

# BTI 2012 | Niger Country Report

<b>Status Index</b>	1-10	<b>5.45</b>	# 70 of 128	
Political Transformation	1-10	6.65	# 46 of 128	➔
Economic Transformation	1-10	4.25	# 101 of 128	➔
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scale: 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest)    score    rank    trend

This report is part of the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI) 2012. The BTI is a global assessment of transition processes in which the state of democracy and market economy as well as the quality of political management in 128 transformation and developing countries are evaluated.

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## Key Indicators

Population	mn.	15.5	HDI	0.295	GDP p.c.	\$	728
Pop. growth <sup>1</sup>	% p.a.	3.5	HDI rank of 187	186	Gini Index		34.0
Life expectancy	years	54	UN Education Index	0.177	Poverty <sup>3</sup>	%	75.9
Urban population	%	16.7	Gender inequality <sup>2</sup>	0.724	Aid per capita	\$	30.7

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

## Executive Summary

Significant political upheavals observed in Niger during the review period undermined the progress made towards democracy in the last decade. In May 2009, President Tandja announced his intention to alter the constitution of Niger's Fifth Republic via a referendum. The proposed changes included extending his term of office by three years. In June 2009, the Constitutional Court declared Tandja's attempt to initiate a constitutional referendum illegal, after which the government dissolved the Constitutional Court and the National Assembly. The constitutional referendum in August 2009 was boycotted by all major opposition groups; the so-called Sixth Republic foresaw a strongly presidential system and the elimination of the presidential term limit. In subsequent weeks, the international community, in particular Western donors and ECOWAS, suspended all cooperation with Niger. A bad harvest and a severe drought drastically exacerbated already dreadful socioeconomic conditions. In February 2010, the military – pointing to the rapid deterioration of living conditions in the country as well as its dependency on aid and international isolation following the August 2009 referendum – overthrew the Tandja regime. The Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy, led by Salou Djibo, immediately announced a timetable for the return of democratic rule. Relations between Niger and the international community gradually improved, and a new constitutional drafting process was put in place. In autumn 2010, the constitution of the Seventh Republic was passed in a national referendum. Parliamentary and presidential elections took place on 31 January 2011. Mahamadou Issoufou, the candidate of the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS) won the run-off against former Prime Minister Seyni Oumarou (National Movement for a Developing Society-Nassara, MNSD-Nassara), and the new government assumed power in April 2011. The interim military government has since cracked down on corruption in ways unprecedented, leading to the arrests of several former ministers and high-ranking government officials. While Niger is back on track politically, there has been little, if any, progress in improving the population's living conditions. Niger continues to face huge challenges in its economic and social transformation; the country will not reach any of the MDGs by 2015. There

also has been little to no progress in implementing the peace agreement that ended the last Tuareg rebellion in 2009. There are further challenges in the Sahel region, including the presence of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), drug and arms trafficking, as well as the uncertainties associated with the precarious state of affairs in Libya at the time of writing.

## History and Characteristics of Transformation

Since independence in 1960, Niger has endured long 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), been subject to two longer periods civilian governments (1993 – 1996, 2000 – 2009), one longer period of military rule (1996 to 1999), and two interim military governments (1999 and 2010).

Authoritarian rule began in 1958, two years before the country gained its independence from France, when Hamani Diori established a repressive one-party regime. In 1974, the military, led by Seyni Kountché, toppled Diori in the midst of an economic crisis and severe drought. Following Kountché's death in 1987, the (civilian-led) Second Republic was established under the National Movement for a Developing 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 (Third Republic). Mahamane Ousmane of the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS-Rahama) party became the country's first democratically elected president. He came into conflict with parliament, however, after opposition parties withdrew from the government coalition. Early elections in 1995 forced Ousmane to appoint Hama Amadou (MNSD-Nassara) as prime minister, although this immediately led to a conflict between the two men. The resulting paralysis of political institutions in this semi-presidential system ultimately provoked the military coup led by Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara on 27 January 1996, which drew support from large segments of the population. The coup also reflected widespread material dissatisfaction and persistent aspirations to power within the military. By contrast, the violent (first) Tuareg insurgency of 1994 and 1995 was settled with a peace agreement.

In response to foreign pressure, Maïnassara held new elections. Noncompetitive conditions and a boycott by opposition parties allowed him to win the presidential election held in July 1996 and legislative elections in the fall, which ushered in the Fourth Republic. Three years of superficially liberalized authoritarianism followed until Maïnassara was assassinated during another military coup launched in April 1999. Its leader, Major Daouda Malam Wanké, re-initiated the process of democratization, which 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 made up of the MNSD-Nassara, and the 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 the coalition in power. This government was the first since 1992 to ensure that the public sector and the military received regular payment. In doing so, it precluded another vicious cycle of general strikes being launched by the trade unions, which had crippled Niger's economy throughout the 1990s and had been a major source of political instability. Stability was nonetheless threatened by a renewed Tuareg rebellion that lasted two years, from 2007 to 2009. The rebellion had a negative impact on freedoms of speech and the press in Niger. Journalists reporting critically of the government's position and activities regarding the Tuareg or about alleged corrupt activities of government ministers were subject to arbitrary arrests and police violence.

Beginning in 2005, Tandja and then-Prime Minister Hama Amadou (both from the MNSD-Nassara) began to fall out of favor with each other and, in June 2007, Amadou was forced to step down and was replaced by Seyni Oumarou.

Tandja's subsequent attempts to change the constitution so as to allow him to remain in office beyond 2009 proved successful, initially, despite the opposition's boycott of the constitutional referendum. Able to call Niger's Sixth Republic into existence following the legislative elections of 2009, Tandja was eventually ousted by the military in February 2010. The military organized a transition to democracy that resulted in a constitutional referendum and general elections being held in early 2011.

The appalling socioeconomic conditions observed 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 further aggravated a weak economic environment. The uranium boom of the late 1970s subsided very quickly 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 administration 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. On 29 May 2008, the IMF approved another PRGF program to run from 2008 to 2011. However, the overall satisfaction expressed by the financial institutions in their first review of the PRGF on 22 December 2007 should not allow us to ignore the appalling conditions pervading all socioeconomic levels, including precarious food security. The most recent statement by the IMF in September 2010 confirms that while there has been some progress in expenditure management, there has been little progress in eradicating poverty and illiteracy.

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

## Transformation Status

### I. Political Transformation

#### 1 | Stateness

Question  
Score

The state's monopoly on the use of force is significantly restricted. This applies in particular to the north, where the failed demilitarization of the Tuareg rebels has led to the widespread circulation of small weapons. This has led to a further increase in banditry by nomadic groups. Large parts of rural areas throughout the country are not secured and remain crime-ridden. The monopoly on the use of force has never functioned completely. Even in the capital city of Niamey, the police lack basic supplies such as vehicles, uniforms and weapons. The uranium-mining region around Arlit has been in a state of heightened tension since September 2010 due to the kidnapping of seven employees of Areva by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Tensions increased still further in February 2011 when two French tourists were kidnapped in a restaurant in the city center of Niamey and later killed.

Monopoly on the  
use of force

6

The nation-state is accepted as legitimate. For decades the Tuareg, or at least the Tuareg rebels, have perceived themselves as a marginalized group, leading to several rebellions (1961– 1964, 1990 – 1995, 2007 – 2009). The basic demands of the Tuareg – better access to state services and better political representation in Niamey – still have not been met. The peace agreement between the former Tandja government and the Tuareg rebels called for improvements with regard to both. Slavery was banned in 2003, yet, according to international estimates, 43,000 individuals live in servitude. However, these problems seem to stem from problems with the rule of law. Traditionally, the government has tried to keep an ethnic balance among its employees and within the cabinet. In the past, dismissed ministers were replaced by members from their own community. Although at the society level divisions exist between the Hausa and the Djerma at the national and political level, these divisions do not translate into entrenched political cleavages.

State identity

9

The recently passed constitution of the Seventh Republic provides for a secular state and is in line with all previous constitutions. However, there has been an increasing radicalization of Islam in rural areas and especially in the area around the city of Maradi. The radical Izala sect has been growing in numbers in recent years and they openly call for the introduction of Shari'ah law. During the Tandja years (2000 – 2009) there have been several clashes between the police and members of this group. Since the onset of political liberalization in 1991, the state has lost effective oversight over Islamic organizations. In March 2009, the Niger Islamic Council called on the government to start regulating sermons; the government has not done so. In many parts of the country, Islamic welfare associations – allegedly financed by sponsors in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan – provide segments of the population with food. The 2009 drought has increased their influence. The Islamic University of Say, whose language of instruction is Arabic, increasingly offers an alternative to the secular-style education offered by the state-run University of Niamey. Political pressure by Islamic leaders has prevented the family code from being passed in parliament (the last attempt failed in December 2006). A new bill, the “code de statut personnel,” was similarly rejected by the Islamic associations, which held numerous demonstrations in the capital. Moreover, AQIM, which is active mainly in Mali, has on various occasions crossed the border into Niger to kidnap foreign tourists.

No interference of  
religious dogmas  
5

The territorial scope of the basic administration is limited to the urban areas. The last Tuareg rebellion has further impaired the administration's influence in the north of the country. However, in 2010, the transitional government introduced a bill on the “collectivités territoriales” and local elections were held, both of which supported decentralization. Both the public administration and the judiciary suffer from a lack of resources. In total, there are 101 registered lawyers in Niger, almost none of whom practice outside Niamey. In the rural areas, chiefs collect taxes and frequently fail to transfer that money to the state. The administration is largely inefficient and plagued by corruption. Low salaries exacerbate the problem.

Basic  
administration  
3

## 2 | Political Participation

The interim military government overthrew the Tandja administration in a military coup in February 2010 and thus lacked democratic legitimacy; however, it immediately implemented a timetable for the return to multiparty democracy. New elections took place on 31 January 2011 and were considered free and fair, although the balloting suffered from administrative shortcomings (as mentioned above, the presidential elections were completed four weeks later with the run-off between Oumarou and Issoufou). The same applied to the municipal in mid-January, which suffered from delays. The Constitutional Court's disqualification of various parliamentary candidates who failed to fulfill the educational criteria set forth in the

Free and fair  
elections  
9

new constitution has given rise to criticism that these requirements are elitist and do not take the socioeconomic realities of the country into consideration.

Elections have been conducted regularly in Niger since 1993. Their respective quality has varied. The 1993, 1999 and 2004 elections were generally considered free and fair. The 1996 elections were heavily rigged in favor of the government, which dissolved the electoral commission during the counting process. The opposition boycotted the 2009 parliamentary election, which was conducted immediately after the contested constitutional referendum which allowed President Tandja to remain in office for another three years. Despite the major controversies surrounding the last elections, and despite the country's mixed fortunes with elections, the electoral body is seen as impartial and effective.

The military interim government is scheduled to hand over power to a civilian regime in April 2011. Historically, Niger's elected politicians have been highly dependent on foreign aid and the local support of chiefs and Islamic clerics. The military has been a constant factor in Nigerien politics, as the current political dispensation attests. The last two military coups (1999 and 2010), however, were undertaken in order to return to constitutional rule and not in order to claim power on a long-term basis. This shows that over the course of the last decade a republican spirit has fostered inside the army. At present, it seems very unlikely that the army plans to meddle with civilian politics any time soon.

Effective power to govern  
8

Since the military takeover in February 2010, political and civil groups are able to assemble freely. Identity-based or particularist political parties and associations are banned. After 9/11, five Islamic associations were disbanded on account of their allegedly extremist activity. The Tandja regime broke up several demonstrations protesting his constitutional referendum. These demonstrations were staged by various members of civil society, in particular students, the democratic opposition and the trade unions. Former members of the National Assembly, who belong to the opposition, were arrested in October 2009 when they tried to hold a meeting. Since the military takeover the right to assemble freely has been accepted.

Association / assembly rights  
9

Under the military government, the situation of journalists has improved significantly. Journalists and civil society representatives have consistently stressed the significant improvements that have occurred since the coup of February 2010. The main privately-owned radio station in Agadez was back on the air after being shut down two years ago. The international press freedom organization Reporters Without Borders has praised the military government's liberal approach to the private media. The national media conference held in late May 2010 led to the adoption of a law that decriminalizes press offences. The High Council for Communications (Conseil Supérieur de la Communication, CSC), Niger's media supervisory body, will, according to an amendment in the law, include a higher number of independent media professionals and thus be less influenced by the

Freedom of expression  
9

interests of the government. During the Tandja regime, freedom of expression was accepted in theory, yet in practice journalists writing about the situation in the north or about government corruption incurred heavy sentences, including temporary arrests. In June 2009, a private TV and radio station had to suspend broadcasting after being accused of undermining public order on the basis of false information. This justification was frequently invoked against journalists. As a result the country was rated as not free by Freedom House's 2010 Freedom of the Press Index. General problems for the private media are the low literacy rate of the population and the low coverage rate of newspapers and radio stations. Journalists suffer from a lack of resources and training.

### 3 | Rule of Law

The new constitution of the Seventh Republic explicitly highlights the importance of mutual checks and balances. Like several of its predecessors, the constitution foresees a semi-presidential system. This inhibits the danger of institutional deadlock that haunted Niger in the early 1990s. However this danger did not materialize in the last decade. The new 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 (the president can propose and dismiss the prime minister); it outlines the respective rights of the president and the prime minister in case of a cohabitation (in this case, the majority of parliament can name the prime minister). The new constitution further specifies the control mechanisms of the judiciary to scrutinize the president and the prime minister in a more precise manner. It stresses that the Constitutional Court is the only institution that can interpret the constitution and that the Constitutional Court cannot be dissolved by the president. Between February 2010 and January 2011, the country was ruled by the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy, which held all executive and legislative power. Judicial power was given to the Constitutional Court, which was staffed with former constitutional judges who had the reputation of being genuinely independent.

In the past the legislature and the judiciary were independent on paper yet often suffered from extensive interference by the executive. During the final stages of the Fifth Republic, the Constitutional Court rebuffed Tandja's attempt to prolong his term in office; Tandja dissolved the Constitutional Court in retaliation. This example shows that the problem in Niger is not the separation of power in principle, but rather the way in which this principle is applied.

Although in the recent past the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court have ruled against several executive decisions, these rulings were ignored or led to the dissolution of the courts. High-ranking judges have often become the targets of intimidation campaigns by the presidency. Very few judicial actions have been

Separation of  
powers

7

Independent  
judiciary

5

taken against high-ranking politicians; however, they were often not taken up by the courts and delayed indefinitely. The lower levels of the judicial systems are overburdened with work, notoriously under-resourced and accordingly plagued by corruption. Very few lawyers are registered outside Niamey and the costs of legal aid are too high for the vast majority of the populace.

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption. This however has never been implemented in practice, even though at times the Tandja government openly admitted to corruption. Civil servants frequently demand bribes to provide public services. International observers raised concerns about transparency in the context of uranium mining contracts as well as a \$5 billion oil-exploration deal signed by the government and the China National Petroleum Corporation. In April 2010, the new military government sacked 20 top officials working for state-owned companies, all of whom had been personal nominees of President Tandja. In addition, it set up a commission to investigate corruption (Commission de lutte contre la délinquance économique financière et fiscale). The commission scrutinized several state bodies; its work resulted in the arrests of the son of former President Tandja, Hadiatoulaye Tandja, and the former minister of mines, Mohamed Abdoulahi (both are now free on bail). Other prominent victims include the former minister of finance, Ali Lamine Zeine, and the former prime minister, Seyni Oumarou. While these steps were welcomed by international anti-corruption groups like Transparency International, there are doubts as to the extent to which the future civilian government can maintain the current anti-corruption drive. Niger's political class represents a close-knit community, thereby fostering a culture of impunity. The current progress owes to the temporary nature of the regime in place.

Prosecution of  
office abuse

5

Civil rights are guaranteed by the constitution, yet these rights are not fully inviolate and are not respected in all parts of the country. Outside Niamey there is almost no legal recourse due to a lack of lawyers and insufficiently trained legal aid. Despite constitutional protections, nomadic peoples have little or no access to government services. Significant 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. This applies in particular to women in rural areas. Family law gives women inferior status in property disputes. According to human rights groups, around 8% of the population are subject to forced labor. Slavery still exists despite an official parliamentary ban in 2003. Child marriage and child prostitution is a problem in the rural areas. In the U.S. State Department's 2009 Trafficking in Persons report, Niger now belongs to Tier 3, the worst possible rating. The government acts against traffickers to the extent that it is able to do so. The National Commission for the Coordination of the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons still has no budget.

Civil rights

6

#### 4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

The military interim government dissolved all previous democratic institutions. The Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy published a timetable for the return to democratic rule scheduled to begin in April 2011. However, this military interlude demonstrates that while democratic institutions have some foundation, they are still not stable. In the last two decades, democratic institutions frequently underperformed. According to domestic estimates, roughly 70% of all former MPs cannot read or write. There have also been frictions between the executive and the judiciary, which contributed to political instability in 2009. Potential tensions between the president and the prime minister pose a constant threat to stability in Niger due to the French-style semi-presidential system. An institutional deadlock between legislative and executive has not occurred since the mid-1990s.

Performance of  
democratic  
institutions

7

Democratic institutions are accepted by the majority of political actors, yet not by everyone. All political parties and the vast majority of civil society are in favor of multiparty contests. Winners and losers alike have in the past always accepted the outcome of elections, provided that they meet international standards. The freedom of assembly and the freedom of speech were not always respected by the Tandja government. The fact that large parts of the MNSD and parts of the political class did and still do support Tandja's failed attempt to prolong his stay in office indicates that some autocratic elements still wield significant political influence in the country's largest party. Radical Islamic groups – such as the Izala sect in Maradi and some Islamic welfare organizations – reject the secular state as well as civil liberties and freedoms in general. So far, these elements do not constitute a threat to the democratic secular order. The Tuareg rebels (not necessarily the Tuareg on the whole) do not respect Niger's democratic institutions either, although they might claim otherwise. While the military intervention in February 2010 has illustrated that the army is still able and willing to intervene in civilian politics, the particular circumstances of the intervention have shown that the army regards itself as the guardian of democratic rule rather than its opponent.

Commitment to  
democratic  
institutions

7

#### 5 | Political and Social Integration

Niger is back on track towards multiparty democracy. The 2009 parliamentary elections were boycotted by all major opposition parties (the PNDS and the CDS). The outcome resulted in an overwhelming majority for the MNSD and did not correspond to conventional voting behavior in Niger. After the 2004 parliamentary elections the party system displayed moderate fragmentation, low-to-moderate polarization and a medium level of institutionalization. The election further saw a slight increase in the number of effective parties from 3.3 in 1999 to 3.8 in 2004. This number increased in the January 2011 elections when former Prime Minister

Party system

7

Hama Amadou formed his own party, the Democratic Nigerien Movement (MDN), which won 23 seats and inflicted major losses on the MNSD. Also, in the local elections on 10 January 2011, Amadou's MDN emerged as the second-strongest political force denting the MNSD vote share. Political alliances in the run-up to the 2011 elections were fickle and dominated by strategic not by programmatic considerations.

Generally, the party system has only shallow roots in society and Niger's low turnout rates on election day (2004: 45%) attest to that. Only the trade unions have managed to foster somewhat deeper relations with the major parties. The protests against Tandja's third term in the summer of 2009 indicated some loose form of coordination between civil society and the parliamentary opposition; however, this appeared to be ad hoc and driven by circumstances. Parties' electoral success is strongly dependent on the co-optation of traditional chiefs, more so than in other African countries. By African standards the party system shows a high degree of stability. The major political forces and leaders have remained the same since the early 1990s and voter volatility has remained low.

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 lack the ability to influence policy-making. Very few coordination mechanisms exist. The capacity to analyze political issues is severely undermined given the lack of funding among interest groups. Most lack a clearly defined purpose. The Coalition *Équité/Qualité contre la Vie Chère au Niger*, which has long demanded better living conditions, is an exception to the rule. Its success can be explained by the fact that everyone in Niger can easily agree with its main goal given the extremely dire economic conditions. Civil society as a whole is often deeply divided politically. Some Islamic organizations for example are in favor of gender equality, while others campaign aggressively against it. During the course of 2009, various NGOs united under the umbrella organization, *Front Uni pour la Sauvegarde des Acquis Démocratique (FUSAD)*, in order to protest a third Tandja term. Other groups, sponsored by the government, have adopted the opposite stance. The only powerful interest group is found in the trade unions of the public sector; in the 1990s, they demonstrated their ability to paralyze Niamey with general strikes. The unions also played a key role in facilitating democratic change. Outside Niamey, the effect of interest groups is nonexistent.

There is no recent survey data available for the acceptance of democratic norms in Niger. The citizenry's consent to democracy is thus difficult to assess. According to an opinion poll conducted by the GIGA Institute of African Affairs in late 2006, almost two-thirds of all Nigerians (66.2%) prefer democracy over any other kind of government. Comparable shares of respondents also favor multipartyism and the independence of the judiciary. Demonstrations in support of the military caretaker government, which took place after the military had announced its intention to

Interest groups  
5

Approval of  
democracy  
n/a

return Niger to democratic rule, indicate that support for democracy remains high. However, the political upheavals of the last twenty years have given rise to the spread of a more radical form of Islam. Islamic clerics have called for the overthrow of democratic politics and the introduction of Shari'ah law. According to local researchers, anti-democratic attitudes in rural areas have increased over the last few years.

Social self-organization is rather poorly developed, though the number of self-help associations has increased in recent years (in particular with regard to feminist groups). Family and local networks mitigate this. A lack of relevant survey data and the vastness of the country (in combination with infrastructural shortcomings) mean that trust between different segments of society is hard to assess. In rural areas, where 90% of the Nigerien population resides, social life has been structured for centuries along both hierarchical and gender lines. While these forms of social organization are not conducive to modernity and democracy, they instill a medium level of mutual trust. The Kountché military regime (1974–1987) implemented so-called local development councils, which dealt with the developmental needs of their respective local communities. While these are no longer in place, they have institutionalized the cooperation of local leaders.

Social capital

6

## II. Economic Transformation

### 6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

All development indicators display an exceptionally low level of human and economic development. In 2007 Niger was at the bottom of the HDI ranking (182nd out of 182 countries), a position it has held for years. 86% of the population live on less than \$2 a day and 60% live on less than \$1. In 2009, GDP per capita was \$676, a slight improvement over 2006, when it was \$622. A large informal sector exists and over 80% of the population depend on subsistence farming and herding. On the UN Education Index 2007, Niger scores 0.27, the lowest score measured. Around 80% of the population are illiterate. Niger's HIV rate is relatively low (0.8 in 2007) yet life expectancy is only 51 years at birth; Niger fares as badly as countries that are torn by the HIV virus such as South Africa. In addition, Niger has one of the highest population growth rates (3.9% in 2009) and the current population of 15.3 million is expected to double in the next 20 years. The Gini coefficient is 43.9 (2005); while this might indicate a more equal society than in many other African countries, Niger is a very unequal society. Extreme poverty is widespread, which skews the indicator in favor of a value that is indicative of equality. Niger experienced severe food crises in 2005 and 2009/10; malnutrition is prevalent in

Question  
ScoreSocioeconomic  
barriers

1

large parts of the country. The country remains dependent on international hunger relief and on foreign budget aid; aid dependency per capita has doubled between 2001 (\$22 per capita) and 2008 (\$41 per capita) despite generous HIPC relief. The new constitution highlights gender equality and in recent years the number of women in administrative and political positions has increased, yet women in general suffer from extensive societal discrimination and social exclusion in all sectors of society. Slavery persists in some ethnic groups.

Economic indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010
GDP	\$ mn.	4290.5	5369.9	5259.4	<b>5548.8</b>
GDP growth	%	3.4	8.7	-1.2	<b>8.8</b>
Inflation (CPI)	%	0.1	11.3	4.3	<b>0.8</b>
Unemployment	%	-	-	-	-
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	3.0	6.3	14.0	<b>17.1</b>
Export growth	%	-	-	-	-
Import growth	%	-	-	-	-
Current account balance	\$ mn.	-351.3	-651.4	-1320.1	-
Public debt	% of GDP	15.9	13.9	15.8	<b>17.6</b>
External debt	\$ mn.	1148.0	1002.1	1102.7	<b>1126.8</b>
Total debt service	\$ mn.	32.1	29.5	45.3	<b>27.0</b>
Cash surplus or deficit	% of GDP	-0.9	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	11.3	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Public expnd. on edu.	% of GDP	4.1	3.7	4.5	-
Public expnd. on health	% of GDP	5.3	5.9	6.1	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	-	1.0	-	-

Sources: The World Bank, World Development Indicators 2011 | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook 2011 | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database 2011.

## 7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Markets operate within a weak institutional framework that reflects the small size of the formal economy. On the 2010 Index of Economic Freedom, Niger ranks 129th out of 179 countries; there has been no change from previous years. According to the World Bank's Doing Business survey, it takes 31 days and 8 procedures to start a business; Niger ranks 173rd out of 183 and is just ahead of countries like Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The costs of launching a business are very high and closing a business can be a lengthy process. The top corporate tax rate is 35%, which is a moderate rate by international standards. 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. As in all Francophone countries, the CFA is pegged to the EURO.

Market-based  
competition  
4

From 1998 onwards, the government divested itself of monopolies in water, (electric) power and telecommunications under the guidance of the World Bank. The privatization of other state monopolies has stalled. The oil-distribution company (SONIDEP) and the national electricity company (NIGELEC) still hold monopolies. Three mobile phone and two Internet licenses have been granted and genuine competition in these sectors has commenced. An independent multi-sectoral regulatory body has been created to help ensure free and fair competition. For 30 years the French government-owned company, Areva, held a virtual monopoly over Niger's uranium.

Anti-monopoly  
policy  
6

In 2008 Niger granted some concessions to Canadian and Chinese companies in the mining sector, including oil. Various foreign firms are competing in the nascent gold and oil sectors.

Trade is liberalized in principle. Niger has been a member of the WTO since 1996. Its participation in international trade is very limited with regard to both imports and exports. Import restrictions, import taxes, inefficient customs and widespread corruption add to the cost of trade. On the 2010 Economic Freedom Index (category "free trade") Niger is at par with the global average. Niger also participates in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Membership entails a customs union marked by a considerable degree of de facto protectionism and state regulations.

Liberalization of  
foreign trade  
6

The banking sector is weak and heavily concentrated. There are four major commercial banks, which control 90% of total financial sector assets. The country's deposit to GDP ratio is among the lowest in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (ECOWAS). Non-Nigerian nationals own over two-third of Niger's banks. Foreign investment in the banking sector is restricted to West and

Banking system  
5

North Africa. Less than 5% of the population use any financial products. Only 16 in 1,000 people have a bank account, one of the lowest ratios in the world. This is partly due to the socioeconomic conditions, partly due to high banking fees, which constitute roughly 30% of the average income. The number of bank branches increased from 21 to 38 between 2003 and 2006, which some see as an indication that competition is increasing. Niger's central bank is the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO). Niger is not a signatory to the Basel II accords.

## 8 | Currency and Price Stability

Niger's membership in the CFA zone pegs the CFA franc to the euro. This prevents Niger from pursuing its own currency policy. With the exception of 2008 (11.3%), Niger has traditionally enjoyed low inflation rates (2006: 0.0%; 2007: 0.1%; 2009: 4.3%). The sharp increase in 2008 was due to a worldwide hike in food and oil prices. International estimates predict an inflation rate of 1.1% for 2010. The decline is due to the fall in local food prices following the end of the 2010 famine.

Anti-inflation /  
forex policy

8

Niger qualified for the HIPC initiative in 2000, and it accordingly received extensive debt relief between 2000 and 2008. Most of the debt relief was provided in 2005. Since 2006 Niger's total debt has again risen slightly (2006: \$867 million; 2007: \$967 million, 2008: \$966 million). While debt relief has drastically improved the country's financial standing, there is evidence that Niger has taken on more debt while receiving extensive debt relief; in due course, Niger's debt burden might reach the levels of the late 1990s. According to World Bank statistics, the average annual deficit in the 1990s was 7% of the GDP, rising to an average of 8% of GDP from 2000 to 2008. This indicates that there has been a lack of commitment to reduce state consumption. In September 2010, the IMF visited Niamey to carry out the combined fourth and fifth reviews of Niger's extended credit facility. Despite Niger's lack of fiscal discipline, the IMF praised the country for its management of public expenditure.

Macrostability

6

## 9 | Private Property

The international property rights index does not rank Niger. Despite a legal regime for the protection of intellectual and other property rights, the government lacks capacity and resources to fight violations of the law. The registration of land titles is beset with problems. 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 outlined in the code have significant regional variations in subjects such as the right to inherit land, individual and family tenure,

Property rights

4

and women's land access. Most customary practices reflect the influence of Shari'ah law. International experts view the non-implementation of the existing legal code as a major constraint for economic freedom.

Private companies can act freely in principle but encounter administrative problems. According to the World Bank's Doing Business report, it takes 31 days to start a business and there are eight procedures that must be performed, putting Niger in a mid-field position of transformation countries within the BTI. Generally, the poor legal and physical infrastructure has made it difficult for small firms to operate. The privatizations of the national electricity company and the oil distribution company have both failed to attract private sector investors. In June 2010, the government announced that it would try to find suitable investors.

Private enterprise  
5

## 10 | Welfare Regime

There are two institutions that are responsible for social security: the Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale (CNSS) and the Fonds National des Retraites (FNR). The CNSS has been in place since 1965 and covers accidents at work, work-related illnesses and disability; it also provides for health protection of mothers and their children. The FNR is the national pension fund. According to information provided by the CNSS in 2005, the CNSS covers 60,000 workers; there is no equivalent data for the FNR. The CNSS and the FNR only cover workers employed in the formal economy. The vast majority of the population has to rely on family networks or savings. An alternative source of social security is provided by Islamic welfare organizations. Although the country participates in the HIPC initiative, there is no comprehensive strategy to fight poverty. Almost all indicators of the Millennium Development Goals are in regression. Overall, there is a shortage of even the most basic forms of social safety.

Social safety nets  
3

Nigerien society is strictly hierarchical and heavily segmented. Opportunities depend on one's own personal background and not on one's merit. While the very small political and economic elite is free to consider any educational and professional option, the poor have little or nothing in which to participate. The situation is particularly dire for women due to religious and other cultural factors. The government has paid lip service to enrolling more women at university and in schools. The number of female MPs has increased (from one to 13) and the last civilian government was able to ensure 25% female representation in the cabinet.

Equal opportunity  
3

## 11 | Economic Performance

Since 2005, Niger has experienced solid economic growth. In 2008, annual growth reached a new peak at 9.5%, while previous growth rates fluctuated between 7.4%

Output strength  
6

(2005) and 3.3% (2007). In 2009, the annual growth rate declined to 1.0% due to a bad harvest; agriculture accounts for 40% of GDP. The Economist Intelligence Unit estimates GDP growth for 2010 to be around 7.5% due to better rainfalls. These data show the dependence of the economy on climate conditions. Current economic growth is driven by foreign-financed infrastructure projects such as the Kandadji dam; as a result, foreign direct investment increased from 1.4% of GDP in 2006 to 13.7% of GDP in 2009. Niger's landlocked position makes exporting costly especially since the main roads of transport lead through crisis-driven countries such as Ivory Coast and (northern) Nigeria. Due to Niger's participation in the HIPC initiative, the debt burden has decreased significantly; however, the average account deficit in the last decade was 8% of GDP. In 2008 the inflation rate skyrocketed to 10%. In 2009 inflation was brought down to 4.3%, which corresponds to the global average rate. Estimates show that in 2010 inflation went down further to 1.1% (or even lower), which is due to international and national initiatives to regain control over the price of food. There is no recent data on tax revenue (2006: 10.7% of GDP, 2007: 11.5% of GDP). In large parts of the country, traditional leaders act as tax collectors and divert money for their own purposes. The very high population growth (at over 3%, one of the highest in the world) is a further burden for public expenditure and society as a whole. There are no official unemployment statistics, but the majority of the population is either unemployed or underemployed. The situation is particularly desperate among young males given the high birth rate. Niger's only hope to improve its output is its natural resources, in particular gold and oil. There have been calls for the exploitation of solar energy by various civil society organizations, but the lack of technical sophistication in the country makes this a very unrealistic enterprise.

## 12 | Sustainability

Niger's most pressing environmental issues include the serious depletion of vegetation by the burning of grass for crops, the overgrazing of land, soil erosion and increasing desertification. Pollution and desiccation continue to threaten the Niger River. The river is the main source of water and crucial for irrigation. In January 2011 Greenpeace found dangerous levels of radiation in the populated areas near Niger's uranium mines; the mining towns of Arlit and Akokan were particularly impacted. The government does not take these problems seriously. The only exception is the administration of the "W" National Park (together with Benin and Burkina Faso), which strives to protect fauna and endangered wildlife. Unlawful hunting and poaching have nonetheless become serious issues, ones which the government has been unable to address.

Environmental  
policy  
3

Niger's literacy rate is a dismal 28.7%, the second lowest rate in the world. Only 15.1% of all females are literate. The literacy rate among young people (aged 15 to 24) is slightly better at 39%. Despite extensive foreign aid, Niger has not made any progress in achieving the MDGs. The last human development report dates back to 2004. Accordingly, the scholarization rate for primary education is 45.4%, which varies significantly between regions (95% in Niamey; 32.9% in Zinder). This data does not take into consideration structural constraints on the quality of education, such as underpaid teachers and lack of teaching resources. These constraints are endemic. On average the pupil-teacher ratio at the primary level was 41 to 1. By local standards the cost of sending a child to a secondary school are very high (69,928 CFA in 2004). No statistics exist for the enrolment rate in secondary education institutions. A variety of private secondary institutions exist, which are attended by less than 1% of the student body. There are three institutions of higher education, the National School of Administration, the University of Niamey, and the Islamic University of West Africa at Say; three additional universities were created in Tahoua, Maradi and Zinder. However, classes at the University of Niamey often have to be cancelled due to student or faculty strikes. The strikes are motivated by cuts in budgets or faculty salaries. All segments of the education system are underperforming and have fallen victim to the general economic malaise. UN reports have criticized the fact that annual budget allocations for education have been in decline for many years.

Education policy /  
R&D

3

## Transformation Management

### I. Level of Difficulty

Niger is confronted with very high structural constraints. The country is ranked at the bottom of the HDI index; 86% of the population live on less than \$2 a day. Around 60% of the population live on less than \$1 a day and in extreme poverty. The country experiences droughts at regular intervals. The drought of 2005 and the drought of 2009/2010 led to extreme food shortages outside the capital and worsened living conditions. In previous years Niger experienced locust plagues (2004). Niger's landlocked position makes international trade a difficult enterprise as trade routes run through Algeria, Nigeria and Ivory Coast, all of which are unstable nations. The high fertility rate (3.9% in 2009) – one of the highest rates in the world – has led to high population growth, which means that satisfactory economic growth rates do not necessarily lead to improvements in living standards. Economic growth rates are driven by foreign investment in infrastructure and agricultural output. The former is dependent on foreign investment behavior, the latter on climatic conditions. The high population growth exercises high pressure on the infrastructure, which is weak even by African standards. The public school system is underperforming and the only public university is notoriously underfunded. Student and faculty strikes have paralyzed the university in the past. A diversified set of subterranean assets (e.g., uranium, gold, oil, iron ore, nickel, copper, phosphates and coal) provides potential for future improvements, yet with the exception of uranium these resources have not been exploited on large scale. In 2012 the oilfield in Agadam will be developed and the country's first oil refinery at Zinder will begin operations. While these are positive developments, future income will depend on the development of world market prices. Overall there has been very little progress and it seems unlikely that these severe structural constraints can be overcome in the near to medium term.

Structural  
constraints  
9

Civil society as a whole rests on weak foundations. President Kountché (1974 – 1987) established the so-called “Development Society,” which relied on the advice of local-based cooperative societies, youth groups and professional associations. Neither of these groups was de facto independent and critical of the government. These organizations became the nucleus of the MNSD in 1989. Especially at the local level, many of these associations provide the foundation for contemporary

Civil society  
traditions  
7

local associations. Most contemporary civil society organizations are concentrated in Niger, consist of very few members and cannot rely on a solid financial base. Their activities are dependent on donor funding. The exception to the rule is trade unions, which were instrumental in bringing about democratic change in the early 1990s. The trade unions are the only actor with the organizational capacity to mobilize significant numbers of people. At times the unions have also been a destabilizing factor; in the 1990s, Niger experienced general strikes on an almost monthly basis, which worsened the socioeconomic outlook of the country. This was one factor that caused the institutional deadlock of 1996 (leading to a military coup). In the last decade various organizations have come together under the umbrella of the Coalition Équité/ Qualité contre la Vie Chère au Niger. This organization's activities have been confined to urban areas. The movement was divided over Tandja's attempt to extend his term of office. Various civil society organizations were opposed to the constitutional referendum that ushered in the Sixth Republic, while others – co-opted by the government – staged demonstrations in favor of the new political constellation. Various organizations lack the impartiality required to scrutinize government. In day-to-day politics, civil society does not play an active role. Consultations are rare and occur on an ad hoc basis.

Compared to other African countries and in particular compared to Niger's immediate neighborhood (Nigeria and Chad), the political salience of ethnicity is low. There are some tensions between the Hausa and the Djerma groups that resulted from uneven economic development due to French colonialism and the early years of independence. During the period of military rule between 1974 and 1989, the government tried to maintain an ethnic balance in all public appointments. While political parties have their strongholds, political party competition is certainly not shaped by ethnic exclusion. The political liberalization of the late 1980s was followed by two large-scale conflicts between the central government and the Tuareg. The last conflict, which ended in 2009, left 70 government soldiers and 200 Tuareg rebels dead. The conflict has produced tension between the government and representatives of the free media due to government infringements of press footage covering the conflict. In recent years Niger has witnessed the radicalization of Islam in some parts of the country, most notably in the region around Maradi. This had led to clashes between adherents of traditional Islam and the Izala brotherhood. Conflict intensity might be low at the moment but there is potential for growing societal polarization.

Conflict intensity  
5

## II. Management Performance

### 14 | Steering Capability

The government principally has the will to tackle long-term problems such as unemployment and poverty. It formulates its strategic goals in cooperation with the international donor community. Yet in contrast to many other African countries, no Nigerien government has ever formulated a holistic and long-term vision of how to improve the country's socioeconomic situation. There is no blueprint for future development. In the past, even those policy goals that do exist have not been pursued due to the short-term material interests of the individuals involved.

Nigerien politicians first and foremost strive for their personal benefit. The Tandja government tried to unconstitutionally extend the president's term limit; several of its leading members and Tandja's son were involved in large-scale corruption cases. Since 1993 every government has failed to cooperate with representatives from rural areas; as a result, government planning does not correspond to the needs of the local population. Outside the major urban areas there is a distinct lack of qualified government personnel to plan and execute government decisions. Although donor aid has increased by 50% in the last decade (compared to the last decade of the twentieth century) no progress has been achieved with regard to vital developmental indicators. The interim military government has given priority to the food crisis, a fast return to democratic rule and a crackdown on corruption (as well as national reconciliation). It has achieved all of these goals. Purges inside the military junta in October 2010 led to the dismissal of Abdoulaye Badie, the deputy of the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy, and the head of the national guard, Abdou Sidikou. This demonstrates that the military is internally divided over the course of the transition. While the exact reasons for these dismissals are impossible to identify, it appears that several officers wanted to delay the return to civilian rule. Given its short term in office the military was in no position to formulate any long-term goals.

All civilian governments since 1993 have failed to implement poverty reduction strategies. There are no policies in place that mitigate the high population growth; awareness campaigns about the consequences of high fertility rates do not exist. Debt relief has not been accompanied by any improvements in living standards. There has been some progress in the exploitation of resources; this has largely been driven by foreign and in particular Chinese interest in these resources. The country's infrastructure has been deteriorating for many years; improvements were typically the result of external intervention. Shortcomings in implementation can

Question  
Score

Prioritization  
5

Implementation  
6

primarily be attributed to poor administrative capacities and corruption. In its latest visit to the country in autumn 2010, the IMF expressed its happiness over the military government's willingness to solve the national food crisis and to mitigate the consequences of the floods in recent months. It also stated that Niger has been particularly successful in increasing its revenues. It also explicitly referred however to delays in structural reform. The EU recently conducted a budget audit assessing to what extent budget allocation mechanisms corresponded to good governance criteria. Niger failed all significant criteria. The report has not been published yet.

The military coup of 2010 was accompanied by political reforms. The interim military government outlined a timetable for the return of constitutional rule and implemented that timetable as quickly as possible. All former restrictions on the media – a key characteristic of the Tandja regime – were lifted.

Despite its participation in the HIPC initiative and despite an increase in the amount of development aid, there has been no improvement in economic and social development. This indicates that policy learning or innovation are largely absent. No master plan exists on how to improve the current economic predicament. No serious attempts have been undertaken to diversify the Nigerien economy. Economic reforms are urgently needed if another debt crisis is to be averted in the medium to long run, yet the Tandja government has increased the costs of the public sector.

Although the peace treaty with the Tuareg in 2009 was a major breakthrough, little progress has been achieved in dealing with the problems of the north. The nation state remains largely absent and banditry is increasing once again. A new allocation formula for the resources gained from the export of uranium also has not yet occurred. While it is too early to evaluate the peace treaty's extended impact, the current situation has the potential to give rise to a future rebellion.

In terms of political transformation, the overthrow of the Tandja government has illustrated two things: first, that the civilian regime fails to stick to democratic norms, and second, that the military is still a powerful political player with the ambition to intervene if necessary. The behavioral patterns of both the civilian elite and the military indicate little progress in the way both approach politics. In anticipation of the 2011 elections, the four major political parties agreed on various alliances, only to change their positions a few weeks later. The selection of presidential candidates shows little change compared to the early 1990s.

## 15 | Resource Efficiency

The government uses only some of its resources efficiently. The administration has traditionally been oversized in terms of personnel but under-equipped with regard to technical resources. The Tandja government increased the salaries of civil servants and ensured that civil servants only have to work part-time on Friday in order to have enough time to practice religion. This guaranteed the support of the trade unions. While this made sense politically and socially, it has also made the government machinery less efficient. The anti-corruption commission put in place by the interim military government revealed various corruption affairs involving several high-ranking civil servants. Recruitment into top positions follows a logic of personal loyalty instead of merit. Participation in the HIPC initiative has clearly improved the country's financial standing, however economic experts argue that in a few years the debt burden will be where it was in 2000 when HIPC relief set in. According to estimates by local NGOs, around 70% of all MPs were illiterate, which makes budget auditing by the legislative branch a difficult enterprise. Budget International has criticized Niger for providing very little information to the public on its budget – even by regional standards. The public also has no opportunity to attend parliamentary meetings where the budget is discussed. In recent years the government has made some progress with regard to decentralization; however in many places those entrusted with governmental functions are not sure about their role. Among the local population there is also a distinct lack of knowledge on the mandate of the authorities.

Efficient use of  
assets

4

Both the Tandja government and the interim military government have tried to coordinate conflicting objectives. The deadlock potential that the semi-presidential system poses has been of no significance in the observation period. The Tandja regime has shown no internal friction; potential opponents to Tandja's third term as president were removed from the inner circles of power as soon as they become visible. The most prominent example was former Prime Minister Hama Amadou. Some friction emerged inside the military regime in the latter part of 2010 over the duration of the transition. This caused the dismissal of various high-ranking members of the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy including the deputy of General Djibou and the head of the presidential guard. The exact motives are difficult to decipher given the nature of the regime. According to domestic observers, the military has been keen on avoiding the classic coordination problems that exist in any civilian government that faces regular electoral scrutiny. However, the apparent success of the military in coordinating its policies is in large part due to the contribution of the international community, which played a key role in the fight against the famine.

Policy  
coordination

6

Corruption remains a serious problem at all levels of the state. The crackdown of the interim military government on previous ministers in 2010 illustrates the severity of the problem. The EU recently conducted an (unpublished) institutional audit that evaluated budget allocation mechanisms. Niger failed all categories. There is no effective party finance regulation in place. There is also no effective auditing mechanism of state spending. Information on state spending is not provided. Even parliamentarians who are members of the budget accounts committee lack access to crucial documents. The poor state of the private media and more importantly the poor state of the judicial system mean that many cases of high-level corruption have either never been addressed in earnest or have never been revealed to a broader audience. Widespread illiteracy contributes to a general sense of impunity in the political realm.

Anti-corruption  
policy  
4

## 16 | Consensus-Building

There is a general consensus among all important political players on the general goals of development and democratic transformation. The behavior of the Tandja government has illustrated that the self-interest of individual actors can stand in the way of achieving these goals. The protest of all political parties (except for the MNSD), including the former coalition partner of the MNSD against a third Tandja term and the military takeover, have shown that political society as a whole is strong enough to counter these tendencies when the basic principles of democracy are at stake. The only further potential spoilers to the democratization process (beyond Tandja loyalists) are radical Islamic groups who have taken a strongly anti-secular and anti-democratic position. These groups are not new but their support has grown, in particular in rural areas. The political upheaval of the last twenty years and the uncertainties that the democratic project has produced have led to a loss of trust in the secular state and its institutions. On the national stage the political influence of these groups is still minimal. Some elements inside the military, in particular those who have been in leading positions before 1991, still adhere to the idea of permanent military rule. Yet the last two coups were undertaken to reinstall multiparty democracy, which indicates that the pro-democratic forces inside the army have gained the upper hand. A failure of the new civilian regime to improve living conditions and prevent political instability (for example, an institutional deadlock between the prime minister and the president) could incite future military intervention. The fact that no national political actor has emerged who is able to seriously threaten the pro-democratic and market-friendly reforms of the last two decades should not distract from the fact that there are openly anti-democratic elements inside some of the key political actors. The freedom of the press has been seriously hampered under Tandja and it remains to be seen to what extent the new civilian government will be willing to be more accommodating of criticism. The willingness of the government to fully privatize

Consensus on goals  
6

former state companies can also be doubted given previous experiences where the privatization of some companies was simply abandoned or never pursued in earnest.

In the past the most powerful anti-democratic actor was the military. The behavior of the military in the aftermath of the 1999 and the 2009 coups indicates that it has redefined its role. To what extent its new self-perception is accepted by all soldiers cannot be ascertained. The military's pro-democratic attitude could be rooted in the generous attitude of the former civilian government towards the military (regular payment of salaries, etc.). If this is the case, then the democratic conviction of the military is still very weak. Islamic groups continue to oppose political liberalization, especially with regard to the rights of women and with regard to secularism. Although the political class as a whole has accepted previous election outcomes, powerful self-interests still have the potential to override the commitment to democratic principles.

Anti-democratic  
actors

6

The political leadership tries to prevent the escalation of ethnic and religious conflicts yet it has had limited success in initiating serious progress.

Cleavage /  
conflict  
management

5

Although all political parties have regional and ethnic strongholds, no party excludes members of individual communities. All political leaders show their commitment to Islamic traditions, yet all accept the secular state. People in rural areas have felt marginalized since the early 1990s (both politically and economically) and there are doubts as to the extent to which the urban-based political elite is still representative of rural needs. The growing rise of radical Islam is particularly visible in rural areas and there certainly is potential for a growing rift between rural-based radical Islam and the urban-based secular political elite. Previous clashes between security forces and radical Islamic preachers and their followers in Maradi illustrate the potential for future violent conflict.

The last civilian administration has done very little to nothing to react to this growing rift. There have been attempts to increase inter-religious dialogue between Muslims and Christians, yet the small size of the Christian community means that there is little potential for conflict in the first place. The last Tuareg uprising has led to an escalation between the Tuareg and the central government. The peace agreement, which can be seen as some sort of success in the area of conflict management, foresees the allocation of greater financial means to the Tuareg, yet thus far this has not materialized and the failure to honor the provisions of earlier agreements in the 1990ies has been one of the causes of the renewed rebellion in 2007. There is therefore the potential for future violent conflict between the Tuareg and the central government. The interim military government has not taken on this task and has refused to acknowledge any of the former rebels' grievances.

At times the political leadership takes the advice of civil society into consideration when formulating its course of action. During the constitutional drafting process of the constitution of the Seventh Republic in 2010, representatives of all civil society groups were asked to give their opinion on the draft constitution, which was produced by the committee of experts. Civil society has also been consulted in the PRSP process. Various civil society groups have been vocal in the process against rising food prices, which led to various negotiation rounds between the government and civil society. Overall however the impact of civil society in everyday political life is low. Civil society is only taken seriously when political survival is at stake or when the inclusion of civil society groups is advocated by Western donors. The links between civil society groups and political parties are weak and the relationship between the political class and civil society leaders is characterized by mutual mistrust. The failed attempt by the former government to extend its mandate has exacerbated these tensions.

Civil society participation  
6

Reconciliation between former perpetrators of injustice and their victims has never been addressed in earnest. This applies to the victims of the Kountché regime (1974 – 1987) and the Maïnassara regime (1996 – 1999). The attempts by the National Conference in 1991 to identify previous political and social injustices ended in the humiliation of the army, which was one cause for the 1996 coup. Former perpetrators enjoy impunity while former victims have no serious recourse. Various governments put a premium on new political beginnings and in doing so deliberately overlooked the need to come to terms with the past. There have never been any serious attempts to address the grievances of the Tuareg, a community whose culture and aspirations remain misunderstood; many – in particular the army – continue to view the Tuareg rebels as a terrorists.

Reconciliation  
4

The interim government implemented an awareness campaign for reconciliation in the autumn of 2011. The campaign highlights the need for national reconciliation but does not spell out what national reconciliation includes. The military regime further invited various segments of Nigerien society (such as the media) to discuss the importance of reconciliation but these discussions had no tangible results.

## 17 | International Cooperation

World Bank data for the last ten years show a rapid increase of development aid in all sectors. In addition, Niger was able to qualify for the HIPC initiative and benefit extensively from debt relief. In March 2008, the country also qualified for the Millennium Challenge Account. But development indicators such as the MDGs show that there has been no progress with regard to any development goals. Much of the influx of foreign aid (in particular the increase in the budget that is due to debt relief) has simply gone into financing the civil service and keeping the military happy. While this has resulted in political stability, it constitutes the very opposite

Effective use of support  
8

of making effective use of resources. At the local level the government often fails to inform the population about the benefits of external intervention – a situation that is due to the high rates of illiteracy. In contrast to many other African countries, Niger does not have a strategy in place for increasing the economic growth and prosperity of its population. This does not deny that the government is open to external advice and that some development programs – in particular the fight against extreme poverty or against famine – have been somewhat successful. It should be noted that the interim military government was less critical of international involvement during the food crisis than its civilian predecessors. There have been further successes in the reintegration of persons in the northern Tillabery region who were internally displaced due to local conflicts between farmers and herders. Overall however short-term expediencies and rent-seeking hamper the use of available support.

Former President Tandja's attempt to prolong his term in office provoked the international community, including ECOWAS. Only France sounded a conciliatory note and – contrary to the approach taken by other EU states – initially announced that it would increase its budget aid. In October 2009 Niger was suspended from ECOWAS, and at the same time the donor community suspended foreign aid; Nigeria – Niger's main trading partner – suspended its electricity supply (although the power cuts were also due to technical problems; the cuts continue until the present). Both the West and ECOWAS initially condemned the military takeover. However, as soon as the military government announced that it would work towards a speedy return to democratic rule, the relationship between Niger and the international community improved significantly from February 2010 onwards. There is general agreement that the interim military government is driven by the conviction of returning Niger to democratically elected politicians as soon as possible. The military government has proactively sought to communicate its policies with the donors. Throughout the course of 2010 there has been close cooperation between the military government and the international community in fighting the food shortage. Niger remained a loyal ally in "the war on terror" and continues to play its role in the Pan Sahel Initiative, funded by the U.S. State Department. Both the United States and France provide military advice to Niger in order to train Nigerien special forces.

Credibility  
9

Niger is a charter member of the African Union and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. It belongs to the Niger Basin Authority and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Economic Community of West African States, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Regional  
cooperation  
8

Niger's suspension from ECOWAS in the autumn of 2009 greatly damaged the level of trust the country previously enjoyed among its neighbors. Relations have improved since the overthrow of the Tandja regime in February 2010 and will presumably return to normal once the new civilian government takes power. The

former confidence of the international community in Niger in general is almost where it was before the referendum of August 2009. As a landlocked country, Niger relies on friendly relations with neighboring countries such as Benin, Nigeria and Ivory Coast. It therefore has a tangible interest in regional peace and tranquility.

## Strategic Outlook

At the time of this writing Niger was about to return to civilian rule. Given its very low level of sociopolitical development, it will not develop into a fully integrated market economy any time soon. The new civilian government faces the same challenges that its various predecessors have been unable to resolve for over two decades. First, there remains the challenge of poverty and illiteracy. The new government urgently needs to find a coherent framework to deal with these challenges on a long-term basis. Yet Niger's political class displays a distinct lack of interest in improving the quality of the market economy and the management capacity of the country. The donor community should use the aid dependency of Niger to initiate a long-term economic strategy. This will be difficult given increasing Chinese infrastructural investment and interest in Niger's resources (oil, uranium and gold).

Second, there are growing or at least persistent problems in stateness and the rule of law, in particular in rural areas. The political and economic marginalization of those living in rural areas and the long-term effect of the political upheavals of the last two decades have led to a decrease in trust in the institutions of the secular state. Radical Islamic groups will continue to be a challenge for the central government. Even though these radical groups are not directly linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, they nevertheless operate in close geographical proximity. The international community, in particular France and the United States, should continue to seek cooperation with the central government in containing Islamic extremism. This however must not override the imperative to create an economic structure that facilitates social and economic opportunities for the majority of the population. The radicalization of Islam is directly linked to the problem of economic marginalization and thus illustrates the interconnectedness of development and security policy.

Third, although former President's Tandja's attempt to prolong his term in office failed, the democratic credentials of the key political actors are tenuous. All major contenders for the presidential office are individuals who have shaped the political trajectory of the country in the last two decades and bear at least some responsibility for the instability that has shaped Niger since 1991. Political cooperation will remain driven by individual interest and not by what is in the interest of the country. Parliamentary coalitions will be fragile, in particular when it comes to the urgent need to return to fiscal prudence. Since 1996, political cohabitation between the president and a prime minister from different parties has not occurred. This however does not mean that this can be ruled out as future scenario. Future institutional deadlock provoking political instability might return. The donor community should increase awareness among key political actors of this threat. This could be achieved with the help of Niger's nascent civil society.

Fourth, on a closely related topic, the quality of management and governance needs dramatic improvement. This does not only apply to the top level of politicians but also to the capacity of

civil servants. Niger is in dire need of effective anti-corruption policies and this seems all the more important as possible future income from oil and other valuable natural resources is particularly prone to embezzlement and other corrupt practices. Niger should find a way to turn its wealth in natural resources into a blessing, not a curse.

Fifth, although the military has restored democratic rule twice (in 1999 and in 2010) and although a certain republican spirit has taken root inside the army, future military coups cannot be excluded. The dismissal of several high-ranking members of the interim military government indicates that anti-democratic forces still have their place inside the army.