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What does the population in Niger think about a military government?

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Abstract
Using the Round 9 Afrobarometer survey data collected in the Republic of Niger in 2022, this study examined the attitudes of Nigeriens toward military rule and military intervention conditional upon the democratically elected government being corrupt. The descriptive results showed that Nigeriens generally do not have a strong aversion toward military rule. In fact, 50 percent of them approved of military rule. Moreover, 69 percent of Nigeriens agreed with a statement in support of military intervention when the democratically elected government was corrupt. I also estimated regression models which examined the effect of socioeconomic deprivation on support for military rule and military intervention when the democratically elected government was corrupt. The results showed that socioeconomic deprivation negatively correlated with support for both military rule and military intervention. The negative correlation was particularly strong in the latter case. This suggests that the poor prefer democracy to an authoritarian regime. The regression results also showed that political instability, which I measured using the incidence of violent conflict in the country's regions, increased the likelihood of supporting both military rule and military intervention.

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1.0. Introduction

On July 26, 2023, the democratically elected President of the Republic of Niger, Mohamed Bazoum, was ousted by the presidential guards, putting the landlocked country in the international spotlight (International Crisis group 2023). The military junta, headed by General Abdourahmane Tchiani, justified the coup on the grounds of rising insecurity caused by Islamist insurgency, corruption, and the poor state of the Nigerien economy (France 24 2023; Voice of America 2023; Gebauer et al. 2023). The coup in Niger is the fourth in a succession of successful coups in West Africa that have toppled democratic governments during the past three years. The first was in Mali in May, 2021 (Wing 2021; International Crisis Group 2021; Reuters 2021), the second in Guinea in September, 2021 (BBC 2021; Human Rights Watch 2022), and then Burkina Faso, which experienced two successful coups within a span of nine months. Burkina Faso's first coup of January 2022 toppled the democratically elected government, while the second in September of the same year was a counter coup that toppled the military government (Mimault & Ndiaga 2022; Mednick 2022; Mednick & Kabore 2022; BBC 2022). Sanctions have been imposed on Niger; the US has cut off foreign aid to the country (Voice of America 2023), and many ECOWAS member states have closed their land and air borders with Niger, suspended financial transactions with the country, and frozen its foreign assets (Sahara Reporters 2023; Asadu 2023; Obiezu 2023).

There has been wide condemnation of the coup from several quarters including civil society organizations, governments around the world including France and the United States, the United Nations (UN), and regional blocs like the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), and the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) (African Union 2023; European Union 2023; United Nations 2023; ECOWAS 2023; France 24 2023a; Voice of America 2023a). ECOWAS, under the leadership of Nigeria's president, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has urged Niger's military junta to reinstate the democratically elected president and warned that it would explore every means necessary to restore democracy in the country, even if this involved military action. On July 30, 2023, ECOWAS gave the Nigerien military junta a one-week ultimatum to reinstate

Mohamed Bazoum as the country's legitimate president (Krippahl 2023), a deadline which it defied (Diallo 2023; Willsher 2023; DW 2023; Voice of America 2023). The military Junta has rather doubled down by naming 21 ministers, appointing a prime minister, and governors to head the country's eight regions (DW 2023a; Sahara Reporters 2023a; Boureima & Mazou 2023).

However, there has also been some support for the Nigerien military junta. The military governments of Mali and Burkina Faso have demonstrated solidarity with the Nigerien military junta and have promised to support it militarily should it be attacked by external forces (France 24 2023; Voice of America 2023; Okafor 2023). Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the infamous Wagner Group, has hailed the coup as a blow to Western imperialism (Osborn 2023). Suffice it to add that anti-French sentiments have been brewing in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. The leaders of these countries are cutting off their ties with the West, especially France – their former colonial rulers – and seeking to establish stronger ties with Russia (Ramdani 2023; Bryant 2023; Ndiaga 2023; Gebauer et al. 2023; Haidara 2021; Pilling 2023). There have also been protests by Nigeriens opposing French presence in the country and expressing support for the military Junta (International Crisis Group 2023).

It is imperative to provide some stylized facts about Niger. Niger, which is one of the poorest countries in the world, gained independence from French rule in 1960. Data from the Round 9 Afrobarometer survey, which was conducted in 2022 and is representative for Niger's population, showed that 45 percent of Nigeriens considered the economic situation in the country to be either "very bad" or "bad." When asked about their own living conditions, 38 percent of them said it was either "very bad" or "bad." 47 percent of Nigeriens thought the country's economic situation had deteriorated compared to the previous year, 49 percent of them had no formal education, and 45 percent of them thought the level of corruption in the country had increased during the past five years.[1] Data from Transparency International (2023) shows that Niger had a corruption Perception Index (CPI) score of 32 in 2022, which indicates that corruption

[1] To access the Round 9 Afrobarometer survey data visit: https://www.afrobarometer.org/

is a problem in the country.[2] Niger had a Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.4 in 2021, making it one of the countries with the lowest level of human development in the world. Only Chad and South Sudan performed worse (United Nations Development Program 2022).[3]

The irony of Niger's dismal economic condition is accentuated by the fact that it is very rich in natural resources, especially uranium. While Niger supplies 15 percent of France's uranium needs and 24 percent of the EU's uranium stock (Leali 2023; Pandey 2023), which is required for powering nuclear plants that generate electricity, data from the Round 9 Afrobarometer survey shows that only 26 percent of Nigeriens were connected to the country's national electricity grid (NIGELEC) in 2022.[4] It is thus not surprising that some protesters who have taken to the streets in support of the military junta have accused France of "controlling" the ousted democratic government and robbing the country of its natural resources, while ordinary Nigeriens remain poor and destitute (Gebauer et al. 2023; Salay 2023; Mbulle-Nziege & Cheeseman 2023).[5]

While the position of governments and regional organizations pertaining to the coup is obvious, as evidenced by numerous statements in the news media, the perceptions of ordinary Nigeriens toward military rule or military intervention has not been systematically examined. Using the Round 9 Afrobarometer survey data, which is representative for Niger and was collected in 2022, this study seeks to achieve two goals: First, it examines the degree to which Nigeriens generally approve of military rule and the extent to which they support military intervention conditional upon the democratically elected government being corrupt. Second, this study examines the effect of socioeconomic deprivation on support for military rule and military

[2] The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranges from 0 to 100, with 0 denoting the highest level of corruption and 100 the highest level of transparency.

[3] Niger ranked 189 out of the 191countries in the 2021 Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is a weighted measure that consists of three main components: education, life expectancy, and income. It ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 denoting the highest level of human development and 0 the lowest.

[4] Niger also imports electricity from Nigeria. One of the sanctions that the Nigerian government imposed on Niger in the wake of the coup was to cut off its electricity supply (Akpan et al. 2023; BBC 2023).

[5] France and the larger European Union (EU) rely heavily on nuclear power for generating electricity. While the EU placed sanctions on fossil fuel imports from Russia after its invasion of Ukraine in February, 2022, the nuclear sector was left untouched (Jack & Cooper 2023; Pandey 2023).

intervention. The first question will be answered descriptively, while the second will be answered using regression analysis. A point worth re-emphasizing is that this study is based on data collected before the July 2023 coup.

This study proceeds as follows: Section 2 presents the data and operationalizes the variables that will be used to estimate the regression models. I incorporated the descriptive analysis into this section. Section 3 presents the regression results and discusses them, while section 4 summarizes the study and concludes.

2.0. Data and methodology

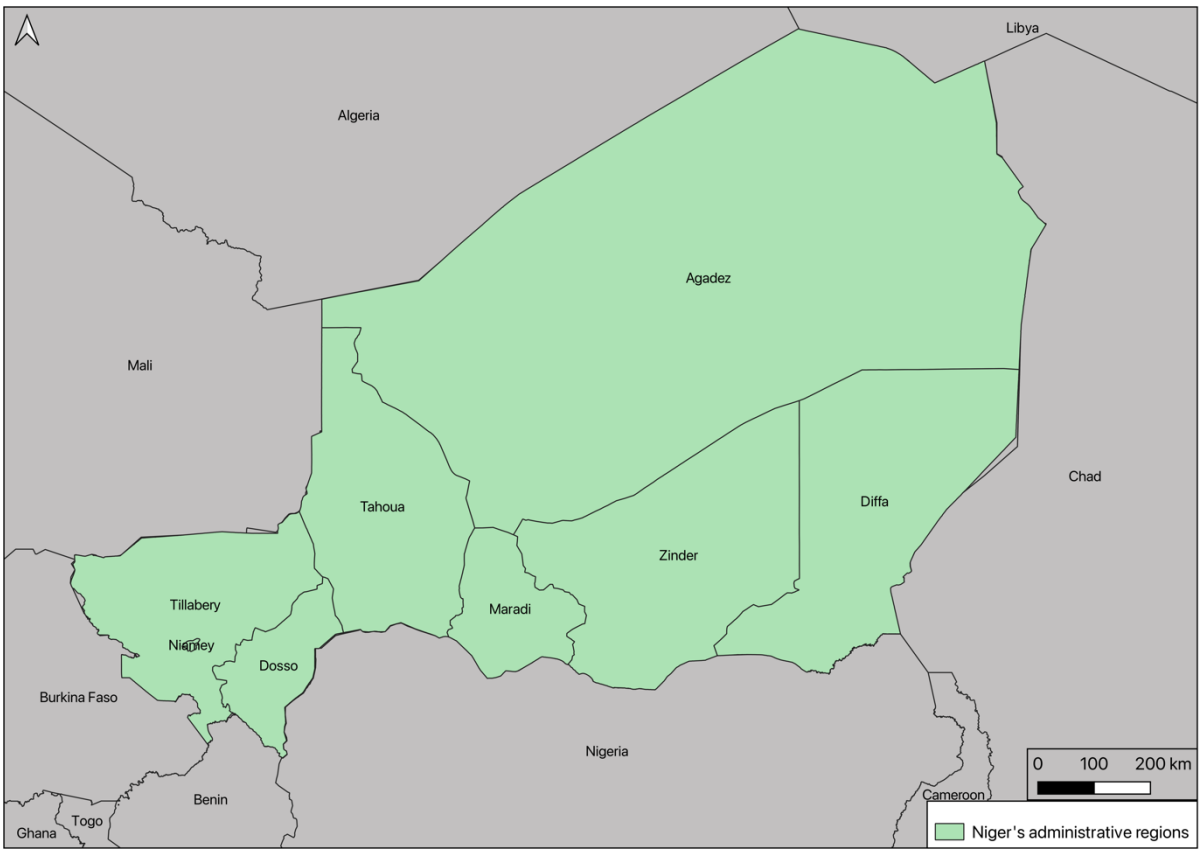

Figure 1: Administrative regions in Niger

Note: The figure shows the eight regions that constitute the Republic of Niger (i.e., admin1 boundaries). It also shows the countries that are contiguous to Niger. The shapefiles containing Niger's administrative divisions were obtained from the Geodata Library at the University of Texas Austin, US. They could be accessed here: https://geodata.lib.utexas.edu/

This study relies on the Round 9 Afrobarometer survey data collected in Niger in 2022.[6] A total of 1,200 respondents, drawn from the country's eight regions (see figure 1), were interviewed.

[6] To access the Round 9 Afrobarometer data for Niger visit: https://www.afrobarometer.org/

Respondents were at least 18 years old. Males and female were equally represented in the sample in the ratio 50:50.

2.1. Operationalization of the variables

2.1.1. Dependent variables

Military rule: This measures the degree to which respondents support military rule. It was derived from the question, "There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives? The army comes in to govern the country." The responses were measured on an ordinal scale with five categories ranging from "1 = strongly disapprove" to "5 = strongly approve." I treated "don't know" and "refused to answer" responses as missing. I applied this rule to all variables derived from the Afrobarometer survey.

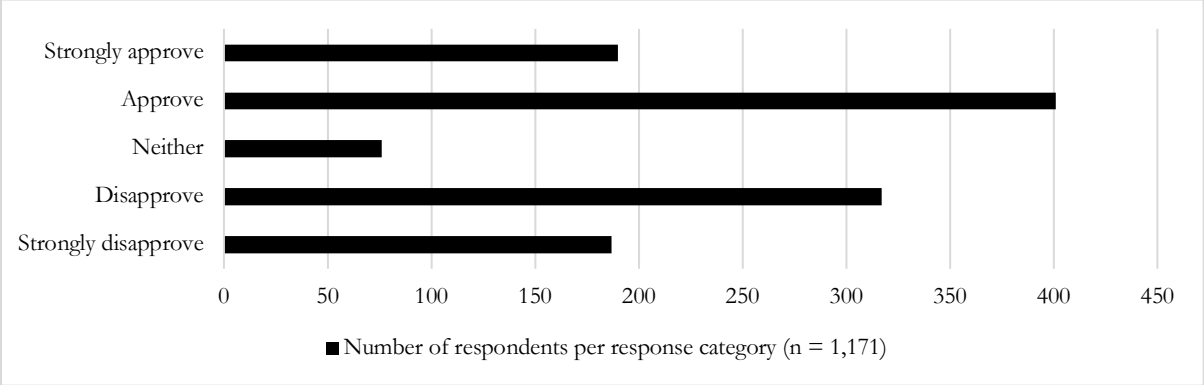

Figure 2: Support for military rule in Niger (2022)

Note: The figure shows the distribution of the responses to a question probing the degree to which Nigeriens approved of military rule in 2022. The y-axis shows the response categories, while the x-axis shows the number of respondents who chose a particular response category.

As shown in figure 2, Nigeriens generally do not have a strong aversion toward military rule. 50 percent of them either "strongly approve" or "approve" of military rule, which is seven percentage points higher than the number of respondents who either "strongly disapprove" or "disapprove" of military rule.[7] I developed a binary version of this variable where I coded the

[7] In the Round 8 survey which was conducted in 2020, the question about support for military rule was also asked. 32 percent of the respondents chose either the "strongly approve" or "approve" response categories, which indicates that support for military rule in Niger increased by 18 percentage points between 2020 to 2022. Although I refer to the Round 8 survey data as a reference category here to put the estimates for 2022 in context, I do not use it to estimate the regression models.

"strongly approve" and "approve" response categories as 1 and the remaining three response categories as 0. I used this variable to conduct a robustness check.

Intervention: Unlike the preceding variable – i.e., Military rule – "Intervention" measures the degree to which respondents support military intervention conditional upon the democratically elected government being corrupt.[8] It was derived from the following two statements: "STATEMENT 1: Niger's armed forces should never intervene in the country's political process. STATEMENT 2: It is legitimate for the armed forces to take control of government when elected leaders abuse power for their own ends." The responses were measured on an ordinal scale with the following four categories, "1 = strongly agree with statement 1; 2 = Agree with statement 1; 3 = agree with statement 2; 4 = strongly agree with statement 2." I treated the respondents who agreed with neither of the statements (n = 17) as missing. This led to a marginal decrease in the number of observations.

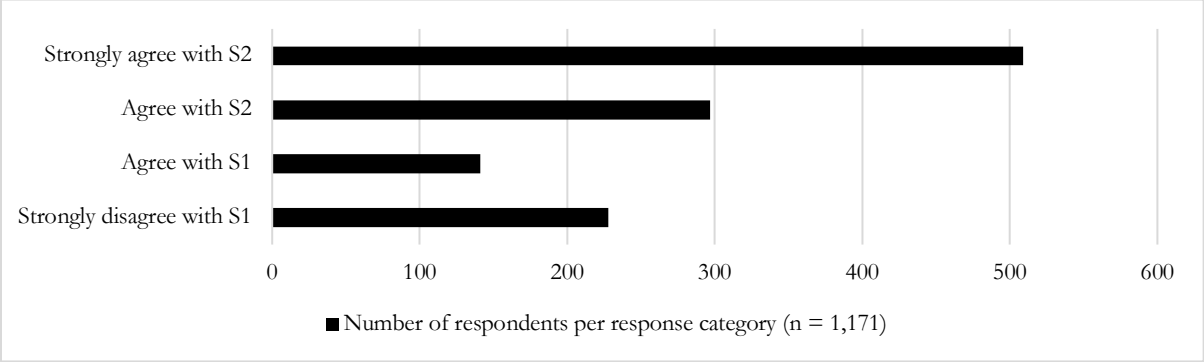

Figure 3: Conditional support for military intervention in Niger (2022)

Note: The figure shows the distribution of the responses to a question probing the degree to which Nigeriens support the military seizing power conditional upon the democratically elected government being corrupt. The y-axis shows the response categories to two statements: *Statement 1* (S1) expresses opposition to military intervention, while *Statement 2* (S2) expresses support for military intervention. The x-axis shows the number of respondents who chose a particular response category.

As shown in figure 3, Most Nigeriens are supportive of military intervention when the democratically elected government is corrupt. More specifically, 69 percent of them either

[8] The responses to the question on intervention is unlikely to be affected by that directly asking about military rule. This is because respondents were first asked about their general support for military rule before they were later asked about their support for military intervention conditional upon the democratically elected government being corrupt.

"strongly agree" or "agree" with the statement supporting military intervention, which translates to two in three Nigeriens. I developed a binary version of this variable where I coded the two responses agreeing with the *Statement 2* as 1, and the remaining two responses agreeing with *Statement 1* as 0. I used this to conduct a robustness check.

2.1.2. Explanatory variable

Deprivation index: This is an additive indicator that measures the wellbeing of the respondents along five dimensions. It was derived by summing the responses to the following questions: "Over the past 12 months, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: (a) Gone without enough food to eat? (b) Gone without enough clean water for home use (c) Gone without medicines or medical treatment? (d) Gone without fuel to cook your food (e) Gone without a cash income?" The responses to each question were measured on an ordinal scale with five categories ranging from "0 = never" to "4 = always." The five items had a Cronbach Alpha statistic of 0.64, which shows internal reliability. The deprivation index ranges from 0 to 20, with 0 denoting the best socioeconomic condition and 20 denoting the highest level of socioeconomic deprivation.

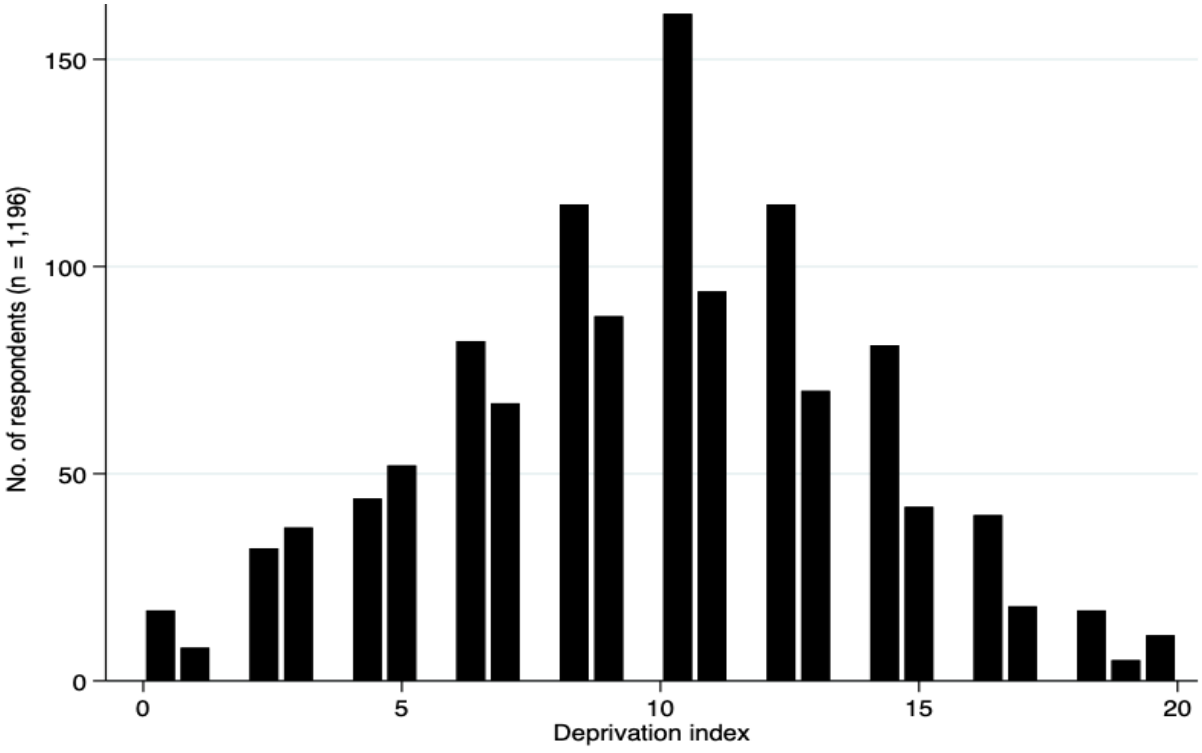

Figure 4: Socioeconomic deprivation in Niger (2022)

Note: The figure shows the distribution of socioeconomic deprivation among the population in Niger in 2022. The x-axis plots the deprivation index scores which range from 0 to 20 (higher values denote a higher level of deprivation), while the y-axis plots the number of respondents associated with a particular index score.

Only 1.4 percent of the respondents (n = 17) had "never" gone without any of the five listed items during the past year. 55 percent of the respondents had deprivation index scores of at least 10, which indicates that poverty is a pressing problem in the country.

2.1.3. Control variables

Educational level: This measures the highest level of education attained by the respondents on an ordinal scale that has 10 categories. The response categories range from "0 = no formal schooling" to "9 = postgraduate." About 50 percent of the population had no formal education. The rationale for adding education as a control variable in the regression model is driven by its capacity to potentially influence both the explanatory and dependent variables. Educational attainment might negatively correlate with socioeconomic deprivation because people who are educated are more likely to earn higher incomes (Hofmarcher 2021; Awan et al. 2011). Some studies have also shown that education positively correlates with support for democracy (Chong & Gradstein 2015; Evans & Rose 2012; Shafiq 2010).

Nighttime light: This objective variable, which proxies economic development at the communal level, measures the mean annual nighttime light in the region where the respondents reside (Ghosh et al, 2021).[9] The estimates are for the year 2020. The nighttime light index ranges from 0 to 63, with higher values denoting a higher level of economic development and vice versa. Since the raw dataset is gridded, I computed the relevant statistics for the respective regions using QGIS software. I controlled for economic development in the regression model because it could influence both the dependent and explanatory variables. People residing in communities with a low level of economic development might be more supportive of military intervention because they feel that having a democratically elected government has not accelerated economic development. Low development at the communal level could also lead to deprivation at the individual level

[9] The nighttime light dataset could be accessed here: https://eogdata.mines.edu/products/dmsp/

because the two are intertwined: Macro problems are predicated upon micro fundamentals. For instance, the absence of some necessities like electricity in a region may increase the cost of doing business there, and thus discourage investors from setting up businesses that could have created jobs and led to improvements in the socioeconomic condition of individuals residing there. Higher productions costs may be associated with higher prices, which might push a significant proportion of the population below the poverty line. The absence of electricity could also directly affect human wellbeing, as it is necessary for the effective functioning of essential facilities (e.g., hospitals).

Political instability: This measures the total number of violent conflicts that occurred in the region where the respondents reside between 1997 to 2021.

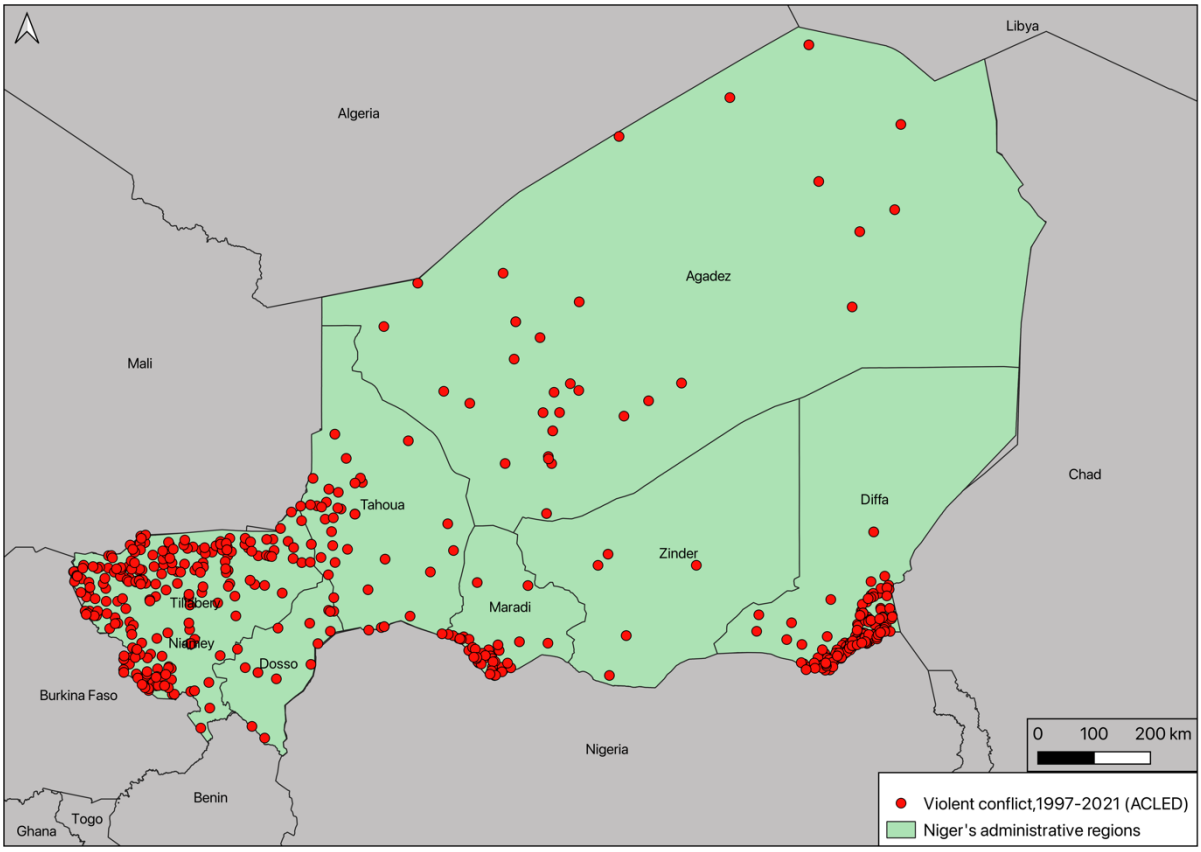

Figure 5: Incidence of violent conflict in Niger (1997-2021)

Note: The figure shows the distribution of violent conflicts across Niger's eight administrative regions between 1997 to 2021.

Relying on data obtained from the Armed Conflict Location and Events Database (ACLED) (Raleigh et al. 2010), I define violent conflict as any incident that falls under any of the

following three categories: Battles, Violence against civilians, and Explosions/Remote violence.[10] I considered all the conflicts from 1997 to 2021 because I am particularly interested in the cumulative effect of violent conflict on support for military rule and military intervention. Moreover, some studies have shown that memories of past conflicts affect behavior in the present (e.g., Bikmen 2013; Tint 2010). I used the start year of 1997 because the ACLED dataset is available beginning from that year. I excluded the incidents that occurred after 2021 because the dependent variable is measured in 2022. This lags the measure for political instability, thus mitigating the potential problem of reverse causation.

Figure 5 visualizes the incidence of violent conflicts across Niger's administrative regions between 1997 to 2021. A total of 1,488 incidents occurred during this period. 53 percent of them caused at least one fatality. The incidence of violent conflict is unevenly spread across the eight regions. The region of Diffa, which has the highest incidence of violent conflicts, accounted for 44 percent of the total incidents between 1997 to 2021. This is likely because of its contiguity with the state of Borno in Northeastern Nigeria, where the activities of radical Islamist group, *Boko Haram*, are concentrated (Maina 2023; Campbell 2020; Ahmed & Eckel 2014). Moreover, as shown in figure 5, the incidents in Diffa are clustered in the areas contiguous to Nigeria. Tillaberry, which is contiguous to Mali and Burkina Faso, had the second highest incidence of violent conflict. It accounted for 33 percent of the total incidents. The Southernmost part of the region of Maradi, which is contiguous to the state of Zamfara in Northern Nigeria, also has a high incidence of violent conflicts. In recent years, Zamfara has been contending with sporadic violence perpetrated by armed bandit groups who often engage in ransom-driven abductions (Ariemu 2023; Aina 2022; Edeme 2022).[11]

Demographic covariates: This includes the gender and age of the respondents. Gender is a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent is male and 0 if female.

[10] To access the ACLED dataset visit: https://acleddata.com/

[11] Maradi has also been a safe haven for thousands of Nigerians fleeing the violence in Zamfara (Schlein 2019).

2.2. Summary statistics and analytical technique

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Military rule$^{\phi}$	1171	3.077	1.377	1	5
Military rule (binary) $^{\phi}$	1171	0.505	0.5	0	1
Intervention$^{\phi}$	1171	2.925	1.153	1	4
Intervention (binary)$^{\phi}$	1171	0.685	0.465	0	1
Deprivation index	1196	9.663	4.077	0	20
Age	1200	39.046	15.254	18	103
Gender	1200	0.502	0.5	0	1
Educational level	1200	1.329	1.808	0	9
Nighttime light	1200	1.758	6.812	0.005	28.711
Political instability	1200	140.287	186.301	12	649

Note: ϕ *is the dependent variable. "Military rule (binary)" and "Intervention (binary)" are reduced forms of the main dependent variables where the response categories were collapsed into two main categories. Some of the observations have less than the potential 1,200 observations because I treated "don't know" and "refused to answer" responses as missing.*

Table 2 presents the summary statistics of the variables that will be used to estimate the regression models. The general form of the model could be expressed thus:

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Deprivation\ index_t + \beta_2 X'_t + e_t$$

Where Y_t is the dependent variable which measures the degree to which respondents support military rule/intervention, β_0 is the intercept, β_1 and β_2 are the coefficients of the explanatory and control variables respectively, X'_t is a vector of control variables that have been explained in the preceding section, e_t is the error term, while *t* denotes the year in which the variables are measured. Because the dependent variables are measured on an ordinal scale, I estimated the models using ordered logit regression (Ologit), which is based on maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). I conducted a robustness check where I treated all the variables as continuous and re-estimated the models using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression as an alternative estimation method. I also conducted another robustness check where I measured the dependent variables binarily and estimated the models using logit regression and linear probability model (LPM). I included fixed effects for the region where the respondents reside and for the ethnic group to which they belong in all the models. The regional fixed effects capture the time invariant factors that are unique to the respective regions, and which might influence support for military rule/intervention (e.g., the physical geographical terrain). I added fixed effect for the ethnic groups to filter out the effect of

ethnicity on support for military rule. Ethnicity appears to play a crucial role in Nigerien politics (Ajala 2023, 2021; Olumba 2023). I clustered the standard errors at the regional level to allow for correlation between observations within the same region.

3.0. Results and discussion

3.1. Support for Military rule

Table 2: Effect of socioeconomic deprivation on support for military rule

Military rule$^{\phi}$	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**
Deprivation index	-0.023	-0.025*	-0.013	-0.003	-0.014
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.004)	(0.019)
Age		-0.005*	-0.004	-0.002**	-0.008***
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Gender		-0.113	-0.109	-0.023	-0.1
		(0.077)	(0.063)	(0.03)	(0.13)
Educational level		-0.032	-0.02	-0.002	-0.011
		(0.024)	(0.016)	(0.006)	(0.028)
Nighttime light		0.026***	0.014**	0.006***	0.027***
		(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.007)
Political instability		0.003***	0.002***	0.00	0.00
		(0.001)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.001)
Constant			3.317***	.588***	0.397*
			(0.129)	(0.054)	(0.235)
Estimation method	Ologit	Ologit	OLS	LPM	Logit
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1167	1167	1167	1167	1164
Pseudo R^2	0.031	0.032			0.063
R-squared			0.079	0.086	
Log pseudolikelihood	-1681.398	-1679.122			-756.213
AIC statistic	3378.795	3374.244	3974.712	1602.717	1526.426

Note: *ϕ is the dependent variable, clustered robust standard errors are in parenthesis, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. Models 1 and 2 are estimated using ordered logit (Ologit) regression, model 3 is estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, model 4 is estimated using linear probability model (LPM), and model 5 is estimated using logit regression. The dependent variable is measured on an ordinal scale with five categories in models 1 to 3, while it is measured binarily in models 4 and 5. The intercepts of the Ologit models have not been reported. All models contain fixed effects for the region where the respondents reside and the ethnic group to which they belong.*

Table 2 presents the results of regression models examining the effect of socioeconomic deprivation on support for military rule. In model 1 – i.e., the baseline model where no control variables were included – the deprivation index carried a negative sign and was statistically insignificant with a p-value of 0.15. In model 2, where I added the control variables, the Akaike Information Criteria (AIC) statistic declined from 3,378 to 3,374, which suggests that model 2 has a better fit than its predecessor. The deprivation index retained its negative sign and became significant at the 10 percent level. This suggests that socioeconomic deprivation negatively

correlates with support for military rule. Put differently, poverty increases the likelihood of supporting a democratic government. Keeping all covariates at their mean levels, the analysis showed that a one unit increase in the deprivation index increases the likelihood of respondents choosing the "strongly disapprove" response category by 0.3 percent when asked about the extent to which they approve of military rule.[12] This contradicts my a priori expectation that the poor would be more supportive of a military government because they think the democratic government has not done enough to improve their living conditions and thus might want to try a different system of government. suffice it to add that Niger was under democratic rule in 2022 when the Round 9 Afrobarometer survey was conducted. A plausible reason for this unexpected finding could be that the poor cherish their civil liberties greatly. Since they are unable to meet their material needs, their civil liberties are some of the few valuable things they have left; this makes them very reluctant to relinquish them. Put differently, while the poor may be dissatisfied with their lot under a democratic government, they do not think that an authoritarian government is the solution to their problems. Moreover, the freedoms permitted under a democratic government allows the poor to articulate their concerns and grievances to the government without fear of negative repercussions.

Among the control variables, age, nighttime light, and political instability were statistically significant. Age carried a negative sign and was significant at the 10 percent level, which suggests that older people are more supportive of military rule. Nighttime light, which proxies the level of economic development at the regional level, carried a positive sign and was significant at the one percent level. If this result were to be taken at face value, then it suggests that improvements in the level of economic development in a region increases the likelihood of its population supporting military rule. However, a closer inspection of the nighttime light variable reveals that it is very skewed. While the mean nighttime light value for the state capital (i.e., Niamey) is 29, those for the remaining seven regions are less than one. When I excluded the subsample of respondents who

[12] Table A1 in the appendix reports the marginal effects at the mean for model 2

reside in Niamey (n = 72) and re-estimated the regression model, the sign accompanying Nighttime light became negative; however, its significance level dropped to 10 percent (see model 1 in table A3 in the appendix). Suffice it to add that nighttime light and the deprivation index do not measure the same thing: While the former variable is an objective measure of development at the regional level, the latter variable measures wellbeing at the individual level.

Political instability carried a positive sign and was significant at the one percent level, which suggests a positive correlation between the incidence of conflict in a region and support for military rule among its population. Keeping all covariates at their mean levels, the analysis showed that a one unit increase in the incidence of violent conflict in the region where respondents reside increases the likelihood of them choosing the "strongly approve" response category by 0.04 percent when asked about the degree to which they approve of military rule. A plausible mechanism behind this result could be that people who reside in conflict-affected regions feel that the military can do a better job at providing security than a civilian government. Suffice it to add that the years 2020 and 2021 accounted for 50 percent of the 1,488 total violent conflicts that occurred in Niger from 1997 to 2021.

In model 3 where I treated all the variables as continuous and re-estimated the model using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, the deprivation index became statistically insignificant with a p-value of 0.29. Among the control variables, only nighttime light and political instability were significant. In models 4 and 5, I measured the dependent variable binarily and estimated the regression models using linear probability model (LPM) and logit regression respectively. The deprivation index remained statistically insignificant. Among the control variables, only age and nighttime light were significant.

3.2. Support for military intervention

Having examined the effect of socioeconomic deprivation on support for military rule, I proceed to examine the effect of socioeconomic deprivation on support for military intervention conditional upon the democratically elected government being corrupt. A point worth highlighting

is that the variable "Intervention" differs from "Military rule" because the latter simply measures general support for military rule without specifying any particular condition that might prompt such support.[13] Table 3 presents the regression results. In model 1 – i.e., the baseline model – the deprivation index carried a negative sign and was significant at the one percent level. This suggests a positive correlation between socioeconomic deprivation and support for military intervention. Put differently, poverty increases the likelihood of supporting a democratic government. This is akin to the earlier results in model 2 reported in table 2. This supports my proposition that the poor are less supportive of an authoritarian regime because they cherish their civil liberties greatly. Given that they are already lacking in terms of their material needs, their civil liberties become some of the few valuable things they have left.

Table 3: Effect of socioeconomic deprivation on support for military intervention

Intervention$^{\phi}$	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**
Deprivation index	-0.045***	-0.047***	-0.028***	-0.012***	-0.062***
	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.015)
Age		-0.005	-0.004	-0.002	-0.011
		(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.007)
Gender		-0.166*	-0.123**	-0.033*	-0.16*
		(0.085)	(0.052)	(0.017)	(0.086)
Educational level		-0.036	-0.017	-0.005	-0.028
		(0.042)	(0.024)	(0.009)	(0.046)
Nighttime light		0.048***	0.021***	0.007***	0.033***
		(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.005)
Political instability		0.013***	0.007***	0.003***	0.014***
		(0.001)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant			2.843***	0.649***	0.784**
			(0.155)	(0.075)	(0.358)
Estimation method	Ologit	Ologit	OLS	LPM	Logit
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1167	1167	1167	1167	1164
Pseudo R^2	0.04	0.042			0.065
R-squared			0.086	0.082	
Log pseudolikelihood	-1437.485	-1434.671			-679.505
AIC statistic	2890.972	2885.341	3553.259	1438.743	1373.01

Note: *ϕ is the dependent variable, clustered robust standard errors are in parenthesis, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. Models 1 and 2 are estimated using ordered logit (Ologit) regression, model 3 is estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, model 4 is estimated using linear probability model (LPM), and model 5 is estimated using logit regression. The dependent variable is measured on an ordinal scale with four categories in models 1 to 3, while it is measured binarily in models 4 and 5. The intercepts of the Ologit models have not been reported. All models contain fixed effects for the region where the respondents reside and the ethnic group to which they belong.*

[13] This is evident in section 2.1.1 where 50 percent of the respondents support military rule, while 69 percent of them support military intervention.

In model 2 where I added the control variables, the AIC statistic declined from 2,890 to 2,885, which suggests that model 2 has a better fit than its predecessor. The deprivation index retained its negative sign and remained significant at the one percent level. Keeping all covariates at their mean levels, the analysis showed that a one unit increase in the deprivation index reduces the likelihood of respondents strongly agreeing with *Statement 2* which supports military intervention by 1.1 percent.[14] Among the control variables, gender, nighttime light, and political instability were statistically significant. Gender carried a negative sign, which suggests that being male reduces the likelihood of supporting military intervention. As was the case in the earlier models reported in table 2, nighttime light was significant at the one percent level and carried a positive sign. It's sign also turned negative when I estimated a model excluding the subsample of respondents who reside in Niamey (see model 2 in table A3 in the appendix). Political instability carried a positive sign and was significant at the one percent level. This indicates that a high incidence of violent conflict in a region increases the likelihood of its population supporting military intervention. Keeping all covariates at their mean levels, the analysis showed that a one unit increase in the number of violent conflicts in the region where respondents reside increases the likelihood of them strongly agreeing with *Statement 2* which supports military intervention by 0.3 percent. This is congruent with the results reported earlier in table 2.

In model 3 where I treated all the variables as continuous and re-estimated the model using OLS regression, the results were consistent with those in the preceding models which are based on maximum likelihood estimations (MLE). As shown in models 4 and 5, the results are robust to a binary operationalization of the dependent variable, and the use of LPM and logit regression as alternative estimation methods.

4.0. Conclusion

This study set out to achieve two goals: The first was to determine the general attitudes of Nigeriens toward military rule and military intervention conditional upon the democratically elected

[14] Table A2 in the appendix reports the marginal effects at the mean for model 2

government being corrupt. The second was to examine the effect of socioeconomic deprivation on support for military rule and military intervention. The descriptive analysis showed that Nigeriens generally do not have a strong aversion toward military rule: In fact, half of the population either "strongly approve" or "approve" of military rule. Moreover, about 70 percent of the population either "strongly agree" or "agree" with a statement that the military should intervene if the democratically elected government is corrupt. The regression results showed that socioeconomic deprivation negatively correlated with both support for military rule and military intervention. The results were more robust in the latter case, which focused on military intervention. A plausible reason why socioeconomic deprivation increases support for a democratic government might be because the poor cherish their civil liberties greatly. Since they are already lacking in terms of their material needs, their civil liberties become some of the few valuable things they have left, and they become very reluctant to relinquish these by supporting an authoritarian regime.

The regression results also showed that political instability, which was measured using the number of violent conflict incidents in the region where the respondents resided, increased the likelihood of supporting military rule and military intervention. This is likely because people who are exposed to violent conflict feel that a military government would do a better job at providing security than a civilian government. A limitation of this study is the cross-sectional nature of the dataset, which enables me to examine the relevant relationships (especially in the case of the regression analysis) only at one point in time – i.e., before the July 2023 coup. An ideal scenario would have been to examine attitudes towards military rule and military intervention before and after the coup. However, I am unable to do that because the coup has just recently occurred, and I do not have access to any recent data measuring attitudes towards military rule/intervention in the wake of the coup.

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Appendix

Table A1: Marginal effects at the mean for model 2 in table 2

Military rule$^{\phi}$	**Strongly disapprove (1)**	**Disapprove (2)**	**Neither (3)**	**Approve (4)**	**Strongly Approve (5)**
Deprivation index	0.003*	0.003	0.00	-0.003	-0.003*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.00)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age	0.001	0.001	0.00	-0.001*	-0.001*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Gender	0.013	0.014	0.001	-0.014	-0.014
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.009)
Educational level	0.004	0.004	0.00	-0.004	-0.004
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.00)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Nighttime light	-0.003***	-0.003***	-0.00***	0.003***	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.00)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Political instability	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)

Note: *Standard errors are in parentheses, ϕ is the dependent variable, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. The numbers below the response categories denote the ordinal values assigned to each of them.*

Table A2: Marginal effects at the mean for model 2 in table 3

Intervention$^{\phi}$	**Strongly agree with statement 1 (1)**	**Agree with statement 1 (2)**	**Agree with statement 2 (3)**	**Strongly agree with statement 2 (4)**
Deprivation index	0.007***	0.003***	0.002***	-0.011***
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.00)	(0.003)
Age	0.001	0.00	0.00	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.001)
Gender	0.024	0.011**	0.006**	-0.041*
	(0.014)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.021)
Educational level	0.005	0.002	0.001	-0.009
	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.01)
Nighttime light	-0.007***	-0.003***	-0.002***	0.012***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.00)	(0.001)
Political instability	-0.002***	-0.001***	-0.001***	0.003***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)

Note: *Standard errors are in parentheses, ϕ is the dependent variable, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. The numbers below the response categories denote the ordinal values assigned to each of them. "STATEMENT 1: Nigeria's armed forces should never intervene in the country's political process. STATEMENT 2: It is legitimate for the armed forces to take control of government when elected leaders abuse power for their own ends."*

Table A3: Robustness checks excluding observations from Niamey

Dependent variable		
	Military rule$^{\phi}$	**Intervention$^{\phi}$**
	(1)	**(2)**
Deprivation index	-0.031**	-0.051***
	(0.016)	(0.013)
Age	-0.006*	-0.007
	(0.003)	(0.006)
Gender	-0.09	-0.117*
	(0.08)	(0.071)
Educational level	-0.018	-0.043
	(0.025)	(0.048)
Nighttime light	-7.787*	-55.069***
	(4.69)	(5.229)
Political instability	0.002***	0.007***
	(0.00)	(0.001)
Estimation method	Ologit	Ologit
Region FE	Yes	Yes
Ethnic group FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	1097	1095
Pseudo R^2	0.029	0.04
Log pseudolikelihood	-1573.964	-1364.251
AIC statistic	3161.927	2742.501

Note: *ϕ is the dependent variable, clustered robust standard errors are in parenthesis, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. All models are estimated using ordered logit (Ologit) regression. The dependent in model 1 is measured on an ordinal scale with five categories, while that in model has four categories. The intercepts of the models have not been reported. All models contain fixed effects for the region where the respondents reside and the ethnic group to which they belong.*