

Unpacking Democratic Transitions: The Case of Niger

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Executive Summary

Sam Jowett

Despite its dismantling of previous corrupt government regimes and recent political elections, Niger consistently ranks lowest on the HDI Index at 186 and remains stricken with poverty. While the current government can be deemed democratic and the country is en route to a stable election in 2016, the state lacks the capacity to effectively administer solutions to the numerous problems plaguing the country. Despite having no serious internal conflicts, Niger's geographic location places it at the centre of several at-risk states. At best, Niger's borders are porous, at worst, non-existent. Conflicts stemming from Mali, Libya, and Nigeria bleed over, sending displaced refugees into the state. Numerous militant groups easily cross into Niger, posing high risk to the Uranium mining operations occurring. The reports below summarize the crux of the major issues that Niger faces. To suggest there are any easy solutions would be naïve and unfounded.

Niger History

Soheil Milani

Niger was part of the French West Africa, a group of 8 territories in Africa under French rule. The first National party was the conservative Nigerien Progressive Party (PPN) led by Hamoud Diori in 40s. He also founded the African Rally to gain representation in the national assembly and gain economic and social advantages. The people he removed from the party went on to create their own radical leftist freedom parties, such as the Democratic National Union – (UDN) - which called for independence. Diori pushed for a referendum to see if citizens wanted to fight for autonomy in the French Community, or for independence, and more than 78% voted to autonomy in the Community¹. Following the referendum, Diori led a coalition of pro-French parties and won a majority of the seats in the assembly and became PM. He proceeded to ban the opposition party, and after gaining Niger's independence from France, became president through an election in the assembly. He put down a coup by opposition supporters and was re-elected in 1965.¹

In 1968 uranium mines were developed, and a devastating 5-year drought began, destroying land and livestock. In 1974 the head of the military, Kountche, declared a coup and took power. Claiming a coup attempt by UDN in 75, he banished all opposition parties. In 76 there is another attempted coup, where a few are killed and 9 army officers are arrested and executed. Issues with Libya begin in the 80s over the mistreatment of the Tuaregs, and results in breakdown of diplomatic relations. Early 80s efforts to include civilians in the national government are made, and Koutchne appoints Ousmane as the Prime Minister. In 1983 another coup is attempted by the military, and Ousmane is removed for suspicions that he was involved. Another PM is put into place to replace him - Ahmid Algabid. Tuareg groups on the Libyan-Niger border attack and kill civilians, and the government expels all Tuaregs who are not citizens in '85. Diori is exiled to Morocco after suspicions of rebellion. In '86 Kountche was diagnosed with a brain tumour, and gave up power to chief of staff of the military of the time, Ali Saibou. Progress towards democracy continues.²

In the final years of the 1980s, both former presidents, Kountche and Diori pass away, Ousmane is made Prime Minister then removed, and finally a new constitution is drafted, which shapes the parameters of the government as a military, one party institution; the referendum passes with over 99% support, and Ali Seybou and his party run unopposed, winning all the seats.

¹ "Niger Profile," 2013. *BBC News: Africa*.

² "Timeline: Instability in Niger," 2010. *Al Jazeera*.

The new decade began with civil and student protests. The drought worsened and the government cut off funding previously promised to Tuareg tribes. Protests lead to riots and demands of autonomy, and after 30 die in Tchín-Tabaradene, the army is sent in, killing hundreds of Tuaregs. Niger, Algeria, Libya and Mali attempt to control the nomadic Tuaregs who reside surrounding the borders they share. Seybou drafted a new constitution and organized a national conference to allow for a multi-party civilian democracy. The new constitution was passed with nearly 90% approval in a referendum, and Ousmane becomes president. Ousmane promised the Tuaregs degrees of autonomy, and peace talks lead to a signed agreement between the government and the main rebel groups, in 1995.³

³ "Niger Profile: A Chronology of Key Events," 2013. *BBC News: Africa*.

Niger History

Sam Jowett

Events leading up to the coup

Rumours that President Tandja may attempt to extend his presidential rule by adding a third term began to surface in October 2008. Both supporters and opponents to the extension began to swiftly mount demonstrations and protests. Tandja himself was mostly silent about the extension, until declaring in March 2009 that he would remain in power until the end of his second term and not reform the Constitution to further his rule.

A mere two months later, during an interview, Tandja altered his intentions, stating that “the people [of Niger] have demanded I remain”.⁴ An official referendum was announced, with its goal to scrap the current constitution and form the Sixth Republic of Niger. A political crisis swiftly boiled throughout the country with several protests erupting from official opposition parties, as well parties that were previously sided with Tandja’s government. Various divisions of government were highly critical of the move, with the constitution court declaring that such an action would be illegal. Those who opposed the referendum were replaced during a governmental reorganization. Immediately after the court’s statement, Tandja announced that he had dissolved the National Assembly. This move was in the sphere of power of the president, under the sanction that an election would have to occur within three months.⁵

Tension escalated in June when the Courts demanded that the government move towards an August election, having refused to reconsider the referendum and stating that its decision was binding.⁶ In response Tandja also dissolved the government, including the courts, and declared a state of emergency under the claim that Niger’s independence was being threatened, and that he would rule by decree.

In August 2009, the voting for the referendum went through. Given that the vast majority of the Opposition had decided to boycott the referendum, it passed with 92.5% of votes in favour.⁷ Voter turnout remains in dispute, and calls the validity of the referendum into question. This allowed Tandja to form the Sixth Republic, moving Niger to a full Presidential system and giving him full executive power. Tandja’s decisions were strongly criticized from both regional and international actors. The Economic Community of West African States suspended Niger’s membership, and aid from several Western states was frozen.⁸

⁴ Kirkby, Daniela. 2009. “Niger’s Threat to Democracy.” *Consultancy Africa*.

⁵ “Niger.” *Freedom House*. 2010.

⁶ “Niger: U.S., Ecowas Refuse to Recognize Tandja.” 2009. *AllAfrica*.

⁷ “Massive win for Niger President.” 2009. *BBC News*.

⁸ “Niger: Constitutional Crisis Turned Coup.” 2010. *Irin*

Coup d'état

On February 18 2010, President Tandja and government ministers were subjected to an attack, beginning with gunfire just outside of the Presidential Palace by members of the armed forces. The ensuing four-hour firefight led to the capture of Tandja and his government. After having successfully ousted Tandja, the military junta, named *The Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy*, established an interim government for Niger with the primary goal of swiftly moving towards a new democratic election.⁹ The three primary figures responsible for the coup were Major Salou Dijibo, Colonel Djibril Hamidou, and Colonel Abdoulaye Adamou Harouna.¹⁰ It was emphasized that no member of the interim government would be eligible to stand for election. Twenty ministers were appointed to govern during the democratic transition period, each with assigned portfolios. While President Tandja had downplayed any issues of poverty and famine occurring in the country, the interim government was quick to appeal to the international community for aid. The international response for the coup was mixed, with some states recognizing the need for Tandja to surrender powers, while others condemned the forceful measures taken.

Presidential Election

Presidential and parliamentary elections were announced for January 2011. The National Movement for a Developing Society (MNSD) announced Seyni Oumarou as their candidate, who had previously served under the Tandja government. The Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism announced Mahamadou Issoufou as their candidate. These two were seen as frontrunners for the elections. Both Oumarou and Issoufou took large portions of the initial vote and would advance to a run off vote.

Both parties ran on generally similar policies. The main distinction being that Oumarou had been a member of Tandja's government, while Issoufou had been the main opposition. The run off went through with Issoufou winning with 58% of the vote over Oumarou's 42%.¹¹

⁹ Issa, Ousseini. "POLITICS-NIGER: First Moves by Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy." 2010. *GlobalIssues*.

¹⁰ "Key Figures in Niger Coup." 2010. *AlJazeera*.

¹¹ "Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security." 2011. *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series* 48 (3).

Politics and Constitution of Niger

Ryan Howson

The 5th Republic of Niger is semi-Presidential and relies on the 1999 Constitution, which was re-approved by popular referendum in 2010 (90.18%).¹² The President (currently Mahamadou Issoufou) serves a 5-year term as Head of State, and he names a Prime Minister (Brigi Mafini) who heads the government. Executive power resides dually with the President and PM, and with the Unicameral National Assembly, which is also elected by the general populace every 5 years. The National Assembly is the sole legislative body in Niger, and there is also an independent judiciary, with the Supreme Court of Niger being the highest-level body. The last Presidential and Parliamentary elections took place in January 2011, producing the current government, and were declared free and fair by government and opposition parties in Niger, as well as by the international community.¹³ The next elections are expected to occur in early 2016.

The National Assembly is composed of 113 deputies – 105 are elected based on a party-list proportional-representation system, and the other 8 represent regions through first-past-the-post.¹⁴ Parties must gain at least 5% of the popular vote to gain any of the 105 PR seats. The other 8 seats represent the 8 administrative regions that Niger is divided into, which are further sub-divided into 36 districts which each have an appointed “chief administrator”.

3 major political parties have dominated the 5th Republic, along with a number of smaller minor ones. The first is the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS), which currently holds the most seats in the National Assembly, and is the party of President Issoufou. It is the main left-wing party in Niger, and is a member of Socialist International.¹⁵ Secondly is the National Movement for the Development of Society (MNSD-Nassara), led by Seyni Oumarou, a former Prime Minister. It is the main centre-right alternative to the PNDS, and was in power for most of the 2000s.¹⁶ Finally is the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS-Rahama), led by Mahamane Ousmane. It is a chiefly centrist party who cooperated with MNSD-Nassara for much of the previous decade, but broke away from it when President Tandja

¹² News 24, *Niger Set To Adopt New Charter*, November 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Niger-on-course-to-adopt-new-charter-20101102>.

¹³ Agence France-Presse, *EU Congratulates Winner of Niger Presidential Poll*, March 2011. Retrieved from http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALEqM5gVj_Hmv2_A6snaMt4mM9UVEfu4Cw?docId=CNG.eec782652f590060d2b0c356a1aae693.291.

¹⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Niger - Assemblée Nationale*. Retrieved from <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2237.htm>.

¹⁵ Socialist International, *Member Parties of the Socialist International*, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.socialistinternational.org/viewArticle.cfm?ArticlePageID=931>.

¹⁶ *Nos Idées*, MNSD-Nassara, 2012. Retrieved from <http://mnsdnassara.org/nos-idees/>.

Mamadou began holding onto power against Constitutional rules. It is concerned chiefly with the upholding of Democracy and the Rule of Law.

The current state of Niger's politics has been largely shaped by the military coup which deposed former leader Tandja Mamadou in 2009. The military took control in 2009, and kept their promise to return the nation to democratic rule, forming the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy. Thus, the Presidential and Parliamentary elections of 2011 were the first in the post-Tandja era, and mark a new period in Niger's politics.

The main issues in the 2011 election were more to do with anti-corruption and constitutional and legal matters than actual policy differences. For instance, MNSD-Nassara was penalized by voters because of its association with Tandja – Nigeriens were less likely to vote for Oumarou because of involvement in Tandja's government. On matters of policy, PNDS and MNSD-Nassara (the two major parties) actually held fairly similar views: they both sought the alleviation of poverty and food shortages, and were interested in the redistribution of wealth gained from economics projects like uranium mining.¹⁷ All major political parties emphasized National Reconciliation as a chief aim – this was a large focus of the election. Thus, it remains to be seen what kind of policy debates will be decisive when Niger's citizens go to the polls next in 2016.

¹⁷ Agence France-Presse, *EU Congratulates Winner of Niger Presidential Poll*, March 2011. Retrieved from http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gVj_Hmv2_A6snaMt4mM9UVEfu4Cw?docId=CNG.eec782652f590060d2b0c356a1aae693.291.

Internal Conflict

Christian Taylor

Niger has endured relentless military rule for the majority of its post independence history. This includes prolonged guerilla warfare between the Tuareg nomadic rebels in the North and the agriculture based communities of the south. While the country has experienced two significant modern rebellions, a history of coup's and single-party dictatorships has created a weak central government that has been plagued with slow development and rampant poverty.

Niger's independence from France began on August 3rd 1960 in the form of a single-party dictatorship under Hamani Diori¹⁸. Coup's leading to dictatorship were routine in Niger until the first multiparty elections in 1993 resulted in Mahamane Ousmane's presidency¹⁹. Ibrahim Baré would oust Ousmane in a 1996 military coup, however Baré later held rigged elections triggering an angry electorate and Baré's eventual assassination in 1999²⁰. Further elections and a new constitution resulted in a return to democratic government under Mamadou Tanja as President and Hama Amadou's as Prime Minister (Majority Leader of the National Assembly), which lasted through the first ever simultaneously successful municipal and national elections in 2004. A July 2007 vote of non-confidence led to Seyni Oumarou becoming Prime Minister who put forth reforms within the Council of Ministers of Niger. In February of 2010, Tandja was stripped of power in a coup and detained by a group of soldiers who later declared the formation of the 'Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy' and a new constitution²¹. Presidential and Legislative elections were held in January 2011, resulting in Mahamadou Issoufou as President and Seini Oumarou as Prime Minister in a democratic civilian approved process, a significant accomplishment given the history of Niger²².

Armed Conflict

In May 1990 the first Tuareg rebellion occurred²³, seeking autonomy and independence from both Mali and Niger. The Tuareg are a nomadic secularist people who live across the

¹⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Niger," accessed November 25, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/414746/Niger>.

¹⁹ McGowan, Patrick J. 2003. 'African Military coups d'état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution.' *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41.4: 339-370.

²⁰ Lunde, Tormod K. 1991. 'Modernization and Political Instability: Coups d'Etat in Africa, 1955- 85.' *Acta Sociologica* 34.1: 13-32.

²¹ McGowan 339 - 370

²² See 1 for the entire history of Niger's electoral process

²³ Previous rebellions had occurred in 1911 and 1914 but because they occurred during Colonial times they are considered separate from the modern Tuareg rebellions.

Sahara, with representation in most of Northern Saharan Africa²⁴. A prolonged drought and weak economy led to the 'Popular Front for the Liberation of Niger', a Tuareg opposition group that began to use radical means to project their views. Initially the group demanded education curriculums that included Tamashek and Tuareg customs, greater inclusion within government, society and the military and larger shares from uranium mining. However the demands rapidly spiraled to full autonomy. Responding to growing opposition, the Nigerien Military attacked, often using brutal methods, hundreds of Tuareg civilians in what is now known as the Tchind Tabaradene Massacre. This led to the formation of two official, armed Tuareg groups: the Front for the Liberation of Air and Azaouak and the Front for the Liberation of Tamoust. While the fighting was sporadic, regional instability and lack of development led to enormous economic harms in the North. A peace agreement was reached, after several tries, in Ouagadougou on April 15th 1995, which included increases rebel inclusion within the army, government and civilian institutions as well as a greater share of the North's mineral revenues.

The second modern Tuareg rebellion occurred largely due to a failure (in the minds of the rebels) of the Niger Government to honor the 1995 peace accords. The conflict led to citizens fleeing into southern Niger cities like Agadez and refugees crossing the boarder into Algeria and Libya. The conflict began when the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) attacked Nigerien Military Forces in February 2007. International media outlets became increasingly concerned when an Al-Qaeda Organization kidnapped 2 Canadian diplomats and four European tourists. Southern guerilla attacks shortly after the Ramadan truce of 2007 led the government to proclaim a national state of emergency to attract humanitarian intervention. Disputes within the MNJ leadership led to the Nigerien Patriotic Front taking control of rebel factions, who agreed to enter peace talks with the Nigerien government and Libyan representatives.

Internal Governmental Conflict

Major Dauda Mallam Wanke led a coup that institutionalized democracy in 1999, which elected President Mamajou Tandja. Previous President Ibrahim Bare Mainassara held responsibility for a multiplying inflation rate, and an "inability to responsibly manage public expenditures."²⁵ As well, a changing climate left an economy reliant on agriculture and resources vulnerable to drought and unstable price fluctuations. At the time, Amnesty International reported that, "Hundreds of people were arrested solely for exercising their right

²⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Tuareg," accessed December 27, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/608089/Tuareg>.

²⁵ Miller, Andrew. "Debunking the myth of "Good" Coup d'Etat in Africa." *African Studies Quarterly*. no. 2 (2011): 57.

to freedom of expression and association”²⁶ after Bare forced the Supreme Court to void an opposition party’s 1999 victory. Bare was assassinated on April 9th 1999 on Wanke’s orders, leading to Niger’s Fifth Republic and a fair election process that left Tandja in power.

The Fifth Republic’s commitment to democracy and an open political process was undermined when Tandja dissolved the National Assembly and Constitutional Court in 2009, and initiated a “crackdown on media dissent.”²⁷ President Tandja held a referendum in August 2009 to extend his presidential term for three more years (after having served 10 already) to “finish some projects.”²⁸ Opposition groups boycotted the referendum and considering Tandja dissolution of the assembly and courts, the 93% approval rate is subject to speculation.

The 2010 coup resulted in the formation of the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy, which planned a democratic transition within a year of the takeover. January 2011 elections resulted in a civilian elected government, which will face an arrangement of plaguing social and economic problems that continue to weaken the development of Niger. The newfound democratic process could be a source of future internal conflict within Niger as it has been in the past. As well, Niger’s ongoing droughts, poverty and malnutrition has led to little development of agricultural techniques or resource extraction. Soil erosion and dated agricultural practices, which haven’t adapted to a changing climate, have left the country at the bottom of the Human Development Index. Future conflict or division may result from the political processes used to cope with a changing climate and economy that requires significant effort just to deal with current challenges. Such climate change, little education and widespread poverty have left the country incapable of future development, which may cause future internal government or societal conflicts.

²⁶ Amnesty International 1996.

²⁷ Miller, 58.

²⁸ Anonymous. 2010. ‘The Coup in Niger.’ This Day (Nigeria): 3 March.

Foreign Relations

Scott Falls

Security

Niger faces an array of security threats due to its geographical location. Instability in the region has led militant groups to spread from neighbouring countries across Niger's poorly secured borders. Conflicts in Libya and Mali have caused thousands of refugees to flood into Niger, accompanied by armed Tuareg rebels who have had a difficult past with the Nigerien government.²⁹ Apart from threats from ethnic rebels, Islamist militants have made their presence in Niger known in recent years. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a regional arm of the greater al Qaeda terrorist organization, has been active in Northern Mali since mid-2012 and has conducted kidnappings and various attacks on foreigners and civil servants in Niger since at least early 2010.³⁰ Additionally, militant jihadists of the Boko Haram Islamist group are known to frequently cross over Nigeria's northern border and to conduct operations in Niger.³¹

Despite a few ongoing border disputes, Niger has close ties to many of its West African neighbours (US Department of State). However, regional instability is a major threat to the security of Niger, and the Issoufou government has responded by substantially increasing defence spending and border security.³² Niger is not alone in their efforts to keep militants out of the country; France and the United States are frequently involved in training exercises with the Nigerien military and see Niger as an important ally in combating the spread of Islamic terrorism.³³ The US operates a drone base out of Niamey, Niger's capital, which has become an important hub for conducting counterterrorist measures in West Africa.³⁴ Furthermore, in January of 2013, Niger and the US signed a status-of-forces agreement, indicating a movement towards creating stronger security ties between Niger and the US.

Multilateral Relations

Niger plays an active role in the international community. Niger is a member of the United Nations and its primary subsidiary bodies, and served on the Security Council briefly from 1980-1981 (US Department of State). As well, Niger is a member of various regional

²⁹ Lebovich, Andrew. "Overstating Terror in Niger." *Foreign Affairs*. Council on Foreign Relations, 14 Aug. 2013.

³⁰ Lebovich, Andrew. "Overstating Terror in Niger."

³¹ Elischer, Sebastian. "After Mali Comes Niger." *Foreign Affairs*. Council on Foreign Relations, 12 Feb. 2013.

³² Lebovich, Andrew. "Overstating Terror in Niger."

³³ Lebovich, Andrew. "Overstating Terror in Niger."

³⁴ Lebovich, Andrew. "Overstating Terror in Niger."

organizations such as the African Union, Economic Community of West African States, and the West African Monetary Union, among others.³⁵ Niger is also active in cooperating with and working through the International Atomic Energy Agency due to the importance of uranium production in Niger.³⁶ In 2010, Niger was elected to the IAEA Board of Governors and served until 2012.³⁷

Humanitarian Aid

Due to Niger's extreme poverty and vulnerable food security, the country is heavily reliant on foreign aid. Niger receives significant funding from France, the EU, and the US, and also receives aid from the World Bank, IMF, and various subsidiary bodies of the UN such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF. In 2002, the amount of foreign aid and external loans Niger was receiving was equivalent to roughly 45% of the government's fiscal year budget (CFG-Niger). This perpetual reliance on foreign assistance, beginning in the 1970s, has left Niger in a constant state of indebtedness while continuing to run high deficit levels. As a result, creditor states and organizations have frequently cancelled debt payments to reduce Niger's debt-to-GDP ratio, which was successfully brought down from 52% in 2005 to 11.8% in 2010.³⁸ The IMF has estimated that between 2011 and 2028, Niger will average roughly 17% in debt-to-GDP, which is a substantial improvement.³⁹

³⁵ "Niger (06/20/11)." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State, 20 June 2011

³⁶ Sidi, Mahamane. "42nd IAEA General Conference - UN Statement." *42nd IAEA General Conference - UN Statement*. International Atomic Energy Agency, n.d.

³⁷ Henriques, Sasha. "Board of Governors Elects New Chair." *Board of Governors Elects New Chair*. International Atomic Energy Agency, 27 Sept. 2010.

³⁸ Dunphy, Elaine. "Niger - Economy." *Europa World Plus*. Routledge, n.d.

³⁹ Dunphy, Elaine. "Niger - Economy." *Europa World Plus*. Routledge, n.d.

Niger Economics

Katrina Dods

While full of potential in its natural resources, Niger has been ravaged by too many negative influences that have prevented proper economic development. Political instability, such as the regional crisis alongside Mali, have stunted build-up of infrastructure and have warded off foreign investors.⁴⁰ As a landlocked state largely covered by the Sahara desert, the threat of drought makes agriculture (a staple of the economy) a gamble.⁴¹ Moreover, massive population growth is simply too overwhelming for the institutions Niger currently has in place, especially in the light of refugee influxes from the Mali conflicts. These, alongside the shackles of an economic union and high fiscal debt, have made it extremely difficult for growth that would help alleviate many of the social issues currently present in the country.

The primary concern with Niger's economic system is its utter lack of diversity, which makes it particularly susceptible to shocks.⁴² Its primary sector, which accounts for 46.8% of Niger's GDP,⁴³ is almost entirely dependent on agriculture. In fact, the extraordinary GDP growth experienced in 2012⁴⁴ was simply a result of high rainfall; needless to say, the dependency of an economy on weather is clearly problematic. While Niger has a large service sector, its smallest sector is what holds the most promise: secondary industry grew by 38% in 2012.⁴⁵ Niger holds some of the world's largest uranium deposits and oil reserves, among other mineral resources.⁴⁶

Domestic trade is centred around agriculture- it accounts for the livelihood of 90% of the Niger population.⁴⁷ However, its membership in the African Economic Community (and its subsidiaries) entails a free trade environment through customs unions, rendering inter-member trade highly accessible. Still, Niger's main trading partnership remains with Nigeria, accounting for 41% of its exports.⁴⁸ The United States and India follow suit.⁴⁹ Niger largely exports

⁴⁰ African Development Bank Group, "Niger Economic Outlook.", <http://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/niger/niger-economic-outlook>.

⁴¹ Government of Canada, "Niger", Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD), <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/niger-e>.

⁴² Christine Lagarde, "Securing Niger's Economic Future in Uncertain Global Economic Times", speech for Nigerien National Assembly from International Monetary Fund, Niamey, Niger, December 11, 2011.

⁴³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook* (2008) <http://www.oecd.org/dev/emea/40578324.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Country Comparison - GDP Real Growth Rate", The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2003rank.html>.

⁴⁵ African Development Bank Group, "Niger Economic Outlook."

⁴⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Niger", The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ng.html>.

⁴⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Niger".

⁴⁸ African Development Bank Group, "Niger Economic Outlook."

uranium, livestock, cowpeas, and onions, with oil likely being the up-and-coming breadwinner for Niger's balance of trade. The effective mining and refinery of oil could prove to be a saviour for a struggling Niger balance of trade; as of the second quarter of 2013, the trade gap was approximately \$121 million USD.⁵⁰

Issues arise in Niger's inability to handle economic shocks properly, as it only has the liberty of adjusting fiscal policies. It has no discretion over interest rates or money supply, as its currency is regulated strictly by the Central Bank of the West African Union to maintain parity and control inflation.⁵¹ Thus, Niger is forced to turn to expansionary fiscal policy, which has contributed to enormous debt (likely Niger's biggest economic problem). Debt has largely been incurred as part of massive social programming bent on improving healthcare, education, security, and the like.⁵² While such as investment in human capital is commendable, income poverty has declined too slowly for these programs to be considered successful. Moreover, regional political instability may mean that the Niger government will need to shift its spending towards security and the military, over social welfare.⁵³ In either case, its goal should be to control spending and use increased revenues gained from inflationary impacts on spending wisely.⁵⁴ Currently, tax revenue is garnered through industrial/commercial profits taxes and Value Added Taxes, both of which are well below their projected target.⁵⁵ However, if Niger can draw enough investment to build up infrastructure supporting mining industries, revenues will increase through profit taxes and permits.⁵⁶

Dealing with debt has been a struggle for Niger, and is a challenge that must be overcome in order to achieve economic growth without such a sizable limitation. In 2000, Niger qualified to receive funds from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through its Highly Indebted Poor Countries Fund.⁵⁷ Canada's Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports a decrease to 13.4% in Niger's debt/GDP ratio through the IMF's Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative⁵⁸, the country began receiving 100% relief in 2005.⁵⁹

⁴⁹ African Development Bank Group, "Niger Economic Outlook."

⁵⁰ Trading Economics, "Niger Balance of Trade", <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/niger/balance-of-trade>.

⁵¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁵² African Development Bank Group, "Niger Economic Outlook."

⁵³ African Development Bank Group, "Niger Economic Outlook."

⁵⁴ Christine Lagarde, "Securing Niger's Economic Future in Uncertain Global Economic Times."

⁵⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁵⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁵⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Niger".

⁵⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁵⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Niger".

Niger has relied heavily on multilateral aid from many organizations and nations, aside from the IMF. Issues that would likely arise from growing mining and refinery industries would involve the conflicting priorities between growing industries and considerations of environmental externalities.⁶⁰ Something to take into account is the danger of aid overreliance in developing countries; however, in the time being Niger is only able to maintain many of its welfare programs without defaulting through such external funding. Canada, for example, has many aid programs targeting Niger that simultaneously promote sustainable development.⁶¹ These range from school feeding programs to the training of local women to manage foodgrain banks.⁶² Even so, Niger is unlikely to achieve all the Millenium Development Goals by 2015.⁶³

The OECD identifies that the most effective aid to Niger at this point would be targeted improvements to elements of political and economic infrastructure. Perhaps the most pressing issues within government are effective and stable bureaucracy. Niger has already gone through measures to create more accountable institutions through Treasury reforms and more thorough procedures for audits and the training of government officials⁶⁴. This, coupled with increased tax fraud prevention, sets a good base for improved relations and more reliable administration if the policies are followed through.⁶⁵ A second structural issue that Niger faces surrounds the handling of both resource and human capital. The improvement of agriculture relies on the “[promotion of] irrigated cultivation, [diversification of] agricultural production and [creation of] conditions needed to achieve food security”.⁶⁶ Regulation for uranium and oil refinery is also key in establishing an appealing environment for foreign multinationals.⁶⁷ Niger has also worked to privatize major financial institutions and utility/resource firms to better facilitate their growth, largely with the guidance of the World Bank.⁶⁸ There is also an increased focus on developing technical and vocational skills by making education and training more

⁶⁰ African Development Bank Group, "Niger Economic Outlook."

⁶¹ Government of Canada, "Niger - International Development Projects", Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD), <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cidaweb/cpo.nsf/fWebCSAZEn?ReadForm&idx=01&CC=NE>.

⁶² Government of Canada, "Niger - International Development Projects".

⁶³ African Development Bank Group, "Niger Economic Outlook."

⁶⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁶⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁶⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁶⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁶⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

geographically widespread, creating better quality instruction within institutions, and putting particular emphasis on promoting skills that will align with Niger's goals for economic growth.⁶⁹

The African Union's African Economic Community (AEC), established in 1991 through the Abuja Treaty,⁷⁰ has striven to create a more unified economic structure through the stimulation of 'regional economic communities'⁷¹. Economic communities are multi-level trade unions intended on facilitating better economic relations through reduced barriers; Niger is part of a layer of such unions. Within the AEC, Niger has also been member to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) since 1994, along with 7 other neighbouring states.⁷² It is a customs and currency union, sharing a common external tariff to protect a free trade area. Moreover, it shares the CFA Franc as a common currency, as well the Central Bank of West African States.⁷³ The goal of such unions is to promote economic integration: protectionist measures that intend on providing lower market prices for consumers and distributors to increase productivity of member states as a whole. In the future, the UEMOA should also be able to better merge its macroeconomic policies in order to facilitate greater competition through open markets. Within the UEMOA, Niger joins Burkina Faso and Mali in the Liptako-Gourma Authority (LGA). The LGA website identifies its mission as the "common regional development of mineral, energy, hydraulic, and agricultural resources"⁷⁴, which could be a crucial means of growth considering the structural issues detailed previously. Needless to say, the viability of any of these economic communities to produce any real effects largely relies on regional security and responsible government.

⁶⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and African Development Bank, *Niger: African Economic Outlook*.

⁷⁰ The African Union Commission, "AU in a Nutshell", African Union, <http://www.au.int/en/about/nutshell>.

⁷¹ Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of South Africa, "The Role of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as the Building Blocks of the African Union", International Relations and Cooperation - Republic of South Africa, <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2003/au0815.htm>.

⁷² The World Bank Group, "Western Africa: WAEMU - West African Economic and Monetary Union", Regional Integration in Africa - The World Bank, <http://go.worldbank.org/FKHEP1VQF0>.

⁷³ The World Bank Group, "Western Africa: WAEMU - West African Economic and Monetary Union".

⁷⁴ Liptako-Gourma, "L'ALG: Création et mission", Autorité de Développement Intégré de la Région du Liptako-Gourma (ALG), <http://www.liptakogourma.org/spip.php?rubrique1>.

Foreign Aid

Laura Maxwell

Niger receives a large amount of foreign aid, experiencing political turmoil, unreliable agriculture and food security and high levels of corruption in the extractive industry. Niger relies on foreign aid and borrowing to survive and is classified as 'debt-distressed' by the World Bank. In 2002, foreign aid comprised 45% of the government's budget. Principle donors to Niger include France, the European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United States, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Saudi Arabia and various other United Nations agencies.⁷⁵

Foreign relations with the United States, which deteriorated following the 1996 presidential election, improved significantly following the reinstatement of an elected government in January 2000. The following March, the US government announced its intentions to end sanctions on Niger. The US, with several other donor countries and international organizations, criticized President Tandja's attempt to extend his mandate in 2009 and while he remained in office the US suspended non-humanitarian assistance, resuming in mid-2010 following the return to civilian rule in Niger.⁷⁶

The People's Republic of China has recently expressed interest in developing strong economic relations with Niger, increasing bilateral trade, and investing heavily in uranium mining. An agreement was made in June 2008 which was worth five million USD over a three-year period for oil exploration and drilling rights in Agadem, as well as for the construction of a pipeline and refinery. In September of that year, a bilateral agreement on economic and technological cooperation was signed.⁷⁷

Education

In 2007, adult literacy rate in Niger was estimated by UNESCO to be 30.4% (males 44.3%; females 16.4%), one of the lowest in the world. Free education is available in Niger and is compulsory from age seven to fifteen. Primary education begins at age six or seven and lasts for six years and secondary education begins at age thirteen, lasting four years. According to UNESCO estimates, in 2010/11 62% (boys 68%; girls 57%) of children in Niger were enrolled in primary school and 10% in secondary school (boys 13%; girls 8%). Access to education is an

⁷⁵ "U.S. relations with Niger" Bureau of African Affairs, accessed December 22 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5474.htm>.

⁷⁶ "Recent history: foreign relations," Europa World Plus, accessed December 22 2013, <http://www.europaworld.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/entry/ne.hi>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

issue for nomadic families and children in the north of the country. There are two universities in Niger; the Abodou Moumouni University, founded in 1973, and the Islamic University of Niger, founded in 1987. Enrollment in these institutions was 11,292 in 2009/10. Public expenditure on education in 2010 represented 16.9% of total spending.⁷⁸

Health and Welfare

Niger consistently ranks lowest, at 186 on the Human Development Index, with a HDI value of 0.304 in 2012.⁷⁹ Child (under five years old) mortality is estimated to be 12.5% due to generally poor health conditions and inadequate nutrition, and fertility rate is seven children per woman, the highest fertility rate globally.⁸⁰ Consequentially, 49% of the country's population is under the age of 15. Niger also has the highest infant mortality rate in the world, according to reports by the NGO Save the Children, and the 11th highest maternal mortality rate of 820 deaths per 100,000 live births.⁸¹ The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is approximated to be 0.8% of the population aged 15-49, with 0.02 physicians and 0.3 hospital beds per 1,000 people. Health expenditure is \$36 USD per head and health expenditure as a percentage of GDP is 4.8%. Only 50% of Nigeriens have access to water and even fewer, 10%, have access to sanitation.

Religion & Ethnic Conflict

It has been estimated that approximately 95% of the population of Niger are Muslims, and that 0.5% of Nigeriens are Christians. The remainder of the population follow traditional beliefs. The most influential Islamic groups in Niger are the Tijaniyya, the Senoussi and the Hamallists. The Roman Catholic Church is the most prevalent form of Christianity.⁸²

The Nigerien government, in October 2006, announced that it planned to expel from Niger up to 150,000 Mahamid Arabs from Chad who had migrated into the country in 1974 to escape severe drought conditions and in the 1980s fleeing domestic conflict. The government claimed that the group posed a threat to security due to possession of firearms and poor

⁷⁸ "UIS statistics in brief, general profile: Niger," Unesco Institute for Statistics, accessed December 22 2013, http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=147&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=5620&BR_Region=40540.

⁷⁹ The United Nations Development Program, *Human development report 2013* (New York: Gilmore Printing Services Inc., 2013), 150.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 89-90.

⁸¹ "Niger" Save the Children, accessed December 12, 2013, <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/where-we-work/africa/niger>.

⁸² "Country profile: location, climate, language, religion, flag, capital," Europa World Plus, accessed December 22 2013, <http://www.europaworld.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/entry/ne.is.2>.

relations with the local population. Protests from several thousand Nigeriens and Chad forced the government to suspend the expulsions.⁸³

La Programme de Renaissance

La Programme de Renaissance, developed in 2013, has been designed in order to overcome challenges faced in the Sahel, the ecoclimatic and biogeographic zone of transition between the Sahara desert to the North and the Sudanian Savanna to the south. The Program, as outlined by the Nigerian government working with the UN, the African Union, the World Bank and the European Union, has outlined Niger's main priorities⁸⁴ which include:

- I. To build a strong and stable democratic institutions. The Nigerien government claims that advances have been made on this front; that the country is one of the most free in the world and that corruption has been reduced. The president expressed that administrative capacities need to be improved and that the middle class needs to be expanded.
- II. To assure border and personal security as well as security of goods. \$200 million will be allocated for 5-year investment in new infrastructure for the military in the north.
- III. To nourish and reinforce the resilience of Nigeriens in the face of climate changes. In the face of climate changes in Niger, where desertification is a serious issue, chronic malnutrition, grain deficiency and extremely poor food security must be addressed.
- IV. To equip Niger with communication and energy infrastructure. There is a need for better roads and railways and better energy across Niger. There will also be a push to increase education for girls and to improve institutions of higher education in the country.
- V. Humanitarian questions. Libyan, Ivorian and Nigerian issues have brought thousands of Nigeriens back to Niger, and the Malian crisis has resulted in an influx of refugees to the country.⁸⁵

⁸³ "Recent history: foreign relations," Europa World Plus, accessed December 22 2013, <http://www.europaworld.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/entry/ne.hi>.

⁸⁴ "<<Le Niger occupe une place centrale au Sahel et de ce fait est le plus expose aux menaces>>," declare SEM Issoufou Mahamadou," *Le Sahel*, 2013, accessed November 2013, <http://www.lesahel.org/index.php/component/k2/item/4468-le-niger-occupe-une-place-centrale-au-sahel-et-de-ce-fait-est-le-plus-expos%C3%A9-aux-menaces-d%C3%A9clare-sem-issoufou-mahamadou>.

⁸⁵ International Monetary Fund, *Niger: Document de strategie pour la reduction de la pauvreté* (Washington: International Monetary Fund Publication Services, 2013), 1-278.

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