

A decorative map of the African continent composed of a grid of dots in various shades of grey and red. The red dots are concentrated in the Sahel region, highlighting the focus of the paper.

# Promoting Sustainable Security and Stability in the Sahel: What is the Outlook for Niger in the Aftermath of the Military Coup?

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## I. BACKGROUND

For several years now, Niger, a West African state covering 1,267,000 km<sup>2</sup>, has been facing a security challenge of unprecedented magnitude and persistence. On its south-eastern border, which it shares with Benin, Nigeria, and Chad, the country has to contend with threats from the Nigerian-based jihadist group Boko Haram in the Diffa region, as well as cross-border crime spilling over from the Nigerian state of Zamfara into the Maradi region in central-eastern Niger. On its north-western border, which it shares with Burkina Faso and Mali, Niger has to deal with activists from armed terrorist groups based in northern Mali, particularly the two main terrorist groups in the Sahel: Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (Support Group for Islam and Muslims - JNIM).

Finally, the country has to keep a very close eye on its northern border with Libya, where the collapse of the central government has made way for the expansion of

criminal gangs whose activities can easily reach across the border. Due to the situation in Libya, a lucrative trade in weapons of war has developed in the Agadez region of Niger, along the common border. Reflecting the scale of the security challenge in Niger, three of the country's eight regions (Diffa, Tahoua and Tillabéry) have been placed under a state of emergency since 2015.

Although it is more vulnerable and even larger than Burkina Faso and Mali, Niger's security situation is less critical than that of its two neighbours. Underpinning the country's resilience is its high level of political stability, as reflected in the presidential election of December 2020, which, although hotly contested, never developed into a full-blown post-election crisis. Indeed, the candidate who lost in the second round of the presidential race, Mahamane Ousmane, chose to explore all legal avenues at national level before turning to the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Former President



Mahamane Ousmane eventually accepted his defeat and resumed his position in the National Assembly. The arrival in power of President Mohamed Bazoum, who was overthrown on 26 July 2023, was accompanied by an easing of relations between the government and the opposition, notably with the resumption of the activities of the National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP), the appointment of Tahirou Saidou, also known as Parc 20, as leader of the opposition, and the release of political figures imprisoned for their alleged responsibility in the post-electoral violence of February 2021, including the former Chief of Staff of the Niger army (1999-2010), General Moumouni Boureima. In addition to the country's political stability, Niger's resilience is due above all to the strong social cohesion between the country's nine ethnolinguistic groups: Arab, Buduma, Gourmantche, Hausa, Kanuri, Peul, Tuareg, Tubu and Zarma. Drawing on the lessons learned from the 1991-1995 rebellion as well as the 2007 rebellion by the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ), Niger has succeeded in integrating the Tuareg community firmly into the government apparatus.<sup>1</sup> An emblematic figure in that community, Brigi Rafini, held the position of Prime Minister for ten years (2001-2011), an unprecedented record of longevity in the office of Prime Minister in Niger. Moreover, it was due to the successful integration of the Tuareg in political governance roles that Niger, unlike Mali, did not experience an armed rebellion after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in November 2011 and the return of thousands of Nigerien Tuareg fighters. More recently, the January 2023 signing of the Banibangou inter-community peace agreement in the northwest of the tri-border area (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger) and the success of the 'Repentir contre Pardon' (Repentance for Forgiveness) programme, which helped demobilize dozens of Boko Haram fighters, attest to the importance of social cohesion in Niger. In addition to the peaceful transition from Mahamadou Issoufou to Mohamed Bazoum in 2021, political stability, social unity, and the quality of the military have all enabled Niger to build real resilience and, above all, to become a focal point for Western intervention in the Sahel. Close to 1,100 American soldiers are stationed in Niger, based in Agadez, Niamey, and in Ouallam, on the Niger-Malian border, in the tri-border area.

After pulling out of Mali, France chose Niger as the new main base for its presence in the Sahel. Until the coup d'état on 26 July, approximately 1,500 French soldiers

were deployed in Niger, where the European Union, in addition to Eucap Sahel Niger, was planning to deploy a military training mission known as the European Union Training Mission (EUTM-Niger).

Against this backdrop, the coup on 26 July was met with surprise, even by those well versed in the situation in Niger. However, the argument put forward by the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) to justify its actions, citing issues of poor governance, does appear to have merit. Indeed, between 2011 and 2023, the country was plagued by deep-seated and endemic corruption, as illustrated by the embezzlement of 12.1 billion CFA francs (more than 18 million euros) at Niger's Ministry of National Defence. Other scandals linked to the opaque management of public funds plagued the Renaissance I and II regimes (under Mahamadou Issoufou, 2011-2021), as well as the Renaissance III regime (under Mohamed Bazoum, 2021-2023).

On closer analysis, the coup of 26 July ushered in a new era of uncertainty in Niger. More than two months after the overthrow of President Bazoum, the military have failed to explain the actual course the country is taking. At the time of writing of this policy paper, neither a transition timeframe nor a transition agenda has been defined, let alone clear arrangements for the sharing of power between civilians and the military during the transition period. This is compounded by major uncertainties regarding regional stability, following the creation of an Alliance of Sahel States (AES) between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, one of whose aims is to stand alongside Niger in the event of a military intervention by ECOWAS. Finally, the coup adds to the uncertainty surrounding the future of the fight against terrorism in the Sahel, both because the armies of the sub-region will be busy dealing with political affairs and because a regional military confrontation would weaken them, thereby *de facto* benefitting the armed terrorist groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the peace agreement signed between the Tuareg rebellion and the government of Niger in Ouagadougou in April 1995, the government declared 24 April 'National Concord Day'.



## II. POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Despite its uncertain nature and the numerous uncertainties surrounding the current situation in Niger, a number of scenarios for the future can be envisaged.

### 2.1. A Political and Diplomatic Solution

ECOWAS and the CNSP continue to reaffirm their willingness to work towards a political and diplomatic solution to the crisis arising from the overthrow of President Mohamed Bazoum. Two initial rounds of talks between the military regime in power and a delegation from the sub-regional organization led by former Nigerian president Abubakar Abdusalami, with the support of religious authorities from Niger and Nigeria, have helped to move things along. During its second visit to Niamey, the ECOWAS delegation was able to meet with General Abdourahamane Tiani, chairman of the CNSP, and pay a brief courtesy call on the deposed president, Mohamed Bazoum. There are three possible scenarios for a political and diplomatic outcome.

#### ■ A transition led by an independent civilian figure

In the context of a 'neither Bazoum nor Tiani' scenario, certain Nigerien circles have suggested a compromise which would entrust the management of a transition lasting between twelve and eighteen months to a Nigerien civilian of international stature. The transition team's mandate would then be to prepare for general elections and to revise the fundamental legal instruments: a new constitution, a new electoral code, a new Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), a new electoral roll, and so forth. It remains to be seen whether this way out of the crisis will be favourably viewed both by the ousted president, Mohamed Bazoum,<sup>2</sup> who still refuses to resign, and General Abdourahamane Tiani, whose regime has taken control of the reins of power. Under this scenario, General Tiani could be appointed alongside the civilian president, as vice-president in charge of defence and security.

#### ■ A political transition led by President Mohamed Bazoum

The hypothesis of a transition led by President Bazoum has also been put forward as a way out of the crisis. The idea is to allow the deposed president to finish his

term of office by returning him to power for the next two years. During that time, the president would be assisted by a national union government that would not implement the campaign promises of Mohamed Bazoum, but rather a consensual programme with mutually agreed priorities. This scenario has little chance of coming to fruition.

#### ■ A transition led by General Abdourahamane Tiani

The leader of the CNSP, General Tiani, who was head of the presidential guard under former president Mahamadou Issoufou (2011-2021) and under Bazoum (2021-2023), plans to remain in power to lead the transition from the seventh to the eighth republic. In an address to the nation on 19 August 2023, the head of the CNSP spoke of 'a transition not to exceed three years', under his leadership. One way out of the crisis would therefore be to leave General Tiani in power, but to appoint a new prime minister chosen jointly with the political class and civil society, who would then form a new government team with a profile that is more technocratic than political.

Although unanimously supported, a political solution within the framework of negotiations between the CNSP and ECOWAS has very little chance of success, given how far apart the positions of the two parties actually are. While the military behind the coup d'état have embraced a transition scenario, the details and duration of which they propose to define during the inclusive national dialogue, the regional organization, for its part, reasserts that the only viable option is an unconditional return to the normal constitutional order with President Bazoum as head of state.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As proof that he has not relinquished his functions, President Mohamed Bazoum has appointed an international group of lawyers, who issued a press release on 2 October 2023 in which they announced that they were filing a complaint to obtain his unconditional release with a view to his reinstatement.

<sup>3</sup> ECOWAS and France are on the same wavelength, demanding the reinstatement of President Mohamed Bazoum. The United States has a more nuanced position, which does not rule out a return to constitutional order, or even a transition period, without necessarily reinstating the deposed president. On Tuesday 10 October 2023, the Americans decided to classify the July military takeover as a coup d'état and, as a result, announced the withdrawal of \$442 million in economic aid to Niger.



## 2.2. Maintaining the *Status Quo Ante*

In the absence of a realistic political solution, it is commonly felt that the current situation will persist, with the CNSP pushing ahead with its agenda and ECOWAS refusing to lift its sanctions against Niger. These sanctions include the closure of the country's land and air borders with the ECOWAS Member States, the suspension of financial and banking transactions with Niger, and individual measures against the perpetrators of the coup and anyone who agreed to help them. In this event, the country would suffer from a host of financial and social difficulties. The ECOWAS sanctions have led to a collapse in the country's internal resources, with a drastic decline in customs and tax revenues. In August 2023, Niger's customs authorities were only able to collect CFA francs 4 billion, compared with their normal monthly revenue of between CFA francs 15 and 17 billion. Tax revenue has not fared much better, with receipts down by close to 50% following the coup. For the month of August 2023, the tax authorities collected less than CFA francs 30 billion in revenue, compared with more than CFA francs 50 billion prior to the coup d'état. As a result, the government of Niger is finding it extremely difficult to meet its payroll. It is not certain that it will be able to pay out salaries in the coming months if the ECOWAS sanctions are maintained as they stand. In reality, public revenue is not the only area penalized by the implementation of the ECOWAS sanctions. Within two months following the coup d'état, there was a sharp rise in the price of basic foodstuffs, including rice, which jumped from CFA francs 11,000 per sack to CFA francs 15,000, an increase of nearly 30%. Maintaining the status quo will therefore only be possible at the cost of great hardship for the people of Niger, particularly the most vulnerable strata of society, thereby exacerbating poverty in the country and providing fertile ground for the recruitment of young people by armed terrorist groups. It is unclear, however, whether or not the situation will deteriorate, leading to 'hunger riots', as the junta has opted for the strategy of holding ECOWAS solely responsible for the misfortunes of the people of Niger. In any event, if the situation persists, it could well undermine the esteem and support enjoyed by the military government among the people of Niger. Since France agreed to withdraw its forces, tensions have arisen between the junta and a portion of civil society, which believes that the junta is not doing enough to address the poor governance that

has plagued the country for the past dozen years. For example, a growing number of voices are calling on the junta to arrest former President Mahamadou Issoufou for his alleged responsibility for poor governance in the country. There is no indication at this stage that the CNSP will comply with their request.

## 2.3. A Military Intervention by ECOWAS

Having failed to impose a favourable balance of power on the military regimes in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea Conakry, the sub-regional organization has no intention of letting the coup in Niger go unchallenged, including by means of military intervention. Accordingly, preparations for a military intervention in Niger have begun, with the August 2023 meeting of the ECOWAS Member States' armed forces chiefs of staff in Accra, Ghana. According to the initial plan, Nigeria was to spearhead the ECOWAS force in Niger to reinstate President Mohamed Bazoum and restore constitutional order. Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal announced that they would send troops to support the ECOWAS military intervention in Niger. However, the initial plan for the intervention was thwarted by the Nigerian Senate's refusal to allow President Bola Tinubu to engage the Nigerian army in Niger. Despite the scepticism it has aroused, the sub-regional organization still considers military intervention to be a feasible scenario. If it were to go ahead, a military intervention would entail significant risks on three fronts.

- Because Niamey's seats of power are located in a densely populated urban area in the heart of the capital, any military intervention, even a surgical one, is likely to cause enormous collateral damage. Deployment of military ground or air forces in the city of Niamey could result in a huge loss of life. In addition, given the sheer size of the country, control of the city of Niamey alone would not be sufficient to establish the authority of the reinstated regime over the whole country.
- A military intervention would also entail considerable political risks. With whom and how would President Bazoum govern if he were reinstated by force? The majority that brought him to power in 2021 does not hold the same views on ECOWAS military intervention. In addition to the internal split within the PNDS (Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism), the party co-founded by former President Mahamadou



Issoufou and Mohamed Bazoum, Seyni Oumarou's National Movement for the Development of Society (MNSD), and former Minister of the Interior Albadé Abouba's Patriotic Movement for the Republic (MPR) – the third political force in the presidential majority – are opposed to any military intervention. Whatever the ultimate outcome, the coup will have reshuffled the political cards. For the first time in its history, the PNDS is airing its internal divisions between, on the one hand, the supporters of former President Issoufou and, on the other, the supporters of his successor as head of state in Niger and of the Bazoum party. Although they are currently in opposing political blocs, Kassoum Moctar's Congress for the Republic (CPR) and the Nigerien Democratic Movement for an African Federation (MODEN/FA-Lumana) are among the political groups fiercely opposed to any military intervention. Quite apart from the political uncertainties, a military intervention could considerably weaken social cohesion. If it goes ahead, the relationship between supporters and opponents of military intervention in Niger will never be the same again. If the intervention is successful, its supporters could call to account those who publicly opposed it, and vice versa. A military intervention could also leave nationals of participating states vulnerable to reprisals. Even before an intervention began, nationals of several ECOWAS countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal) have begun to be singled out, to the point where they have had to publicly distance themselves from their governments through marches in support of the coup.

- Finally, military intervention poses risks for regional stability and the efforts to tackle the security challenge in the Sahel. Since the signing of the Liptako Charter, which created the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), Burkina Faso and Mali are under a binding commitment to go to war in the event of military intervention in Niger.<sup>4</sup> Such an outcome would give rise to a regional war, with Niger and its allies in Burkina Faso and Mali on one side, and the other ECOWAS member countries on the other. Added to this risk of escalation is the no less formidable prospect that a regional war would benefit the armed terrorist groups already lying in wait in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. There can be little doubt that any weakening of the defence and security forces (DSFs) of these three Sahelian countries would entail a major setback in the fight against terrorism.

### III. SHORT-, MEDIUM-, AND LONG-TERM OUTLOOKS

Niger is currently experiencing a time of great uncertainty, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to forecast its political and socio-economic prospects for the immediate future or the long term. However, a few trends do appear to be emerging for the country.

#### 3.1. In the Short Term

With the departure of French forces from the national territory and the suspension of Franco-Nigerian military cooperation, the country could see a resurgence of terrorist activity, particularly in the so-called tri-border (Burkina Faso-Mali-Niger) area.

The progress achieved in the fight against the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) jihadist group is likely to be consolidated.

The country should soon enter a transitional phase that is expected to culminate in general elections. Whatever the scenario, the country is likely to embark on a transitional phase that will provide an opportunity to elect the new national leadership. At this stage, the possibility of a return to power of the ousted president seems uncertain and even improbable.

The implementation of the transition will entail the adoption of new fundamental texts: a constitution, an electoral code, an electoral roll, voters' cards, etc.

Negotiations with Benin for the commissioning of the Niger-Benin Export Pipeline (PENB). With the effective start-up of this PENB, Niger is expected to export 90,000 barrels per day.<sup>5</sup> The contribution of the oil sector is expected to increase from the current 4% to 25% of gross domestic product (GDP), with the com-

<sup>4</sup> Article 6 of the Liptako-Gourma Charter establishing the Alliance of Sahel States stipulates that: 'Any attack on the sovereignty or territorial integrity of one or more of the Contracting Parties shall be considered an act of aggression against the other Parties and shall give rise to a duty of assistance and help on the part of all the Parties, individually or collectively, including the use of armed force, in order to restore and ensure security within the area covered by the Alliance'. (<https://www.voltairenet.org/article219804.html>)



missioning by the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) of new oil fields at Agadem, in the east of the country, more than 1,600 km from Niamey.

If the ECOWAS sanctions remain in force as they stand, with the country's exports and imports through the port of Cotonou halted, the economy of Niger may well collapse.

The coup is likely to delay the start-up of the activities of the *Office nigérien de la population* (ONP, or Office of National Population), a body set up in 2022 to help control population growth – a major challenge for the country whose population, with an annual growth rate of 3.9%, doubles every 17 years.

The government's cash flow problems could also affect the running of schools in Niger, particularly through the suspension of contracts for non-permanent teachers, who make up more than a third of the national education workforce. In 2023, the country recorded unsatisfactory results on school examinations, with a pass rate of 25.23% on the *baccalauréat* (A-levels) and a pass rate of 31.47% on the *brevet d'études secondaires* (secondary school certificate).

### 3.2. In the Medium Term

General elections will be held to elect the President of the Republic and the members of the National Assembly. These elections are expected to redefine the national political scene. At this stage, it already seems certain that the PNDS (the ruling party) will not maintain its current composition in the wake of the coup, owing to the deep rift between the supporters of the deposed president, Mohamed Bazoum, and those of his predecessor, Mahamadou Issoufou.

The entry into force of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), and the establishment of its operational bodies, should enable progress to be made in building a transnational response to insecurity, with improved military cooperation between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. If this Alliance achieves convincing results very quickly, it could overshadow the G-5 Sahel, whose attempts at a revival since the last summit of heads of state held in N'Djamena (Chad) in February 2023 have yet to produce any results. The Mauritanian head of state and current

chairman of the G-5 Sahel, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, pledged to make every effort to persuade Mali to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the organization in May 2022. So far, his endeavours have been to no avail. There is little chance of the G-5 Sahel returning to business as usual, and the position of Burkina Faso is ambiguous, as it has not formally withdrawn, but does not fully participate. Although the 'Alliance of Sahel States' has left the door ajar, there is little chance of regional states such as Mauritania and Chad joining it. Rightly or wrongly, the AES is perceived as a coalition directed against France.

A significant increase in the Nigerien government's resources from the commissioning of the PENB should lead to improved living conditions for the people of Niger thanks to better revenue sharing.

Cooperation is expected to resume between Niger and its international partners, both bilateral (Germany, France, Spain, Italy) and multilateral (European Union, IMF, World Bank, African Development Bank, etc.).

### 3.3. In the Long Term

A gradual return to security in the north-western part of the country, following the restoration of normality in the south-east, with the total cessation of the activities of ISWAP and Abubakar Shekau's wing of Boko Haram. The country returns to political stability, with a new, more virtuous ruling elite.

Oil production is expected to increase with the start-up of the Bilma blocks in the north, where the Algerian company SONATRACH (Société nationale pour la recherche, la production, le transport, la transformation et la commercialisation des hydrocarbures) has completed tests on some of the wells, which have been shown that their exploitation will be profitable. Niger's production could then exceed 200,000 barrels of oil per day.

Niger is set to regain control over its population growth, with a significant drop thanks to the initiatives of the Office of National Population.

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5 As a result of the deterioration of relations between Niger and Benin following the coup d'état on 26 July, there is no longer any visibility as to the actual commissioning of the PEBN.



Currently, 800,000 Nigerien children enter school every year. Due to a lack of resources, they are sometimes obliged to attend school in straw huts that are vulnerable to fire. In November 2021, twenty-six pupils at a nursery school in Maradi (in the centre-east of the country) were burnt alive, while twenty-one pupils at a nursery school in Niamey also lost their lives in April 2022 in a fire in straw hut classrooms. With the improvement in Niger's economy, boosted by oil revenues, the country will be in a position to provide better conditions for children attending school and also offer them opportunities for vocational and technical training, tailored to the employment environment, when they grow older.

In the health sector too, the revenues expected from the increase in oil production and the rise in uranium prices should make it possible to provide better healthcare. While it currently has one reference hospital and three national hospitals (2 in Niamey and another in Zinder, the country's second largest city) for a population of nearly 25 million, Niger should take advantage of the oil windfall to strengthen its healthcare system, with, for example, the construction of a national hospital in each of the eight regions. Similarly, the improved security situation should lead to the reopening of many healthcare facilities, in particular the integrated healthcare centres that provide services within local communities.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of general and specific recommendations can be made on the basis of our assessment of the current situation in Niger and the outlook for the future.

### 4.1. General Recommendations

- Build a holistic response, underpinned by a new paradigm that combines military and security issues, but also good governance, development, and solutions to climate change.
- Take into account new non-state actors that draw their legitimacy from the security crisis, such as traditional chiefs, religious leaders, civil society organizations and women's and youth umbrella groups.

### 4.2. Specific Recommendations for the Government of Niger

- Rethink the form of government to break away from the current highly centralized schema, under which all major decisions go through Niamey, and achieve a greater degree of decentralization. Due to persistent insecurity, people are highly selective in their movements and need local public services that can be provided close to home.
- Work to re-establish the bond of trust between the DSFs and the local population, which has been damaged by numerous acts of violence that have gone unpunished. This new approach should make the people part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. The paradigm shift in the relationship between the DSFs and the local population could bring real added value to the counter-terrorism strategy, and thus prevent the rise of political instability in the region, leading to recurrent military coups.
- Place transnational and cross-border responses at the top of the agenda. Niger's presumed resilience to the security challenge can only be sustainable if it is supported by resilience in Burkina Faso and Mali.
- Guarantee access to essential basic public services (education, health, water, energy, etc.) for people in insecure areas. As a result of its failure to provide them with the security they need, the people in these areas can only see the legitimacy of the state in terms of its ability to provide them with access to basic and essential services.
- Take account of the security context in the delivery of public services. For example, in areas subject to curfew, the opening and closing times of administrative offices could be moved ahead. It is also possible to consider opening public institutions such as integrated healthcare centres (IHCs) on Sundays or Saturdays where necessary. Owing to insecurity, people only go to the IHC on the weekly market day, which may fall on a Saturday or Sunday. As things currently stand, these healthcare facilities are inaccessible to the local population.
- Ensure more equitable sharing of oil revenues and combat all forms of fraud associated with public procurement. Public procurement is a serious governance issue in Niger today, and one that needs to be resolved quickly.



- Accept that development partners should involve players other than government bodies. In areas where the government is only partially present or not at all due to insecurity, the government of Niger should accept the local delivery of certain essential services by national and international NGOs. This is not yet the case.
- Build synergies between NGOs to avoid duplication, fragmentation, and inflation. To take one example, there are more than 250 NGOs operating in the Diffa region in south-east Niger, the epicentre of Boko Haram's activities. As a result, the regional administrative authorities are unable to monitor the activities of these NGOs, which are no longer even able to coordinate their activities.

### 4.3. Specific Recommendations for Technical and Financial Partners

- Prior to taking any action, carry out a complete mapping of the actors in the area. This will provide an overview of the legitimate players, particularly those whose legitimacy has been strengthened by the security crisis. For example, as a result of the crisis, traditional chiefs have become invaluable intermediaries when it comes to security and access to healthcare and education. The 'Repentir contre Pardon' (Repentance for Forgiveness) programme launched in Niger's Diffa region would not have been a success without the involvement of traditional chiefs. In fact, nearly 90% of repentant Boko Haram members turned themselves in to traditional chiefs before embarking on the administrative circuit leading to the centre for deradicalization, vocational training and social reintegration. It is therefore only natural that these traditional chiefs should be taken into account as fully-fledged stakeholders in the intervention strategies.
- Allow for a large degree of flexibility in operations to take account of the country's highly specific context caused by the security crisis. For example, it would be counter-productive to impose international calls for tender for activities to be carried out in the Tahoua, Tillabéry, and Diffa regions, which are under curfew and where international service providers will never travel. What is more, if international service providers did work there, it would have an impact on the cost-effectiveness of the contracts awarded due to high insurance fees.
- Consider joint action by different TFPs to reduce the current fragmentation. In the Tillabéry region in the north-west of the country, the Agence française de développement (AFD) has joined forces with Niger's High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP) to build boreholes for the local population. This joint undertaking has produced convincing results.

## CONCLUSION

After a period of relative stability from 2011 to 2023, marked by a peaceful change of presidential leadership in 2021, which was universally acclaimed around the world, Niger embarked on a chapter of uncertainty on 26 July 2026 with the military coup by the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP). Negotiations between Niamey's military rulers and ECOWAS are still underway, but it is still unclear what the outcome of the crisis triggered by the coup against President Mohamed Bazoum will be.

Many rightly fear that the current political uncertainty will have an impact on the security challenge facing Niger, which along with Burkina Faso and Mali forms the tri-border area, the epicentre of jihadist activity in the Sahel. If Niger succeeds in finding a political and diplomatic solution, which is the preferred option of all the parties as well as the country's partners, the country will have enormous potential – particularly thanks to its oil resources – to face the future with serenity and confidence. However, it will need to take bold and effective measures to control its soaring population, which is undermining the benefits of economic growth and impeding economic and social progress. After the phase of heavy sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and the holding of new general elections, Niger will also need to return to better social and economic governance, supported by a political elite more exemplary than any the country has known to date.





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