

## Polity IV Country Report 2010: Niger

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Polity:</b></td> <td>-3</td> <td>3</td> <td>+6</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Democ:</b></td> <td>0</td> <td>4</td> <td>+4</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Autoc:</b></td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>-2</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Durable:</b></td> <td colspan="3">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Tentative:</b></td> <td colspan="3">Yes</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	<b>Polity:</b>	-3	3	+6	<b>Democ:</b>	0	4	+4	<b>Autoc:</b>	3	1	-2	<b>Durable:</b>	0			<b>Tentative:</b>	Yes			
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SCODE	<b>NIR</b>	CCODE	<b>436</b>	Date of Report	<b>1 June 2011</b>																				
<b>Polity IV Component Variables</b>																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
2	0	0	5	3	4																				
<b>Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)</b>																									
End Date		18 February 2010		Begin Date																					
				19 February 2010																					
<b>Polity Fragmentation: No</b>																									
<b>Constitution</b>																									
		1999																							
<b>Executive(s)</b>																									
		President Mahamadou Issoufou (PNDS); directly elected 31 January and 12 March 2011; 36.1%, 58.0% Prime Minister Brigi Rafini (PNDS); appointed by the president 7 April 2011																							
<b>Legislature</b>																									
		Unicameral: National Assembly (113 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 31 January 2011) Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism <i>and allies</i> (PNDS): 39 National Movement for the Development of Society (MNSD): 26 Nigerien Movement for an African Federation (MDNFA): 23 Other parties: 25																							
<b>Judiciary</b>																									
		Supreme Court; High Court of Justice																							

### Narrative Description:<sup>1</sup>

#### **Executive Recruitment: Executive-Guided Transition (5)**

Niger remained under the yoke of varying authoritarian and military governments from independence until growing popular discontent induced Gen. Ali Saibou to lift the ban on political parties in 1990 and convene a constitutional convention in 1991. The convention stripped Saibou of power and set up a transitional government. Following a brief period of instability, a new constitution was crafted in 1992 and legislative and presidential elections were held in March and April 1993. Mahamane Ousmane was elected president, while his party, the Democratic and Social Convention—Rahama, gained a strong presence in the

<sup>1</sup> The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

legislature and formed a coalition against the military-backed National Movement for the Development of Society (MNSD). On 27 January 1996, Lt. Col. Ibrahim Barre Mainassara ousted the elected government in a military coup. Mainassara was assassinated by members of his presidential guard on 9 April 1999. Maj. Daouda Malam Wanke, the head of the presidential guard, was named chairman of the National Reconciliation Council (CRN); the CRN quickly announced its intention to promulgate a new constitution and institute a return to civilian rule.

A new constitution designed to spread power among the president, prime minister, and legislature was approved by popular referendum, despite an extremely low voter turnout, in July 1999. Retired Gen. Mamadou Tandja (MNSD) won the November 1999 runoff election (56.6%) out of an original field of seven candidates. The elections were considered generally fair by observers. President Tandja won a second term in two rounds of balloting held in November and December 2004. Once again, these elections were considered by international observers to have been conducted in a free and fair manner. Tandja was the first president of Niger to have survived an entire term in office. Niger's three previous rulers were either ousted in coups or assassinated. President Mamadou Tandja effectively seized power in a presidential coup on 26 May 2009 when he dissolved the National Assembly for obstructing his plan to organize a referendum to extend his rule beyond the two-term limit codified in the constitution. The referendum was held on 4 August 2009 and boycotted by the opposition; as a result, Tandja gained a popular "mandate" to promulgate a new constitution and stronger presidential system. Following Tandja's attempt to consolidate personalistic power, the military ousted President Tandja on 18 February 2010 and set up a caretaker military junta, the Supreme Council for the Resoration of Democracy, led by Maj. Salou Djibo. The ruling junta instituted constitutional changes and scheduled elections for a return to civilian rule in January 2011.

*Note: Presidential elections were held in Niger on 31 January 2011 with a runoff election on 13 March 2011; Social Democratic Party candidate Mahamadou Issoufou was elected president with 58% of the popular vote against his runoff opponent, Seini Oumarou. Issoufou was inaugurated on 6 April 2011, completing Niger's transition back to elected, civilian government.*

#### **Executive Constraints: Substantial Limitations (5)**

The nature and effectiveness of executive constraints in Niger remain unclear. The 1999 constitution calls for an equal distribution of power among president, prime minister, and legislature but the constitution itself was designed by a military caretaker government and received little popular support in the July 1999 referendum. The newly elected president and the majority party in parliament (MNSD) enjoy the backing of the military, an essential quality for succeeding in Niger politics; the ruling coalition government enjoys a sizable majority in parliament. Political parties other than the MNSD are weak and fluid, rising and falling on political personalities. The constitution provides for an independent judiciary but it remains unclear whether it has the expertise, resources, and will to act independently in practice.

Despite the dominance of the president in this system, his power is not unlimited. The limits on executive power were demonstrated in May 2007 when Prime Minister Amadou, a long-standing ally of President Tandja, was forced from office by a vote of no-confidence in the legislature. Out of the 113 delegates in the National Assembly, 62 voted to dissolve the government of Prime Minister Hama Amadou, who had held the position for seven years. The vote was precipitated by an embezzlement scandal, following allegations that the Prime Minister stole international education funds. Despite the loss of his official government position, nonetheless, Amadou retained his position as the head of Tandja's political party, the National Movement for the Development of Society (MNSD). While the opposition forced Amadou to resign, it allowed the President to select a replacement candidate from the ranks of the MNSD.

#### **Political Participation: Political Liberalization or Democratic Retrenchment: Persistent Overt Coercion (8)**

Politics in Niger have long been dominated by the military and have been characterized by competition between its two largest ethnic groups: Hausa (56%) and Djerma (22%). Popular participation in party politics was traditionally suppressed by the succession of military rulers. Opposition parties were allowed to form briefly in the early 1990s before being banned once again until the most recent liberalization began in 1996. Still parties remain weak and un-institutionalized and general electoral participation remains very low (voter turnout for the 1999 constitutional referendum and general elections were less than 30% of eligible voters). The government banned several Islamic parties following disturbances in November 2000. Widespread student unrest in the capital was reported in February 2001. On 30 July 2002, a mutiny by

army soldiers in Diffa spread to other barracks including one in the capital. The mutinous barracks were overpowered by loyal troops and calm was restored by 5 August 2002. As a result of the mutiny, 4 officers and 270 soldiers were arrested. On 26 May 2009, President Tandja dissolved the National Assembly and instituted direct presidential rule, only to be ousted in a military coup on 18 February 2010. The military junta promised to prepare for new presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in January 2011, paving the way for a return to elected, civilian government.

National unity in Niger has historically been undercut by the ethnic diversity of the population. Nomadic groups such as the Toubou and the Tuareg have long been subject to social and economic discrimination by the dominant Haussa and Djerma groups. In response to these deprivations, the Tuareg have engaged in sporadic fighting in recent years to defend its regional autonomy. While a series of accords were signed in the 1990s to end the Tuareg rebellion, progress has been slow in fully implementing these peace plans. By 2007 Tuareg-led violence was once again on the rise. According to rebel fighters, the Government has not met the terms of the peace deals signed in the late 1990s, which included promises of decentralization of political power and a focus on economic development of the northern regions of the country.