



The question of Niger



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Issue: The question of Niger

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Introduction

Today, the country of Niger faces many challenges, the most prominent of these being: security concerns, food insecurity, lack of economic development, political stability, environmental challenges, healthcare, and education.

All the abovementioned led to a failed attempted coup on March 31st, 2021. However, on July 26th, 2023, a successful coup was held by the military. Within 48 hours, General Abdourahamane Tiani, president of the newly formed National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP), proclaimed himself head of state. He is currently still in power. This is one of many coups in the sub-Saharan region in the 2020s.

The aftermath of the coup is called the 2023 Nigerien crisis. A minimum of 4.3 million people urgently require assistance, encompassing essential needs like food, medicine, and basic commodities. The United Nations predicts an escalation in this figure due to the imposition of international sanctions. Moreover, the closure of airspace by the junta adds complexity to the challenges of delivering humanitarian aid to the country. As of September 1, reports indicate that approximately 7,300 tons of food aid have been impeded from entering Niger because of these sanctions. Simultaneously, food prices have surged by an estimated 21 percent. The repercussions of sanctions are not limited to humanitarian aid alone; Niger's food exports, notably onions, have also suffered, causing prices in neighbouring countries such as Ghana to double due to the disruptions.

Adding to the instability in Niger is the issue of the Islamist and jihadist insurgencies. The first, also known as the Sahel war, referring to the particular region, has been going on since the

Arab spring in 2011. Note the incredible complexity of the issue at hand, due to the number of different parties and societal issues playing a role in Niger.

To the honourable presidency

The 2024 United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will be led by two first-rate and exceptional experts in the field. For a proper introduction on the council, please view the research report composed by my esteemed colleague, Pieter van Lelyveld. Together they have served many honourable positions in the last 5 years, ranging from organizational to presidential. With a combined track record of over 40 conferences, we will bring experience, wisdom and intelligence to the table.



Figure 1 Left to right: T. van der Struijk, our academic hero, P. van Lelyveld.

Alongside our many great qualities we are also known for our enormous sense of modesty.

Definition of Key Terms

Arab Spring

The Arab spring was a series of anti-government protests and armed rebellions that spread across the Arabic world starting in 2011. A major slogan at the time being: “the people want to bring down the regime.” However, many responses due to violent from



Figure 2 Map of western Africa.

authorities, pro-government

militias, counterdemonstrators and militaries were precipitated by 2012 or led to even larger conflicts. Even to this day there is great instability and power struggle in the area. Regimes that lack quick success and wealth likely undergo regime changes. This led to a “second” Arab spring in 2018, still lacking the wished upon results in many states.

Coup belt

A region Africa where instability and insurgency groups led to numerous coups in just the 2020s. In three years, there were sixteen attempted coups in the area, with nine of these being successful.

Insurgency

An insurgency is an armed rebellion that practices guerilla warfare against a larger authority. Due to the asymmetrical nature of guerilla warfare, it can be hard to battle as a poorly equipped government. This asymmetry being the fact that there are never large confrontations between the two parties, the largely rural operation, and co-operation with local rural communities.

This means that if insurgents blend in fairly well with the population, they are difficult to track when there is a lack of funding and appropriate technology.

Islamism

Islamism is the religious-political ideology associated with the Islam. The Islamist is devoted to realizing their ideological interpretation of Islam and the Quran, with emphasis for the state and society. They preach the implementation of sharia, political Islamic unity under a single state called the ‘Caliphate,’ the creation of Islamic states that can eventually merge to form said caliphate, and the rejection of the west and westernization.

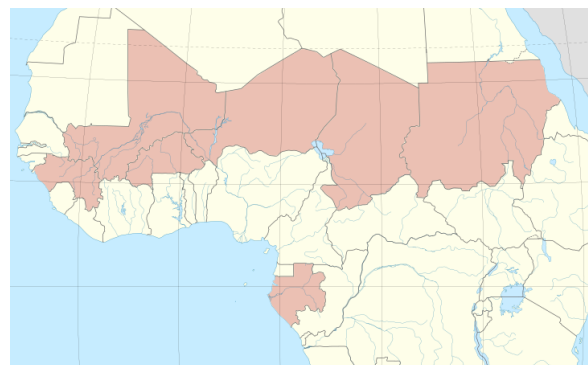


Figure 3 Successful coups in Africa in the 2020s.

Islamism described an ideology seeking to revive the Islam to its former glory, purifying foreign elements, reasserting its role into “social, political, and personal life,” and in particular “reordering government and society in accordance with laws prescribed by Islam.” Sometimes referred to as pan-Islamism, the ‘pan-’ prefix coming from the term ‘pan-nationalism’ which is

nationalism aimed to transcend traditional boundaries and historical identities in order to create a “higher” identity.

Jihadist

The Arabic word ‘jihad’ means “striving” or “struggling,” with a romanticized notion. In the Islamic context it refers to an effort to make personal and social life conform with Gods guidance. Examples of this include one’s struggle against their evil or bad inclinations or their effort toward the ‘Ummah’ (the Muslim community as a whole). However, this effort is often outed in, and -more importantly- associated with violent wars. This association is created by the fact that under the classical sharia the term refers to armed struggle against the unbelievers. The term has thus become more popular recently with the rise of Islamic extremist militant and terrorist organizations.

(Military) Junta

A military junta is a government led by a committee of military leaders. In Niger, this committee is called the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP). Keep in mind the acronym is originally in French, which is Conseil National pour la Sauvegarde de la Patrie. The CNSP establishment led to the ongoing Nigerien crisis.

Sharia

The sharia is the religious law part of Islamic tradition, based on the Quran and the Hadith. It is seen as the divine rule of God. In this research report it will refer to the classical sharia practices preached by the Islamist. This implementation of the sharia is often critiqued by the western world due to its violations of basic human rights, gender equality, and freedom of expression. However, states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia categorically reject this concept of human rights simply because its western and secular. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in several cases that sharia is “incompatible with the fundamental principles of democracy,” but once again, this is based on European and thus western law and to the mentioned countries seen as irrelevant.

It is important to stress that approaches to the sharia vary greatly and the piece written above only refers to the classical implementation.

War on terror

Officially the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), is a global military campaign initiated by the US after the 9/11 in 2001. The main targets of this operation are militant Islamist movements such

as: al-Qaeda, Taliban, and the Islamic State and their allies. It is the most recent global conflict, spanning multiple wars. After the US lost control over Afghanistan and withdrew in 2021, the main 'war' of the GWOT was viewed as over and thus the end of the war on terror as whole must be in sight.

Personally, I don't believe the war on terror is over, even though, the US officially announced the war to be concluded. But I would digress, the HMUN secretariat has informed me that an opinion based on plenty evidence provided in the research report, is still an opinion and not allowed. According to an international and public affairs study, as of 2021, the campaign has displaced a total of thirty-eight million people, cost the lives of 4.5 million, and cost the US treasury over \$8 trillion.

General Overview

Jihadism

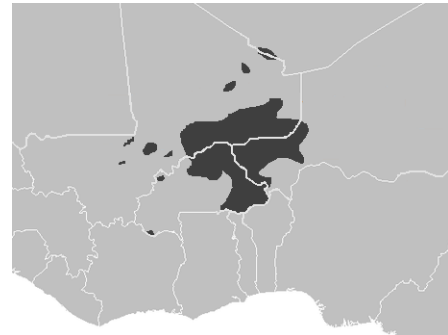
Before diving into the actual geopolitical conflict, it is important to understand the motivations of the Islamic insurgencies that are deeply rooted in not only this specific issue and the country of Niger, but also large parts of Africa, the middle east, and Asia.

The word 'jihad' appears with and without military connotations in the Quran, but most often in the expression "striving in the path of God." There was an elaborate set of rules associated with jihad such as prohibitions on harming those not engaged in battle, however, in recent years - especially in the wake of 9/11- like mentioned before, the word has become an ideological and political concept. This is where the term 'jihadism' comes into play, it alludes to the militant Islamic movements perceived as threatening by the west. It is applied to insurgent Islamic extremists, militant Islamist and terrorists alike, referring to the notion of 'jihad' in the classical sense. Meaning the armed struggle against unbelievers, think of the Ottoman Empire, who extensively campaigned against non-Muslim nations in the name of jihad.

The ideology is envisioned is a "revolutionary struggle" against the worldly international order established by the west with the goal to unite the Muslim world under the "rule of god" (sharia). Most Islamic states are recognized as jihadist as well, for example ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) or ISWAP (Islamic State's Western Africa Province). There are currently at least ten ongoing conflicts involving jihadist-labelled insurgencies. Including the Kashmir conflict, which is also discussed in this forum on HMUN. But I would digress, now that there is an understanding for the insurgent groups active in Niger, we can better tackle the issue at hand.

Sahel War

Also known as the Islamist insurgency in the Sahel. Since 2007, the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have been engaging the Algerian government in an insurgency in the Maghreb, for this insurgency they used mostly Algerian and Saharan/Malian (the Tuareg people in particular) communities. The intensive conflict going on in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger started in 2011 because of the insurgency in the Maghreb. In 2017 the AQIM merged with several other militant organizations into Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM).



Though the Arab Spring did not originally spark in any of the three countries mentioned above, they have been massively impacted by the ‘fallout’ of the Arab Spring. Tuareg fighters that fought in Islamist insurgency groups in the Maghreb sparked a civil war with the Malian government in 2012 fighting for independence or greater autonomy in northern Mali. Then, a concurrent insurgency was started by Boko Haram in Nigeria. By 2015, the Mali war had spread to Burkina Faso and Niger, leading to heavy fighting and humanitarian crises. In 2019 the effects of the conflict began accelerating due to resentment in the populations and the alleged inability to handle the conflict. Culminating in a series of coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Sudan, Chad, and Guinea and the region being labelled the coup belt.

Niger faces jihadist insurgencies by both the spillover from the Mali war in its western regions and from the Islamist insurgency in Nigeria in its southeastern regions. The Sahel has been named the fastest growing crisis in the world by the UNHCR.

Jihadist insurgency in Niger

Since 2015, the border between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger has been an area of conflict between jihadist forces originating from Mali. In the southwest, the Islamic State – Sahel Province (ISSP) and the Nusrat al-Islam have been carrying out attacks. In some parts of south and southeast, the Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP) has even established control. Some attribute weak governance in the region to the expansion of the extremism, and this in turn has been caused by the frequent transfers of power.

Figure 4 Areas that ISSP operate.

Foreign involvement

Since 2013, the United States has been carrying out counterterrorism operations in Niger as part of Operation Juniper Shield. This military intervention had been in close cooperation with and in support of the French military until they withdrew from Niger following the coup. Operation Juniper Shield's deployment mostly involves training the forces of the host states, enhancement of host nation security efforts, and facilitating counterterrorism, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions in said host nations. While France withdrew, the US senate rejected the withdrawal from Niger. This means that since 2002, the US has been assisting Niger in numerous ways for its war on terror.

Operation Barkhane was a counterinsurgency operation in the Sahel led by the French military until November 2022. This operation was in cooperation with Estonia, Sweden, and the Czech Republic. For this operation, an institutional framework for coordination and cooperation was created called the G5 Sahel. Originally consisting of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, since then Mali and more recently in December 2023 Niger and Burkina Faso have withdrawn from the alliance. Ultimately operation Barkhane failed to reach its objective due to France's inability to work with the host nations.

2023 Nigerien crisis

After the coup, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) issued an ultimatum to reinstate the former president, however, even after the ultimatum expired no real action was taken. Though they threatened with international sanctions and potential use of force, only standby forces were activated as a precaution. This can be attributed to the fact that the members of ECOWAS are torn in two political blocks. In red the Allegiance of Sahel States (AES), this pact between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger created on September 16th is a defence pact between mentioned states.

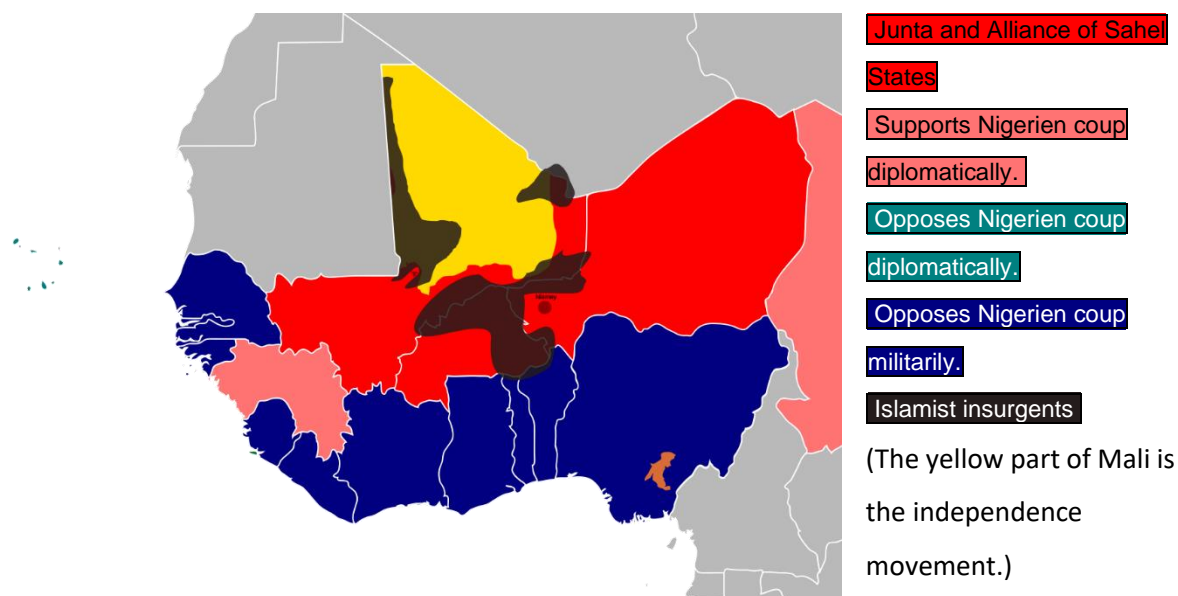


Figure 5 The political situation of ECOWAS as of September 17th, 2023.

The AES emphasizes that “any attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one or more contracted parties will be considered an aggression against the other parties” (similar to Article 5 of NATO). Essentially tying the hands of ECOWAS and limiting their options to reinstate the president to zero.

The French withdrawal from the region led to a power vacuum, opening up to Russian and Turkish influence. The private Russian mercenary firm Wagner Group in particular. However Russian support of the coup is alleged and not confirmed.

The consequences of this conflict are immense, at least 4.3 million people are in need of aid, food, medicine, and basic goods. The international sanctions that are coming into effect will only worsen the situation. Airspace closure by the junta also complicates efforts to aid.

Neo-colonialism

As aversion to the west rises in Africa and the middle east, they start looking the other way for financial support and cooperation. This is where member states such as China and the Russian federation come into play. In recent years there has been a substantial increase in Chinese investments and in Russian influence in African countries. This is the perfect example of the power in the world shifting away from the west.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
1988	al-Qaeda is founded
9th of September 2001	Terrorist attacks on the WTC in New York
2002	Boko Haram is founded
7th of November 2002	PSI is announced
December 2004	PSI is concluded
2005	The TSCTP succeeds the PSI
January 2007	The GSPC is from now known as AQIM
6th February 2007	Operation Juniper Shield starts
17th of December 2010	Arab spring kicks off in Tunisia
1st of May 2011	Osama bin Laden is assassinated
16th of January 2012	Mali war starts
5th of February 2013	US military deploys in Niger
16th of February 2014	G5 Sahel is established
1st of August 2014	Operation Barkhane starts
6th of February 2015	Jihadist insurgencies cross from Mali into Niger
2016	ISWAP splits of from Boko Haram
17th of March 2017	AQIM merges into JNIM
1st of January 2018	Second Arab spring
30th of August 2021	Official conclusion of the war on terror
15th of May 2022	Mali withdraws from G5 Sahel
9th of November 2022	Operation Barkhane formally ends
26th of July 2023	President Bazoum is detained
29th of July 2023	The Nigerien coup is official
6th of August 2023	ECOWAS ultimatum expired
16th of September 2023	AES is established
5th of October 2023	France starts military withdrawal from Niger
2nd of December 2023	Niger and Burkina Faso withdraw from G5 Sahel
6th of December 2023	Chad and Mauritania announce the dissolution of the G5 Sahel

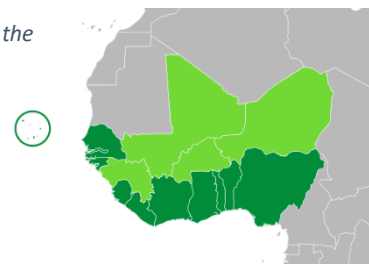
Major Parties Involved

Al-Qaeda

Meaning “the Base,” al-Qaeda is most famously known for the 9/11 attacks and its founder: Osama bin Laden, who is credited to be the mind behind mentioned attacks. It was founded in the wake of the Soviet Afghan war with the ideologic goal of a global Islamist revolution to unite the Muslim world under a supra-national Islamic state, known as the Caliphate. In response to the 9/11 attacks, the United States of America (US) launched the war on terror.

In particular the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a jihadist militant organization that was started with the aim to overthrow the Algerian government in 2007. However, it is currently more so involved in an insurgency campaign in the Maghreb and Sahel regions. It has declared its intention to attack American and European targets and has thus been declared a terrorist organization.

Figure 6 ECOWAS, in light green the suspended member states.



Boko Haram

Officially known as *Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād*, which means ‘Group of the People of Sunnah for Dawah and Jihad,’ is another Islamist militant organization based out of northeastern Nigeria. It is active in Chad, Niger, northern Cameroon, and Mali. It was the deadliest terrorist group for part of the 2010s according to the Global Terrorism Index. In 2016, part of Boko Haram split and became known as the Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP).

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

A regional political and economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa, aimed to achieve “collective self-sufficiency,” raise living standards, and promote economic development. Established in 1975, its fundamental principles rely on equity, inter-dependence, solidarity, co-operation, nonaggression, regional peace, promotion of human rights, and economic and social justice. Following the coups in the region, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger have been suspended from ECOWAS.

United States of America (USA)

The US has been heavily involved with militant Islamist organizations worldwide due to the war on terror. They have put tremendous amounts of effort into eradicating and weakening said organizations. In addition, they are actively carrying out counterterrorism operations in close cooperation with Niger. As of August 2023, approximately 1,100 US forces are deployed in Niger.

France

All 1,500 French troops withdrew from the region following the coup, which opened the region up to mainly Russian influence. Nonetheless, France has been heavily involved in the Sahel, and the war on terror in general. France is also the main initiator of Operation Barkhane.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

A quick recap of all the previous efforts to resolve mainly the issue of the Islamist militant organizations. Pay close attention to the reasons why these efforts failed to succeed, that way you might be able to suggest more fruitful clauses.

Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI)

Starting in 2002 and concluding in 2004, this is one of the shortest efforts on the issue. This US led effort to assist Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania in numerous ways to combat terrorist activity in the areas. It was superseded by the TSCTP because it had a larger scope, in order to more equally tackle the problem in the whole of trans-Sahara and multiple aspects of the problem.

Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTP)

The successor of the PSI, once again led by the US, was meant to combine both civil and military efforts. The military component is known as Operation Juniper Shield, which has previously been discussed. Some critics question the integrity of some of the host governments, seen as their past behaviour might indicate that they are using the program to gain training, equipment, and funding to use for illegitimate ends. Such as repressing democratic political opponents in member states, or to fuel wars between neighbouring states. Keep in mind, in many of the states discussed, corruption still is a large problem.

Operation Barkhane

Already discussed as well, but I wanted to emphasize that this operation failed due to France's inability to properly connect and communicate with the host nations. And not a lack of international support, there was plenty, but lack of international assistance for this mission. Especially this for this operation, there is plenty of UN security council material to find and use for clause drafting.

Possible Solutions

It is important to recognize that the underlying problem in Niger has been caused by militant Islamist groups, however Niger was never truly stable to begin with. The 2023 Nigerien crisis is the sum of years of poverty and lack of economic development, environmental challenges, lack of adequate healthcare and education, and lastly Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and al-Qaeda. This was the perfect storm for the coup. However, the junta failed to recognize that once they were in power this storm would continue, and they would be responsible to help Niger out of it. Up until now the junta have not been able to do Niger as a country any good. A big part of this can be attributed to ECOWAS and international sanctions though.

How does one go about solving this conflict unanimously? Do we wish to reinstate the lawful president? How do we go about that, keeping in mind the consequences that it will have in relation to AES? These are the questions you will have to answer in order to make a successful resolution together. It is important to focus on international cooperation with the security council as whole. A testament to this is operation Barkhane, like mentioned above.

Further Reading

For more insight into why PSI was superseded:
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