

# ECOWAS Peace and Security Report

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## Under attack? Niger faced with religious extremism and terrorism

### Introduction

On 23 May 2013, Niger suffered a double terrorist attack: one on a military barrack in Agadez and the other on a plant owned by the French nuclear giant Areva in Arlit. These attacks were jointly claimed by the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (*Mouvement pour l'unicité et le djihad en Afrique de l'Ouest*, or MUJAO) and the *katiba* ('battalion') called 'Signatories in blood', founded in December 2012 by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the former leader of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). A week later, on 31 May, the civilian prison in the capital, Niamey, was attacked. The first of their kind in the country, these attacks confirm regional fears about the transnational nature of religious extremism and terrorism, which – in the case of Niger – had previously been restricted to the abduction of Westerners.

Is Niger, which has so far coped with the Tuareg and Toubou rebellions and been spared terrorist acts, a collateral victim or a new target of terrorist and jihadist groups? What strategy has it developed to prevent or respond to the threat? What are the strengths and weaknesses of its global strategy against extremism and terrorism? Is its anti-terrorism strategy adequately integrated in a regional or international approach? How can Niger strengthen its mechanism to accelerate socio-economic development while ensuring peace and stability?

This report aims to analyse the factors that make Niger vulnerable, as well as those that account for its resilience. Based on interviews and field research conducted in Niamey in July and August 2013, the report analyses the security challenges facing Niger in the current geopolitical context. It also reviews the country's national strategy against the threats posed by religious extremism and terrorism and how well it is integrated into regional efforts.

### Threats of religious extremism and terrorism in Niger: myth or reality?

Niger faces threats from three directions: northern Mali, southern Libya and northern Nigeria. Various social and political actors have different views on the consequences of this situation. Indeed, the threats of religious radicalism and terrorism are perceived in two different ways in Niger. Some believe the threats are real, while others feel that, while they are exaggerated, there is a need for special attention in terms of preventive measures.

### ECOWAS PEACE AND SECURITY REPORT SERIES

The *ECOWAS Peace and Security Report* series seeks to provide the decision makers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with analysis on critical and topical human security situations in West Africa. It results from a partnership between the ISS and the ECOWAS Commission (Regional Security Division). The objective is to produce independent, field-based policy research in a timely manner to inform ECOWAS decision-making processes or alert its governing structures on emerging issues. The *ECOWAS Peace and Security Report* series consists of analyses of country situations and other thematic issues with recommendations. It is circulated, free of charge, both electronically and in hard copy, to a diverse audience in West Africa and beyond. The *ECOWAS Peace and Security Report* is produced by the Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis Division (CPRA) in ISS Dakar with the support of CPRA staff in ISS Addis Ababa, ISS Nairobi and ISS Pretoria.

## *A reality that should not be underrated*

According to some sources, the threat of extremism and religious terrorism is a reality in Niger. This perception is based on the fact that the attacks were perpetrated in a context coloured by the military intervention in Mali. These sources point out that President Mahamadou Issoufou, elected in 2011, was one of the first to sound the alarm regarding the consequences of the destabilisation of Libya. One year later, in 2012, he called for a military intervention to dislodge the 'terrorist and drug trafficking' groups that had taken control of northern Mali. Niger then joined the International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) by contributing nearly 500 troops. As part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which took over from AFISMA, more than 800 Nigerien troops are currently deployed. It is these various commitments that have made Niger a potential target of the jihadists. French interests in the country, such as those of Areva, further expose Niger to attacks by terrorist groups, who have threatened to strike any country that 'dared to send troops to Mali or collaborate with the invader'.<sup>1</sup>

## Geographically, Niger is surrounded by Mali, Libya and Nigeria, all countries that face threats from terrorist and separatist groups

In addition to these conclusions drawn from an analysis of the May 2013 attacks, two other aspects should be considered, namely the country's geographic situation and economic vulnerability.

Geographically, Niger is surrounded by Mali, Libya and Nigeria, all countries that face threats from terrorist and separatist groups. Groups such as Ansar Dine, MUJAO and AQIM, which occupied northern Mali, were more or less scattered by the military intervention launched by France and Chad and later joined by AFISMA. They fled to the Sahel and are still able to cause trouble, as shown by the Niger attacks and the hostage crisis at the In Aménas oil plant in Algeria. While the military intervention has reduced the striking force of these groups in Mali, it has also caused their members to disperse across Mali and into neighbouring countries, including Niger. Some of them are also said to have fled to Libya – the authorities in Niamey view the southern

part of Libya as their new safe haven. Issoufou, in an interview with the French newspaper *l'Express* in May 2013, attributed the terrorist attacks in his country to groups from southern Libya.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the Niger government claims that the terrorist threat has declined in Mali, it is reportedly increasing in Libya and Nigeria. Since the 2000s, Nigeria has had to contend with the terrorist group Boko Haram, which its federal government is still struggling to eradicate. The deadly attacks perpetrated by this group, the military offensive by the Nigerian government and the flow of refugees to Niger cause concern at the highest level. Authorities find it very worrying that members of the group are infiltrating the south of the country through the towns of Diffa, Maradi and Zinder bordering northern Nigeria, where Boko Haram operates.

Because of the alleged links between Boko Haram and certain groups occupying northern Mali, the Niger government fears 'proxy reprisals' by Boko Haram. These fears are amplified by the fact that family and ethnic ties transcend the borders, which are anyway difficult to control, especially in the current context of active population displacement. All indications are that Niger's border towns are particularly exposed to the influence of the radical Islamism advocated by Boko Haram. This area is mainly populated by the Kanouri, the dominant tribe of Boko Haram followers who live on both sides of the border.

The Niger government faces a major challenge in establishing its presence across the country and controlling its borders with Libya, Mali and Nigeria. Indeed, because of limited resources it does not have effective control of the entire territory. As a result, the government's absence in certain poor areas deprived of basic facilities and social services creates a fertile ground for the emergence or establishment of radical groups.

In terms of the country's economic vulnerability, youth unemployment is a factor of instability. Concerned by this situation, a civil society member said: 'The state is non-existent [in some areas] and if the youth knew where to find AQIM or MUJAO, they would join them.' The precariousness of the situation, corruption and the widespread belief that the country's wealth is enjoyed by only the elite and Western powers, have severely damaged relations between citizens and the state. The latter's absence in some areas is gradually being filled by religious and extremist organisations that take advantage of the situation to increase their influence. Obviously, terrorist groups could exploit this vacuum, especially in the remotest and poorest areas, as part of their infiltration strategy.

According to the authorities, even though the terrorists may have benefited from local support in the case of the May 2013 attacks – the car used in the Arlit attack, for example, was registered in Agadez – it would be difficult under the present circumstances to say that there are dormant cells in Niger. Nevertheless, some officials did mention the emergence of an embryonic form of radicalism. The latter is said to be visible in some sermons and radio and television programmes, as well as in the flourishing religious schools that are not necessarily controlled by the state. The authorities are therefore worried about what they call the ‘growing signs of a benign extremism’.

### *A myth that should be taken seriously...*

However, in the view of other social and political actors, the threat is real but should not be blown out of proportion. According to their analysis, the attacks of 23 May 2013 and the attack against the prison the following week did not specifically target Niger, for three reasons. Firstly, they maintain that terrorism is a phenomenon that is foreign to Niger. Secondly, the attack on the Areva plant in Arlit was aimed more against French interests in Niger. Finally, even though the military barracks and prison were attacked, this was meant to raise the spirits of the jihadists who had just suffered a defeat in Mali, and show the countries of the region, including Niger, that they are vulnerable.

Moreover, these attacks may actually have turned the population against the terrorists. The atrocities perpetrated in Mali are said to have discouraged many aspiring jihadists, causing them to reject these anti-Islamist practices. Reportedly, the combination of these events not only prompted the local population to support the various measures taken by the government to strengthen security, but also generated a wave of solidarity with the defence and security forces.

Those who believe the threat should not be exaggerated also describe Niger as a crossroads of civilizations, with a long practice of Islamic tolerance based on the traditional values of the different ethnic groups that make up the population. The practice of this tolerant Islam has enabled the peaceful cohabitation of the different religions of the country without any inter-religious violence. This cohabitation was made possible partly thanks to the interventions of the Islamic Association of Niger (*Association islamique du Niger*) as well as the efforts of the traditional chieftains, who play a role in educating citizens and preventing all forms of radicalism. Thus, while Islamisation is growing in Niger, it has not yet reached the proportions of the violent radicalism observed in northern Nigeria.

Further, even though one may find contradictions in the interpretation of the constitutional and religious norms

regarding the concept of state secularism, Niger has so far been spared religious radicalisation not only because it respects the principle of secularism, but also because it does not use religion as a political tool. However, while examples of the political manipulation of religion are rare, the fact remains that politicians increasingly solicit religious leaders. The separation of state and religion, as well as the focus of political rhetoric on the major socioeconomic issues instead of religion, are viewed as bulwarks against the surge of radicalism.

Two other elements support this view, namely the integration of members of the Tuareg communities and the progress achieved by the decentralisation process.

## *The separation of state and religion, as well as the focus of political rhetoric on the major socioeconomic issues instead of religion, are viewed as bulwarks against the surge of radicalism*

Regarding the Tuareg issue, the Niger government believes that, unlike Mali where ‘bad agreements were signed leading to the collapse of the state’, Niger’s approach has succeeded in ensuring peace. The government has put in place a veteran reinsertion and reintegration policy considered globally coherent, coordinated and accepted by the communities concerned. Many former Tuareg rebels have benefited from some form of socioeconomic reinsertion within the administration, government or private sector. Indeed, the construction, public works, transportation and oil industry sectors, among others, are said to be dominated by members of the Tuareg community, who are participating in the socioeconomic development of the country in a peaceful manner. However, other communities have started expressing their frustration in veiled terms. They feel that the government favours one group to the detriment of other citizens, whereas they all face the same difficulties.

Resulting from the 1995 peace agreement, decentralisation – the second element mentioned by many respondents – has become a tangible reality in Niger. As stipulated in the agreement, northern towns and villages have been transformed into municipalities led by local councillors and are largely self-governing. For example, Tuaregs lead 11 out of the 15 municipalities in the north. Moreover, there is broad

compliance with the principle of handing back 15 per cent of mining revenue to local communities (uranium in the north, gold and oil in the east).<sup>3</sup> To a large extent, these measures probably helped prevent the Malian Tuareg rebellion from spreading to Niger, especially considering the impact of past rebellions on the neighbouring country. In fact, Niger's Tuareg communities did not hesitate to distance themselves from the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (*Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad*, or MNLA), whose military campaign in Mali cost hundreds of lives and forced thousands of Tuaregs to settle in refugee camps.

Thus the threats of radicalism and terrorism in Niger are perceived differently. Some regard the threats as real, as evidenced by the 23 May attacks. Others view these attacks as the unfortunate consequences of a complex sub-regional situation, which does not mean that Niger is a special target for radical Islamists. Whether these threats are exaggerated or not, the Niger government must take the necessary measures to deal with them both at home and as part of regional cooperation.

## **Niger mechanism faced with the threats of extremism and terrorism**

The chain of events following the death of Muammar Gaddafi and subsequent developments in the region have largely influenced Niger's approach, which is based on three pillars: a military and security response, a socioeconomic component and a legal framework.

### *A necessary but insufficient military and security response*

The reflex military reaction of the Niger government to the 23 May attacks was not a matter of chance. Firstly, it resulted from a logic long established among the Niger authorities, especially after the armed rebellion by the Niger Movement for Justice (*Mouvement nigérien pour la justice*, or MNJ) in 2007. Secondly, it is part of the republican logic of an army that is very active on the political scene while often anxious to play its role as the guardian of the state's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Thirdly, it highlights the need for preventive measures – institutional and military capacity to respond to national security threats – to address regional security challenges.<sup>4</sup> For example, during the Libyan crisis, which caused the return of the Tuareg combatants, the army systematically disarmed them and facilitated their reinsertion.

The military approach to the threats of terrorism and extremism is a short-term strategy that does not necessarily take into account the structural parameters of medium- and long-term instability. Yet many people in Niger believe that the military option, though costly, is the right solution. By

adopting this position, Niger has also demonstrated its intention to pursue the highly criticised policy of former President Mamadou Tandja, who refused to negotiate with the Tuareg rebels while in office. Further, some believe that the hard line he took on drug traffickers and jihadists, who planned to extend the scope of their activities to the whole of West Africa, was necessary under the circumstances.

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The military approach rests on three main pillars. Firstly, the government has purchased military equipment in response to the nature of the threat, which is no longer a conventional but rather an asymmetric war. The country now has a number of Sukhoi Su-25 Ukrainian-made fighter aircraft. The acquisition of this equipment will help improve surveillance of hard-to-access areas such as the mountainous regions of the north. This area could be used as a rear base by drug traffickers and jihadists, and other illicit clandestine activities are also being conducted, posing a potential danger to the country.

The increasing number of local patrols has also strengthened the military forces on the ground. These patrols further help to stabilise Niger by serving as a deterrent and making it possible to monitor the movement of people and goods, arresting suspects when necessary.

Finally, the intelligence services are organised both within and outside the territory to fulfil the same objective of securing the country. The High Security Council (*Haut Conseil pour la Sécurité*), an organ composed of the relevant ministerial departments, has been set up internally and meets on a weekly basis to discuss urgent security issues. At the international level, greater cooperation with the United States and France has helped improve surveillance with the introduction of drones.

As a result, the impact on the activities of jihadist groups is far from negligible: even though these armed groups, which

previously nurtured the ambition of establishing a safe haven in the Sahel, still pose a threat, they no longer have much room for manoeuvre. While the military reaction does for the moment help to maintain order, it cannot on its own create the conditions for a lasting peace. Although it gives priority to military action, Niger has thus developed a socioeconomic programme that has complemented its security architecture since 2012.

### *An approach that includes a socioeconomic component*

Relatively unfavourable geographic, demographic and economic factors, as well as the political instability of the country, have influenced the reaction of the Niger government. Located in a landlocked and austere region with an exploding population and an economy dominated by the informal sector, the country is subjected to constraints that expose its population to all kinds of ideologies promising solutions to their daily problems. The recurrent political instability has also worsened the pauperisation of Niger's people.

As a result, the government added a socioeconomic component to the military and security aspects. If religious radicals and terrorists are able to recruit followers, it is also because people want better living conditions. Unemployment, especially among the youth, food insecurity and the lack of basic services cannot be fought with weapons and regulations. These issues should be addressed with effective development policies.

The Strategy for the Development and Security of the Sahel-Saharan Zones of Niger (*Stratégie pour le développement et la sécurité des zones sahélo-sahariennes du Niger*, or SDS), put in place in October 2012, addresses the need to take socioeconomic constraints into account in the counter-terrorism mechanism. The drivers of the threat, especially unemployment, insecurity, lack of socioeconomic opportunities and illegal migration, should be addressed in an integrated manner. The SDS has five main focus areas.<sup>5</sup>

Firstly, it emphasises the enhancement of the security of goods and persons in rural and urban areas. Secondly, the SDS aims to improve people's access to economic opportunities by developing agro-sylvi-pastoral potential and promoting tourism and handicrafts, while protecting the environment in vulnerable areas. Education, health and other public services constitute the third main focal point. Fourthly, to improve development and security, the strategy provides for the promotion of governance based on the capacity building of local and communal decentralisation actors such as traditional chieftains, as well as women leaders. Similarly,

it provides for the enhancement of social participation and youth promotion involving community leaders, including traditional chieftains. Finally, the strategy takes into account the peace and security threat posed by forced civilian returnees from Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Algeria. An emergency programme has been put in place to facilitate their resettlement. The same programme creates the conditions that provide them with food security and access to employment.

The provisional budget of the SDS amounts to about 1,266 billion francs CFA (approximately €2,5 billion). A precise amount has been budgeted for each component of the strategy. The financing is provided first by the state, which contributes 50 per cent. The European Union (EU) provides 7,78 per cent, with other partners expected to contribute 42,22 per cent. However, the implementation of the SDS has not yet begun due to difficulties in raising the necessary funds.

Despite the country's wealth, Niger does not receive its fair share from the exploitation of its resources. For example, uranium accounts for only 5 per cent of the national budget.<sup>6</sup> Even though some people believe that the exploitation of other resources such as oil will enable the country to satisfy its needs, this enthusiasm is dampened by corruption and the apparent indifference of the multinationals exploiting those resources to the living conditions of Niger's people.

A programme launched by the president entitled 'Nigériens feed Nigériens' (*Les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens*), better known as the '3Ns', has been adopted by the government.<sup>7</sup> It is designed to address the root causes of food and nutritional insecurity, while proposing appropriate solutions to the emergencies and precarious economic situations that often affect a sizable chunk of the population. A 2012–2015 investment plan has been developed to implement the programme. The government has earmarked about 1 000 billion CFA francs (about €1,5 billion), to implement all its proposed activities.<sup>8</sup>

### *A reinforced legal framework*

Niger strengthened its counter-terrorism legal framework by adopting three ordinances on 27 January 2013. These ordinances organise the country's courts, while modifying the penal code and the criminal procedure code.

Regarding the courts in general and the criminal courts in particular, the ordinance that sets out their organisation and jurisdiction introduced three major innovations: a counter-terrorism<sup>9</sup> division, created side by side with the criminal courts responsible for ordinary offences, a control chamber



and a counter-terrorism trial chamber within the Niamey Court of Appeal. These three entities have jurisdiction over all cases relating to acts of terrorism and extremism in Niger.

The ordinance modifying and supplementing the penal code<sup>10</sup> provides a list of acts described as terrorism, since the 1961 law fails to do so. The listed offences are aircraft and ship hijacking, nuclear attacks and hostage taking. Also included as punishable offences are aiding and abetting acts of terrorism, whether logistically, financially or morally. Sanctions range from a fine to capital punishment, including life imprisonment. The fines are between 500 000 francs CFA and 500 million francs CFA.

The third ordinance modifies the criminal procedure code to bring it in line with the penal code.

### *A still fragile regional cooperation framework*

While it is true that neighbouring countries such as Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger perceived the issue of terrorism and transnational crimes quite early, one of the major concerns of governments in the Sahel-Saharan and West African regions has been the ineffective regional cooperation frameworks.

Two regional cooperation initiatives have been adopted in the past few years as part of counter-terrorism efforts in the region. The first involved the establishment by the core countries in 2010 of the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL) based in Algiers, and the General Staff Joint Operations Committee (*Comité d'état-major opérationnel conjoint*, or CEMOC) based in Tamanrasset. The UFL is responsible for collecting, processing and disseminating intelligence on terrorist activities. Perceived by many actors as a 'paper tiger', CEMOC is in charge of coordinating counter-terrorism military actions by the core countries. There were plans to hold periodic meetings, but many observers believe that, beyond declarations of intent, the actions and especially the impact of the UFL and CEMOC are still limited.

Terrorist attacks have exposed the weaknesses of the regional mechanisms. It is therefore appropriate for Niger, along with other countries of the region, to begin by reviewing its internal mechanisms before engaging partners within and outside the region. As one respondent said, 'Niger should first of all count on its own forces.'

In order to address security threats, Niger has also strengthened its cooperation with Mauritania, Chad and Nigeria. On 20 August 2013, a military cooperation agreement was signed between Niger and Mauritania.

This kind of bilateral initiative aims to make up for the ineffectiveness of the existing security cooperation frameworks. Paradoxically, these bilateral initiatives are only really effective in the long term if they fit into a coordinated and structured region-wide strategy.

Most Nigerien authorities, however, have underscored the difficulties of cooperating with certain regional actors. Indeed, differing views about threats, which vary according to whether one is close to the battlefield or not, partly explain the deficiencies of the regional agreements. The lack of political will on the part of governments has been one of the major weaknesses of regional cooperation. Yet all the states acknowledge that terrorism and religious extremism spare nobody, which is one more reason to pool their efforts.

### *The multiplicity of strategies may lead to overlapping or competition, which is likely to impact the effectiveness of the considerable regional and international mobilisation in the region*

In any case, Niger does not seem to expect much from the regional community. The government believes that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) can and should do better. One priority is the immediate implementation of the regional counter-terrorism strategy adopted in February 2013 in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire.

In order to address this gap in terms of cooperation, the African Union (AU) launched the second regional cooperation initiative on 17 March 2013 in Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania; a process meant to 'facilitate the deepening of security cooperation through the coordination and strengthening of border control measures, as well as through intelligence sharing and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahel-Saharan region.'<sup>11</sup>

Thus far, five meetings have been held in this so-called 'Nouakchott process'. The first meeting at ministerial level was held in Mauritania and laid the foundations of the process. It was followed by two meetings of heads of Intelligence and Security Services on 18 April 2013 in

Bamako, Mali, and 20–21 June in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. A meeting on enhancing operational land border security cooperation later took place in Tripoli, Libya, on 4 September 2013. Finally, a second ministerial meeting on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalisation of APSA in the Sahel-Saharan region was held in Ndjamen, Chad, on 11 September 2013. Another meeting is planned for the end of 2013. While this is a welcome initiative, it is too early to make a detailed assessment of its impact on the Sahel-Saharan region.

Several strategies by external partners, sometimes developed without any extensive consultation with the states concerned, with or without special envoys to the Sahel, have been prepared concurrently or are in the process of being prepared. A Nigerien interlocutor jokingly likened the Sahel to 'a trendy girl everybody would like to date'. While such mobilisation indicating partners' renewed interest in the region is welcome, this situation is cause for concern. The

multiplicity of strategies may lead to overlapping or competition, which is likely to impact the effectiveness of the considerable regional and international mobilisation in the region.

## Conclusion

While the radicalism and terrorism threats are viewed differently by various social and political actors in Niger, the fact remains that the country is at the crossroads of three sources of insecurity: northern Mali, northern Nigeria and southern Libya. The measures taken thus far by the government have enabled the country to cope with the threats and ensure stability. However, as the phenomenon develops in the Sahel-Saharan region, the Niger government should strengthen the security, legal and socio-economic aspects of its strategy. This can only be effective if it fits into a coordinated regional framework that takes into account the different strategies of the countries affected.

## Main recommendations

1. Nationally, the Strategy for the Development and Security of the Sahel-Saharan Zones of Niger (SDS) developed by the Niger government in 2012 is a good starting point because of its multidimensional nature. It should now be implemented. The effectiveness of the strategy will depend on building the state's counter-terrorism judicial capacity, for example by training the judicial division in charge of this matter. Beyond its security dimension – which is necessary but not sufficient – as part of a preventive approach the same attention should be paid to the judicial and the socioeconomic components, which focus on socioeconomic development, good governance and social justice. This effort should involve civil society and be supported by external partners.
2. Faced with the development of religious radicalism – still considered embryonic by the government and social actors – Niger should encourage the establishment of a national framework for dialogue on the religious education system in order to define the content of national education programmes, control modes of financing and address the potential frustrations of those marginalised by the official Francophone system. It might be worthwhile to brainstorm on this issue and exchange ideas at the sub-regional level. ECOWAS could lead this initiative.
3. In view of the collusion between criminals and terrorists in the Sahel-Saharan region, only a concerted plan and the pooling of resources for the effective implementation of different regional instruments against terrorism and transnational crime can succeed. Security cooperation between North African and Sub-Saharan countries should also be strengthened, particularly in the Sahel-Saharan region. The AU, ECOWAS, other relevant organisations and their member states should, in accordance with the regional operationalisation of APSA launched in Nouakchott in March 2013, endeavour to improve judicial, intelligence and border control cooperation.
4. The mushrooming of Sahel strategies, sometimes developed without an in-depth consultative process involving affected states, may cause overlapping or competition, limiting the effectiveness of the greater regional and international mobilisation. It is unfortunately too late, at this stage, to design an integrated 'multi-actor' strategy for the Sahel. A certain level of coordination and harmonisation should therefore be ensured in the implementation of the various strategies. The states concerned should consider setting up a committee to monitor the implementation of the Sahel strategies in order to ensure that their needs are met, and not just those of the external partners.

## Important dates

**14 December 2008:** The Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to Niger, Robert Fowler, his colleague Louis Guay and their driver are kidnapped in Niger

**19 April 2010:** Michel Germaneau, a French national, and his Algerian driver are kidnapped in northern Niger

**16 September 2010:** Five French nationals are kidnapped in Niger

**8 January 2011:** AQIM kidnaps two French nationals in Niger: an NGO member and his friend

**14 October 2012:** Six NGO employees are kidnapped in the south-west of Niger

**23 May 2013:** A double terrorist attack – on a military camp in Agadez and another on the plant of French nuclear giant Areva in Arlit – takes place

**25 May 2013:** Issoufou accuses Libya of harbouring terrorists

**31 May 2013:** Jailbreak from the civilian prison of Niamey, two wardens killed

**4 June 2013:** Niamey reaffirms its willingness to cooperate with Libya to fight terrorism

**8 July 2013:** Niger and Chad sign a counter-terrorism intelligence-sharing agreement

**13 August 2013:** Cabinet reshuffle in Niger

**18 August 2013:** The Speaker of the National Assembly, Hama Amadou, Issoufou's chief ally, asks ministers who are members of his political party to withdraw from the national coalition government

**4 September 2013:** Fighting between the Niger army and drug traffickers in the Ténéré desert close to the border with Algeria and Libya

**23 September 2013:** Issoufou receives French Defence Minister Jean Yves Le Drian

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## Notes

- 1 In June 2012, while the international community was still debating the right approach, MUJAO and AQIM threatened to attack the troop-contributing countries. See 'Des islamistes "prêts à frapper" les pays de la future force militaire au Mali (MUJAO)', *Agence France Presse*, <http://news.abamako.com/h/2789.html> (accessed 30 June 2012).
- 2 See 'Mahamadou Issoufou: "L'Afrique paie une absence de vision"', [http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/afrique/mahamadou-issoufou-l-afrique-paie-une-absence-de-vision\\_1250880.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/afrique/mahamadou-issoufou-l-afrique-paie-une-absence-de-vision_1250880.html) (accessed 10 August 2013).
- 3 Article 146 of Act No. 2007-01 of 31 January 2007 on the Oil Code and article 95 of Act No. 2006-26 of 9 August 2006 on the Mining Code.
- 4 Seen from inside Niger, the quality and capacity of the army give the impression that the state has not failed as badly as in Mali and that the army is relatively well trained and maintained.
- 5 *Stratégie pour le développement et la sécurité dans les zones sahélo-sahariennes du Niger* (SDS Sahel-Niger), October 2012, 35–67.
- 6 Niger is one of the poorest countries on the continent. Despite the progress achieved in the last two decades in terms of social indicators (school enrolment increased from 29 per cent in 1990 to 76 per cent in 2011, infant mortality declined sharply), the population is regularly affected by severe climate hazards. These partly explain the recurrent famines the country suffers from.
- 7 Decree 2012-139/PRN of 18 April 2012.
- 8 See Priority Investment Plan 2012–2015 or the website of the 3N High Commission, <http://initiative3n.org/>.
- 9 The counter-terrorism division is a special court with jurisdiction over terrorism and related offences. It is composed of five judges, two examining magistrates and two prosecuting magistrates, and has very broad powers.
- 10 Ordinance No. 2011-11 of 27 January 2011, modifying and supplementing Act No. 61-27 of 15 July 2011 establishing the penal code, page 506 to 510 of the Official Gazette dated 11 March 2011.
- 11 Conclusion of the ministerial meeting on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahel-Saharan region, Nouakchott, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, 17 March 2013.

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