

The Insights of Neo-Colonial Divorce between Niger and France through Defensive versus Offensive Diplomatic Mechanisms Perpetuated by Continuous Ambitions of Exploration, Expropriation and Exploitation of Natural Resources in Niger 2000-2023

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Abstract

The West African country called Niger is blessed with seven neighbouring countries which surrounded all its frontiers in spite of the fact that it is a landlocked country with no direct access to the sea. The rich natural resources like uranium attracted several Multinational Corporations (MNCs) to set up for the Exploration, Expropriation and Exploitation (3Es). Yet, the country remains one of the poorest and under developed for 63 years after independence but was crowned in the position of Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiatives (HIPC). Unfortunately for France as the main consumer of Niger's resources through the use of pro-French leaders of the country, the 21st Century was not going to be the same as it recently happened in the previous four decades of the 20th Century. To that effect, a New Generation of West African Leaders (NGWAL) from Mali, Burkina-Faso and Mali individual decided to take the bull by the horns with main objective to overthrow Purported Pro- French Civilian Leaders (PPFCL) in order to end all the mechanisms and networks of neo-colonialism as impediments to National Development and Unity (NDU) which in turns fuelled periods of social unrest and political instabilities since the 1960s. Therefore, Niger was not left out in this neo-colonial dance of the third decade of the 21st Century as it happened in 2023 with strong sentimental feelings in favour of the suffering Nigeriens. The scrutinized of specialized sources of information enable us to use a historical approach with our findings that Niger is on good footing towards new structural developmental agenda without any single dictatorial prescriptions from the neo-colonial men of Western Europe.

Keywords: Defensive, offensive, looting, natural resources, development, neo-colonial divorce.

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Niger is a landlocked country in West Africa. It is bordered by Mali to the north, Burkina Faso to the east, Benin to the south, and Nigeria and Chad to the southwest. It is a vast country, with an area of over 1,267,000 square kilometers. It is the second-largest country in West Africa, after Mali. Niger's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is \$16.67 billion, as per reports from the World Bank. The country gained independence from France in 1960. It is now a semi-presidential republic, whereby the President of Niger is head of state and the Prime Minister of Niger is head of government. The officials holding these posts are chosen through a representative democratic process of

elections in a multi-party system. The most recent President of the Republic of Niger is Mohamed Bazoum who was installed in 2021 until the recent 2023 military coup d'états. It is important to know who the former Presidents of Niger were since granted independence by France in 1960 thereby marking the end of colonialism and beginning of intensive neo-colonialism with all its effective mechanisms put in place in almost all the lucrative sectors especially natural resources (U S.. geological Survey Minerals yearbook). Known and exploited Mineral resources of Niger, data derived from US Geological Survey. Colored circles represent current mining centers. Unexploited but proved resources in parentheses. * Gold: Au * Coal: C * Diamond: Dm * Iron ore: Fe * Limestone: Ls * Phosphate: P * Petroleum,

crude: Pet * Tin: Sn The mineral mining industry is a crucial piece of the Economy of Niger. Exports of minerals consistently account for 40% of exports. Mineral commodities produced in Niger included cement, coal, gold, gypsum, limestone, salt, silver, tin, and uranium. In 2006, Niger was the world's fourth-ranked producer of uranium. A new mining code was adopted in August 2006 and the former National Mine research Office (ONAREM), whose responsibilities included organizing mining exploration programs, was replaced by two newly established entities: the geological and Mining Research Center and the Mining Company of Niger (SOPaMin). SOPaMin is to hold the state's shares in the existing uranium companies and is in charge of engaging in commercial transactions, such as uranium sales. Since the adoption of the new Mining Code, the government has issued a significant number of new mineral exploration permits (Natural resources of Niger, Fortune of Africa, <https://fortuneofafrica.com> › ... › Investment Climate). Niger joined the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2005 and, as part of the EITI efforts, appointed in late 2006 a national consultative committee, which included representatives of the general public. A first audit report reconciling revenue paid by mining companies with government receipts was scheduled to be issued in late 2007. Niger's mineral sector accounted for about 3% of the GDP and for about 40% of exports. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a renewed interest in the generation of nuclear energy had led to increased demand for uranium, encouraged investment expansions at existing uranium mines, and promoted exploration. Foreign direct investment in the sector by renowned French company AREVA from 2008 to 2012 was projected to be \$1.4 billion, which would double the country's uranium production capacity (Brighton Energy Discovers, 2012, Decalo, Samuel, 1997).

Following the estimation population of Niger in 2023, it stood at 25,396,840 with the Hausa representing 53.1percent while Zarma/Songhai with 21.2 percent as the two major ethnic groups then the rest of the 25.7 percent is linking to other smaller ethnic groups. The first government of the Fifth Republic was installed on January 5, 2000, and a government reshuffle occurred on September 18, 2001. Serious unrest within the military occurred in August 2002, in Niamey, Diffa, and Nguigmi, but the government was able to restore order within several days. First-ever municipal elections are scheduled to take place late in 2003 (Femi N. *et al.*, February 16, 2021). Niger came into the spotlight on the July 26, when Republican Guard soldiers claimed to

have overthrown Niger's democratically elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, on state television. The junta leader is from the Hausa (also a major group in neighbouring Nigeria); while President Bazoum comes from the Arab minority, which makes up about 0.4%. The country borders seven countries, four of which have good relations with Russia (Algeria); or have fallen under Russian influence recently (Mali and BurkinaFaso). The country borders seven countries, four of which have good relations with Russia (Algeria); or have fallen under Russian influence recently (Mali and BurkinaFaso). The junta announced two days later that Abdourahmane Tiani, the head of Niger's Presidential guard, would be the new head of state. Some of the reasons given for the coup were the deteriorating security situation and poor economic and social governance. However, an investigation into the diversion of \$125 million, nearly half the defence budget to private contractors linked to the top brass in the military during the entire tenure of the previous administration, according to Africa Confidential, may well be the reason the generals moved against President Mohamed Bazoum. This was the fifth successful coup in the country since independence (Mohamed K. O., August 15, 2023). Coup supporters took to the streets, waving Russian flags and burning French ones, apparently less out of love for Russia and more an expression of historical dissatisfaction with France's exploitative policies in the country and the region. Some supporters attacked the French Embassy. Significantly, though both the USA and France have military forces in the country, there were no signs of anyone burning the US flag. Given the current dynamics, it is difficult to tell whether the demonstrations were spontaneous or mobilised by coup leaders.

1. Intensive Manifestations of 3Es and Counter Continuity of Looting Niger's Natural Resources by the Western Multinational Corporations

This section brings out the main actors of bilateral relations between France and Niger starting with the President of Niger as the main victim of neo-colonialism at the beginning of the 21st Century namely, Mamadou Tandja 199-2004, Salou Djibo 2010-2011, Mahamadou Issoufou 2011-2021, Mohamed Bazoum 2021-July 2023 and the present Junta leader A. Tiani since August 2023 (Liste des présidents du Niger, <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste...>). In addition, tables No. 1 and 2 indicates the list of appointed Ambassadors of the two countries which were noted 21 and 4 for France and Niger respectively. Thereafter, much literature about the real manifestation of 3Es are:

Table 1: The 22 French appointed Ambassadors to Niger for the Moderation of 3Es Agenda to Closure of Embassy 1960-2022

No	Names of Diplomatic Agents	Years
1	Don-Jean Colombani	04 /08/1960
2	Paul Fouchet	03/10/1962
3	Albert Treca	19/05/1964
4	Michel Wintrebert	02/03/1968
5	Claude-François Rostain	27/04//1970
6	Paul-Henri Gaschignard	13 /11/1972
7	Henri Costilhes	26/11/ 1975
8	Alain Pierret	28/08/1980
9	Maurice Courage	07/05/1982
10	Claude Soubeste	22/02/1985
11	Michel Lunven	16/03 /1988
12	Jean-François Lionnet	06/03/1993
13	Albert Pavéc	17/11/1996
14	Denis Vène	24/01/2000
15	François Ponge	2004
16	Alain Holleville	6/11/2007
17	Christophe Bouchard	07/10/2011
18	Antoine Anfré	28/03/2014
19	Marcel Escure	17/ 09/2015
20	Alexandre Garcia	16/01/2019
21	Sylvain Itté	28/09/2022

SOURCES: Compiled by us with information from the following websites online. List of diplomatic missions of France, Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li...>, France Embassy and Consulates in Niger, Embassies.net, <https://embassies.net/france-in-ni...> ste chronologique des ambassadeurs - La France au Niger, La France au Niger, <https://ne.ambafrance.org/Liste-chronologique-des>. Last modification on 20/10/2022. Niger : l'ambassadeur de France Sylvain Itté de retour à Paris, France 24 <https://www.france24.com/france-24/Afrique> 27 sept. 2023 — L'ambassadeur de France au Niger est de retour en France. Sylvain Itté, qui a quitté le pays par avion, mercredi 27 septembre au matin, ...Online, Consulted on 26 December 2023.

Table 2: The 4 Appointed Niger's Ambassadors to France for the Consolidation of Bilateral Relations in the 21st Century

No	Names of Niger Diplomatic Agents	Years
1	Adamou Seydou	2002
2	Abderahamane Mayaki Assane	2010-2015
3	Ado Elhadji Abou	2015-2021
4	Aïchatou Kané Boulama	2021-22/07/2022

Source: Compiled by us with information from various sources : L'Ambassadrice du Niger en France refuse de quitter son ..., Anadolu Ajansı, <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/l-ambassadrice-du-n...>, Remise de lettres de créance [archive], JORF n° 171 du 26 juillet 2022, texte n° 1, NOR EAEP2221817X. Maison des Français de l'étranger, « Ambassades et consulats étrangers en France - Niger [archive] », sur mfe.org (consulté le 5 janvier 2014). « Remise de lettres de créance [archive] », sur Légifrance, 9 octobre 2002. Ambassade du Niger en France online, Consulted, December 26, 2023.

From table numbers 2 and 3, we can see the disparity concerning the number of diplomatic representation which was heavily on one side. What happened to Niger between 1960 and 2001? Does it mean that for the rest of the 20th Century of neo-colonialism, there were no diplomatic representation and

how were those bilateral relations between France and Niger moderated? Meaning that the tendencies of 3Es we qualified in this paper were too high for the neo-colonial agents to perfectly looted the country's natural resources while bringing in only embarrassing prices which could not strongly impacted the entire National Revenues.



MAP 1: The Location of Niger Encircled by Seven Countries with no access to the Sea (Landlocked)
SOURCE: Extracted from Image Credit: CIA Factbook, online October 2023.

One does not go without the other.” In 2021, Niger provided the European Union with nearly 25 percent of its uranium supplies, which produced electricity for millions of households. Yet 75% of electricity to Niger comes from Nigeria and has been cut off following ECOWAS sanctions, plunging villages and towns into blackouts, including the presidential palace. Its electricity production for 2021 was 0.45 billion kilowatt-hours, while the world average in 2021 based on 190 countries was 143.51 billion kilowatt-hours. Africans in the French post-colony have been critical, but historically silent, of France’s presence and influence, rooted in strong perceptions that colonialist practices and paternalistic attitudes never really ended. From right to ‘centre-left’, from Nicholas Sarkozy to Emmanuel Macron, the barely concealed contempt for their former African possessions is these days only matched by the panicked response of France’s authorities against rising pauper immigration (Mohamed K.. O., August 15, 2023). The silence around FrançAfrique, “a Janus-faced entity... the ultimate symbol of a confiscated, perverted sovereignty”, to quote Senegalese author, Boris Boubabcar Diop, is the result of the long-standing collaboration between the Elysée Palace and the ‘assimilated’ African elite, the latter still holding onto the illusion that their loyalty will somehow translate into social acceptance at the metropolitan centre. Nonetheless, it was the deal these elites signed at independence that has kept a steady supply of cheap raw materials – extracted almost at slake wages – to France’s industrial centres, thus ensuring that French workers remain in work, the French industrial machine keeps turning, and, as former French president, the late Jacques

Chirac once remarked, France remains a first, rather than a Third World, power.(Oil and mining industry of Niger, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_ind...). In 2010, the two Orano (née Areva) subsidiaries extracted a total of 114,346 tons of uranium ore from Niger, representing an export value of 2,300 billion CFA francs (more than 3.5 billion euros). Of this sum, Niger would have received only 300 billion CFA francs (about 459 million euros), or 13% of the exported value. In 2012, Areva received tax exemptions worth €320 million. Although mining made up 70.8% of Niger’s exports in 2010, it contributed only 5.8% of the country’s gross domestic product (Mohamed K.. O., August 15, 2023). In 2.279 billion euros, more than Niger’s total annual budget (around the first quarter of 2013 alone, Areva generated consolidated revenues of 2 billion euros). In the 3rd quarter of 2013, its turnover amounted to 6.8 billion euros, up in 2012, and its order book reached 42 billion euros representing 21 years of Niger’s budget. In 2012, the group’s total turnover exceeded 9 billion euros, and its mining activities generated 1.36 billion euros. Niger, where more than 60% of the population make less than \$1 per day, is ranked 189/191 in the 2022 UN Human Development Index. Though about two-thirds of the world’s uranium production comes from Kazakhstan, Canada, and Australia. Niger is the world’s 7th biggest uranium producer (5 % of global production) and possesses Africa’s highest-grade uranium ores. France, the country’s former colonial ruler, imports Nigerien uranium, which powers the French civil nuclear industry. Orano the multinational 90% owned by the French state,

operates several mines in the country (Mohamed K. O., August 15, 2023).

According to WNA Niger has two significant uranium mines close to the twin mining towns of Arlit and Akokan, 900 km northeast of the capital Niamey (more than 1200 km by road) on the southern border of the Sahara. Uranium in Niger was discovered in 1957 by French researchers; Niger's first commercial uranium mine began operating in 1971. In 2021 Niger produced 2248 tons of raw uranium and cumulative production was about 150,000 tons by the end of 2019. The concentrates are trucked 1600 km to Parakou in Benin, then railed 400 km to the port at Cotonou. They are exported for conversion, mostly to Comurhex in France. Over the past ten years, the 88,200 tons of uranium ore imported into France came mainly from three countries: Kazakhstan (27%), Niger (20%), and Uzbekistan (19%). The Niger government sought a revised deal based on the 2006 mining law, which raised royalty taxes from 5.5% in the 10-year license to between 12% and 15%, depending on profits. Niger's struggle to secure greater benefits from its uranium was described by Oxfam in 2014 as a "fascinating David vs. Goliath struggle playing out in Niger – the poorest country in the world pitted against the French multinational uranium conglomerate, Areva." It added: "Though it's not getting much attention globally, the outcome could have important implications for other poor countries that are trying to get better deals for the minerals and oil dug out of their lands. "The mines resumed operation at the end of January 2014 under the terms of a government decree. The deal stipulated for the first time that the firms' boards would include Nigerien managing directors. (Oil and mining industry of Niger, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_ind..).

Though the Orano website boasts that it is the world leader in nuclear reactor waste recycling worldwide, environmental watchdogs in Niger and abroad report that dangerous levels of radioactive waste were left among the local populations living near the mines. According to a French-based Independent Research Commission (CRIIRAD) on radioactivity, Niger's northern town of Arlit has been left wallowing in 20 million tons of radioactive waste after a uranium mine run by Orano closed down. "The waste produces the radioactive gas radon. The strong wind of the desert spreads radioactive dust, which is then inhaled by the surrounding population," said CRIIRAD's scientist, Bruno Chareyron. Soil and underground water have also been contaminated. The 100,000 people in the area have no alternative but to drink that water. The report added that exposure to such dangerously high radiation levels can lead to birth defects, cancer, and several other disorders. Journalists who visited the mining sites recently spoke about the abject poverty of the population, patients complaining about radiation effects and lack of basic health facilities. They were struck by a very large

cemetery and thus titled their documentary Uranium. "Niger is well known in international media as one of the world's poorest countries, struggling with chronic structural hunger and malnutrition. What is less well known to many is that Niger also hosts the fourth largest uranium production in the world. Export values totaled over 348 million Euros in 2010 alone, representing more than twice the total development assistance finance received during the same year. The exploitation of the mineral wealth (include uranium, gold, phosphate, coal) by international investors is expanding, with granted and requested mining permits comprising close to 10% of the national territory (DIIS Working Paper 2013). Meanwhile, the Nigerien uranium mining sector is intricately linked to the geopolitical energy security interests of some donor countries. When transparent problem identification is missing from donor strategies, then it opens for speculation that the ignorance of mining-related environmental issues and the crisis discourse on desertification and food insecurity be mobilized as instruments to divert attention from geopolitical interests in the country's mineral wealth (DIIS Working Paper 2013).

The period 2000-2008, some of the largest development cooperation donors to Niger included the European Commission, Belgium, France, Denmark and Luxembourg, accounting for over 50 per cent of the aid budget. Of the Euros 1,071.8 million contributed by this donor group, rural development and food security programs ranked second with 19% of the funding, only surpassed by macro-economic support (24%) To be sure, Niger is well known in international media as one of the world's poorest countries, struggling with chronic structural hunger and malnutrition. What is less well known to many is that Niger also provides a substantial part of uranium ore to the global nuclear market, with export values totaling over 348 million Euros in 2010 alone (INS-Niger, 2012). This represents more than twice the total development assistance finance received by Niger during the same year (Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2011). According to the British Geological Survey, Niger is the world's fourth largest producer of uranium, with the World Nuclear Association (2010) reporting an annual production from Niger of 4,351 tons Niger hosts five metallogenic regions with varying mineral deposits and sediments (Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 2012). In the early years of mineral exploitation, activities were concentrated in the Regions of Tahoua and Agadez, but in the last decades extensive investments have been made in diversification looking at the Cadastral map of mining activities in Niger, 2011 (Ministry of Mines and Geology. DIFFA).

Above and beyond public regulations, mining companies have adopted several international CSR standards. Operators under the AREVA Group, such as Somaïr and Cominak, are ISO 14001 certified (on

environmental management systems). Cominak was accredited to ISO 14001 in 2002 and Somair in 2001. Both companies are also accredited under the occupational health and safety standard (OHSAS 18001, 2007; Capus *et al.*, 2005). The ISO14001 standard for environmental management systems sets out requirements that are audited to obtain certification. However, as stated by ISO (2012), “[t]his International Standard does not establish absolute requirements for environmental performance beyond the commitments, in the [company’s] environmental policy, to comply with applicable legal requirements and with other requirements to which the organization subscribes, to prevention of pollution and to continual improvement”. In order to ensure national coordination and general compliance with the Paris Declaration, strategies are expected to be commonly guided by the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Niger adopted its updated strategy for the period of 2008-2012 in the shape of an Accelerated Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (SDRP). The first strategy was launched and later revised in 2007, to serve as a coordinating instrument for implementation. This has included two economic and financial programmes supported by the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (IMF, 2008). With the new national government taking seat in 2010 a new long-term vision is being prepared, namely the Development Strategy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth (Strategie pour la developpement durable et croissance inclusive). Awaiting the finalization of this strategy document, the Economic and Social Development Plan 2012-2015 (Plan de Developpement Economique et Social - PDES). (Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 2012) comprises the key guiding document for the ongoing preparation of a new strategy for donor support. A key motivation in moving from the PRSP to the PDES was the desire to define development in broader terms than poverty alleviation and fully spell out the ambitions of the country.¹⁵ Linked to the revision in strategy documents, the Executive Secretariat of the Rural (Working Paper 2013, 2002) Development Strategy (Secrétariat Exécutif de la Stratégie du Développement Rural), which has previously served as the main coordinating state body on rural development, has been re-placed with the “3N Initiative” for Food and Nutrition Security and Agricultural Development (Initiative “3N” pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle et le Développement Agricole – les Nigériens Nourissent les Nigériens). The strategy document 2012-2015 of this initiative outlines the aim to raise 2 M USD for its implementation. The expected increased revenue from the mining sector is included as a main funding source, together with increased export revenue from agricultural and livestock produce (High Commission of the Initiative, 2012).

Linked to the revision in strategy documents, the Executive Secretariat of the Rural Development

Strategy (Secrétariat Exécutif de la Stratégie du Développement Rural), which has previously served as the main coordinating state body on rural development, has been re-placed with the “3N Initiative” for Food and Nutrition Security and Agricultural Development (Initiative “3N” pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle et le Développement Agricole les Nigériens Nourissent les Nigériens). The strategy document 2012-2015 of this initiative outlines the aim to raise 2 M USD for its implementation. The expected increased revenue from the mining sector is included as a main funding source, together with increased export revenue from agricultural and livestock produce (High Commission of the Initiative 3N, 2012). The PDES spells out the goal to more than double exports from the mining sector by 2016 with the assumption that this will significantly contribute to reduce poverty and achieve development objectives. Specifically, the following needs are put forward:

- To address weaknesses in managing price and revenue volatility, and increase the financial return;
- To continue the efforts in current reforms undertaken since 2011 to strengthen audit-
- Increase capacity of the state to ensure stricter control with mining corporations in their fiscal compliance;
- To improve the transparency in the state’s use of revenue;
- To diversify the exploitation and address the limited knowledge of mineral deposits and further develop the capacity for re-search and prospecting;
- To improve the coordination between the mining and environmental sectors and their limited human and institutional capacities;

The shift in strategy documents is timely since most donors’ country strategies and programmes for Niger are naturally coming to an end during 2012-2013. Based on the Nigerien strategies a roundtable event with over 300 participants and 56 delegations from the major bilateral and multi-lateral partners was held in Paris in November 2012. Niger succeeded in securing close to billion 3.7 Euro in donor pledges for the period 2012-2015 (Reuters, 2012). In forthcoming implementation, the Nigerien government is hoping to improve the alignment of donors in response to experiences of disorganization in the past.

Despite this formal administrative framework, the uranium mining sector, and the mining sector in general, is operating in the face of severe grievances from affected local populations and transhumant and pastoral peoples. While there are few consolidated accounts of these impacts publically available to date, the primary evidence from the interviews in this study shows the gravity of the situation as perceived by a range of the key actors directly implicated in the mining zones. In the critique offered by the interviewees in this study,

the existence of these impacts was explained primarily by deficiencies in the public administration, including considerable constraints in implementing the legislative and institutional framework. There was contention from corporate staff with regards to the impacts born and that the industry in fact complies with all government regulations. Yet, interviewees irrespective of their affiliations as civil servants, (NGO staff DIIS Working Paper 2013). When robust and transparent problem identification is missing from donors' country analyses and strategies, then one may wonder about the trustworthiness of existing prioritisation. In particular, when it comes to the international exploitation of Nigerien uranium, it opens for speculation that vested geopolitical objectives of donor countries are influencing the demarcation of development cooperation interventions. Indeed, it has previously been suggested that European and, perhaps in particular, French development cooperation includes security objectives where aid is not expected to be altruistic (SEE, 2010). Similarly, it has previously been acknowledged that while progress has been achieved, development cooperation still suffers from shortfalls in the donor's problem diagnosis (Böjo, Reddy, 2003). Concerns have also been expressed that OECD countries represented in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) fall short of applying their own guidelines for environmental policy integration, mainstreaming and impact assessment (OECD, 2000). There are also documented examples of donors' political decisions being made to fulfill the desires of national audiences rather than the interests and needs of the population in the recipient countries (Brunbech, 2011). Destination Niger, a virtual guide to this landlocked country in Western Africa situated on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. It is one of the world's least-developed nations. Niger is bordered by Libya and Algeria in the north, Benin and Nigeria in the south, Burkina Faso in southeast, Mali in west, and Chad in east. Before France incorporated the region as part of its colonial African possessions in the early 20th century, the area was subject to conflicts between various kingdoms and tribes. With an area of 1,267,000 km² the country is more than twice the size of (Metropolitan) France, or slightly less than twice the size of the U.S. state Texas (Brighton Energy Discovers, 2012, Decalo, Samuel, 1997). The Sahara Desert covers about 65% of Niger. Most people of Niger are living in the southern part of the country. Niger has a population of 17,8 million people according to 2013 estimates, it is the country with the highest total fertility rate (7,6 children each woman). Capital and largest city is Niamey, spoken languages are French (official), but also Hausa, Zarma, Songhay, Arabic and half a dozen other languages. 95% of Niger's population are Muslims. Despite the fact that the country has some of the world's largest uranium deposits, Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, a landlocked Sub-Saharan nation, whose economy centers on subsistence crops and livestock.

Niger suffered austere military rule for much of its post-independence history. Not until 1993, 33 years after independence from France, did Niger hold its first free and open elections. A 1995 peace accord ended a five-year revolt by Tuareg tribes, who accused the government of failing to deliver on promised economic aid. Coups in 1996 and 1999 were followed by the creation of a National Reconciliation Council that effected a transition to civilian rule in December 1999. Stricken by military rule, coups, political instability, and a Tuareg rebellion, Niger returned to civilian rule in 2011. Now the country is a semi-presidential republic. Chief of state is the president; head of government is the prime minister. The executive power is shared between the president and the prime minister. The unicameral National Assembly is Niger's sole legislative body. But the country is weak and under threat of frequent droughts, insurgency, displaced people and wide-Niger sits on some of the world's largest uranium deposits, but is one of the "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries" (HIPC). Its economy is based on subsistence agriculture, like crops and livestock, and the export of raw commodities (Natural resources of Niger, Fortune of Africa, <https://fortuneofafrica.com> › ... › Investment Climate).

Niger produces about 5% of world uranium output, providing Africa's highest-grade uranium ore. It produced 2,020 tonnes of uranium in 2022, down from 2,991 tonnes in 2020 and 4,821 tonnes in 2012 [5, 6]. From the 1950s, Niger has been known to have large uranium deposits in the desert north of the Agadez Region, which is located about 1,000 kilometres (620 mi) northeast of Niamey. In 1971, the first mine was opened outside Arlit and operated by SOMAIR, a national company with Areva and the government of Niger as shareholders. SOMAIR is owned by Areva at 63.4% and the government of Niger at 36.6% and employed about 600 people (Onstad Eric 31 July 2023). From 1978 to 2021, the second uranium mining project in Akokan near Arlit produced 75,000 tonnes of uranium [5]. It was operated by COMINAK, a national company, like SOMAIR with Areva and the government of Niger as shareholders. COMINAK was owned by Areva NC at 34%, the government of Niger at 31%, Overseas uranium resources development Company of Japan at 25%, and Enusa industrias avanzadas, S.a. of Spain at 10% and employed about 1,100 people (Brighton Energy Discovers, 2012, Decalo, Samuel, 1997). The underground mine of Akokan was the largest underground uranium mine in the world. The mining activities created an economic boom in the country, as Nigerien budgets flourished in the 1970s due to record uranium prices. Extracted uranium from SOMAIR and COMINAK was initially sold entirely by French concessionary corporations, with contracts later revised to give Niger both an overall contract payment, rent, and a smaller amount of ore it could sell on world markets (Onstad Eric 31 July 2023).

In addition to the mines of SOMAIR and COMINAK, the Azelik mine at 200 kilometres (120 mi) of Arlit was opened in 2011 and operated by SOMINA. The stakeholders in SOMINA are: China National Nuclear Corporation at 37.2%, the government of Niger through the national mining company (SOPAMIN) at 33%, ZXJOY, a Chinese, at 24.8% and KORES, a Korean national company, at 5%. Uranium ore mined in the Arlit area (Agadez Region) is extracted as Triuranium octoxide. The SOMAIR mine has uranium reserve of 14,000 tonnes (with U3O8, 0.3%) as of 2011 and a production capacity of 2,700 tonnes per year. The COMINAK concession totaled 29,000 tonnes (U3O8 @ 0.4%) and had a production capacity of 1,500 tonnes per year. The Azelik mine operated by SOMINA has a production rate of 700 tonnes per year in 2011, and is expected to increase to 2500 tonnes per year by 2015 (Onstad Eric 31 July 2023). The Imouraren mine, presently under construction, is expected to have the largest uranium reserves in Niger (120,000 tonnes) albeit at a lower concentration of uranium (U3O8, 0.15%). The Imouraren mine, located about 80 kilometres (50 mi) south of Arlit, was granted in July 2006 to Areva for an ore body originally discovered in 1969. One hundred people were employed at the site in 2006 and more than 55 kilometres (34 mi) of development drilling had been completed at the site during a period of one year and more than 2 tonnes of ore had been shipped for testing to Areva's laboratories. It was however decided in 2014 by Areva and the government of Niger following new contract discussions that plan to launch the mine will be delayed pending favorable market conditions. The history of coal exploration and mining dates back to 1968 when coal reserves were discovered in Anou Araren by an exploration team led by the French Atomic Commission Commissariat à l'énergie atomique. This discovery and the parallel discovery and exploitation of uranium mines in the same region of Niger led to the creation of SONICHAR in 1975. The goal was to mine coal which will be used as a fuel to power the thermal power plants in order to supply power to uranium mining activities in Arlit. In 1980, coal mining began at Anou Araren and a year later, the thermal power plant was in operation. Since then, coal mining projects have stagnated. In 2008, coal reserves. In 2014, construction for the second coal mine began in Salkadamna in Takanamatt, Tahoua Region. The coal extracted from the mine will supply a 600 MW power plant and coal briquette plant adjacent to the mine. The Anou Araren coal reserves are estimated at 15 million tonnes and in 2011, 246,016 tonnes of coal were extracted from the mine. The coal reserves at Salkadamna are estimated at 70 million tonnes (Onstad Eric 31 July 2023).

Exploitable deposits of gold have long been known to exist in south western region of Niger and more recently in northern region of Agadez. Artisanal gold mining was already conducted between the Niger River and the border with Burkina Faso. In 2004, the Samira

Hill Gold Mine, operated by Mining company of Liptako, began production. The mining company of Liptako owned by two Canadian companies at 40% each and the government of Niger at 20%. The gold production in 2011 is 1,564 kg from this mine and has decreased steadily since 2008. In 2014, two gold deposits have been found in the Agadez Region in Djado and Mount Ibl, 700 and 360 km from Agadez city, respectively. (Oil and mining industry of Niger, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_ind...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_industry_of_Niger)). The site in Djado was discovered in April 2014 and resulted in a gold rush that attracted local inhabitants of Agadez as well as prospectors from neighboring countries like Chad, Sudan and Burkina Faso. Activities at the Djado site were temporarily ceased in order to organize exploration and artisanal extraction activities, to improve infrastructures, principally water supply and to improve the security presence. The site near Mount Ibl was discovered in September 2014. Exploration permits are required for all prospectors prior to accessing the sites. The cement extraction industry has existed in Niger since 1964 when the Malbaza cement plant was opened. Located in the Tahoua Region, the cement plant has been the only such project until 2014. In 2011, work for expanding the cement plant of Malbaza began with the expectation to increase its production capacity 13-fold. In 2014, work began for a new cement plant in Keita in the Tahoua Region. (Oil and mining industry of Niger, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_ind...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_industry_of_Niger)). The Malbaza cement plant presently produces 40,000 tonnes per year and, upon expansion, is expected to reach 540,000 tons per year [21]. The Keita cement under construction is expected to produce 1 million tonnes per year at startup and 1.5 million tonnes per year afterwards. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 47.8% of children aged 5 to 14 are working children and 4.3% of them are engaged in hazardous activities in the industrial sector, mining for iron, salt, gypsum and gold. The Department's 2014 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor reported that Niger's mining industry still resorts to such practices in the production of these goods. (Oil and mining industry of Niger, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_ind...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_industry_of_Niger)). In Niger, the globalization of the uranium market resulted in the emergence of new economic powers and put an end to the French monopoly, even if Areva still holds a commanding position. Negotiating with the government to fix the price for a kilogram of uranate became increasingly tense and conditions favored producer countries until the accident at the Japanese plant. Since then, the situation has turned around (in May 2011, the price stabilized around \$58) and the new Niger authorities have no interest in backtracking on previously signed agreements, which is not the case for Areva. These contracts, often called opaque, have long been established as an unequal relationship when stakes are high. Uranium exports once again represent an

important source of revenue for Niger: 30% of exports or more than 140 million dollars a year (Cellier and Robinet 2008; Statistical Yearbook 2003-2007, 2008 edition, National Institute of Statistics and website).

2. Direct Commercial Imbalance Situations between the Defensive and Offensive Countries

There was a thwarted coup attempt in Niger in March 2021, when a military unit tried to seize the presidential palace days before the recently elected Bazoum was due to be sworn in. Bazoum's election was the first democratic transition of power in a state that has

witnessed four military coups since independence from France in 1960. Niger President Mohamed Bazoum has been removed from power, according to a group of soldiers who appeared on the West African nation's national television late on Wednesday, hours after the president was held in the presidential palace. Reading from a statement, Colonel Amadou Abdramane, seated and flanked by nine other officers, said defence and security forces had decided: "Put an end to the regime that you know due to the deteriorating security situation and bad governance" (Moussa Aksar *et al.*, 2023).

Table 3: 83 Selected Types of goods exported by France to Niger in 2022

No	Types of goods
1	Manufacturers of plaiting material, basketwork
2	Works of art, collectors' pieces and antiques
3	Lac, gums, resins
4	Pulp of wood, fibrous cellulosic material, waste
5	Special woven or tufted fabric, lace, tapestry
6	Base metals not specified elsewhere, cermets.
7	Tin
8	Cork and articles of cork
9	Lead
10	Knitted or crocheted fabric
11	Carpets and other textile floor coverings
12	Wood and articles of wood, wood charcoal
13	Ships, boats, and other floating structures
14	Pearls, precious stones, metals, coins
15	Manmade filaments
16	Cereals
17	Milling products, malt, starches, inlin, wheat gluten
18	Edible fruits, nuts, peel of citrus fruit, melons
19	Nickel
20	Articles of apparel, knit or crocheted
21	Musical instruments, parts and accessories
22	Products of animal origin
23	Headgear and
24	Organic chemicals
25	Impregnated, coated or laminated textile fabric
26	Residues, wastes of food industry, animal fodder
27	Clocks and watches
28	Photographic or cinematographic goods
29	Wadding, felt, nonwovens, yarns, twine, cordage
30	Albuminoids, modified starches, glues, enzymes
31	Arms and ammunition, parts and accessories
32	Toys, games, sports requisites
33	Glass and glassware
34	Tanning, dyeing extracts, tannins, derivatives, pigments
35	<u>Live animals</u>
36	Copper
37	Railway, tramway locomotives, rolling stock, equipment
38	Inorganic chemicals, precious metal compound, isotope
39	Salt, sulphur, earth, stone, plaster, lime and cement
40	Animal, vegetable fats and oils, cleavage products
41	Footwear, gaiters and the like,
42	Cotton

No	Types of goods
43	Articles of leather, animal gut, harness, travel good
44	Fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatics invertebrates
45	Ceramic products
46	Aluminum
47	Miscellaneous chemical products
48	Explosives, pyrotechnics, matches, pyrophoric
49	Coffee, tea, mate and spices
50	Other made textile articles, sets, worn clothing
51	Cocoa and cocoa preparations
52	Mineral fuels, oils, distillation products
53	Rubbers
54	Soaps, lubricants, waxes, candles, modeling pastes
55	Iron and steel
56	Sugars and sugar confectionery
57	Beverages, spirits and vinegar
58	Tools, implements, cutlery of base metal
59	Oil seed, oleagic fruits, grain, seed, fruits
60	Tobacco and manufactures tobacco substitutes
61	Plastics
62	Stone, plaster, cement, asbestos, mica or similar materials
63	Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers
64	Essential oils, perfumes, cosmetics, toiletries
65	Miscellaneous articles of base metal
66	Articles of apparel, not knit or crocheted
67	Articles of iron or steel
68	Furniture, lighting signs, prefabricated buildings
69	Meat, fish and seafood preparations
70	Meat and edible meat offal
71	Paper and paperboard, articles of pulp, paper and board
72	Aircraft, spacecraft
73	Vegetable, fruit, nut food preparations
74	Electrical, electronic equipment
75	Miscellaneous edible preparations
76	Dairy products, eggs, honey, edible products
77	Cereal, flour, starch, milk preparations and products
78	Optical, photo, technical, medical apparatus
79	Printed books, newspapers, pictures
80	Vehicles other than railway, tramway
81	Pharmaceutical products
82	Machinery, nuclear reactors, boilers
83	Miscellaneous manufactured articles

Sources: Compiled by us with statistics from diverse documents and websites: Trading Economics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/france/exports/niger>

Table 4: 23 selected types of goods Exported to France by Niger in 2022

No	Types of goods
1	Machinery, nuclear reactors, boilers
2	Optical, photo, technical, medical apparatus
3	Electrical, electronic equipment
4	Pearls, precious stones, metals, coins
5	Lac, gums, resins
6	Aircraft, spacecraft
7	Furniture, lighting signs, prefabricated buildings
8	Ores slag and ash
9	Inorganic chemicals, precious metal compound, isotope
10	Vehicles other than railway, tramway

No	Types of goods
11	Tools, implements, cutlery of base metal
12	Manufacturers of plaiting material, basketwork
13	Mineral fuels, oils, distillation products
14	Musical instruments, parts and accessories
15	Articles of apparel, not knit or crocheted
16	Oil seed, oleagic fruits, grain, seed, fruits
17	Salt, sulphur, earth, stone, plaster, lime and cemen
18	Beverages, spirits and vinegar
19	Live trees, plants, bulbs, roots, cut flower
20	Iron and steel
21	Clocks and watches
22	Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers
23	Other made textile articles, sets, worn clothing

Sources: Compiled by us with information from diverse sources.

Niger Exports to France - 2023 Data 2024 Forecast 1995- ...<https://tradingeconomics.com/niger/exports/france>
 Niger Exports to France was US\$140.46 Million during 2022, according to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade. Niger Exports to France, 2023 TRADING ECONOMICS
 Niger Exports to France 2023 Data 2024 Forecast, 1995-2022 Historical. Niger Exports to France was US\$140.46 Million during 2022, according to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade. Niger Exports to France - data, historical chart and statistics - was last updated on August of 2023.

3. Conflicting Perceptions Different Actors: Frightening Reactions and Counter Traumatizing Reactions of the Oppressed and Oppressors

In fact, after the democratically elected president of Niger was deposed in a military coup, thousands of supporters of the takeover thronged the French embassy in the nation's capital to deliver an unmistakable message to their former colonial power and its Western allies. As President Mohamed Bazoum was being held captive by his soldiers at the presidential palace in Niamey, tense scenes played out down the road where pro-coup Nigeriens, some waving Russian flags, chanted "long live Putin" and "down with France" as a plaque at the embassy was torn down. The images reverberated through the halls of power at the Elysee Palace in Paris, thousands of miles away. French President Emmanuel Macron threatened retaliation against any attacks on French nationals and condemned the coup as "completely illegitimate and profoundly dangerous for the Nigeriens, Niger and the whole region." The United States and other Western nations also condemned the coup, and a bloc of Western African countries threatened to intervene militarily if Bazoum was not reinstated. US President Joe Biden called for the immediate release of Bazoum in a written statement commemorating Niger's Independence Day, saying Washington "stands with the people of Niger" as the country faces a "grave challenge to its democracy." Pro-junta demonstrators gathered outside the French embassy, tried to set it on fire before being dispersed by security forces in Niamey, the capital city of Niger July 30, 2023. The toppling of Bazoum was just the latest in a spate of recent coups stretching from one side of Africa to the other. Five countries in western and central Africa have been seized by military juntas in the past three years, five of them former French colonies. The coups have unfolded within the context of a wider struggle

between the West and Russia for influence in Africa, where experts say a rising tide of anger in former French colonies has left the door open for the Kremlin. While there is no sign that Russia helped instigate Niger's rebellion, Moscow has sought to take advantage of anti-Western sentiment around the region in recent years. US officials warn that the Russian mercenary group Wagner, which helps prop up several military juntas in the region, could seek to exploit the crisis in Niger. Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin has celebrated the putsch and offered to help the country's new leaders (World , Audio , Stephanie Busari, CNN, Thursday3; August 2023). As Western countries raced to evacuate their people from Niamey on Wednesday, one of Niger's coup leaders flew with a delegation to neighboring Mali, where hundreds of Wagner contractors are stationed, to seek support from that nation's military ruler. An important Western ally The coup in Niger has deprived Western nations, particularly France and the United States, of a key ally in a troubled region. The largest country in West Africa, Niger had been touted as a democratic success story on the continent and Bazoum was seen as a crucial partner in the fight against Islamist jihadists in the region. About 1,100 US troops are stationed in the country, including at a drone base that aids the Nigerien military in countering insurgents affiliated to ISIS and al Qaeda. US and Niger flags are raised side by side at a base camp for air forces and other personnel in Agadez, Niger in a 2018 file photo. The French military also maintains two permanent bases in the Sahel region, one of which is in Niamey. This was the main base for its flagship Operation Barkhane, a broader French anti-terror initiative targeting militants across the Sahel, including in Burkina Faso. The number of violent events involving militant Islamist groups in the Sahel has doubled since 2021, according to a report published Monday by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, a Pentagon think-

tank. Niger is also a leading supply of uranium to the European Union and produces around 5% of the world's supply of the mineral, according to the World Nuclear Association (World, Audio, Stephanie Busari, CNN, Thu August 3, 2023).

For the anti-French backlash despite its wealth of resources, Niger remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Many Nigeriens, especially in the younger generation, see France as responsible for prevailing poverty levels in their country. "We came out to tell this little Macron from France that Niger belongs to us. It is up to us to do what we want with Niger, we deal with who we want," Maman Sani, a pro-coup protester, told CNN. This resentment has spilled over into a burgeoning anti-French sentiment that is raising across the former French colonies in West and Central Africa, said Oluwole Ojewale, an analyst with the Institute for Security Studies. "There's a sense that even though France granted independence ... they are still tied to the umbilical cord of France. There's a subtle thinking that nothing takes place in Francophone countries without the tacit approval of France," Ojewale told CNN. For decades, Paris has maintained a prominent presence in many African nations stemming from its colonial history in the continent, a relationship known as "Françafrique." Françafrique has often been criticized for perpetuating neo-colonial practices. For example, few things have sparked more controversy than the Central African franc or CFA, a currency which is used by 14 nations in West and Central Africa including Niger. Countries using CFA Francs are required to store 50% of their currency reserves with the Banque de France, and the currency is pegged to the euro. While Paris asserts that the system promotes economic stability, others say it allows France to exert control over the economy of the countries using it (World, Audio, Stephanie Busari, CNN, Thu August 3, 2023). In addition, a battle for influence occurred. The wave of anger against the French in its former colonies in Africa presents an opportunity for Russia as it seeks to extend its influence across the continent, said Remi Adekoya, an associate lecturer in politics at the UK's York University. "When people were talking about potential rivals of Western influence in Africa, it was always China," Adekoya said. "Now in the past couple years, essentially since the war with Ukraine, Russia has intensified its efforts, and all of a sudden Russia is now back almost as a geopolitical player on the African continent, and Western intelligence services are worried." Wagner is central to the way in which Russia has maintained and grown its clout in Africa. Several CNN investigations, alongside research by human rights groups, have uncovered the private military company's association with atrocities perpetrated against civilian populations in Mali and Sudan, where it has come to the aid of military juntas. The mercenaries have also been tracked in other African nations including the Central African Republic, Mozambique and Libya (World, Audio, Stephanie Busari, CNN, Thu August 3, 2023).

The Wagner founder Prigozhin blamed the coup in Niger on the legacy of colonialism, and said his group was capable of dealing with situations like the one unfolding in Niamey, though there are no signs yet that his offer has been taken up. "What happened in Niger has been brewing for years," Prigozhin said in a message posted on social media. "The former colonizers are trying to keep the people of African countries in check. In order to keep them in check, the former colonizers are filling these countries with terrorists and various bandit formations thus, creating a colossal security crisis" in West Africa (Garé A., 28 February, 2023). As the coup was unfolding in Niger last week, Russian President Vladimir Putin was launching a charm offensive on African leaders at a summit in St. Petersburg, where he railed against Western colonialism and wooed attendees with gifts, including debt relief for Somalia, a mobile medical laboratory for Uganda and even a presidential helicopter for the leader of Zimbabwe. Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and President of the Republic of South Africa Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa shake hands on the sideline of the Russia Africa Summit. The meeting was more sparsely attended than the Kremlin had hoped. Seventeen African heads of state showed up, far fewer than the 43 that attended a previous summit in 2019. The poor turnout came days after Russia's cancellation of a Ukrainian grain export deal angered some African leaders. The Russian leader defended his withdrawal from the pact, which is crucial to food supplies on the continent, and pledged to send free grain to six African countries. One of the recipients was Burkina Faso, where Ibrahim Traore seized power in a coup last October and has since distanced his country completely from France. The 34-year-old is Africa's youngest head of state and was one of several junta leaders at the summit, during which he pledged the "support and friendship of the Burkinabe people" to Russia (Mona H. A., 6 August, 2023). "The region is shaken up by until today." Traore also alluded to the coup in Niger, saying the military "was taking responsibility" for the country, and asking for support for the new junta. "We want the same thing ... a multipolar world towards sovereignty ... and a complete change of partners." Traore was given a hero's welcome and was mobbed by a crowd on his return home. "The military leaders are using the anti-French sentiment to stay in power," said Ojewale, the ISS expert. "They claim to be the new messiahs but this time around, they are wearing Khaki (uniforms). It is anti-French populism." Ojewale says Paris has its work cut out to stem the tide of anti-French sentiment on the continent. "The French needs to rebuild and repair with Francophone countries. That's going to be very difficult to do. There's a third wave of scramble for Africa. The British are coming. The Chinese are coming. The US is coming, Russia is coming. Everyone wants to trade with Africa." the desire for change from different people," Traore said in a speech at the summit. "This has led us to turn our backs on traditional partners and to turn to our real friends, like Russia which has supported us through

decolonization (World , Audio , Stephanie Busari, CNN, Thu August 3, 2023).

Rabat - Niger's suspension of uranium and gold exports to France, which followed the military coup in the country, is a "response" to years of French oppression, has said Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. According to a report from the Turkish news channel NTV published on August 4, France's actions in Algeria and Rwanda have left a mark on world history. Amid the ongoing crisis in Niger, the Turkish president addressed the strained relations between France and its former African colonies, asserting that Paris had long oppressed them. Erdogan stated: "This is not the first such case concerning France. Their practices in Algeria and Rwanda have entered world history." "They [the military in power since July 26] have stopped the export of gold and uranium to France, as a response to the oppression of these countries for years," Erdogan explained, adding that Ankara is striving to maintain positive relations with African countries. In response to the announcement of the export ban, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had previously said that France's supplies of uranium were "extremely diversified," and there were no French companies mining gold in Niger. Read also: Morocco Stresses Importance of Maintaining Stability in Niger. Niger is France's largest supplier of uranium. France imported about one-third of its 6,286 tons of uranium from Niger (34.7%) in 2020, according to the Euratom Technical Committee (CTE). Niger, a former French colony, is the seventh largest uranium producer in the world by 2022, according to the World Nuclear Association (WNA). Without Niger's uranium, France would face the threat of power shortage as the European country generates more than 70% of its electricity using nuclear power. The Nigerian military announced ousting President Mohamed Bazoum, who was democratically elected on July 26, 2021 (TehranTimes, <https://www.tehrantimes.com › news › Niger-coup-En.>). In the wake of the coup, West African countries have imposed sanctions and threatened military intervention if Niger's coup leaders fail to reinstate Bazoum within a week, according to Reuters. Supporters of the military have attacked the French embassy in Niamey, expressing their refusal to any potential interference from France, while the current military leadership announced that any military intervention in Niger will be considered a declaration of war. Meanwhile, people in the country's capital, Niamey, have continued burning French flags and stoning the former French mission, prompting the police to use tear gas to attempt to disperse the crowds (Morocco World News).

Niger has become the latest country in West Africa where the army has seized control, following Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Chad - all former French colonies. Since 1990, a striking 78% of the 27 coups in sub-Saharan Africa have occurred in

Francophone states leading some commentators to ask whether France - or the legacy of French colonialism - is to blame? (Leonard Mbulle-Nziege & Nic Cheeseman, Goodbye France," reads a placard held by supporters of the coup, (Image source, Reuters, 2023). Many of the coup plotters would certainly like us to think so. Colonel Abdoulaye Maiga, who was named prime minister by the military junta in Mali in September 2022, launched a scathing attack on France. Criticising "neocolonialist, condescending, paternalist and vengeful policies", Mr Maiga alleged that France had "disowned universal moral values" and stabbed Mali "in the back". Anti-French vitriol has also flourished in Burkina Faso, where the military government ended a long-standing accord that allowed French troops to operate in the country in February, giving France one month to remove its forces. In Niger, which neighbours both countries, allegations that President Mohamed Bazoum was a puppet for French interests were used to legitimise his removal from power, and five military deals with France have since been revoked by the junta led by Gen Abdourahmane Tchiani. Partly as a result, the coup was followed by popular protests and attacks on the French embassy. The historical record provides some support for these grievances. French colonial rule established political systems designed to extract valuable resources while using repressive strategies to retain control (Femi N. *et al.*, February 16, 2021). So did British colonial rule, but what was distinctive about France's role in Africa was the extent to which it continued to engage - its critics would say meddle - in the politics and economics of its former territories after independence. Seven of the nine Francophone states in West Africa still use the CFA franc, which is pegged to the euro and guaranteed by France, as their currency, a legacy of French economic policy towards its colonies. France also forged defence agreements that saw it regularly intervene militarily on behalf of unpopular pro-French leaders to keep them in power (Leonard Mbulle-Nziege & Nic Cheeseman, Image source, Reuters, 2023).

Demonstrators in Niger also condemned neighbouring countries that have imposed economic sanctions since the coup. In many cases, this strengthened the hand of corrupt and abusive figures such as Chad's former President Idriss Déby and former Burkinabe President Blaise Compaoré, creating additional challenges for the struggle for democracy. Although France did not intervene militarily to reinstate any of the recently deposed heads of state, all were seen as being "pro-French". Worse still, the relationship between French political leaders and their allies in Africa was often corrupt, creating powerful and wealthy elite at the expense of African citizens. François-Xavier Verschave, a prominent French economist, coined the term *Françafrique* to refer to a neocolonial relationship hidden by "the secret criminality in the upper echelons of French politics and economy". These ties, he alleged, resulted in large sums of money being "misappropriated"

(Image source, EPA, Image caption, 2023). Although recent French governments have sought to distance themselves from *Françafrique*, there are constant reminders of the problematic relations between France, French business interests and Africa, including a number of embarrassing corruption cases. It is therefore easy to understand why one Nigerien told the BBC that: "Since childhood, I've been opposed to France... They've exploited all the riches of my country such as uranium." Such scandals were often swept under the carpet while France's African political allies were strong, and France's military support helped to maintain stability. In recent years, the ability of France and other Western states to ensure order has deteriorated, leaving them increasingly vulnerable to criticism. Despite considerable funding and troops, the French-led international response to Islamist insurgencies in the Sahel region has failed to enable West African governments to regain control of their territories. This was particularly significant to the fate of civilian leaders in Burkina Faso and Mali because their inability to protect their own citizens created the impression that French support was more of a liability than a blessing. In turn, growing popular anger and frustration emboldened military leaders to believe that a coup would be celebrated by citizens. Yet, for all of the mistakes France has made in its dealings with its former colonies in Africa over the years, the instability Francophone states are currently experiencing cannot be solely laid at its door. It has hardly been the only former colonial power to prop up authoritarian leaders abroad (Image source, EPA, Image caption, 2023).

Some of those opposed to French involvement in Niger have shown their support for Russia instead. During the dark days of the Cold War, the UK and the United States helped prop up a number of dictators in return for their loyalty, from Daniel arap Moi in Kenya to Mobutu Sese Seko in what was then Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. The strong relationship between coups and the former colonial power was also much less prevalent in previous eras. Four of the countries that have seen the highest number of coup attempts since 1952 are Nigeria (8), Ghana (10), Sierra Leone (10), and Sudan (17), which all experienced British rule. While the recent trend of coups in Francophone states may reflect the legacy of *Françafrique* coming home to roost, it has also been underpinned by "unprecedented" levels of insecurity in parts of West Africa and the Sahel region, with "armed groups, violent extremists and criminal networks" undermining public confidence in civilian governments, according to the UN. Each of the coups over the last three years has also been driven by a specific set of domestic factors that demonstrate the agency of African political and military leaders (Leonard Mbulle-Nziege, Image source, EPA, Image caption, 2023, online). In Mali, the background to the coup included an influx of extremist forces following the the collapse of the Libyan state in 2011, allegations the president had manipulated local

elections, and mass anti-government protests orchestrated by opposition parties in the capital. The trigger for the coup in Niger appears to have been President Bazoum's plans to reform the military high command and remove Gen Tchiani from his position. This is a strong indication that the coup was not really intended to strengthen Nigerien sovereignty, or to aid the country's poorest citizens, but rather to protect the privileges of the military elite. The mixed motives of recent coups are well demonstrated by the speed with which many of the new military governments have sought to replace one problematic relationship with an external ally with another. At the recent Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg, leaders from Burkina Faso and Mali declared their support for President Vladimir Putin and the invasion of Ukraine. As in the past, the beneficiaries of these global alliances are likely to be the political elite rather than ordinary citizens. There are already reports that in May, troops from the Wagner group, in alliance with Putin's government at the time, were responsible for the torture and massacre of hundreds of civilians in Mali as part of anti-insurgency operations. Reducing French influence is therefore unlikely to be a straightforward boon for political stability, and in decades to come we may well see a new generation of military leaders attempting to legitimise further coups on the basis of the need to rid their countries of malign Russian influence (Leonard Mbulle-Nziege, Image source, EPA, Image caption, 2023, online). He is a researcher at the Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa at the University of Cape Town and Nic Cheeseman is the director of the Centre for Elections, Democracy, Accountability and Representation at the University of Birmingham.

5. Different Diplomatic Exchanges Paving the Way Forwards in Favour of France's Neo-colonialism

France and Niger historically have strong relations. The two countries are linked through many agreements, in the areas of cultural, legal and defence cooperation. There is much high-level contact between political leaders and regular bilateral visits. With regard to France presence in Niger, its Consulate was established in Niger capital Niamey having a total France's population in the country to about 1,214 French nationals registered in January 2022. While the Consulate of Niger in France was established in Paris with estimated nationals in France registered to be 2,057 as of 2015. There waer high level exchanges visits and meetings as follows: The President of the French Republic visited Niamey on 23 December 2017. The French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, visited Niamey on 12 October 2017 and 15 March 2018. The Minister of the Interior, Gérard Collomb, visited Niger from 15 to 17 March 2018, to attend a conference in Niamey (14 countries) on the fight against immigration, bringing together for the first time countries of departure, transit and arrival. Ministre d'État François de Rugy represented France on 25 February

2019 for the Climate Summit in Niamey, organized by Niger's Presidency of the Climate Commission for the Sahel Region created by the African Union. Minister of the Economy and Finance Bruno Le Maire visited Niger on 28 March 2019 for the Franc Zone Finance Ministers Meeting. President Bazoum was received by the French President on 9 July 2021. He took part in the Summit on the Financing of African Economies, held in Paris on 18 May 2021, as well as the Paris Peace Forum on 11 November 2021 and the International Conference for Libya on 12 November 2021. Former President Mahamadou Issoufou made official visits to France in June 2016 and June 2018 and was received in Paris by President François Hollande on 31 March 2017 and then President Emmanuel Macron on 15 January 2021. He attended the Sixth Replenishment Conference of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria on 10 October 2019 in Lyon, and the Paris Peace Forum on 12 November. On 13 January 2020, he attended the Pau Summit alongside his G5 Sahel counterparts and the President of the French Republic (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs - 2023).

Concerning economic relations, in 2019, French exports to Niger increased by 17%, with a volume of €127 million. At the same time, French imports from Niger increased markedly, with a volume of €51 million. However, the bilateral trade balance has traditionally and structurally been positive in Niger, with the French deficit, which, however, is falling because of the significant drop in uranium imports. At sectorial level, Niger mainly imports electrical equipment, computers and devices, and pharmaceuticals from France. Niger's three main exports to France are non-ferrous metals, metal ores and various chemicals. Around 30 French companies are working in Niger across all economic sectors, including services, distribution and mining. For cultural, scientific and technical cooperation Niger is one of the 19 priority countries for French development assistance. At the Renaissance Conference (for the financing of the 2017-2021 Economic and Social Development Plan) held in Paris on 13 and 14 December 2017, France pledged €400 million (all instruments combined) to Niger for the 2017-2021 periods (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs - 2023). This financing is mainly implemented by the Agence française de développement (AFD, French Development Agency), the priorities of which are i) improving food security ii) strengthening governance for peace and public services iii) investing in human capital and youth iv) supporting economic development of territories and vi) supporting the demographic transition and women's contribution to development. Niger received €590 million in AFD commitments between 2010 and 2019, including €280 million between 2017 and 2019. In 2019, France provided €119.27 million in official development assistance, including 71.74 million bilaterally. France is the leading destination for students from Niger: in 2019/2020, there were 1,088 studying in

France, which co-financed educational and mobility programmes (Erasmus +) in the areas of agriculture, health, political science and mathematics. France supports the scaling up of the Secretariat of the Climate Commission of the Sahel Region and the implementation of the Climate Investment Plan for the Sahel Region (US\$1.3 billion). Decentralized cooperation (22 active partnerships) covered a large portion of Niger's territory in 2018, amounting to €1 million per year. Scientific cooperation draws on the National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) and the medical and health research centre (CERMES) that is a member of the Pasteur Institute network and Agrhymet. Cultural cooperation is built on the Jean Rouch France-Niger cultural centre, which is a bi-national institution. Its two centres in Niamey and Zinder have the two largest public libraries in Niger. Two Alliances Française branches are located in Agadez and Maradi. The Lycée Français La Fontaine in Niamey has almost 800 pupils, from pre-school through to secondary school (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs - 2023). On other cooperation aspects, in view of the security challenges in the Sahel-Sahara region, there is extensive security and defence cooperation between France and Niger. It seeks in particular to strengthen Niger's expertise in combating major crime (terrorism, various forms of trafficking). Operation Barkhane, launched in August 2014, relies on a projected air base in Niamey. It is committed in supporting Niger's armed forces and the G5 Sahel Joint Force with which it conducts joint cross-border operations. The Joint Command Post and the Intelligence Fusion Cell, created following the Pau Summit, are also located in Niamey. Since March 2022, Niamey has also hosted a partner command post. This operational cooperation is supplemented by a permanent structural cooperation system overseen by a network of seven military cooperation officers involved in six projects regarding training advice and operationalization of armed forces. Domestic security cooperation uses seven cooperation officers and mainly targets the areas of training and capacity building, in coordination with the EUCAP Sahel Niger mission (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs - 2023).

The country still have its functional diplomatic missions in foreign countries while other countries in Niger, excluding honorary consulates. Niger maintains permanent diplomatic missions in 25 nations around the world, both on the ambassadorial and the consular level. The diplomatic staff of the Republic of Niger reports to the Presidency of Niger through the Nigerien Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. It belongs to the United Nations and its main specialized agencies and in 1980-81 served on the UN Security Council. Niger maintains a special relationship with France and enjoys close relations with its West African neighbours. It is a charter member of the Organisation of African Unity and the West African Monetary Union and also belongs to the Niger River Commission and the Lake Chad Basin

Commission, the Economic Community of West African States, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. The Niger Embassy Worldwide page indicates the comprehensive list of Foreign Embassies and Consulates from around the world located in Niger as well as Nigerien Embassies, Consulates and other Nigerien representations worldwide. There are about 12 Foreign Embassies and 11 Consulates placed in the territory of Niger. Niger itself in total counts near 12 Embassies and 15 Consulates spread all over the world. In the list below, you can connect with any of indicated specific Embassy or Consulate in Niger or Nigerien Embassy or Consulate in specific foreign country to get the complete information as regards of contact details and services offered by that particular diplomatic or consular office. Niger Embassies and Consulates, (Embassy WorldWide, <https://www.embassyworldwide.com> > country > niger).

Niger's coup leaders have announced a list of 21 people they say will become ministers in a new government, forcing their agenda ahead of a summit of regional leaders demanding an end to their military takeover. Mahamane Roufai Laouali, cited as "secretary-general of the government", read out the names on state television overnight on Thursday, without specifying any further plans. Three of the generals who helped in the July 26 removal of democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum were named ministers of defence, interior and sports in the government, which is about half the size of the previous one. The 21-member cabinet will be headed by Prime Minister Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine, a civilian. The 58-year-old previously served as finance minister under the administration of former President Mamadou Tandja. Niger's previous government had 43 ministers of whom none were military officers. Heads of state in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are holding a summit in Nigeria to agree on a plan of action for Niger, where the coup leaders have refused to stand down. Since the coup, which shocked the region, ECOWAS has been calling for Bazoum's reinstatement. It imposed a number of sanctions including a no-fly zone and has threatened the possible use of force to restore democracy. The defiant putschists rebuffed diplomatic overtures and ignored an August 6 deadline by ECOWAS to restore civilian rule. Military governments in neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso have promised to treat any military intervention in Niger as a declaration of war on them. Meanwhile, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has voiced concerns about Bazoum and his family after his party reported that they were being detained at the presidential residence without electricity or running water, and had gone days without fresh food (Sam Mednick, 10 August 2023).

The secretary-general ... once again calls for his immediate, unconditional release and his reinstatement as head of state," a UN spokesperson said

on Wednesday. Niger coup leaders accuse France of violating airspace, freeing rebels. The meeting in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, could prove a pivotal moment in the standoff. The bloc's leaders are expected to agree on next steps, which could include military intervention – something an ECOWAS official has said would be a last resort. Sadeeq Garba Shehu, a security analyst and adjunct professor at the Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, said the ball was in ECOWAS's court after the coup leaders "called the bluff" on the bloc's seven-day deadline. "It's a very decisive moment for ECOWAS and its leaders," he told Al Jazeera from Abuja. Pressing ahead with the option of the use of force "is a position that is fraught with dangers and uncertainties", Shehu said. "First, will there be acceptance by all the members to put their money where their mouth is? How many of the ECOWAS members are ready to do that? How many are ready to finance that?" Shehu added, noting that West African leaders had to also consider domestic pressures from their countries' own populations. 'Time for public diplomacy' On Wednesday, former Nigerian central bank Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi met coup leaders in the Nigerien capital, Niamey, offering a glimmer of hope for dialogue after previous ECOWAS missions were spurned. And after a meeting with Nigerian president and ECOWAS chair Bola Tinubu, Sanusi told Nigerian press in Abuja that "interventions are ongoing and will continue". "This is a time for public diplomacy. It's not a matter that we leave to governments. All Nigerians, all Nigeriens need to be involved to find a solution that works for Africa, for Niger, for Nigeria and for humanity," he said. A former emir of the northern Nigerian city of Kano, Sanusi is also a leader of the Nigerian order of the Tijaniyyah, a Sufi Muslim sect with origins in Algeria but with followers across West Africa, including Niger. He is yet to respond to Al Jazeera's requests for comment on the mission to Niamey. Any escalation would further destabilise West Africa's Sahel region, one of the world's poorest, where long running violence from armed groups has displaced millions and stoked a hunger crisis. Niger was suspended from ECOWAS following the military coup, just as Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali were after coups occurred there in the last three years. (Al Jazeera and news agencies, August 2023). Niger's coup leaders have refused to stand down despite ECOWAS threatening to use force to restore democracy (File: Sam Mednick/AP], 10 August 2023).

It has been noted that Niger remains one of France's top three uranium suppliers in West Africa. Over the last ten years, the 88,200 tons of natural uranium imported into France came mainly from three countries: Kazakhstan (27%), Niger (20%), and Uzbekistan (19%).⁴ Aug 2023. France sources a significant portion of its much-needed uranium from Niger, and also has a military presence in the Sahelian country. The political troubles in Niamey are undoubtedly of interest in Paris. Niger, which has

Africa's highest-grade uranium ores, produced 2,020 metric tons of uranium in 2022, about 5% of world mining output, according to the WNA. This was down from 2,991 tons in 2020. The world's three biggest producers are Kazakhstan, Canada and Namibia.^{30 Jul 2023.} Namibia led the uranium production in Africa as of 2021, with an output of 5,400 metric tons. Niger followed: the production stood at 2,642 metric tons in the country. Overall, Africa had the second-largest uranium production in the world that same year.^{1 Au.} Over the last ten years, the 88,200 tons of natural uranium imported into France came mainly from three countries: Kazakhstan (27%), Niger (20%), and Uzbekistan (19%). Niger plays an important role in France's supplies, but its importance is overestimated by some politicians.^{4 August.} Niger, for example, is the world's seventh-largest uranium producer, and France, which relies on nuclear energy for around 70% of its power, is a key importer (Goviex Uranium Update on the Current Situation in Niger, July 27, 2023). Military and governmental advisers from Paris have permeated successive Nigerien administrations too, not least the one that has just been deposed.^{5 Aug 2023.} Each kg costs Rs 3 crore and the accused were in the process of finding a buyer. Prajapati during his questioning said that he had the uranium tested at a lab in 2014.^{24 Dec 2016.} Weapons-grade enriched uranium, of which uranium-235 comprises at least 93%, is much cheaper, though twice as expensive as gold – around 100,000\$ per kilogram.^{1 Apr 2020.} The fission of 1 g of uranium or plutonium per day liberates about 1 MW. This is the energy equivalent of 3 tons of coal or about 600 gallons of fuel oil per day, which when burned produces approximately 1/4 tons of carbon dioxide. One kilogram of natural uranium will yield about 20,000 times as much energy as the same amount of coal. It is therefore intrinsically a very portable and tradable commodity. Current uranium reserves are expected to be depleted by the end of the century, and new sources of uranium are hard to find. As a result, uranium prices have been steadily rising, with some estimates predicting a doubling of prices by 2030.^{4 February 2023.} According to EIA's 2013 Domestic Uranium Production Report, the average cost to mine uranium in the United States is \$67.10 per pound (includes expenses for land, exploration, drilling, production, and reclamation) – far above the current spot market price of \$36.50 (as of January 19, 2015). The most expensive natural element is francium, but it decays so quickly it can't be collected to be sold. If you could buy it, you'd pay billions of dollars for 100 grams. The most expensive natural element that is stable enough to purchase is lutetium. If you order 100 grams of lutetium, it will cost about \$10,00 (Goviex Uranium Update on the Current Situation in Niger, July 27, 2023).

6. Reasons of the Russian Choice of Bilateral Relations than France in the 21st Century by the Nigerien Junta Authorities Supported by the Population

In a sign of growing hostility towards the West since the coup in Niger, a businessman proudly shows off his outfit in the colours of the Russian flag in the traditional heartland of deposed President Mohamed Bazoum. Since the coup, there has been a war of words between the military and the West. Mr Bazoum was a staunch ally of the West in the fight against militant Islamists, and was a strong economic partner as well. Niger hosts a French military base and is the world's seventh biggest producer of uranium. The fuel is vital for nuclear power with a quarter of it going to Europe, especially former colonial power France. Since General Abdourahamane Tchiani overthrew the president in a coup on 26 July, Russian colours have suddenly appeared on the streets. Thousands took part in a protest in the capital Niamey on Sunday, with some waving Russian flags and even attacking the French embassy. It now seems this "movement" is spreading across the country. The businessman, based 800km (500 miles) away in the central city of Zinder, didn't want to give his name for safety reasons and asked that we blur his face. "I'm pro-Russian and I don't like France," he said. "Since childhood, I've been opposed to France. "They've exploited all the riches of my country such as uranium, petrol and gold. The poorest Nigeriens are unable to eat three times a day because of France." The businessman said thousands had taken part in Monday's protest in Zinder in support of the military takeover. He said he had asked a local tailor to take material in the Russian colours of white, blue and red and make an outfit for him, denying that it had been paid for by pro-Russian groups. The demonstrations in favour of Niger's military takeover have often featured Russian flags. President Bazoum entered office in 2021 in Niger's first democratic and peaceful transition of power since independence in 1960. But his government was a target for Islamist militants linked to the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda who roam across parts of the Sahara Desert and the semi-arid Sahel just to the south.

Under pressure from the Islamists, the armies in both neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso, also former French colonies with considerable French interests, seized power in recent years, saying this would help in the fight against jihadists. Like Niger, both these countries previously had significant numbers of French troops helping them but as the Islamist attacks continued, anti-French sentiment rose across the region, with people in all three countries starting to accuse the French of not doing enough to stop them. Once in power, the junta in Mali welcomed Russia's mercenary Wagner Group as they first forced out French troops and then pushed for thousands of UN peacekeepers to leave. Although Islamist attacks have continued in Mali, Burkina Faso's junta has also grown close to Russia and expelled

hundreds of French forces. In Niger, anti-French protests were frequently banned by Mr Bazoum's administration. Several civil society groups began escalating anti-French protests in mid-2022, when Mr Bazoum's administration approved the redeployment of France's Barkhane forces to Niger after they had been ordered to leave Mali. Key among them is the M62 movement, formed in August 2022 by a coalition of activists, civil society movements and trade unions. They led calls against the rising cost of living. Russian colours are suddenly popular on the streets of Niger. Various planned protests by the group were banned or violently put down by Niger's authorities with its leader Abdoulaye Seydou jailed for nine months in April 2023 for "disrupting public order" (Elizabeth P. *et al.*, July 30, 2023). The M62 appears revitalised in the wake of President Bazoum's removal. In an unusual move, its members were quoted by state TV mobilising mass protests in support of the junta, as well as denouncing sanctions by West African leaders over the coup. It is unclear if the group is linked to the junta known as the National Council for Safeguarding the Homeland (CNSP) or to Russia. But it was the umbrella group organising Sunday's protest, where smaller civil society groups such as the Coordination Committee for the Democratic Struggle (CCLD) Bukata and Youth Action for Niger were also present. Back in Zinder, the pro-Russia businessman is positive about how Moscow can help his homeland. "I want Russia to help with security and food," he said. "Russia can supply technology to improve our agriculture. "But, Moutaka, a farmer who also lives in Zinder, rejects this argument and says the coup is bad news for everyone. "I don't support the arrival of Russians in this country because they are all Europeans and nobody will help us," he said. "I love my country and hope we can live in peace.", poor governance and the presence of the French forces. Niger is home to 24.4 million people where two in every five live in extreme poverty, on less than \$2.15 a day (Tchima Illa Issoufou, August 2023).

On July 31, 2022, the Government of Mali called on the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, to abandon the "neo-colonial" attitudes. In this context, France is accused of pursuing "neo-colonial" policies, with its military presence in the country and the region, and its economic impact. In military terms, the bases that France established in the country on the grounds of combating Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, and in economic terms, the CFA franc, which was printed in the Bank of France and used in seven West African countries, including Mali, constitutes the essential foundations of criticisms based on colonialism. Although these two facts are presented as tools for stabilization by France, they caused adverse reactions against the Paris administration. The case of Mali also sheds light about France in all West African colonies (Cemre Çağla ATAMER 17 August 2022).

The colonial activities of France in West Africa started in 1637 by the Atlantic Ocean of the Senegal River and spread inland over time. French colonialism ended shortly after France's Fifth Republic Era began, extending to Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Niger. For over 300 years, France has exploited the region's resources and people through various methods, including trafficking enslaved people in West Africa. In other words, the Paris administration developed the French economy through the colonies. As observed in other colonial empires, France maintained its ties with its former colonies in the post-colonial period. As a matter of fact, the economic system of France was shaped within the framework of the exploiter-exploited relationship. The colonies are generally countries that export raw materials outside crucial production chains (Mali Junta Criticises Macron's 'Neocolonial and Patronising' Attitude", (France 24, [https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220801-\)-mali-criticises-macron-over-patronising-neocolonial-attitude](https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220801-)-mali-criticises-macron-over-patronising-neocolonial-attitude). This situation creates a system that works for the benefit of capitalist states like France because even after independence, these colonies were seen as a "market." Military coups took place in Mali in August 2020 and May 2021, and in addition to the security crisis in the country, a political crisis emerged. France first sent troops to Mali in 2013 to fight a jihadist insurgency. At the beginning of 2020, Paris announced that it would withdraw its military forces in this country. Mali Government Spokesperson Colonel Abdoulaye Maiga, after the statements made by Macron during his three-day visit to Benin, Cameroon, and Guinea-Bissau on July 25-28, 2022, is the "The transitional government demands President Macron permanently abandon his neo-colonial, paternalistic and patronizing posture to understand that no one can love Mali better than Malians," he said. Referring to the situation in Mali during the visit, Macron said that they have an essential responsibility, such as creating a framework for the Malian people to express their sovereignty and to continue the fight against terrorist groups (Cemre Çağla ATAMER 17 August 2022). Macron also referred to the relations between the Government of Mali and the Russian private security firm Wagner. However, Malian decision makers reject claims that the Wagner Group will be deployed in the country. Economically, France is considered a vital supplier of resources by Malian decision-makers. However, in recent years, China's share in the country's economy has exceeded that of France. In this regard, the Paris administration is in a struggle for influence with Beijing and Moscow. In fact, behind France's policies described as "neo-colonial" is the power struggle with these actors. At this point, it is necessary to talk about the dynamics of competition in the region. First, it is helpful to state that China is West Africa's largest investor and trading partner. Because, within the scope of the Belt-Road Project, the ports of the countries with a coast to the ocean make the region

attractive to China. Also, West African countries have an interest in China because, unlike the West, Beijing does not seek “democracy” in return for investment. On the other hand, China also provided military aid to the region’s countries to ensure security within the piracy and terrorist activities framework. For example, Beijing offered \$100 million in financial assistance to The African Standby Force (CADSF) in 2017. China wants to increase the region’s security to protect its investments there. Beijing is thus challenging Paris’ influence in West Africa, especially in economic terms. (France Tries New Tactics After Losing Influence in West Africa”, (Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/analysis-france-tries-new-tactics-after-losing-influence-in-west-africa/1720306>, (Date of Accession: 02.08.2022)). It is seen that Russia is increasing its commercial relations with African countries every year. In addition, military training and arms sales come to the fore in the regional policies of the Moscow administration. For example, as France withdrew from the region, it was observed that the Wagner Group became more active in Mali. At this stage, it should be underlined that the Wagner Group serves the interests of Russia. As a result, France’s relations with West African countries are shaped by a neo-colonial perspective. This situation is closely related to the colonial past of the country. Paris acts with the logic of colonialism to achieve its interests. However, these policies are marketed with the instrumentalization of Western values such as “democracy” and “human rights.” On the other hand, West African countries have been dragged into a whirlpool of crises, with the effect of being exploited for centuries. This triggers anti-colonial sensitivities. Accordingly, the influence of China and Russia in the region is increasing. Therefore, it can be predicted that France’s influence will decrease in Mali and in West Africa in general due to its colonial past. Therefore, the increase in the influence of Russia and China will not be surprising (Cemre Çağla ATAMER 17 August 2022).

The real question of decolonisation is therefore one of change in the economic focus, which will necessarily affect the political system. Whilst the discovery of natural resources is an easy route to economic change, a price or production crisis in the existing basis of state rule is the most natural route to economic change. The difference between the affiliated and unaffiliated countries was the latter’s attempt to diversify away from colonial production systems. Such attempts to diversify are another proxy for economically induced political crisis. Diversification during economic crisis occurred as an attempt to create a new basis for state rule (to guarantee political survival), resulting in deviation from the colonial mode of production (Michael E. Odijie, 2021). There have been enough coups and attempted coups in West Africa and the wider Sahel over the past two years to suggest that there is a pattern to the problems in the region. Poor governance, Islamist

conflicts and perhaps the environmental challenges of life in the Sahel are all part of the dangerous cocktail, but determining the reasons for such instability is never an exact science. Yet is the trend likely to continue and is there anything that the rest of West Africa can do about it? Analysis by Neil Ford and Anver Versi. There is no doubt that the number of coups in West Africa is rising, with UN Secretary-General António Guterres declaring last September that “military coups are back”. This year has already seen the army seize power in Burkina Faso plus a failed coup in Guinea Bissau, while the established governments of Chad, Guinea, Mali and Sudan were all overthrown last year and a military takeover was repulsed in Niger. Democracy has been relatively weak in most of the countries where coups have taken place. Some of the common observable traits include: limited tolerance of political opposition; restrictions on freedom of expression and an independent media; and a judiciary heavily influenced by the government (New African, April 27, 2022). Coup leaders often benefit from the fact that they overthrow unpopular leaders. In some cases, coups merely represent a younger generation of army officers overthrowing an older generation. Whether or not a military man is actually head of state, the army often exerts too much political power behind the scenes. African conflicts have long hosted troops from outside the continent but the large-scale involvement of Russian mercenaries is a relatively recent phenomenon. Most have arrived as part of the much-documented Wagner Group, which officially does not exist but which is believed to be funded by those with close ties to Vladimir Putin, and which some have claimed is actually controlled by the Russian Ministry of Defence. Some of its members are said to be members of the far-right, an association that is also supported by the fact that it was named after the 19th-century opera writer, Richard Wagner, who has gained global notoriety as Hitler’s favourite musical composer. Following human rights abuses in the Central African Republic, the EU imposed sanctions on three people and three organisations connected to the Wagner Group. The EU reported that the group had “sent private military operatives to conflict zones around the world to fuel violence, loot natural resources and intimidate civilians in violation of international law, including international human rights law”. Russia more generally is more involved in Africa than it has been for many years. This could explain the decision of more than 25 African countries not to condemn the invasion of Ukraine at the United Nations, while Eritrea – which actually voted against a resolution condemning Moscow’s actions – hosts Russian military bases. However, there also appears to be some historic affection for Russia as a result of Soviet support for movements opposing southern Africa’s racist governments (New African, April 27, 2022).

Members of the Niger military announced on Wednesday that they had deposed Bazoum and on Friday named Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani as the country’s

new leader, adding Niger to a growing list of military regimes in West Africa's Sahel region. Some leaders of the mutiny said they overthrew Bazoum because he wasn't able to secure the nation against growing jihadi violence. But some analysts and Nigeriens say that was a pretext for a takeover driven by internal power struggles. "We couldn't expect a coup in Niger because there's no social, political or security situation that would justify that the military take the power," Prof. Amad Hassane Boubacar, who teaches at the University of Niamey, told The Associated Press. He said Bazoum wanted to replace the head of the presidential guard, Tchiani. Tchiani, who also goes by Omar, was loyal to Bazoum's predecessor, and that sparked the problems, Boubacar said. Niger's dire security situation is not as bad as that in neighboring Burkina Faso or Mali, which have also been battling an Islamic insurgency linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. Last year, Niger was the only one of the three to see a decline in violence, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. Some taking part in Sunday's rally warned outside bodies to stay away. "I would like also to say to the European Union, African Union and ECOWAS, please, please stay out of our business," Oumar Barou Moussa said at the demonstration. "It's time for us to take our lives, to work for ourselves (Sam Mednick, 30 July 2023), It's time for us to talk about our freedom and liberty." Niger has the most at stake of any country in the Sahel if it turns away from the West, given the millions of dollars of military assistance it has received from abroad. On Saturday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the continued security and economic cooperation with the U.S. hinges on the release of Bazoum — who remains under house arrest — and "the immediate restoration of the democratic order in Niger." Macron said he'd spoken to Bazoum and his predecessor on Sunday. On Saturday France suspended all development and financial aid to Niger. The 15-nation ECOWAS bloc has unsuccessfully tried to restore democracies in nations where the military took power in recent years. Four nations are run by military regimes in West and Central Africa, where there have been nine successful or attempted coups since 2020. While the bloc has struggled to have much impact, the measures placed on Niger Sunday show the gravity of the situation, said Andrew Lebovich, a research fellow with the Clingendael Institute. "The strenuous measures they have put in place or threatened to put in place show not only how seriously they are taking this crisis, but also the urgency the regional body and larger international community feel in trying to force a return to normal that will likely prove elusive," he said. The response from the bloc towards Niger differs from how it dealt with recent coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, which did not involve the threat of force if constitutional rule wasn't reinstated. In the last few decades it has sent troops into member countries a handful of times (Sam Mednick, 30 July 2023). NIAMEY, Niger (AP) — Thousands of people backing the coup in Niger marched through the streets of

the capital denouncing France, the country's former colonial power, waving Russian flags, and setting a door at the French Embassy ablaze on Sunday before the army broke up the crowd. Demonstrators in Niger are openly resentful of France, and Russia is seen by some as a powerful alternative. The nature of Russia's involvement in the rallies, if any, isn't clear but some protesters have carried Russian flags, along with signs reading "Down with France" and supporting Russian President Vladimir Putin. The Russian mercenary group Wagner is operating in neighboring Mali, and under Putin Russia has expanded its influence in West Africa. The new junta's leaders have not said whether they intend to ally themselves with Moscow or stick with Niger's Western partners. French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday that attacks on France and its interests would not be tolerated and anyone who attacks French citizens will see an immediate response (Sam Mednick, 30 July 2023).

However, Colonisation is an unhappy memory that pushes many people to revolt (Garé Amadou, 2023). According to Amadou Oumarou, lecturer at the Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey: 'France is rightly or wrongly considered to support and maintain autocratic, dictatorial, and corrupt regimes'. The reservation of Nigeriens on the French presence in their country is explained by several factors. First, the historical factor: Colonisation is an unhappy memory that pushes many people to revolt against the French and France. This explanation is [old] but current, because it dominates the subconscious of many Nigeriens who see in France those who tortured their ancestors. Second, the economic factor: France is present in our countries through several firms or companies which only benefit the French and France. This is a cause for frustration and hate. Third, the political factor: France is rightly or wrongly considered to support and maintain autocratic, dictatorial, and corrupt regimes.: I don't think the protests represent a minor point of view. It is a feeling that is widely shared and that can or could be expressed on any occasion. French action in terms of the fight against jihadism [has not achieved] concrete results perceptible to citizens. The presence of forces other than French, or the non-presence of French forces, has more positive implications for populations in spaces of violence. Amina Niandou, president of the Association of African Communication Professionals: 'French forces have not been able to prevent the expansion of terrorism'. Amina Niandou, president of the Association of African Communication Professionals: 'French forces have not been able to prevent the expansion of terrorism'. At first, the protest movement was a minority view. But the way things are going, especially reading what is happening on social networks, the protest movement can evolve. The population does not understand why the terrorist attacks continue, given the big means available to the French forces. Nigeriens are skeptical of the French military presence and not against the French. In my opinion, the

Nigeriens who are in this position have observed what is happening in Mali and Burkina Faso. For these Nigeriens, the French forces in these countries have not been able to prevent the expansion of terrorism. So, for them, Niger will be in the same situation. Some also believe that the attacks are sponsored by French forces (Philip Kleinfeld.online, 2023). The government should priorities development solutions. Youth will need to be occupied through the creation of jobs or other entrepreneurial opportunities. Young people are as much drivers of conflict as they are of peace. Governance also must be good enough to overcome factors such as poor redistribution of mineral resources, impunity, social injustice. It will also require the involvement of women and young people in all peace processes, and their integration into local governance. I totally agree with the dialogue. Jihadism in Niger is increasingly carried out by local actors. Several studies.... on the factors of radicalisation of young people have shown that it is local, young people who are swelling the ranks of these jihadists. A dialogue will make it possible to find local responses to this phenomenon. On his part, Amadou Harouna Maïga, civil society leader from the conflict-affected Tillabéri region: ‘Niger needs the support of France. No country alone can win a war’. Its presence has in no way brought any change to the security situation, despite the ultra-sophisticated modern means at its disposal. The outings of these [protest] movements for the most part are limited to Niamey, the capital. But at times, in certain regions of the country, actors come out to chant their hostility to the presence of French forces in Niger. Niger needs the support and commitment of France, in the sense that no country alone can win a war (Philip Kleinfeld.online, 2023). First of all, the government must do everything possible to find out the reasons for this jihadist violence, because when a problem is not identified, it will be difficult to find ways out. Niger is used to discussing, negotiating, dialoguing with armed groups and has concluded agreements. On the one hand, this has been possible because the government is aware of their demands, and on the other hand it knows the actors well. In Niger, until now, the government has not received any claims from the jihadists. So how can it do a dialogue, and with whom? In addition, Maïmouna Diado, journalist: ‘The image that Niger retains of France is of continuous colonisation’. These Nigeriens, on the whole, are not against the fact that France is in Niger. For them, the French army must be in Niger, but they are against the strategy of fighting against the jihadists that France is leading. Despite the presence of the Barkhane force [the name of France’s now-defunct Sahel operation], the country continues to suffer attacks against its army. This is why these Nigeriens are protesting, and this number is not a minority, it is really the whole. They simply ask that France review its strategy for fighting jihadists in the Sahel, and particularly in Niger. France has played a historically negative role in Niger because, for Nigeriens, it was France that colonised Niger for several

years. The image that Niger retains of France is of continuous colonisation. Despite the fact that [we have] all the resources, the country does not manage to develop. And it is France which is at the origin of this plundering of resources in which there has been no positive progress. There are only negative results: Mineral resources are not extracted fairly, and the country is struggling to benefit from these mineral resources (Philip Kleinfeld.online, 2023).

During the French presidential campaign of 2017, Emmanuel Macron told a young Algerian that colonialism was “a crime against humanity”. His mailbox was immediately filled with angry letters from former French-Algerian settlers. A few weeks later, he retracted his remarks. “I’m sorry for wounding you, causing pain. I did not want to offend you,” he assured the colonists. Last year, after George Floyd’s killing sparked widespread demonstrations against French police brutality, Macron commissioned the historian Benjamin Stora to compile a report on the memory of the colonisation of Algeria and the Algerian war. Stora handed in his study, *France-Algeria: Painful Passions*, in January, and it will be published as a book next month. It should be of interest not just to young people with an Algerian connection, said the president, but to anyone whose parents are from a former French colony (Femi N. *et al.*, February 16, 2021). In the 147-page report, Stora uses the term “crime against humanity” only once, and that is simply to quote Macron’s retracted comments from 2017. Stora does use the words “repression” and “acts of violence”, but never “war crime”. He recommends (and Macron has accepted) the establishment of a “memories and truth” commission. But whose memories? And which truth? While we were filming in the West African country Niger, the sultan of Birnin Konni told us about crimes against humanity committed during the 1899 French invasion (the subject of our BBC film, *African Apocalypse*). The French commander, Paul Voulet, had captured the sultan’s town, killing between 7,000 and 15,000 of its Hausa inhabitants. “It’s a crime that remains unacknowledged and unpunished,” the sultan told us. “If he had perpetrated this massacre today, he would have been taken to the international criminal court at The Hague.” For five weeks, we followed Voulet’s trail of atrocities across Niger. It wasn’t hard. The country’s main highway traces Voulet’s route almost exactly. No one knows how many Africans Voulet and his men murdered as they sought to gain control of one of the last unclaimed parts of the continent after its division among the European powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884- 1885 (Cemre Ç. A., 17 August, 2022). It was certainly in the tens of thousands. At virtually every town and village we stopped at, we met Nigeriens, old and young, keen to tell us about the day Voulet came. These stories have been preserved through the tradition of oral history as told by the griot storytellers, or through word of mouth. In many places, the Nigeriens told us we were the first ever to

come and ask about their history. Passing through village after village became like a roll call of horror from colonial holocausts we in the west have forgotten or never even knew: Dioundiou, Tibiri, Matankari, Lougou, Koran-Kalgo. “He found us rich and left us poor,” the sultan of Birnin Konni continued. So important did he consider this opportunity to reveal the story of his people that, when he heard that BBC film-makers were coming, he postponed his long-anticipated hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Voulet’s killing spree lasted about six months before his sickened African troops mutinied and shot him. His genocidal mission was covered up by the French authorities for decades. His excesses, which included routine mass decapitations and torture, were dismissed by contemporary press and politicians as the lunacy of one officer who had become deranged by the African sun. But that did not stop the French government claiming the land he had conquered (Femi N. *et al.*, February 16, 2021). Five years after Voulet’s death, British ministers “granted” the land to France in return for French-held tuna fishing rights off the coast of Newfoundland, 6,000 miles away in the North Atlantic. This is how present day border between Niger and Nigeria was created. Such is the casual, grim surreality of colonialism. And that is the point. For the Nigeriens we met on our journey, the story of Voulet was not just history: it was the beginning of their present. Practically everyone we met felt their country continued to be controlled by a force from afar. The UN human development index places Niger the lowest in the world (Femi N. *et al.*, February 16, 2021). Like 11 other African countries colonised by France – so-called *Francafrrique*, a term Macron now rejects – Niger uses the CFA franc as its currency. CFA used to stand for *Colonies Francaises d’Afrique* (French Colonies of Africa). Now it’s been airbrushed into *Communauté Financière Africaine* (African Financial Community). Either way, each *Francafrrique* government is still obliged to deposit at least 50% of its currency reserves with the French treasury. When independence was announced in 1960, it was 100%. And the Banque de France holds 85% of the gold owned by the *Francafrrique* countries of West Africa. Along our route, many Nigeriens spoke mournfully of *la penetration coloniale* (colonial penetration) – none more so than two middle-aged men who had spent their working lives in the French-controlled uranium mines of northern Niger. Nigerien uranium reportedly supplies the electricity for one in three light bulbs in France, while much of Niger itself remains electrified. In the 1970s, Niger was paid a minimal amount for this uranium. Until 2014, a French company imported the uranium free of tax. The miners, Bija Bara and Abdou Haruna, are both sick from decades of unprotected exposure to raw, radioactive uranium. Most of their colleagues have died of uranium-related cancers. That’s what colonial penetration means to them. These are just some of the “memories and truth” that should be reckoned with in Macron’s new commission. But it should not just be a reckoning for France. Britain’s

colonial history is equally replete with atrocities, cover-ups and continuing exploitation. As George Orwell wrote in 1948: “It is by no means certain that we can afford [our high standard of life] if we throw away the advantages we derive from colonial exploitation.” That is no less true today, and it’s a similar story for all the colonising countries of Europe (Femi N. *et al.*, February 16, 2021).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has threatened a military intervention in Niger if coup leaders do not restore the presidency of Mohamed Bazoum by Sunday, 6 August. The threat could be a bluff, though after a spate of recent military takeovers, regional leaders fear a soft response might send the wrong message to other adventurous soldiers. ECOWAS has experience in such deployments and its current leader, Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, is keen to demonstrate the institution still has teeth. But analysts warn an intervention could lead to a long-lasting occupation that would further damage the legitimacy of Bazoum and his unpopular (and often anti-democratic) ruling party. Junta-led Burkina Faso and Mali have said military action would amount to a “declaration of war” on their countries, and the coup leaders – motivated by personal grievance and broader structural issues – are showing little interest in backing down. As the Nigerien intellectual Rahamne Idriss put it: “The reality has really changed, indeed, by force; but force cannot bring it back” (Louise O’Brien/TNH, 4 August 2023). Time has failed to heal the colonial-era crimes perpetuated by France in Africa. As many as 29 countries that were under French occupation in the continent are still pursuing reparations for the crimes and are awaiting the return of the wealth looted from their lands. Although French and African historians have unearthed volumes of evidence of colonial crimes, French leaders have consistently denied and attempted to conceal this black chapter of history. Africa awaits closure of French colonial crimes (Aurore B., 07 December.2020). African nations are still awaiting restitution of the French army’s crimes and return of wealth looted from their lands

The latest African country to rise up against French dominance is Niger, where the military managed to overthrow the Western-backed government of Mohamed Bazoum in July. Western governments have resorted to their usual tactic and begun a propaganda campaign against the coup which in fact seems to enjoy the support of most Nigerien people. Instead of talking about why the coup has happened and what people had been demanding from the previous government, the West has decided to reduce the event to an authoritative act and call it a threat against democracy. The American and European governments reacted exactly the same way when similar events happened in Mali and Burkina Faso in 2021, and 2022. The two countries, similar to Niger, finally drew a line in the sand and decided to root out French influence so that African people can determine

the fate of their own nations. The people of Africa are fed up with being kept in poverty and struggling to put food on the table while France exploits their natural resources and fills its own pockets with African wealth (Mona H. A. August 2023). The simple fact that Africans no longer want France's stealing is something you will never hear from Western media. To understand what's exactly being sidestepped by the West we will be taking a look at France's colonial past in Africa, and how it continues to exploit the continent today. The British and French colonized 95% of the African continent at one point. France colonized 20 nations including present day Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Niger, which are all located in West Africa. It is important to note that France has never paid compensation for any of the inhumane crimes it has committed. If you ask a French person today, they might laud their ancestors for bringing "modernism" to Africa and helping the people of the continent become more "humane". As various renowned writers and historians have pointed out, this notion that non-Western people are lesser than, still prevails throughout Europe and the U.S. France still continues its colonialism of Africa through agreements and administrative practices. Paris loots the natural reserves of 14 African countries today; namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. France has been earning hundreds of billions of dollars each year through these "agreements" (Mona H. A., August 2023).

The appearance and presentation of democratically elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, on state television actually shown that the Junta conquered him and his supporters. The Junta announced two days later that Abdourahmane Tiani, the head of Niger's Presidential Guard, would be the new head of state. Some of the reasons given for the coup were the deteriorating security situation and poor economic and social governance. However, an investigation into the diversion of \$125 million, nearly half the defence budget to private contractors linked to the top brass in the military during the entire tenure of the previous administration, according to Africa Confidential, may well be the reason the generals moved against President Mohamed Bazoum. This was the fifth successful coup in the country since independence. Coup supporters took to the streets, waving Russian flags and burning French ones, apparently less out of love for Russia and more an expression of historical dissatisfaction with France's exploitative policies in the country and the region. Some supporters attacked the French Embassy. Significantly, though both the USA and France have military forces in the country, there were no signs of anyone burning the US flag. Given the current dynamics, it is difficult to tell whether the demonstrations were spontaneous or mobilised by coup leaders. The Kremlin-linked Wagner Group also operates in Libya. Chad is unstable. The only

two stable countries are Nigeria, with whom it has historical, ethnic and cultural relations, and Benin (Mohamed K. O. , August 2023). In 2010, the two Orano (née Areva) subsidiaries extracted a total of 114,346 tons of uranium ore from Niger, representing an export value of 2,300 billion CFA francs (more than 3.5 billion euros). Of this sum, Niger would have received only 300 billion CFA francs (about 459 million euros), or 13% of the exported value. In 2012, Areva received tax exemptions worth €320 million. Although mining made up 70.8% of Niger's exports in 2010, it contributed only 5.8% of the country's gross domestic product (Mohamed K. O. , August 2023).

In the first quarter of 2013 alone, Areva generated consolidated revenues of 2.279 billion euros, more than Niger's total annual budget (around 2 billion euros). In the 3rd quarter of 2013, its turnover amounted to 6.8 billion euros, up in 2012, and its order book reached 42 billion euros (i.e., 21 years of Niger's budget). In 2012, the group's total turnover exceeded 9 billion euros, and its mining activities generated 1.36 billion euros. Niger, where more than 60% of the population makes less than \$1 per day, is ranked 189/191 in the 2022 UN Human Development Index. According to WNA Niger has two significant uranium mines close to the twin mining towns of Arlit and Akokan, 900 km northeast of the capital Niamey (more than 1200 km by road) on the southern border of the Sahara. Uranium in Niger was discovered in 1957 by French researchers; Niger's first commercial uranium mine began operating in 1971. In 2021 Niger produced 2248 tU (tons of raw uranium), and cumulative production was about 150,000 tU by the end of 2019. The concentrates are trucked 1600 km to Parakou in Benin, then railed 400 km to the port at Cotonou. They are exported for conversion, mostly to Comurhex in France. Over the past ten years, the 88,200 tonnes of uranium ore imported into France came mainly from three countries: Kazakhstan (27%), Niger (20%), and Uzbekistan (19%). The Niger government sought a revised deal based on the 2006 mining law, which raised royalty taxes from 5.5% in the 10-year license to between 12% and 15%, depending on profits. Niger's struggle to secure greater benefits from its uranium was described by Oxfam in 2014 as a "fascinating David vs. Goliath struggle playing out in Niger – the poorest country in the world pitted against the French multinational uranium conglomerate, Areva." It added: "Though it's not getting much attention globally, the outcome could have important implications for other poor countries that are trying to get better deals for the minerals and oil dug out of their lands." The mines resumed operation at the end of January 2014 under the terms of a government decree. The deal stipulated for the first time that the firms' boards would include Nigerien managing directors (Mohamed K. O. , August 2023).

7. Real Offensive Speeches Chasing France out of Niger due to the Support of Ousted Mohamed Bazoum

Niger's military regime fired a new verbal broadside at France on Friday, accusing Paris of "blatant interference" by backing the country's ousted president as protestors rallied near a French base outside the capital Niamey. President Mohamed Bazoum, a French ally whose election in 2021 had stoked hopes of stability in the troubled country, was detained on July 26 by members of his guard. Relations with France, the country's former colonial power and ally in its fight against militants, went swiftly downhill after Paris stood by Bazoum. Comments by French President Emmanuel Macron in support of Bazoum "constitute further blatant interference in Niger's domestic affairs," regime spokesman Colonel Amadou Abdramane said in a statement read on nationwide TV. The Sahel state is also embroiled in a standoff with the West African bloc ECOWAS, which has threatened to intervene militarily if diplomatic pressure to return the elected Bazoum to office fails. On Monday, Macron said, "I call on all the states in the region to adopt a responsible policy." France, he said, "supports (ECOWAS') diplomatic action and, when it so decides, (its) military" action, he said, describing this as "a partnership approach." On Friday, Macron paid further tribute to Bazoum, praising his "commitment, action and courage" (Falma T. 2 September 2023). He dismissed Niger's rulers as having "no legitimacy" and insisted France would make its decisions with regard to Niger "on the basis of exchanges with President Bazoum". Abdramane said, "Mr. Macron's comments and his unceasing efforts in favor of an invasion of Niger aim at perpetuating a neo-colonial operation against the Nigerien people, who ask for nothing more than to decide its own destiny for itself." Abdramane said Niger's "differences" with France "do not touch on the relationship between our peoples, or on individuals, but on the relevance of the French military presence in Niger." On August 3, the regime denounced military agreements with France, a move that Paris has ignored on the grounds of legitimacy. The agreements cover different timeframes, although one of them dating from 2012 was set to expire within a month, according to military leaders. France has around 1,500 troops in Niger, many of them stationed at an airbase near the capital, who are deployed to help fight a bloody insurgency. Thousands of people on Friday gathered outside the base to demand the troops leave. The three-day "sit-in" has been organized by the M62, a coalition of civil groups opposed to the French military presence in Niger. "France must leave and she will leave, because Niger is not her home," said an M62 leader, (Falma T.. 2 September 2023). Supporters of Niger's National Council of Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) display a French national flag with a x-mark on during a protest outside Niger and French airbase in Niamey on September 1, 2023 to demand the departure of the French army from Niger (Photo by AFP, 2023).

French President Emmanuel Macron looks on, as he visits the Marseille-Fos industrial dock in Marseille, southeastern France, on June 28, 2023. LUDOVIC MARIN/Pool via REUTERS/File Photo Acquire Licensing Rights. PARIS, July 30 (Reuters) - France condemned violence against its diplomatic mission in Niger and pledged to react strongly to any attack on its nationals or interests, as anti-French protests took place outside the French Embassy in Niamey on Sunday following last week's military coup. "The President will not tolerate any attack against France and its interests," President Emmanuel Macron's office said in a statement, specifying that it would respond to attacks against French diplomats, armed forces or businesses. In a separate statement, the Foreign Affairs ministry condemned all violence against diplomatic missions and called on Niger authorities to protect the French mission as required under international law. Macron has spoken with ousted President Mohamed Bazoum and former president of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou in the last few hours, the statement from the president's office said, adding that both of them condemned the coup and called for calm. France, the former colonial power in Niger, announced on Saturday it was cutting all development aid to the country and called for Bazoum to be returned to office following his ouster late on Wednesday. Niger has been a security partner of France, and the United States, which have used it as a base to fight an Islamist insurgency in West and Central Africa's wider Sahel region according to the Report (Elizabeth P. July 30, 2023). Earlier, Colonna said the coup leaders in Niamey had until Sunday to hand back power, otherwise a threat by member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to stage a military intervention had to be taken "very seriously". "The threat is credible," she said on French public radio. France did not specify on Saturday whether its backing would entail military support for an ECOWAS intervention in Niger. On Friday, ECOWAS said its military chiefs had agreed on a plan for a possible intervention in Niger. "All the elements that will go into any eventual intervention have been worked out," ECOWAS commissioner Abdel-Fatau Musah said. These included "the resources needed, and including the how and when we are going to deploy the force", he added. "We want diplomacy to work, and we want this message clearly transmitted to them [the junta] that we are giving them every opportunity to reverse what they have done," Musah said. The coup leaders have warned they would meet force with force (Elizabeth P. July 30, 2023). Mali and Burkina Faso, where military leaders have taken power since 2020, have warned that any regional intervention would be tantamount to a "declaration of war" against them. Russia, which has increased its footprint across the Sahel region in recent years, said a foreign intervention would not resolve the crisis. Neighbouring Benin and Germany on Friday urged continued diplomacy to defuse the situation. The United States said on Friday it was suspending some aid to Niger following the coup.

Washington is pausing “certain foreign assistance programmes benefitting the government of Niger”, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. “As we have made clear since the outset of this situation, the provision of US assistance to the government of Niger depends on democratic governance and respect for constitutional order,” Blinken said, adding that Washington would continue to review its foreign assistance as the situation on the ground evolves. Blinken did not specify what programmes would be affected but said life-saving humanitarian and food assistance, as well as diplomatic and security operations to protect US personnel, would continue. “We remain committed to supporting the people of Niger to help them preserve their hard-earned democracy and we reiterate our call for the immediate restoration of Niger’s democratically-elected government,” Blinken said (Al Jazeera Media Network, 2023).

In the meantime, the episode has shone a bright light on the U.S. military presence in the country, raising questions about whether American forces will have to leave a large drone base that officials consider crucial to regional counter-terrorism operations. The base, located near the small northern city of Agadez, is the primary launching point for nearly all of Washington’s intelligence and surveillance operations in West Africa. America’s drone fleet for the region, which previously operated from the base, has been grounded since the coup following the junta’s decision to close Nigerien airspace. The U.S. presence in Niger dates back to 2002, when the George W. Bush administration was winding up its so-called “Global War on Terror.” The idea was that the U.S. was going to wage preemptive war, really getting to root out the source of potential terrorist attacks,” explained Stephanie Savell, the co-director of the Costs of War project at Brown University, in a recent Quincy Institute panel. Washington spent \$110 million building the base near Agadez and has poured at least \$500 million of security aid into the country since 2012.(). The U.S. has also dedicated significant time to training Nigerien officers and assisting them in missions aimed at rooting out terror groups that have taken hold in the country in recent years. Today, there are roughly 1,100 American soldiers permanently stationed in the country. As journalist Nick Turse has shown, there’s reason to believe that the U.S. presence in Niger has had a negative impact on the country’s security. Attacks have gone up dramatically since the U.S. began to operate in the region, and at least five of the junta leaders received training from the U.S. military, suggesting that American influence has done little to encourage respect for democracy in the Nigerien ranks. Notably, many ongoing security problems in the region date back to the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, Niger’s northern neighbor. “Current instability is associated with the collapse of the Libyan state in 2011, which led to the proliferation of weapons and armed fighters in the region,” explained a recent report from the Council on

Foreign Relations. With an abundance of black market weapons available, jihadist groups have created instability across the Sahel, opening the door for a series of military coups (Michael E. O. 30 March 2021). Now, the United States finds itself in a bind. American officials have taken some steps to reduce cooperation with Niger in the short term, according to the Department of Defense. “We have paused, on an interim basis, security cooperation efforts and are not conducting military training while we monitor this evolving situation,” a Pentagon spokesperson told RS. “We’re focused on a diplomatic solution to preserve Niger’s hard-earned democracy. “At the same time, U.S. officials have made clear that the Pentagon will not leave Niger of its own volition. “The only way this mission ends is if the Nigerien government asks us to leave,” an anonymous U.S. official told Reuters. “It’s too important for us to abandon. ”So far, the junta has opted not to pick a fight with Washington. Instead, coup leader Abdourahamane Tiani has set his sights on France, ripping up a series of military cooperation agreements and demanding that French forces leave the country. Paris, for its part, has declined to withdraw the 1,500 troops it currently has stationed in Niger, arguing that any decisions made by the junta are illegitimate. Many analysts argue that the U.S. would likely have to leave if the military threats from ECOWAS turn into a reality. “I would imagine if an ECOWAS invasion happened, and there was a regional war, I think that would really put the Defense Department in a tricky position,” argued Sarah Harrison of the International Crisis Group in a recent panel sponsored by the Forum on the Arms Trade (Connor E., August 17, 2023).

In case of an invasion, Harrison said, the U.S. would likely have to withdraw “just for force protection issues.” (One need not have a vivid imagination to see how a decision to keep American troops in the country could lead to a “Black Hawk Down”-esque situation, with all its attendant moral and political costs.) Another situation that could force U.S. soldiers to leave — or at least reduce their role in the country — is if the junta manages to hold onto power. “If [the coup] is not reversed, it’s going to be hard as a policy matter to stay,” Harrison argued. “The U.S. is there training and equipping Nigerien forces, and a lot of that is going to be off limits.” Given these challenges, some analysts see the coup as an opportunity for American policymakers to shift gears and try a new approach to improving security and building state capacity in West Africa. “What this moment really calls us to do, in the United States, is to see this as a wakeup call that a dramatically different kind of an approach is needed,” argued Savell. “Let’s be courageous enough to say what we’ve done so far hasn’t worked” (Connor Echols, Aug 17, 2023). Connor Echols is a reporter for Responsible Statecraft. He was previously an associate editor at the Nonzero Foundation, where he co-wrote a weekly foreign policy newsletter. Echols received his bachelor’s degree from

Northwestern University, where he studied journalism and Middle East and North African Studies. The views expressed by authors on Responsible Statecraft do not necessarily reflect those of the Quincy Institute or its associates. Nigerien soldiers participate in a special forces training exercise during a U.S.-led exercise near Agadez, Niger, April 14, 2018. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 (SW/AW) Evan Parker) (US finally recognizes coup in Niger. Now what? - Responsible Statecraft >, Senate shoots down effort to withdraw US troops from Niger - Responsible Statecraft > Reporting Africa (Connor E., (August 17, 2023). In fact, France currently sources over 75% of its electricity from nuclear energy and is dependent on Niger for much of its immediate and future uranium supply. This dependence could grow even further when production at the recently-discovered Imouraren uranium deposit is up and running in 2015. The mine is set to produce 5,000 tonnes of uranium per year and would help make Niger the second-largest uranium producer in the world. Areva, which is 87% owned by the French state and holds a majority share in three out of the four uranium mining companies operating in Niger, is funding the new mine. However, despite Niger's vast uranium reserves – over which France has an effective monopoly – the country has remained poor. In February 2013, President Mahamadou Issoufou, a former Areva employee, claimed that Niger's uranium deals generate just 100 million Euros (\$140 million) a year, representing just 5% of Niger's budget. *"That's why I have asked to re-equilibrate the terms of the deal between Areva and Niger,"* he said. Issoufou also said Niger has started looking to other countries, saying that his "objective is to diversify our uranium mining partners" (Assma M., (August 7, 2023). One can perhaps substitute 'other countries' for China, which already owns a 37% stake in Niger's SOMINA mine and has carried out uranium exploration throughout the country. However, Areva – France by proxy – still holds all the cards given its controlling stakes in the country's three other mines. Comparatively, Francophone Africa does not receive the same level of Chinese investment as many Anglophone parts of the continent and Niger is no different. French saturation of Nigerien markets leaves little space for other investors, and its grip on the uranium industry is such that hopes of real diversification of investment and competition are slim. And without other prominent competitors, Niger's position in negotiations with Areva is severely weakened. Areva's power in Niger is also exemplified by recent court battles over the safety of the mines. In 2009, Serge Venel, a French miner who worked for Areva in Niger from 1978 to 1985 died of lung cancer. He had previously raised concerns about the lack of health precautions in mines and after his death; doctors said that his unprotected work in the nuclear industry had been the cause of his illness. The French courts agreed, and in 2012 demanded Areva pay Venel's family €200,000 (\$270,000). However, in 2013, Areva won an appeal. The company argued that the COMINAK mine

was to blame, not Areva, despite being the majority shareholder in the mine. Proving where culpability lies in mining-related illnesses is particularly tricky, especially when Areva owns all the local hospitals in the area. Serge Venel was able to be diagnosed properly at home in France; Nigerien miners and their families are treated at Areva-owned medical facilities (Sam P., 19 February 2014).

CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, the history of neo-colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa in particular during the 21st Century is very interesting in the domain of History of International Relations with related field of studies when taking a flash back to the era of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods which lasted till the end of the 20th Century. Those phases of French hegemony in its former colonial sphere of influences with the manipulation of 3Es ambitions to the developmental detriments of the Africans and Nigeriens as used in the present research had its pitfalls with direct attacks emanating from the New Generation of West African Military Leaders (NGWAML) as the Niger's Junta stood their grounds to set a clear example of ending neo-colonialism with immediate effects urging the French settlers to leave their territory, closure of diplomatic services and a popular slogan of "NO" to continuous looting of natural resources through French protected leaders having no wills to develop the country. In fact, popular agitation and manifestations in the French embassy and Military Headquarters in Niger urging their departure were actually unbelievable to some African countries which till present are still hosting French pro-democratically elected leaders. The inspirations of military takeover in Burkina-Faso, Mali, Niger and recently in Gabon are shaping new grounds of challenges towards French Hyper-Hegemonic Presence (FHHP) in those countries among others. It is very clear by the end of the 2023 that, the French economy has been in terrible crises among the European Union and will likely push for social instabilities couple with much hardship in France. For example, the existing industries which were depending on uranium energy resources looted from Niger are going to suffer serious setbacks. Hence, the darkness experiencing in Niger's towns due to lack of stable electricity connections will be the turn of the French towns in case no serious adjustment are done to remedy the situation. Our finding also goes that, the discarding and ending of post-colonial accords and pacts in various domains of activities are for the benefits of Africans thereby by giving the new leaders an upper hand to formulate and implement effective macro-economic and microeconomic policies with adjustment suitable with the country's realities for national development and poverty alleviation. Nigeriens can thus have more positive reflections to embark strongly on the transformation of natural resources to finished products ready for consumptions in Niger thereby encouraging the Multinational corporations investing to

carry direct activities with taxes paid in the State's treasuries of Niger. However, there are prospects that Niger in collaboration with non-neo-colonial actors like Russia and China can strong embark on the effectiveness of wine-wine mechanisms for the opening and development of specific heavy industrial sectors which can generate income for local development initiatives to regain its glories for the benefits of the population which have so far been suffering in the hands of FHHP to the status of HIPC. If the French are not careful to soften their foreign policy initiatives towards its former colonies, the rest of the 21st Century will be very challenging as looting of African natural resources may not likely continue to their benefits in the entire Sub-Saharan African Countries as illustrated with the case of Niger which strongly took the bull by the horns with both offensive and defensive diplomatic stances. Notwithstanding the fact that Bazoum's election as the President of Niger was the first democratic transition of power in a country that has witnessed four military coups since obtained independence from France in 1960 as it ended up disappointing the Nigeriens due to his continuous pro-French supporting neo-colonial mechanisms which were unbearable to the population due the increasing rate of underdevelopment.

In a nut shed, Niger is natural blessed with fossil Fuels as ranium production in Niger had increased by 29% to 4,198 tons in 2010 from 3,243 tons produced in 2009. The Akouta underground uranium mine is operated by Compagnie Minière d'Akouta (COMINAK). This company is jointly owned by Areva Group, Overseas Uranium Resources Development Co. of Japan, ENUSA Industrias Avanzadas, S.A. of Spain, and the government of Niger. The Arlit open pit uranium mine is operated by Société des Mines de l'Air (SOMAIR). – (<http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2010/myb3-2010-ml-ng.pdf>.) This company is jointly owned by Areva Group and the government of Niger. The Imouraren uranium deposit is considered to be of world-class standard. In 2010, Areva began developing a mine at Imouraren in which it planned to invest \$1.6 billion. The mine would have a production capacity of 5,000 Mt/yr and is believed to have a life span of more than 35 years. Areva will begin production activities in 2013, and will be employing about 1400 people. Several global mining companies are also conducting uranium exploration or mining activities in Niger. Some notorious MNCs includes: Artemis Resources Ltd. of Australia, Paladin Energy Ltd. of Australia, Oklo Uranium Ltd. of Australia, URU Metals Ltd. of South Africa, Homeland Uranium Inc. of Canada, Bays water Uranium Corp. of Canada, Orezone Gold Corp. of Canada and Nuclear International Uranium Corp. of China (<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/niger/>). Despite the fact that the Niger has some of the World's largest uranium deposits, the country till the end of the second decade of the 21st

Century remain one of the poorest countries in the World, landlocked, rely on subsistence agriculture and livestock making it too shameful to the long manipulators and looters of the most valuable natural resources whose revenues could have boost the country economy and development. However, the Military Junta Government are bent to initiate and implement new strategies to relief the country and its population from those long colonial and post-colonial manipulations exercised by the French diplomatic representatives and other related actors of 3Es ambitions.

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