Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel?
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Executive Summary

The 23 May 2013 twin suicide attacks targeting the Agadez army barracks and an Areva mining site in Arlit, and the 1 June violent prison break in Niamey, cast a shadow over Niger’s stability. In a deteriorating regional environment, President Mahamadou Issoufou and his Western allies have favoured a security strategy that has significant limitations, as elsewhere in the Sahel. An excessive focus on external threats can overshadow important internal dynamics, such as communal tensions, a democratic deficit and the growing marginalisation of poor, rural societies. Security spending looks likely to increase at the expense of social expenditure, carrying significant risks for a country that faces serious demographic and economic challenges. The possibility of a terrorist spillover from its neighbours is compounded by a fragile socioeconomic and political environment.

Niger, a focus of outside interest mainly for its uranium and newfound oil reserves, has recently received renewed attention. For several years, Western countries have viewed the Sahel-Sahara region as a particularly dangerous zone, characterised by the rise of insecurity, political crises and poorly controlled flows of people, arms and other licit and illicit goods. The 2011 Libyan civil war, the 2012 Mali crisis and the recent intensification of military confrontations between government forces and Boko Haram in northern Nigeria all affect Niger. Ideas, weapons and combatants circulate across borders. However, surrounded by crisis-ridden neighbours, Niger appears contradictorily to be fragile and yet an island of stability. Its Western and regional allies seek to contain perceived growing threats, in particular from violent Islamist groups such al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).

Since 2011, Nigerien security forces have been on alert with the support of Western militaries that have been present in the country ever since. They also contribute to the UN Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), with a battalion deployed in the Gao region, close to Niger. The country has been included in security strategies that protect it, but over which it has little influence. Niger constitutes an important element of the French military operation in Mali; is pivotal to the European Union’s Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel; and also accommodates a growing U.S. assistance and presence. Encouraged by its allies to upgrade its security apparatus, the government has also substantially increased its military expenditure. But such a security focus could lead to a reallocation of resources at the expense of already weak social sectors.

The security strategy pursued in the Sahel over the last decade has proven weak in neighbouring Mali. In Niger, it will be of little help to President Issoufou in establishing a bond of trust between the state and the people. The current regime, which took over after a transition from military rule in 2011, is still fragile. The president’s “Renaisance” program, a high-level platform of reforms on which he was elected, raised hopes but has yet to show tangible results. Social protests are already on the rise. This situation stirs political ambitions, and tensions surrounding the formation of the new national unity government in August 2013 revealed a fragile democracy. Moreover, as in the rest of the Sahel-Sahara region, the state and security apparatus are
suspected of being infiltrated by transnational criminal networks. The risks are high
when deep socio-economic distress is added to insufficient democratic consolidation.

However, these weaknesses should not obscure a more nuanced reality. In 2009,
the attempt by then-President Mamadou Tandja to forcibly remain in power showed
that some institutions and civil society are willing to fight to protect democracy. The
military admittedly intervened in political life to stop Tandja, but returned to the bar-
racks after a relatively short transition. These gains are certainly still weak. The his-
torically influential military could intercede again in the event of an institutional
deadlock. Corruption and impunity remain endemic, and some civil society represent-
atives have been co-opted by the ruling elites. As in Mali, frustration over democratic
shortcomings feeds the expansion of an Islamic civil society that is particularly vocal
in its criticism; it can represent either a radical, potentially violent protest movement
or a peaceful attempt to “re-moralise” public life.

Finally, the Tuareg issue has not been fully resolved in Niger, though it appears
better managed than in neighbouring Mali. Far from being homogeneous, Tuareg
society is divided along generation, clan and social fault lines; some elites are well in-
tegrated into the administration and have little reason to turn against the state, while
others raise the spectre of a resurgent conflict, out of conviction or to defend their
privileged position as middlemen. The population has grown tired of rebellions that
have failed to keep their promises, but many youths from the north have few alterna-
tives to trafficking and armed activities.

Rather than a security state, the people of Niger need a government that provides
services, an economy that creates employment, as well as the rule of law and a rein-
forced democratic system. President Issoufou should keep the initial focus of his agen-
da on these goals and recognise that national security and stability depend at least as
much on those issues as on narrow counter-terrorism military responses.

_Dakar/Brussels, 19 September 2013_
Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel?

I. Introduction

Niger is located at the heart of a turbulent region marked by political and religious violence in northern Nigeria, Tuareg separatist and armed Islamist movements in northern Mali, intercommunal violence and state collapse in southern Libya. However, despite its neighbours’ instability and the general doom-laden discourse, Niger has not been plunged into violence. Analyses that present the entire Sahel-Sahara region as under threat focus on transborder dynamics of insecurity, but this hides the importance of local political arrangements, including the particular situation of individual states and efforts at the local level to achieve political stability.

Niger undeniably faces major structural challenges. The country suffers from endemic poverty; it ranks last in the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI). Rapid demographic growth aggravates the situation: the population has doubled approximately every twenty years since the 1960s. This almost cancels out the gains made by the relatively good economic growth and means the government has to make major investments only to maintain the limited provision of social services and education.

Provided with modest yet growing resources, the Nigerien state has to administer an immense territory. With 1,267,000 sq km, Niger is the sixth biggest country in Africa and the biggest in West Africa. It is landlocked with 5,700km of land borders, a high proportion of which runs through sparsely inhabited regions that are difficult to govern.

Niger’s population of 17 million is unevenly spread throughout the country. An estimated three quarters of the population live in the southern quarter, where practically all the country’s 12 per cent of arable land is located. Conversely, some parts of the north are almost uninhabited. The population is mainly rural and peasant. Niger has a dozen ethnic groups, but the 2001 census showed that four main groups account for 90 per cent of the population: the Hausas (55.4 per cent), the Djerma-Songhais (21 per cent), the Tuaregs (9.3 per cent) and the Peuls (8.5 per cent).

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1 More than 80 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. “Country Briefing: Niger”, OPHI, December 2011.

2 According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 4 per cent in 2011 but the contribution of the oil industry could increase GDP by 14 per cent in 2012 (Report on Niger n°11/357F, International Monetary Fund, May 2012). UNICEF estimates annual population growth at 3 per cent (www.unicef.org/f). Half of Nigeriens were under the age of fifteen in 2011, (Institut national de la statistique (INS), Annuaire Statistique 2011). Youth represents both a resource for the country and an immediate constraint for the government, because it requires the most investment in the education and health sectors.

3 It is bigger than Nigeria (923,000 sq km), but its population is ten times smaller.

4 The department of Bilma, the biggest in the country, in the north east, has only 27,000 inhabitants. Its area is greater than the regions of Zinder and Maradi combined, which together have a population of more than six million. Niger has seven regions (plus the urban community of Niamey), which are divided into 36 departments.

5 They are followed by the Kanouri-Manga (4.7 per cent), the Toubou (0.4 per cent), the Gourmantché (0.4 per cent) and the Arabs (0.4 per cent). This data is from the general census conducted in 2001 (INS/RGP, H-2001). In a country in which intercommunal relations are strong, ethnic identity is more heterogeneous than indicated simply by demographic data.
Extractive industries form an important part of the economy. Uranium has been mined since the 1960s by companies dominated by French capital. A Chinese company, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), extracted the first barrels of oil in 2012. Although income from mining does not account for a high proportion of state revenue, minerals are nevertheless a coveted strategic resource that makes a significant contribution in hard currencies. Stock raising and agriculture form an important sector of the economy, occupying more than 80 per cent of the workforce. As an economist in Niamey put it, “a good rainy season can increase Niger’s GDP by several points”. However, the agricultural sector is weak; Niger suffers endemic food and nutritional insecurity and the peasant populations in the south are extremely poor. Many Nigeriens therefore undertake seasonal migrations, especially to Nigeria and Libya.

Since independence in 1960, Niger has had no less than seven republican regimes and four military coups. However, in 2010, the military officers who overthrew President Tandja, in office since 1999, quickly returned power to civilians. In 2011, President Issoufou inaugurated the Seventh Republic and embarked on an ambitious program called the Renaissance. On the diplomatic front, Niger is one of the countries most resolutely engaged in the fight against terrorism at the side of Western allies and hopes to reap dividends from this regional involvement.

This report is based on intensive research in Niamey with a wide range of actors, including members of the government and security forces, civil society actors, former leaders of Tuareg rebellions and elected representatives in the north, university academics and legal experts, diplomats and representatives of international organisations. It analyses factors of instability and dependence and examines the role of watchdogs and the constitutional safeguards that underpin Niger’s social and political contract. Written shortly after the first suicide bomb attacks in Niger’s history, this report questions the sustainability of the government’s policies and alliances and assesses short- and medium-term risks. Although President Issoufou claims to be committed to fostering stability, economic development and good governance, the country displays worrying weaknesses that could turn it, like Mali, into another weak link in the Sahel.

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6 The CNPC also built Niger’s first refinery in Zinder, with a capacity of 20,000 barrels per day, two thirds of which are exported.
7 In the 2013 financial year, state revenues from mining, mainly uranium, rose to CFA 24.3 billion (about $50 million), representing 1.8 per cent of total revenue. Journal officiel de la République du Niger, special edition, no. 32, 31 December 2012. The IMF estimates that in addition to mining royalties and rights, total revenue from uranium mining was CFA 55.4 billion in 2011 and CFA 70.4 billion in 2012. Even so, uranium’s contribution to the national budget was still under 10 per cent. However, according to the same source, uranium accounted for 43 per cent of export revenues in 2012 (CFA 360.5 billion). However, the uranium sector creates relatively few jobs (a few thousand direct jobs at most), mainly in the Agadez region.
8 Crisis Group interview, economics expert, Niamey, April 2013.
10 On 23 May 2013, a twin suicide attack simultaneously hit the Agadez army barracks and the French nuclear company Areva’s plant at Arlit. The attacks were reportedly carried out jointly by the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and the Blood Signatories brigade (Katiba el-Mouaguuiine Biddam) founded in December 2012 by Mokhtar Belmokhtar after he broke with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
II. The Scramble for Power: Between Civilian and Military Rule (1960-2010)

With seven republics and four military coups within half a century, Niger’s unstable past has been characterised by a bitter power struggle. The periodic breakdowns that punctuate the country’s history also reflect attempts by the elites to find the right balance to rule the country.

A. Old Imbalances: The Colonial State’s Weaknesses and Violence

Colonisation of Niger came late and proved difficult. Initially attached to the vast territory formed by the French under the name of Upper-Senegal-Niger, Niger included populations of diverse origins in a territory that remained exclusively under military rule until 1920. A remote and arid territory, Niger had the reputation of being a “penal colony” to which the least docile and competent colonial public servants were transferred. Along with Mauritania, it was the French West African territory in which Paris invested the least in infrastructure.

The administration was deficient and imbalanced. It neglected the smaller populations in the north and east and the rare investments made were in the south west. Short of personnel, the colonial administration relied on local leaders and chiefs. Traditional authorities therefore retained significant power, a situation that continued after independence. The relative weakness of the French presence also led it to govern more brutally than elsewhere, meaning the government was seen as largely undesirable. However, in spite of its violent nature, colonisation ushered in a period of relative peace, which Islam used to spread its influence among the masses. It also created opportunities for a few groups and individuals.

The colonial period had a major impact on the reconfiguration of the political elites. The colonial administration mainly recruited from among the Djerma-Songhai populations of the south west. They enjoyed benefits such as better access to state

11 In 1899-1900, the infamous Voulet-Chanoine column, a French military expedition, inflicted a high level of violence on the civilian populations in Niger. Ibrahim Yahaya, *L’expédition coloniale Voulet-Chanoine dans les livres et à l’écran* (Paris, 2013).
15 Unable to manage and control the population on a day-to-day basis, the colonial authorities occasionally cracked down on civil disobedience and protest movements with extreme violence. See, for example, *La savane rouge* (Avignon, 1962).
17 Boubou Hama, first president of the National Assembly, was said to be of servile origin. Forcibly sent to a French school, he became one of the country’s first political leaders. Boubou Hama, *Kotia-Nima: rencontre avec l’Europe* (Paris, 1968).
schools and administration, and continued to do so after independence. Inversely, nomadic elites, especially the Tuaregs, gradually lost exclusive control of trans-Saharan routes. The colonial bureaucracy operated largely without them, except for their traditional chiefs. They were further marginalised by the relocation of state power to the south.

The reorganisation of power relations also harmed other groups. For example, the role of Hausas in the colonial administration did not seem to match their demographic importance. In 1926, this was illustrated by the decision to move the capital from Zinder to Niamey. Colonisation’s impact on the different communities therefore varied. Although the French army promoted the romantic myth of the Tuareg, it became harder to be a nomad. Some Tuareg clans and chiefs chose to cooperate with the French, while others chose to stay out of their way or resist, which exacerbated the divisions within Tuareg society.

The gradual extension of voting rights after 1945 encouraged the development of an intense political life. The 1950s saw clashes between the political parties, especially between Diori Hamani’s Nigerien Progressive Party (PPN) and Djibo Bakary’s Niger-Sawaba Democratic Union (UDN).

After winning elections and forming the first government council in 1957, Djibo Bakary campaigned for independence and called for Nigeriens to vote “no” in the referendum on the French-African community. He was beaten by the PPN, which was supported by the French administration and UDN dissidents. As in the rest of French West Africa (FWA), with the exception of Guinea, which refused to join the community in 1958, Niger finally negotiated independence in 1960.

B. The Failure of the First Republic (1960-1974)

Niger won independence under the presidency of PPN leader Diori Hamani. Its first governments comprised representatives from different communities, including the Tuaregs. This practice, related to the initial need to cement a still fragile national
unity, continues to this day. Forming a government in Niger requires striking a care-
ful balance between diverging interests, and ethnicity sometimes prevails over com-
petence. However, during Diori’s term, an educated minority, mainly from the south
west, held most senior administrative positions. Power was concentrated in the hands
of a small group of individuals, generally from the Djerma-Songhai populations, that
formed the PPN leadership in what was in effect a single-party state.

Despite independence, France’s influence in Niger remained strong as evidenced
by the 1961 cooperation agreements that granted it the “freedom to establish the mil-
itary installations required for defence purposes” and “priority use of raw materials
and strategic products”. Paris was the biggest purchaser of Nigerien groundnuts,
which then accounted for more than 65 per cent of the country’s exports. It particu-
larly benefited from uranium production, which began in 1968 at Arlit and then
Akokan, by companies mainly formed by French capital. Geologists confirmed the
presence of uranium in the 1950s but France became more interested in this re-
source with the development of its nuclear policy at the end of the 1960s and the oil
crisis of the 1970s. Although France did not show much interest in Niger during
the colonial period, its presence became more visible in the post-colonial period.

President Diori, who was a great Francophile, encouraged this presence. He sur-
rounded himself with French advisers, whose influence increasingly irritated Nigeri-
ens. The capture of power by elites closely associated with French interests provoked
discontent. Decolonisation took place amid violent repression against the Sawaba, which
became an underground movement after it was banned in 1959. Established
in the Hausa region and, to a lesser extent, in the north, it began to plot the armed over-
throw of the Diori government with the help of Mali, Ghana and Algeria. In 1964, an
attempted insurrection failed and triggered severe repression. On the other hand,

507-528.
27 However, ethnicity is far from being the only criterion. Political loyalties and the need to repre-
sent other social forces were also taken into account. Crisis Group interviews, Nigerien jurists and
political scientists, Niamey, April 2013.
29 Niger’s democratic experience came to a sudden end and it became a de facto, if not a de jure, one-
party state. The 1960 constitution provided for the freedom of expression, but after the dissolution
of Sawaba in 1959, President Diori took measures to prevent the formation of other political parties.
Abdou Hamani, *Les femmes et la politique au Niger* (Paris, 2001). In 1965 and 1970, he was re-
elected with almost 100 per cent of votes. Deycard, op. cit., p. 167.
30 They also granted the French “free movement through its territory, airspace and territorial wa-
ters”. Accord de défense entre les gouvernements de la République française, de la République de
31 The mining companies Somaïr (Société minière de l’Air), formed in 1968, and Cominak (Com-
pagnie des mines d’Akokan), formed in 1974, were initially attached to the French Atomic Energy
Commission (CEA). In 1976, COGEMA became the main shareholder, with the Nigerien state re-
taining a minority shareholding. In 2006, COGEMA became an Areva subsidiary. Emmanuel Gré-
32 Grégoire, op. cit.
33 Significantly, the founding congress of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACCT),
the forerunner of the International Francophone Organisation (OIF), was held in Niamey in 1970.
34 For example, the influential Nicolas Leca, director of President Diori’s cabinet (1959-1974). Fugle-
stad & Higgott, op. cit.
35 Van Walraven, op. cit.
36 Ibid.
no significant Tuareg revolt troubled the Diori presidency while neighbouring Mali was subject to its first major rebellion in 1963.37

Diori also lost the support of his own army, which became irritated at the presence of French officers in the army staff. The military also resisted Diori’s plan to make it work on major development projects. After an attempted mutiny in December 1963, during which France intervened to protect it, the government created a “party militia” directly under the presidency’s control designed to act as a counterweight to the army’s power.38

In the early 1970s, serious droughts affected peasant and nomad populations and Diori was criticised for his inability to respond adequately to the worrying food crisis. In order to obtain the resources he needed and break with the image of being too close to French interests, Diori tried to negotiate an increase in royalties from uranium production. This resulted in the loss of an important source of foreign support and the army overthrew him in April 1974, without the former colonial power intervening to protect him as in 1963.39


The army officers who deposed President Diori formed a Supreme Military Council (CMS) led by Lieutenant-Colonel Seyni Kountché, who quickly established himself as Niger’s strong man. He suspended the constitution and concentrated legislative and executive powers in his own hands.40 He inaugurated a period dominated by “military politicians”, during which the army took control of the state.41 This intervention, frequent in the sub-region, is reminiscent of practices of colonial armies dedicated to repress rather than protect the civilian population.42 It was rare for an army to have African officers during colonisation. Hastily trained after 1960, they quickly competed with civilian elites that intended to restrict their influence.

Although the military government claimed it was starting afresh, some aspects of the First Republic were not discarded and power continued to be concentrated in the hands of a small group, many of them from the south west. There was also a continued trend towards authoritarianism. Attempted coups fuelled suspicion and created a very tense atmosphere of mistrust.43 Seyni Kountché protected himself by imprisoning and sometimes physically eliminating his opponents and by creating a police

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37 The Agadez region, strategic because of the links between Sawaba and Algeria, was, however, affected by repression. Tuareg chiefs suspected of collaborating with Sawaba were arrested.


39 According to several analyses, France facilitated or, at least, accepted the overthrow of the government by the army following Diori’s attempt to renegotiate royalties from uranium production. Jouve, op. cit., p. 21; Grégoire, op. cit., p. 38; Issa, op. cit., p. 137. However, the next government hastened to end the French military presence in Niger. It would therefore be far-fetched to state that France engineered Diori’s fall.


41 The expression was coined by Mahamane Tidjani Alou (Kimba, op. cit., p. 93).

42 Seyni Kountché served in Indochina and Algeria, where the French used Sub-Saharan African troops to repress independence movements.

43 Issa, op. cit.
state. He closed down the single party and its militia but, like his predecessor, he used civil society associations to supervise and monitor the general public. Finally, although the president was less of a Francophile than his predecessor, Niger continued to be France's close partner.

The government faced increasing Tuareg unrest in the north. Repeated food shortages in the 1970s and 1980s accelerated a crisis in the nomadic way of life, which relied on a pastoral economy. Years of drought greatly weakened the pastoral zone and caused many Tuaregs to flee to neighbouring countries, especially Libya. Tuareg populations began to feel that the Nigerien government was not helping them and distrusted them. The participation of Tuareg officers in three attempted coups against Kountché, combined with the increasing importance of the uranium mines in Air, in the north, raised the tension. Although many youths emigrated to escape poverty, others also fled to escape political repression.

The economy was hit by a fall in the price of groundnuts but benefited from the uranium boom in the 1970s, to the extent that this resource accounted for half of government revenues. Unlike agriculture, however, the uranium sector only provided a few thousand direct jobs. The government used the proceeds to invest in major public works and hydro-agricultural projects but obtained mixed results. Despite Kountché’s commitment to end food shortages, Niger was again hit by a serious food crisis in 1983-1984. Faced with a considerable debt and significant financial external dependence, the country’s leaders agreed to the structural adjustment policies first im-

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44 Commander Sani Souda Siddo, the CMS’s second-in-command, was arrested in 1975 and died in prison. In 1976, Sidi Mohamed and Moussa Bayéré, two military officers who had positions in the new government, organised a coup. Several dozen military personnel and civilians were arrested and nine were condemned to death and executed with the exception of two who were tried in absentia (Issa, op. cit.). According to some analysts, President Kountché’s government was among the most repressive of its time. Jibrin Ibrahim, “Transition et successions politiques au Niger”, in Momar Coumba Diop and Mamadou Diouf (eds.), *Les figures du politique en Afrique* (Paris, 1999), p. 210.

45 For example, the Niger Islamic Association (AIN), the Niger Women’s Association (AFN) and Samariya, a youth organisation that had a major presence in Hausa areas and that spread to the rest of the country. Crisis Group interview, Nigerien university academic, Niamey, April 2013. These associations mobilised and supervised the population on behalf of the state, using a combination of constraints and nationalist mobilisation. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, *Chefs et projets au village (Niger)*, *Bulletin de l’APAD*, no. 15 (1998).

46 The new Nigerien government closed the French bases in Niger. In 1977, the new military cooperation agreement replaced that of 1961. It restored special, but not exclusive relations. Symbolically, the agreement stated that “French military personnel made available to Niger … shall wear the civilian dress or uniform of the Nigerien army while on duty”. Accord de coopération militaire technique entre la République française et la République du Niger, Article 7, Niamey, 19 February 1977.

47 For clarity, the expression “Tuareg problem” and “Tuareg question” are used here to describe the tense and complex relations between Tuareg populations and the Nigerien state.

48 The drought of 1973 reduced the livestock population by 75 per cent in the Tahoua and Agadez regions. Emmanuel Grégoire,* Touaregs du Niger: le destin d’un mythe* (Paris, 2010). The *ishumars* (derived from the French term for unemployed), who were at the heart of the rebellion in the 1990s, developed their political identity in exile (Deycard, op. cit.).

49 In 1982, a commando unit entering the country from Mali was arrested while on the way to Arlit. In 1985, there were clashes between the army and young Tuaregs in Tchintabaraden. See Deycard, op. cit., p. 170.

50 Ibid.

51 Grégoire, op. cit.
posed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1982. The 1980s were characterised by budgetary austerity, privatisation and the "streamlining" of the administration. Seyni Kountché has left behind him the reputation of a brutal leader who nonetheless strengthened the state’s authority, yet the end of his government ushered in a period of weakening state power.

D. A Fragile and Uncertain Democratisation (1990-2000)

The military government did not last long after Seyni Kountché’s death in 1987. His successor, Colonel Ali Saïbou, tried to gain legitimacy by putting a republican gloss on the government. In 1988, he created a political party, the National Movement for a Development Society (MNSD) and, in 1989, a new constitution was adopted by referendum.

1. Short-lived regimes: The Second, Third and Fourth Republics

In December 1989, Saïbou became the president of Niger’s Second Republic. A vast aspiration for change swept through West Africa as populations protested against austerity policies and economic problems. In Niger, society was in turmoil and strikes spread despite the repression. Faced with an insurrection in the north and the threat of a general strike in Niamey, the government agreed to introduce a multi-party system in November 1990 and organised a national conference to discuss this. Starting in July 1991, the conference established transitional institutions that returned power to civilians. In January 1993, a new constitution installed a new government structure with powers no longer concentrated in the hands of the head of state.

The national conference nevertheless highlighted the divisions within society. Social protest remained strong even within the army, which continued to intervene in public affairs. Tension increased around the relationship between state and religion. Democracy certainly raised expectations but its construction was taking place in a context of budgetary cuts and economic crisis. In Niamey, quarrels between parties and politicians disrupted institutions. Mahamane Ousmane, elected presi-
dent in March 1993, did not have an absolute majority in the National Assembly and had to rely on a fragile coalition that included his party, the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS), the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS), led by Mahamadou Issoufou, his prime minister, and the Nigerien Alliance for Democracy and Progress (ANPD), led by Moumouni A. Djermakoye. Disagreements within the government caused Issoufou to resign and his party joined the MNSD in opposition in 1994. In October, the president dissolved the assembly after it refused to approve the appointment of a new prime minister from the CDS.

In January 1995, the presidential party lost the legislative elections and this inaugurated an unprecedented period of coexistence in the sub-region. The president was forced to appoint Hama Amadou, MNSD’s general secretary, as prime minister and had to accept Mahamane Issoufou becoming president of the National Assembly. However, the institutions once again found themselves deadlocked and the army intervened in January 1996. The coup leader, Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, promised a program of “democratic rectification” before returning power to civilians. He organised the adoption of a new constitution in May 1996 and imposed himself as president following a sham election. This government, with Seyni Kountché as its reference, signalled the army’s return to power and showed the weakness of the democratic process. However, it did not last long: in April 1999, the president-general was assassinated by members of his own personal guard. The coup was organised by junior officers who remained in power for just a few months. A new constitution, the fifth since 1960, was adopted in July 1999.

2. The armed rebellions of the 1990s

The political instability of the 1990s was also due to the radicalisation of Tuareg demands and the emergence of armed rebellions in the north. The Tuareg diaspora in Libya had been organising militarily since the 1980s. In 1987, the new president,

59 This was a fragile alliance based more on rejection of the old elites than on a program or common aspirations. Moreover, Moumouni Djermakoye was himself a former military officer and foreign minister under Seyni Kountché. His failure to win the leadership of the MNSD from Mamadou Tandja largely explains his decision to found the ANPD and join the presidential alliance formed by Mahamane Ousmane in 1993. The MNSD, founded by Ali Saïbou, continued to be the country’s biggest political force with the highest number of elected representatives. Associated with the old elites, it was nevertheless rejected by the opposition.

60 The president refused to sign some decrees or to attend council of ministers meetings for long periods. Appointments to senior government positions were bitterly disputed.

61 Ibrahim, op. cit. On the eve of the elections, the government announced that the vote would be held over two days rather than one. At the end of the first day, it dissolved the electoral commission and installed another, which validated a total reversal of the initial results and declared General Baré to have won the presidential election in the first round. France, which had leaned on the army to organise quick elections, recognised the result of this sham. However, the U.S. challenged the results and closed the office of its development aid agency (USAID) in Niamey.

62 The 29 July Stadium, named after the date of the inauguration of the national conference, was renamed the Seyni Kountché Stadium by General Baré. He also relaunched an army journal, Le béret vert, in which he reaffirmed the army’s political role in Niger. (Ibrahim, op. cit., p. 211).

63 The then-chief of staff refused to lead the transition. The coup leader, Major Daouda Mallam Wanke, chief of the presidential guard, then took on the office of president of the council of national reconciliation for a few months.

64 From the 1970s onwards, Qadhafi welcomed the Nigerien opposition of Tuareg or Arab origin on Libyan soil. In 1980, he called on the nomadic communities of the Sahara to build a unified state and attracted thousands of Tuaregs for military training in Libya. Along with economic migrants,
Ali Saïbou, sought to reduce tensions and called on migrants to return. Tens of thousands of Tuaregs in Algeria and Libya returned to Niger. However, they found a country weakened by austerity policies and governed by a military regime that was nearing the end of the road. This was the context in which the major armed rebellions of the 1990s took place.

In May 1990, the “Tchintabaraden massacre” perpetrated by the Nigerien army against civilian Tuareg communities triggered the rebellion.\(^{65}\) It was initially led by a unified liberation movement, the Front for the Liberation of Air and Azawouar (FLAA), founded in 1991, which called for the creation of a federal state with a large measure of autonomy for northern regions.\(^{66}\) After 1993, the FLAA split into many “fronts”, all of them defending their own clan or geographic interests.\(^{67}\) Meanwhile, the government encouraged the creation of community militias to fight armed Tuareg and Toubou movements.\(^{68}\) This low-intensity conflict lasted more than seven years and widened the gap between the civilian populations in the north and the Nigerien security forces.\(^{69}\)

The negotiations that began in 1993 led to the 1995 Ouagadougou and Niamey Agreements, which were complemented by those of Algiers (1997) and N’Djamena (1998). These accords had three main components: decentralisation, with the transfer of state powers to the cities, departments and regions; integration of rebel combatants into the civil service and security forces; and socio-economic development of northern Niger. In addition, the appointment of several rebellion leaders to high public office gave them a share of central government power and implicitly recognised their capacity to regulate political order in the north of the country.

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\(^{65}\) After clashes with youths at Tchintabaraden, in the Air region, Nigerien security forces organised a violent wave of repression. Though the number of victims remains controversial, the massacre continues to symbolise the repression inflicted on Tuaregs by the Nigerien state. Grégoire, op. cit., pp. 49-51; Deycard, op. cit., p. 170.

\(^{66}\) Its two main leaders were Mano Dayak (civilian wing) and Rhissa ag Bula (military wing).

\(^{67}\) The Revolutionary Army of North Niger (ARLNN) and the Temoust Liberation Front (FLT) led by Mohamed Akotey were formed in 1993. The Popular Front for the Liberation of the Sahara (FPLS) was formed in 1994. Four ARLNN splinter groups came on the scene in 1994-1995: Popular Liberation Army of the North (APLN), Liberation Forces Front (FFL), Revolutionary Action Front (FAR) and the North Niger Revolutionary Liberation Movement (MRLNN). During the negotiations with the government that led to the 1995 accords, most of these formed alliances, including the Armed Resistance Organisation (ORA) led by Rhissa ag Boul and the Coordination of Armed Resistance (CRA) led by Mano Dayak. Some groups remained outside these alliances and later signed specific agreements, notably the Union of the Forces of Armed Resistance (UFRA) led by Mohamed Anacko, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara (FARS), a group mainly composed of Toubou combatants from the east of the country and the Democratic Front for Renewal (FDR), active in the Kwar region close to the Libyan border. Deycard, op. cit., pp. 210-211 and Yvan Guichaoua, *Circumstantial Alliances and Loose Loyalties in Rebellion Making: The Case of Tuareg Insurgency in Northern Niger* (2007-2009), Microcon Research Working Paper no. 20 (2009).

\(^{68}\) This was the Arab youth and the Peul self-defence militia.

\(^{69}\) Grégoire, op. cit.
E. **The Tandja Decade (1999-2010)**

The November 1999 election of Mamadou Tandja ushered in a period of institutional stability.\(^70\) Tandja combined military authority and democratic legitimacy. A former officer close to Seyni Kountché, he led a party that included some of the civilian elites who participated in the national conference and the democratic debates of the 1990s.\(^71\) He sought to strengthen state power and, during his second term in office, loosened the country’s dependence on France by welcoming interest from other countries, notably China.\(^72\) He also denounced Western NGOs, which he accused of inventing the famine in 2005 and 2008.\(^73\)

However, the stability of the Tandja period should not overshadow the turmoil that marked his two terms in office. There was recurring social protest, with major student demonstrations in 2001 and 2004, demonstrations against the cost of living in 2005 and continued unrest in the army. In 2002, a mutiny broke out at Diffa, in the east of the country. The mutineers called on the army chief of staff to step down and demanded payment of wage arrears and better living conditions.\(^74\) After 2007, the Tandja government faced a rebellion by the Nigerien Movement for Justice (MNJ) in the north of the country.

1. **The “second Tuareg rebellion”**

In the 2000s, social and political tension remained high in the north.\(^75\) Poor implementation of the 1990s peace accords provoked great frustration. Former combatants and young Tuaregs were disappointed by the failures of integration and the slow pace of economic development.\(^76\) In early 2007, a new group, the MNJ, claimed responsibility for a series of armed attacks, including one on the Iférouane military post in February. The MNJ was undoubtedly an initiative by traffickers and former combatants but they were soon joined by militants and members of the diaspora, which

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\(^{70}\) Crisis Group interview, Nigerien researcher, April 2013.

\(^{71}\) A professional army officer, Mamadou Tandja served as interior minister under presidents Kountché (1979-1981) and Ali Saïbou at the beginning of the 1990s. Moreover, he occupied this post during the period of repression of the Tuareg movement and the Tchintabaraden massacre. In July 1991, he succeeded Saïbou as leader of the MNSD, winning out against another military officer, Moumouni Dzemakoye. A losing candidate in the 1993 and 1996 presidential elections, he was finally elected in December 1999 and again in November 2004.

\(^{72}\) Niger used Chinese interest in the uranium and oil sectors to diversify its resources. In 2009, the state budget rose by a massive 26 per cent, essentially because of the $256 million deal to develop oil reserves in the east of the country, signed by Niger and the CNPC in June 2008. “Chinese engagement in Niger and potential areas for cooperation”, U.S. embassy Niamey cable, as published by WikiLeaks, 12 February 2010.


\(^{75}\) In 2004, the dismissal and arrest of Rhissa ag Boula, tourism minister, accused of murdering an MNSD activist, led to localised attacks and a brief revival of the FLAA by his brother Mohamed ag Boula. In 2005, Libyan mediation led to Rhissa’s release followed by a ceremony in which the FLAA symbolically laid down their arms.

\(^{76}\) Crisis Group interviews, former “integrated” member of the FARS, former front leader, Niamey, April 2013. Also see the analysis of the failures of the UNDP Programme for the Consolidation of Peace in Air and Azawak (PCPAA), in Yvan Guichaoua, op. cit., p. 13.
gave the movement a more political dimension. Under the leadership of Aghaly Alambo, ex-member of the FLAA and former sub-prefect of Arlit, the MNJ demanded greater integration in the state and more autonomy for northern regions.

This second Tuareg rebellion was shortlived. First and foremost, it was hit hard by the military, helped by recently purchased combat helicopters. President Tandja and his supporters insisted on describing the MNJ as a criminal band or as terrorists pretending to be Tuareg militants. In addition, the movement did not have as much support as its predecessors. The population seemed to be tired of armed groups, which fuel violence and mainly serve the interests of a few men. The presence within the MNJ of groups suspected of involvement in drug trafficking further reduced the movement’s local legitimacy. Finally, as in the past, factionalism and personal quarrels weakened the movement. In April 2009, Qadhafi’s personal involvement brought the conflict to an end after he promised to distribute large sums of money. The groups officially disarmed at ceremonies organised in Libya but no peace agreement was

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77 As Yvan Guichaoua and Frédéric Deycard suggest, the Iférouane attack was led by a small group of men, including notorious traffickers. Their objective was to pressure the government into extending the benefits of the program to integrate a group of ex-combatants that had remained excluded from the process. The attack was then claimed by a more political and more ambitious movement. Frédéric Deycard shows “how a clash between traffickers and the police gave birth to a coherent political movement that was appropriated by the diaspora and the West, and how it pushed Niger towards a renewal of political conflict” (Deycard, op. cit., p. 303). Similarly, Guichaoua describes the MNJ as the convergence of an opportunist action by professionals used to violence and the involvement of more political young activists mainly belonging to the diaspora (Guichaoua, op. cit.).

78 Crisis Group interview, former MNJ spokesperson, Niamey, April 2013. The MNJ “refused to let the citizens of the Aïr, Kawar du Manga and Azawagh regions continue to remain passive spectators while others took decisions that shaped their destiny and demanded full local participation in regional and national government”. It added that “representation of the Tuaregs and other minorities and indigenous peoples in the government and all its departments must be irreversibly sanctioned by the constitution”. In more precise terms, the MNJ demanded “a 90 per cent quota of jobs in mining companies for indigenous peoples” and “payment of 50 per cent of the income of mining companies into local government”. MNJ demands quoted by Deycard, op. cit., p. 436.

79 President Tandja always prioritised a military response to MNJ activities. In August 2007, he declared a state of emergency in the north of the country and gave more powers to the security forces. See Deycard, op. cit., p. 375. Also see Jeremy Keenan, The Dying Sahara. U.S. Imperialism and Terror in Africa (London, 2013), pp. 103-105. A former Tuareg elected representative of the MNSD described the MNJ as the result of a “disagreement about drug trafficking” as opposed to the first rebellion, which he described as “popular”, “backed by the people” and “justified”. However, he recognised that sincere supporters of the Tuareg cause participated in the movement. Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg elected representative, Niamey, April 2013. Amid tense renegotiations about the price of uranium and the concession at the Imourarem site, the government was also concerned about perceived vague links between the MNJ and Areva (Grégoire, op. cit., p. 215). In July 2007, the Areva director, Dominique Pin, was expelled from Niger. Ferdaous Bouhlel-Hardy, Yvan Guichaoua and Abdoulaye Tamboura, Crises Touarègues au Niger et au Mali, seminar, Institut français des relations internationales, January 2008, p. 3.

80 Tuareg civilian support for the armed fronts in the 1990s was massive. Deycard, op. cit., p. 224. In the 2000s, support for the MNJ was less certain. Contrary to the 1990s, most of the populations of Azawak did not get involved in the armed movements that were particularly active in Aïr. Crisis Group telephone interview, French researcher, September 2013.

81 The Niger Movement of Young Arabs (MJAN) was suspected of involvement in the rebellion in order to provide cover for its criminal activities. See Deycard, op. cit., p. 357.

82 Removed from the MNJ leadership, Rhissa ag Boula formed his own movement, the Front of the Forces for Recovery (FFR), which was one of the last to disarm. Deycard, op. cit., p. 262. The MNJ was also briefly joined by the MJAN, which was one of the first to defect.
signed. In 2010, when President Tandja was deposed, one could not say that the “Tuarreg question” had been fully settled.

2. The abuses of tazartché

In 2007, another major political issue was the emergence of a debate on a constitutional reform that would allow the president to stand for a third term in office.\(^8^3\) The debate divided the MNSD, because the prime minister, Hama Amadou, was interested in succeeding Tandja. However, Amadou was sidelined by a no-confidence motion voted by parliament on 31 May 2007 and was forced to resign.\(^8^4\) He was arrested in June 2008 and charged with misappropriating public funds.\(^8^5\) In May 2009, Tandja announced his proposals for reform, which the public labelled tazartché.\(^8^6\) Civil society groups and political parties formed the Coordination of Forces for Democracy and the Republic (CFDR) to oppose the proposal.

Despite this opposition, the president went ahead and announced a referendum. On 25 May, he dissolved the National Assembly after the constitutional court rejected his proposal for a referendum. In June, he assumed full powers and dismissed the seven judges of the constitutional court who rejected his proposal a second time.\(^8^7\) But the adoption of a new constitution by a large majority (92 per cent) in the 4 August 2009 referendum did not defuse the crisis and strong protests continued against what the opposition denounced as a “constitutional coup”.

Outside Niger, the tazartché caused a lot of embarrassment and received little support. France, involved in negotiations with Tandja about uranium mining, kept a low profile and did not publicly condemn what was happening.\(^8^8\) The European Union


\(^{84}\) The no confidence motion was brought in connection with the misappropriation of public funds. The government was left in a minority when some members of the presidential majority, to which the prime minister belonged, voted with the opposition.

\(^{85}\) Released in April 2009 for health reasons, Hama Amadou left Niger for a while. In July, an international warrant was issued for his arrest on charges of misappropriation of public funds. Amadou publicly rejected these accusations. “Niger’s former prime minister denies allegations of corruption”, Agence France-Presse, 31 July 2009.

\(^{86}\) “Continuity” in Hausa. The term was already used by President Tandja’s supporters during the 2004 presidential election campaign. It reappeared at the end of 2008 during a campaign calling on the president to remain in government even though the end of his second (and legally the last) term in office was approaching. Oswald Padonou, *Les médiations internationales des crises politiques au Niger entre 2009 et 2011* (Paris, 2012).

\(^{87}\) “Niger: le président dissout la Cour constitutionnelle”, *Le Monde*, 29 June 2009. The first referendum proposal aimed to change the constitution to extend the presidential term by three years. The constitutional court ruled such a referendum was inadmissible and affirmed that the constitution did not allow the president to remain in office beyond his term, and that Article 49, which covers arrangements for referendums, could not be used to revise the constitution (Cour constitutionnelle du Niger, avis n°02/CC, 25 May 2009). The court later invalidated a presidential decree convening a referendum on a second proposal to amend the constitution (Cour constitutionnelle du Niger, arrêt n°04/CC/ME, 12 June 2009).

\(^{88}\) Niger was at that time responsible for supplying a third of the uranium used by French power stations and this was to rise to half after production began at Imourarem, 160km north of Agadez. During his second term in office, Tandja ended the French monopoly on Nigerien uranium by opening the sector to foreign competition, notably Chinese and Canadian. Since 2011, the Somina company, in which Chinese capital has a majority stake, produces about 700 tonnes of uranium per year at
(EU) suspended its development aid on 6 November 2009 shortly after the legislative elections, which were boycotted by the Nigerien opposition. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) put strong pressure on Mamadou Tandja to backtrack. In June, the acting ECOWAS chairman, the Nigerian President Yar’adua, appointed General Abdulsalami Abubakar as mediator between the government and the opposition. In October, faced with the obstinacy of the Nigerien authorities, which had just organised legislative elections, the ECOWAS heads of state summit suspended Niger. The Sixth Republic was shortlived: President Tandja was overthrown by a group of army officers on 18 February 2010, a few days after ECOWAS-sponsored talks in Niamey broke down.

Azelik (Agadez region). A Canadian company, Goviex, has contracted to mine the site at Madaouella in the Arlit region, discovered in 1963. Grégoire, op. cit., p. 221.

89 The ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council sent a delegation to remind President Tandja of the principles of the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy. Padonou, op. cit.
III. The Seventh Republic: A Still Fragile Regime

The current government is the outcome of a transition from military rule that ended the tazartché episode and quickly returned power to civilians. The election of President Issoufou raised hopes, but the government is still young and fragile.

A. From Military Transition to the 2011 Elections

The 18 February 2010 coup suspended the Sixth Republic and President Tandja was arrested after brief fighting. The coup was carried out by the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD), composed of senior officers, including colonels who participated in the 1999 coup, and led by squadron leader Salou Djibo, a mid-ranking officer of Djerma origin.90

In the following days, several countries and international organisations formally condemned the coup.91 But after months of political crisis, many saw it as the lesser of evils. The CSRD quickly pledged to organise elections and promised that no members of the armed forces would be candidates.92 That was enough to convince several members of the international community, including the EU, to resume aid to Niger. The tazartché had provoked widespread opposition among politicians, civil society and even the security forces. The coup was therefore widely welcomed in Niger, and it signalled a certain attachment to democratic values within the army.93 A Nigerien legal expert believes that by putting an end to tazartché in 2010, “the army acted as a deputy constitutional court”.94 However, the military’s action also served the interests of politicians sidelined by President Tandja’s authoritarian drift. External interests also influenced the course of events, if only by the tacit support extended to the coup leaders despite formal condemnation of their acts.95

The CSRD kept its promise to quickly restore republican order. The new constitution, submitted to a referendum on 31 October 2010, includes some new provisions, such as the requirement that candidates in legislative elections must hold certain di-

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91 The African Union (AU) quickly condemned the coup and suspended Niger. Shortly afterwards, a joint AU/ECOWAS/UN mission visited Niger to ask the new authorities for “a firm commitment to a rapid return to constitutional order”. In June 2010, the AU Council decided to accompany the CSRD’s intention to hand over power to civilian authorities (Conference of the African Union, fifteenth ordinary session, 25-27 July 2010, Kampala, Assembly/AU/6(XV), p. 15).
92 An 11 March 2010 decree signed by Salou Djibo prevented members of the CSRD and the transitional government of contesting the elections. In April, the new government also established a national consultative council to supervise the transition and a committee to prepare a new constitution. Assembly/AU/6(XV), p. 15 and Andreas Mehler, Henning Melber and Klaas Van Walraven (eds), Africa Yearbook Volume 8: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2011 (Leiden, 2012), p. 151.
93 Several demonstrations of support for the military’s initiatives were organised in the streets of Niamey, Dosso and Tahoua.
94 Crisis Group interview, constitutional court adviser, Niamey, April 2013.
95 As convincingly suggested by Emmanuel Grégoire in “Coup d’état au Niger: le président Tandja Mamadou chassé par l’armée”, Hérodote, 22 February 2010. It would certainly be exaggerated to see foreign manipulation in the coup, but President Tandja’s mining policy provoked a degree of concern among diplomatic and business circles, especially in France. His political agenda of promoting national sovereignty caused a steep rise in the price of uranium in the final years of his presidency.
plomas (Art. 84); full transparency of contracts for the exploration and production of natural resources (Art. 150); and the requirement to share revenues from mineral resources between the central government and local authorities (Art. 152). Although allegations of inappropriate conduct were made against some individuals close to the junta, the management of public finances has improved according to some specialists.

On 31 January 2011, a little under a year after Tandja was overthrown, the legislative elections resulted in a qualified victory for Mahamadou Issoufou’s PNDS (39 seats) over his two rivals, Seyni Oumarou’s MNSD (26 seats) and Hama Amadou’s MODEN (23 seats). In the 12 March 2011 presidential run-off, Issoufou beat Seyni Oumarou with 58 per cent of the votes. Several international observer missions, including those sent by the OIF, AU and EU, highlighted the transparency and quality of the electoral process.

However, the junta’s balance sheet is not completely positive. The final months of the transition were very tense. In October 2010, four senior officers, including Colonel Abdoulaye Badié, the junta’s second-in-command, were arrested and accused of a “plot against the state’s authority”. This could indicate disagreement within the junta about whether to return power to civilians. These tensions were perhaps also due to the competing alliances that the officers established with political leaders in the run-up to the elections.

Moreover, the electoral process was challenged despite positive reports from election observers. Citing the new provisions about the need for candidates to hold school diplomas, the Transitional Constitutional Council (CCT), established by the new authorities on 12 June 2010, invalidated close to half of candidates for the parliamentary polls. The move did not spare any of the major political parties but hit the former ruling party hardest. The MNSD interpreted this as an attempt by the junta to keep those it had overthrown out of power. They claimed that junta members supported some politicians in order to protect the goods and benefits acquired during the transition. Whether that is true or not, the career of some junta members seems to have made major breakthrough.

Compared to the recent examples of Mali and Guinea, the Nigerien transition from military rule was notable for being both positive and quick. However, it depends on compromises between military authorities and leading politicians who some believe

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96 The 9 August 2006 law, approved under President Tandja, already provided for the allocation of 15 per cent of mining revenues to the cities in the regions concerned. The principle of sharing mining revenues with local authorities was enshrined in the constitution. In May 2013, the National Assembly extended this principle to oil revenues and included regional councils as well as municipalities among the beneficiaries.


100 Others, who say they have seen the documentation and believe there is no evidence, are more sceptical about whether there was a plot against the state or Salou Djibo. Crisis Group interview, officer, Niamey, April 2013.


102 Crisis Group interview, MNSD deputy, Niamey, April 2013.

103 Within a few months, Salou Djibo, a simple squadron leader, became an army general, the highest rank in the military hierarchy. He enjoys the immunity and benefits of former heads of state. He retired from politics and is now head of a private foundation (www.fonsad.org).
are indispensable but whom others see as the weak link on which President Issoufou’s government is based.104

B. The President’s Program

Mahamadou Issoufou belongs to a generation of politicians that emerged in the context of the 1991 national conference. He has held senior government positions, as prime minister, then president of the National Assembly, before going into opposition after the 1996 coup.105 In the 2000s, he was one of the opposition’s leaders and was one of the founders of the CFDR, which rejected Tandja’s plan to amend the constitution.

Issoufou was elected after putting forward a wide-ranging, ambitious reform plan called the Renaissance program, the provisional cost of which was CFA 6,238 billion.106 Donors support the program but some observers remain cautious.107 Some say the president has dressed up old initiatives to make them look new and that his program is no more than a publicity stunt.108 Others claim he has achieved little despite the government’s self-promotion campaign.109 The government is under pressure to show evidence of its achievements and it spends a lot of energy trying to do so, as suggested by the tense negotiations with Areva on the inauguration of the Imouraren mine.110

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104 Crisis Group interview, member of civil society, Niamey, April 2013.
105 Born in 1952, Issoufou started as an engineer but in the 1980s became director of mines at the mines and industry ministry, and secretary-general and then director at Somaïr mines. In 1990, he was among the founders of the PNDS and became its secretary-general and then president before his election in March 2011. His electoral stronghold is his home region of Tahoua, which he has represented as deputy since 1993. Coming third in the 1993 presidential election, he was appointed prime minister by President Mahamane Ousmane, but he resigned in September 1994 and went into opposition. After the 1995 elections, he became president of the National Assembly. In 1999, he lost to Mamadou Tandja in the presidential run-off.
106 This program is based on eight points including the revival of democratic institutions, the fight against hunger, human security, the creation of 50,000 jobs every year for young people and the development of education. Half of the funds needed for this program were to be covered by foreign aid (80 per cent donations and 20 per cent loans) and the other half by Nigerien tax revenues. Mahamadou Issoufou, “Niger: La renaissance” (http://pnds-tarayya.net).
107 At the November 2012 forum in Paris, donors promised to contribute more than CFA 2,400 billion (€3.6 billion) to Niger’s Economic and Social Development Plan. That was certainly good news for the president but also provided a reminder that Niger is “extremely dependant on aid”. Crisis Group interview, economics expert, Niamey, April 2013.
108 The initiative to fight hunger, called “les Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens” or the 3N Initiative, is an innovative project inspired by the Brazilian model. Crisis Group interview, 3N Initiative secretary general, Niamey, April 2013. However, some specialists have criticised the program for merely renaming old development projects and reiterating the old discourse on food sovereignty with new buzz words. Crisis Group interview, food security specialist, Niamey, April 2013.
109 Critics of the government nevertheless acknowledge President Issoufou’s achievements (building classrooms, unprecedented recruitment of health workers, etc.). However, the socio-economic situation of most Nigeriens has not changed significantly and continues to cause concern. The lack of sustained growth means that the government currently finds it difficult to fund ambitious projects. Crisis Group interviews, economics expert, Niamey, April 2013; leader of a medical NGO, Niamey, April 2013.
110 Areva had been due to begin production at the Imouraren mine before the end of the president’s first period in office, but, at the end of 2012, announced it would no longer be possible. This provoked the anger of the presidential camp, which needs the revenue to fund the Renaissance program. He not only obtained financial compensation (close to €35 million) for this delay but also a guaran-
In order to implement his program, President Issoufou has surrounded himself with a team mainly composed of politicians who have been in office since 2011, despite the August 2013 cabinet reshuffle. Brigi Rafini, described as both a technocrat and a “political nomad” because of his capacity to operate in different governments and parties, was appointed prime minister on 7 April 2011. A Tuareg from Iférouane, who did not take part in the rebellion and is said to seek compromise and have no great political ambitions, his appointment is presented as a good-will gesture to the Tuareg community. However, many observers believe he has only limited authority over ministers whose appointment he failed to influence.111

Among the cabinet’s strongmen are several leading PNDS figures, including the foreign minister, Bazoum Mohamed, the defence minister, Karidjo Mahamadou, and the energy and oil minister, Foumakoye Gado. This “old guard”, very influential in the PNDS, holds significant power in a country where appointments at every level of government are extremely politicised.

In addition to this inner circle, there are ministers whose presence is a result of alliances made by President Issoufou with political parties or civil society.112 Civil society, who remarkably fought against tazartché, is represented by leaders such as Amadou Marou, justice minister and government spokesperson since 2011.113 With rare exceptions, the current political elites emerged in the early 1990s, which indicates that a renewal of the Nigerien elites is overdue. In a country where more than half of the population is under eighteen, tension between the generations is common in politics.114

The president and his team are finding it difficult to get the Renaissance program up and running and show they have the capacity to break with the ineffectiveness of previous governments. The energy sector is a good example. The government was unable to avoid prolonged power cuts in Niamey in June 2013. In July, it rescinded the contract for the construction of a hydroelectric dam at Kandadji, one of the Renaissance program’s flagship projects.115 The public is annoyed, especially as Niger’s uranium has provided France with electricity since the 1970s. In this context, social

tee that the site would be officially opened before production begins. “Areva achète la paix avec Issoufou”, *La Lettre du Continent*, no. 651, 23/01/2013 and Crisis Group interview, representative of a humanitarian organisation, Niamey, April 2013. Areva acknowledges that it has contributed to Niger’s financial security but its vice president has given assurances that this was not related to the delays at Imouraren. “Areva says to start output at Niger mine in mid-2015”, Reuters, 7 March 2013.111 Crisis Group interview, former leader of a Tuareg front, Niamey, April 2013.112 The parties that form the presidential majority are represented by ministers such as the URD president, Amadou Boubacar Cissé, who is planning minister and Omar Hamidou Tchiana, mines and industrial development minister. See below for the impact of the formation of a government of national unity in August 2013 on political alliances.113 Aged 40, Amadou Marou also belongs to a younger generation. In the 2000s, he was part of several civil society movements seeking to make public life more ethical, notably the Committee for Independent Discussion and Orientation for Safeguarding Democracy (CROISADE). Justice ministry website, www.justice.gouv.ne, and Crisis Group interview, international technical expert, Niamey, April 2013.114 See www.unicef.org/french/infobycountry/niger_statistics.html and Crisis Group interview, PNDS activist for 30 years, Niamey, April 2013.115 The contract was awarded to a Russian company that proved unable to carry out the work according to the agreed timetable. Ali Soumana, “Fiasco dans la construction du barrage de Kandadji”, *Le Courrier*, 27 July 2013.
tensions are simmering. Even the president’s supporters are concerned about the lack of achievement, at a time when Niger is going through worrying instability.

C. A Government Based on Unstable Alliances

Confronted with social discontent in a tense security context, the president needs to consolidate the alliances that will allow him to govern but that appear to be, to say the least, unstable.

1. The security forces and the new government

The security forces have two major components: the Nigerien Armed Forces (FAN) and the National Intervention and Security Forces (FNIS). These forces seem to be in a better condition than their counterparts in the sub-region. However, they suffer from worrying malfunctions, imbalances and logistical problems that reduce the effectiveness of border controls. The FNIS also suffer from an insufficient number of officers, a serious handicap in large-scale operations. Finally, the security forces are notorious for repeated violence against the civilian population during the crackdown on rebellions in the 1990s and 2000s.

The army is also perceived as being ethnically-based but the extent to which this is true is difficult to estimate. The military hierarchy allegedly prefers to recruit from the Djerma ethnic group and the integration of other communities into the army often creates tensions. However, there are many examples that contradict such an
assertion. Rather than ethnic criteria, it seems that more than anything, personal connections within the army strongly distort the procedure for promotion and provoke imbalances and frustration.

Niger’s history is littered with repeated army interventions in public affairs. Since independence, four military coups have overthrown governments and only three civilians have served as president. However, these interventions have led to both military rule (1974 and 1996) and the return of power to civilians after “rectification transitions” (1999 and 2010). The army has sometimes played a disruptive role but also acted as a broker in the event of political deadlock. As military interference is common in Nigerien politics, politicians have also sometimes managed to establish close clientelistic relationships with officers. Civilian governments must therefore take account of the security forces and have learned they sometimes need to form alliances with them.

President Issoufou has to tread carefully when managing the armed forces, which overthrew the preceding government and perhaps, as some would have it, even facilitated his election. He has at no point questioned the immunity and benefits provided to former CSRD members. Neither has he conducted a financial audit of the transition as the opposition requested. The context of regional insecurity has allowed him to substantially increase the defence budget, sometimes to the detriment of social services. The government continues efforts initiated by its predecessor to equip the army, with the help of Western countries involved in the fight against terrorism.

Promotion of Tuareg officers was held back by the military hierarchy because of intercommunal tensions. For example, the assistant chief of staff, Colonel Ahmed Mohamed, and the colonel who heads the HACP, Mohamadou Abou Tarka, are Tuaregs. The commander of the national guard is a Hausa. Some officers who belong to ethnic minorities believe that there is no discrimination in the army. The establishment of the national school for non-commissioned officers on active service at Agadez is an encouraging sign for the Tuaregs.

Selection for the coveted training opportunities abroad are supposedly based on clientelistic criteria. The context of regional insecurity has allowed the army, with the help of Western countries involved in the fight against terrorism.

To the extent that the junta wanted to avoid the MNSD taking power (see previous section).

The 20 June 2012 law reorganising the budget doubled public investment in defence. It provided for supplementary expenditure of CFA 40.4 billion (Journal officiel de la République du Niger, special no. 15, 30 August 2012, p. 1,142), for a budget that was initially set at about CFA 35 billion (Journal officiel de la République du Niger, special no. 7, 17 April 2012). Even doubled, the defence budget accounted for less than 7 per cent of government revenue. On the other hand, this increase meant cutbacks in other areas: the same budget cancelled expenditure of CFA 35 billion in the finance and education ministries and even the presidency.

The army received resources to develop the air force, the value of which was established during the fighting against the MNJ. The FAN acquired two MI-35 transport helicopters and two MI-17 combat helicopters under President Tandja. In 2013, France donated three Gazelle helicopters, the U.S. donated two Cessna 208 transport aircraft and Niger bought two Sukhoï 25, ground support aircraft for which it also had to recruit foreign pilots. Crisis Group interview, Nigerien researcher on political sciences, Niamey, April 2013.
The president has also granted benefits to military personnel in the form of increased bonuses and social housing.132

The civilian government does not therefore have full control over the military. When making promotions to the most senior ranks in the military in June 2011, President Issoufou visibly sought a compromise between his own preferences and the need to maintain good relations with former CSRD members.133 In the following months, he sidelined senior officers by appointing them to embassy posts abroad.134 There is still distrust between the two sides: in July 2011, the security services foiled an attempted assassination of the president.135 Shortly after, military officers, including Colonel Abdoulaye Badié, former second-in-command of the junta, were arrested. Moreover, the government’s pro-military intervention stance on Mali and the recent deployment of Western troops on Nigerien territory have provoked discontent in the army,136 the extent of which is difficult to gauge.137

A fragile balance has been established between the government and the army. The latter might still suddenly intervene in politics, particularly in the event of renewed institutional deadlock.138 Regional insecurity could provide another motive for intervention, especially if the military were to be targeted by attacks such as those at Agadez on 23 May.

2. The political parties

The ruling party does not have a majority in the National Assembly. In order to govern, it formed a coalition, the Movement for the Renaissance of Niger (MRN), composed of the PNDS-Tarraya (37 seats), MODEN-Lumana (23 seats), the ANDP (eight

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132 The defence minister said that “the head of state has allocated 800 million to speed up the construction of social housing”. “Interview with M.Karidio Mahamadou, defence minister”, Sahel Dimanche, 5 April 2013. According to a Western military source, the daily allowance of Nigerien soldiers deployed in border control operations was doubled in October 2012. Crisis Group interview, Western official, Niamey, April 2013.


134 Several colonels close to the CSRD, in particular Colonel Badié, were appointed to posts abroad. “Comment Issoufou désarme les gradés”, La Lettre du Continent, no. 633, 12 April 2012.


136 In September 2010, following the abduction of seven Areva employees, France was granted permission to fly over Nigerien air space. “La France envoie 80 militaires pour tenter de retrouver les otages”, France 24, 20 September 2010. The resources deployed by France varied over time but did not involve activities outside Niger. They reportedly supported the Nigerien operation Malibèro (surveillance of the region), especially regarding the security of mining sites. In January 2013, Operation Serval reinforced the French presence and involved the deployment of three Harfang drones. “Rapport d’information sur l’opération Serval au Mali”, National Assembly, no. 1288, Paris, 18 July 2013; “Niger: le président Issoufou confirme la présence de forces spéciales françaises au Nord”, Niger 24, 4 February 2013. Meanwhile, in January 2013, President Issoufou authorised the U.S. to deploy three unarmed drones and a number of soldiers. French diplomats were irritated at the speed with which the U.S. was authorised to deploy its drones as it had taken more than a year for them to negotiate deployment of theirs. Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Niamey, April 2013. See Section V.E.

137 Rumours that are difficult to verify mentioned the presence in the army of officers who supported Islamist networks. Crisis Group interview, security manager for an international NGO, Niamey, April 2013.

138 In 2011, in an article in the magazine Le béret vert, Karingama Waly Ibrahim, the president’s army chief of staff, called on his colleagues to stop interfering in politics. He was particularly critical of Djibo Salou, former head of the CSRD. Colonel Karingama Waly Ibrahim, “Le retour à la caserne”, Le béret vert, 7 April 2011, reproduced in Opinions, no. 138, 13 April 2011.
seats) and the Union for Democracy and the Republic, UDR-Tabatt (six seats). Such alliances are common in Niger, it is rare for one party to gain a majority in the assembly. However, Issoufou’s alliance seems to be weak. It was established out of the ashes of the CFDR, which broke up during the 2011 elections. After the PNDS victory in the 11 January 2011 local elections, the MODEN and the CDS decided to join the MNSD in the Alliance for National Reconciliation (ARN), formed on 25 January, a few days before the legislative and presidential elections. However, after the PNDS won the legislative polls and the first round of the presidential election, Hama Amadou and the MODEN did a U-turn and formed an alliance with Mahamadou Issoufou against Seyni Oumarou.

The MODEN-PNDS alliance gave the government a parliamentary majority. In exchange, Hama Amadou obtained the presidency of the National Assembly and six ministries. However, the MRN has several times displayed signs of weakness partly because of Hama Amadou’s unusual position. He is 63 years old and the next presidential election in 2016 will be his last chance to become president. In order to contest it, he will have to leave the presidential coalition at the most favourable moment for him. This prospect undermined the solidity of the alliance right from the start.

In June 2013, the PNDS found itself in a minority in the National Assembly when voting on a customs bill. Rumours of a cabinet reshuffle quickly spread. On 13 August, President Issoufou announced the formation of a national unity government because of what he claimed were unprecedented security challenges. The government is still led by Brigi Rafini, who has appointed ministers from the MNSD. However, the reshuffle seems to be limited, with senior PNDS ministers remaining in their posts. The MODEN, feeling its interests have been harmed, has suspended its participation. However, four of its six ministers refuse to toe the party line, starting an internal crisis in the MODEN. Meanwhile, the MNSD’s participation in the new government has provoked infighting and has weakened its president, Seyni Oumarou, who has long been hostile to the idea of entering the government. The rapprochement with the PNDS is perhaps more the work of Mamadou Tandja, who continues to have a lot of influence in the MNSD, and who reportedly met President Issoufou several times in recent months.

In the end, the formation of this government, which is only nominally of national unity, seems to be more of a political manoeuvre than a response to security concerns. There has so far been no clear winner of this episode and it could weaken all the major political parties in the long term: the MODEN divided over the issue of its participation, the MNSD is not unanimous and the new coalition formed by the PNDS seems weak. The presidential majority relies increasingly on personal connections between politicians and President Issoufou rather than on a solid alliance of political parties.

139 The opposition is grouped in the Alliance for National Reconciliation led by the MNSD-Nassara and the CDS-Rahama.
140 It presents similarities with the temporary majority formed around President Mahamane Ousmane in 1993. It is striking to note how many of the actors involved in the 1993-1995 deadlock are still there today. It is one more indication of the importance of renewing Niger’s political elites.
141 Seyni Oumarou was Mamadou Tandja’s prime minister during the tazartché period. Africa Yearbook 2011 and Crisis Group interview, civil society representative, Niamey, April 2013.
142 The alliance with the UDR and ANDP was not enough to guarantee a majority.
143 In early 2013, rumours circulated about the possible departure of Hama Amadou, which he was slow to deny. Laoual Sallahou Ismael, “Dislocation de la MRN: le président Hama Amadou se défend”, La Roue de l’Histoire, no. 652, March 2013.
In this context, the threat of a deadlock as occurred in 1994-1995 cannot be discarded. The next parliamentary session should prove decisive for the solidity of the new government and the majority on which it relies.

3. Checks and balances

Niger has gradually built institutions to protect democracy. Some of them, such as the constitutional court, have earned the reputation of being relatively independent. In 2009, the court resisted the tazarctché project until Mamadou Tandja dissolved it. In 2012, its rulings prompted two ministers to resign. In April 2012, it ruled that the National Assembly’s decision, at the government’s request, to lift the immunity from eight deputies accused of misappropriating public funds was constitutional.

The ability of other recently created institutions to operate is more uncertain. Established in 2004, the National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP) is in charge of ensuring smooth relations between the government and the opposition, but its critics say it is more like a “dialogue of the deaf”. The position of mediator of the republic, created in 2008, is currently held by the leader of a political party, which can undermine its independence. Some institutions seem to be too dependent on the government or their effectiveness is reduced by politicking.

The agencies that are supposed to combat corruption and financial crime are a good illustration. The National Financial Information Unit (CENTIF) was created in 2004; the High Authority Against Corruption and Similar Crimes (HALCIA) in July 2011; and the Information and Complaints Office in the Fight Against Corruption and the Trafficking of Influence in the Judiciary (BIR/LCTI) in October 2011. The creation of these agencies, made at the request of donors with a view to promoting good governance, is welcome but their operation and lack of independence have been criticised.

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144 They contravened Article 52 of the constitution, which prohibits the executive and legislative powers from “taking part ... in public and private government contracts”. While it made no more than half a dozen rulings per year toward the end of the Tandja government, the constitutional court became more active under President Issoufou. It made 21 rulings in 2012 and has already made seven in the first half of 2013 (http://cour-constitutionnelle-niger.org/arrets_constitutionnelle_par_an.php). Its members insist that it ignores pressure from the executive when taking decisions. Crisis Group interview, member of the constitutional court, Niamey, April 2013.

145 The opposition had lodged a complaint with the constitutional court, stating that the government had violated the principle of separation of powers. Most parliamentarians concerned about the procedure had connections with the MNSD. The party believed a government anti-corruption initiative was partisan. Crisis Group interview, opposition parliamentarian, Niamey, April 2013.

146 Crisis Group interview, university researcher, Niamey, April 2013.

147 This independent authority receives complaints about the operation of public agencies and issues recommendations. The first mediator was Mamane Oumarou, former prime minister under Seyni Kountché. In August 2011, a new law created the mediator of the Seventh Republic (reducing its mandate from six to four years). In 2011, President Issoufou appointed Cheffou Amadou, former prime minister (1991-1993) and head of RSD-Gaskiya, to the position.

148 The activities of CENTIF, formed in 2004, are limited because it depends on the statements of transfers made by banks and does not have the resources to monitor informal economy channels used by criminal financial networks. Crisis Group interview, former member of CENTIF, Niamey, April 2013. In April 2013, the opposition criticised HALCIA and questioned its constitutionality, independence and usefulness. From the first year of its operation, the dispute between the president of HALCIA and the vice president, who criticised the non-transparent management of the budget, undermined its credibility. Laoual Sallaou Ismaïl, “Fonctionnement de la Halcia: la guerre est ouverte ...”, La Roue de l’Histoire, 2 April 2012.
Even though they should not be disregarded, these institutions still play an uncertain and contested role as safeguards for democracy and good governance.

In addition to state institutions, civil society has played an important role in defending political and social rights since the 1990s. Organisations such as the Nigerien Human Rights Association (ANDDH) and the NGO Timidria have contributed to democratisation.149 Civil society organisations, especially trade unions, are the driving force behind social protest movements, some of which can be violent.150 However, the government is led by a political party that was in opposition for a long time and that has built important ties with civil society. Some activists feel that this is problematic and undermines civil society’s duty to maintain a critical stance.151

Civil society is currently seeking a second wind and this may be provided by younger and more militant organisations such as the Network of Organisations for Transparency and Budgetary Analysis (ROTAB). Founded in 2006, it focuses on the sensitive question of revenues from the extractive industries. It is very critical of big foreign companies and the government.152 Its main demand is a revision of the mining contracts and transparency in the distribution of public funds generated by these contracts.153

4. The Issoufou government and the Islamic civil society

Since the 1990s, religious associations, particularly those that claim allegiance to Islam, have been playing an increasingly prominent role in public affairs and in what are sometimes heated debates on social and political questions.154 Their first national protest movement took place in 1993 in response to a government bill for a “family code”. Many Islamic representatives rejected the bill, claiming it promoted Western values that contradicted Islam.155 Faced with strong mobilisation, the government dropped the bill. In March 2011, demonstrations took place in Niamey following ru-

150 As the strike by teachers fighting for permanent contracts showed at the end of 2011.
151 An activist said: “It is necessary to work harder on civilising Nigerien civil society: people are too anxious about getting daily allowances and being appointed to posts”. He also questioned “the external partners [who] are not demanding enough”. Crisis Group interview, president of a civil society association, Niamey, April 2013. Moreover, many politicians have their own NGO or association that they use to stay busy and retain influence when their term of office ends or to apply for grants. Olivier de Sardan, op. cit.
152 In a joint statement, ROTAB and the Discussion and Action Group on Extractive Industries in Niger (GREN) drew attention to the fact that: “for several years, our country has exploited many natural resources, but our citizens do not benefit very much from the proceeds. This deplorable situation is due not only to a lack of skill in negotiating but also to the weakness of the authorities ... who find it difficult to ensure strict enforcement of conventions”. GREN-ROTAB statement, Niamey, 27 July 2012, available at http://sites.nova-technologies.com.
153 Crisis Group interview, president of a Nigerien NGO, Niamey, April 2013. He recognised that “people are afraid of the situation in Mali, therefore they are afraid of change in Niger”.
mours that the transitional government was also preparing to approve a family code.\(^{156}\) More recently, in January 2013, demonstrations took place against a bill to protect girls’ rights to secondary education.\(^{157}\) The government is often accused of being influenced by Western countries that are said to be trying to break down the values of Islam, impose birth control and combat population growth of Muslim societies under the cover of protecting women’s rights.\(^{158}\)

Some analysts believe that “religious organisations, not the political parties, are the main opposition force in Niger”.\(^{159}\) These associations do not only play an opposition role, they actively promote the “re-Islamisation” of society, which for some means the Islamisation of the state.\(^{160}\) Since 1999, the constitution stipulates that the president of the republic, the prime minister, the president of the National Assembly and members of the constitutional court should swear an oath on the Holy Book of their faith.\(^{161}\) During the debates on the tazartché in 2009, the Collective of Niger Islamic Associations (CASIN) formally put forward a proposal for a new constitution that would end the separation between state and religion.\(^{162}\)

The growing influence of Islam on the state partly reflects increasing conservatism and a trend toward reaffirming Muslim identity and values. Yet it also represents the emergence of an Islamic civil society that wants to moralise public life, while the government finds it difficult “to base governance on secular principles”.\(^{163}\) Islam’s role in public life should not be interpreted in a simplistic way; it is plural and reflects the extreme fragmentation of Nigerien Islamic civil society. Political Islamism is developing in Niger but it would be greatly exaggerated to say that all forms of its expression belong to fundamentalist and jihadi currents, which remain a minority.

Although it is engaged at the side of its Western allies in the fight against armed terrorist Islamist groups, the government must also cater to the section of public opinion that believes the war against terrorism to be an attack on Islam. Caught between

\(^{156}\) In February 2011 in Niamey, demonstrators responded to the call put out by the Association for Islamic Culture and Orientation and “symbolically burned ... a copy of the Family Code”, Xinhua, 9 March 2011.

\(^{157}\) The National Assembly preferred to return the bill to the government rather than putting it to a vote. Crisis Group interview, researcher, Laboratory for Studies and Research on Local Social and Development Dynamics (LASDEL), Niamey, April 2011.

\(^{158}\) In Niger, the fertility rate reached the record figure of seven children per woman (unicef.org). Western partners believe this rapid population growth to be a veritable “time bomb”. Crisis Group interview, Western development expert, Niamey, April 2013. The U.S. historian Barbara Cooper, a specialist on gender in Niger, stressed the mutual lack of understanding between populations and international experts on the sensitive question of fertility and reproduction. She wrote that Nigerien populations “view ‘family planning’ as a genocidal intrusion into their reproductive lives”. Barbara Cooper, “De quoi la crise démographique est-elle le nom?”, Politique africaine, no. 130 (2013), p. 69.

\(^{159}\) Crisis Group interview, researcher, LASDEL, Niamey, April 2011.

\(^{160}\) This project clashed with the secular values inherited from the colonial period. Already in 1991, at the time of the national conference, the expression “secularism” replaced “non-confessionnalism”. Crisis Group interview, researcher, LASDEL, Niamey, April 2011.

\(^{161}\) The constitutions of the Fifth and Seventh Republics of Niger. However, the 2010 constitution maintained the principle of the separation of state and religion (Article 3) and emphasises the ban on parties based on ethnic, regional or religious criteria (Article 9).


\(^{163}\) The expression “Islamic civil society” was coined by Abdoulaye Sounaye (op. cit., 2011). The idea here is that to swear an oath on a Holy Book would give the authorities a legitimacy they had lost. However, some Islamic associations believe to swear a public oath in this way trivialises the act and diminishes its importance. Crisis Group interview, researcher, LASDEL, Niamey, April 2011.
the imperatives of regional security and popular expectations, the government presents two faces to the public: one clearly sides with its Western allies in the fight against terrorism, while the other advertises its Islamic credentials in its quest for popular legitimacy.164

164 The president has referred to Caliph Omar to describe his relationship to political Islam. “I am not a fundamentalist, but I like to quote the Caliph Omar, Islam’s third caliph. He was a righteous man”. Interview with President Issoufou, Jeune Afrique, July 2011. Crisis Group interview, LASDEL researcher, Niamey, April 2013.
IV. The Tuaregs in the Seventh Republic

Estimated at 10 per cent of the Nigerien population, the Tuaregs are the third largest ethnic group after the Hausas and the Djerma-Songhais.\(^{165}\) There are many Tuaregs in the regions of Azawak (Tahoua region) and Air (Agadez region) but they are also present in all of Niger’s eight regions. Agadez, the historic heart of the Tuareg people in Niger, has an increasingly diverse population.\(^{166}\) The north-south divide appears less pronounced in Niger than it is in neighbouring Mali.\(^{167}\) The dispersion of the Tuaregs across a large part of the national territory and their long coexistence with other groups explain why separatism is viewed differently and perhaps with less intensity than in Mali.\(^{168}\) Many Tuaregs think of themselves as Nigeriens but also have a separate sense of identity related to their history of political and socio-economic marginalisation.\(^{169}\)

A. “Demilitarising” the Tuareg Question

President Issoufou came to power while it was relatively quiet on the Tuareg front. The last rebellion by the MNJ suffered several unprecedented military defeats.\(^{170}\) The violence meted out by both sides accentuated public fatigue with armed revolts.\(^{171}\) The crisis in Mali has certainly revived the Tuareg problem but Western security concerns also offer the Nigerien government new resources to tackle it.\(^{172}\) Although it

\(^{165}\) However, this is an old estimate that has been challenged (INS/RGP, 1988). The last census in 2013 has not yet been officially published but it appears that it will not include ethnic data. In comparison, the Tuareg, at least those whose mother tongue is Tamasheq, represent 3.5 per cent of the Malian population. They are concentrated (84 per cent) in the three northern regions. Sedyou Moussa Traoré et al., *Recensement général de la population et de l’habitat du Mali (RGPH-2009).* *Analyse des résultats définitifs*, Bamako, December 2011, pp. 75-76.

\(^{166}\) In 2011, the Agadez region had about 500,000 inhabitants out of the country’s 15.5 million. Since the 1970s, the mining industry has attracted labour from the south, which coexists with the Tuareg in Air and mainly lives in towns such as Arlit and Agadez.

\(^{167}\) The contrast between “black” and “white” (or “red”) populations is also less marked than in Mali. However, it does exist. The MNLA insurrection in Mali reportedly fuelled distrust towards “white” Tuaregs in Niger. Crisis Group interview, international NGO representative, Niamey, April 2013.

\(^{168}\) However, it is present, especially among young intellectuals (Crisis Group interview, former MNJ member, Niamey, April 2013). However, they seem to be in a minority and less widespread than in the 1990s. A former elected representative and former rebel in the 1990s said: “I no longer believe in micro-states, much less in ethnic-based states, I believe in big groups”. Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg elected representative, Niamey, April 2013. “Our demands focus more on the sense of exclusion than on territory .... It is not possible to create a Republic of Air,” another leader of the fronts in the 1990s said. Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg minister, Niamey, April 2013.

\(^{169}\) Crisis Group interviews, elected Tuareg representatives and former elected representatives, NGO representatives, former combatants and former leaders of the fronts in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2007, the MNJ’s platform of demands highlighted the stigmatisation felt by some Tuareg. It denounced “a government that talks with distrust and arrogance about ‘you’ the people and ‘us’ the state”. MNJ Platform of demands, quoted by Deycard, op. cit., p. 434.

\(^{170}\) Crisis Group interviews, senior officer, Bamako, July 2013 and former MNJ representative, Niamey, April 2013.

\(^{171}\) Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg elected representative, Niamey, April 2013.

\(^{172}\) For example, the Instrument for Stability, an EU program supported by the UN Development Program (UNDP), which “aims to promote a new dynamic of economic, social and cultural development in areas facing a specific development problem caused by precarious security conditions” (pnum.ne). It includes a component for the “contribution to the consolidation of peace in the northern region (CCPNN), the aim of which is to bring security to the northern part of Niger (Agadez,
has not completely broken with practices of the past, President Issoufou’s policy opens new perspectives.

The appointment of a Tuareg prime minister from Air, Brigi Rafini, was an important gesture toward northern communities. However, his career in the civil service does not grant him much legitimacy in the eyes of former rebel leaders and combatants. More generally, a good number of ministers and senior civil servants have been drawn from the Tuareg community. This was true even before the Seventh Republic, but the present government is more explicit in its efforts to promote Tuareg figures based on their education and skills rather than on arms and identity. As a former Tuareg elected representative told Crisis Group, the government wants “to break with the idea that rebellion is a way to get promotion”. The government is cautious in its dealings with former front leaders but decentralisation offers them a path towards “normalisation” of their status. Tuareg political and military leaders, such as Mohamed Anacko, Issouf Ag Maha and Rhissa Feltou, have changed orientation and become regional councillors or mayors.

Similarly, with donor support, the government seeks to develop economic reintegration programs for the Tuaregs in the Agadez and Tahoua regions. Such programs are not new but the government tries to give them new impetus. For example, the authorities now address the targets as “young people at risk” rather than as “former combatants”, indicating a desire to break with the idea that rebellion will be rewarded with a pay-off. Moreover, these programs are managed in liaison with the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace, an institution created in 2011 that continued...
the work of the High Commission for the Restoration of Peace, established in 1994. This change of name reflects the government’s preference for an approach based on socio-economic development rather than political monitoring of peace accords that are, in any case, receding into the past.\(^\text{180}\) Mahamadou Issoufou is also the first president to publicly recommend local recruitment in the mining industry.\(^\text{181}\) Access to jobs created by uranium extraction is indeed a longstanding Tuareg demand.

These are interesting innovations and reflect the government’s wish to break with President Tandja’s more hardline position toward the Tuaregs. However, it remains to be seen what the effects are in practice. These programs are part of a peace process that exists but is still weak and has not definitively ended the tension between the central government and Tuareg communities.

**B. Persistent Tensions**

The new government’s position on the Tuareg question is not unanimous. First, the way in which it focuses on the Tuaregs irritates other ethnic communities. Some of them criticise the benefits obtained by groups that threaten rebellion. Community leaders believe that Tuareg demands overshadow those of other groups.\(^\text{182}\) The Agadez region, epicentre of previous revolts, is certainly poor but it is not the most marginalised area of Niger.\(^\text{183}\)

Secondly, the government’s position on the Malian crisis has caused a stir among Niger’s Tuaregs,\(^\text{184}\) who do not understand its intransigence towards the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA).\(^\text{185}\) Some criticise the government for taking a more hardline stance toward MNLA rebels than toward terrorist organi-

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\(^{180}\) As indicated by Colonel Abou Tarka, high commissioner for the consolidation of peace, in a 2011 interview: “The new authorities, aware that peace must be built on solid economic foundations, preferred the expression ‘consolidation of peace’ to show, first, that peace has been achieved and, second, that it needs to be consolidated by dealing with the economy, which is, at the end of the day, the determining factor”. Ibrahim Diallo, “Colonel Abou Tarka: de l’énergie au Service de la paix au Niger”, Afrik.com, 12 December 2011.

\(^{181}\) Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg front leader, Niamey, April 2013.

\(^{182}\) Quoting the Tuareg example, a representative of a Peul association said, out of bravado, “we will throw away our crooks [referring to Peul shepherds] and get Kalashnikovs”. Crisis Group interview, representative of a Peul association, Niamey, April 2013. Moreover, Niger has experienced other episodes of intercommunal tension, for example, when the government tried to expel several thousand Chadian Arab Mahamides from eastern Niger in 2007.

\(^{183}\) The percentage of births taking place in health establishments in the Agadez region is the highest in the country after Niamey. Similarly, the Agadez region has the highest gross school enrolment rate after Niamey. Sources: report of demographic and health investigations conducted in 2006 and 2012; education ministry statistics for the period 2010-2011. However, these statistics hide the great disparities between towns and remote areas within the Agadez region.

\(^{184}\) In an interview with RFI in June 2012, Bazoum Mohamed, foreign minister, said on the various armed groups in northern Mali, “I think they are the same. Their members could easily move from the MNLA to Ansar Dine, just as they could move from Ansar Dine to the MNLA”. And he added, “the military option is the only possible option, because we are talking about a fight to death with AQIM and all those associated with that organisation”. Christophe Boisbouvier’s interview with Mohamed Bazoum, RFI, 4 June 2012.

\(^{185}\) See Seydou-Kaocen Maïga, “Lettre d’un Touareg au Président Issoufou du Niger”, L’enquêteur, no. 691, 6 February 2013. A manager at SOPAMIN (Société de patrimoine des mines du Niger), Seydou-Kaocen Maïga is also a former MNJ spokesperson.
They even say that the conflict could spread to Niger if the repression against the MNLA and the Tuaregs in Mali continues. There have always been links between Nigerien and Malian rebel movements. In 2012, small groups of Nigerien Tuaregs went to Mali to support the MNLA, motivated partly by opportunism and partly by genuine support for the cause. The risk of a spillover of the Malian Tuareg rebellion into Niger is real. However, other Tuareg leaders support the government’s stance on the MNLA. They believe that the separatist option belongs to the past and doubt that the conflict will spread to Niger. A former Tuareg elected representative told Crisis Group, “we do not want to die in another venture in Mali”.

At the local level, decentralisation has allowed Tuareg representatives to have access to positions in the administration but they lack adequate skills and the central government has been slow to transfer resources to local authorities. Relations between local authorities and central government remain tense, as shown by the complicated relationships between the governor, the military officer that represents central government and the regional president (a former front leader) in Agadez. More broadly, reintegration and economic revival projects seem to be too limited to address unemployment and the collapse of tourism. Trafficking remains one of the few options open to the ishumars. Although not all trafficking is criminal, some trafficking activities involve violence, making crime a real concern in the northern regions.

Finally, relations between the security forces and the civilian population remain tense. The desertion of Tuareg contingents in Mali and Niger during the recent rebellions have caused the military authorities to adopt a cautious attitude towards using Tuareg troops. The general staff tries to mix units and deploy them throughout the national territory whatever their origin. This is necessary to turn the army into a

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186 Lamenting the government’s hardline stance on the MNLA, especially as expressed by the foreign minister, a former front leader said, “what affects the Tuaregs in Mali affects the Tuaregs in Niger”. Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg minister, Niamey, April 2013.


188 Crisis Group interview, Tuareg leader from Niger, Niamey, April 2013. On the issue of the MNLA’s Nigerien recruits, the leader said, “where people go depends on what they are offered and on the balance of forces”.

189 Believing that the marginalisation of the Tuareg in the Sahel was structural, a former MNJ representative told Crisis Group, “in five years, Niger will be like Mali is today”. Crisis Group interview, former MNJ representative, Niamey, April 2013.

190 Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg elected representative, Niamey, April 2013.

191 The new constitution obliges the government to pay a proportion of mining revenues to local authorities. However, there are big delays in these payments and a lack of transparency about the amounts allocated. Crisis Group interview, ROTAB, Niamey, April 2013. In May 2013, the government changed the mining and oil industry codes, reallocating 15 per cent of revenues to communes and regional councils.

192 Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg front leader, Niamey, April 2013.

193 See footnote 48.

194 Recruitment of Tuaregs into the security forces takes place either through the regular procedure or as agreed in peace accords. In both cases, it is difficult to obtain reliable statistics. Deycard, op. cit., p. 276. In 1997-1998, about 1,500 combatants were integrated into the security forces. Only a small number (about 250) joined the FAN, because the army was hostile to their integration and because many Tuareg combatants viewed the army as the enemy. More Tuaregs joined the FNIS, which was created in 1997 and was then composed of the republican guard and new Saharan Security Units (USS). However, many soldiers defected from the USS in 2007. In April 2010, the CSRD
genuine “national melting pot” but it faces many obstacles. At the local level, civilians and the military still distrust each other. The latter is also accused of not doing enough to integrate Tuareg officers.

However, the question of Tuareg representation in other sectors of public administration such as health and education is rarely raised. Despite the government’s efforts to “demilitarise” the Tuareg question, this shows, for both sides, that the issue is primarily seen through a security lens.


In 2007, the MNJ denounced the fact that “the combatants integrated into the FNIS were subjected to the FAN’s diktat, were not trusted by the government and had no chance of promotion because the government regarded them as being potentially dangerous”. It also demanded the allocation of a quota of senior officer posts in the FAN to Nigeriens from the north. Deycard, op. cit., pp. 437-438.

In this context, the recent creation of a community police force is an interesting experiment. However, how long it will last and its precise remit remain uncertain.

Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg front leader, Niamey, April 2013. This leader believes that the army remains one of the last institutions closed to the integration of nomad peoples. He thinks that “the senior echelons of the army are mono-ethnic” in Niger. However, the army has a significant number of senior Tuareg officers in its ranks. However, a Malian military source believes there are fewer Tuareg officers in Niger than in Mali. In fact, unlike its neighbour, Niger has not agreed to rebels retaining their rebel army rank when joining the national security forces. Crisis Group interview, Malian colonel, Bamako, August 2013. A Western military source commented that many Tuareg officers were ignored for promotion or had to wait longer for it. Crisis Group interview, Western officer, Niamey, April 2013.
C. **A Community Divided in its Relationship with the Government**

Tuareg society and elites are divided in their relations with government. Some reject the armed struggle and want to "conquer Niamey from within." They no longer believe in "micro-states, let alone in ethnic-based states." Others believe that Tuareg society is still discriminated against; they call for autonomy for Air and Azawak and say they are ready to resume the armed struggle if necessary. These are young intellectuals who hold a principled position, but also many others trying to protect their position as intermediaries between the government and the north and their associated material benefits. They regularly raise the spectre of the armed struggle to highlight their ability to defuse the anger of "young people" and "ex-combatants."

The divisions are both generational and social. Many marginalised youths and ex-combatants accuse former leaders of the armed struggle of betraying their cause and monopolising the resources made available as a result of peace treaties. This resentment is sometimes as strong as the resentment towards central government. Some young people refuse to support an armed struggle that would only serve personal or criminal interests. Others believe that youths should take responsibility for organising a "third rebellion" and take their destiny into their own hands, as their elders did but perhaps against them. Although society is profoundly weary of armed violence, the current situation offers these young people few options for overcoming economic difficulties and idleness.

A malaise therefore still pervades sectors of Tuareg society in Niger. The authorities, worried about the potential for resumption of armed violence in the north, are careful in their dealings with Tuareg and Arab leaders they suspect of being able to stir trouble. Thus, for example, Abta Hamidine, former leader of the Niger Movement of Young Arabs (MJAN), and Aghali Alambo, former leader of the MNJ, were arrested following an investigation into arms trafficking involving AQIM in June 2011 and then again in March 2012. However, they were both released at the end of...
March 2012. The authorities were afraid that their supporters would take up arms. Such a policy undoubtedly allows the government to ensure security in the short term, but it presents worrying similarities with Mali, where President Amadou Toumani Touré allowed the northern chiefs to maintain armed groups and control trafficking.

Relations between the government and the Tuareg communities will continue to play out in a fragile balance between rupture and continuity. The government will pursue attempts to “demilitarise” the Tuareg question by integrating the elites into senior positions in the public administration and improving prospects for young people through economic development. However, it is constrained by slow economic development and major security issues that do not allow it to break with former chiefs of armed movements, some of whom are now involved in the criminal economy.

204 Two months later, the press reported the voluntary disarmament of an Arab militia in the Tassara region, birthplace of Abta Hamidine. “Un groupe de jeunes remettent leurs armes aux autorités”, Xinhua, 15 June 2012. In 2004, the arrest of Rhissa ag Boulà, former leader of Tuareg fronts accused of murder, had led to renewed violence in the Agadez region and the brief reappearance of the FLAA.
V. A Threatening Regional Environment

Niger’s neighbours are both indispensable economic partners and a source of frequent concern. The deterioration of security in northern Mali, Libya and northern Nigeria has major implications for Niger’s internal stability and socio-economic welfare.

A. Libya: Old and New Concerns

Libya is an indispensable but troublesome neighbour. Muammar Qadhafi’s policy towards the Sahel and Sahara region was particularly intrusive and volatile. He initially put forward the idea of unifying the region’s nomadic communities under the banner of the Libyan Jamahiriya. He later called for the formation of a United States of the Sahel before abandoning the idea. In the 1970s and 1980s, he welcomed and gave military training to young Nigerien and Malian Tuaregs who later formed the military backbone of the armed fronts in Niger and Mali in the 1990s. Despite the ties that united them, Qadhafi did not support the Tuareg separatist rebellion in Niger but acted as an intermediary between armed groups and the government. He played a particularly important role in the 2007-2009 rebellion in Niger, using his money and influence to negotiate an end to hostilities and finance the disarmament of the rebels.

The Libyan civil war in 2011 had important consequences for Niger. Qadhafi relied on Tuareg combatants, some of them from Niger and Mali. The fighting and the fall of the regime led them to leave Libya, along with more than 90,000 Nigerien workers (200,000 according to Niamey). President Issoufou became worried very early on about the fallout from the Libyan conflict. He publicly disapproved of Western airstrikes and called for a negotiated solution. He also obtained aid for the economic reintegration of migrants and ex-combatants returning from Libya.

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205 People have been trading agricultural produce and livestock across the Sahara for hundreds of years. After the development of the oil economy in the 1970s, Libya also attracted a large number of Nigeriens to the country. These seasonal migrations are still indispensable for the survival of many of Niger’s rural communities.

206 Shortly after he came to power, Qadhafi militarily occupied a few posts in northern Niger. In 1971, the signature of a friendship treaty calmed the situation down and began a policy of economic cooperation. In 1976, relations became tense again: President Kountché suspected Qadhafi of supporting an attempted coup by Tuareg and Arab officers. Relations between Niger and Libya were reestablished under presidents Saibou, Ousmane and, especially, Mainassara Baré. Grégoire, op. cit., pp. 37, 44 and 192.

207 Ibid, p. 44.

208 Some were militants loyal to the Tuareg cause but most were fleeing the misery caused by the 1974 drought. Qadhafi recruited young combatants for his personal guard and the Islamic Legion, the Pan-African force he deployed abroad, in Uganda, Lebanon and especially Chad. He ensured their loyalty by paying them wages and sometimes granting them Libyan citizenship. Deycard, op. cit., and Crisis Group Africa Report N°189, Mali: Avoiding Escalation, 18 July 2012, pp. 9-11.

209 The recruitment of Nigerien and Malian mercenaries by Qadhafi to defend his regime has not been conclusively proved. See ibid and Crisis Group North Africa/Middle East Report N°107, Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (V): Making Sense of Libya, 6 June 2011, pp. 21-23.


211 In June 2011, President Issoufou used an African Union summit to denounce the danger of the “Somalisation of Libya”. During an interview with Jeune Afrique, he said: “we are afraid that the Libyan state will break up, as happened to Somalia, and that religious extremists will take power”
When Qadhafi fell, the Nigerien army launched Operation Malibéro to monitor the movement of arms and men, prevent the emergence of a terrorist threat and discourage resumption of armed rebellion in the north. The FAN organised the disarmament of combatants returning from Libya, but doubts remain about whether they managed to control the flow of men and arms out of Libya, which an observer described as “an open air arms market.”

Turmoil in Libya still affects Niger. Most of the country’s south west is outside government control, and community militias fight for control over territory and trafficking. Instability periodically spills over a particularly porous border. This region is also thought to be a new haven for jihadi groups who have fled from Mali. In May 2013, Niamey announced that the twin attack on Agadez and Arlit was prepared in southern Libya. Tripoli protested at these accusations and criticised Niger for giving shelter to supporters of the former dictator, including his son, Saadi Qadhafi.

The Nigerien government later toned down its rhetoric toward its neighbour. Niger and Libya need to cooperate to find peaceful ways of controlling the movement of men and goods in the border zone. Niger will also need to overcome the end of

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212 In 2012, Mali unsuccessfully tried to convince Western countries to finance the reception and disarmament of combatants returning from Libya. Despite sending an experienced envoy, perceptions of widespread corruption surrounding President Touré’s government just before his fall apparently discouraged donors. Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Bamako, July 2013.

213 Crisis Group interview, defence minister, Niamey, April 2013. As part of this operation, 1,200 were deployed in the Arlit region. This contingent, quite large for the Nigerien army, was not enough to control such an immense territory, but with 500 men based in Arlit, it helped secure the mining sites. “Rapport d’information sur l’opération Serval au Mali”, National Assembly, no. 1288, Paris, 18 July 2013.

214 Mathieu Pellerin in “Le Sahel et la contagion libyenne”, Politique étrangère, no. 4, 2012, pp. 835–847. There is uncertainty about the quantity of arms seized on Nigerien territory in connection with the Libyan crisis. Despite its best efforts, Crisis Group has been unable to obtain precise figures on this subject from the Nigerien authorities. Crisis Group interviews, Nigerien officers, respectively members of the HACP and the National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illegal Arms (CNCCAI), Niamey, April 2013.

215 Libyan officers of Tuareg origin, for example, General Ali Kana, and supporters of the Qadhafi regime, reportedly recruited combatants in Agadez. They then returned to southern Libya, where clashes took place between community militias. Crisis Group interview, Western diplomatic source, Niamey, April 2013.

216 Barka Wardougou, a former head of FARS, signatory to the 1997 Algiers Accord and at one point an ally of the MNJ, currently leads a Touba militia in the Mourzouk region, in the south of Sahel. “Lybie: quand les Toubaos se réveillent”, Jeune Afrique, 16 May 2012. This position facilitates the control of trafficking between Libya and Niger despite the Libyan prime minister’s decision to officially close land borders in December 2012. Crisis Group interview, Nigerien journalist, Niamey, April 2013. Touba groups, who now control trafficking in the border region of Mourzouk, are seeking to extend the area under their control as far as Agadez, where their presence and financial investments are causing tension with their Tuareg rivals. Crisis Group interviews, Western military source, former “integrated” member of the FARS, Niamey, April 2013.

217 Shortly afterwards, hundreds of Nigeriens were expelled from Libya. “Des centaines de clandestins dont de très nombreux nigériens refoulés de Libye”, RFI, 29 May 2013.

218 In the course of 2012, the new Libyan government signed several accords on border surveillance with its Chadian, Sudanese, Tunisian and Algerian neighbours. There are no similar accords with Niger, which welcomed former dignitaries of the Qadhafi regime. Peter Cole, “Borderline Chaos? Stabilizing Libya’s Periphery”, The Carnegie Papers, October 2012.
Qadhafi’s regime, which was certainly intrusive but which also had a moderating influence in the sub-region.219

B. Niger and the Emergence of a Terrorist Threat in the Sahara

The Sahara is an immense area that states do not control enough to stop armed groups establishing themselves.220 Armed jihadi movements that began to emerge in the 2000s developed complex relationships with the local populations, rebel movements and criminal gangs. International intervention in Mali has hindered but not interrupted the transport of drugs. Traffickers have changed their routes accordingly and moved towards the east of the country.221 The control of convoys is hotly disputed, perhaps because there are now fewer of them.222

In Niger, the first armed incidents took place in 2003 with clashes between the FAN, special U.S. forces and former members of the Algerian Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).223 In 2007, the GSPC changed its name to AQIM. It announced its presence with the abduction of Western hostages in the Sahara and first became known in Niger in 2008.224 Initially, the organisation did not operate on Nigerien soil but outsourced abductions to local criminal groups who transferred hostages to northern Mali, where AQIM consolidated its presence in the 2000s. In northern Niger, the

219 Frédéric Deycard and Yvan Guichaoua, “‘Whether you liked him or not, Gadaffi used to fix a lot of holes’. Tuareg insurgencies in Mali and Niger and the war in Libya”, Africanarguments.org, 8 September 2011.
220 The cocaine trafficking that grew rapidly in the 2000s involves transport by heavily armed convoys crossing several countries. It generates significant income that attracts many, and some groups specialise in the capture and sale of convoys. Governments form part of these networks, which buy the right of entry and passage from the authorities. Corruption sometimes extends to the highest levels of government and the security forces, as in Mali under President Touré. See Crisis Group Report, Mali: Avoiding Escalation, op. cit. The phenomenon also affects Niger but it is difficult to assess the extent of the traffickers’ influence.
221 Crisis Group interview, Western expert on security and anti-drugs trafficking, Niamey, April 2013.
222 They recently took on a worrying communal dimension, involving Tuareg, Arab and Toubou communities. The cargo of a major drugs trafficker in the Tillia region was reportedly stolen by Tuaregs with connections to an elected representative in the Agadez region in early 2013. Crisis Group interview, Nigerien trader in the Arab community, Niamey, April 2013.
223 For more on the GSPC, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°92, Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?, 31 March 2005.
224 The first abduction attributed to AQIM was that of Robert Fowler, about 40km from Niamey in December 2008. In January 2009, four Europeans were abducted in the Tassara region, close to the border with Mali (three were released and one was executed). In November 2009, the attempted abduction of several collaborators of the U.S. embassy from a hotel in Tahoua failed. In April 2010, a French engineer and humanitarian worker was abducted in the Tassara region and delivered to AQIM in Mali. In September 2010, seven Areva employees were abducted in Arlit and transferred to Mali (three of them were released). In January 2011, the attempted abduction of two French nationals in Niamey ended tragically with the death of the kidnappers and their hostages, who were intercepted as they fled towards Mali. In October 2012, six African humanitarian workers were abducted in the Dakoro region – one of them was killed resisting and the others were taken to Mali before being released. It seems that the kidnappers’ original plan was to abduct an Italian anthropologist, whom the kidnappers could not find. Crisis Group interview, security officer of an international organisation, Niamey, April 2013 and Keenan, op. cit.
organisation has scattered local contacts and arms caches identifiable by GPS rather than a proper rear base.225

It changed its strategy in 2010 and conducted direct attacks against the army or Western interests in Niger.226 In January 2010, a clash between the FAN and elements allegedly linked to AQIM took place near Tilia. In March, an attack on the Tiloa barracks, near the border with Mali, left five Nigerien soldiers dead.227 Several sources also recorded another attempted attack on the same barracks.228 In September 2012, a small group in possession of Semtex explosives was intercepted in the Arlit region.229

The threat of an attack using explosives on mining installations in Niger was therefore apparent well before May 2013.

Despite a probably small presence, AQIM’s actions had a major impact in Niger. The abductions jeopardised tourism, which had been doing well at the beginning of the 2000s, and led to a downsized Western presence in Niger, which was henceforth concentrated in Niamey.230 While in the first half of the 2000s the country did not appear to be one of the areas most under threat in the Sahara, Niger is now presented, along with Mali, as one of the strategic theatres of the fight between jihadi groups and Western countries.

225 In 2009, the U.S. ambassador to Niger noted that AQIM was trying to extend its influence to Niger, particularly to the border zone with Mali and Algeria. “Niger: 2009 Country Report on Terrorism”, U.S. embassy Niamey cable, 16 December 2009, as published by WikiLeaks. It would have been more accurate to say that the organisation was seeking to establish contacts in the Air region. It reportedly set up small dormant sleeping cells but was not as successful as in northern Mali. Similarly, following Operation Serval in January 2013, AQIM supporters fled to Niger but then reportedly moved into southern Libya. Crisis Group interviews, counter-terrorism official, chargé for military cooperation and a former elected representative for the Agadez region, Niamey, April 2013.


227 “Country Reports on Terrorism 2010”, U.S. State Department, August 2011. The attackers’ identity and motives remain unclear. To our knowledge, nobody has officially claimed responsibility for the attacks at Tilia and Tiloa. There is a thin line between criminal activities and terrorist actions. For example, the attacks in January and March 2010 followed the assassination of four Saudi “tourists” on 28 December 2009, a crime for which Cheïbâne Ould Hama, an Arab from Mali, received a twenty-year prison sentence in Niger. He was also suspected of killing the U.S. military attaché in Niamey in 2000 and of complicity in the abduction of Western hostages in Niger. Described as a “terrorist” by the Nigerien authorities, he escaped in June 2013 during the attack on Niamey prison. The motive for killing the Saudis remain unclear. The incident does not appear in the State Department’s annual report on terrorist activities in 2009. According to a Nigerien source, it was related to an affair of smuggling and morals. Crisis Group interview, counter-terrorism actor, Niamey, April 2013.

228 The lorry apparently did not explode. Sources disagree on the precise date of this event, placing it between the end of 2009 and 2011. Moreover, in June 2011, vehicles containing Semtex were intercepted during a clash with the FAN in the country’s north east. Crisis Group interview, counter-terrorism official, Niamey, April 2013.

229 Two of them were reportedly killed. Crisis Group interview, counter-terrorism official, Niamey, April 2011. Other Crisis Group interviews did not confirm this but mention the arrest of others in possession of explosives on Nigerien territory in 2011 and 2012. Investigations are underway and it is still difficult to know whether these people had links with AQIM and were planning to carry out an action in Niger. Crisis Group interview, several counter-terrorism specialists, Niamey, April 2013.

230 In the eyes of Westerners, the capital gradually took on the appearance of a besieged town even though, until January 2013, the country was not involved in any conflict.
The discourse of Nigerien authorities gradually changed. President Tandja only used the rhetoric of the fight against terrorism to convince Western countries to help him in his battle with the MNJ, while President Issoufou presents the fight against terrorism as one of the main issues of his presidency. As with Amadou Toumani Touré in Mali and his counterparts in Mauritania, it may be that he saw an opportunity to gain access to resources deployed in the fight against terrorism. However, this involvement is double-edged. For example, it led him to adopt a more hawkish stance toward the Malian crisis.

C. A Hawkish Policy toward Mali

Unlike in the Libyan crisis, President Issoufou was quick to choose the military option in Mali. The Nigerien army was among the first contributing troops to AFISMA. Deployed in Gao and Ménaka, military experts judged these troops to be among the most operational in the African force. The country also allowed French and U.S. armed forces to use its territory and airspace, including for the deployment of aircraft and drones mobilised during Operation Serval.

Niger’s military involvement in Mali is predicated on the conviction that AQIM’s base in northern Mali has posed a direct threat to the country for several years. Its involvement also puts Niger in a good position to gain access to funds used for security and development in the Sahel, which have considerably increased since the Malian crisis began in 2012.

However, Niger’s involvement in Mali also involves risks and costs. Even though it receives foreign aid, the country contributes to the funding of its military involvement. Moreover, the government has reallocated some funds from social services to defence and security, which could prove to be socially disruptive in the long term. In addition, by openly engaging in the fight against terrorism, a fight that some Nigeriens believe to be the West’s problem, the government is exposing itself to internal criticism.

There is a certain amount of criticism of the intervention in Mali among the country’s leaders. They fear that the public will be receptive to the radical Islamist dis-

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231 In an interview granted to Jeune Afrique in July 2011, Issoufou said “there is no military solution in Libya”. Jeune Afrique, op. cit.
232 President Issoufou’s policy allowed the early deployment of rapidly operational Nigerien forces. Following Operation Malibéro, launched during the Libyan crisis, Niger deployed about 2,000 men to monitor its northern borders in the summer of 2012. The chief of staff also prepared for the possibility of a military intervention, although UN Resolution 2085 of December 2012 did not plan to deploy African forces until autumn 2013. Niger stationed a battalion along the Malian border, which was one of the first army units to be fully operational under AFISMA. Moreover, a Nigerien general was appointed deputy chief of staff of the African mission. Crisis Group interview, Western military expert, Niamey, April 2013 and “Rapport d’information sur l’opération Serval au Mali”, op. cit.
233 See footnote 136. These forces were deployed to fight jihadi groups in northern Mali but were more generally used for surveillance in the Sahel. The exact duration of these foreign missions and the area they covered have not been made public.
234 For an analysis of the 2012 crisis in Mali, see Crisis Group Africa Report, Mali: Avoiding Escalation, op. cit.
235 Although it received foreign aid, it was not clear that it would be enough to cover all the necessary expenditure, especially if there were any delays in MINUSMA’s deployment.
course that depicts the conflict as a religious war. The presence of foreign troops on Nigerien soil also raises concern, including at senior levels of the military. Finally, some predict that Niger will become a target for retaliation by groups wanting to punish its alliance with Western forces. The unprecedented twin attack of 23 May at Arlit and Agadez, claimed by groups linked to AQIM, fuelled fears of a spillover of the terrorist threat into Niger.

Since the start of the Malian crisis, the government has intensified monitoring of preaching in some mosques. Although such surveillance is not new, it shows that the authorities are getting increasingly nervous about the threat of jihadi cells establishing themselves in Niger.

There are concerns that the Air region could serve as a refuge for AQIM members who have had to leave northern Mali. Although the movement’s prestige is felt to be weak in this Tuareg-majority region, its financial resources could attract recruits. As a former Tuareg elected representatives said, “AQIM is a business that pays better than Areva”. Some people fear the development of links between religious radicalism and Tuareg interests, as in northern Mali.

The establishment of the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) in the Gao region, on the border with Niger, is another source of concern. The movement’s leaders come from various Arab communities in the Sahel-Sahara region, often perceived to be “white populations”. However, the group also recruits “blacks”

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237 A preacher who described the Nigerien soldiers serving in Mali as heathens was arrested and briefly detained. Such sermons do not necessarily have a large audience but they make the authorities anxious. The government reacted by encouraging the AIN’s ulemas to discredit the terrorists by referring to them as bad Muslims. Crisis Group interviews, university academic, specialist on Islam in Niger, Western diplomatic source, Niamey, April 2013.

238 In addition to the sensitivities stemming from history and nationalist sentiment, some believe that intervention in Mali allows France to strengthen its control over its mining interests in Niger. They think that the president has been unable to give continuity to President Tandja’s policy of promoting national sovereignty. President Tandja is often perceived to be firm and less dependent on France.

239 The Nigerien contingent was the target of a failed suicide attack in Ménaka. “Guerre au Mali: une action kamikaze contre le contingent nigérien déjouée à Ménaka”, Slate Afrique, 11 May 2013.

240 Access to the territory was reportedly closed to Pakistani preachers suspected of belonging to the dawa, a religious brotherhood that counted among its members Iyad ag Ghali, founder of Ansar Dine. Crisis Group interview, leader of an international NGO mission, Niamey, April 2013.

241 Several sources mention that Nigeriens were among the perpetrators of the attack on the Agadez barracks in May 2013. Crisis Group telephone interviews, security officer, international NGO, July 2013 and French researcher, September 2013.

242 Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg elected representative, Niamey, April 2013.

243 The MUJAO is a jihadi movement that probably resulted from a split in AQIM in 2011. It first announced its existence when it abducted European tourists in Tindouf in October 2011. In February 2012, it joined the MNLA and AQIM in taking the town of Gao before turning against the MNLA in June. The group dispersed in response to the Serval offensive in January 2013. In August, it announced it was merging with the Blood Signatories (katiba el-Mouaguuiine Biddam) led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar in a new group called the Mourabitounes. See Crisis Group report, Mali: Avoiding Escalation, op. cit., p. 17.

244 The only exception is Hicham Bilal, a Nigerien national, said to be the only “black” to have led a MUJAO brigade. He surrendered to the Nigerien authorities in November 2012. Bakary Gueye, “Un commandant du MUJAO quitte le groupe terroriste au Mali”, Magharebia, 12 November 2012 and Crisis Group interview, counter-terrorism specialist, Niamey, April 2013.
in the Niger Valley, particularly young Songhais and Peuls.\textsuperscript{245} These local recruits include Nigeriens who found refuge in their country of origin from the French airstrikes in Mali.\textsuperscript{246} Links have therefore developed between Nigeriens and the armed jihadi movements in Mali. However, it remains difficult to say the extent to which they would continue the armed struggle in Niger. Some of them joined the MUJAO out of opportunism, others out of loyalty to the cause. Nothing as yet indicates that the movement will establish itself and grow in Niger.

There are reasons to worry that terrorist attacks will increase in Niger. However, the country should not overestimate these risks or misconstrue their nature. Movements that challenge government control over the territory such as Boko Haram and Ansar Dine are weak. As a Tuareg representative told Crisis Group, AQIM “has not yet found an Iyad Ghali in Niger”.\textsuperscript{247} On the other hand, abductions and attacks against Western interests are more likely. They could be sufficiently serious to threaten the stability of a fragile government that is exposed by its hawkish positions on Mali. Finally, it should be remembered that, in Niger’s recent history, the main source of violence is less religion than the state itself. The fight against terrorism has resulted in only limited violence against the civilian population in Niger, but recent developments in Nigeria should encourage the government to remain vigilant.

D. A Policy of Prudence towards Nigeria

Like Libya, Nigeria is a useful but troublesome neighbour. The strong commercial links between the two countries benefit the wealthy cross-border trading networks but the rural populations in southern Niger are among the poorest in the world.\textsuperscript{248} People and ideas circulate freely because the populations are united by strong historical, linguistic and cultural links.

The political and religious violence in northern Nigeria has regularly spilled over into Niger. In the early 1980s, the followers of Maitatsine, including many Nigeriens, fled from the Nigerian army’s violent repression and crossed the border into the re-

\textsuperscript{245} A hundred young Nigerien Peuls, many of them former members of self-defence militias, reportedly joined the MUJAO in 2012 after the death of Amadou Diallo, former leader of Ganda Izo. They saw MUJAO as a movement able to restore moral order and as protection against the attacks and livestock thefts attributed to the Tuareg. At the time of the French airstrikes, they crossed the border and established themselves in the north of the Tillabéry region, where they have family connections. Crisis Group interviews, representative of the Peul community, Tillabéry and Peul elected representative, Niamey, April 2013.

\textsuperscript{246} It was reported that MUJAO had cells in the north of the Tillabéry region, in the Tahoua region and in Niamey.

\textsuperscript{247} Crisis Group interview, former elected representative of the Agadez region, Niamey, April 2013. Iyad ag Ghali, head of Ansar Dine, is a particularly charismatic leader who has rallied many young combatants to his side. See Crisis Group report, Mali: Avoiding Escalation, op. cit., pp. 3 and 12-13. There is no leader in Niger as influential as Iyad ag Ghali or the Nigerian Mohamed Yusuf, Boko Haram founder. AQIM recently tried but failed to recruit a charismatic Tuareg leader. Crisis Group interview, former Tuareg minister, Niamey, April 2013.

\textsuperscript{248} The purchasing power and needs of the big Nigerian cities absorb Nigerien cereal production and push prices up. Powerful Hausa economic operators, whose family networks extend across the border, control the trade in cereals. These economic networks influence Niger’s political life, especially during electoral campaigns, when big Nigerian traders make large financial contributions. Emmanuel Grégoire, Les Alhazai de Maradi (Niger): histoire d’un groupe de riches marchands sahéliens (Paris, 1986).
regions of Maradi and Zinder. In the 1990s, the Izala movement in northern Nigeria recruited many followers in southern Niger. Its desire to purify Islamic practices and its critique of the Sufi brotherhoods caused tension that led to the burning of mosques and clashes between believers. Although Niger was worried about the possible spread of religious tension onto its own territory, it did not adopt the same repressive policies towards these radical religious groups as its Nigerian neighbour. It preferred an approach that combined relative tolerance, surveillance of preachers and targeted action.

The recent development of Boko Haram in Nigeria has provoked renewed concern. Engaged in an armed struggle with the Nigerian security forces since 2009, the movement has developed rear bases in Niger, especially in the regions of Diffa and Zinder. The Nigerien authorities and some Western embassies in Niamey are particularly worried. So far, Niger has provided a refuge and not a theatre of operations for Boko Haram, but there are some indications of a possible change of strategy.

Throughout 2012, the movement strengthened its contacts with the jihadi groups in northern Mali, although the extent to which they exchanged recruits, materials and money remains unknown. In February 2012, in the Diffa region, the Nigerien police dismantled a network of fifteen people that were preparing an operation against the local military garrison. Since early 2013, violence has reached a new level in the state of Borno, causing an influx of thousands of civilians into Diffa. The authori-

252 In Diffa, Boko Haram can reportedly count on the links that unite the Kanuri populations on both sides of the border. It recruits most of its militants from these communities. In addition, it reportedly has medical facilities in Zinder where it treats its wounded. Crisis Group interview, counter-terrorism specialist, Niamey, April 2013.
254 Smugglers used Nigerien territory where some of them were arrested. The existence of a pan-Sahel terrorist movement should not be exaggerated but correspondence, money and recruits have passed between Nigeria and northern Mali. Crisis Group interview, counter-terrorism official, Niamey, April 2013.
255 Crisis Group interview, security officer, international organisation, Niamey, April 2013.
256 Initially, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that they were mainly Nigeriens returning to their country (Bulletin humanitaire, 22 May 2013). More recently,
ties fear that Boko Haram activists are infiltrating the area. In June, the attack on Niamey prison caused serious concern. Although it is still unclear who organised the operation, several Boko Haram members were among the escaped prisoners. Finally, the recent development of Ansaru, a Boko Haram splinter group that focuses on Western targets, has renewed fears of abductions and attacks against foreign interests in Niger from bases in Nigeria.258

Nigeria has encouraged its neighbour to act more firmly in the fight against Boko Haram.259 In October 2012, the two countries signed agreements to organise joint border patrols.260 However, Niger, anxious to avoid aggravating the situation, has adopted a cautious attitude toward Boko Haram.261 It is more concerned about stopping spillover effects from northern Nigeria than repressing a movement that remains relatively quiet in Niger.

E. Western Security Concerns

The Western military presence in the Sahel, particularly in Niger, has grown in recent years. Since the abductions in 2010, France has consolidated its forces in order to improve its capacity to respond to abductions and to strengthen security at uranium mines, which are strategically important.262 In early 2013, Niger granted France improved facilities at Niamey and Agadez airfields.263 Special force reservists are reportedly used as security guards at the Areva site and assist Nigerien forces in the fight against terrorism.264 The French military presence in Niger has gone beyond simply

the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recognised the presence of many Nigerian refugees, which raises the question of who is going to care for them. "Nigeria offensive pushes 6,000 refugees into Niger – UN", Reuters, 11 June 2013.


258 Crisis Group interview, counter-terrorism specialist, Niamey, April 2013.

259 In July 2009, dozens of Nigerien members of Boko Haram were expelled by the Nigerian authorities. "Niger: 2009 Country Report on Terrorism", op. cit. A few months previously, the Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, declared a state of emergency in the north east and closed the borders with Niger. "Nigeria: état d’urgence et frontières fermées", RFI, 2 January 2012. In August 2013, Nigeria expelled about 22,000 foreign nationals, mainly Nigeriens, in just a few days, as part of the struggle against Boko Haram. “Nigeria deports 22,000 as part of anti-insurgency fight”, Agence France-Presse, 23 August 2013.

260 “Le Niger et le Nigéria renforcent leur coopération et signent un accord de défense”, RFI, 19 October 2012. However, these patrols lack resources and have highlighted different procedures being used to deal with the Boko Haram question. Crisis Group interview, security officer, international organisation, Niamey, April 2013.

261 In March 2013, Reuters reported that the Chadian and Nigerien military provided support for the Nigerian army’s attack on the village of Baga, accused of sheltering jihadi militants. The former denied this claim.

262 However, this concern probably goes back further in time. In 2008, France supported the organisation in Niamey of a regional seminar on the fight against terrorism. “Niger: November 25-27, 2008 Regional Seminar on Terrorism and Trafficking”, U.S. embassy Niamey cable, 3 December 2008, as published by WikiLeaks.

263 Three Harfang drones are stationed there.

264 French forces in Niger reportedly supported Operation Malibéro (see footnote 136). In May 2013, they were also involved, at President Issoufou’s request, in neutralising the residual terrorist elements left after the attack on the Agadez barracks. However, the French military presence should not be overestimated – the French defence budget is threatened by drastic cuts. Security in the mining areas is provided by Nigerien forces and private companies that employ former French military personnel and former Tuareg rebels. Jean Guisnel, “La sécurité d’Areva entièrement assurée par
providing the “occasional support” mentioned by the French defence minister in May 2013.\textsuperscript{265} Since October 2009, France has also supported the JUSSEC project, a program to reform judicial, customs and internal security systems.\textsuperscript{266}

Since the 2000s, the U.S. has also strengthened military cooperation in the Sahel through the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) and the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI).\textsuperscript{267} Its efforts, initially focused on Mali and Mauritania, have extended to Niger in recent years.\textsuperscript{268} In 2013, it donated military equipment, including vehicles and aircraft parts to Nigerien forces. Since February 2013, Niger is the only West African country where U.S. drones are deployed. The U.S. has also upgraded development aid programs directly related to security and counter-terrorism.\textsuperscript{269}

Increased Western military presence is coupled with greater police cooperation, particularly in counter-terrorism and the fight against drug trafficking. The European Union has invested in these two fields, as part of its Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, adopted in March 2011. This strategy has several components, including programs connected to the Instrument for Stability (IfS) and the EUCAP Sahel Niger mission. Created in July 2012 for two years, EUCAP is a capacity building civilian mission that is part of the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Its main aim is to “establish an integrated, coherent and sustainable approach to combating terrorism and organised crime in Niger” by also developing regional cooperation.\textsuperscript{270}

The IfS has two main components.\textsuperscript{271} A long-term component (IfS LT) aims to build counter-terrorism capacities in the Sahel, mainly in Niger, by providing training. The short-term IfS (IfS ST) supports aid programs aimed at dealing with areas and groups selected according to security criteria, for example, the creation of community police forces in the Agadez region.\textsuperscript{272} Cooperation in these matters has produced positive
results, as shown, for example, by the creation of a central counter-terrorism service in February 2011. However, the different actors involved in this field concede that their activities sometimes overlap and that coordination is quite difficult.\(^{273}\)

More broadly, Niger’s partners are increasingly focusing on security programs, although, for the moment, these only represent a small proportion of foreign aid to the country. The growing security focus in the Sahel has its limits, as shown in Mali. An excessive focus on terrorist threats runs the risk of ignoring crucial internal dynamics such as governance and democracy issues. The security-oriented approach prompts policy changes, as shown by Niger’s budgetary decision to transfer resources to defence. A diplomat recently expressed concern to Crisis Group that Niger “has reached the limit of the transfer of resources from the social budget to military expenditure”.\(^{274}\)

The security concern is legitimate. While the government is finding it difficult to keep its promises regarding social services and the economy, it is, however, trying to make them the centre of a political program. Focusing on security will not be enough to build the trust needed between the government and its people.

Moreover, Niger’s partners are increasingly linking development initiatives with their security concerns.\(^{275}\) This may be a positive step but may also lead to dangerous confusion between types of aid.\(^{276}\) Right or wrong, development and humanitarian aid are increasingly perceived as political instruments used by the West to protect its interests.\(^{277}\) Coordination between the two fields can also be tricky. In October 2012, Niger introduced a Development and Security Strategy (SDS) for the Sahel and Sahara regions under the prime minister’s authority, whose competence in this field has been challenged.\(^{278}\) Security cooperation actors hesitate to support a strategy in which the...
activities focus much more on development than on security per se. In this context, it is appropriate to question the benefits and costs of integrated approaches linking development aid and security.

Component 1 (security of persons and goods), which represents the security component strictly speaking, accounts for less than 7 per cent of the SDS budget (CFA 1,266 billion). Component 2 (access to economic opportunities) and 3 (access to basic social services) account for more than 62 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Component 4 is strengthening local governance and component 5 is the reintegration of returnees. "Stratégie de développement et de sécurité (SDS) des zones sahélo-sahariennes", prime minister’s cabinet, October 2011.
VI. Conclusion

With seven successive republics and four military coups, Niger has had a troubled history. The current government, elected in 2011, is still trying to find its way. It must seek legitimacy in a difficult socio-economic context held back by the lowest development indicators in the world. However, prospects are not necessarily grim for a country where institutional crises are interspersed with long periods of political stability. Nigerien civil society recently displayed its ability to mobilise the public. The government also appears anxious to “demilitarise” the Tuareg question even though tensions remain and no permanent solution has been found.

However, instability in the Sahel poses an additional threat in a country already facing many challenges. Niger is now at the centre of geostrategic interests that extend far beyond its borders. Western partners are determined to defend their interests and contain what they perceive to be an unprecedented Islamist threat. Influenced by his allies, President Issoufou is engaged in a regional battle against terrorism, but this involvement is not without danger. Focusing on security has showed its limits in neighbouring Mali. In Niger, it is very tempting to make it the centrepiece of government and risk disappointing the expectations of people whose priorities lie elsewhere.

Dakar/Brussels, 19 September 2013
Appendix A: Map of Niger
Appendix B: Map of the Sahel
### Appendix C: Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCT</td>
<td>Agence de coopération culturelle et technique (Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADC</td>
<td>Alliance démocratique pour le changement (Democratic Alliance for Change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFISMA</td>
<td>African-led International Support Mission to Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFN</td>
<td>Association des femmes du Niger (Niger Women's Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIN</td>
<td>Association islamique du Niger (Islamic Association of Niger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDDH</td>
<td>Association nigérienne de défense des droits de l'homme (Nigerien Human Rights Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDP</td>
<td>Alliance nigérienne pour la démocratie et le progrès (Nigerien Alliance for Democracy and Progress), led by Moumouni A. Djermakoye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Association pour la paix des ex-combattants (Ex-Combatants' Association for Peace)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APLN</td>
<td>Armée populaire de libération du Nord (Popular Liberation Army of the North), Tuareg movement created in 1994-1995, came out of ARLNN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARLNN</td>
<td>Armée révolutionnaire du Nord-Niger (Revolutionary Army of North Niger), Tuareg movement created in 1993, came out of FLAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARN</td>
<td>Alliance pour la reconciliation nationale (Alliance for National Reconciliation), coalition composed of MODEN and the CDS, founded in 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASIN</td>
<td>Collectif des associations islamiques du Niger (Collective of Niger Islamic Associations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>Conseil constitutionnel de transition (Transition Constitutional Council), established after the 2010 coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDS</td>
<td>Convention démocratique et sociale (Democratic and Social Convention), led by Mahamane Ousmane (president 1993-1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEA</td>
<td>Commissariat à l’énergie atomique (French Atomic Energy Commission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENI</td>
<td>Commission électorale nationale indépendante (Independent National Electoral Commission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTIF</td>
<td>Cellule nationale de traitement des informations financières (National Financial Information Unit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFDR</td>
<td>Coordination des forces pour la démocratie et la république (Coordination of Forces for Democracy and the Republic), coalition in opposition to President Tandja in 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNCCAI</td>
<td>Commission nationale de collecte et de contrôle des armes illicites (National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illegal Arms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Conseil militaire suprême (Supreme Military Council), created following the 1974 coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNDP</td>
<td>Conseil national du dialogue politique (National Council for Political Dialogue), organ responsible for promoting dialogue between the government and the opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNPC</td>
<td>China National Petroleum Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRA</td>
<td>Coordination de la résistance armée (Coordination of Armed Resistance), Tuareg movement, led by Mano Dayak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croisade</td>
<td>Comité de réflexion et d’orientation indépendant pour la sauvegarde des acquis démocratiques (Committee for Independent Discussion and Orientation for Safeguarding Democracy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSDP</td>
<td>EU Common Security and Defence Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSRD</td>
<td>Conseil suprême pour la restauration de la démocratie (Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy), officers’ organisation that carried out the 2010 coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAN</td>
<td>Forces armées nigériennes (Nigerien Armed Forces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAR</td>
<td>Front d’action révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Action Front), Tuareg movement created in 1994-1995, came out of ARLNN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARS</td>
<td>Forces armées révolutionnaires du Sahara (Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara), mainly composed of Toubou combatants from eastern Niger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDR</td>
<td>Front démocratique du renouveau (Democratic Front for Renewal), Tuareg movement active in the Kawar region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFL</td>
<td>Front des forces de libération (Liberation Forces Front), Tuareg movement created in 1994-1995, came out of ARLNN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFR</td>
<td>Front des forces de redressement (Front of the Forces for Recovery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLAA</td>
<td>Front de libération de l’Aïr et de l’Azawouar (Front for the Liberation of Aïr and Azawouar), Tuareg rebel front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLT</td>
<td>Front de libération Temoust (Temoust Liberation Front), led by Mohamed Akotey, Tuareg movement created in 1993, came out of FLAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNIS</td>
<td>Forces nationales d’intervention et de sécurité (National Intervention and Security Forces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPLS</td>
<td>Front populaire de libération du Sahara (Popular Front for the Liberation of the Sahara), Tuareg movement created in 1994, came out of FLAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWA</td>
<td>French West Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIA</td>
<td>Groupe islamique armé (Armed Islamic Group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREN</td>
<td>Groupe de réflexion et d’action sur les industries extractives au Niger (Discussion and Action Group on Extractive Industries in Niger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSPC</td>
<td>Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat), forerunner of AQIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACP</td>
<td>Haute Autorité de consolidation de la paix (High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HALCIA</td>
<td>Haute Autorité de lute contre la corruption et les infractions assimilées (High Authority of the Fight against Corruption and Similar Crimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIS</td>
<td>Instrument for Stability, EU crisis management tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INS</td>
<td>Institut national de la statistique (National Institute for Statistics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LASDEL</td>
<td>Laboratoire d’études et de recherche sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (Laboratory for Studies and Research on Local Social and Development Dynamics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSMA</td>
<td>Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations unies pour la stabilisation au Mali (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MJAN</td>
<td>Mouvement des jeunes Arabes du Niger (Niger Movement of Young Arabs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNJ</td>
<td>Mouvement des Nigériens pour la justice (Movement of Nigeriens for Justice), Tuareg rebellion that broke out in 2007 in the north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNLA</td>
<td>Mouvement national de libération de l’Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNSD</td>
<td>Mouvement national pour la société de développement (National Movement for a Development Society)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODEN</td>
<td>Mouvement démocratique nigérien (Nigerien Democratic Movement), party led by Hama Amadou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRLNN</td>
<td>Mouvement révolutionnaire de libération du Nord-Niger (North Niger Revolutionary Liberation Movement), Tuareg group created in 1994-1995, came out of ARLNN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRN</td>
<td>Mouvement pour la renaissance du Niger (Movement for the Rebirth of Niger), President Issoufou’s first coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUJAO</td>
<td>Mouvement pour l’unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l’Ouest (Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIF</td>
<td>Organisation internationale de la francophonie (International Francophone Organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORA</td>
<td>Organisation de la résistance armée (Armed Resistance Organisation), Tuareg movement led by Rhissa ag Boula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNDS</td>
<td>Parti nigérien pour la démocratie et le socialisme (Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism), led by Mahamadou Issoufou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPN</td>
<td>Parti progressiste nigérien (Nigerien Progressive Party) led by Diori Hamani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td>Pan-Sahel Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROTAB</td>
<td>Réseau des organisations pour la transparence et l’analyse budgétaire (Network of Organisations for Transparency and Budgetary Analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSD-Gaskiya</td>
<td>Rassemblement social-démocrate – Gaskiya (Social Democratic Rally – Gaskiya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Stratégie de développement et de sécurité (Development and Security Strategy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somair</td>
<td>Société des mines de l’Aïr (Air Mining Company)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somina</td>
<td>Société des mines d’Azelik (Azelik Mining Company)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSCTI</td>
<td>Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDN</td>
<td>Union démocratique du Niger-Sawaba (Niger-Sawaba Democratic Union) led by Djibo Bakary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDR</td>
<td>Union pour la démocratie et la république (Union for Democracy and the Republic), one of the parties in the MRN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFRA</td>
<td>Union des forces de la résistance armée (Union of the Forces of Armed Resistance), Tuareg movement led by Mohamed Anacko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIS</td>
<td>Union nigérienne des indépendants et sympathisants (Nigerien Movement of Independents and Supporters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS</td>
<td>Unités sahariennes de sécurité (Saharan Security Units)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>