



Niger

Niger: Introduction

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Chart 1: Political map of Niger

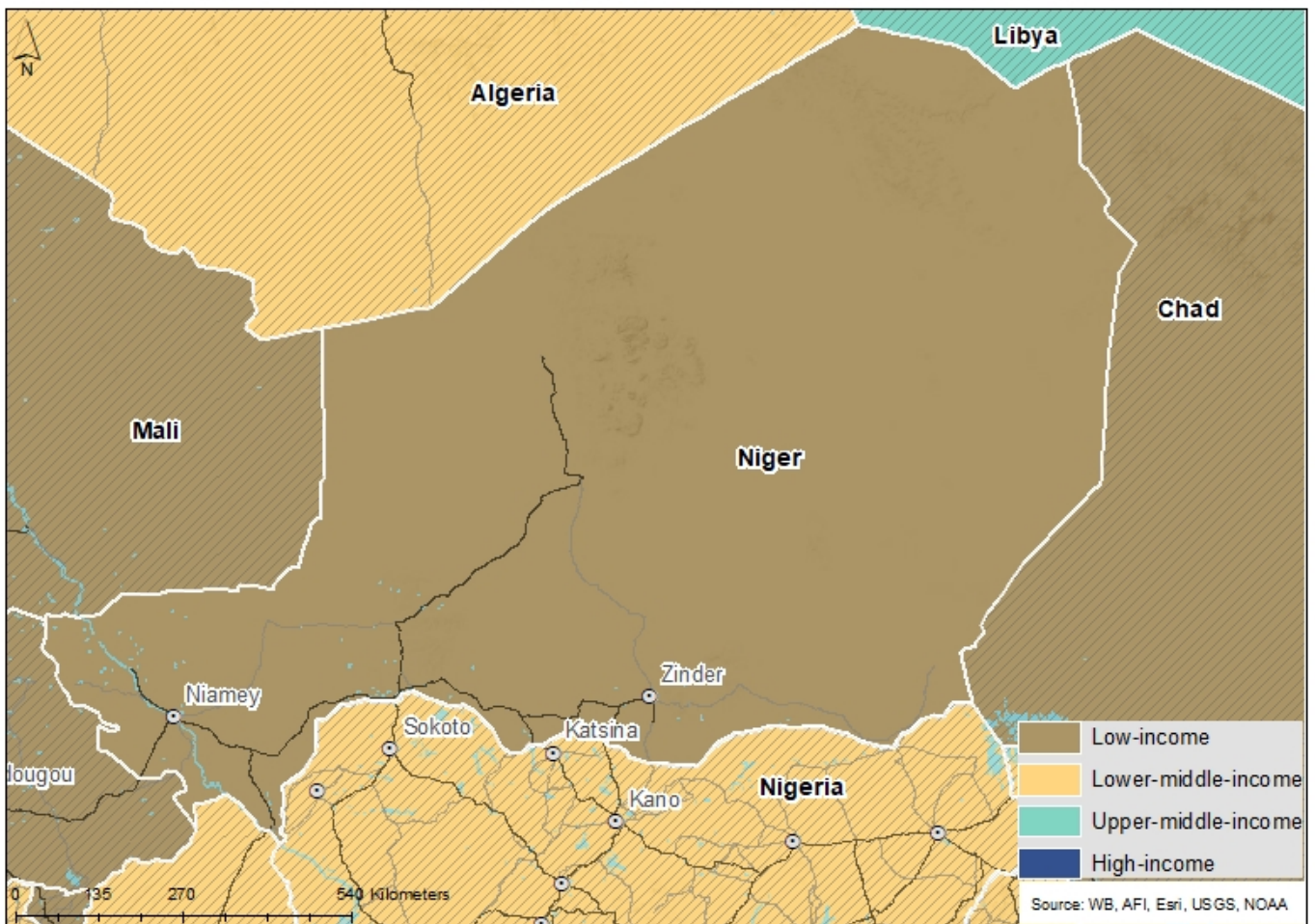


Chart 1 is a political map of Niger.

Niger, a landlocked country in Western Africa, is classified as low-income and shares borders with Algeria, Libya, Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali. Spanning approximately 1.27 million square kilometres, Niger is rich in natural resources, including uranium, coal, iron ore, tin and petroleum. These resources have historically contributed to government revenues, attracted foreign investment, and supported infrastructure projects. However, the equitable distribution of these benefits has been hindered by challenges in resource management and periods of political instability.

The capital city, Niamey, is situated in the southwestern region, which hosts the highest population density and serves as a hub for the majority of agricultural activities. In contrast, the northern regions are predominantly desert, while central areas provide grazing lands for the livestock of nomadic pastoralist communities.

The country is located in one of the world's hottest zones, with minimal annual rainfall, ranging from 100 mm in the northern Saharan region to 600 mm in the southern Sahelian zone. The rainy season, lasting one to four months, heavily influences agriculture and water availability throughout these zones. Ecologically, the country spans arid deserts, transitional savannas and a small fertile southern zone, home to diverse but threatened wildlife. Challenges like desertification (spanning southwards) and climate change (specifically affecting rainfall variability) exacerbate vulnerabilities, adding pressure to an already fragile socio-economic and political landscape.

Since gaining **independence** from French colonial rule in 1960, Niger has navigated periods of political instability interspersed with relative calm. The initial phase of one-party civilian governance lasted until a military coup in 1974, ushering in military rule that persisted until 1991. Niger became a democratic state following the Sovereign National Conference in 1992, which led to the adoption of a new constitution authorising a multi-party system. The first president was democratically elected in 1993. Subsequent years were marked by coups in 1996 and 1999, followed by the election of Mamadou Tandja, who served two terms until 2009. An attempt to amend the **constitution** for a third term led to another military intervention in 2010. Elections in 2011 brought Mahamadou Issoufou to power, who completed two terms before peacefully transferring authority to Mohamed Bazoum in 2021, marking Niger's first peaceful transition between democratically elected leaders, despite the opposition contesting the election.

However, this period of democratic rule was short-lived. On 26 July 2023, President Bazoum was **deposed** in a military coup led by General Abdourahmane Tchiani, who assumed leadership of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (Conseil National pour la Sauvegarde de la Patrie, or CNSP). The military-led government **cited** deteriorating security conditions and economic mismanagement as justifications for the coup.

In the aftermath of the July 2023 coup, Niger's political landscape underwent significant shifts. The military-led government severed longstanding security agreements with France, leading to the withdrawal of French troops by December 2023. The US also evacuated and closed its drone base in Agadez in August 2024 at the request of the military-led government. Following its strained relations with ECOWAS and regional tensions, Niger, alongside Burkina Faso and Mali, **announced** its withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the G5 Sahel. The three nations subsequently formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in late September 2023 to jointly address security challenges and strengthen regional defense cooperation. This military alliance later evolved into the broader Confederation of Sahel States (CSS), formalising their collaboration on political, economic and diplomatic efforts to assert sovereignty and foster independence in the Sahel region. Niger currently uses the West African Franc (CFA) and is part of the West Economic and Monetary Union, but the country **has stated** its intent to stop using the CFA.

Niger is also a member of the Niger Basin Authority, which enables member states to jointly manage the water resources of the Niger basin in a sustainable manner, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, which has the same aims for the Lake Chad Basin region and the Liptako–Gourma Authority, which aims to develop and secure the border regions between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

Despite these realignments, the security situation remains **precarious**. The withdrawal of Western military support has emboldened Islamist insurgent groups, leading to increased attacks. The **military-led government's** efforts to seek assistance from alternative partners, including China, Russia and Türkiye, have yet to yield significant improvements in security. Furthermore, internal dissent has emerged, with new non-state armed groups expressing support for the deposed President Bazoum. The most active are the Patriotic Liberation Front and the Patriotic Front for Justice, which carried out several attacks in 2024 against Niger's military and infrastructure.

While the military-led government implemented measures to address internal challenges, such as establishing a new anti-corruption commission aimed at recovering misappropriated public assets, concerns have been raised regarding the transparency and effectiveness of these initiatives. Overall, Niger's political landscape remains **fraught** with challenges, and the path to stability and democratic governance is uncertain.

Niger's social indicators also reflect persistent developmental challenges. The United Nations **Human Development Index (HDI)** for 2024 places Niger at 189th out of 191 countries, with a score of 0.394, significantly below the sub-Saharan Africa average of 0.549. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Report **2024 SDG index** ranks Niger 160th out of 167 countries, highlighting substantial gaps in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Niger is at a critical juncture, grappling with political upheaval, security threats, economic disruptions and enduring developmental challenges. The recent coup and subsequent policy shifts have introduced new dynamics that will significantly influence the country's trajectory in the coming years as explored in the sections below.

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