might be sufficient to keep the process on track.

Driving Factors		Uncertainties
▲ ECOWAS’s commitment to democratic norms and its history of intervening in regional crises.		▼ The junta’s willingness to genuinely engage in the mediation process and potentially cede power.
▲ The collective diplomatic weight of major powers, pushing for a peaceful resolution.		▼ The stance of the ousted government, especially regarding power-sharing or transitional arrangements.
▲ The junta’s recognition of the challenges of governing in the face of domestic and international opposition.		▼ Potential spoilers, both domestic and international, who might see an advantage in prolonging the crisis.
▲ The desire for stability among the Nigerien populace, weary of potential conflict and economic hardships.		▼ The role of militant groups, who might attempt to exploit any perceived power vacuum.
▲ Economic pressures, with the potential for sanctions or incentives shaping the junta’s decisions.		▼ The timeline for the transition, with potential disagreements over when and how to conduct elections.
Implications	► Even with a successful mediation, the transitional government might face questions of legitimacy, especially if factions within Niger feel underrepresented or sidelined. This could lead to political tensions and potential unrest.	
	► The coup and subsequent mediation could impact Niger’s economic standing. Foreign investors might be wary of re-engaging until they’re certain of long-term stability, potentially slowing down economic recovery.	
	► Depending on the outcome of the mediation, Niger might see a shift in its foreign relations. If the junta retains some power, ties with countries like Russia could strengthen, whereas a complete return to civilian rule might see a rekindling of relations with Western powers.	
	► The period of political uncertainty could be seen as an opportunity by militant groups operating in the region. They might attempt to expand their influence or carry out attacks, capitalizing on potential security lapses.	
	► Given that the military played a pivotal role in the coup, there might be calls, both domestically and internationally, for reforms within Niger’s security apparatus to prevent future coups. This could involve restructuring or retraining, with implications for Niger’s internal security dynamics.	



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