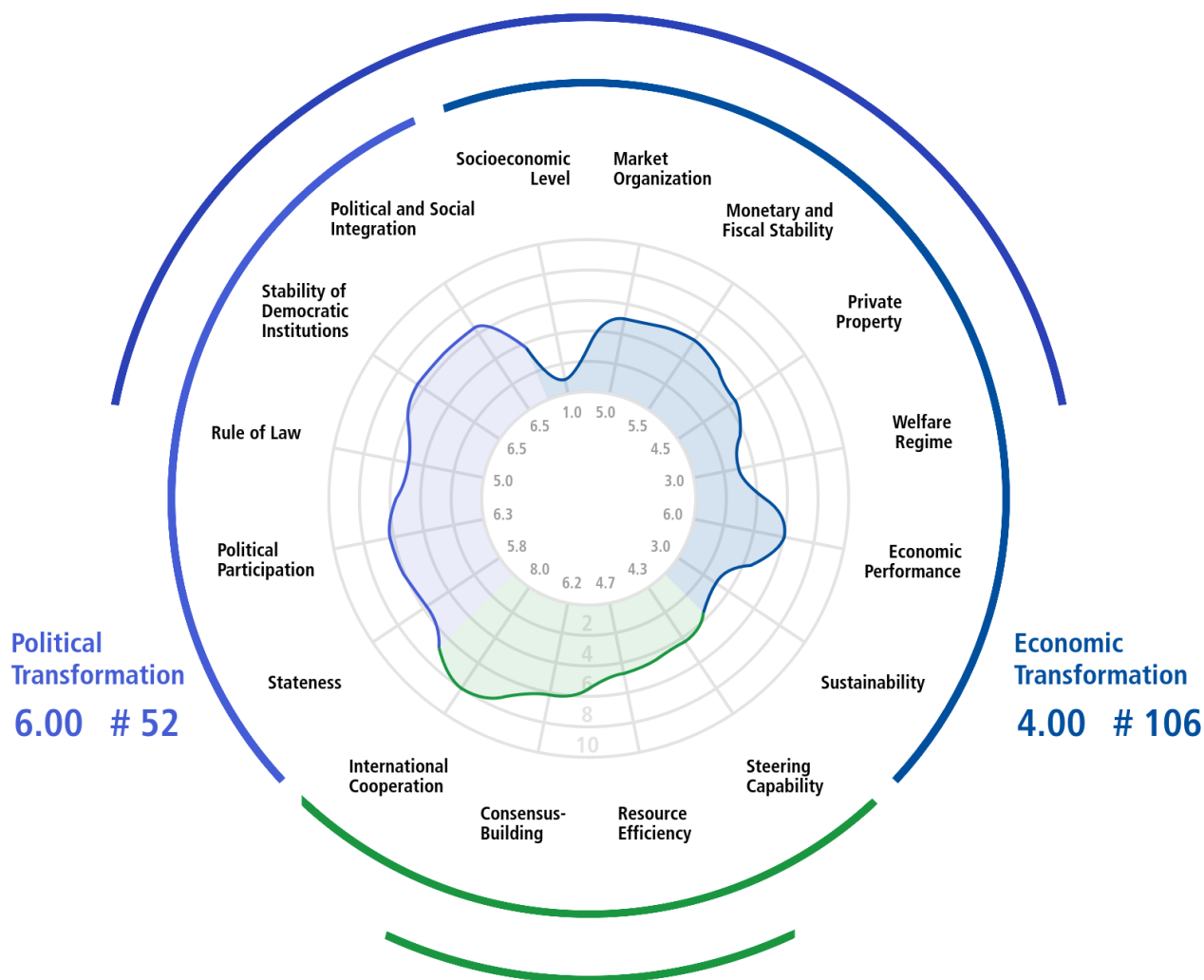


# Niger

## Status Index

**5.00 # 71**

on 1-10 scale out of 137



**Political Transformation**  
**6.00 # 52**

**Economic Transformation**  
**4.00 # 106**

## Governance Index

**5.51 # 37**

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2024**. It covers the period from February 1, 2021 to January 31, 2023. 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>.

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**Key Indicators**

Population	M	<b>26.2</b>	HDI	<b>0.400</b>	GDP p.c., PPP \$	<b>1505</b>
Pop. growth <sup>1</sup>	% p.a.	<b>3.7</b>	HDI rank of 189	<b>189</b>	Gini Index	<b>37.3</b>
Life expectancy	years	<b>61.6</b>	UN Education Index	<b>0.264</b>	Poverty <sup>3</sup>	% <b>81.2</b>
Urban population	%	<b>16.9</b>	Gender inequality <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.611</b>	Aid per capita \$	<b>70.3</b>

Sources (as of December 2023): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2021-22. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

## Executive Summary

In spite of experiencing its first transfer of power from one civilian government to another in March 2021, Niger's political path remains highly uncertain and prone to volatility. While the exact nature of the 2020/2021 elections remains unclear due to the lack of a substantial team of election observers, significant concerns arose over potential electoral manipulation and the risk of electoral violence. Although the Bazoum administration publicly professes commitment to democratic principles, its approach to handling street protests and government critics closely mirrors that of its predecessor. Despite the government's ongoing efforts to suppress dissenting voices, a resilient civil society and vocal media outlets continue to thrive. Consequently, Niger stands as a hybrid political regime, grappling with challenges to democratic norms and institutions.

In March 2021, an attempted coup by a small faction of soldiers failed disastrously. Nevertheless, this incident underscores the potential for political dynamics akin to those witnessed in Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Guinea to reemerge in Niger.

Niger persists in grappling with a complex economic landscape marked by a burgeoning debt crisis, an inefficient and corrupt state bureaucracy, stark divisions between the affluent minority and the impoverished majority, a political class unable to address economic hurdles, and Western donors prioritizing security and stability over economic advancement and democratic liberties.

Niger continues to serve as a dependable diplomatic ally. Niamey has emerged as a vocal critic of junta-led governments in Mali and Burkina Faso, while simultaneously engaging in economic and military collaborations with both nations. It also seeks close ties with Chad, advocating for regional stability. Despite Nigeria's unpredictable political climate, economic and diplomatic relations with Abuja remain harmonious. Niamey steadfastly supports intra-African economic cooperation and integration. On a global scale, Niger stands as the sole nation that participated in drafting a U.N. resolution opposing Russia's intervention in Ukraine. In contrast to Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger isn't pursuing improved relations with Moscow; instead, it has opted for closer connections with France and the United States.

## 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). Since the return of civilian rule, the country has seen two failed military coups, one in 2015, the other in 2021.

The most recent transition to civilian rule in 2011 (the Seventh Republic) saw the election of Mahamadou Issoufou and his party, PNDS-Tarayya, to power. In 2016, Issoufou secured a second term. The 2020/2021 presidential and legislative elections resulted in the country's first peaceful handover of power from one civilian government to the next. Since 2013, Niger has experienced a gradual but ongoing democratic rollback. Under the administration of President Mohamed Bazoum, this trend continues.

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 payments. 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 was 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. Issoufou's hand-picked successor Mohamed Bazoum continued Issoufou's handling of the opposition and of street protest.

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 continues 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. Over the course of the last decade, Niger's debt has worsened considerably with the debt burden now totaling around half of its GDP. This occurred despite solid and considerable annual GDP growth rates (between 3% and 5%) over the last 10 years. The encouraging growth rates did little to lift the country's majority population out of poverty, although the Issoufou government made progress with regard to the fight against extreme poverty.

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

A multitude of non-state actors challenge the state's monopoly on the use of force in the border regions with Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso. The most significant challengers are jihadi-Salafi groups. The notable groups include Boko Haram (operating along the border with Nigeria), Jama'at Nusratul Islam wal Muslimine or Group of Support of Islam and Muslims, and the Islamic State in the Sahel (operating along the border with Burkina Faso and Mali), as well as various breakaway groups.

Their activities consist of attacks on military installations, the murder of innocent civilians, the killing of Nigerien soldiers, and the kidnapping of Western aid workers. The number of all these activities increased dramatically in 2021 and 2022. It is worth noting, however, that none of these groups have historical origins or home bases in Niger. The Nigerien state has responded to these groups by deploying its armed forces to the affected areas and by seeking close military cooperation with its neighboring countries, as well as with France, the United States, and other European militaries. Additionally, 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 their effectiveness.

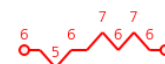
Thus, the state's monopoly on the use of force is under severe threat but remains in place in principle. President Issoufou and his successor, President Bazoum, are committed to the fight against these groups. All major politicians and political parties regard the fight against Islamic militancy as a key domestic and foreign policy goal. Military cooperation between Niger and its international/regional partners has strengthened the capacity of the Nigerien state to maintain control over its territory.

Question  
Score

Monopoly on the  
use of force

6

'06 '24 10



1

The vast majority of the Nigerien population views the nation-state as legitimate. According to survey data from Afrobarometer (data collected in 2022), three-quarters of the Nigerien population trust the police and the armed forces. Over 70% of all respondents stated that they trusted individuals from ethnic groups other than their own. In 2018/19 (no data for 2022), over half of all respondents stated that they viewed themselves first and foremost as Nigeriens rather than as members of a specific ethnic group. This is a very high value within the context of sub-Saharan Africa.

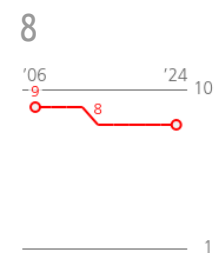
Having for decades perceived themselves as a marginalized group, the Tuareg – themselves a socially and politically heterogeneous group – have initiated several rebellions (1961 – 1964, 1990 – 1995, and 2007 – 2009). Their basic demands include improving their access to state services and political representation in Niamey. These demands have not been completely met, though their participation in local and national politics has improved over the last decade. 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 prime minister. His tenure has had a positive effect on the relationship between the central government and the Tuareg in the north. However, there is little that indicates that the Nigerien Tuareg will take up arms against the central government now or in the near future.

Traditionally, the government has sought to maintain a balanced representation of ethnicities among its employees and within the cabinet. This practice remains unchanged under President Bazoum. In fact, the ongoing war against Boko Haram in the Diffa region has prompted President Issoufou to call on all communities to stay united in the fight against terrorism. While there are ethnic and regional divisions in Nigerien politics, they have minimal impact on daily party politics.

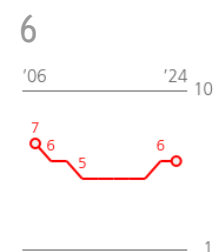
The constitution provides for the separation of state and religion and prohibits religiously affiliated political parties. All political parties that have secured representation in parliament are committed to this constitutional requirement. In line with his predecessor, President Bazoum has publicly condemned the practice of polygamy and rejected the influence of religious dogma in politics.

However, since the liberalization of the political system in November 1990 and the subsequent return of multiparty competition in 1993, conservative Islamic clerics have gained increasing influence in society. One notable example is the Izala community, a regional network of Salafi clerics that has emerged as a significant societal force. Several Salafi clerics have assumed advisory roles within the government, thereby influencing the discourse on specific policies. There are differing reports on the level to which Shariah is practiced in local communities in Niger.

#### State identity



#### No interference of religious dogmas



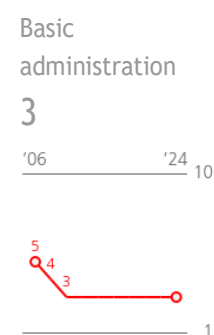
Neither political Salafism nor jihadi Salafism have a significant presence in Niger. The state-run Islamic Council of Niger, like its predecessors, has made efforts to influence Friday prayer sermons, the selection of local imams, and the content of religious education throughout the country. These attempts have been relatively successful compared to other locations in the Sahel region. The incursions by Boko Haram into Diffa province are met with little to no sympathy from the population. While many Nigeriens are devoutly religious and conservative, they persistently reject Islamic extremism.

The administrative capacity of the state is limited. Outside of Niamey and the main cities, there is no functioning legal system. In Niamey, only a few people have the means to afford a lawyer and access the legal system.

Investments in transport and basic infrastructure are limited to Niamey and the main cities. However, due to significant migration into the capital and the highest population growth rates globally, Niamey's transport system and infrastructure are deficient. The influx of refugees from Mali and Nigeria has further strained the fragile and inefficient national and local infrastructures.

Although the number of internet users has increased, only around 14% of the population has 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 56% of the population has access to a source of drinking water, and only 13% of the population has access to basic sanitation services. Open defecation is practiced by more than 71% of the population, with serious consequences for health, nutrition, education, and economic development. Only 22.7% of schools have access to drinking water, and 26.7% have access to sanitation facilities, according to UNICEF data. The conflict with jihadi-Salafi organizations has undermined the education and business sectors in the border areas with Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Slightly less than 20% of the population has access to electricity, which is an improvement compared to a decade ago (13%).

There is still not enough 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 reports by international, regional, and domestic observers, the first round of the presidential elections and the legislative 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. Assessing these claims, which always arise before elections, proves challenging. There were also isolated reports of vote-buying.

However, the outcome of the runoff of the presidential elections between Issoufou's hand-picked successor Bazoum and former President Ousmane (1993 – 1996) led to three days of rioting in Niamey and other cities. Serious concerns arose regarding the accuracy of the presidential election results in the rural areas of the country's interior. The lack of systematic and large-scale international or national election observation missions made it impossible to accurately assess the extent to which the presidential elections were free and fair.

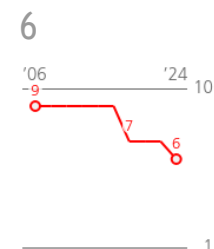
This, however, is not a new situation for Niger, where any analysis of the electoral outcome is shaped by deepening partisanism. The riots are most likely an outcome of this partisanism. Given that the new government took over power and that the opposition grudgingly accepted the outcome, one can assume that, although the elections were far from perfect, the electoral outcome corresponded to the view of the majority.

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 of baby smuggling. The Constitutional Court disqualified his candidacy.

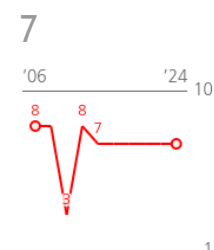
The COVID-19 pandemic meant that political rallies could not take place, posing problems for all political parties. Some reports indicated that a few opposition rallies were disproportionately affected by the ban's implementation.

Since the return of multiparty democracy in 1993, democratically elected political representatives have had significant power to govern. However, there are several crucial groups that can undermine democratic procedures. Niger remains heavily reliant on the support of foreign donors and military aid, granting outside powers the ability to influence domestic decision-making. Though there is limited evidence of outside powers utilizing this influence, there is a valid reason to believe that their presence aided in stabilizing former President Issoufou's semi-authoritarian government, particularly during his second term.

Free and fair elections



Effective power to govern



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, indicating some commitment to the principle of civilian oversight in politics. The government quashed coup attempts in December 2015 and in March 2021. The coup attempt in March 2021 was plotted by officers within the Air and Land forces, who viewed Bazoum Mohamed as a non-Nigerien and thus unfit to lead the country. Some of them had also become frustrated by the growing number of soldiers who had lost their lives in the conflict with the various jihadi-Salafi organizations in the border areas with Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali. However, within the military, the coup enjoyed little to no support and failed dismally. There is no indication that the military at large is influencing or dictating civilian decision-making.

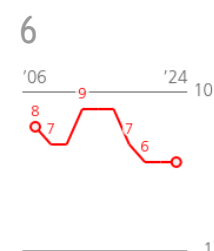
Conservative Islamic clerics represent a third and final veto player, as they have become increasingly influential since the early 1990s. Various governments have informally consulted with these clerics to avoid antagonizing them. In recent years, the close collaboration between Niger and France has led to protests led by Islamic clerics. Conservative clerics have also criticized the strict anti-Corona measures, including the temporary closure of mosques, in 2020.

The constitution of the Seventh Republic explicitly protects freedom of association and assembly. The government does not restrict the formation of interest groups. However, various governments have interfered with the right to assemble freely. As prominent Nigerien civic associations have attested to, local authorities frequently cancel previously authorized protest marches at the last minute. Civil rights activists and protesters who do not receive information about the last-minute cancellations are frequently arrested or suffer disproportionate violence at the hands of the security forces. According to Tournons la page, a leading Nigerien NGO, the Nigerien government has banned over 1,000 protest rallies between 2014 and 2022.

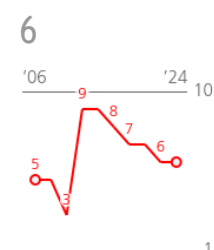
International human rights associations have expressed concern about the decline of civil liberties in the country. In recent years, the situation has worsened considerably, and many associations critical of the government now report that they no longer exercise their right to assembly for fear of government repression. Nonetheless, the government often allows civil society to protest.

Freedom of the press and media is guaranteed in the constitution. However, the reach and audience of print and online media are limited, although there exists a certain diversity of opinion. President Bazoum, like his predecessor, has utilized the security services to suppress and intimidate journalists who express criticism. Both international media rights organizations and international human rights organizations have condemned the Nigerien government for engaging in such abusive practices. In 2019, a cybercrime law was enacted and is frequently employed to silence online journalists, who face the threat of severe fines and imprisonment. Furthermore, there

Association /  
assembly rights



Freedom of  
expression



is insufficient protection for journalists' sources, and, when detained, the police consistently apply pressure on journalists to disclose their sources.

In the 2022 World Press Freedom Index, Niger is ranked 59th out of 180 countries, marking a slight decline compared to previous years. When constitutional multiparty rule returned to the country in 2011, Niger held the 29th rank.

### 3 | Rule of Law

The constitution explicitly highlights the importance of mutual checks and balances. Like several of its predecessors, 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 the previous constitution, the current constitution strengthens the rights of the legislative vis-à-vis the executive, especially regarding the legislature's right to approve the prime minister, while the president can propose and dismiss the prime minister. Additionally, it outlines the respective rights of the president and the prime minister in cases of cohabitation (i.e., the majority of parliament can name the prime minister).

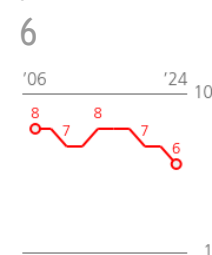
The constitution further specifies the judiciary's control mechanisms, allowing it to scrutinize the president and the prime minister more carefully. The Constitutional Court cannot be dissolved by the president and is the only institution with the mandate to interpret the constitution. According to data from the Comparative Constitution Project, Niger has one of the strongest judicial branches worldwide on paper.

As in previous years, the Constitutional Court did not play a significant role in checking executive power during the period under review. President Bazoum's tight grip over the legislative and executive renders the judiciary almost irrelevant and ensures the dominance of the executive in all political decision-making processes.

As in the past, opportunities to determine whether the separation of powers works in reality have been rare to nonexistent in 2021 and 2022. Despite government harassment and intimidation, the opposition parties are still capable of holding the government accountable in parliament. The curfews and other restrictions implemented to combat the coronavirus pandemic are no longer in effect.

The Diffa region has been under a state of emergency since 2015. Several districts in the Tahoua and Tillaberi regions have also been under a (more or less permanent) state of emergency since 2017. This response to the security threat is posed by the various jihadi-Salafi groups operating in the region. It is known that state security services utilize the situation to extract resources from the local populations for their own personal gain.

Separation of powers



The judiciary comprises 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. There are no reports or reliable evidence indicating that the executive tries to influence the decision-making of the national courts. In the distant past, the Constitutional Court may have had the courage to overturn executive decisions; however, these rulings were often ignored. In the period under review, the Constitutional Court did not render any major rulings.

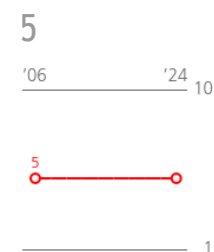
At the national level, the Nigerien law association chooses national judges, who are subsequently confirmed by the president. In the past, the executive did not openly interfere in that process, and as a result, a certain degree of judicial independence exists. There is no reliable information on how judges at the regional level are appointed.

High-ranking politicians are not often subject to judicial action. If and when they are subject to investigation, cases are often abandoned or delayed indefinitely. During the period under review, a few high-ranking politicians, including a cabinet member, were arrested and jailed on accusations of corruption. However, generally, if politicians are prosecuted, it is usually an indication that they have fallen out of favor with whoever is in charge of the executive. The treatment of former opposition leader Hama Amadou provides a prominent example of this.

A 2022 Afrobarometer survey shows that nearly two-thirds of the population trust the courts. However, in many parts of the country, courts and lawyers are absent, primarily due to an acute shortage of judges and lawyers. According to local estimates, there are as few as approximately one hundred trained lawyers in the country. Local media reports and conversations with those involved in the judicial system indicate that corruption hampers justice at the local level. However, verifying these reports is challenging. The lack of institutional capacity and manpower poses a much larger issue. This circumstance might explain why so many people do, in fact, trust the courts.

According to Afrobarometer, slightly over two-thirds of the population also states that reporting corruption brings the risk of retaliation. Finally, 71% of the population states that some or most magistrates are corrupt. Fighting for one's rights in a court of law can be expensive. Therefore, the vast majority of the population does not have access to the legal system, cannot afford the legal fees, or is forced to pay bribes to judges or magistrates.

Independent  
judiciary



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 obligated to disclose their personal property and other assets to the Constitutional Court when assuming and leaving office. Although most high-ranking public officeholders follow this directive, it is impossible to verify the accuracy of the information provided. Those who fail to provide the information are generally not held accountable.

The disclosure of private assets does not prevent the abuse of public office. According to survey data from Afrobarometer (collected in 2022), 67% of the Nigerien population believes that some or most government officials are involved in corrupt activities. A total of 45% of the population said that the level of corruption in the country had increased substantially or somewhat.

In May 2022, Nigerien non-governmental organizations filed a legal complaint over alleged losses of approximately \$99 million in state funds. The audit reported a lack of documents to support the purchase of supplies or justify the construction of infrastructure, fake public tenders, and the “granting of undue advantages” to officials. This comes on the heels of the 2020 procurement scandal within the Nigerien armed forces. The judiciary did not prosecute anyone in this case, and it seems unlikely that anyone will be prosecuted based on the recent NGO audit. Civil servants and local NGOs frequently state that the large-scale influx of Western development aid from 2015 onward has led to a dramatic increase in corrupt practices within the civil service.

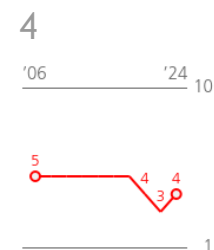
Civil rights are guaranteed by the constitution; however, these rights are often violated in practice and not respected throughout the country. Domestic and international civil society organizations have raised concerns over the arbitrary arrests of journalists and civil society activists. Since 2013, there has been a persistent decline in the respect for civil rights.

The constitution and law prohibit torture. Domestic civil society organizations report that security forces have beaten and abused civilians in the context of the fight against terrorism in the border regions with Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Mali. Members of the security services can often act without fear of being held accountable for their actions.

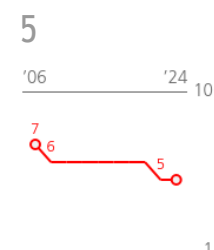
The Nigerien constitution prescribes equal legal status and rights for women and men. However, these equal rights are not codified in the family law. Family affairs are usually adjudicated by customary courts, where legal rights as head of household typically apply only to men.

Slavery still exists de facto despite an official parliamentary ban in 2003; however, precise and reliable data on this topic is unavailable. Nonetheless, the government now allows research on this issue. Child marriage and child prostitution are problems across the country. Human trafficking and drug trafficking are prevalent in the north of the country, particularly in the regions of Agadez and Tillabéry.

#### Prosecution of office abuse



#### Civil rights



In rural areas, where lawyers and adequately trained legal workers are scarce, citizens have little legal recourse except customary court. Occasionally, the Ministry of Justice organizes mobile courts in these rural areas. Access to legal protection is prohibitively expensive, making it impossible for 95% of the population to afford. Despite constitutional protections, nomadic peoples have limited or no access to government services. Traditional structures hinder significant portions of the population from exercising their civil rights.

All government and non-government organizations that have the role of ensuring respect for civil rights suffer from a lack of institutional and financial capacity.

#### 4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

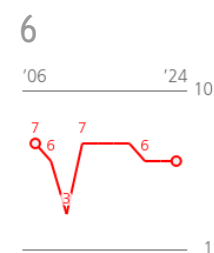
Democratic institutions exist at all levels and have been in place since 1993 with very short interruptions of authoritarian rule (1996 – 1999; 2010). The institutions have performed their function in principle yet have often been inefficient.

Over the last three decades, Niger has certainly experienced friction and polarization. Institutional paralysis led to the military coup of 1996, while extensive street protests repeatedly destabilized and threatened democratic consolidation throughout the 1990s. In 2010, President Tandja circumvented the presidential two-term limit, resulting in another military coup. During President Issoufou's tenure (2011 – 2021), opposition politicians and civil society activists faced harassment and intimidation from the security forces. President Bazoum, who took office in 2021, has continued in the footsteps of Issoufou, adopting a semi-democratic style of governing.

The legislative branch does not always 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.

Local government officials are often unaware of their competencies and thus remain inactive. In several regions, local government structures only exist on paper. So far, every mayor of Niamey and almost every mayor of any other major city has been removed on the order of the executive before they could finish their term in office.

Performance of democratic institutions



In principle, the majority of political actors accept democratic institutions. According to Afrobarometer (2022), 61% of the population prefer democracy over any other political system. However, 60% of all respondents stated that democracy in Niger faces major or minor problems. All political parties and civil society actors endorse multiparty competition. However, when the personal, economic, or political interests of politicians or other influential actors are threatened, they are unlikely to hesitate in attempting to undermine democratic principles. Following the most recent presidential runoff, incidents of post-electoral violence occurred in Niamey for three days. Historically, this is the exception, as the opposition has consistently refused to acknowledge the electoral result after each previous election.

The armed forces retain the potential to threaten democracy. They have overthrown civilian governments in 1996, 1999, and 2010, with failed military coups occurring in 2015 and 2021. Although there may be individuals within the armed forces who still favor military rule, these factions constitute a minority.

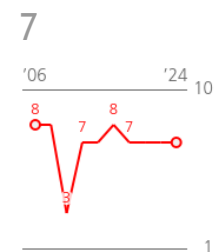
Although conservative Islamist groups have gained political influence in recent years, they do not formally engage in political processes. While they reject democracy and the nation-state in principle, they do not challenge the constitutional order in practice. Currently, there is no alternative to the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

## 5 | Political and Social Integration

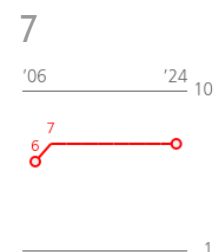
Since 1993, Niger has held eight presidential and 10 legislative elections. There are no reliable data on party membership. Most – if not all – parties have low or very low levels of organizational capacity outside of the capital and urban centers in the interior of the country (e.g., Diffa, Dosso and 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 and, to a lesser extent, the MNSD are the political parties that can be seen as national forces. Overall, however, powerful individuals – and not political parties – structure political competition.

Clientelist and personalistic linkages, rather than ideological cohesion, are what unite parties with their followers. A significant share of members of parliament 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. The authoritarian reflexes of both the Issoufou and the Bazoum administrations have increased the polarization between the government and the parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition forces. However, the salience of neo-patrimonialism and the high degree of discretion for powerful individuals ensure that polarization does not translate into large-scale violence.

Commitment to democratic institutions



Party system





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

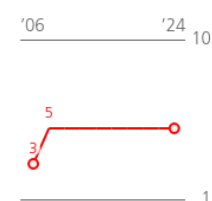
Since the early 1990s, a variety of interest groups have formed. Most of these groups have very few members and lack the ability to aggregate interests; therefore, they are unable to influence policymaking. In recent years, individual NGOs have tended to form umbrella organizations based on their mandates. This development has given civil society the capacity to mobilize larger segments of society. The most noteworthy umbrella associations focus on a human rights agenda, the improvement of basic living conditions, or the representation of professional associations and trade unions. Due to the vague and opaque nature of their demands, civil society organizations have had limited influence in policy and law formulation. In recent times, religious leaders have sought to consolidate their influence and, in some cases, challenge government actions.

According to time series data from Afrobarometer (data taken between 2001 and 2022), approval for democracy has declined slightly over time. In 2022, 61% state that democracy is preferable to any other political system. In 2018, almost 70% agreed that democracy was to be preferred to any other system. At the same time, trust in the National Assembly has slightly increased. In 2022, 58% of all respondents state that they trust the National Assembly somewhat or a lot. In 2018, only 51% trusted the National Assembly somewhat or a lot. In 2022, approximately 50% of all respondents stated that the government is not performing well in economic terms. This is only slightly better than in 2018 or in even earlier rounds. In short, support for the political system, government performance, and democratic institutions is higher than for the alternatives but not higher than in previous years or decades.

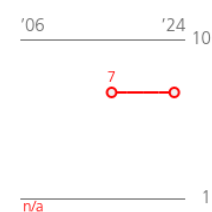
There is limited concrete information available regarding self-help groups. Niger has a lengthy history of close-knit communities, particularly in rural and countryside areas. A strong sense of solidarity is clearly present in these regions. Nigeriens also persist in organizing cultural, environmental, and social associations. In 2022, Afrobarometer conducted a survey in Niger where respondents were asked about their level of trust in their fellow citizens. Approximately 82% expressed a high or moderate degree of trust. This suggests that the level and scope of trust are significantly greater than previously believed.

There are hundreds of formal associations and clubs organized around professional, religious, and sportive activities. Thousands of self-organized neighborhood clubs, locally known as Fada, are formed mainly by youth. There is a significant level of trust among members of these clubs and associations.

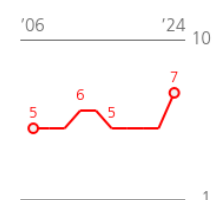
Interest groups  
5



Approval of democracy  
7



Social capital  
7





## II. Economic Transformation

### 6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

Niger remains one of the poorest nations in the world. Over the course of the last three decades, the UN's Human Development Index (HDI) has placed Niger near the bottom of its overall ranking, specifically at rank 189.

Since 2015, Western donors have significantly increased aid to the country, but this has not yet resulted in sustained economic growth that lifts people out of poverty. According to the World Bank, 81% of the population lives in poverty. In terms of the gender equality index, Niger is among the bottom 20 countries worldwide, with a Gender Inequality Index score of 0.611 in 2021. Women are marginalized in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. The literacy rate of the adult population is 35% (men: 44%; women: 27%). Important export goods include gold, oil, and animal products, all of which are highly dependent on external factors. The worsening climate crisis is undermining the agricultural sector, and when combined with high demographic growth, it exacerbates recurring food shortages.

Question  
Score

Socioeconomic  
barriers

1

'06 '24 10

1 1

Economic indicators		2019	2020	2021	2022
GDP	\$ M	12916.5	13744.2	14915.0	<b>13969.6</b>
GDP growth	%	5.9	3.6	1.4	<b>11.5</b>
Inflation (CPI)	%	-2.5	2.9	3.8	<b>4.2</b>
Unemployment	%	0.6	0.7	0.7	<b>0.5</b>
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	5.6	2.6	4.0	<b>4.2</b>
Export growth	%	1.1	-6.3	6.7	<b>0.0</b>
Import growth	%	6.2	2.7	6.9	<b>5.1</b>
Current account balance	\$ M	-1572.4	-1815.7	-2099.1	-
Public debt	% of GDP	39.8	45.0	51.3	<b>50.3</b>
External debt	\$ M	3598.3	4567.4	4984.3	-
Total debt service	\$ M	141.4	195.8	222.0	-

Economic indicators		2019	2020	2021	2022
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	15.6	15.8	17.3	<b>17.3</b>
Public education spending	% of GDP	3.5	3.8	3.8	<b>4.1</b>
Public health spending	% of GDP	2.0	2.3	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	1.9	1.7	1.4	<b>1.7</b>

Sources (as of December 2023): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

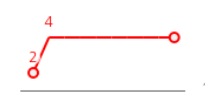
## 7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

There have been attempts by the Nigerien government to make access to the Nigerien markets easier for domestic and international investors. The Maison de l'Entreprise facilitates the start-up of new businesses through a single-window registration process. However, overall, market competition operates under a weak institutional framework with uneven rules for market participants.

As in previous periods, 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. According to data from the International Labour Organisation, the share of informal employment in total employment stood at 73.6% in 2017. The vast majority of Nigeriens do not have access to the formal employment market. The formal labor market is largely confined to the state and state employees, though in recent years job opportunities in the private sector, including banking, telecommunications and NGOs, have increased. Enforcement of the tax code is highly uneven.

The government claims that it supports the establishment of a free and dynamic market, but this is not the case. Foreign capital and domestic capital are legally equal. The Investment Code, adopted in 2014, guarantees the reception and protection of foreign direct investment, as well as tax advantages available for investment projects. The Investment Code allows tax exemptions for a certain period, and according to the location and amount of the projects, to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the Ministry of Commerce. The code guarantees fair treatment of investors regardless

Market  
organization



of their origin. All sectors are open to investment. Small-scale domestic investors have virtually no access to credit. International investors face other constraints, such as corruption, nepotism, the absence of enforceable rules, and a weak domestic consumer base.

Niger's membership in the CFA currency allows for stable exchange rates with the eurozone but limits economic interactions with Nigeria, an important political and economic neighbor country.

According to the Global Competitiveness Report published by the World Economic Forum in 2019, Niger scores 48 out of 100 points and ranks 115th. The global average score is 61 points.

As Niger is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, there are procedures in place that work against the formation of monopolies. However, member states are not obliged to report the merger of companies, making the enforcement of antitrust laws a difficult enterprise. Niger is not a member of the International Competition Network.

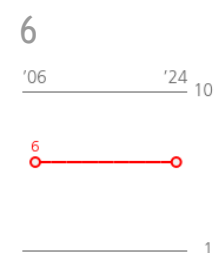
There is general agreement that the state provides tax exemptions based on clientelistic networks. At the same time, the government recently removed state subsidies, such as support for fertilizers.

The state has attempted to privatize parts of the mining and telecommunication sectors. The results have been mixed, but it is fair to say that both sectors display a certain degree of competition.

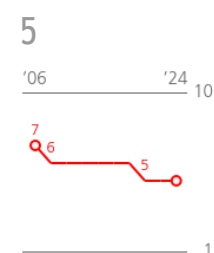
In line with all of his predecessors, President Bazoum has emphasized the significance of foreign capital for the well-being of Niger. Bazoum aims to build on the progress made by his predecessors in order to further develop the country's mineral and petroleum resources, while also seeking to promote agricultural enterprises that can benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. The High Council for Investment, an institution responsible for supporting and encouraging foreign direct investment in Niger, is actively advocating for more foreign investment. The Council has established Guichet Exterior, a centralized online platform providing information on foreign trade and investment.

The import tariff applicable in Niger is, in principle, the WAEMU's Common External Tariff. Niger also imposes other duties and taxes and distinguishes between five types of other duties: essential goods (duty rate: 0%), raw materials (5%), intermediate products (10%), finished goods that are not produced locally (20%), and finished goods that are manufactured locally (35%). These formal non-tariff barriers to trade are high. In addition, a wider range of formal and informal non-tariff barriers constrain intra-regional trade, including onerous customs procedures, driver and vehicle-related regulations, delays at ports, weighbridges, and roadblocks.

#### Competition policy



#### Liberalization of foreign trade



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. The government does not promote outward investment.

The Central Bank of West African States governs the banking system. Niger has a small banking system with a moderate degree of concentration. About 8.4% of the adult population has formal accounts, one of the lowest rates in the WAEMU region. Due to prohibitive costs, perceived cumbersomeness of banks with high documentation requirements and lack of proximity, only 3% of the population have access to commercial banking services, according to data from the central bank. There are no available figures on Niger's bank capital-to-assets ratio or non-performing loans. Reports by foreign embassies suggest that the banking sector is generally healthy and well-capitalized.

Eleven commercial banks and one financial institution operate in Niger. The system is characterized by the over-liquidity of banks and their hesitancy to make medium- or long-term loans. The banking system is served by four medium-sized local banks: BIA Niger (Banque Internationale pour l'Afrique), Ecobank, Bank of Africa and SONIBANK (Société Nigerienne de Banque). There are also several smaller commercial banks.

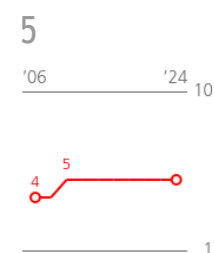
## 8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

The Bazoum administration clearly recognizes the importance of monetary stability. However, the enormous structural, political and security challenges often stand in the way of ensuring stable monetary policy outcomes.

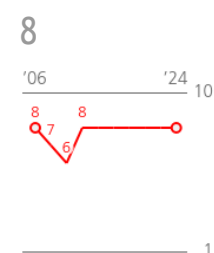
Monetary policy is determined by the regional central bank, Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, which prioritizes inflation targeting. This has worked somewhat well in the past – between 2009 and 2020, the inflation rate was below 3%. In 2021, the inflation rate was 3.8%, and in 2022, it was at 4.5%, according to the World Bank. It is important to know that there remain serious questions about the quality of these official statistics. In general, however, inflation constitutes less of a challenge to Niger than inflation in other West African states. The currency is pegged to the euro. As a result, the CFA franc fluctuates in line with euro-dollar movements, and the central bank's policy is heavily influenced by the actions of the European Central Bank.

There is no information about whether the regional central bank is successful in defending the target by avoiding a strong divergence between the country's inflation rate and that of the anchor country.

Banking system



Monetary stability



The Nigerien government attempted to reconcile two vastly contrasting objectives: ensuring fiscal stability and addressing ongoing economic and security challenges. This undertaking is no small feat and necessitates significant trade-offs. Given the numerous structural obstacles involved, the government strives to maintain stability in the fiscal situation. Niger demonstrates a commendable control over its finances when compared to neighboring countries.

Since the mid-1980s, Niger's trade balance has remained negative. Public debt has increased dramatically – in 2021, public debt stood at 51.2% of GDP, compared to 18.1% in 2012. Niger has consistently managed to qualify for donor funding from the IMF, bilateral Western donors, and donors from the Arabian Peninsula. However, overall, this has done little to consolidate the country's finances. Over the last decade (2012 – 2020), the total external debt has exploded from \$1.8 billion to \$4.6 billion. Public debt stands at 51.2% of the annual GDP (data from 2021). There is no data on annual net lending/borrowing. In 2021, the annual government consumption was 18% of the annual GDP, mirroring the extent of government consumption in previous years and decades. There is no data on total reserves.

The IMF and the World Bank have praised Niger's efforts in implementing pro-growth and anti-debt policies, but there is little indication that the government will achieve a stable fiscal situation soon. Niger participates in the Debt Service Suspension Initiative.

There have been improvements regarding budget transparency. According to the Open Budget Survey, Niger (data from 2021) scored 43 out of 100 points in budget oversight and 27 out of 100 points in budget transparency. These numbers are higher than those from two years ago.

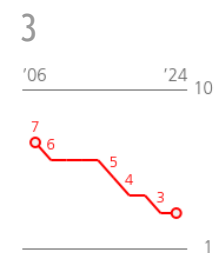
## 9 | Private Property

Property rights and regulations on acquisition, benefits, use, and sale are formally defined in laws. However, property disputes are common, particularly concerning community-owned land or land in rural areas where customary land titles are still prevalent. Land disputes between Nigerien farmers and traditional nomadic herders often revolve around traditional use rights. In 2014, Niger implemented measures to facilitate property transfer by reducing registration fees.

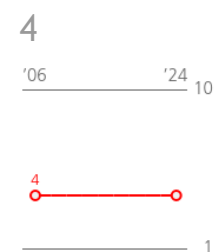
Property records are unreliable and often under dispute. Currently, there is no government effort to register land titles independent of active transactions.

The incursions of non-state armed groups from Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria have affected property rights in Tillabéry, Tahoua, and Maradi.

### Fiscal stability



### Property rights



The government encourages the formation and protection of private enterprises and has repeatedly pledged to take whatever steps are necessary to encourage the development of the private sector. The government has established an Institutional Framework for Improving Business Climate Indicators office (Dispositif Institutionnel d'Amélioration et de Suivi du Climat des Affaires) within the Ministry of Commerce. Its goal is to create a framework that enables the implementation of sustainable reforms. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry houses a specialized institution called the Investment Promotion Center, which supports domestic and foreign investors in business creation, extension, and rehabilitation.

The Investment Code adopted in 2014 guarantees the reception and protection of foreign direct investment, as well as tax advantages available for investment projects. The Investment Code allows tax exemptions for a certain period, based on the location and amount of the projects, to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the Ministry of Commerce. The code guarantees fair treatment of investors, irrespective of their origin.

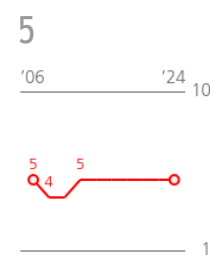
The Investment Code guarantees that no business will be subject to nationalization or expropriation, except when deemed in the public interest. The code requires the government to compensate any expropriated business with a just and equitable payment. However, the law is not applied evenly – there have been a number of expropriations of commercial and personal property, most of which were not conducted in a manner consistent with Nigerien law. In fact, it is rare for property owners to be compensated by the government after property expropriations.

Most sectors of the economy – with the exception of a few state-owned enterprises – have been privatized. The state-owned oil-distribution company SONIDEP no longer has a monopoly over oil exportation; exportation authority is now equally shared between SONIDEP and the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation. Likewise, although the national electricity company, NIGELEC, continues to hold a virtual monopoly on electricity distribution, steps were taken to allow third-party access to the country's electricity grid.

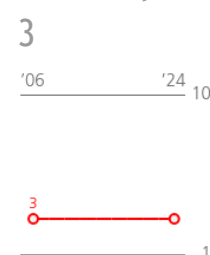
## 10 | Welfare Regime

The right to social protection is enshrined in the constitution of the 7th Republic. There is no shortage of policy documents and government declarations that highlight the importance of a social safety net. The reality is grim. Only a very small section of the citizenry – according to the World Bank, 1% of the population – can rely on a public social safety net. Niger's population is doubling every 20 years. Expanding coverage of social services while increasing quality constitutes a core challenge even if the government were able to invest in social safety nets.

Private enterprise



Social safety nets



A total of 51% of the population lives in poverty – 41% live in extreme poverty. Life expectancy is 61 years, which reflects a slight decline compared to a few years ago. The government currently spends 2.0% of GDP on health care.

The public welfare regime only covers individuals who work in the formal sector, thus encompassing only a small fraction of the population – usually civil servants. The 2014 Investment Code provides tax incentives for sectors that the government deems priorities, such as social housing and health. The extent to which investors utilize these tax privileges cannot be determined.

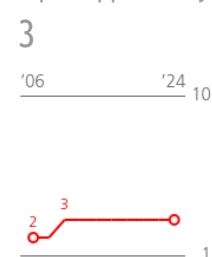
Niger suffers from significant inequalities between its urban and rural populations, as well as between men and women, and the rich and the poor. Women and girls are marginalized in all sectors of society and the economy. Approximately 42.6% of the workforce is comprised of women. Out of a total of 166 parliamentarians, only 50 are women and 47 are under the age of 45. However, female parliamentarians are not adequately represented in high-ranking political positions. The same is true for young parliamentarians. The literacy rate in Niger is 35%, with males having a rate of 43.6% and females at 26.6%.

The social origins of an individual often determine that individual’s chances and opportunities in life. The gross enrollment ratio is 66.4% for the primary education sector, 24.3% for the secondary education sector, and 4.4% for the tertiary sector. Both schools and universities often experience long-term strikes, and instructional staff is generally underpaid. The influential role of Islamic leaders and the dominance of traditional gender and generational roles constitute huge obstacles to the emancipation of women, sexual and other minorities, and young people.

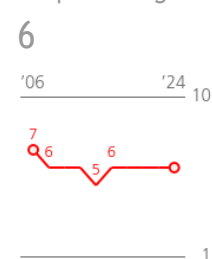
### 11 | Economic Performance

Niger continues to experience solid and encouraging economic growth rates. The GDP per capita has increased from \$1,068 in 2011 to \$1,310 in 2021. The annual GDP growth rates were also positive (2017: 5.0%; 2018: 7.2%; 2019: 5.9%; 2020: 3.6%; 2021: 1.4%). Despite this, however, Niger remains stuck at the very bottom of the HDI. In 2021, public debt stood at 51.2% of the annual GDP. The annual trade deficit has been negative for decades. Foreign Direct Investment has decreased drastically from 10.1% of GDP in 2010 to 2.6% of GDP in 2020. The official unemployment record does not provide substantial information, as it only covers the formal sector. Most Nigeriens participate in the subsistence economy and are underemployed. There is no data about the country’s tax revenue.

Equal opportunity



Output strength



## 12 | Sustainability

It is difficult to overstate Niger’s environmental challenges. Its high population growth rates put additional pressure on already limited natural resources, highlighting the importance of environmental protection measures. Flooding during the summer months has worsened, threatening the livelihoods and homes of a growing number of citizens. Niger is one of the countries in West Africa hit hardest by the climate crisis. Sandstorms have also become frequent extreme events, adversely affecting agriculture, livestock, water resources, public health, and human life.

In 2021 and 2022, a growing number of NGOs and international partners have highlighted the dimension of the problem. The government is aware of these challenges and is trying to address them through green solutions and environmental projects with multilateral and bilateral donors. Under the Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens (3N) initiative, which aims to combat hunger and poverty while augmenting the resilience of farmers and herders to climate change, Niger has committed itself to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, which have an environmental dimension. Various Nigerien governments have passed legislation and decrees aimed at the protection of forests and water. Environmental coordination might receive more attention than before, but regulatory efforts are currently insufficient.

The government is committed to improving education, as well as research and development opportunities. In 2020 and 2019 (most recent data), the government spent between 3–4% of GDP on education. Many educational institutions are in poor condition or suffer from a capacity deficit. As a result, Niger performs very poorly on the U.N. Education Index, receiving the lowest ranking with a score of 0.264. Since Niger does not publish its annual budget, there is no data available on its annual spending on research and development. Most of the spending in that regard is likely to come from donor funding.





## Governance

### I. Level of Difficulty

Niger faces monumental structural constraints. A total of 43% of its population lives in extreme poverty, and 51% live in poverty. Its economy remains largely dependent on agriculture and raw materials, with the former relying on rainfall and the latter on world market prices. The workforce lacks specialization, and the majority of workers are employed in the informal sector. Many talented Nigeriens migrate to other African countries or Western nations. The population doubles in size every twenty years due to Niger's annual population growth rate of 3.7%.

There is one doctor per 90,000 inhabitants, which provides an insight into the dismal health infrastructure. There are no functioning railways, and outside of the main cities, roads are mostly unpaved. Some infrastructural projects, such as the renovations of some mines, have been undertaken, but these projects were driven by the need to export goods.

Natural disasters, such as flooding, have become more commonplace. Landlocked between Mali, Libya, Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso, Niger is severely affected by the security situation in Mali, Burkina Faso, Libya, and Nigeria. The incursions of jihadi-Salafi terrorist groups and their attacks on Niger's territory have had a detrimental impact on its infrastructure.

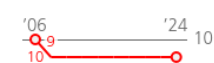
There are numerous civil society organizations operating in the country. Their foundations are weak, and in many cases, individual associations gather under the roof of an umbrella association. The activities of civil society organizations are primarily limited to more populated and urban areas, although professional and youth organizations also exist in rural areas.

The authoritarian tendencies of the Issoufou and Bazoum administrations have weakened the institutional foundation of civil rights and pro-democracy groups in Niamey and other major cities. Civil society organizations 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, limiting their influence on policymaking. Islamic leaders and groups should be considered among the strongest and most influential civil society actors.

According to Afrobarometer (data from 2022), 82% of the population state that they trust other citizens; 71% state that they trust people from other ethnic groups; and 90% state that they trust their neighbors. Therefore, it seems fair to say that there is a considerable amount of social capital in the country.

Structural constraints

9



1

Civil society traditions

7



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Since 2015, Niger has been the subject of jihadi-Salafi attacks, specifically from Boko Haram, along the border with Nigeria in the Diffa region. In 2018, various jihadi-Salafi organizations, particularly the Islamic State in the Sahel, have also engaged in terrorist attacks along the border with Mali and Burkina Faso. Consequently, Niger has become a victim of conflicts that have spilled over from neighboring countries.

In 2022, there were a total of 169 terrorist attacks on Nigerien territory, while in 2021 there were 142 attacks, and in 2020 there were 232 attacks. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 253 individuals in 2022, 603 people in 2021, and 239 individuals in 2020. Although there has been a slight decrease in the number of attacks compared to previous periods, jihadi-Salafi groups continue to pose a significant threat to Niger's stability.

The assistance of foreign militaries, including those of the United States, France, Germany, and Belgium, is crucial in order to prevent Niger from following the paths of Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Without their support, there is a real danger that Niger could face similar challenges.

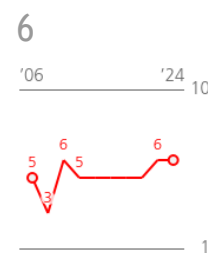
Various governments have successfully undermined or co-opted potentially violent challengers to state authority. Prominent examples include the Tuareg rebels in the early 1990s and conservative Islamist clerics in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Ethnic cleavages in Niger are politically less salient 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.

## II. Governance Performance

### 14 | Steering Capability

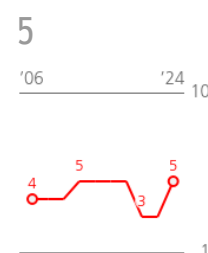
The Bazoum administration espouses the same strategic priorities as the Issoufou administration before it. These priorities are outlined in the Plan du Développement Economique et Social (2022 – 2026). It prioritizes the development of human capital, the improvement of governance, and the structural transformation of the economy. Additionally, the government adhered to the SDG goals and the UN's Agenda 2030. The government strongly supports the policy priorities outlined in the AU's Agenda 2063. It consults frequently and regularly with civil society organizations about its priorities.

#### Conflict intensity



#### Question Score

#### Prioritization



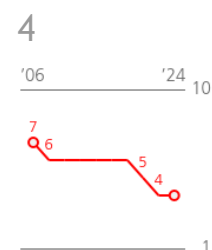
Niger's greatest historical challenge has been the government's inability to enforce its priorities. Since 2010, the influx of aid money has led to corruption and inefficiency within the state's bureaucracy. According to Afrobarometer's most recent survey data (2022), roughly half the population believes that corruption has worsened under the new government. Data from 2018 shows that three-quarters of the population perceive the public administration as corrupt. While some governments have successfully reduced extreme poverty, there has been little significant improvement in the living conditions of ordinary citizens. Those in power prioritize political bargaining and co-optation. However, the government has been able to mobilize the military to combat external jihadi-Salafi groups.

Since the return of multiparty democracy in 1993, all governments have failed to deliver on their developmental promises. This does not mean that they should not be considered drivers of change and reform. However, today Niger is very much in the same socioeconomic situation as it was in 1993, in 1974 (military coup by Kountché) or in 1960 (independence from France). These failures are due to a number of factors: a disjuncture between the wealthy political elites and the wider population; an inefficient bureaucracy that contains a significant amount of "ghost workers"; the failure of the administrative elite to prioritize key policy changes over the status quo; Western donors that support Niger with growing amounts of development aid to stabilize a key ally in the war against terrorism in the Sahel; the general lack of education among large sections of society; and a dysfunctional educational system. Overall, there is a lack of reliable data that shows how policies are implemented. The fact that the Nigerien government does not provide the public with detailed information about its budget does not help.

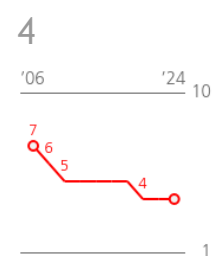
Niger's economy is not diversified and highly dependent on factors it cannot influence, such as the weather or world market prices. Nigerien governments have a tendency to blame their predecessors for the failure to make substantial improvements to the lives of the population. However, corruption, poor planning, little serious engagement with development strategies beyond public pronouncements, and the ability to rely on outside funding mean that there is some degree of learning, but the government could do better. The fact that it fails to do better has to do with the clientelist structures of the civil service and – once again – with the enormous structural challenges that the government is facing.

It is important to note that Niger has been engaged in violent military confrontations with jihadi-Salafi groups since 2015. This is an enormous security challenge, and over time, the Nigerien security forces have learned to make good use of foreign military resources. The conflict, however, also demands significant administrative attention and effort, resulting in a lack of flexibility and innovation in other policies.

#### Implementation



#### Policy learning



## 15 | Resource Efficiency

Niger does not efficiently utilize its human capital. Recruitment is based on personal proximity to higher-ranking officials, sometimes on a merit basis. The significance of personal connections increases with higher administrative positions. Dismissals and appointments of high-ranking civil servants are motivated by politics. Competitive recruitment is rare, with only occasional exceptions.

The Nigerien government does not provide a detailed annual budget or any other specific information about its expenses, personnel, or other utilization of its assets. Therefore, it is practically impossible to assess the extent to which it employs administrative personnel or utilizes its budget resources. The war against Boko Haram and the Islamic State in the Sahel have also affected state resources, but a conclusive determination cannot be made.

Decentralization is a government reform project that has remained on the agenda of numerous administrations – it is poorly implemented in most parts of the country.

There have been various recent attempts to reform the state administration and enhance its effectiveness. Since 2017, the public finance administration (Direction Générale des Opérations Financières et des Réformes) has been striving to increase the speed of its operations. The government's objective is to establish a citizen-friendly bureaucracy. Currently, there is no reliable information available regarding the progress made by this reform. Delays in the disbursement of public salaries are a frequent occurrence. The public health sector is particularly impacted by this issue.

In the face of the security threat posed by jihadi-Salafi groups and climate threats, such as extensive flooding and desertification, there have been several attempts to improve policy coherence. The government has also made efforts to coordinate the various ministries involved in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, often these attempts are ad hoc and not institutionalized. Outside of the main cities, the responsibilities of different ministries and different layers of government are not communicated to the broader public or to the administrators in charge of those units. The coordination mechanism as a whole can best be described as a mixture of patriarchal, centralized, and personalist mechanisms.

Efficient use of assets

4

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Policy coordination

7

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Niger publishes the findings from audits, but the government fails to provide citizens with sufficient information about budgetary spending.

In 2011, the Issoufou administration created the Haute Autorité de Lutte contre la Corruption et Infractions Assimilées (HALCIA). HALCIA’s purpose is to identify corrupt practices within the state bureaucracy and work toward a change of mentality regarding corruption. HALCIA collaborates with various civic associations but currently lacks the drive it had a decade ago. The presidency finances HALCIA.

To access information about corruption, Nigeriens are dependent on civic associations or findings from the court of auditors. Some of these associations include the Réseau des organisations pour la transparence et l’analyse budgétaire (ROTAB), Tournons La Page Niger (TLP-Niger), and Le réseau nigérien anti-corruption (RENAC). In 2021, Niger passed a law designed to protect the court of auditors from external influences. In its annual reports for 2020 and 2021, the court found irregularities in several state-run companies, municipal administrations, and state institutions.

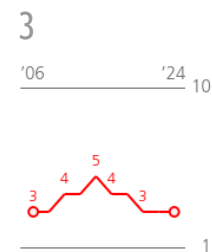
### 16 | Consensus-Building

All major political actors agree on the desirability of democratic norms and institutions. All important political leaders were shaped during the struggle for democracy in the early 1990s. There is no broad desire to delegate power to civilian or military strongmen. The Nigerien military staged three successful coups (1996, 1999, and 2010) and, recently, two unsuccessful ones (2015 and 2021). The unsuccessful ones failed miserably due to support from the military at large. This is not to say that a military coup is unthinkable, but currently, there is no indication that the civilian leaders lack legitimacy. According to Afrobarometer (2022), 56% of Nigeriens trust the governing party (PNDS), and 42% trust the opposition parties. In contrast to 2018, these values have improved moderately. Sixty-one percent of all respondents prefer democracy to any other form of government.

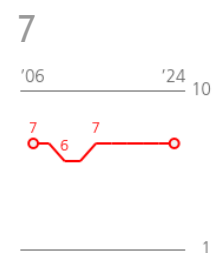
Although survey data assessing support for the market economy is not available, it is reasonable to say that a majority of Nigeriens support the basic principles of the market economy. However, many civic associations frequently take to the streets to question the kind of market economy and the inequality that characterizes Niger.

The failed military coup of March 2021 is a powerful warning that a minority within may still be inclined and capable of claiming power. Fundamentalist Islamic clerics, who defy both state authority and modern values, are another important veto player. However, the 2021 coup failed dismally, and there is no indication that fundamentalist clerics are in any position to challenge democratic institutions and state authority decisively. Although the political class as a whole has accepted election outcomes, individual leaders’ powerful self-interest still has the potential to override democratic principles.

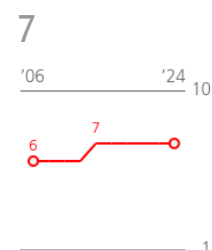
Anti-corruption policy



Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors



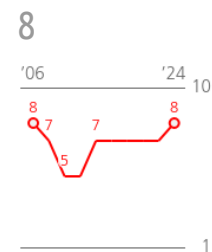
The electoral violence surrounding the runoff of the presidential elections in 2021 confirmed that the most salient cleavage line in Niger runs between the government and the opposition. In contrast to many other countries in Africa, these cleavages are personalistic and regional, not ethnic or religious. Within society, the largest line of division runs between a wealthy and secular minority and a poor and highly religious majority. The minority is well represented among the political elite. Given Niger’s population growth rate (around 3.7% annually for the last twenty years), there is a growing division between the country’s youth and the country’s social establishment. The government tried to avoid the escalation of divisions by trying to engage with its opponents and through co-optation.

In 2022, as a result of rising violence in Tillabéry and Tahoua, local communities formed militias to protect themselves from jihadist violence, leading to intercommunal violence. To prevent further communal violence, the government decided to recruit hundreds of militiamen into Niger’s defense and security and attempted to discourage the formation of new militias and the ethnicization of the conflict.

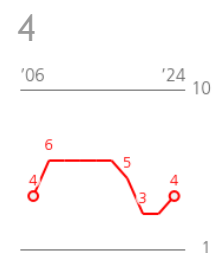
The government frequently consults with civil society; however, it sets its political agenda on its own or in consultation with Western donors. The same applies to policy formulation. There is little to no information about how it arrives at decisions or who powerful decision-makers are outside of the cabinet. Traditional and religious leaders play a more salient role here than civic associations. Niger has participated in the voluntary review mechanisms of the SDGs, but the findings are largely without consequences. There is little to no oversight about policy output. As a result, there is no efficient or noteworthy performance monitoring.

The political leadership recognizes the need to address historical acts of injustice, but it faces difficulties in its attempts for reconciliation. Various governments have established numerous deliberative councils intended to contribute to national cohesion and reconciliation. One such notable institution is the High Authority of Peace Consolidation, which implements numerous projects in conflict zones to promote peace and address the needs of marginalized populations. However, it is impossible to evaluate these projects as there are no regular reports available on their activities. In the past, the mediator of the republic successfully built bridges between the government and the opposition but has thus far been unable to mitigate some of the tension between them. The Tuareg have been among the major victims of past injustices, and the government has attempted to address these issues through co-optation.

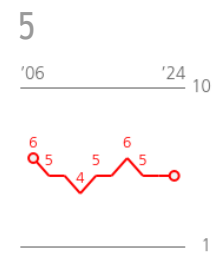
Cleavage / conflict management



Public consultation



Reconciliation



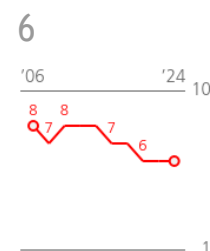
## 17 | International Cooperation

Since 2015, there has been a significant increase in donor assistance, largely in response to the threat posed by Boko Haram and other jihadi-Salafi groups operating in the Sahel. The government has formulated clear objectives for economic and political development that align with those of its Western donors. Road maps have also been established to outline specific milestones. However, due to the lack of reliable development statistics and transparency within the state bureaucracy, it is difficult to determine the progress made in achieving these milestones. On one hand, this is a result of the limited administrative capacity, as the size of donor programs often overwhelms the state bureaucracy. On the other hand, neo-patrimonial structures undermine the effective utilization of funds, both domestic and foreign.

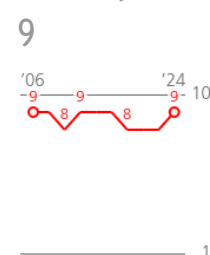
Niger is viewed as a highly credible and reliable partner in the region. The disintegration and the military coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, as well as the endemic instability in Nigeria, have all enhanced Niger’s reputation as a relatively stable and capable partner. Niger has signed all relevant international and regional treaties. However, there are serious concerns regarding the implementation of treaties that promote gender equality, educational equality, and labor standards. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and most Western donors have continued to provide funding to Niger and frequently commend the country for its developmental goals. In international organizations like the United Nations (UN), Niger is known for its efforts in working toward peace and reconciliation. Niger was the sole African country to support a resolution denouncing the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In recent years, Niamey has strongly advocated for a swift return to constitutional rule in Mali and Burkina Faso.

The political leadership actively and successfully builds and expands cooperative, neighborly, and international relations. Although Niamey has been a critic of the junta-led governments in Mali and Burkina Faso at times, it seeks close relations with all of its neighbors. This is particularly true for the relationship with Nigeria and Chad. Although Niger emphasizes the need for stability, it has also become a voice advocating for greater and deeper democratic reforms. Niamey is one of the driving forces behind the African Continental Free Trade Area and a leading force behind the stabilization of the G5 Sahel. In the war against jihadi terrorism in the Sahel, Niamey has become the leading voice for not giving in to terrorists and for seeking closer security cooperation within the region and with Western military partners.

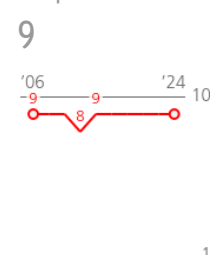
Effective use of support



Credibility



Regional cooperation



## Strategic Outlook

The way in which the runoff of the 2020/2021 presidential elections were conducted serves to underscore Niger's gradual erosion of democratic values, a trend that began in 2013. Both national and international civic organizations express concerns over the government's willingness to uphold freedom of speech and assembly. Consequently, the relationship between the state and society remains a significant political concern. The new administration should halt the ongoing practice of last-minute cancellations of public demonstrations, as well as the arrests of protest leaders and participants who defy these cancellations. The government also needs to refrain from labeling government critics as sympathizers of Boko Haram. While Western governments should continue their economic and military support for Niger, they should also prioritize scrutinizing the government's interactions with its critics.

Niger boasts one of the world's fastest-growing populations, resulting in one of the youngest populations on the African continent. Paradoxically, youth are under-represented in both parliament and leadership positions within relevant political parties. This situation has the potential to alienate young people from political engagement. To rectify this, both the government and Western donors should work toward greater inclusivity for this dominant demographic group, as well as for women and minority groups.

Despite anticipated increases in oil exports over the next few years, there's little indication of imminent economic improvement in Niger. Environmental challenges are poised to intensify during this period. The country remains reliant on rainfall and agricultural production, showing little inclination toward economic diversification. While acknowledging some progress in extreme poverty reduction and basic education, the overall economic outlook is grim and concerning.

Corruption and inefficiencies within the public sector represent significant economic hurdles for Niger. The influx of donor aid has yet to yield substantial improvements for the majority of the population. On one hand, the small state bureaucracy struggles to effectively manage the substantial inflow of external funds. On the other hand, a significant portion of these funds ends up in the hands of a powerful few who redirect these resources for personal or political gain. Survey data indicates that most Nigeriens believe corruption has markedly increased over the past two years. The presidency and state bureaucracy are predominantly held responsible for this rise in corruption. Moreover, the country now faces the looming prospect of another debt crisis, as public debt has escalated to an unsustainable level.

Ongoing attacks by jihadi-Salafi organizations on Nigerien territory necessitate close military coordination among the government, local governments in the region (G5 Sahel and ECOWAS), and international partners such as France, the EU, and the United States. While Niger has shown more adeptness in addressing jihadi activities compared to Mali, Burkina Faso, or Nigeria, the past two years have seen a slight decline in terrorist attacks. Nonetheless, jihadi-Salafi groups still retain the capacity to pose a significant security threat to the country.