

## Nigeria: Geo-Politics on Niger; Ministerial Nominees in Senate

August 14, 2023

*Note: Please see the BACKGROUNDErs on (i) the Natural Resources of Niger and on (ii) the Inter-twined Societies of NIGERIA & NIGER on pages 4-6.*

*Some older information about the coup has recently become available. It is given on pages 3-4.*

August 15, 2023: Military Junta paints the ousted **President Mohamed Bazoum** as a **French Agent** and claim to be **Patriots**: Brigadier General Abdourahmane Tchiani proclaimed himself as the new **President** of the **National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland** (CNSP), after the military coup of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

GEO-POLITICAL FACTORS: The fact is that many of the Niger's Army Officers have been trained by France and USA.

Mali's military government's decision to deploy Russia's Wagner Group mercenaries triggered France's troop and diplomatic withdrawal from the country, and the winding down of operations of the 13,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission, **Minusma**.

At that time, Bazoum had welcomed the French and the UN forces to Niamey as part of a renewed strategy to buffer Niger and other West African states from the destabilizing effects of violence by Islamic State and al-Qaeda militants.

Removal of President Bazoum by Gen Tchiani threatens to scuttle these partnerships.

The military coup and the junta's apparent close ties to Russia and Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner Group are challenges for the U.S. and France, which have partnered with Niger to counter the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and the Boko Haram extremist movement in the unstable region.

At present **China is exploiting the oil**, found in the large sedimentary basins on the vast territories of Niger. The exploration and extraction costs in Niger are quite low and Niger may become a large oil-producer.

The **Uranium** is extracted by a **French company** and a good part of Uranium is exported to France. According to the World Nuclear Association, Niger is the fourth-largest producer of uranium in the world and France is the largest importer of Nigerien uranium. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, France imports about 75 percent of its uranium from Niger. Russia may have an interest in destabilizing the supply of Uranium to France by controlling the regime in Niger.

[www.DiGiNews360.com](http://www.DiGiNews360.com) does not have adequate information to say whether the coup is engineered by the Wagner's Group or whether it is an effort of some Army

*Officers of Niger. Please await this site for more authentic information as [www.DiGiNews360.com](http://www.DiGiNews360.com) continues to do further research.*

READINESS of ECOWAS for a MILITARY ACTION: On the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, the 15-member **Economic Community of West African States** (ECOWAS) of which Niger is a member, issued an ultimatum to the coup leaders to restore Bazoum to power within one week, or face the consequences including possible military action.

However, two of the members, **Mali** and **Burkina Faso** went against ECOWAS and opposed the proposed military intervention as a “declaration of war” against the people of Niger. Mali and Burkina Faso said that they would defend the newly installed military junta.

Secondly **Niger** is geographically one of the biggest countries in West Africa and **possesses a well-trained army.**

Thirdly Nigeria, Chair of ECOWAS, has some influential people, particularly in the North, who do not want a war with Niger. It is because, the northern part of Nigeria, which is largely Muslim and Niger share religious practices and many Muslim religious leaders of Nigeria are respected by people in Niger also.

TWO PRESIDENTS with CORRESPONDENTS: The President of Cote d’Ivoire, **Alhassan Ouatarra** said that **the coup was not acceptable.** He implied that ECOWAS must be ready for even the military option. He insisted that the coup in Niger was not an issue of Nigeria. He said, “It was an issue of ECOWAS.” While speaking to correspondents, Ouatarra said that ECOWAS is nearly 400 million people, 240 million in Nigeria, 140 million in the West African monetary union. He asked, “**If we don’t have democracy, do you think that our countries will be able to move ahead?**”

When the **Senegalese President, Macky Sall** was asked about why similar military action was not taken when similar coups took place in other ECOWAS countries, he said, “I think it was a mistake not to have taken action previously. But now that we are together on this, we should take action to make sure that such a coup does not occur in Africa again.”

August 14, 2023: **Prosecuting the ousted President, Niger for High Treason: Colonel-Major Amadou Abdramane**, the spokesman for the military junta,

declared on a Sunday night TV show, that **President Mohamed Bazoum** will be tried for alleged **treason** and for **undermining the internal and external security of Niger.**”

The ousted President **Mohamed Bazoum** has been under house arrest in the Presidential Palace since July 26, 2023. His wife and his adult son have been with him in the Palace.

Aug 13: Niamey: **Attack on Nigeria’s Embassy:** Nigerien protesters tried to attack the Nigerian embassy in Niamey but were repelled by the Nigerien military, an official has said.

The attempted attack happened on Sunday, 30 July, four days after presidential guards toppled the democratically elected government of President Mohamed Bazoum, said Nigeria’s Ambassador to Niger, **Mohamed Usman**. “At the moment, the Embassy is well guarded by the Nigerien Military and other Security Authorities,” said a statement by the ambassador. A staff of the embassy **Liti Auwalu** had shared a video of the Nigerian embassy being set ablaze on social media, the authenticity of the video or the extent of loss at the embassy could not be confirmed by [www.DiGiNews360.com](http://www.DiGiNews360.com).

August 11, 2023: Concern about the **security of** the ousted **President Mohamed Bazoum**, his wife, his adult son and his cabinet members: The European Union and African Union joined the United States and other voices in sounding the alarm for democratically elected President **Mohamed Bazoum**, who was ousted by members of his guard on July 26.



*Niamey, Niger: Mohamed Bazoum. The ousted President*

**Josep Borrell**, EU Foreign Policy Chief, said, “ Bazoum, 63, and his family, according to the latest information, have been deprived of food, electricity and medical care for several days.” Borrell added that his son of 20 years has a serious heart condition. But the military junta is refusing a doctor to visit him.

August 8, 2023: **Some Info about Confirmation of Ministerial Nominees by the Senate:** The Senate has confirmed 45 out of 48 senatorial nominees of President Tinubu to Cabinet positions. The three nominees, who may be re-invited for a second hearing, are a former Kaduna Governor **Nasir El-Rufai**, Senator **Abubakar Danladi** from Taraba State, and ex-Nexim Bank Managing Director, **Stella Okotete** (Delta State).

Thereafter, El-Rufai met the President, on Tuesday afternoon. El-Rufai said that he was no longer interested in being a minister since it appeared some forces around the President were scheming to block his nomination.

During his confirmation hearing on August 1, El-Rufai had said that President Tinubu had asked him to work on the power problem facing the country. According to him, the President had set **a target of seven years for Nigeria to stop experiencing power outages** in the country.

At the Tuesday meeting, Mr. El-Rufai also reportedly told the President that since he would no longer be in the federal executive council, he would return the next day with his team to present the preliminary work done by him so far on the energy sector. The team that accompanied the former governor to make presentations to the President on Wednesday included **Eyo Ekpo**, a former **Commissioner** at the **Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC)**; **Hafiz Bayero**, a former **Commissioner** and **Administrator** of the **Kaduna Capital Territory Authority**; **Tolu Oyekan** of the **Boston Consulting Group** and **Ayodele Oni**, a lawyer.

El-Rufai is studying for a **Doctorate in Public Policy** at the **United Nations University, Maastricht**, Netherlands.

#### ----BACKGROUND: Natural resources of **NIGER**----

Niger is a part of the 14 Francophone African countries for which France prints **Communaute Financiere Africaine (CFA) Francs**, which is tied to Euro for stability of its financial system.

Though Niger is the 3<sup>rd</sup> poorest country of the world, it is endowed with ample natural resources of uranium, oil and gold.



Uranium: U; Tin: Sn; Petroleum, Crude: PET; Salt; Limestone: Ls; Phosphate: (P); Iron Ore: Fe; Gold: Au

The oil-producing potential of Niger comes from its two large sedimentary basins which cover over 90% of its national territory: the west basin (Ullémenden, Tamesna) and the east basin (the Graben system in Djado). Niger's proven and probable (2P) recoverable petroleum reserves stood at 140 Mn barrels and were concentrated in three deposits: Sokor, Goumeri and Agadi. According to African Business, oil production in Niger is operated by the **China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC)** since 2011 on the Agadem block in the East, about a hundred Km from the Chad border. It has a daily production of around 20,000 barrels. Through a 462.5-Km pipeline, the crude is taken to Niger's Zinder refinery, which produces diesel and super petrol for the domestic market and exports the surplus (50%). Additional investments in the Sokor, Madama, and Yogou formations can lead to additional production of 90,000 barrels per day which may be exported through a 1,950 Km Niger-Benin pipeline. The SIPEX, a subsidiary of Algeria's State Energy Firm Sonatrach Group, is exploring the Kafra block (on the Algerian border). The UK based Savannah Petroleum PLC is exploring on the R3 block (acquired from CNPC). A joint venture, between Niger and France, the **Societe des mines de l'Air (Somair)** operates Niger's **uranium industry**. 85% of Somair is owned by France's Atomic Energy Commission and two French companies. 15% of Somair is owned by Niger's government. Niger is the world's 7<sup>th</sup> largest producer of uranium. 70% of France's domestic power supply is nuclear energy.

(Reference: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/08/15/niger-a-coup-against-french-control-and-dominance/>)

The Samira Hill Gold Mine is one of the gold mines in Niger. It is operated by Mining company of Liptako and began production in 2004. Liptako is owned by two Canadian companies (40% each) and 20% by Niger Government. 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.

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. (Ref: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil\\_and\\_mining\\_industry\\_of\\_Niger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_and_mining_industry_of_Niger))

----BACKGROUND: Inter-twined Societies of NIGERIA & NIGER; **Jehadi Attacks** ----  
Though Niger has a larger land area (Niger: 1.267 Mn Km<sup>2</sup> Vs. Nigeria: 923,768 Km<sup>2</sup>), 80% of its area is covered by the Saharan desert. More than 90% of the 24.4 Mn people of the Republic of Niger are Muslim. About 53.5% of Nigeria's population of 222.5 Mn people of Nigeria are Muslim.

The Niger-Nigeria border is artificial; it was drawn in the colonial period by London and Paris, to check German expansion in West Africa. It ignored the recognition of ethnicities or other indigenous factors. Both speak Hausa and people move freely between Niger and Nigeria. However, the elites in Niger are Francophone, while those of Nigeria are Anglophone.

According to John Campbell in "There Is a Difference: Nigeria and Niger" of October 24, 2017 issue of "Africa in Transition" of the Council on Foreign Relations, the jihadi movements, operating in Niger, have close links with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, with a heavy overlay of criminality associated with narcotics trafficking, smuggling, and kidnapping. The Jehadi insurgencies, in parts of North and West Africa, became worse when President Obama, in his well-meaning campaign for democracy in the middle-east, threw out the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. While they enjoy some domestic support, jihadi movements in Niger tend to be largely influenced from abroad. In Nigeria, by contrast, Boko Haram is much more indigenous, and its persistence indicates greater domestic support. Boko Haram operates in Niger, Cameroon, and Chad, but primarily in areas that are ethnically linked to northern Nigeria. For members of these militant groups, as for most people, the Niger-Nigeria border is largely irrelevant. (Reference: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/there-difference-nigeria-and-niger>)

**Note:** For information about some Muslim Leaders of Nigeria, who have intervened in the ECOWAS vs Niger conflict, with information to **President Bola Tinubu**, please see "Coup in Niger: Muslim Religious Leaders Mediate" at <https://diginews360.com/coup-in-niger-muslim-religious-leaders-mediate/>.