

In Niger, Neither Generals Nor ECOWAS

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While the coup plotters in no way represent an alternative for Niger, the economic sanctions and threats of military intervention by ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), backed by Macron, are a real danger for the population.

General Abdourahamane Tiani, head of the presidential guard, is no exception to the rule, justifying his coup d'état in the name of safeguarding the homeland. The other senior officers of the various army corps followed suit to avoid a bloodbath, they said. As for the deposed president Mohamed Bazoum, he is still imprisoned in the basement of the palace.

Greed and Demagoguery

However, most of the coup plotters contributed to the policies pursued for years by Bazoum, such as Salifou Modi, the former chief of staff who is now vice-president of the junta.

Beyond the grandiloquent declarations, the reasons for the coup are more prosaic. Bazoum's desire to thoroughly reorganise the presidential guard risked costing Tiani a position he had held for more than a decade and which had made him considerably richer.

Unlike their peers in Mali and Burkina Faso, the putschists in Niger are part of the country's ruling elite.

What's more, in a few months' time Niger is set to become a major oil exporter, a fact that is stirring up a great deal of envy in the various spheres of power.

General Tiani is skilfully exploiting the desire for change and the exasperation of the people of Niger in the face of a social and economic situation that continues to deteriorate. And ECOWAS is making his task much easier.

A Clique Called ECOWAS

ECOWAS has instituted a total economic blockade. The President of Nigeria, who also heads the regional organisation, immediately stopped supplying electricity to Niger. In this landlocked country, as always, the first to suffer from these sanctions are the people.

Humanitarian organisations such as the International Rescue Committee are calling for humanitarian corridors to be set up to deliver medicines and nutritional support, which are beginning to be in short supply.

ECOWAS, which is headed by heads of state, is largely exceeding its prerogatives. In fact, the Court of Justice of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) had already ruled that the sanctions against Mali were illegal.

Not content with setting up an economic blockade, ECOWAS is planning a military intervention in the name of democracy. It's hard to take seriously leaders who keep themselves in power in their own countries by tampering with the constitution and manipulating elections.

Aggressive Policy

Many are worried about ECOWAS's bellicose course. Civil society organisations, while not supporting the coup plotters, are opposed to armed intervention, which would solve nothing of substance. The African Union Peace and Security Council is also opposed. Algeria, aware of the risk of destabilising the region, is trying to promote a political transition. The USA is also reluctant to take armed action. Only one warmonger stands out: Emmanuel Macron. He claims to be the herald of democracy, even though he has endorsed all the electoral misdeeds of his friends, the African autocrats.

The latest revelations in *Le Monde* sweep aside the cliché that *Françafrique* is behind us. We learn that French troops stationed in Niger to fight the jihadists were ready to launch a coup de force to free Mohamed Bazoum. It was only Bazoum's refusal to do so that stopped the intervention. Macron had already used French troops from Operation Barkhane in Chad to bomb columns of Chadian rebels who had nothing to do with the jihadists in order to save the dictator Déby.

Given the instability in several French-speaking African countries and Macron's bellicose policy, the demand for French troops to leave Africa is one of the most pressing issues of the moment.

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