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Niger Coup

# CONFLICT watch

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## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN NIGER?

### Political Transition

On 26 Jul, a coup led by the Presidential Guards, operating under the title of the National Council for the Protection of the Homeland (CNSP), unseated the democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum.

### Regional Reaction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has responded with a robust condemnation of the coup, resulting in the suspension of bilateral ties with Niger and the closure of both land and air borders.

### Economic Impact

On 31 Jul, the junta imposed a halt on Niger's export of vital commodities like uranium and gold to France, indicating potential economic and trade implications.

### Regional Consultation

ECOWAS leaders expected to meet on 09 Aug to discuss on the crisis of the Niger.



### Leadership Shift

By 28 Jul, Colonel Abdul Abdourahamane Tchiani, the commander of the Presidential Guard, was appointed as the interim head of state by the CNSP.

### Public Sentiment

The capital, Niamey, has witnessed public demonstrations with factions both in support of the military junta and in favor of Bazoum. While there have been confrontations, no fatalities have been recorded thus far.

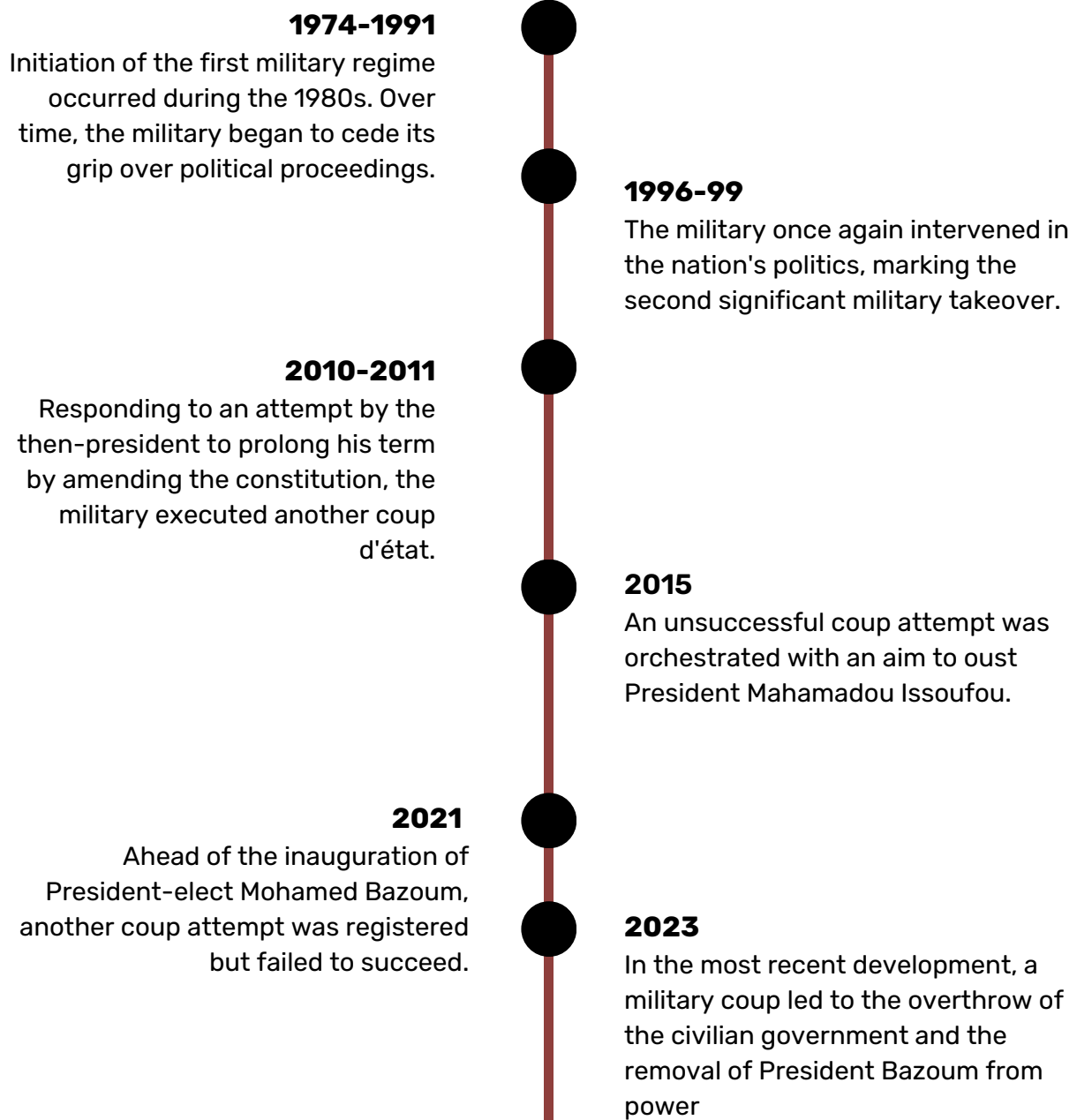
### Border Dynamics

As of 01 Aug, Niger has resumed border activities with its neighboring countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Libya, and Chad.

## BACKGROUND

Niger, once a French colony, achieved independence in 1960. Its post-independence trajectory has been marked by political instability, with a series of coups accentuating the nation's political narrative.

## HISTORY OF POLITICAL TRANSITIONS



## LEADING CAUSES FOR THE COUP

- **Jihadist Insurgency**

- Groups: Jama'at Nasr al-Islam (JNIM), Boko Haram, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, and Islamic State Sahel Province.
- Impact: Attacks on farmers post-2021, significant decline in cereal production.

- **Anti - French Sentiments**

- Catalyst: Transfer of French Operation Barkhane forces from Mali to Niger.
- Movements: M62 movement's anti-French and pro-Russia demonstrations.
- External Influence: Wagner group's increasing presence in the Sahel.

- **Economic & Environmental Strains**

- Climate Impact: Droughts in 2005, 2010, and 2011 disrupting agriculture, which forms 28% of GDP.
- Food Crises: Recorded in 1980, 1988, 1990, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2011, and 2017.

## WHAT IS ECOWAS?

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional grouping of 15 West African countries.

- Founded in 1975, its mission is to promote economic integration in all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial issues, social and cultural matters.

**Member Countries:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and The Gambia.

**Interventions in Regional Stability:** ECOWAS has an active role in maintaining peace and stability in the region, especially when democratic norms are threatened:

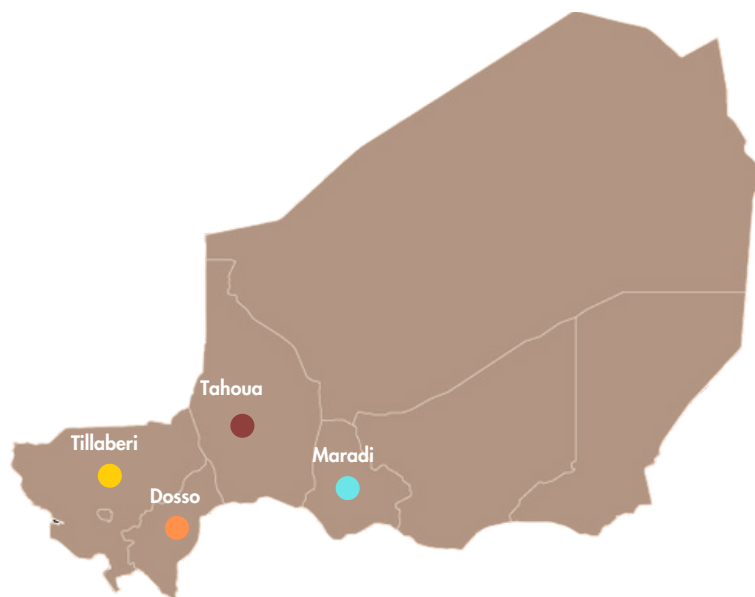
- Mali: After a coup in Mali in 2020, ECOWAS imposed sanctions and subsequently suspended the country from its decision-making bodies.
- Burkina Faso: Similar actions were taken when Burkina Faso experienced a military takeover in 2022.
- Guinea: Following a coup in Guinea, the country was suspended by ECOWAS as well in 2021.

## TERRORISM & INSURGENCY

The presence and influence of extremist groups in Niger have escalated tensions between the nation and Western powers. The recent coup has triggered a series of responses that have direct implications for regional security and stability.

### Major Developments

- Western Military Operations: Following the coup, Western powers, including the US and France, have suspended their military operations within Niger. This presents a potential vacuum in regional counter-terrorism efforts.
- US Military Deployment: The US had previously established drone bases in Niamey and Agadez, bolstered by a force of approximately 1,000 troops. The status of this deployment is now uncertain.
- French Troop Presence: France, a key security actor in the region, had stationed around 1,500 troops in Niamey. The cessation of their operations could affect the regional counter-terrorism dynamic.
- Germany's Stance: In addition to halting financial aid and cooperation with Niger, Germany's earlier intention to deploy 60 soldiers in Niger as part of an EU operation has now come under reconsideration.
- Benin-Niger Cooperation: In Jul 2022, both nations committed to a joint anti-terrorism initiative. However, given Benin's membership in ECOWAS and the subsequent border closures post-coup, this cooperative effort may now be compromised.



Data on fatalities due to terror incidents across Niger

## TERRORISM & INSURGENCY

Date	Attack	Casualty
04 May 2021	ISIS -GS attacked on a military outpost near Banibangou in the Tillaberi Region	15 deaths
30 May 2021	Attack by Boko Haram in Diffa region	8 deaths
29 Jun 2021	Attack by Boko Haram in Diffa and Maine Sora	4 deaths

Data on fatalities due to terror incidents across Niger

## IMPACT ON NIGER'S TRANSIT & SUPPLY CHAIN POST-COUP

### Geographical Context

Niger, a landlocked nation, shares borders with Libya (Northeast), Chad (East), Nigeria and Benin (South), and Algeria (Northwest). Given its geographical disposition, efficient transit systems are crucial for its trade and commerce.

### Transit Disruptions:

- **Border Dynamics:** Subsequent to the coup, there was a border shutdown. As of 01 Aug, the coup leadership reinstated borders with Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, and Chad. However, airspace was again closed on 06 Aug. Borders with Nigeria and Benin, both ECOWAS members, remain sealed.
- **Key Trade Routes Affected:**
  - **Benin-Niger Corridor:** The vital trade channel between the Port of Cotonou in Benin and Niger's capital Niamey faces disruptions. Key roads affected include RN1 and RN6, crucial for the Maradi-Nigeria transit.
  - **Regional Trade Routes:** The coup endangers the functionality of primary West African trade routes, including the Trans-Sahara Highway and the Dakar-N'djamena Highway.



## ECONOMIC & SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACTS

- **Commodity Price Surge:** Border closures and trade sanctions have triggered a spike in prices of essential items. Notably, rice prices have escalated by over one-third, reaching about 15,000 CFA francs (\$25) per sack.
- **Electricity Crisis:** Following ECOWAS sanctions, Nigeria ceased electricity supply to Niger, plunging regions into darkness.
- **Aid & Economic Assistance:** Western allies, including the USA, have retracted their economic aid. Furthermore, ECOWAS has suspended all commercial and financial dealings with Niger, intensifying the nation's financial distress.
- **Food Security:** Niger's inherent challenges, like droughts and limited cultivable land, have been amplified by the recent developments. With the borders sealed, the ongoing food crisis has intensified, leaving around 17% of the population reliant on food aid.
- **Dependency on Western Aid:** Niger's reliance on humanitarian aid from nations like the USA, Germany, and France makes it vulnerable, especially as these nations have withdrawn financial support.
- **Healthcare & Humanitarian Impact:** The food scarcity has aggravated malnutrition rates in Niger. A staggering 47% of children below five years are chronically malnourished, underscoring an impending humanitarian crisis.

## IMPACT ON THE REGION

### Neighboring Countries and Political Shifts

- Recent Coups: Since 2020, West Africa has witnessed a series of coups, beginning with Mali and subsequently in Burkina Faso and Chad.
- This trend indicates a potential paradigm shift in the region, hinting at a growing acceptance or predisposition toward military governance.

### International Stakeholders & Implications

- Russia and Wagner Group: The evolving political landscape offers Russia and entities like the Wagner Group enhanced opportunities to access and exploit resources in the African region, potentially altering the power dynamics and economic interests.
- Potential for ECOWAS Intervention: If ECOWAS chooses to intervene militarily, the region might experience escalating tensions, potentially teetering on the brink of a broader conflict. Such a move would require careful diplomatic navigation to avoid a full-blown war-like situation.

## URANIUM PRODUCTION: NIGER'S ROLE IN EUROPEAN SUPPLY

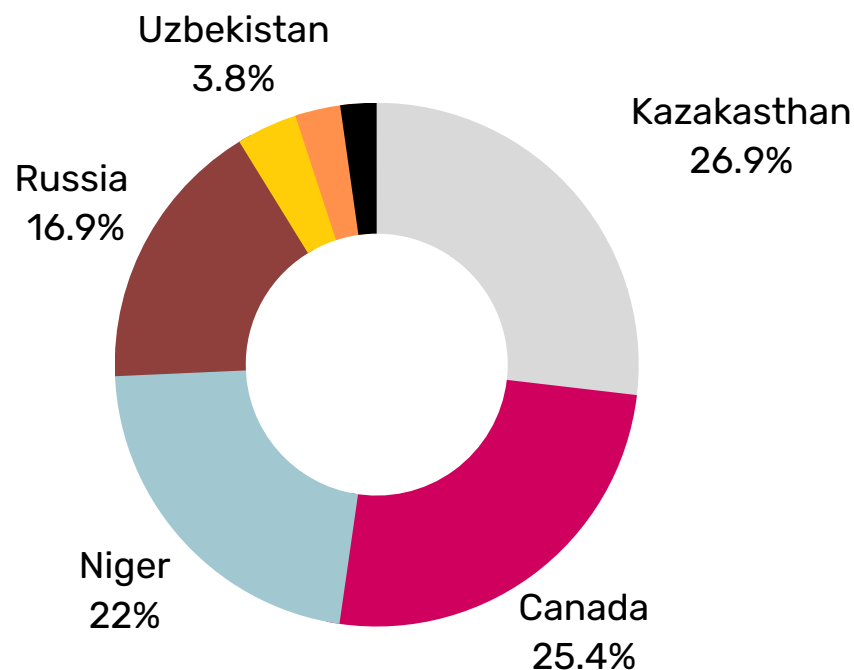
### Key Production Metrics

- European Supply Source: As per data from the Supply Agency of the European Atomic Energy Community, in 2022, Niger positioned itself as one of the premier uranium suppliers to Europe.

### European Dependencies

- Uranium Reliance: European nations, with their expansive nuclear energy programs, are significantly reliant on Niger for consistent uranium supply.
- France's Partnership: Among the European nations, France emerges as a dominant partner. Since the 1990s, France has consistently depended on Niger for its uranium imports, underscoring a long-standing trade relationship.

## Uranium Share to EU (%)



Data on Uranium Delivered to EU utilities in 2022 | Source: European Atomic Energy Community



## **CHINA AND RUSSIA INTEREST IN THE REGION**

### **China**

- China stands as the second-largest foreign investor in Niger. As of recent data, China's foreign direct investment in the country amounts to \$2.68 billion. Niger's journey as an oil producer began in 2011 with the initiation of production at the Agadem oilfield, a collaborative venture between Niger and PetroChina.
- In 2019, a significant agreement was forged between PetroChina and the Nigerian government to construct a crude oil pipeline connecting the Agadem field to the Beninese port of Cotonou. By 2023, this ambitious project has reached 63% completion. Once finalized, it promises to address and alleviate the security and logistical challenges associated with exporting crude oil through areas riddled with conflict.
- Further strengthening ties, in May 2023, the prominent state oil and gas company, Sinopec, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Niger government. This MOU signifies a commitment to deepen cooperation between China and Niger in the oil and gas sectors.

### **Russia**

- Over the past decade, Russia has notably expanded its influence in the region. The nation has adeptly capitalized on prevailing anti-colonial and anti-European sentiments.
- In a controversial move in 2017, Russia dispatched weapons and military trainers from the Wagner Group to the Central African Republic, bypassing the UN Security Council's embargo.
- This strategic entry by Wagner not only solidified Russia's standing in the region but also highlighted the gaps left by France's shortcomings.
- As a result, Russia has managed to further entrench its position and image in the region.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

### Civil Unrest & Protests



HIGH IMPACT



HIGH PROBABILITY

- Protests are highly probable to persist, with potential escalation if pro and anti-CNSP factions converge. Clashes are moderately likely should demonstrators resort to violence.
- It is expected that the already high risk of civil unrest would deepen in the months due to economic impact, especially through the erosion of living of standards.

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### Energy Crisis



HIGH IMPACT



HIGH PROBABILITY

- Regional destabilization would likely increase the threats to strategic energy infrastructure.
- The suspension of Uranium supplies allocated to nuclear power reactors in France and other EU countries are likely to endanger European energy security.
- There is high probability that France will witness a significant surge in electricity prices, and the nation's energy stability will be tested.

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### Regional Impact



HIGH IMPACT



MEDIUM PROBABILITY

- Recent military governance in West Africa, alongside Russia and the Wagner Group influences potential ECOWAS intervention, is altering the regional political dynamics.
- ECOWAS would probably continue to reimpose sanctions on the regime.
- There is a high possibility of policy volatility, Western diplomatic strains, and increased regional tensions.
- Additionally, the spread of Russian propaganda may influence the citizens ideologically, potentially swaying their affinity for democratic values and traditions.

## Economic Implications



HIGH IMPACT



HIGH PROBABILITY

- Due to political uncertainty and economic instability, there is high possibility of a reduction in imports, due to lack of foreign-exchange, as well as a spike in inflation.
- Given Niger's role as a prominent uranium exporter and the French predominance in mining and export, the suspension of uranium exports by the junta raises strategic concerns.
- There's a high likelihood of violence and threats targeting French interests.
- Additionally, the new regime might negotiate for higher royalty payments, reconsider partnerships with France, or even pivot away from the West, providing openings for alternative global powers or extremist entities.

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## Poverty and Migration



HIGH IMPACT



MEDIUM PROBABILITY

- The coup has caused several nations to withdraw support from Niger, affecting air support and humanitarian aid.
- Essential public services will face a crunch, amplifying the vulnerabilities of the populace.
- This, coupled with regional tensions, could spur migration, with Nigerians and residents of neighboring countries seeking refuge across borders.
- The EU's initiatives to control illegal migration and human trafficking from Africa might face setbacks.

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