



## COUNTRY IN PERSPECTIVE

# NIGER



*Village, Saga, Tillaberi  
Flickr / YoTuT*

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DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE  
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*Tenere Desert*  
Flickr / Alessandro Vannucci

## Chapter 1 | Niger in Perspective

# Geography

## Introduction

Niger is a landlocked republic, nearly twice the size of Texas, located on the edge of the southern Sahara Desert in West Africa. Niger shares borders with Algeria and Libya to the north, Chad to the east, Nigeria and Benin to the south, Burkina Faso to the southwest, and Mali to the west. The capital, Niamey, is the largest city in the country; it is located in southwestern Niger, on the banks of the Niger River, which marks part of the Benin-Niger border.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The Republic of Niger is comprised of seven states. The largest state is Agadez, covering the arid north and center of the country. The state of Diffa in the southeast shares a

border with Nigeria and Chad. The states that share a border with Nigeria in the south are Zinder, Maradi, Tahoua, Dosso, and Tillabéri, where Niamey, the capital, is located.<sup>3</sup>

Niger is one of the hottest and driest countries in the world. The Sahara, the Sahel, and the Ténéré deserts dominate two-thirds of Niger, and the other third of the country is savannah. The north and west are mostly vast expanses of sand. Only 2% of the country is forestland. Approximately 12% of the land is arable, some of it located near Lake Chad in the southeastern corner of the country and some by the Niger River in the southwest.<sup>4</sup> A mere 0.1% of the country's land is used for permanent crops.<sup>5</sup> Drought has routinely destroyed agricultural output for much of the past 70 years. Niger has suffered significant food and water shortages. Regional warfare and forced migrations have greatly exacerbated these crises, as refugees and displaced persons from Nigeria, Mali, and Libya have sought refuge in Niger.<sup>6, 7</sup>

## Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

A thin belt of land along the southwestern border is the most fertile and cultivated land in Niger. This region receives far more rain than the rest of the country. A great part of the population is concentrated in the south, along the Niger River. Swathes of increasingly hot territory separate the south from the heat of the Sahara Desert, which makes up northern and northeastern Niger. The terrain progressively changes from the tropical forests of the south to steppes and vast plateaus, and finally, to the desolate Sahara, the Air Mountains of the north-central region and the high plateaus of the far northeast corner.<sup>8</sup>

### *Air Massif*



*The Montagnes Bleues in the Air Massif*  
Wikimedia / Jacques Taberlet

The Air Mountains or Air Massif, a group of triangular granite mountains, are located in north central Niger, in the Sahara Desert north of the city of Agadez. The mountains run along a north-south axis with some of the peaks exceeding 6,000 feet (1,800 m). The highest point, Mont Idoukal-n-Taghès, stands at 6,634 feet (2022 m) above sea level.<sup>9</sup> The mountains are traversed by deep valleys called *koris* and bordered by sand dunes and desert plains. Several oases and seasonal streams in the mountains support

some farming and grazing of livestock owned mainly by the Tuareg.<sup>10, 11</sup> Hot springs and ancient rock carvings dating from 6,000 BCE to around 1000 CE are found in the region.<sup>12</sup>

The Air Mountains are on the UNESCO world heritage list because of their unique landscape, flora, and fauna. These mountains are a part of a vast natural reserve which also includes the Ténéré Desert. This is one of the largest protected areas in Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Niger's uranium mines are located on the western edge of the mountains, at the intersection with the Sahel in the state of Agadez. The town of Agadez, which is the capital of Air, is in the heart of Tuareg country.<sup>14</sup>

### *Talak Region*



*Talak Region*  
Flickr / escalepade

The Talak region in northwestern Niger is a section of the Sahara Desert that extends into Algeria and Mali. The Trans-Saharan Road crosses eastern Talak from the north to the south, linking Algeria with Nigeria. This sandy dune region covers around 100,000 sq km (40,000 sq m). During the yearly monsoon season, the region receives more water than much of the rest of the Sahara, and numerous transient streams drain into the Niger River. The region includes the Tamesna plains in the north and the Azaoua area in the south, which are more productive than the surrounding plateaus. Dinosaur bones and fossils have been found in the Talak region.<sup>15, 16</sup>

### *Ténéré Desert*

Named for the Tamashek word for “void,” this section of the Sahara is covered by sand dunes (*ergs*) in the southeast and gravel plains (*regs*) in the northwest. The region extends from northeastern Niger into western Chad. The desert is devoid of plant life or human habitation due to its extremely hot and dry climate. A rare desert antelope, the addax, survives in



*Ténéré Desert*  
Flickr / Alessandro Vannucci



this desert, where the temperature can rise to over 50C (122 ° F).<sup>17, 18</sup> There are small communities of Kanouri, Manga, and Toubou on the fringes of the desert, and signs of human habitation such as rock engravings and pictures date back to 8,000 years ago. The Tuareg continue to operate trade routes through the desert, including weapons smuggling.<sup>19, 20</sup>

### *High Plateaus*

The Djado, Mangueni, and Tchigai high plateaus of the northeast connect the Ahaggar Mountains of Algeria with the Tibesti Mountains of Chad.<sup>21</sup>



*Djado Plateau*  
FWikimedia / Holger Reineccius

The Djado Plateau, located in the hyper-arid ecosystem of central Sahara, is known for its rock formations and is mostly uninhabitable. Ruins of ancient cities and forts are still visible. The Djado is a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its cultural and geographical significance. The plateau is used as a migration corridor for the critically endangered desert antelope, addax, which moves between Algeria and Chad.<sup>22, 23</sup> Historically, many Toubou settled in the Djado Plateau.<sup>24</sup>

The Mangueni Plateau is located in northeastern Niger near the borders with Libya and Algeria. The Salvador Pass, which runs through the region, is used by smugglers and Algerian Jihadists.<sup>25</sup>

The Tchigai Plateau straddles the Niger-Chad border. Like the Air Mountains, this plateau has oases that make the region slightly more habitable than the surrounding desert.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Sahel*

A frequently ill-defined semiarid belt between the barren Sahara Desert in the north and the tropical savannahs to the south, the Sahel experiences a brief rainy season and a prolonged, extremely dry season.<sup>27</sup> The harsh environment offers little for human habitation. Nomadic herders and farmers depend on the brief rainy season and sparse vegetation, but extended dry periods have brought the area to the brink of famine.<sup>28, 29, 30</sup> Niger's uranium mines, which have been a major source of income

for the country, are located in the Sahel, in the Agadez region.<sup>31</sup> Except for a few pockets mostly surrounding large towns, the population of the Sahel is primarily Tuareg. In recent years, the Sahel has gained global notoriety due to famines, terrorism, insurgencies, and trafficking in arms, drugs, and humans.<sup>32, 33</sup>



*Sahel*

*Flickr / Nick Brooks*

### *Niger River Basin*



*Niger River Basin*  
*Flickr / Jeanne Menjoulet*

The Niger River is the third-longest river in Africa. The river originates in Guinea, flows into Mali, and then forms a portion of the Niger-Benin border. The Niger River Basin stretches along nine countries and covers the southwestern part of Niger.<sup>34</sup>

The river basin is the only relatively well-watered area in Niger, providing 98% of the country's arable land. Niger is almost entirely dependent on the river for its water resources.<sup>35</sup> The Niger Basin

Authority (NBA) is one of the world's most progressive river management organizations. It supports collaboration between the countries that share the river and provides flood warnings.<sup>36, 37</sup>

## **Bodies of Water**

### *Niger River*

The largest body of water in Niger is the Niger River. The Niger begins in the highlands near the Atlantic coast of Guinea, flowing eastward through Mali. It proceeds southeast through Niger for 550 km (342 mi), before turning southward and flowing into Nigeria. There, it spills into the Atlantic Ocean through the Niger Delta. Although the river is full during the rainy season, water level fluctuates between the rainy and dry seasons.<sup>38</sup> Three types of crocodiles, a variety of lizards, and hippopotamuses live in the river; fish species include carp, catfish, and the Nile perch.<sup>39</sup>



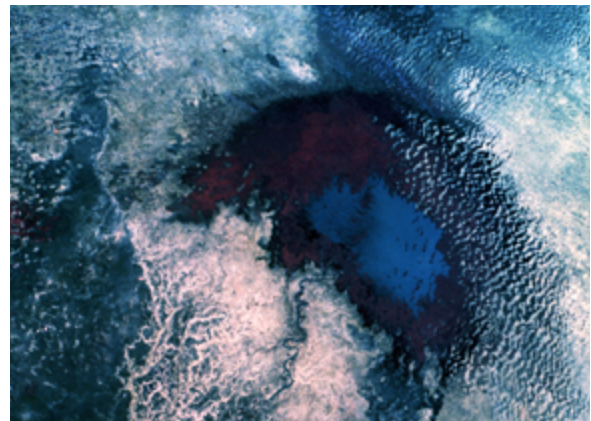
*Niger River  
Flickr / Felix Krohn*

The river floods yearly, from September to May, providing much-needed water for farming. The Niger River has two flood periods. The first, known as the white flood, occurs at the end of the rainy season—usually in September. The second, the black flood, arrives in December because of the increased sediment from upstream. During the dry season, evaporation lowers the river’s volume. Although Niger has yet to tap the river’s irrigation potential, the Niger River allows for the cultivation of traditional grains of the Sahel. The river is the country’s only navigable waterway.<sup>40</sup>

The W National Park of Niger located along the river was added to the World Heritage List in 1996. This famous loop in the river, which runs through Benin and Burkina Faso, contains the most important aquatic and semi-aquatic ecosystems in the West African savannah belt. The W is a wildlife refuge that supports the largest population of elephants in West Africa as well as cheetahs, lions, and leopards.<sup>41, 42</sup>

### *Lake Chad*

Lake Chad is dying. Once Africa’s largest freshwater reservoir, the lake has lost 95% of its original area due to severe droughts and human demand.<sup>43</sup> The Niger section of Lake Chad, which is located in the Sahel region and shares the border of Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria, is only 4 to 7 meters (13-23 ft) deep. The disappearance of the lake is causing tensions among communities around it.<sup>44, 45</sup>



*Lake Chad satellite image  
Flickr / NASA Johnson*

Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), which was established in 1964 by Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger, is committed to save the lake and help the farmers who live around it, though funds for the project have not been raised.<sup>46</sup>

## *Komadugu Yobe River*

Komadugu Yobe River flows between Niger and Nigeria and forms 95 mi (195 km) of the border between the two countries. The river empties into the western side of Lake Chad. The river has a strong and irregular current.<sup>47, 48</sup>

The other bodies of water are a handful of fleeting pools, seasonal rivers, and streams that deliver water to the more arid portions of the country. In the Ténéré Desert, scarce oases, wells, and hidden mountain pools are the only sources of water.<sup>49</sup>

## Climate

Niger is one of the hottest countries in the world. The climate is defined by geography: the Sahara Desert in the north, the Sahel to the south, and the savannah in the southwest. The seasons are divided into a short rainy season and a dry period. The temperature range is greatest in the northeast. The rainy season lasts roughly from June to October, and most rainfall occurs between July and August. The high temperatures of the Sahara cause the rainfall to evaporate before it reaches the



*Rainy season  
Flickr / ILRI*

ground.<sup>50</sup> The cold season is from December to February.<sup>51</sup> Average temperatures vary drastically from one region to another. Temperatures near 40°C (104°F) are common in the hottest summer days in the capital of Niamey. Temperatures in the northern regions are brutally hot, often reach 40°C (104°F) in the daytime and plummet to 12°C (54°F) during the coldest months.<sup>52</sup> The average annual rainfall is less than 2.5 cm (1 in) in Niger's northern desert. Precipitation in the mountains is often 10 times higher than in the deserts; in the southern savannahs, annual totals of 56-86 cm (22-34 in) are common.

The *harmattan* winds, which blow southwestward from the Sahara toward the equator, create dust storms that reduce visibility to near zero and make living conditions on the southern edge of the desert unbearable. The winds usually arrive before the rainy season.<sup>53, 54</sup>

# Major Cities

There are few populous cities in Niger. Niamey, the capital and the country’s socioeconomic center, is the only city with over a million people. Only five other cities have a population of over 100,000. Niger is projected to have a population of over 50 million by 2050.<sup>55</sup>

City	Population (2015 est.) <sup>55, 56, 57</sup>
Niamey	1,302,910
Zinder	256,000
Maradi	206,414
Tahoua	123,000
Agadez	118,244

## Niamey

Niamey is the country’s capital, and it is nearly five times more populous than any other Nigerien city. It is situated along the banks of the Niger River and derives its importance from its location. Niamey was the location of the first French colonial military base, and it became the capital of the French Colony in 1926. The city is an important agricultural, manufacturing, administrative, and cultural center. It hosts the University of Niamey, the National School of Administration, the National Museum, and an international airport.<sup>57</sup>



City of Niamey  
Flickr / Roland

Droughts, political upheaval (both domestic and international), and economic opportunities have drawn an ever-increasing number of Nigeriens to the capital. The lack of planned development to accommodate this influx has created slums and other informal settlements, which are plagued with social and health problems.<sup>58, 59</sup> The capital district is an independent administrative region, placing it on par with the country’s other administrative regions.<sup>60</sup>

## Zinder



Old Town of Zinder  
Flickr / Roland

Zinder is located in south-central Niger and is the capital of Zinder administrative region. It is the country's second most populous city with 256,000 residents. The city served as the first capital during the French colonial era between 1922 and 1926. The French relocated the capital to Niamey to escape the oppressive climate and political unrest.<sup>61</sup> Before the French colonial era, Zinder was known as Damagaram, having served as the Islamic center of the Sultanate of Damagaram.<sup>62</sup>

Niger's Soraz oil refinery, a joint venture with China, opened in 2011 just outside Zinder. The city is a center of peanut production and processing and has a thermoelectric power plant. Water shortages are a serious challenge for the growing population.<sup>63, 64</sup>

## Maradi

Maradi has an estimated population of just over 206,000, which makes it the country's third most populous city. It is a capital of Maradi administrative region and an economic center. It is located southwest of Zinder, along the banks of the Maradi seasonal stream. Residents rebuilt the city on higher ground after floods destroyed it in 1945. Maradi is an agricultural hub, supporting livestock, fertilizer production, and the cultivation of peanuts, melons, cassava, sorghum, millet, and cotton.<sup>65</sup>



City of Maradi  
Wikimedia / Mab.Black

Leather tanning, cooking oil production, cotton processing industries, and mattress factories employ the local population. The city was originally a Hausa state before it was occupied by the French and the population is predominantly Hausa. The city lacks adequate power, water, and other resources.<sup>66, 67</sup>

## Tahoua

Situated between Niamey and Agadez in southern Niger, Tahoua is the administrative capital of Tahoua administrative region and an important trading town. The city has a population of 123,000. During the drought of the 1970s and 1980s, it served as a refugee center. The city has an airport and is a meeting center for the Tuareg and Fulani ethnic groups.<sup>68, 69</sup>

## Agadez

With a population of 118,244, Agadez is a market town located in central Niger at the southern edge of the Air Mountains.<sup>70</sup> It is the most important Tuareg-majority city in the country and continues to play a significant role in the Tuareg trans-Sahel trade route. Agadez is situated at the epicenter of Niger’s uranium mining operations and is the capital of Agadez administrative region. It has an international airport and a mining school. The town has been a base of operations for the Tuareg rebellions against French colonialists and later against the Nigerien government.<sup>71, 72</sup>



City of Tahoua  
Wikimedia / Enrique Saenz



Agadez Grand Mosque  
Flickr / Roland

Named “the gateway to the desert,” the city’s historic center has many earthen dwellings, palaces, and mosques, including the Grand Mosque with its minaret made entirely of mud brick, the highest such structure in the world, and the Sultan’s Palace, dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries when the Sultanate of Agadez was established there. The historic center is listed on UNESCO world heritage list.<sup>73</sup>

## Arlit

Arlit is the site of one of Niger's main uranium extraction operations, which is controlled by the French company Société des Mines de l'Air (SOMAIR).<sup>74, 75</sup> The city lies at the western base of the Air Mountains, to the northwest of Agadez, and it has a population of 112,430.<sup>76</sup> Arlit was built to house people who worked in the mines, and during the uranium boom in the early 1980s, it was the most developed city in Niger.<sup>77</sup> Because of the presence of foreigners, the city is a preferred target for Tuareg militants who demand a fair share of the uranium revenues and different terrorist organizations.<sup>78, 79, 80</sup>



*SOMAIR's headquarter building in Niamey  
Wikimedia / Roland Huziak*

## Environmental Concerns and Natural Hazards



*Giraffe Park  
Flickr / Andrea Bersani*

Major environmental concerns facing Niger include extreme weather, overgrazing, soil and wind erosion, windstorms, deforestation, desertification and pests infestations. Additionally, poaching and loss of habitat threaten Niger's wildlife population including elephants, lions, giraffes, and gazelles.<sup>81</sup>

The two persistent natural hazards, and the greatest dangers that the country is facing, are recurring droughts and floods.<sup>82,</sup>

<sup>83</sup> The increased regularity of droughts during the dry season has led to one of the world's most severe food shortages, which is further exacerbated by the influx of displaced persons fleeing regional conflicts.<sup>84, 85</sup> During the rainy season, heavy rains cause flooding, which can destroy villages and leave thousands of people homeless.<sup>86</sup>

According to the country's top meteorologist, climate change in the Sahel is creating warmer conditions that allows the atmosphere to hold more moisture, often increasing the volume of rainfall.<sup>87, 88, 89</sup>



# Country in Perspective | Niger

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## Niger in Perspective

# Chapter 1 | Geography

## Assessment

1. Niger is a country on the west coast of Africa. It has beautiful beaches and a mild climate year round.
2. The city of Maradi is situated along the banks of a seasonal stream.
3. The uranium mines of Niger are located in the eastern region of the country, near Niger's border with Chad.
4. The W is a wildlife refuge that runs along the Niger River.
5. Sudan is a country that borders Niger.

*Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False*



*Ancient rock engraving showing herds of animals in the southern Sahara near Tiguiddit  
Flickr / Dan Lundberg*

## Chapter 2 | Niger in Perspective

# History

## Introduction

Before the European colonial era, Niger was the location of some of Africa's most powerful empires. The Hausa controlled southern Niger for centuries before falling to the Songhai, who pushed northward from their original base near Lake Chad. In the late 16th century, Moroccan invaders defeated the Songhai. After the invaders left, the Songhai Empire was no longer a viable state. In the years that followed, the Kanem-Bornu Empire brought the former Songhai lands under its control. Islamic jihads led by the Peuhl tribes, which had long pressured the Kanem-Bornu and Songhai empires, eradicated the few remaining Songhai in the late 19th century—just before

the arrival of the French. From the 11th century to the present day, the Tuareg have dominated the deserts of northern Niger.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the 19th century, French colonial forces seized the lands that now comprise Niger from the Peuhl and the Tuareg. The Tuareg refused to acknowledge French control and took up arms from 1916 to 1919 in a failed attempt to reassert their independence. In 1922, Niger became a French colony. The French colonial administrators, who were frustrated by the failure to find exploitable natural resources in the new colony, largely neglected Niger's development.<sup>2, 3</sup>

Following various forms of autonomy within the French Republic, Niger attained independence on 3 August 1960. Since that time, it has struggled to establish a lasting democratic republic. The Tuareg have repeatedly rebelled against the government in Niamey. On numerous occasions, the military has removed elected civilian governments from power. Between 1999 and 2009, President Mamadou Tandja brought some stability to the country, only to be deposed in a military coup in 2010. In 2011, Mahamadou Issoufou, an opposition figure during Tandja's rule, was elected president. In 2016, Issoufou was re-elected for a second term in a landslide.<sup>4, 5</sup>

## Ancient History

The Ténéré Desert was once a lush wetland that sustained abundant wildlife. In early 2000, at an archaeological site in Gobero, Niger, scientists discovered evidence of a culture that flourished in this desert between 7,700 and 6,200 BCE.<sup>6</sup> The Kiffian people who lived in the area at that period, were a hunter-fisher-gatherer society who flourished in the region. Around 6,<sup>200</sup> BCE, when radical changes to the climate induced a prolonged drought, scientists believe the water resources had evaporated and the Kiffians migrated elsewhere. Similar cultures disappeared during the next several millennia with the region's alternating climate cycles.<sup>7, 8</sup>



*Ruins of the trade oasis of Djado*  
Wikimedia Commons

By the 5th century BCE, trade caravans carrying precious metals, ivory, slaves, beads, and salt were using routes that crossed present-day Niger. These caravans connected the ancient powers of North Africa with those of West Africa and the Red Sea.<sup>9, 10</sup>

## Medieval History

### *Kanem-Bornu Empire*

Most historians believe that ancestors of the Kanouri Manga ethnic group, ruled by the Sef dynasty (also called Sayf or Saifwa), founded the Kanem Kingdom along the northeast shore of Lake Chad, in mid-9th century CE. With their capital in Njimi, the Kanouri Manga slowly gained control over a large swath of territory including lands in the modern states of Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Mali. In the Kanem Kingdom, more than one-third of the population was enslaved.<sup>11, 12, 13</sup>

The kingdom prospered by controlling the regional trade routes, especially in slaves, between North Africa, the Nile Valley, and the sub-Saharan.<sup>14</sup> Toward the end of the 11th century, the Sef king converted to Islam, and the empire became an Islamic state.

Infighting among the royal family, conflicts with other groups, and the weakening of the economy forced the Sef to leave Kanem in the late-14th century and move the seat of power to Bornu, west of Lake Chad (in modern-day Nigeria). The Bornu Empire was built on the remains of the Kanem Kingdom. Today, many scholars refer to the two as the Kanem-Bornu Empire or the Bornu. The empire survived, although in slow decline, until the advent of European colonialism into the region. The Sef dynasty ended in 1846.<sup>15, 16, 17</sup>



*Bronze plaque, Kanem Kingdom  
Flickr / Internet Archive Book Images*

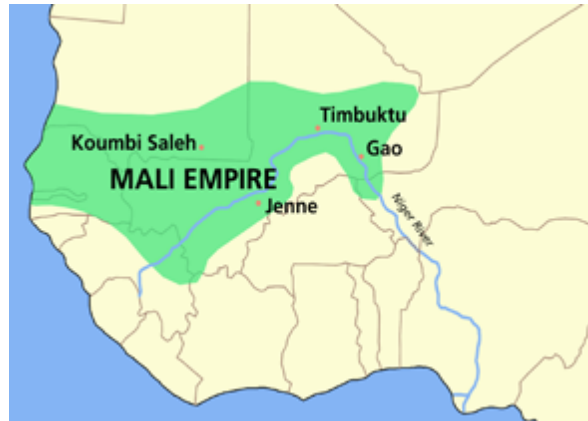
### *The Tuareg Sultanate*

Meanwhile, in the 11th century CE, Tuareg tribes began to migrate to northern and central Niger from points throughout the Sahara Desert. In the 15th century, they established the Sultanate of Agadez, located at the southern base of the Air Mountains.<sup>18, 19</sup> Today, a French-owned uranium mine, located 150 miles north of Agadez, fuels France's nuclear power plants.<sup>20</sup>

## Early Modern History

### *Mali Empire*

In the 9th century, the Malinke people began settling the city of Kangaba, on the upper Niger River, near modern Mali's border with Guinea. The Malinke became traders in gold, and ruled Kangaba until the 13th century. In 1235, Mari Djata from the Keita clan rebelled against the sitting Susu king and became the new emperor. Mari Djata, who was known as Sundiata Keita (Lion King), and his successors expanded the Mali Empire to include the northern Saharan salt mines at Taghaza, the southern gold mines of Wangara, the cities of Timbuktu and Gao, as well as much of what is today western Niger. In the 15th century, loss of control over these territories initiated the decline of the empire and its eventual eclipse by the Songhai Empire.<sup>21, 22</sup>



*Extent of the Mali Empire*  
Wikimedia Commons

### *Songhai Empire*

The Songhai people (ancestors of Niger's Djerma Sonrai ethnic group) lived in Gao (in modern-day Mali), as far back as the 9th century. Gao became capital of their kingdom in the 11th century. The kingdom grew to include Timbuktu and parts of western Niger, and for a time was part of the Mali Empire.<sup>23, 24</sup>



*Extent of the Songhai Empire, 1500*  
Wikimedia Commons

In the 14th century, the Songhai rulers founded the Sonni dynasty. A century later, their leader Sonni Ali Ber brought the Songhai Empire to greatness during his rule. The king permitted the practice of Songhai traditions and Islam in the empire. In 1493, Muhammad Turé overthrew the Sonni ruler and established the Askia dynasty.<sup>25, 26</sup>



Muhammad I Askia consolidated Songhai control over the former Mali Empire and extended his rule into present-day Nigeria. He also created an Islamic state with the help of a Moroccan Muslim adviser. Internal dynastic struggles continued through the 16th century, until a Moroccan invasion in 1591 destroyed the empire.<sup>27, 28</sup>

### *Sultanate of Damagaram*



*Sultan's palace in the Birini district of Zinder*  
Wikimedia / L. Roserot de Melin

In the 17th century, Hausa and Kanouri migrants from Nigeria established the Sultanate of Damagaram, ruling from the city of Zinder in southern Niger. Although initially a vassal state of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, Damagaram emerged as an independent and expansive power in its own right, absorbing many nearby territories. Although ruled by the Kanouri cultural elite, the sultanate was a multi-ethnic state, with Tuareg, Peuhl, Hausa, Toubou, and Arab populations. The economy of the sultanate revolved around revenues generated by the

slave trade and by taxing trade caravans. It survived as a regional power until its conflict with French colonial forces in the final years of the 19th century.<sup>29, 30, 31</sup>

## Modern History

### *French Colonial Era*

France started colonizing West Africa in 1624 by establishing coastal trading posts in present-day Senegal. However, the French did not begin to push into the interior of Africa until much later.<sup>32</sup>

In the mid-19th century, the French renewed their interests in colonizing Africa. They invaded Algeria in 1830 and established a protectorate in Tunisia in 1881. Over the remainder of the 19th century, they gradually gained control over much of North, Central, and West Africa; including Benin, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.<sup>33, 34</sup>



*Map of west Africa in 1770*  
Wikimedia / Rigobert Bonne



*Voulet's and Chanoine's graves near the village of Majjirgui  
Wikimedia / L. Roserot de Melin*

Although the various Nigerien peoples resisted, the French forces, augmented with Senegalese sharpshooting units, ruthlessly crushed all opposition. The infamous Voulet-Chanoine expedition of 1898-1899—operating in tandem with other French commands sweeping in from Algeria and French Congo—moved through West Africa from French bases in Senegal. The two leaders of the expedition, for whom it was named, were ruthless killers, who had previously demonstrated their brutality in other expeditions in West Africa. Before the French administrators were able to exert control over the expedition, the two officers committed one of the bloodiest massacres in the history of French colonialism.<sup>35, 36</sup>

On 8 May 1899, expeditionary forces slaughtered thousands of innocent civilians in the Nigerien village of Birni-N’Konni. The violence ended with a shootout between two French forces, leading to the deaths of Voulet, Chanoine, and the commander of the opposing French force. Afterwards, the expedition continued, taking control of the city of Zinder. Combined with the gains of other French operations underway in the region, this brought most of modern-day Niger under French control.<sup>37, 38</sup>

## Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa)

In 1902, the French added Niger, as part of its Senegambia and Niger colony, to its federation of colonial territories known as Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa). Two years later, as part of a reorganization of its expanding African holdings, France created the Upper Senegal and Niger colony, which remained a part of the French West Africa federation. In 1922, when the Tuareg were finally subjugated, and Niger became a separate colony within this federation.<sup>39, 40</sup>



*Railroads from Dakar to Niger in 1908  
Wikimedia / Frédéric Riembau*

The lieutenant governor in Zinder, and later in 1926 in Niamey, reported to the governor-general of the federation in Dakar, Senegal, who in turn received orders from the Minister of Colonies in Paris. The French divided Niger, like their other colonies, into administrative units (*cercles*) that were administered by commandants. These *cercles* were further subdivided into smaller units. The French administrators largely ignored traditional power structures, except those among the Tuareg, the ethnic group the French granted preferential treatment. Rather than trying to assimilate the populations of their colonies, the French simply sought to assert control over them and their resources.<sup>41</sup>

French administrators were callous in their efforts to maximize the profit from their West African colonies. Although they had helped to abolish official slavery in the region, they instituted the use of forced labor (*corvée*), a legalistic subtlety that amounted to near slavery, to accomplish the same goals that slavery had once afforded the region's rulers. Disappointed by the seeming lack of natural resources, the French did not invest in transport infrastructure. Between 1922 and 1944, no roads or railroads were built in Niger, and no effort was made to encourage river transportation.<sup>42, 43, 44</sup>



Cover of publicity journal,  
French West Africa Colonial Government  
Flickr / Government Press Office

## Post World War II



French West Africa (AOF) soldiers during WWII  
Flickr / Le Devoir

Following World War II, the European powers began to reevaluate their relationships with their overseas colonies. The French afforded their colonies greater internal governance. In 1946, the new French constitution provided French citizenship to their colonial subjects and permitted Niger to elect representatives to the French National Assembly.<sup>45</sup> A decade later, the French government implemented the Overseas Reform Act, which provided colonies with more self-government.<sup>46</sup>

In the late 1950s, French colonial officials found small deposits of uranium in sandstone formations at Azelik, west of the Air Mountains. In the midst of the Cold War, this precious commodity promised the long-sought wealth that had previously eluded Nigeriens and their French rulers.<sup>47, 48</sup> In 1971, SOMAIR - Société des Mines de l'Air, a subsidiary of the French Atomic Energy Commission -started mining Uranium at the Arlit deposit.<sup>49</sup>

In 1958, a new French constitution provided its colonies with the opportunity to choose independence or membership in the French Community, an association of French colonies. In what many observers believed was a rigged election, Niger opted to continue its relationship with France. Two years later, on 3 August 1960, Niger declared its independence. The Nigerien parliament elected Hamani Diori as the country's first president.<sup>50, 51</sup>

## Independence

### *Hamani Diori Presidency*



*President Hamani Diori*  
*Wikimedia / Kroon, Ron / Anefo*

President Diori maintained a close relationship with France and remained in power for 14 years. He presided over a corrupt single-party system. A severe drought devastated Niger from 1968 to 1974. After discovering that government officials were hoarding food aid while many Nigeriens were starving, Lt. Colonel Seyni Kountché led a military coup that toppled the Diori regime on 15 April 1974.<sup>52, 53, 54</sup>

### *Military Rule*

Kountché ruled Niger for the next 13 years. In 1975, Niger became a charter member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The ECOWAS aims to advance economic integration, pool resources, and promote stability throughout West Africa. Kountché died in office in 1987 and was succeeded by his cousin and chief of staff, Brigadier General Ali Saibou.<sup>55, 56</sup>

Saibou attempted to promote greater individual freedoms and the drafting of a new constitution. His reforms emboldened his opponents, who demanded even greater concessions from the military government. Rather than suppressing these expressions,

Saibou adopted reforms that allowed the formation of new political parties and the open expression of oppositional views. In 1990, the Tuaregs of Niger and Mali launched a rebellion on multiple fronts that destabilized both countries.<sup>57, 58, 59</sup>



*Seyni Kountché in 1960*  
Wikimedia / P. hynece

Some Tuareg rebels claimed that the wealth Niger was deriving from natural resources extracted in the areas where the Tuareg lived was not fairly distributed. Others fought for an independent Tuareg nation. The lack of unity among groups of Tuareg rebels preserved Niger's territorial integrity because the military was able to play one faction against another.<sup>60, 61</sup> In the middle of this rebellion, the Toubou also took up arms against the government.<sup>62</sup>

### *Return to Civilian Rule*

In July 1991, the National Conference was convened to establish a transitional government, draft a new constitution, and hold democratic elections. André Salifou, a history professor at the University of Niamey, was selected as the President of the National Conference.<sup>63</sup> In November 1991, the transitional government assumed control from the military regime. In April 1993, with the institution of the new constitution, a newly elected government completed the return to civilian rule.<sup>64</sup>



*Tuareg rebels*  
Wikimedia / Voice of America / Phuong Tran

In April 1995, after five years of war, the government signed a peace accord with Tuareg and Toubou rebels. The agreement largely returned the security situation to its pre-rebellion state. It also granted rebels the opportunity to join the army and provided others with resources necessary to readjust to civilian life.<sup>65, 66</sup>

## Return to Military Rule

In January 1996, Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara led a military coup, toppling the civilian government. Hoping to legitimize his coup, Maïnassara swiftly set about drafting a new constitution and holding sham elections. These measures failed to provide the desired legitimacy, and the international community enacted sanctions against the military regime. Maïnassara clung to power, lashing out at opposition leaders, journalists, and civil libertarians.<sup>67</sup> In April 1999, Major Daouda Malam Wanké led a countercoup that toppled Maïnassara's regime. In the midst of the coup, presidential bodyguards assassinated Maïnassara while he was trying to flee the country.<sup>68, 69</sup>

Wanké immediately moved to return authority to a civilian government, overseeing elections just three months after the coup. In those elections, Nigeriens approved a hastily drafted new constitution. In the fall of 1999, they elected Mamadou Tandja as president, a retired army officer who had been a member of the military junta that came to power in 1974.<sup>70, 71</sup>

## Twenty-First Century



Mamadou Tandja  
Wikimedia / White House photo  
/ Eric Draper

During his first term, Tandja sought to woo international investors and enact austerity measures aimed at improving Niger's financial situation. In response, student demonstrations rocked the capital in 2001, and an army insurrection in Diffa briefly flared up in 2002. Tandja managed to deal with these situations swiftly. In 2004, Tandja resoundingly won reelection.<sup>72, 73</sup>

In July 2005, the United Nations called attention to famine in Niger, which put the lives of 2.5 million people at risk. The famine was brought on by recurring droughts and invasion of desert locusts.<sup>74</sup> Despite millions facing severe malnutrition, the Tandja administration continuously downplayed the crisis.<sup>75, 76</sup>

In early 2007, a new Tuareg rebel group emerged, demanding greater autonomy and economic resources for northern Niger. The Mouvement des Nigeriens pour la Justice (Movement of Nigeriens for Justice - MNJ) launched attacks against military positions in the north. Soon, a full-fledged Tuareg rebellion was underway in Niger and Mali. The war was devastating to the already fragile Nigerien

economy and further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis facing the country.<sup>77</sup> During the rebellion, it became apparent that some Tuareg rebels were working alongside the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) terrorist group. The United States and its allies assisted Niger and Mali in their fight against these groups.<sup>78, 79</sup>



*Movement of Nigeriens for Justice (MNJ) President,  
Aghaly Ag Alambo  
Wikimedia / Voice of America / Phuong Tran*

In April 2009, the MNJ signed a peace accord with the Nigerien government.<sup>80</sup> The agreement, which was negotiated by Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi, ended hostilities and provided amnesty for combatants. The agreement was Tandja administration's chief accomplishment.<sup>81</sup>

### *2010 Military Coup*



*Salou Djibo  
Wikimedia / Annassara*

In May 2009, barred from seeking a third presidential term, Tandja suspended the constitution, dismissed parliament, and assumed emergency powers.<sup>82</sup> The international community and regional organizations decried the power grab.<sup>83</sup> ECOWAS imposed stiff sanctions, refused to meet with Nigerien diplomats, and threatened suspension of Niger's membership.<sup>84</sup>

Through a sham referendum, in direct violation of a ruling by the Constitutional Court, Tandja enacted a new constitution.<sup>85</sup> On 18 February 2010, military forces under the command of Majors Adamou Harouna and Salou Djibo, both of whom had participated in the 1999 coup that had restored democracy, toppled the Tandja regime. The new military junta, operating under the name Conseil Supreme de Restauration de la Democratie (CSRD) (Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy), claimed to have carried out the coup in support of democracy. Djibo emerged as the leader of the junta.<sup>86, 87, 88</sup>

Two days after the coup, the opposition party Coordination des Forces Démocratiques

pour la République (CFDR) (Coordination of Democratic Forces for the Republic) staged a massive rally in Niamey in support of the coup and offered to assist the junta in restoring democracy to Niger.<sup>89</sup> Although the coup was well-received in Niger, the African Union and ECOWAS suspended Niger's membership in protest.<sup>90, 91</sup>

In May 2010, the CSRD announced a transition timetable to achieve civilian rule by early 2011. They also called for democratic elections in which the military would be barred from participation.<sup>92, 93</sup>

## Issoufou Mahamadou Presidency

In late-October 2010, Nigeriens overwhelmingly approved a new constitution drafted by the military junta that limited the powers of the presidency.<sup>94</sup> On 31 January 2011, parliamentary and presidential elections restored civilian rule. The Parti Nigerien pour la Democratie et le Socialisme-Tarayya (Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism) won the most seats in the National Assembly.<sup>95</sup>

In March 2011, in a presidential runoff, Issoufou Mahamadou, Tandja's longtime rival, won a decisive victory against Seyni Oumarou who represented Tandja's party, and emerged as the country's new president.<sup>96</sup> In March 2016, after the opposition, which was headed by Hama Amadou, boycotted the elections, Issoufou won the presidency for the second time in a landslide victory, with 92% of the vote.<sup>97</sup> <sup>98</sup> In early 2017, Hama Amadou, who ran against Issoufou in the 2016 election, was sentenced to a year in prison on a charge of smuggling babies from Nigeria via Benin to wealthy couples in Niger.<sup>99</sup>



*President Mahamadou Issoufou visiting Italy  
Flickr / Palazzo Chigi*

Several months after the 2011 elections, Tuaregs who had fought for the deposed Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi started to return to Niger, bringing along large stockpiles of weapons. A large convoy of Qaddafi loyalists, led by former Tuareg rebel leader Rissa ag Boula, entered Agadez in September 2011, sparking concerns of another Tuareg uprising.<sup>100, 101</sup> President Mahamadou, who was aware of the new threat, vowed to honor all peace agreements that had been signed with Tuareg rebels, and appointed a Tuareg, Brigi Rafini, as his prime minister.<sup>102</sup>



## Current Events



*G5 Sahel leaders  
Flickr / Mission de l'ONU au Mali - UN Mission in Mali*

Since the beginning of the century, Niger has faced security threats from violent terrorist groups that aim to implement Sharia Law in the region.<sup>103</sup> Kidnapping of Westerners by the terror group AQIM (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), and some of its offshoots groups such as al-Mourabitoun (The Sentinels) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), became an important source of funding. In 2010, four uranium mine employees were kidnapped by AQIM.<sup>104, 105</sup>

In 2013, after the Mali-based MUJAO carried out 2 suicide attacks on an army barracks and a uranium mine in Niger, claiming that the attacks were responses to Niger's cooperation with France, French Special Forces were sent to reinforce local security efforts around the uranium mining sites.<sup>106, 107</sup>

In 2014, the G5 Sahel was formed by Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Mali to collaborate in the fight against violent extremist groups and drug trafficking, facilitate humanitarian efforts and deliver aid with the support of the U.S., Germany, and France. In 2017, the G5 leaders and the French president Macron renamed the joint operation the G5 Sahel Force or the FC-G5S.<sup>108, 109</sup>

In January 2015, Niger agreed to contribute troops to an African Union-approved multinational joint task force (MJTF) to combat Boko Haram militants.<sup>110, 111</sup> That same year, France had set up a military base near the Libyan border.<sup>112</sup>

The U.S. military started providing training and security assistance to the Nigerien Armed Forces, including support for intelligence and surveillance, in 2002 in what was called the Pan Sahel Initiative. Currently, there are 800 U.S. military personnel in Niger, among them personnel



*Multi-National Joint Task Force training  
Flickr / New Jersey National Guard*

protecting the U.S. Embassy in Niamey, and personnel supporting the construction of a USD 100 million air base for surveillance drones in Agadez.<sup>113, 114</sup>

Boko Haram, which is based in neighboring Nigeria, began launching attacks inside Niger in 2015.<sup>115, 116</sup> In 2016, militants from Boko Haram attacked a military post in Niger's southeastern Diffa Region killing 26 soldiers, including two soldiers from Nigeria.<sup>117</sup> Abductions of young girls and adolescent boys, and deadly attacks on military posts in the Diffa region continued into 2017 and 2018.<sup>118, 119</sup>

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# Niger in Perspective

## Chapter 2 | History

### Assessment

1. During the Industrial Revolution, the French colonial administrators built a railway across the Sahara to transport precious metals mined in Niger to Europe.
2. President Mamadou Tandja’s major accomplishment was the 2009 peace agreement with the Tuareg.
3. Tuareg tribes who migrated to northern and central Niger from the Sahara Desert established the Sultanate of Agadez.
4. The name “Boko Haram” means “Victory for the just.”
5. The Voulet-Chanoine expedition became famous for discovering the first uranium mine in Niger.

*Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False*





*A farmer collecting millet in Koremairwa village  
Wikimedia / Curt Reynolds*

## Chapter 3 | Niger in Perspective

# Economy

## Introduction

Niger's economy is vulnerable to regional and domestic security issues and climate factors. Furthermore, with the highest total fertility rate in the world - averaging seven children per woman - a very low literacy rate, and a poverty rate around 50%, Niger is one of the poorest nations in the world. Out of 188 countries and territories listed on the U.N. Human Development Index of 2016, Niger's position is at 187.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

Most of Niger's economy is informal and relies on subsistence agriculture and uranium mining. The financial system occupies a small portion of the formal economy, but

it is underdeveloped and weak. Outdated and inefficient regulations reinforced by corruption impede employment growth, commercial operations, and investments.<sup>4, 5</sup>

As of 2014, foreign aid accounts for 40% of the Niger's annual budget.<sup>6</sup> The most important donors are France, the European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund; and several United Nations agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, and UNFPA. Other donors include Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, and Saudi Arabia. The United States is a major donor, pledging more than USD 120 million in economic assistance to Niger in 2017.<sup>7, 8, 9</sup>

The violence perpetrated by Boko Haram and the decline in the price of uranium and oil have put Niger at risk of reversing positive economic developments, which were the result of increased agricultural production and public investment projects.<sup>10, 11</sup>

Despite weak industrialization and entrepreneurship, Niger has experienced steady economic growth in recent years. This economic growth is expected to remain strong through 2018.<sup>12</sup> The official unemployment rate is 2.63%.<sup>13</sup>

## Agriculture

Niger is an overwhelmingly rural country in sub-Saharan Africa. Although most of the country's terrain is desert plains and dunes - only 12% of the land is arable - nearly 90% of the workforce works in the agricultural sector, which accounts for about 45% of GDP; agriculture is the second-largest export sector. Sedentary farmers in the southern regions such as the Hausa and the Djerma-Songhai grow cowpeas, cotton, cassava, peanuts, millet, sorghum, rice, oil palms, and poultry. Nomadic and semi-nomadic herders such as the Fulani, Tuareg, Kanuri, and Toubou raise livestock including cattle, sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, and horses.<sup>14, 15</sup>



*Millet harvest*  
Flickr / IFDC Photography

Niger is the world's second-largest producer of cowpeas (known as black-eyed peas in the United States) after Nigeria and a major supplier of this crop to West African markets.<sup>16, 17</sup> The cowpea is one of Niger's main agricultural exports and an indispensable part of the Nigerien diet.<sup>18</sup>

Niger suffers from land degradation, deforestation, desertification, locust infestations, floods, and frequent droughts, which lead to food insecurity, infectious diseases, and malnutrition. Additionally, extremist groups often exploit conflicts over access to food and water. Investments in irrigation systems, roads, and marketplace infrastructure, as well as improvement in soil management and diversification of crops, are needed to alleviate severe food insecurity, expand economic opportunities, and promote stability.<sup>19, 20, 21</sup>



*Tuareg herders with cattles  
Flickr / s\_manca*

## Natural Resources

Niger has deposits of uranium, petroleum, coal, gold, iron ore, tin, copper, salt, and phosphate. The mineral sector accounts for about 3% of the country's GDP and nearly 40% of Niger's exports.<sup>22</sup>

### Uranium



*Uranium mine in Arlit  
Wikiemdia / Arlitois*

Uranium was discovered in Azelik, Niger in the late 1950s by French exploration teams; production started in 1971. Today, Niger is the fourth largest producer of uranium in the world. Niger controls 7% of global uranium deposits, and the country is the source of Africa's highest grade of uranium ore. Uranium is Niger's biggest export product, accounting for 32% of total exports.<sup>23, 24, 25</sup>

The two largest uranium mines, Arlit and Akouta, are located in northern Niger, on the western range of the Air Mountains, near the Tuareg-majority cities of Agadez and Arlit. The mines' lifespan is expected to last for another 15 years.<sup>26</sup> These mines have seen violent conflicts, as the Tuareg demanded a larger share of the revenue generated by uranium exports.<sup>27</sup>

The largest uranium deposit found in Africa by exploration teams from the French Atomic Commission (CEA) is at the location of the Imouraren open-pit mine, south of the Arlit mine. The mine was supposed to start production in 2015, but operations were put on hold after uranium prices dropped following the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The fourth mine in Azelik, near the Tuareg city of In'gall, is owned and operated by Chinese companies.<sup>28, 29</sup>

Niger operates the Arlit and Akouta uranium mines with international partners, such as the French companies Société des Mines de l'Air (SOMAIR) and COMINAK, subsidiaries of the French Atomic Energy Commission and French uranium mining and nuclear fuel group (AREVA).<sup>30</sup> In 2014, the government approved a new agreement with AREVA in which Niger receives higher revenues from the mines.<sup>31, 32</sup> In late 2017, due to low uranium prices, AREVA announced that it would reduce annual production, cut staff levels, and reorganize the workforce in the mines it operates in Niger. Other companies are also cutting jobs and production.<sup>33</sup>

China's SinoU and ZTE Energy Corporation have established a joint venture to carry out uranium exploration near the Azelik mine. Azelik is owned by Societe des Mines d'Azelik SA (SOMINA), a joint venture between the government of Niger and SinoU. A Korean investor has a 5% stake in the operation.<sup>34, 35</sup>

In recent years, another private Chinese-based company entered a joint venture with Australia's Artemis Resources to explore the Tagaza deposits, adjacent to Teguida. A private Canadian company is developing four uranium deposits, with one deposit in Dasa undergoing preliminary economic assessment. An Indian company also received an exploration license in the Arlit region.<sup>36</sup>

## Gold

Niger's gold deposits are located in the northern region of Agadez and the densely populated forests of Liptako-Gourma, near the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso border.<sup>37</sup>

Although mining amounts to about 40% of Niger's exports, the majority of the gold is mined on a small scale by local artisans. There are about 70 artisanal gold mines across Niger and 24 sites where gold is



*Golden Tuareg Cross  
Flickr / African Studies Library BU*

treated with potassium cyanide. Because there is little government supervision over artisanal gold mining, gold makes little contribution to Niger's economic development.<sup>38, 39 40</sup>

The Samira Hill open-pit gold mine is the most important gold mine in Niger. Operations of the joint venture mine began in 2004; the Nigerien government has a 20% stake, and two Canadian companies, Samafo and Etruscan Resources, each have a 40% stake.<sup>41</sup> In 2013, Samafo sold its share to the government when low gold prices made the mine too expensive to operate.<sup>42</sup> The Samira Hill deposit was recognized as an emerging gold belt known as the "Samira Horizon." The region attracts thousands of artisanal miners, including children.<sup>43</sup> The discovery of more gold deposits in the Agadez region in 2014 has made Niger potentially one of Africa's major gold producers.<sup>44, 45</sup>

## Petroleum



*A test oil well in the Ténéré Desert in 2008  
Wikimedia / Voice of America / Phuong Tran*

Petroleum accounts for 16% of Niger's total exports.<sup>46</sup> In 2008, the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) started building the Soraz refinery in Zinder, the capital of Damagaran region, after signing a deal with the government of Niger. The project also involved drilling oil wells in Diffa region and building a pipeline that would export crude oil to foreign markets. Oil drilled from the Agadem oilfield, located 700 km (435 m) east of the refinery, was expected to feed the refinery. The

refinery opened in 2011.<sup>47</sup> Its output fulfills Niger's fuel requirements, and the surplus is exported. The refinery is 60% owned by China and 40% by Niger.<sup>48</sup> In 2015, a fall in global oil prices put a strain on the refinery, which never reached its full capacity of 20,000 barrels per day.<sup>49, 50</sup>

In 2013, Niger signed a bilateral agreement with Cameroon, in which Nigerien crude oil would be transported through the 1070 km (665 m) Chad-Cameroon Pipeline and pumped to the Cameroonian port of Kribi for export.<sup>51, 52</sup> In 2015, Niger signed a bilateral agreement with Chad, in which Niger would export oil using a pipeline that runs through Chad to Cameroon.<sup>53</sup>

## Energy



*Outdoor kitchen using coals  
Flickr / Colin*

Less than 15% of Nigeriens have access to electricity, but rural residents are far less likely to have access to electricity than urban residents.<sup>54, 55</sup> Despite electricity imports from Nigeria, Niger has the fourth lowest energy consumption per capita in West Africa and one of the lowest in the world.<sup>56</sup> Niger imports 75% of its electricity from Nigeria.<sup>57</sup> Locally mined coal and imported oil are used to generate the rest of Niger's electricity.<sup>58</sup>

The World Bank and the African Development Fund helped fund the Kandadji Project power plant on the Niger River, 180 km (112 m) north-west of Niamey. The plant is intended to provide Niger with renewable, low-cost hydropower energy. The project includes the Kandadji dam, a hydropower plant, and a transmission line. Besides energy, the dam is expected to play a role in providing irrigation, flood management, water sanitation, and poverty reduction.<sup>59</sup> The completion date of the project was set for 2017, but the plant has faced persistent delays. The cancellation of the contract with the Russian dam developer and other operational challenges related to the resettlement of thousands of people put the future of the project in doubt. The World Bank was considering withdrawing from the project.<sup>60</sup> The completion date has been moved to 2021.<sup>61, 62</sup>

## Trade

As of 2016, Niger has a negative trade balance.<sup>63</sup> The value of exports and imports taken together equals 57% of the country's GDP.<sup>64</sup> The top non-agricultural export products are uranium and thorium ore (32% of total exports), refined petroleum (16%), gold (3.8%), fabric, motor vehicles, and cement. Top agricultural export products are rice (14%), palm oil (14%), cowpeas, livestock, cane or beet sugar, and onions.<sup>65</sup> <sup>66</sup> Top imports are aircraft parts, which account for 20% of total imports, followed



*Market in Niamey  
Wikimedia / Yann Fauché and Alma Mulalic*

by foodstuffs, palm oil, vehicles parts, cement, and machinery.<sup>67, 68</sup> Niger's top export destinations are France, Thailand, Malaysia, Nigeria, Mali, and China. The top import partners are France, China, the United States, Nigeria, India, Thailand, and Ghana.<sup>69, 70</sup>

Niger is a member of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), which include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. These economic partnerships are intended to foster trade and investment relations by removing tariffs and other impediments to intra-regional trade flows.<sup>71</sup>

Because Niger is a landlocked country, it relies on ports in Benin, Cameroon, and Togo. Importers also use ports located in Tema, Ghana or Lagos, Nigeria. Deliveries take months because of delays that are encountered at international border crossings in the region. The low number of commercial flights to Niger increases transport costs.<sup>72</sup>

## Banking and Finance

Niger is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and shares a common currency, central bank, and monetary policies with 14 countries. Its currency is the West African CFA franc (XOF), which is connected to a fixed exchange rate with the euro. As of December 2017, the CFA franc was trading at a rate of XOF 656 per EUR 1 and XOF 557 per USD 1.<sup>73, 74</sup>

The regulatory body for the CFA franc is the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), which is located in Dakar, Senegal; the central bank wields considerable control over monetary policy in Niger and other member states.<sup>75</sup> The BCEAO handles the financial assets of the country and issues Niger's currency.<sup>76, 77</sup>



Five hundred francs CFA  
Wikimedia / Nicholas Gemini

The banking sector is weak, inefficient, and expensive. Four major commercial banks control about 90% of deposits, and all the local banks are subsidiaries of banks based in other countries. There are no American or European banks in the country.<sup>78</sup> Access to finance is limited, and less than 5% of the population uses financial products.

Activity in the capital market is limited. Trading on the stock exchanges is managed through the regional ECOWAS Exchange, based in Cote d'Ivoire, which also has a very small branch in Niger.<sup>79</sup>

## Services and Industry

The services sector accounts for 40% of Niger's GDP and employs 9% of the workforce.<sup>80</sup> Much of this sector involves re-exporting trade goods and collecting transit fees from international trade that passes through the country.<sup>81, 82</sup>

The industrial sector accounts for 14% of Niger's GDP and 4% of labor. Mining is the dominant industry, with uranium being the main contributor. The world market drives Niger's uranium industry.<sup>83</sup>



*Man working at the mine  
Flickr / Alessandro Vannucci*

Niger has an emerging oil industry with an operational oil refinery near Zinder and geological research showing more potential oil deposits in the region. Other commodities produced in Niger are gold, cement, coal, brick, soap, chemicals, and meat.<sup>84, 85</sup> Small manufactures of food products, textiles, farm equipment, and metal furniture diversify this sector.<sup>86</sup>

## Standard of Living



*Village women and their livestock  
Flickr / ILRI*

As one of the poorest nations in the world, Niger ranked second to last in the 2016 United Nations Human Development Index (187 out of 188 countries).<sup>87</sup>

In 2017, 45% of the Nigerien population lived below the poverty line, and per capita income was USD 420. Furthermore, Niger is an important transit country for economic migrants from West and Central Africa to Libya. and from there, to the Mediterranean and Europe. This migration,



compounded by a wave of refugees escaping violence in Nigeria, Libya, and Mali, has created a humanitarian crisis in the southwestern region of Diffa and the western regions of Tahoua and Tillaberi. Approximately 300,000 refugees and displaced persons live in refugee camps located throughout Niger.<sup>88, 89</sup>

The literacy rate of Nigeriens over the age of 15 is 19% and the expected number of years spent in school is a little over five, with the female population at a high disadvantage. Less than 5% of the population uses the internet, and only 5% of the rural population has access to electricity. Maternal and infant mortality rates are high and malnutrition among children is nearly 15%. The risk of contracting serious infectious diseases such as hepatitis A and hepatitis E, typhoid, malaria, meningitis, and dengue fever is very high. Outbreaks of infectious diseases in refugee camps claim many victims.<sup>90, 91</sup> The physician to patient ratio is one of the worst in the world.<sup>92, 93</sup>

## Future Outlook

According to analysts, Niger's economy will continue to grow slightly in 2017 and 2018 (5.2%) with the help of foreign aid, and inflation will remain at 0.2%.<sup>94</sup> However, the positive economic outlook is susceptible to the climate (droughts and floods), fluctuations in commodity prices (oil and uranium), and security threats on the borders with Nigeria, Mali, and Libya.<sup>95</sup>



*Banibangou Refugee Camp  
Flickr / European Commission DG ECHO*

Niger plans to strengthen its industry sector by expanding the country's oil and mining operations. However, foreign companies control a large portion of the oil and uranium mining with little government input.<sup>96, 97</sup> Weak infrastructure and the high cost of doing business in Niger hamper the development of these sectors.<sup>98</sup>

The surge in attacks by Boko Haram resulted in a decrease of revenue and increased spending on defense. The increase in spending on security and the need to host thousands of refugees put a burden on the economy and reduced the available resources that the government could use to finance development. The U.S, EU and other countries are investing in Niger's economic development and defense needs.<sup>99</sup>

# Country in Perspective | Niger

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## Niger in Perspective

# Chapter 3 | Economy

### Assessment

1. A multinational monetary organization regulates Niger's currency.
2. Arlit and Azelik are two rare metals mined in the Sahel region of Niger.
3. Gold is an important commodity to the Nigerien economy.
4. Niger exports its petroleum via an oil pipeline that runs through Chad and Cameroon.
5. The majority of Nigeriens have no access to electricity.

*Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True*



*Nigerien traditional dance, Tahoua  
Flickr / Julian PIERRE*

## Chapter 4 | Niger in Perspective

# Society

## Introduction

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world and one of the largest countries in West Africa. The estimated population as of 2017 is close to 22 million. The population is expected to grow to 55 million by 2050, if attitudes about family planning remain the same.<sup>1</sup> French is the official language, spoken by Nigeriens who attended Western-style schools, and the literacy rate is estimated at 19%. Hausa is spoken by more than half of the population and is the lingua franca of Niger. Djerma (Zarma), Songhay and Tamasheq are among the national languages. The government recognizes ten languages as national languages.<sup>2, 3</sup>

Although Niger's population is ethnically and linguistically diverse, Nigeriens share a common religion: 98% of the population is Muslim; 95% of Muslims are Sunni, and 5% are Shia. Less than 2% of the population is comprised of Catholics, Protestants, Baha'i, and followers of West African indigenous beliefs.<sup>4</sup>

The constitution prohibits religious discrimination. All religious organizations must register with the Ministry of Interior and open-air public proselytizing for all religious groups is prohibited for security reasons. Due to the declared state of emergency in Diffa Region, near the border with Nigeria, the government prohibits the use of the full-face veil to prevent concealment of bombs and weapons.<sup>5, 6</sup>

The largest ethnic group in Niger is the Hausa, who also live in northern Nigeria; the second largest group is the Djerma-Songhai, who also live in parts of Mali. Other nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples are the Tuareg, Fulani, Toubou, Gurma, Kanouri Manga, and Igdalen.<sup>7</sup>

## Ethnic and Linguistic Groups

### *Hausa*

The Hausa, the largest regional ethnic group in Niger, represent 53% of the country's population. They live along most of southeastern Niger and northern Nigeria. Most Hausa practice Islam, which was brought to the region by Arab traders from North Africa, but the Fulani War, also called the Fulani Jihad (1804-1810), established Islam as the dominant religion in the Hausa regions of Niger and Nigeria.<sup>8, 9</sup>



*Hausa women in a village near Maradi  
Flickr / Eric Haglund*

Hausa literature emerged around the 14th or 15th century. The Hausa language is spoken all over sub-Saharan Africa and was originally written in Arabic script. The British introduced the Latin script to Hausa in 1903. Hausa is often used as lingua franca among the region's non-Muslims. Many Hausa can read and write Arabic, and speak either French.<sup>10</sup>

Hausa society remains largely feudal, and people use prominent tribal marks on their face and or elsewhere on the body for tribal and kin identification. The dress code of



the Hausa adheres to Islamic traditions. Men wear large flowing gowns, babban riga, or robes, jalabia. Women wear hijabs, shawls, and the abaya body wrap. Marriages are based on Islamic rites.<sup>11, 12</sup>

### *Djerma-Songhai (Zarma)*

Descended from elite cavalrymen of the Songhai Empire, the Djerma-Songhai are practicing Muslims, and they represent 20% of Niger’s population.<sup>13</sup> They are the second largest ethnic group in the country and are concentrated along the Niger River. The Djerma-Songhai value their horses and cattle and speak Songhay.<sup>14, 15, 16</sup>



*Traditional round Zarma hut near Niamey  
Wikimedia / Ryszard Vorbrich*

### *Tuareg*



*A man from the peasant caste of  
the Tuareg near Tahoua  
Wikimedia / Clémence Delmas*

The Tuareg are a prominent ethnic group, who live in the Sahara Desert in areas covering Niger, Mali, Algeria, Chad, and Burkina-Faso. This group constitutes 11% of the population of Niger. The Tuareg were nomads who adopted a semi-nomadic and pastoralist lifestyle. They practice Sunni Islam and traditional African religions.<sup>17</sup> The Tuareg is a matrilineal society, tracing the family line through the women. Their ancient written language, Tifinagh, is used for ceremonies and private occasions. The Tuareg call themselves “Speakers of Tamasheq” and “People of the Veil.” Some outsiders call them “The Blue People” because of the blue veils the Tuareg men wear.<sup>18</sup>

Since they live throughout central and northern Niger, they control many overland trade routes, which helps them move drugs, people, and weapons through the Sahara Desert. Tuaregs who sought independence and a greater share of the lucrative uranium revenue that is generated in their territory have carried out insurgencies and rebellions in Niger and Mali; the last one occurred between 2007 and 2009.<sup>19, 20</sup> In 2011, President Issoufou named a Tuareg as Niger’s prime minister and offered Tuaregs high-level government jobs.<sup>21, 22</sup>

## Fulani (Peul)



Fulani boy in Niger herds  
Flickr / ILRI

Approximately 6.5% of the population is Fulani.<sup>23</sup> Once a predominantly nomadic people, many Fulani have become sedentary, living permanently in villages and cities. They value cattle ownership as a sign of wealth, but cattle are rarely slaughtered for meat. The Fulani were responsible for converting other Nigeriens to Islam through a series of holy wars in the 19th century. The Fulani language, Fula, belongs to the Niger-Congo language family, which is also spoken in Burkina-Faso; Fula uses the Arabic script. Fulani social structure is egalitarian, unlike the hierarchical Hausa.<sup>24, 25</sup>

## Kanuri

Originally indigenous to the Central-South Sahara, the Kanuri are mostly a sedentary group that subsists on farming millet, fishing, and trade. This group has many ethnic subgroups and language varieties. They are descendants of the once powerful Kanem and Bornu Empires. Their society is highly stratified into distinct classes with a political-religious elite at the top. The Kanuri are polygynous.<sup>26</sup> They predominantly live along the south and southeast borders of Niger.<sup>27</sup> The Kanuri language, one of the Nilo-Saharan languages, was a major language of the Bornu Empire and is still a major language in southeastern Niger. The Kanuri are Sunni Muslim. Nearly 6% of Niger's population is Kanuri.<sup>28, 29</sup>

## Gurma

Also known as the Gourmantché, the Gurma are more commonly found in Burkina Faso, but also reside in the southwest corner of Niger. They are sedentary cattle herders and farmers. The group's language is Gurma, part of the Gur language family. Less than 1% of the population in Niger belongs to this ethnic group.<sup>30, 31</sup>



Gourmantché basketry  
Wikimedia / Ji-Elle

## Igdalen

A nomadic people of mixed Songhai-Berber ancestry, the Igdalen have settled predominantly in the Agadez, Maradi, and Arlit regions. Surrounded by the Tuareg, to whom they are closely related, the Igdalen are Muslims who speak Tagdal, a Songhay-Berber mix, which uses Arabic script.<sup>32, 33</sup>

## Toubou

This small ethnic group composed of nomads and small farmers, who are also involved in substance and weapons smuggling, inhabits the inhospitable region of northeastern Niger, Chad, Libya, and Sudan. The hostile environment they live in and their poverty give them the reputation of tough people. Violence between the Toubou, Fulani, and Tuareg erupts occasionally.<sup>34, 35, 36</sup> The Toubou's language, Tebu (also called Tebou, Tedga, Tudaga, etc.), belongs to the Nilo-Saharan language family and is also spoken in Chad.<sup>37</sup>



*Toubou man traveling in the dessert*  
Wikimedia / ToubouGa

## Religion



*Mosque in Niamey*  
Flickr / ARM Climate Research Facility

Islam is observed by 98% of the Nigerien population. Most are Sunnis who adhere to the Maliki Madggab interpretation of Islam, which is a prevalent movement in West Africa.<sup>38</sup> The small Wahhabi and Shi'a communities have come under scrutiny due to government efforts to regulate the expansion of Wahhabism in the country. In the early 2010s, thousands of Wahhabi mosques and madrasas were built in the country.<sup>39</sup>

Muslim-Christian interfaith forums are active in the country, and relations are peaceful. However, Sunnis have burned churches, schools, and orphanages as deadly riots broke out in 2015 in Niamey and Zinder after the publication of a cartoon depicting the

Prophet Muhammad in the French magazine Charlie Hebdo.<sup>40, 41</sup> The 2015 riots, as well as the broadcasting of sermons hostile to Christians from Nigeria into Niger, have left many Christians fearful for their lives.<sup>42</sup>

All religious organizations must register with the Ministry of the Interior. The government scrutinizes the background of the religious organization's leadership before granting approval. The government must also approve the construction of religious buildings. The Ministry of Religious Affairs facilitates an interfaith discourse regarding relevant government policies and legislation.<sup>43</sup>



*A Church in Niamey after being attacked by rioters  
Wikimedia / Normax12*

## Islam



*Mosque in Agadez  
Flickr / Dan Lundberg*

Islam is a monotheistic religion, meaning that its followers believe in a single deity. The Muslim community, or umma, calls this deity Allah. The Arabic word Islam means “to submit” or “to surrender.” Therefore, a Muslim is one who submits to the will of Allah.<sup>44</sup> Muslims believe that Allah revealed his message to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 CE. They consider Muhammad to be the last in a long line of prophets including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Allah’s message, as relayed by Muhammad, is delivered in the Quran, the sacred text of Islam. Additional doctrinal guides include the Hadith, a collection of the sayings of Muhammad, and the Sunna, which describes the practices of Islam by way of Muhammad’s example.<sup>45, 46</sup>

The essential beliefs and rites of the Muslim faith are embodied in the five pillars of Islam. The first and central pillar is the faithful recitation of the shahada, or Islamic creed (literally “witness” or “attestation”): “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is Allah’s messenger.” The remaining pillars are performing ritual prayers five times per day, giving alms to the poor and needy, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and undertaking a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca.<sup>47</sup> Muslims believe that Allah

will judge them for their actions on earth. This judgment determines whether the follower's afterlife is spent in either heaven or hell.<sup>48</sup>

### *Christianity*

European missionaries introduced Christianity to the region during the colonial era. Christians make up a small portion of the overall population and are centered in urban centers such as Maradi, Niamey, and Dogondoutchi. Nigerien Christians include Catholics and various Protestant denominations.<sup>49</sup>



*Christian church in Zinder  
Flickr / Joris-Jan van den Boom*

### *Baha'ism*

Numbering a few thousand, Niger's Baha'is live chiefly in Niamey and along the border with Burkina Faso.<sup>50</sup> The central tenets of the Baha'i faith uphold the unity of God, recognize the unity of his prophets, view divine revelation as a continuous and ongoing process, and teach the principle of the oneness of humanity. Baha'is believe that all the world's religions are in complete harmony at their roots, with separate teachings displaying different facets of the same truth. Consistent with this theology, Baha'ism embraces Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad, Zoroaster, Krishna, Gautama Buddha, and other teachers from other faiths as messengers of God.<sup>51, 52</sup>

### *Indigenous Practices*

Spirit-possession plays a major role in the religious life of followers of traditional indigenous practices and folk-style practices of the Abrahamic faiths.<sup>53</sup> Bori, the traditional religion of the Hausa, involves a spiritual force that resides in physical objects. The Fulani suppressed Bori rituals, but the practice survived among the Hausa in southern Niger.<sup>54</sup> Adherents believe that ritual practitioners can channel spiritual powers that influence rainfall, assist in healing, or otherwise intervene in daily affairs.<sup>55</sup>



*Traditional indigenous practice  
Flickr / PROiJuliAn*

## Gender Issues



*Girls taking cooked millet to men working in the field  
Flickr / ILRI*

Although the constitution provides equal legal status and rights regardless of sex—the Ministry of Women’s Promotion and Children’s Protection along with the Ministry of Labor and Civil Service implement policies against discrimination. Only men have legal rights as heads of household. Divorced or widowed women, even with children, cannot be considered the head of a household. Traditional practices and religious beliefs promote discrimination in marriage, divorce, child custody, credit, property or business ownership, education, the judicial process, and housing. Discrimination is worse in rural areas.<sup>56, 57</sup>

The constitution provides equal access to employment for all citizens, but the government does not enforce the law. There is frequent employment discrimination on the basis of gender and disability (including HIV-positive status, sickle cell anemia, or other communicable diseases apart from race, religion, color, sexual orientation and so forth).<sup>58</sup>

Reliable statistics on domestic violence and sexual harassment against women are not available, though it is known that husbands routinely beat their wives. The law does not explicitly prohibit domestic violence. Women can sue their husbands for battery, though few make formal complaints, either because of ignorance of the law or fear. Penalties for domestic violence range from a fine to a 30-year prison sentence. The law does not recognize spousal rape. In eastern Niger, some husbands prevent their wives from leaving the home without being escorted by a male relative.<sup>59</sup>



*Nigerien women gathering  
Flickr / COSPE*



Women from Azamalan village  
Flickr / Fodil Seddiki

Rape, which is widespread, is punishable by 10 to 30 years in prison, but most incidents of sexual assault and physical violence go unreported because of the victims' fear of retaliation and shame. The Ministry of Women's Promotion and Children's Protection and NGOs conduct public awareness campaigns to educate women about their rights and the legal recourse available to them.<sup>60</sup>

The law prohibits FGM/C (female genital mutilation/cutting) and penalties range from six months to three years in prison. Penalties can increase up to 20 years if a victim dies. FGM/C is practiced predominately by the Fulani (Peuhl) and Djerma, mostly on young girls. In some rural areas, traditional barbers known as wanzam perform FGM/C on newborn girls. Health surveys put the current rate of FGM/C at 2%.<sup>61</sup>

Polygamy is legal and practiced widely. In some places taking a "fifth wife," a practice in which girls and women are sold into slavery and sexual servitude, is still prevalent. Islam permits four wives.

The minimum age of consensual sex is 13 for both boys and girls. The law allows for girls to marry at age 15. Some rural families enter into marriage agreements, which compel girls to reside with her husband's family and live under the "supervision" of their mother-in-law. The prevalence of child marriage is highest in southern Niger.<sup>62, 63</sup>

According to 2015 estimates, maternal mortality was 553 deaths per 100,000 live births; the fertility rate stood between 6.5 and 7 children per woman in 2017.<sup>64</sup> Factors such as the lack of prenatal care, high rates of adolescent pregnancy, diseases during pregnancy, infections after birth, malnutrition, and lack of access to emergency obstetric care all contribute to the high mortality rate. Many women use traditional midwives during childbirth and are sent to a hospital only when the



A young mother and her child  
Flickr / DFID - UK Department for International Development

mother or baby suffers from complications. In 2012, more than 8.5% of women gave birth before they were 15.<sup>65</sup>

## Education

About 28 million girls in West and Central Africa do not have access to education.<sup>66</sup> In Niger, many parents keep their young girls away from school in order to work at home or marry. As a result, only one in two girls attends primary school in Niger. According to UNICEF's 2012 Nigerien statistics, girls' attendance of secondary school stood at 8.4%, and only one girl in fifty attended high school.<sup>67</sup> Girls who travel a long distance to school are especially at high risk of dropping out.<sup>68</sup> The female literacy rate stands at 11%.<sup>69, 70</sup>



Students in class  
Flickr / UNESCO Africa

## Cuisine and Traditional Dress



Pounding millet  
Flickr / Brock Tice

Niger's major crops are millet, legumes, and nuts. Since Niger suffers from recurrent droughts, fresh produce is scarce. Nigeriens frequently make pastes from grains, flavoring them with spicy sauces and vegetables. A popular dish is foura - small dumplings of crushed, fermented millet cooked with milk, sugar, and spices.<sup>71</sup> Fruits such as dates and melons are eaten in season. Dairy is an important source of protein; cheeses are made of camel, cow, and goat milk. Beef

and mutton are typically reserved for holidays and rites of passage. Along the Niger River and near Lake Chad, fresh fish is added to the primarily vegetarian diet.<sup>72, 73</sup> Since Niger is a majority-Muslim country, alcohol is not easily available, and pork is taboo. Tea is the most popular drink.<sup>74, 75</sup>



Traditional attire varies considerably among Niger's many ethnic groups. Among most southern groups, including the Hausa, Djerma Songhai, and Kanouri Manga, women dress in vibrantly colored loose cotton garments. People living in the desert regions favor darker colors and clothing that offers greater protection from the sun. Tuareg men veil their faces and don indigo turbans and flowing robes.<sup>76</sup>



*Tuareg man in flowing robe and turban  
Flickr / AdamRogers2030*

## Arts

### Music



*A Hausa Griot playing a Komsa at Diffa  
Wikimedia / Roland*

Throughout West Africa, including Niger, griots were respected and feared singers who functioned as historians, genealogists, advisers to nobility, entertainers, and messengers. Their music was used as political commentary; songs can be used to praise and admonish. Today, they perform on television and record their music. Many griots, men and women, are popular singers who reinterpret traditional songs, giving new meaning to old words. The griot is an inherited profession.<sup>77</sup>

Several Tuareg musicians have gained international recognition. The artist Omar Moctar, better known as Bombino, has become an international sensation. Bombino performs at blues festivals around the world, fusing traditional Tuareg and contemporary Western musical genres. His songs promote peace in a region often torn by ethnic violence.<sup>78</sup> Tamikrest, a Tuareg blues band led by Ousmane Ag Mossa, sings about the sufferings of and the struggle of the Tuareg for recognition of their identity.<sup>79</sup> Another prominent Tuareg musician, Alhousseini Anivolla, released a solo album in 2012. Malam Mamane Barka, a nomad of the Toubou tribe, received a UNESCO scholarship in 2002 to revive the biram, a five-string harp.<sup>80</sup>

## Instruments



*Kalangu: Hausa Talking Drum*  
Wikimedia / 丿

The many Nigerien ethnic groups follow their own musical traditions and use culture-specific instruments. One such instrument is the ganga, a medium-sized, double-faced, single snare drum used by the Hausa. The Hausa also use the kalangu, a small hour-glass tension drum, and the algaita, a double-reed, three- or four-holed instrument composed of a brass mouth pipe and leather-covered wooden tube.<sup>81, 82</sup>

The Tuareg play the anзад, a bowed single-stringed lute.<sup>83</sup> Its body is composed of a large, dried gourd covered with a thin layer of brightly decorated leather. Its single string is made of animal hair, as is the bowstring. The Tuareg also play the tende, a drum similar to the Hausa ganga.<sup>84, 85</sup>

The Fulani play a side-blown flute known as the tambin, which has a range of two and a half octaves. It is made from a thick woody vine that grows along the Niger River.<sup>86</sup> The biram, a five-stringed harp-like instrument originally found among the Boudouma nomads, is popular along the Niger-Chad regions.<sup>87</sup>

## Crafts

Among Niger's peoples, the Djerma Songhai are known for their intricate pottery.<sup>88, 89</sup> The Hausa are renowned for their luru blankets, which are made of thick cotton strips. They are white with colored stripes and ornamental patterns.<sup>90</sup> The Hausa and the Tuareg are both known for their elaborate leatherwork.<sup>91, 92</sup> The Hausa use traditional methods to dye their leather goods in vibrant shades of green, black, red, and yellow.<sup>93</sup>

The Tuareg use precious metals to create jewelry, folk amulets, and other fine pieces of art.<sup>94</sup> A popular talisman is the silver lattice cross Croix d'Agadez, which protects against the evil eye.<sup>95</sup>



*Man's necklace made by Tuareg*  
Flickr / ellenm1

## Sports and Recreation



*Camel races in Niger  
Flickr / Alberto D'Ottavi*

Sorro wrestling, which incorporates cultural elements such as poetry, is the most popular sport in Niger.<sup>96, 97</sup> Two male contenders take turns striking one another across the chest with sticks. The contestants strive to demonstrate their ability to ignore pain, without wincing, grimacing, or crying. Traditionally, this has been a rite-of-passage ritual in Fulani communities.<sup>98</sup> Nigeriens have traditionally done well at the ECOWAS Traditional Wrestling Championship.<sup>99</sup>

Among the Tuareg and other peoples of northern Niger, horse and camel racing are popular sports. Other popular sports are soccer and rugby.<sup>100</sup> The national soccer team is commonly referred to by its nickname, the Menas.<sup>101</sup> The name Menas refers to the dama gazelle, a species native to Niger and the Nigerien national symbol.<sup>102</sup>

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## Niger in Perspective

# Chapter 4 | Society

### Assessment

1. Hausa is one of the major languages of Niger, spoken throughout sub-Saharan Africa.
2. *Bori* is a one-pot mutton stew offered during wedding ceremonies in southwestern Niger.
3. Although relations between Muslims and Christians are generally peaceful, many Christians are worried about their safety.
4. Because of the strong influence of the Tuareg, camel racing is the most popular sport in Niger.
5. Polygamy is illegal in Niger.

*Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. False*





*Nigerien Army  
Wikimedia / U.S. Navy / Michael Larson*

## Chapter 5 | Niger in Perspective

# Security

## Introduction

A mixture of old and emerging threats contribute to Niger's current security challenges. Niger's remote desert regions are difficult to secure, allowing terrorist organizations and criminal enterprises to flourish with little interference. Insurgencies, rebellions, and terrorist activities that take place in neighboring countries spread into Niger. Food and water security are major issues for this country, dominated by arid deserts and afflicted by recurrent droughts and seasonal floods. Niger is confronting its terrorist threats with military assistance from Western allies and some of its neighbors. Niger is a member of regional security initiatives, which were formed to confront the security threats of the Sahel.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## U.S.—Niger Relations



President Obama with Issoufou Mahamadou  
Flickr / U.S. Department of State

Niger. Niger primarily imports agricultural products from the United States, and the United States imports uranium from Niger.<sup>3</sup>

The United States is investing in Niger’s military to help Niger address its security issues and promote regional stability, and the U.S. Army civil affairs teams are reaching out to the local population.<sup>4, 5 6</sup>

The United States has deployed troops to Niger since 2013 to advise and assist the Nigerien military and provide intelligence to regional allies. That year, the U.S. military began to fly drones from Niamey, and a year later, the Nigerien government approved the construction of another base in Agadez. The new base, which will be completed in 2018, is considered as the most important U.S. military construction effort in Africa.<sup>7</sup> The USD 100 million drone base outside of Agadez will assist with military operations and intelligence gathering in the region.<sup>8, 9</sup> In November 2017, the Nigerien government permitted the United States to arm the drones that operate in the country.<sup>10</sup>

Niger often participates in the annual Flintlock military training exercise, a regional counterterrorism training exercise that is conducted by the United States. Flintlock exercises have been held since 2005. Niger hosted the exercise in 2014, served as a training site in 2017, and will host the exercise again in 2018. The exercise increases interoperability among participating allied militaries. The United States, NATO allies, Sahel militaries, and north African militaries have participated in previous Flintlock exercises. The United States has also sent trainers to observe Nigerien basic training and mentor the Nigerien training cadre.<sup>11, 12, 13</sup> The United States has pledged USD

60 million to support the G5 Sahel force, a regional security alliance that consists of Niger and four other countries.<sup>14, 15</sup>

In October 2017, four U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers and five Nigerien soldiers were killed when their joint patrol was ambushed.<sup>16</sup> The deadly ambush caused a political controversy and triggered an investigation by the chief of staff for U.S. Africa Command.<sup>17</sup> The investigation into the attack concludes in March 2018 that the Special Forces team was on a mission to capture a high-level Islamic State militant, Doundou Chefou, without informing the high command. As a result, higher-level commanders couldn't accurately assess the mission's risk and provide additional information that might have prepared the team for the ambush.<sup>18</sup>



*Flintlock 2014 poster: Military cooperation  
Flickr / Martin Broek*

## Relations with Neighboring Countries



*Democracy in Francophone Africa  
Flickr / U.S. Institute of Peace*

economic integration, uniform economic standards, and trade among West African states.<sup>22</sup>

Niger is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); this regional bloc consists of 15 countries across West Africa. The goal of the economic community is to promote economic integration and trade; Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Nigeria are neighboring countries that are also a part of this group.<sup>19, 20</sup> Niger participates with five other countries in a regional stock exchange.<sup>21</sup> Niger is a member of the West African Monetary Union, which promotes

Niger is a member of the Multi-National Joint Task Force, a counterterrorism bloc. Niger also participates in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, which is a regional U.S.-sponsored counterterrorism union.<sup>23</sup>

## G-5 Sahel

The Joint Force G-5 Sahel, also known as the G-5 Sahel or by its French acronym FC-G5S, is a security partnership among five Sahel countries: Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Chad, and Burkina Faso. The alliance will eventually have a joint command structure, a regional headquarters for three sectors, and a brigade-sized element of about 5,000 troops. The G-5 Sahel will target security threats such as terrorism and trafficking. In addition to the military mandate, the G-5 Sahel has a comprehensive security strategy, which includes supporting regional development and governance goals. The G-5 Sahel is backed by about 4,000 French troops and covers an area of about the size of the continental United States.<sup>24, 25</sup> The alliance was created in 2014, and launched its first military operation in 2017.<sup>26</sup>



*G5 Sahel Joint Force meeting with the UN  
Flickr / Mission de l'ONU au Mali - UN Mission in Mali*

## Algeria



*Map of Niger and Algeria  
Wikimedia / Eric Gaba*

Algeria has a longstanding policy of neutrality and non-intervention, with a few exceptions, but terrorist activity in the country and the rise of regional terrorist activity has prompted a debate over that policy. Algeria had shown restraint when threatened by cross-border militant groups in the past, even when its own security was compromised. Algeria has had success in fighting al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), forcing the group to move to Algeria's southern neighbors.

In 2014, Algeria has closed most of the border crossings on its border with Niger, Mali, Mauritania, and Libya, and turned the border region into military zones.<sup>27</sup> The Algerian army constructed 20 border security stations and access was allowed only with a security clearance from the Ministry of Defense.<sup>28, 29</sup>

Niger and Algeria’s relationship is described as “very good,” and both countries are committed to addressing joint security concerns. Both countries seek mutual cooperation toward eliminating security threats, economic cooperation, development, and educational opportunities. Niger enforces customs regulation and deterrence of migrants along its border with Algeria.<sup>30, 31</sup>

## *Benin*

Benin and Niger are among the 15 members of ECOWAS, which seeks greater cooperation and development among its members.<sup>32, 33</sup> After both countries gained independence from France in 1960, Benin and Niger had a border dispute regarding islands in the Niger and Mekrou rivers; the International Court of Justice settled the dispute in 2005.<sup>34, 35</sup>



*Map of Niger and Benin  
Wikimedia / Eric Gaba*

In 2014, construction began on a railway between Niamey and the Benin’s city of Parakou. In 2015, the construction of an additional railway to connect Niamey to the Benin port city of Cotonou was announced. In total, a 2,800 km (1,739 mi) of railway network was planned to connect Niger, Benin, the Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso.<sup>36</sup> In 2016, President Issoufou inaugurated a complete section of a railway line, which will provide access to the seaport in Benin. The new line was hailed as the first railway in Niger.<sup>37, 38</sup>

Benin and Niger participate in the Multinational Joint Task Force, which is a coordinated response to the threat of regional terrorism.<sup>39</sup>

## *Burkina Faso*

Niger and Burkina Faso are both members of ECOWAS.<sup>40</sup> In 2015, Niger ceded 14 towns and gained four, after the International Court of Justice settled a long-standing border dispute between the two countries.<sup>41</sup>

Burkina Faso and Niger cooperate as members of the Niger Basin Authority (NBA), which is a multinational regional organization established to protect water resources and benefit the population of the Niger River Basin.<sup>42</sup> Burkina Faso cooperates with

Niger and other countries in the region to combat terrorism. Niger and Burkina Faso are members of the EU's Sahel Security and Development Strategy, which promotes regional cooperation and capacity improvements.<sup>43, 44, 45</sup> In late 2017, with assistance from the French military, the G5 Sahel force commenced its first operation in the border region of Niger-Mali-Burkina Faso.<sup>46, 47</sup>



*Map of Niger and Burkina Faso  
Wikimedia / Eric Gaba*

## Chad



*Map of Niger and Chad  
Wikimedia / Eric Gaba*

Chad and Niger are former French colonies; both countries became independent in 1960, but they maintain a close relationship with France. Niger and Chad are both members of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, which promotes the French language, cultural diversity, and education.<sup>48, 49</sup>

In January 2015, Chad sent soldiers to Niger to confront Boko Haram; in March of that year, a joint Nigerien-Chadian offensive attacked a Boko Haram-held village in northern Nigeria. Chad withdrew its military from Niger in October 2017.<sup>50, 51, 52</sup>

Niger and Chad have not ratified a treaty that would delineate the border between the two countries in the vicinity of Lake Chad. Chad is a member of Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), with Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon, which was established in 1964 to save the lake and help the farmers who live around it.<sup>53</sup> The two countries share a 1,196 km (743 mi) border.<sup>54</sup> Chad and Niger contribute troops to the G5 Sahel force.<sup>55</sup>

## Libya



Map of Niger and Libya  
Wikimedia / Eric Gaba

Nigeriens and Libyans have a long history of legal and illegal trade. The fall of the Qaddafi regime led to an increased amount of weapons and militants from Libya to Niger. In the 1990s, Qaddafi provided arms and support for the Tuareg rebellion in Niger, only to later abandon them.<sup>56, 57</sup>

Relations between the two countries hit a low point in 2011 when Niger offered asylum to Qaddafi's third son, Al-Saadi Qaddafi. Niger turned Al-Saadi Qaddafi over to Libyan officials in 2014, as a gesture of goodwill. Since then, Al-Saadi has been held in a prison in Tripoli awaiting trial.<sup>58</sup>

The two countries cooperate to secure their shared border region; militant activity and illicit trade in restive southern Libya is a threat to both countries.<sup>59, 60, 61</sup> Niger and Libya have cooperated with the EU in shutting down the Agadez-Mediterranean-Europe migration route.<sup>62, 63, 64</sup>

## Mali

Niger has played a critical role in stabilizing Mali by mediating the Northern Mali Conflict in 2012, and deploying troops to Mali in support of the UN-led peacekeeping mission.<sup>65</sup> Militants that were facing defeat in Mali retreated to Niger. Both countries have mutual security goals such as defeating extremist groups that operate within one another's borders. Insurgencies within one country can spill over into the other; the U.S. service members who were killed in Niger were supporting anti-militant operations along the Mali-Niger border.<sup>66, 67</sup>



Map of Niger and Mali  
Wikimedia / Eric Gaba

In addition to cooperating with each other on security policies, both Mali and Niger are members of ECOWAS and the Niger Basin Authority.<sup>68, 69</sup> Mali is one of Niger's top five trading partners.<sup>70</sup>

## Nigeria



Map of Niger and Nigeria  
Wikimedia / Eric Gaba

Niger and Nigeria have a close relationship with one another. Northern Nigeria and southeastern Niger are linked by their shared predominance of the Hausa language and culture.<sup>71</sup> The Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation works to improve the lives of citizens on both sides of the border by strengthening economic ties and cooperating on infrastructure and environmental projects.<sup>72</sup> Both countries are committed to defeating Islamic extremist groups, but the sources of Niger's

militant threat come from abroad, whereas Nigeria's Boko Haram is homegrown. Both countries face the threat of violence from Boko Haram and thousands of Nigerian refugees escaped to Niger following attacks by Boko Haram.<sup>73, 74</sup> In 2017, Nigeria collected over USD 64 million in electricity and gas debts from Niger and Benin, in accordance with an energy agreement.<sup>75</sup>

## Police Force

Niger has several law enforcement entities. These entities lack basic supplies, equipment, and training. The Police Nationale is responsible for local law enforcement duties in Niger's larger cities and towns. Police Nationale officers wear black berets. The Police Nationale is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>76, 77</sup>



Nigerien Police Officers  
Flickr / Jean Rebiffé

The Garde Nationale is also under the Ministry of the Interior. The Garde Nationale protects government buildings, controls checkpoints, confronts civil unrest,



and guard prisons. Members of the Garde Nationale are dressed in military uniforms and wear red berets. <sup>78</sup>

The Nigerien Gendarmerie is a paramilitary law enforcement entity, which has jurisdiction over rural parts of the country. The Gendarmerie patrols the Niger River and investigates instances of police abuses of power. The Gendarmerie is under the Ministry of Defense, and members of the Gendarmerie are distinguished by their green berets. <sup>79, 80, 81</sup>

## Military

The Nigerien military consists of about 12,000 army personnel and 400 air force personnel; the Nigerien Army and Air Force are augmented by the Nigerien Gendarmerie, which has about 5,400 personnel. <sup>82</sup> The Nigerien military is under the Ministry of Defense; the military is in charge of external security threats but can be called upon to respond to internal threats. The military has clashed with AQIM, Boko Haram, and other terrorist organizations. The Nigerien Army participates in UN and other multi-national peacekeeping operations. <sup>83, 84, 85</sup> The Nigerien Air Force has a limited number of fixed and rotary-wing aircraft but has been able to transport peacekeepers to their destinations and proficiently maintain their aircraft. <sup>86</sup>



*Nigerien soldiers*  
Wikimedia / U.S. Navy / Michael Larson



*Nigerien Panhard AML light armored cars*  
Wikimedia / U.S. Department of Defense

Niger's geography presents a security challenge to the military; the large desert is difficult to patrol, and the border is difficult to control. Preventing the movement of arms, human trafficking, and drugs is a priority of the military. The Nigerien military is capable, given its lack of equipment, but it is still in need of outside assistance to address security threats. <sup>87, 88</sup> To address the equipment and capability shortcomings, countries such as

the United States, Germany, France, and Italy have donated military equipment and deployed personnel to Niger.<sup>89, 90, 91</sup>

## Issues Affecting Security

### Refugees



Banibangou Refugee Camp  
Flickr / Water Alternatives

Refugees and internally displaced persons are vulnerable to attack from insurgents and fall victim to criminal opportunists; many refugees are living outside of established refugee camps.

The regional security situation has forced refugees to flee Niger, migrate to Niger, and become displaced within Niger.<sup>92</sup>

Nigeriens have fled their homes to escape Boko Haram attacks; over 180,000 Nigeriens have fled internally, and about 8,000 have fled to Chad.<sup>93, 94</sup> About 71,000 Malian refugees have migrated to Niger, and over 300,000 Nigerians escaping Boko Haram have fled to Niger. Refugees are concentrated in the Diffa region of southeastern Niger. Poor access to medical care exacerbated by a lack of adequate water, sanitation facilities, and poor hygiene expose refugees to infectious diseases. Women and children are 70% of the refugee population.<sup>95, 96, 97</sup>

### Smuggling

Arms, drugs, and people are smuggled through Niger to their final destinations. After the 2011 collapse of the Qaddafi regime in Libya, arms depots were raided, and arms smuggling became a lucrative regional trade for criminal networks. Agadez is the regional hub of smuggling; migrants meet human traffickers in Agadez and pay large fees to smugglers, police, and customs officials in order to cross the Sahara. The route is dangerous, and a vehicle breakdown in the desert can be deadly. A large, but uncounted, number of migrants have died crossing the desert.<sup>98, 99</sup> The migrants who make it across then attempt to cross the Mediterranean to seek a better life in Europe. In 2016, an estimated 330,000 migrants traveled through Niger. Some migrants are subjected to forced labor or are held for ransom to pay off their debts to their smugglers. The European Union has provided aid money and training in exchange for

local authorities to crack down on smuggling.<sup>100, 101</sup> This EU policy has led to a decrease of migrants.<sup>102</sup>

Illicit drugs, such as cocaine are trafficked through Niger and the Sahel. Profits from drug trafficking are used to finance terrorist and criminal activities. Drugs trafficked in the region are usually imported from South America and are en route to Europe.<sup>103, 104</sup>

## Militant and Terrorist Groups



*Terrorists were killed by Security Forces in northern Niger  
Flickr / Magharebia*

The majority of terrorist activity in Niger is perpetrated by groups that originated in neighboring countries.<sup>105</sup> Terrorists affiliated with AQIM (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) travel through northern Niger, and Boko Haram militants launch attacks from northern Nigeria into southern Niger. Militants have launched attacks from Mali into Niger. Niger is actively engaged in defeating terrorist threats within its borders and the region, but the country lacks funding, equipment, and the personnel levels to reach its security goals. The United States, France, the EU, the UN, and regional partners all provide counterterrorism assistance to Niger.<sup>106, 107</sup>

### *Boko Haram*

Boko Haram was founded in 2002, and in 2009 the group launched an insurgency against the Nigerian government.<sup>108</sup> Boko Haram is a colloquial Hausa phrase meaning, “Western education is forbidden.” The group’s actual name in English is “People of the Sunnah (those who emulate Muhammad) for Preaching and Jihad Group.”<sup>109</sup> The group was designated by the United States as a terrorist group in 2013.<sup>110</sup>



*Nigerien Armed Forces fighting Boko Haram in March 2015  
Wikiemdia / VOA / Idriss Fall*

Boko Haram has used suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices to attack the Nigerien population; attacks have been concentrated in the Diffa region. Boko Haram has caused the displacement of millions in the region, including an estimated 50,000 people who fled after an attack on the town of Bosso in Niger's southwestern Diffa region. To fight Boko Haram, the Nigerien military has established restricted zones; those who venture into the restricted zones are considered Boko Haram. The Nigerien government has imprisoned 1,500 individuals who are accused of belonging to Boko Haram.<sup>111, 112, 113</sup> At its peak, Boko Haram held territory in northeast Nigeria that was about the size of Belgium, but military campaigns waged by Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad have reduced the terrorist organization into hiding in Nigeria's Sambisa forest.<sup>114, 115</sup>

In 2015, Boko Haram pledged its allegiance to ISIS, and ISIS leadership accepted that pledge. Upon receiving recognition, the group was symbolically renamed Islamic State's West African Province, also known as ISIS-West Africa; shortly after that, rifts emerged between the leadership of ISIS and Boko Haram.<sup>116, 117, 118</sup> According to the U.S. State Department, ISIS-West Africa and Boko Haram have split with each other.<sup>119</sup>

### *ISIS in the Greater Sahara*

ISIS in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) was founded in 2015, after the group's current leader, Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, split off from an al-Qaeda affiliate and pledged allegiance to ISIS. ISIS recognized ISGS as an affiliate in October of 2016. ISGS has been blamed for the 2017 ambush of U.S. Special Forces soldiers in Nigeria, but the group has not claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>120, 121</sup>



*Soldiers searching for terrorists*  
Voice of America

ISGS claimed responsibility for an attempted prison break in Niger, and it has carried out attacks as far away as Burkina Faso. Its stronghold is the Mali-Niger border region. ISGS, AQIM, and their affiliates operate in the same region, and personnel among the groups are often associated with one another. After ISIS suffered defeats in Iraq and Syria, the greater Sahara emerged as a safe haven; the lack of governance allows the group to fill the power vacuum, recruit, and carry out attacks throughout the region.<sup>122, 123, 124</sup>

## AQIM

The Algeria-based Islamic militant group Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has been active in the Sahel region since 1998.<sup>125</sup> The group's original name was the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, but it merged with Al-Qaeda and aligned its goals with the parent organization. Successful counterterrorism policies in Algeria and infighting within the movement has caused the group to shift its focus from Algeria to neighboring countries. The group's two major goals are to rid the region of western influences and overthrow the region's governments in order to replace them with Islamic fundamentalist regimes. AQIM was one of the major players in the 2012 northern Mali conflict. AQIM has carried out attacks in Niger; the group raises funds from cells in Europe, by kidnapping for ransom, and through trafficking drugs and arms throughout the region. Several other terrorist organizations formed after splitting with AQIM, such as Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and al-Mulathamun Battalion; AQIM has worked with other militant groups in the past, such as Ansar Dine and Movement for the Liberation of Azawad.<sup>126, 127, 128</sup>



*AQIM Tuareg militant in Sahel*  
Wikimedia / Magharebia

The al-Qaeda-aligned Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), which started attacking Westerners in the region in 2015, conducted its first attack in Niger in 2016.<sup>129</sup>

## Tuareg Rebels

The Tuareg are a traditionally nomadic people, and they are spread out across the Sahara. The Tuareg population in Niger is estimated to be around 1.4 million. The Nigerien Tuareg population receives 15% of Niger's uranium mining revenue. Tuareg communities have a great deal of autonomy, and they are more integrated into the country than Tuareg in neighboring countries. During the conflict in northern Mali, the Nigerien Tuareg rebel group,



*Tuareg rebels*  
Wikimedia / Magharebia

Front for the Liberation of Air and Azawad (FLAA) was an ally to the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), which was one of the major participants in that conflict. Other Tuareg rebel groups include the Movement for Justice (MNJ), which was a major participant in the 2007-2009 Tuareg rebellion in Niger and Mali. Other Tuareg rebellions occurred in the region in the 1960s and 1990s. Under Qaddafi, Libya provided Nigerien Tuareg rebels with financial support and arms. The lack of a Tuareg homeland and issues related to the French extraction of uranium are persistent grievances of Tuareg rebels.<sup>130, 131, 132</sup>

## Food and Water Security



*A child suffering from malnutrition  
Flickr / European Commission DG ECHO*

Malnutrition is widespread in Niger; over 40% of children are malnourished. Niger's climate, frequent droughts, and poor soil quality all contribute to food insecurity.<sup>133</sup> The Boko Haram conflict has worsened the food situation. Refugees have sought relief in southern Niger, which has historically struggled with food security. Subsistence farmers have abandoned their crops and livelihoods to escape the conflict. Some farmers have had their crops and livestock stolen by Boko Haram. The government has shut down markets for safety reasons, which limited the public's access to food. Food and aid deliveries provide some relief, but it is often insufficient.<sup>134</sup>

Only 58% of Niger's population has access to improved drinking water sources, and about 11% of the population has access to improved sanitation facilities. Droughts in Niger have been devastating to the population as well as to crops and livestock. Because subsistence farming is so prevalent, water insecurity threatens lives and the ability to make a living. Modern communication and weather forecasts can help rural Nigeriens manage their crops and move their herds more effectively.<sup>135, 136</sup>



*Tuareg men at the well  
Flickr / European Commission DG ECHO*

## Outlook



*Nigerien soldiers studying U.S. Army training techniques  
Flickr / US Army Africa*

Niger has a unique set of challenges that lack easy answers, but the Nigerien leadership has proven willing to work with the international community and cooperate with its neighbors to address regional obstacles that threaten Niger's security. The G5 Sahel alliance offers a holistic approach to achieve regional security goals. The United States and European allies have shown their commitment to support Niger's security, and the Sahel countries have shown their commitment

to cooperate with one another. Solving Niger's lack of development and food and water insecurity are critical issues that require a long-term investment of resources in the country. Due to its limited resources, Niger will continue to rely on international assistance to improve its security and development.<sup>137, 138, 139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Michael Shurkin, “What is the Sahel G5 Force and Why Should the U.S. Support It?” Rand Corporation, 6 November 2017, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/11/what-is-the-sahel-g5-force-and-why-should-the-us-support.html>

<sup>139</sup> Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism, “Risk Assessment: 2014,” Syracuse University, 2014, [http://insct.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Niger\\_Risk\\_Assessment\\_Final.pdf](http://insct.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Niger_Risk_Assessment_Final.pdf)

## Niger in Perspective

# Chapter 5 | Security

### Assessment

1. Agadez is a key location for smuggling in Niger.
2. The Sahel G5 is a specialized military personnel carrier developed for the unique terrain of the Sahara Desert.
3. The Nigerien Gendarmerie is a Fulani militant group that fights for autonomy in southeastern Niger.
4. The United States operates armed drones in Niger.
5. A border dispute between Niger and Benin was settled by the International Court of Justice.

*Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True*

# Niger in Perspective

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## Further Readings and Resources

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# Niger in Perspective

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## Final Assessment

1. Niger gained independence from France after a bloody, decade-long war.
2. Zinder is the capital of Niger.
3. Agadez is a major city in central Niger with a majority Tuareg population.
4. The Tuareg are the largest ethnic group in Niger.
5. Serious flooding is an environmental hazard for many in Niger.
6. Most terrorist activity in Niger is perpetrated by groups originating in neighboring countries.
7. The Aïr Massif is a mountain range in north-central Niger.
8. Because most of Niger is desert plains and sand dunes, only a fraction of the population works in the agriculture sector.
9. The Niger River is used to irrigate Niger's arid north, providing much-needed water for subsistence farming.
10. Fula is the language of the Fulani ethnic group.

11. The Sef dynasty ruled the Kanem-Bornu Empire for ten centuries.
12. The Kandadji project is a government initiative that provides small loans to farmers.
13. Uranium was discovered in Niger by a Chinese company at the end of the 20th century.
14. Niger's economy is expected to grow with the launching of the new open-pit uranium mine Imouraren.
15. The Soraz oil refinery never reached its full capacity of 20,000 barrels per day, yet it fulfills Niger's fuel requirements.
16. Niger has no air force.
17. *Griots* are traditional singers who function as historians, advisors, and entertainers.
18. Niger suffers from high unemployment because of domestic instability, security threats, and high illiteracy.
19. Most Nigeriens practice traditional animistic religions.
20. The main food staple in the Nigerien diet is millet.
21. Since Niger became independence in 1960, Libya has been a strong ally.

22. Flintlock is the name of the U.S. military base located near Niamey. The base is operated jointly by the U.S. Army and Air Force.
23. Many refugees are concentrated in the Diffa region of southeastern Niger.
24. After serving two terms as president, Mamadou Tandja was elected for a third term by a landslide.
25. In order to defuse tensions with the Tuareg, President Issoufou appointed a Tuareg to be the prime minister.

*Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. False; 5. True; 6. True; 7. True; 8. False; 9. False; 10. True; 11. True; 12. False; 13. False; 14. False; 15. True; 16. False; 17. True; 18. False; 19. False; 20. True; 21. False; 22. False; 23. True; 24. False; 25. True*