

CONCEPT NOTE

AMANI AFRICA POLICY FORUM

Venue: Hyatt Regency and online

Date and Time: 22 August 1600hrs East African Time

Where to from Niger for the anti-coup norm in Africa?

The coup in Niger the latest of the series of coups that took place on the continent since August 2020 has triggered the most intense response not seen for any of the previous coups. Understandably, as the six coups that took place in the West Africa region, for many in the region and beyond it became the one coup that is too many. A combination of factors - including the fact that a recently elected government was the victim of the coup and the fear it triggered that other countries may not avoid being victims of similar military takeover of power together with the blow it represents for the international security presence in the Sahel – promoted a change in the policy response to this coup.

The regional body, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), took the lead in mobilizing very tough response measures and the campaign to reverse the coup. As Prof Jibrin Ibrahim put it, ECOWAS adopted ‘the most severe regime of sanction in the history of the region’. Going further, it also decided from the very outset to deploy military intervention to achieve the objective of making this the last coup to happen in the region. Considering the fact that this coup implies that nearly one in five countries in the region have come under military rule, ECOWAS rightly took a robust stance to ensure that the spread of coups end in Niger.

While there is strong support for the ambition of ECOWAS to draw a line on coups in Niger, such measures have as yet to show any sign of delivering the expected result. If anything, the military junta continues to deepen its grip on power and looking to stay around for the foreseeable short to medium term. This has now put policy actors including the African Union and ECOWAS on a difficult, even uncharted territory.

Against the background of the foregoing and the pressing policy challenges facing countries in the region and the AU, Amani Africa in collaboration with the Embassy of Burundi, the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for the month of August, organizes a policy forum scheduled for 22 August 2023.

This policy forum aims to provide a platform for

- sharing views on what the Niger coup means for ECOWAS and the AU and their anti-coup norms as well as the principle of subsidiarity; and

- exploring policy options for resolving this coup and identifying how to both prevent the next coup and how to best prepare and plan effective responses for the next coup.

Guiding questions

- What does the coup in Niger signify about democracy promotion and protection of constitutional rule by AU and regional bodies like ECOWAS? How should we understand the apparent support from people for the coup? What are the lessons from the coup in these respects?
- What makes the coup in Niger significant in the context of the series of other coups that took place in the region? If this coup has particular regional and continental significance, how differently should multilateral policy actors in Africa respond from their earlier responses?
- What should policy makers do in dealing with the coup in Niger for preventing the current trend in the recurrence of coups in the region? What do the policy responses from various actors tell us about how best to learn lessons from previous coups and make informed preparation for mobilizing more effective and well thought out policy responses to the next coup?
- What does the coup in Niger tell us about the relationship between the AU and RECs/RMs? Is it always bad for RECs/RMs and the AU not to agree on how to handle crisis situations? What lessons should be drawn from this experience for a more effective policy coordination between the AU and RECs/RMs?
- How can the coup in Niger help the AU and RECs/RMs such as ECOWAS in reviewing their handling of the earlier coups and change their policy approach to responding to coups?