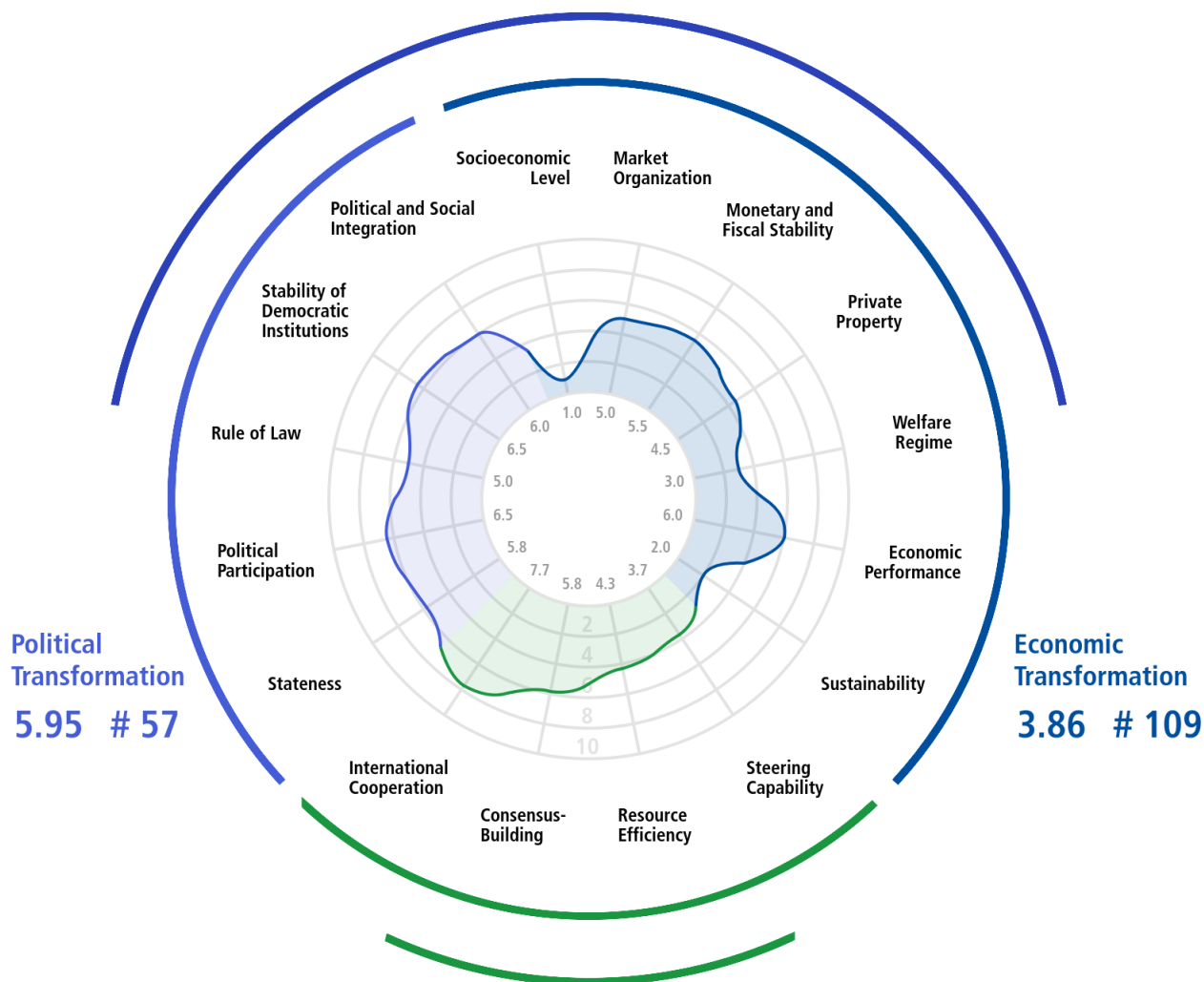


Niger

Status Index

4.90 # 80

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
5.95 # 57

Economic Transformation
3.86 # 109

Governance Index

5.10 # 56

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2022**. It covers the period from February 1, 2019 to January 31, 2021. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

Please cite as follows: Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2022 Country Report – Niger. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Contact

Bertelsmann Stiftung
Carl-Bertelsmann-Strasse 256
33111 Gütersloh
Germany

Sabine Donner

Phone +49 5241 81 81501
sabine.donner@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Hauke Hartmann

Phone +49 5241 81 81389
hauke.hartmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Claudia Härterich

Phone +49 5241 81 81263
claudia.haerterich@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Sabine Steinkamp

Phone +49 5241 81 81507
sabine.steinkamp@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Key Indicators

Population	M	24.2	HDI	0.394	GDP p.c., PPP \$	1263
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	3.8	HDI rank of 189	189	Gini Index	34.3
Life expectancy	years	62.4	UN Education Index	0.249	Poverty ³	% 77.2
Urban population	%	16.6	Gender inequality ²	0.642	Aid per capita \$	63.9

Sources (as of December 2021): The World Bank, World Development Indicators 2021 | UNDP, Human Development Report 2020. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.20 a day at 2011 international prices.

Executive Summary

Niger's largely peaceful and seemingly democratic presidential elections in 2020 and 2021 will result in the country's first handover of power from one civilian leader to another. This is a milestone in the country's political history. However, President Mahamadou Issoufou's second term has seen authoritarian backsliding. Civil society organizations, protest leaders and journalists critical of the government have become the victims of violence and intimidation by the security services. Many individuals critical of the government have been incarcerated under dubious circumstances and for lengthy periods. These are worrisome developments, as they undermine many of the democratic gains of the 2011 political transition. Many constitutional provisions of the Seventh Republic, such as the separation of powers and the provision of basic social services, exist only on paper. At the same time, civil society is vibrant, there are viable opposition parties, and the critical press is alive and well. The sequel to the presidential runoff in late February 2021 will provide a first indication if the next five years will see further authoritarian backsliding or a return to democratic governance.

Niger's economic challenges have remained the same. As an agricultural economy and one of the world's five largest uranium exporters, the country's well-being depends on three factors: the influx of foreign money, the weather (in particular the precipitation rates) and developments on the world market. As a result, Niger has little autonomy over economic developments. The lack of a viable judicial system, the prevalence of corruption, the absence of long-term planning, and an ailing infrastructure stand in the way of urgently needed improvements. One of the world's highest population growth rates constitutes an important additional challenge. President Issoufou was able to rely on the support of Western donors due to Niger's important role as a local partner in the fight against violent Islamic extremism in the Sahel. The government has also been good at fostering economic cooperation with non-Western powers such as China, Turkey and a number of Arab nations.

In reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, Niger declared a health state of emergency on March 27, 2020. While constitutional provisions were respected, the government sometimes implemented measures intended to contain the spread of the virus, such as bans on public assemblies, in a disproportionate manner. For instance, a number of civil society activists were jailed for several months. By the end of 2020, the number of reported COVID-19 infections and deaths were less serious than initially expected, with 3,327 infections and 104 deaths officially registered. However, there might also be a high number of non-identified cases. The pandemic and the deteriorating security situation put the Nigerien economy under pressure, and GDP growth slowed significantly in 2020. Public debt also further increased in 2020.

Despite these ongoing challenges and setbacks, the country has remained stable and functional when compared to its immediate neighbors, Libya, Mali, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Although violent Islamic extremist organizations managed to stage high-profile attacks in a number of locations, these groups have their bases outside of Niger's territory. The presence of foreign military troops has helped secure a modicum of stability. Conservative Sunni groups have increased their societal influence over the years, yet the state has engaged with them in a constructive manner. The relationship between the security services and local populations has become tense in several areas of the country, but to a much lesser extent than in nearby countries.

In a nutshell: Niger in 2021 looks much as it did in 2019. With regard to the economy, little has changed since the late 1970s.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

Since independence in 1960, Niger has endured lengthy periods of authoritarian, military-dominated rule. Since the onset of multiparty democracy in 1993, the country has had five constitutions and one interim civilian government (1991 – 1993), three periods of civilian governments (1993 – 1996, 2000 – 2009 and 2011 – present), one period of military rule (1996 – 1999), and two interim military governments (1999 and 2010 – 2011). In 2011, constitutional rule (the Seventh Republic) was restored. Mahamadou Issoufou and his party, PNDS-Tarayya, were elected to power in 2011 and again in 2016, the latter elections taking place under controversial circumstances. The 2020/2021 presidential and legislative elections resulted in the country's first peaceful handover of power between one civilian government to the next.

Authoritarian rule began in 1958, two years before the country gained independence from France, when Hamani Diori established a repressive one-party regime. In 1974, the military, led by Seyni Kountché, toppled Diori amid an economic crisis and severe drought. Following Kountché's death in 1987, the (civilian-led) Second Republic was established under the National Movement for the Development of Society-Nassara (MNSD-Nassara) party. Responding to regional and domestic pressure from trade unions, students and those behind the Tuareg rebellion, then-President Ali Saibou initiated democratic reforms in the early 1990s. Niger held a national conference in 1991 that resulted in a constitutional referendum and relatively free and fair elections in 1993 (the Third Republic).

Mahamane Ousmane of the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS-Rahama) party was the country's first democratically elected president in 1993. He came, however, into conflict with parliament after opposition parties withdrew from the government coalition. Early parliamentary elections in 1994 forced Ousmane to appoint Hama Amadou (MNSD-Nassara) as prime minister. The subsequent paralysis of political institutions in this semi-presidential system ultimately provoked a military coup led by Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara on January 27, 1996. The coup reflected widespread dissatisfaction and persistent aspirations to power within the military. In response to foreign pressure, Maïnassara held new elections. Non-competitive conditions and a boycott by opposition parties allowed him to win the July 1996 presidential election and November 1996 legislative elections, which ushered in the Fourth Republic.

Three years of superficially liberalized authoritarianism followed until Maïnassara was assassinated during a military coup launched in April 1999. The coup's leader, Major Daouda Malam Wanké, relaunched the process of democratization. This process led to a constitutional referendum, and parliamentary and presidential elections in July, October and November 1999, respectively. President Mamadou Tandja governed with the help of a coalition between the MNSD-Nassara and CDS-Rahama. The Fifth Republic (2000 – 2009) marked a period of comparative stability. Until August 2009, the work of political institutions progressed relatively smoothly despite the potential for conflict in the semi-presidential system. The free and fair general elections at the end of 2004 confirmed Tandja and his governing coalition. This government was the first since 1992 to ensure that the public sector and military personnel received regular payment. In doing so, it prevented another vicious cycle of general strikes, which had crippled Niger's economy throughout the 1990s and been a major source of political instability.

Stability was nonetheless threatened by a renewed Tuareg rebellion that lasted from 2007 to 2009. The rebellion had a negative impact on speech and press freedoms in Niger. Journalists reporting critically on the government's activities regarding the Tuareg or on alleged government corruption were subjected to arbitrary arrests and police violence. Beginning in 2005, Tandja and then-Prime Minister Amadou (both from the MNSD-Nassara) began to fall out with each other. In June 2007, Amadou was forced to step down and replaced by Seyni Oumarou. Tandja's subsequent attempts to change the constitution to allow himself to remain in office beyond 2009 initially proved successful. However, Tandja was eventually ousted by the military in February 2010. The military organized a transition to democracy that resulted in a constitutional referendum, and free and fair elections being held in early 2011.

Beginning in 2013, the Issoufou government used the security services to crack down on critical journalists, civil society organizations and opposition politicians. The most prominent politician subjected to such tactics, Hama Amadou, was accused of being involved in a baby-smuggling ring and was forced to contest the 2016 elections while in prison. He was not allowed to run in the 2020 presidential elections.

The appalling socioeconomic conditions in Niger account for many of the political upheavals of the last decades. Since the early 1970s, drought, desertification, government intervention and bad governance have aggravated a weak economic environment. The uranium boom of the late 1970s subsided rapidly in Niger, whose economy is dominated by agriculture. The considerable national

debt incurred by the country between 1983 and 1986 necessitated an IMF structural adjustment program. Given the political instability of the era, there were several irregularities in implementing the IMF program, which led to its intermittent suspension. The implementation of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) between 1996 and 1999 met with the approval of international financial institutions. After a brief disruption, the transitional government and the Tandja government normalized relations with international donors, which paved the way for several subsequent Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) programs. In April 2004, Niger reached the completion point under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), with debt relief totaling \$663.1 million. Niger has continued to receive extensive loans under the IMF's extended credit facility. Despite a dramatic increase in donor funding over the last decade, Niger continues to be plagued by extreme poverty, unsustainable and inefficient public spending, widespread illiteracy, and a rapidly growing population, and it additionally remains dependent on uranium and oil revenues.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

Transformation Status

I. Political Transformation

1 | Stateness

Various non-state actors continue to challenge the state's monopoly of force along the borders with Nigeria, Mali, Libya and Burkina Faso. The most important challengers in this regard are jihadi Salafi groups operating in these areas. The most prominent groups are Boko Haram (operating in Nigeria), Ansar-Al Dine, Katibat Macina, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, MUJAO/Al-Mourabitoun (all of which groups are operating in Mali), and Ansarul Islam (operating in Burkina Faso). Their activities consist of attacks on military installations, the murder of innocent civilians and the kidnapping of Western aid workers. It deserves notice, however, that none of these groups have historical origins or home bases in Niger. Boko Haram continues its military campaign in Diffa province and constitutes by far the largest and most immediate threat to Nigerien security. Boko Haram does not control or hold Nigerien territory. The Nigerien state has responded to these groups by deploying its armed forces to the affected areas. In addition, the government has initiated a national rehabilitation program for individuals who decide to leave jihadism behind. Little is known about how these programs work in practice and how effective they are. Thus, the state's monopoly on the use of force is established nationwide in principle. The Issoufou government has remained dedicated to the fight against terrorism. This also applies to the new administration, as all major politicians regard the fight against Islamic militancy as a key domestic and foreign policy goal. Military cooperation between Niger, the United States and the European Union, as well as the formation of regional security arrangements like the G-5, have strengthened the capacity of the Nigerien state to maintain control over its territory.

Question
Score

Monopoly on the
use of force

6

'06 '22 10



1

In contrast to its counterparts in neighboring states, the vast majority of the Nigerien population views the nation-state as legitimate. According to survey data from Afrobarometer (data collected between 2016 and 2018), the majority of the Nigerien population trusts state institutions such as the police and the armed forces. Over half of all respondents stated that they viewed themselves first and foremost as Nigeriens rather than as a member of a specific ethnic group. This is a very high value within the context of sub-Saharan Africa.

Having for decades perceived themselves as a marginalized group, the Tuareg – themselves a socially and politically heterogeneous group – have initiated several rebellions (1961 – 1964, 1990 – 1995 and 2007 – 2009). Their basic demands, which include improving their access to state services and political representation in Niamey, have not been met. The (secret) peace agreement between the former Tandja government and the Tuareg rebels called for improvements with regard to both. During the Issoufou presidency (2011 – 2021), a Tuareg, Brigi Rafini, held the position of the prime minister. His tenure has had little effect on the relationship between the central government and the Tuareg in the north.

Traditionally, the government has tried to maintain a balanced representation of ethnicities among its employees and within the cabinet. This has not changed. In fact, the war against Boko Haram in the Diffa region has led President Issoufou to appeal to all communities to remain united in the fight against Islamic terrorism. Although ethno-regional cleavages do exist in Nigerien politics, they have little effect in day-to-day party politics.

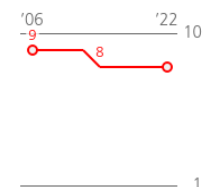
The constitution provides for the separation of state and religion and prohibits religiously affiliated political parties. All political parties that have secured representation in parliament are committed to this constitutional requirement.

Since the liberalization of the political system in November 1990, and since the return of multiparty competition in 1993, conservative Islamic clerics have gained growing societal influence. A prominent example is the Izala community, a regional network of Salafi clerics that has become a powerful societal actor. Various Salafi clerics have emerged as government advisers, thereby shaping the debate over concrete policies. There are conflicting accounts regarding the extent to which local Nigerien communities practice Shariah. Shariah is practiced considerably less than in Mali or northern Nigeria.

Neither political Salafism nor jihadi Salafism enjoy a meaningful presence in Niger. Like its predecessor bodies, the state-run Islamic Council of Niger has tried to influence Friday prayer sermons, the selection of local imams and the content of religious education all over the country. These attempts have been more successful than elsewhere in the Sahel. The incursions by Boko Haram into Diffa province enjoy little or no sympathy among the population. Although many Nigeriens are deeply religious and conservative, they continue to reject Islamic extremism.

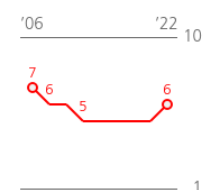
State identity

8



No interference of religious dogmas

6



The administrative capacity of the state is limited. Outside of Niamey, there is no functioning legal system.

Investments in transport and basic infrastructure remain confined to Niamey. However, due to large-scale migration into the capital and the highest population growth rates in the world, Niamey's transport system and infrastructure are in a very poor state.

Although the number of internet users has increased, only around 5% of the population have regular access to the internet. The use of the internet is contingent on the quality of telecommunication networks in neighboring states, and thus cannot be taken for granted. Only 11% of the population has access to basic sanitation, and 58% has access to an improved water source. The conflict with Boko Haram in the Diffa region has undermined the education and business sector as well as the region's frail transport infrastructure.

There is as yet insufficient information about the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for basic services and infrastructure.

2 | Political Participation

National elections are regularly held in Niger. The constitution provides for universal suffrage with secret ballots and free access for citizens to compete in elections.

The legislative elections and the first round of the presidential elections took place in December 2020. According to preliminary reports by international, regional and domestic observers, the elections were held in a proper manner. The opposition had questioned the integrity of the electoral register and the independence of the electoral commission in the run-up to the election. There were also isolated reports of vote-buying.

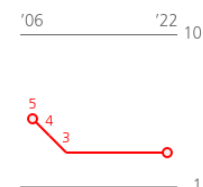
The president's main political opponent, former Prime Minister Hama Amadou, was not allowed to stand as a presidential candidate. Due to his controversial condemnation for baby smuggling, the Constitutional Court disqualified his candidacy.

However, the outcome of the elections was not a foregone conclusion: Mohammed Bazoum, President Issoufou's hand-picked successor, had to face Mahamane Ousmane in the runoff election in February 2021. Ousmane was Niger's first democratically elected president in 1993, but he was ousted by a coup d'état.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that political rallies could not take place, which posed problems for all political parties. There were some reports that a few opposition rallies were disproportionately affected by the implementation of this ban. However, there is no evidence that this had any effect on voting behavior or on the electoral outcome.

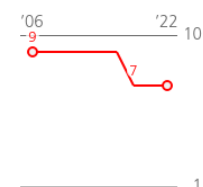
Basic administration

3



Free and fair elections

7



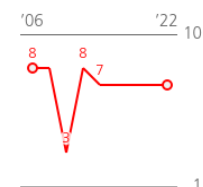
Since the return of multiparty democracy in 1993, democratically elected political representatives have had considerable power to govern. However, there are several important groups that have the capacity to undermine democratic procedures. Niger is dependent on the support of foreign donors and military support. This provides outside powers with the ability to influence domestic decision-making. Although there is little evidence that outside powers use that influence, there is good reason to believe that their presence helped stabilize former President Issoufou's semi-authoritarian government. The armed forces represent a second potential veto player. Since 1993, the armed forces have overthrown three civilian governments (in 1996, 1999 and 2010). However, in 1999 and 2010 the armed forces handed power over to democratically elected civilians, which indicates some commitment to the principle of civilian oversight in politics. According to the former Issoufou administration, the government quashed a military coup attempt in December 2015. Conservative Islamic clerics represent a third and final veto player, as they have become increasingly influential since the early 1990s. Various governments have informally consulted with these clerics in order to avoid antagonizing them. In recent years, the close collaboration between Niger and France has led to protests led by Islamic clerics.

The constitution of the Seventh Republic explicitly protects freedom of association and assembly. The government does not restrict the formation of interest groups nor generally intrude on their right to express their opinions freely. Protest marches against both the government and opposition are a common feature. Nigerien civil society organizations have suffered intimidation and harassment since about 2015. Many civil rights activists have been arrested arbitrarily and accused either of seeking to overthrow the government or of collaborating with Boko Haram. The government has also frequently prohibited assemblies and protests, citing tense social conditions.

In recent months, the government has used the COVID-19 pandemic to enforce bans on assemblies. This ban was still in force at the end of January 2021. Several civil society activists who failed to comply with the ban were arrested and thrown into jail for several months. Maikoul Zodi (Tournons la page) and Nouhou Arzika (Coalition contre la vie chère), who respectively advocate for democratic renewal and poverty alleviation are cases in point. Both the arrests and the prison time must be seen as disproportionate. In September 2020, Amnesty International noted a surge of human rights violations in Niger. In December 2020, CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organizations and activists, expressed great concerns about the restrictions on civic space in Niger. Thus, there is every indication that the pandemic has led to more authoritarian behavior by the government.

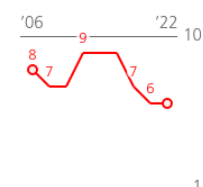
Effective power to govern

7



Association / assembly rights

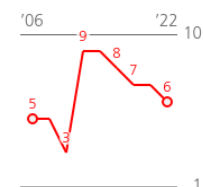
6



Freedom of the press and media is guaranteed in the constitution. The reach and audience of print and online media are limited, but there is a certain diversity of opinion. Throughout his second term of office (2016 – 2021), President Issoufou has at times used the security services to crack down on critical journalists and media outlets. Several journalists have been arrested, and media outlets have been suspended in an arbitrary manner. This is particularly true of journalists who report critically about the government. Journalists are sometimes tried and imprisoned under the criminal code instead of being tried under the media law, which has decriminalized media offenses. In the 2020 World Press Freedom Index, Niger is ranked 57th, an improvement compared to 2019 (66th) and 2018 (63rd). However, when Issoufou took office in 2011, Niger occupied rank 29. Overall, thus, the freedom of the media has suffered extensively during the last 10 years.

Freedom of expression

6

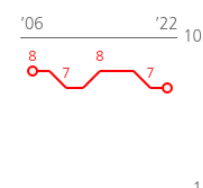


3 | Rule of Law

The constitution explicitly highlights the importance of mutual checks and balances. Like several of those preceding it, the constitution foresees a semi-presidential system that provides for a distinct separation of powers between the president and the prime minister. In contrast to those preceding it, the current constitution strengthens the rights of the legislative vis-à-vis the executive in particular with regard to the right of the legislature to approve the prime minister, while the president can propose and dismiss the prime minister. It also outlines the respective rights of the president and the prime minister in case of cohabitation (i.e., the majority of parliament can name the prime minister). The constitution further specifies the judiciary's control mechanisms allowing it to scrutinize more carefully the president and the prime minister. The Constitutional Court cannot be dissolved by the president and is the only institution with the mandate to interpret the constitution.

Separation of powers

7



As in previous years, the Constitutional Court did not play a significant role in checking executive power during the period under review. President Issoufou enjoyed a stable parliamentary majority and has successfully intimidated potential regime opponents. The military conflict against Boko Haram has been used to suppress opposition, with government opponents arrested based on weak accusations of collaborating with Boko Haram. In short, there have been few if any opportunities to see whether the separation of powers works in reality. Despite government harassment and intimidation, the opposition parties are still able to hold the government accountable in parliament. However, historically, the National Assembly has proven ineffective during periods in which the government has held a strong parliamentary majority.

As of early January 2021, Niger was under a national health state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This state of exception was first declared on March 27, 2020. The parliament was involved in the declaration and in the several extensions of the health state of emergency.

At some point during the last two years, five of Niger's eight provinces have been under a state of emergency. The Tillabéry and the Diffa regions have been under a state of emergency for the last five years. This is not related to the COVID-19 pandemic but is rather the result of jihadi Salafi terrorism activities near Niger's borders with Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso. The national security council imposed the state of emergency, which is standard procedure according to the constitution.

The judiciary comprises of the Constitutional Court, the Court of Appeal (Cour de cassation), the State Council (Conseil d'état), the Court of Auditors (Cour des comptes) and the ordinary courts. The Constitutional Court has a long tradition of rulings that contradict executive decisions. However, these decisions have often been ignored. In the period under review, the Constitutional Court did not render any major ruling.

High-ranking politicians are rarely subject to judicial action; if and when they are subject to investigation, cases are either abandoned or delayed indefinitely. If politicians are prosecuted, this is normally a sign that they have fallen out of favor with whomever is in charge of the executive. The trial against Hama Amadou, the former prime minister and president of the National Assembly, was not transparent, and was settled in accordance with President Issoufou's preferences.

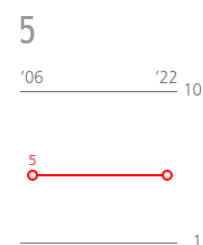
Corruption is a problem in the judiciary. A 2016 Afrobarometer survey (the most recent available) reported that 34% of respondents experienced problems in dealing with the courts such as paying bribes, delays and lack of access.

Niger further suffers from a lack of authorized lawyers. Fighting for one's rights in a court of law is very expensive. The vast majority of the population either does not have access to the legal system or cannot afford the legal fees.

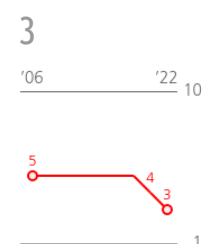
Public officeholders who engage in corruption or break the law are not adequately prosecuted in Niger. According to constitutional provisions, high-ranking public officeholders such as the president of the republic and cabinet members are obliged to disclose their personal property and other assets to the Constitutional Court when assuming and leaving office. All ministers and the president have complied with this prerequisite. The president even published his information in 2018, but other senior office holders refrained from doing so. However, the disclosure of private assets does not prevent the abuse of public office.

According to survey data from Afrobarometer (collected between 2016 and 2018), 67% of the Nigerien population believes that some or most government officials are involved in corrupt activities. A total of 62% of the population said that the level of

Independent
judiciary



Prosecution of
office abuse



corruption in the country had increased a lot or somewhat. According to statements by local aid workers, the growing influx of donor aid has led to an increase in government corruption.

The defense sector appears to be particularly affected by political corruption. Investigative journalists revealed in 2020 that almost 40% of the \$312 million spent on military procurement contracts had been lost due to inflated costs or materiel that was not delivered. The judiciary did not prosecute anyone in this case.

Civil rights are guaranteed by the constitution, yet these rights are often violated in practice and not respected throughout the country. Domestic and international civil society organizations have repeatedly raised concerns over the arbitrary arrests of journalists and civil society activists. Over the course of 2020, there were several violent protests against the ban on public gatherings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The constitution and law prohibit torture. Domestic civil society organizations report that security forces have beat and abused civilians in the context of the fight against terrorism in Diffa and Tillabéry Regions. The U.S. State Department reports that the security forces abuse members of the Fulani community and accuse them of affiliation with Boko Haram or other extremist groups.

The Nigerien constitution prescribes equal legal status and rights for women and men. Yet, these equal rights are not codified in the family law. Family affairs are usually adjudicated by customary courts. In customary law, legal rights as head of household typically apply only to men.

According to human rights groups, around 7% of the population are subject to forced labor. Slavery still exists despite an official parliamentary ban in 2003. However, precise and reliable data on this topic is unavailable, and the Nigerien government continues to obstruct research into this topic. Child marriage and child prostitution is a problem across the country. Human trafficking and drug trafficking are very common in the north of the country, particularly in the region of Agadez and Tillabéry.

Outside Niamey, where lawyers and sufficiently trained legal workers are rare, citizens have almost no legal recourse, even though the Ministry of Justice occasionally organizes mobile courts in rural areas. Access to legal protection is very expensive, and thus impossible for 95% of the population. Despite constitutional protections, nomadic peoples have little or no access to government services. Traditional structures prevent large segments of the population from expressing their civil rights. In the eastern part of the country, women among the Hausa and Peul (also known as Fulani or Fulbe) communities are often not allowed to leave their homes without a male escort.

Civil rights

5

'06 '22 10



1

4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

Democratic institutions have been in existence for most of the time since the return of multiparty democracy in 1993. The institutions have performed their function in principle, yet have often been inefficient.

Over the last three decades, Niger has certainly been no stranger to friction and polarization: institutional paralysis provoked the military coup of 1996; extensive street protest repeatedly destabilized and threatened democratic consolidation throughout the 1990s; and in 2010, President Tandja circumvented the presidential two-term limit, which led to another military coup. During President Issoufou's tenure, opposition politicians and civil society activists were subject to harassment and intimidation by the security forces. The president's main political opponent, former Prime Minister Hama Amadou, ended up in jail after being accused of baby smuggling. In the run-up to the 2020 presidential elections, various opposition groups claimed that Mohamed Bazoum, the presidential candidate of the governing PNDS, lacked Nigerien citizenship.

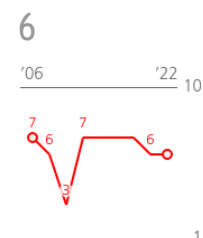
However, outgoing President Mahamadou Issoufou decided to respect the constitutionally prescribed two-term limit and was able to form stable parliamentary alliances throughout his time in office. It is fair to say that the legislative branch does not perform its functions due to outside (most of the time executive) interference. Another problem concerns the inactivity of the actors represented in these institutions, who appear unwilling to use institutional powers in the interest of accountability and transparency. This certainly applies to the Constitutional Court, which has been largely inactive and controlled by the executive during the last 10 years.

Local government officials are often not aware of their competencies and thus remain inactive. In several regions, local government structures only exist on paper.

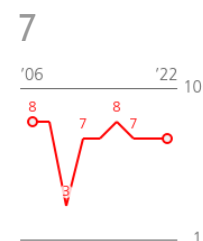
In principle, democratic institutions are accepted by the majority of the political actors. All political parties and civil society actors support multiparty competition. After each presidential and legislative election, the losing candidates and parties complain about electoral rigging and administrative shortcomings. Despite this, there have been no cases of electoral violence. Instead, the losing parties eventually accepted the official results. It is worthy of note that President Issoufou respected the presidential two-term limit, thus allowing for the first democratic handover of power in the country's history in 2021.

The armed forces overthrew civilian governments in 1996, 1999 and 2010. The coups of 1999 and 2010 were "good coups": that is, they removed authoritarian governments and paved the way for multiparty elections shortly thereafter. While some factions of the armed forces might still prefer military rule, these factions are in the minority.

Performance of democratic institutions



Commitment to democratic institutions



Although conservative Islamist groups have gained political influence in recent years, they do not engage formally in political processes. While they reject democracy and the nation-state in principle, they do not challenge the constitutional order in practice. Currently, there is no alternative to the democratic secular nation-state.

The majority of the Nigerien citizens remain committed to democratic principles. According to data from Afrobarometer (data collected between 2016 and 2018), 69% of the population views democracy as preferable to any other kind of government. At the same time, 38% sees Niger as a democracy with major problems; 18% views it as a democracy with minor problems, and 61% are not at all satisfied or not very satisfied with the state of democracy in Niger.

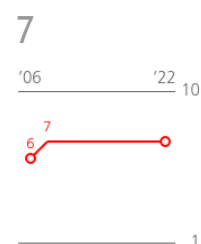
5 | Political and Social Integration

Since 1993, Niger has held eight presidential and 10 legislative elections. There are no reliable data on party membership. Most, if not all, parties have low levels of organizational capacity outside of the capital and urban centers in the interior of the country (e.g., Diffa, Dosso and Zinder). The last three elections have seen the rise of several new parties, which are breakaways from older and more established parties such as the PNDS and MNSD. The December 2020 elections continued this trend. The newly elected National Assembly contains three more parties than previously (19 instead of 16 parties). However, the PNDS is the only political party that can be seen as a national force.

Clientelist and personalistic linkages rather than ideological cohesion is what unites parties with their followers. A significant share of MPs are entrepreneurs and normally do not serve more than one parliamentary cycle. Political alliances are fickle, which makes the political environment unstable and unpredictable. The ability of the party system to produce different alliances, however, also indicates a low level of ethnic and political polarization.

Much as in 2016, voter turnout in the 2020 general election, at 69%, was higher than in earlier elections. Yet there is little evidence suggesting that political parties enjoy deep roots in society. All parties have regional strongholds. Cooperation between parties and civil society organizations is ad hoc. Cooperation between parties and trade unions or other interest groups has never been institutionalized.

Party system



Since the early 1990s, a variety of interest groups have formed. Most of these have very few members and lack the ability to aggregate interests, and hence, they lack the ability to influence policymaking. Many civil society organizations work toward the establishment of more harmonious relations between the country's different religious and ethnic communities. There are also numerous smaller organizations that represent professional associations and their interests. In recent years, many organizations have joined forces to protest (perceived or real) government corruption, to demand improvement in living conditions, and to highlight the increasing authoritarian tendencies of the administration. These protests were a reoccurring feature during Issoufou's presidency. As these demands are very vague, and since there is no central mechanism that coordinates and unites these efforts, they have had little to no influence on policymaking. The trade unions were influential political players until the 2000s, when the main trade union disintegrated into several smaller and competing unions. Today, the unionization rate outside the civil service is very low, and the unions' efficiency is hampered by personal rivalries.

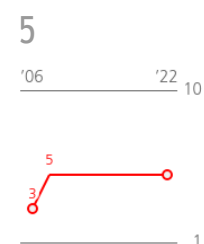
Approval of democratic norms and procedures is fairly high: According to Afrobarometer data from 2018, 69% of the Nigerien population prefers democracy to any other kind of government. At the same time, 38% regard Niger as a democracy with major problems, and 18% see it as a democracy with minor problems. A total of 61.7% are not at all or not very satisfied with the state of democracy in the country. Trust in the various government institutions has suffered due to dissatisfaction with the Issoufou administration. A comparison between Afrobarometer data from 2015 (Round six of the survey) and 2018 (Round seven of the survey) shows a decrease in trust for the National Assembly (2015: 73%; 2018: 52%), the president (2015: 82%; 2018: 58%), and the police (2015: 86%; 2018: 66%). There is no evidence that the coronavirus crisis and the controversial government reaction to the pandemic has had a negative effect on people's attitude toward democratic institutions.

There is little reliable information about self-help groups and the degree to which they are institutionalized. There is also no question that these groups exist.

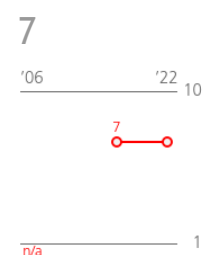
Interpersonal trust and solidarity among citizens seem to be limited, although only limited survey data is available. According to the most recent Afrobarometer data (round seven, 2016 – 2018), Nigerien respondents place enormous trust (84%) in their religious leaders. By and large, respondents refrain from associational activities: 85% say that they are not a member or even an inactive member of a voluntary association or interest group. Fully 40% of all respondents said they had never attended a community meeting.

It is unclear whether, or to what extent, the large-scale protest against the Issoufou government had any effect on the level of social trust in society.

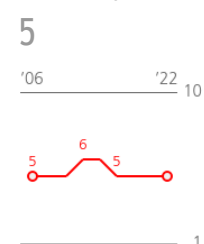
Interest groups



Approval of democracy



Social capital



II. Economic Transformation

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

Since gaining independence from France in 1960, Niger has been one of the poorest countries in the world. The solid economic growth rates of between 3% to 7% over the last decade have not translated into wealth and opportunity for the general population. The same applies to the impressive and growing influx of donor funding, including the expanding levels of funding from non-Western donors. Poverty is widespread and structurally ingrained.

Niger's score on the Human Development Index (HDI) has remained stagnant at a very low level (2019:.394; 2009:.321). Over the course of the last three decades, the HDI has also placed Niger near the bottom of its overall ranking. The country's Gini index (34.3%) indicates that there is less inequality than elsewhere, but this is at least partly the result of widespread poverty. In 2018, Niger's inequality-adjusted HDI score was 27.9% lower than the base HDI score.

Women face discrimination and obstacles in all spheres of society. They lack equal access to education, work and the legal system. In 2019, Niger received a score of 0.642 on the Gender Inequality Index, which was only a minor improvement in comparison to 2011 (0.683). Outside of the country's north, the Tuareg also face informal discrimination at the workplace.

The lack of a diversified economy, the existing pattern of cultural and religious beliefs, the prevalence of corruption, and the fragile security situation along the borders with Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso are all major socioeconomic barriers.

Economic indicators		2017	2018	2019	2020
GDP	\$ M	11189.5	12847.0	12911.7	13678.2
GDP growth	%	5.0	7.2	5.9	1.5
Inflation (CPI)	%	2.8	3.0	-2.5	-
Unemployment	%	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7

Question
Score

Socioeconomic
barriers

1

'06 '22 10

1 1

Economic indicators		2017	2018	2019	2020
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	3.0	3.6	5.6	-
Export growth	%	11.6	-5.5	2.4	-
Import growth	%	11.8	7.1	7.9	-
Current account balance	\$ M	-1274.4	-1625.0	-1572.4	-
Public debt	% of GDP	36.5	36.9	39.8	45.0
External debt	\$ M	3055.1	3197.2	3608.8	4590.7
Total debt service	\$ M	133.2	124.7	140.3	186.0
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	17.2	16.9	17.2	-
Public education spending	% of GDP	2.6	3.4	3.5	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	2.6	2.4	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.4

Sources (as of December 2021): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Over the last decade, Niger has reduced the number of procedures for registering and starting a business. It is ranked 132nd on the World Bank Ease of Doing Business and 18th within sub-Saharan Africa. It takes four procedures, 10 days and costs 7.9% of per capita GDP to start a business in Niger. The Nigerien administration provides a one-stop shop, the Maison de l'Entreprise, to facilitate the starting of new businesses through a single-window registration process.

The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom rates Niger's economic freedom status as mostly unfree. The country's investment framework is outmoded and nontransparent. Informal rules determine entry and exit barriers. Access to bank credit is difficult for both domestic and foreign investors. The informal sector is considerably larger than the formal sector and operates independently of any framework. Enforcement of the tax code is not always even.

Market organization

4

'06 '22 10



1

Niger remains highly vulnerable to external shocks and continues to have an underdeveloped financial sector. It is fair to say that this has been the case since independence. With the exception of petroleum, the market sets prices, but the government influences prices through state-owned utilities. Foreign capital and domestic capital are legally equal. All sectors are open to investment. Land ownership requires approval by the government. The country uses the West African CFA franc, which is pegged to the euro.

Various foreign firms operate in the nascent gold and oil sectors, but a number have been turned off by the country's outdated and opaque bureaucratic investment framework. Further privatization has been held back by the unattractive returns these investments are likely to generate.

The legal framework for competition policy in Niger is based on the Competition and Consumer Protection Law of 2015, which replaced a 1992 law that was never fully operational. Niger also adheres to the Community Competition Law of West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

The state still co-owns around one-third of several uranium companies, including the Compagnie Minière d' Akouta (COMINAK), Société des Mines d' Azelik (SOMINA) and Imouraren S.A. The oil-distribution company (SONIDEP) and national electricity company (NIGELEC) still hold monopolies. However, several mobile phone and internet licenses have been granted, and genuine competition in these sectors has commenced.

According to the U.S. State Department's Investment Climate Report, the Nigerien government possesses transparent policies and requisite laws to foster competition on a nondiscriminatory basis. However, these policies and formal provisions are not equally enforced, in large part due to corruption and weak government systems. Legal, regulatory and accounting systems are generally transparent and formally comply with international norms. The Legal Regime – related to the Investment Code, the Labor Code and the Commercial Acts – implements the provisions of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA). It also provides for free access to public procurement processes, with a moderate level of transparency in the procedures for awarding contracts, according to the U.S. State Department.

Competition policy

6

'06 _____ '22 10

6 ————— 0

————— 1

The government regularly emphasizes that Niger is open to foreign trade. Its national development plan (PDES) has highlighted the private sector and trade as major potential drivers for the country's economic growth.

According to the World Bank, foreign trade accounted for 49% of the country's GDP in 2018. Customs duties are not very high. The simple average of applied MFN tariffs stood at 12% in 2019. Production costs, limited credit facilities and import-export activities through the informal sector have limited the development of international trade. The country's main exported goods include uranium, petroleum products, rice, palm oil, gold and pasta. Air vehicle parts, rice, palm oil, cement, vehicles, medicines and electrical appliances feature on the list of main imports.

Niger's trade balance has been negative for decades. The country's most important trading partners are the European Union (France being both the country's largest supplier and customer), China, the United States, Thailand, Nigeria and Malaysia. Niger has committed itself to implementing the trade policy of the WAEMU. Moreover, the country is integrated into the EU's generalized system of preferences (GSP).

The Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) governs the banking system. Niger has a small banking system with a moderate degree of concentration. Four of the 10 banks account for 80% of total assets. Other financial entities include 49 registered microfinance institutions, several postal offices providing financial services, five insurance companies, and the national social security fund (Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale – CNSS). Niger's banking sector's total assets are the second smallest in the region. There are no available figures on Niger's bank capital-to-assets ratio or non-performing loans.

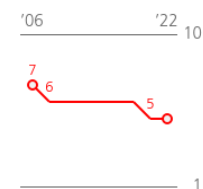
The country's deposits-to-GDP ratio remains one of the lowest in the West African region. The financial sector has few links to the world economy. Although liquidity is high, access to credit is difficult because there is a general hesitancy to loan. Participation in banking is very low among the population and is confined to the major cities. About 1.5% of the population is estimated to have a bank account.

8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

Monetary policy is determined by the regional central bank, Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (BCEAO), which prioritizes inflation targeting. As a result, inflation control has been tight: over the last 10 years, the inflation rate has consistently been under 3%, in most years even below 2%. In 2019, Niger experienced deflation of -2.5%. The currency is pegged to the euro. As a result, the CFA franc fluctuates in line with euro-dollar movements, and the BCEAO's policy is heavily influenced by the actions of the European Central Bank (ECB). The COVID-19 pandemic had no effect on monetary stability. There is no data available on the real effective exchange rate.

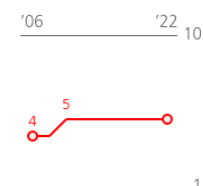
Liberalization of foreign trade

5



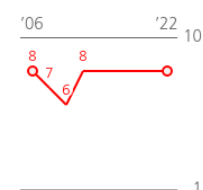
Banking system

5



Monetary stability

8



Niger's current account balance has been negative since 1984. This has not changed under the current administration. On the one hand, this is the result of adverse structural economic conditions. On the other, it is the outcome of corruption and economic mismanagement. In 2000, Niger qualified for the HIPC Initiative, and received extensive debt relief between 2000 and 2008. Consequently, Niger's debt burden went down significantly. In recent years, it has gone up dramatically. In 2018, the year's account deficit was a staggering \$1.625 billion. In 2014, the total national debt was about \$2 billion, but this had risen by 2017 to \$4.34 billion. In 2019, public debt amounted to 41.7% of Niger's GDP. The ratio between the total external debt stock to gross national income in 2019 was 28.33. In 2008 it stood at 13.257. These are very worrisome tendencies, in part because they have increased the country's dependency on outside funding. Foreign donors have increased their commitment to Niger. In 2009, net official development aid totaled \$470 million; in 2018, that amount had increased to \$1.196 billion. Over the long run, this will dramatically increase annual debt service amounts. Despite these developments, the IMF has repeatedly praised the country's efforts to achieve macroeconomic stability in the future. However, these efforts have focused on anticipated benefits through an expansion of uranium production and other export goods. Overall, there is little tangible evidence to suggest that the Nigerien government cares about fiscal stability.

According to the IMF, Niger spent an additional \$0.1 billion in 2020 for on-budget and \$0.2 billion for off-budget measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Niger is a participant in the Debt Service Suspension Initiative.

9 | Private Property

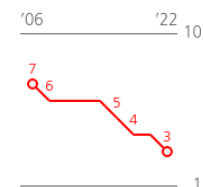
Niger has drastically reduced the time required to register a property. In 2019, this required 13 days, down from 26 days in 2017. It takes 19 procedures to build a warehouse.

Niger has made the enforcement of all contracts easier by creating a specialized court in Niamey. This, however, does not help affected parties outside of the capital where an effective legal enforcement mechanism remains absent. According to the Heritage Foundation, a number of complications undermine legal guarantees of the right to own property. Few people hold titles to their land, and property disputes are common. Foreign ownership of land requires government authorization. The judicial framework is ineffective, and the court system is weak and vulnerable to political pressure. Corruption is particularly prevalent in the taxation agencies. Bribes are sometimes required to access public services.

The 1993 Rural Code decentralizes land administration and allows for registration of customary land rights, but confusion exists over what rights can be registered, and the lack of capacity to manage land registration has caused an increase in land disputes. Those with less power to assert claims frequently lose land rights. The laws

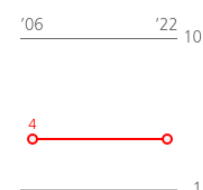
Fiscal stability

3



Property rights

4



outlined in the code have significant regional variations in subjects such as the right to inherit land, individual and family tenure, and women's land access. Most customary practices reflect the influence of Shariah law.

Officially, the government encourages the formation and the protection of private enterprises. The investment code was revised in 2017. Its objective is to stimulate investment and job creation by providing tax benefits for investors, as well as several other benefits. According to the Africa Energy Report, important institutional measures in this regard include the establishment of the High Council for Investment in Niger (Conseil National des Investisseurs Privés: CNIP) as a framework for dialogue between the state and national and foreign investors, with the goal of improving the business environment and promoting investments; the creation of a Permanent Consultative Committee (Conseil Consultatif Permanent: CCP) between the Ministry of Trade and Promotion of the Private Sector and the Niger Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which is tasked with finding solutions to the concerns of economic entities; and the creation of the Mediation and Arbitration Center in Niamey (Center de Médiation et d'Arbitrage du Niger: CMAN), which is meant to offer a simple and fast alternative to commercial disputes.

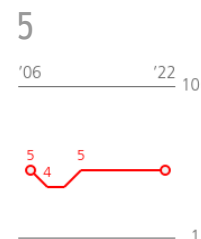
Most sectors of the economy have been privatized. There is no official information on the number of state-owned enterprises. According to the U.S. Department of State's Investment Climate Report, privatization processes are controlled and technically directed by the ministry that is responsible for the respective company. The government issues calls for bids after an internationally known independent audit firm has conducted a detailed analysis of the business operations of the firm to be privatized.

10 | Welfare Regime

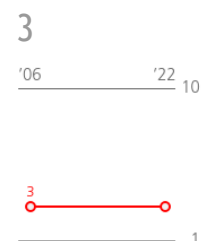
The constitution of the Seventh Republic outlines the right to social protection. Various previous poverty reduction strategies and other official documents by the government highlight the need to improve the country's social safety nets. However, this did not happen under the Issoufou presidency, and there is little to indicate that this will change soon. The only exception are civil servants, who have access to pensions and state-funded health care. In 2018, life expectancy at birth was 62 years. In 2017, public expenditure on public health constituted 2.7% of the annual budget. Poverty is widespread and ordinary citizens have to rely on family members or other social contacts to access welfare support.

Due to the country's overall scarce financial resources, the government had limited ability to introduce social welfare measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the OECD coronavirus policy tracker, the Nigerien state covered electricity and water bills for the months of April and May for some segments of the population, and the annual benefits for vulnerable households were expanded.

Private enterprise



Social safety nets



Equality of opportunity is clearly not achieved. Nigerien society remains strictly hierarchical and heavily segmented. Opportunities largely depend on personal background rather than merit. While the very small political and economic elite is free to consider any educational and professional option, the poor have little to no opportunity to advance. This applies to all ethnic groups. Women and sexual minorities are particularly marginalized in all regions of the country and across all ethnic groups. In 2020, 42.3% of the Nigerien population was active in the labor force.

The general literacy rate was 35.0% in 2018, according to the World Bank. The literacy rate among men was 43.6%, while the literacy rate among women was a disappointing 26.6%. In all sectors of the educational system, the share of females attending school is lower than that for males (female-to-male enrollment ratio in primary education: 0.9, secondary education: 0.7, tertiary education: 0.6). The gross enrollment ratio for primary education is 66% and for secondary education just 24%. Only 4.2% of the population has access to tertiary education.

Little to nothing has changed with regard to the lack of equal opportunity over the last decade. Quota laws increasing the political representation of women in parliament have been passed but are not enforced in practice.

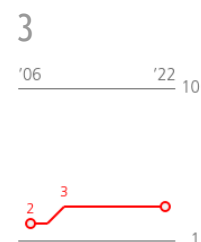
11 | Economic Performance

Over the last decade, Niger has experienced solid growth rates. The country is an exporter of uranium, and world market prices for uranium have been higher and more stable than in previous decades. Real GDP growth was 7% in 2018 and 5.9% in 2019, but slowed down to 1.2% in 2020 due to effects of the fragile security situation and the COVID-19 pandemic. Niger's GDP per capita grew by 1.9% in 2019, which was weaker growth than in 2018 (3%), but stronger than in 2017 (1%). The last time per capita growth was negative was in 2011 (-1.5%). In absolute terms, GDP per capita in PPP has grown consistently since 1999. In 1999, this stood at \$999; in 2019, it was \$1,270. GDP has almost doubled over the last decade: in 2009, it was \$7.28 billion; in 2010, it was \$12.93 billion. The country's current account balance was -\$1.63 billion in 2018.

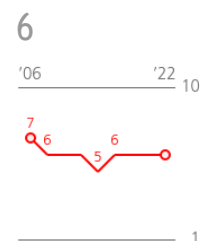
However, over this same period, Niger's public debt has increased dramatically. In 2011, its public debt totaled 14.7% of GDP, and was thus manageable. In 2019, this figure reached 41.7% of GDP. In 2020, debt levels were expected to reach 50% of GDP due to the pandemic. According to the African Development Bank, this presents a moderate risk of debt distress.

Although donor countries have asked Niger since the early 1980s to start collecting data on its tax base, this has not happened. There is also no reliable data on the current employment rate. However, it is known that the vast majority of the population is underemployed or unemployed. Niger's current political elites are not translating macroeconomic gains into fiscal consolidation.

Equal opportunity



Output strength



12 | Sustainability

Niger faces significant environmental challenges such as regular flooding, deforestation, desertification, and environmental pollution due to overpopulation and the lack of adequate sanitation facilities. The Nigerien government does not do enough to address these challenges.

Niger has committed itself to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, which have an environmental dimension. Various Nigerien governments have passed legislation and decrees aimed at the protection of forests and water. There has been some progress with regard to tree planting. The government is also increasingly aware of climate change and flooding. However, its environmental policy agenda appears to be largely donor driven and lacks domestic ownership. The Nigerien state and multinational companies exploit oil and uranium without any regard for environmental consequences. Niger received a score of 30.8 in the 2020 Environmental Performance Index, giving it 152nd place worldwide.

Various administrations have highlighted the importance of education as a key strategy for climbing out of poverty. The government has produced a strategy highlighting its intention to improve the education sector by 2024 (Plan sectoriel de l'éducation 2014 – 2024). The main goal is to increase enrollment and the quality of education institutions across the country. The major obstacles for the realization of the project are administrative inefficiencies within the education sector (three ministries are formally in charge of education), the lack of sufficiently trained teachers, the lack of suitable buildings (especially in the countryside) and the diversion of educational funds for other purposes. In 2019, the country received a score of 0.249 in the U.N. Education Index, one of the lowest such values in the world. Although the government has spent an average of around 3.5% of GDP on education over the last decade, much of this funding has not reached its intended recipients. Teachers and university instructors frequently go without pay for months. Niger has the highest population growth rates in the world, which has eradicated any kind of progress made in the education sector. The literacy rate is 35%, one of the lowest such figures in the world.

There is also a small research and development sector, though it does not receive sufficient government support. Efforts to improve the university system have not led to substantial improvements.

Environmental
policy

3

'06 '22 10



Education policy /
R&D

1

'06 '22 10



Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

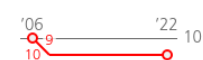
Structural constraints in Niger remain exceptionally great. Poverty is widespread and deeply ingrained in the country's social fabric. Structural poverty is perpetuated by strong population growth. Niger has the highest population growth rate in Africa: in 2019 it grew by 3.8%, which was also the approximate yearly average in the last three decade. The country's population almost quintupled from 8,026,591 people in 1990 to 23,310,720 in 2019. Only about 4% of the country's workforce has received tertiary education. Most educational facilities are in a dismal state, with the exception of a few selected schools in Niamey. The Issoufou administration did not address the country's infrastructural deficiencies, which are severe. Natural disasters such as flooding have become more commonplace. Located between Mali, Libya, Algeria, Chad, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, Niger is severely affected by the severe security situation in Mali, Burkina Faso, Libya and Nigeria. The precise extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the country remains unclear; it is certainly the case that the pandemic has made existing challenges harder on ordinary citizens.

There is no quantifiable data on social trust in the country. In the countryside, many Nigeriens engage in local self-help projects. This is a legacy of the Kountché years, which aimed to create a so-called national development society. Climate change, desertification and food shortages have also forced local villages and towns to coordinate their actions.

Although some civil society organizations managed to persist despite the authoritarian reflexes of the Issoufou administration, the foundations of civil society have remained fairly weak. Outside of the capital, few civil society organizations are present. Most if not all organizations rely on outside or government funding. Many civic associations exist, but a substantial proportion are breakaway groups from larger organizations. At times, civil society organizations have managed to hold the government accountable and protest government policies. Civil society organizations do manage to rally Nigerien citizens around universal goals such as "democracy" or "anti-corruption;" however, they are deeply divided when it comes to concrete policies or policy priorities. The most powerful and institutionalized civil society organizations used to be the trade unions, but the unions have weakened over the last decade. Personal rivalries between individual unions, the gradual decline in the unionization rate of formal-sector employees, and the shrinking of the formal sector due to financial cutbacks have gradually undermined the unions' ability to influence political decision-making in the country.

Structural
constraints

9



1

Civil society
traditions

7



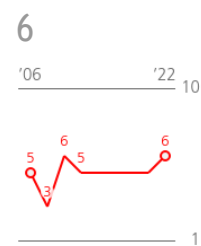
1

The level of violence increased in Niger during review period. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) conflict database, the number of deaths due to terror attacks and clashes between militant groups increased to 1,114 in 2020, up from 506 in 2018 (2019: 719). However, this increase in the number violent incidents has been less pronounced than similar trends in Niger's neighbor countries of Mali, Nigeria and Libya.

Various governments have successfully undermined or coopted potentially violent challengers to state authority. Prominent examples include the Tuareg rebels in the early 1990s and conservative Islamist clerics in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Ethnic cleavages in Niger are politically less salient than elsewhere in Africa. As the country is 99% Muslim, there are no noteworthy religious cleavages, although tensions between Sufi and Salafi clerics exist. However, these societal tensions do not translate into political tensions. At the elite level, Nigerien politics is centered around personalities who might have a strong regional following but also a following elsewhere. All political elites refrain from violence.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, protests against bans on public gatherings emerged, as these bans were seen as a means of undermining political protest. However, the pandemic has not changed the political dynamics in any meaningful manner.

Conflict intensity



II. Governance Performance

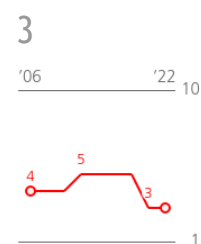
14 | Steering Capability

Between 2011 and 2020, the Issoufou administration prioritized the following goals: economic and social development as outlined in the Agenda 2030 and various general policy documents; the protection of democratic gains as outlined in the constitution; and the maintenance of stability and order in the country. The extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic affected the prioritization of policies remains unclear. Evidence suggests that COVID-19 will pose a health and financial challenge; however, there is nothing that suggests that the pandemic has impacted political decision-making or the implementation of decisions. It is important to note that policy implementation in Niger is generally slow and uneven.

Beyond these vague aims, the government has failed to espouse clear-cut strategies for achieving these general goals. Moreover, Niger has in recent years faced massive security challenges due to conflicts in its neighboring countries. President Issoufou did manage to prevent the jihadi Salafi organizations operating in Nigeria and Mali from infiltrating Niger and kept the country stable. However, this often occurred at the expense of democratic norms and procedures.

Question Score

Prioritization



Thirty years after the liberalization of its political regime, Niger still lacks a coherent strategy for overcoming its tremendous structural economic challenges. The influx of Western donor funding has done little to change that.

Since the 1970s, all governments have consistently failed to achieve their strategic objectives. There are a number of reasons for this, including the lack of an efficient administrative workforce, the lack of domestic capital and sufficiently trained workers, corruption within the government bureaucracy, and cultural and societal obstacles.

Niger failed to achieve many of the Millennium Development Goals. The government is committed to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals but has not to date come up with a convincing strategy of how it expects to achieve them. Numerous policy documents and declarations exist, but the government typically does not follow up with concrete action. While Niger has committed to several policies aimed at tackling population growth, there is no visible evidence of their implementation or success. There are no policies in place intended to improve the country's crumbling infrastructure.

Donor countries have focused on programs intended to increase community resilience, fight radicalization and prevent emigration to Europe. There is no reliable information about the extent to which these programs have in fact been implemented or are successful. There are signs that donor funding and attention has led to an increase in corruption and the diversion of donor funds to private channels. The defense procurement scandal, which was covered by the international media in 2020, is one illustration of this.

These hurdles should not distract from the fact that committed reform actors do exist. But these forces lack sufficient political influence to move the country out of poverty and effectively diversify the economy.

The government frequently laments the mistakes that were made in the past. However, there is little overall indication that the government is willing to learn from the past. Rising public debt levels and ongoing corruption within the state bureaucracy demonstrate this. As recruitment to most senior public sector positions is based on personal proximity to those in power rather than on merit, the Nigerien bureaucratic apparatus lacks institutional memory. Government officials are aware of best practices, and support these practices rhetorically, but do not follow up on their rhetoric. There is no shortage of foreign consultants and academic experts, given Niger's prominent role in the fight against violent extremism in the Sahel. But their presence seems to have had little impact on the country's ability to learn from past mistakes. Some even argue that the influx of donor money has created a new degree of dependency, thus making matters worse.

Implementation



Policy learning



15 | Resource Efficiency

Niger does not use its human capital efficiently. Recruitment is based on personal proximity to those in higher positions. The higher the administrative position, the more personal connections matter. Dismissals and appointments of high-ranking civil servants alike are driven by political motivations. Some competitive recruitment takes place, but this is the exception.

State debt is out of control and has been growing over the course of the last 10 years. At this rate, it is clearly not sustainable. There is an almost complete lack of budget transparency. Domestic and international civil society organizations have long lamented the lack of transparency. Therefore, it cannot be assessed to what extent the government deviates from its planned course of expenditure.

There is no information available regarding how decentralization works in practice, although the various local governments have been in place for quite some time. The government has expressed no intention to reform or modernize the public administration.

It seems reasonable to believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the reallocation of resources. But there is no data detailing the extent to which this has happened. In response to the pandemic, Western donors provided the government with financial relief, which means that the reallocation of resources was probably not too extensive.

There is little to no visible effort to coordinate policy. To cite just one example, there are three ministries in charge of education policy. As Nigerien politics is driven by personalities, officeholders have no incentive to coordinate between different departments. Many bureaucratic units are overstaffed and lack coherent tasks and responsibilities. Overall, there are many significant redundancies and gaps. The government has been successful in integrating former Tuareg rebels by decentralizing the administration of the country’s north and coopting former rebel fighters.

All politicians present themselves as committed to the fight against corruption. Under Issoufou, there was some progress in this area, at least during his first term in office. The country’s main anti-corruption body, the Haute Autorité de Lutte contre la Corruption et les Infractions Assimilées (HALCIA), remains somewhat active, and has pursued numerous complaints. However, HALCIA’s budget is controlled by the presidency, and the body has consequently been less effective than it could.

No transparent audit of state spending has been performed for decades. Party financing is regulated on paper, but there are no official accounts detailing how parties finance their activities. The government does not provide citizens or the media with detailed information about the budget or state spending. The president and the

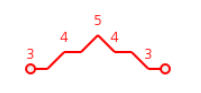
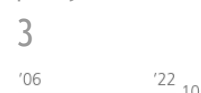
Efficient use of assets



Policy coordination



Anti-corruption policy



cabinet are required to provide information about their assets at regular intervals. President Issoufou has done so on a number of occasions, but several cabinet members failed to do so.

The recent defense procurement scandal demonstrated that there is no viable procurement system in place. This applies to all government ministries.

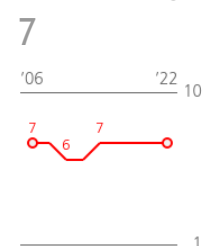
16 | Consensus-Building

The major political actors agree on the desirability of democratic institutions. None of the major political parties or societal forces, including the armed forces, has the intention to introduce a nondemocratic political system. The last two coups (1999 and 2010) ushered in the return of multiparty democracy. The last (alleged) coup attempt of December 2015 failed. However, as soon as powerholders feel threatened by the opposition or civil society, they refer to authoritarian measures to consolidate their power. The Issoufou administration demonstrated this numerous times during its post-2013 era in office. Beyond the general commitment to democracy, Niger lacks democracy in action and hence lacks genuine democrats.

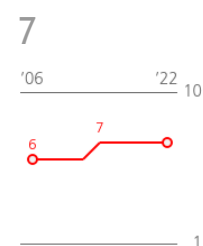
There is also a general consensus that Nigeriens should live in a capitalist market economy. Many Nigerien citizens might be opposed to the current neoliberal climate and aid conditionality, but this does not mean that they would prefer to live under a different economic system. Many privatization initiatives failed due to the lack of sufficient capital or the absence of a dynamic economic market rather than opposition to free market principles. Most Nigeriens are employed in the informal economy, which is driven by the basic logic of free enterprise.

There are two potentially influential sets of anti-democratic actors: the armed forces and conservative Sunni clerics. The armed forces have given no sign that they intend to overthrow the government. In fact, since 1999, the armed forces have helped established multiparty democracy on several occasions. There might be factions within the armed forces that disagree with democratic rule, but these constitute a small minority. Conservative Sunni clerics by and large work through the government, but not against the state. The escalation of conflicts between various jihadi Salafī groups in Mali, Nigeria and Burkina Faso have the potential to destabilize democracy in Niger. However, this threat is not new, and the Nigerien state has managed to contain that threat to its border regions. Although the political class as a whole has accepted election outcomes, individual leaders' powerful self-interest still has the potential to override democratic principles.

Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors



The main political cleavage runs between government and opposition supporters. At times the relationship between the Issoufou administration and opposition forces in parliament as well as on the street broke down. In more recent months, this has improved somewhat. The recent elections were peaceful, and the outcome was accepted by all political players.

Ethnicity historically has been less of a divisive factor. Instead, personal rivalries have shaped Nigerien politics. All political parties have strong personal and clientelistic elements. Regional and ethnic divisions between the Tuareg and the rest of the country and between the Tuareg and other tribes in the north exist but are seen as less salient. Most governments have tried to prevent the escalation of cleavages.

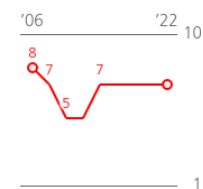
The relationship between the government and civil society organizations has not been easy or harmonious since the breakdown of authoritarian rule in 1991. During the second Issoufou administration (2015 – 2020) this relationship declined further. The government ignores the advice of the most important organizations and does not engage with them in any meaningful manner. Civil society organizations are not involved in agenda setting, decision-making, policy implementation or the monitoring of government performance. This might differ with regard to organizations that can help the government promote its growth agenda in rural areas, or those that are involved in public health initiatives. However, the government overall provides very little space for the participation of civil society organizations in the political process.

Politicians' public speeches sometimes refer to the victims of past injustices, but such individuals' suffering has never been addressed in earnest. While various governments have established numerous deliberative councils meant to contribute to national cohesion and reconciliation, assessments of their effects vary. While some observers contend that these endeavors have had little to no effect, others argue that the reconciliation efforts, despite shortcomings, have nevertheless contributed to the integration of Tuareg communities into the state.

The fight against jihadi Salafi groups has led to a new emphasis on “unity” and “security.” As a result, past injustices by the armed forces are given virtually no attention.

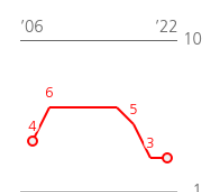
Cleavage /
conflict
management

7



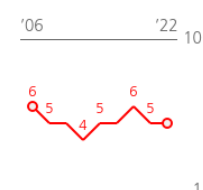
Civil society
participation

3



Reconciliation

5



17 | International Cooperation

The Nigerien government works closely with international donors. Due to its geostrategic importance with regard to security in the Sahel and migration to Europe, it has been able to attract high levels of donor funding in recent years. The government has a clearly defined development agenda that is based on the U.N. Agenda 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Officeholders are committed to the eradication of poverty and economic progress. In practice, however, the government has failed to devise coherent strategies to follow up on these goals. Although some forward steps have been taken over the last 20 years, such as the reduction in the number of people in extreme poverty, there has overall been little economic progress. The dramatic increase in donor funding over the last decade has not resulted in tangible improvements, although this assistance has clearly helped to stabilize the country. International aid is subject to embezzlement and mismanagement (see "Prosecution of office abuse").

Niger has managed to inspire a high level of confidence among other members of the international community, as the country has proved to be a reliable and credible international partner.

The country has ratified all relevant U.N. treaties, plays an active role within the African Union, is a strong advocate for multilateral solutions, and has emerged as a key security partner for Western nations. It cooperates closely with the European Union within the context of regulating the flow of migrants from Africa to Europe. There are some agreements for which the degree of Nigerien compliance cannot be assessed. This includes the climate change agreements, ILO core labor standards, human rights conventions, and trade and debt agreements.

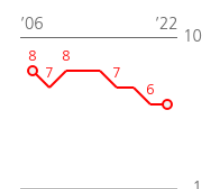
Niger is a founding member and a driving force behind the G-5, a regional cooperation agreement between five Sahel nations that aims to counteract violent extremism and foster economic cooperation. Outgoing President Issoufou has on various occasions committed the country to close cooperation with its Sahel neighbors in the fight against terrorism. In recent months, Niger has advocated making the G-5 joint security forces operational and allowing them to operate across the Sahel unhindered.

Niger supports all regional cooperation and integration arrangements in West Africa. It is very active within the African Union, ECOWAS, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the G-5. In line with other regional and international leaders, the Nigerien government condemned the military coup in Mali in August 2019. The Issoufou administration called for a return to civilian rule as soon as possible. In so doing, Niger was echoing the position of the AU and other international bodies.

In addition to its close cooperation with the EU, Niger has also sought close relations with China, Turkey, various Arab nations and Turkey. The extent and content of its cooperation with non-Western powers cannot be assessed.

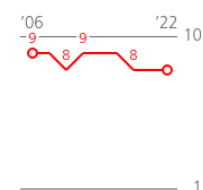
Effective use of support

6



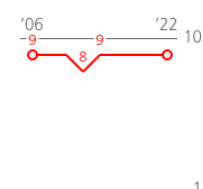
Credibility

8



Regional cooperation

9



Strategic Outlook

The next five years will show whether the authoritarian backsliding of the last decade can be confined to the tenure of President Issoufou or is instead structurally ingrained in the political fabric of the country. To mitigate the loss of some democratic freedoms, the new Nigerien government ought to initiate a discussion with the country's leading civil society organizations. All political prisoners, including human rights activists and opposition politicians, should be set free. The new government should emphasize the need to fight corruption within the government bureaucracy. The institutional provisions currently in place (HALCIA) fail to address government corruption in a sustainable and meaningful manner. The judicial system needs to be reformed, especially at the local level.

The government should cooperate with major donors and major domestic stakeholders to develop a holistic and participatory economic reform strategy. The last decade might have seen forward steps with regard to the eradication of extreme poverty, but there has been little to no progress in translating solid economic growth rates into social progress for the broader population. The government should aim to extend the tertiary sector of the economy, while trying to provide the primary sector with infrastructural support. The environment must be better protected. Floods have already done unprecedented damage to the city of Niamey and other urban areas. Curbing the rapid population growth rate should be one of the new administration's top goals.

Future waves of the COVID-19 pandemic and new mutations of the virus could cause higher infection and death rates in Niger. The Nigerien government should therefore seek to obtain as many vaccine doses as possible with the help of international cooperation and will need a solid plan to vaccinate the most vulnerable parts of the population. Moreover, the country will need the support of the international community to mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic.

Close cooperation within the framework of the G-5 and with Western security partners will ensure continued resilience with respect to violent Islamic extremist organizations. However, the Nigerien armed forces need to consult more closely with local communities regarding the communities' security needs and their specific grievances vis-a-vis the central government.