C-thesis

France’s influence through EU Structures: Mechanism, Strategies, and Impact on security and development in Niger

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the influence of France on Niger's security and development sectors through EU structures, using a qualitative case study with abductive reasoning. It aims to analyse the complex interplay between security and development challenges in Niger, despite the country's abundant natural resources. Of particular interest is the historical and current influence of France on Niger's development, taking into account both positive contributions such as infrastructure development and negative legacies such as the persistence of colonial-era inequalities. France's post-colonial presence is still pronounced, especially in the areas of security co-operation and economic relations, leading to discussions about sovereignty, particularly in the fight against terrorism. France's economic interests, particularly in areas such as uranium mining, have a significant influence on Niger's economic policy. However, these engagements have been criticised for favouring multinational companies over local communities and raising questions about sustainable development.

The aim of the study is also to analyse the mechanisms and strategies used by France in Niger through the EU structures and to assess their impact on the pressing security and development needs of the Sahel region. It will also examine the role of international organisations in combating insecurity and poverty in Niger. Data collection will include historical contexts, policy statements, semi-structured dialogues and media reports on security and development issues in Niger. This comprehensive approach aims to provide nuanced insights into the challenges facing Niger and how policy makers and stakeholders can advocate for policies that prioritise the well-being and self-determination of Nigerien citizens while promoting inclusive growth and stability in the region.

Key words:

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction 9
   1.1. Relevance 11
   1.2. Research Objective 11
   1.3. Research questions 12
   1.4. Structure of Study 12

2. Literature review 13
   2.1 Research Gap 17

3. Theoretical 17

4. Methodological framework 21
   4.1. Research design and research method 21
   4.2. Data Selection 23
   4.3. Limitations and delimitations 25
   4.4. Ethical considerations 26

5. Presentations of Research findings 27
   5.1. EU: Ensuring stability in Niger and Europe through EUCAP Mission 27
      5.1.1 Political Relations (Legal and operational framework for EU-Niger relations) 29
      5.1.2 Development Cooperation (objectives and intervention framework) 29
      5.1.3 Economic Relations and Trade between EU and Niger 30
      5.1.4 How effective is the EU mission in Niger and challenges 31
   5.2 France aims and objectives in Niger 32
      5.2.1 Political channel used by France to Influence Niger 32
      5.2.2 Economical & Developmental channel used by France to influence Niger 33
5.2.3 Aid, development, culture, scientific and technical Cooperation

5.3 Françafrique

5.3.1 Speech by French political leaders to put an end to Françafrique

5.3.2 Political statement from the Italian Prime Minister Meloni

Giorgia against Françafrique:

5.4 Debates on French influence in Africa

5.5 United States mission strategic framework in Niger

5.5.1 The U.S. is Failing the Sahel

5.6 Security and development situation in Niger under EU, France and US military watch

5.6.1 The French and EU, the US, and the UN comment after the Coup and consequences

5.7 Semi dialogue the researcher had from ethical consideration

5.8 Niger’s partnership with China and Russia.

6. Analysis

6.1 First research question

6.1.1 Diplomatic channels used by France within the EU and Niger

6.1.2 Security Cooperation

6.1.3 Economic/ Development

6.1.4 Implications of these structures and strategies through the EU on Niger’s security and development
List of Abbreviations

ACP - African, Caribbean and Pacific
APPO - Organization of African Petroleum Producers
AU - African Union
BRICS - Brazil Russia India China and South Africa
DFID - Department for International Development
ECB - European Central Bank
ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States
EDF - European Development Fund
EEAS - European External Action Service
EEC - European Economic Community
EU - European Union
EUCAP - European Union Capacity Building Mission
FMPRC - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
GoN - Government of Niger
GPI - Global Peace Index
HDI - Human Development Index
IcSP - Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace
IMF - International Monetary Fund
IPA - International Peace Academy
JNIM - Jamat’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin
NIP - National Indicative program
OEC - Observatory of Economic Complexity
OHCHR - The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAP - Priority Action Plan
PARJ - Program for judicial reforms
PIDA - Programme in infrastructure Development in Africa
PRI - Interim Response Program
UN - United Nations
UNCTAD - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund
UN SDGs - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
US - United States
USAID - United States Agency for International Development
USIP - United States Institute of Peace
S & P Global - Standard & Poor’s Global
SRA - Social Research Association
TSGP - Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline
WAEMU - West African Economic and Monetary Union
WTO - World Trade Organization
VE - Violent Extremism

French words
Agence française de développement (French Development Agency)
Caisse Central de coopération économique (Central Economic Cooperation Fund)
Commission nationale des garanties (National Guarantees Commission)
Communauté Financière Africaine (African Financial Community)
Communauté française d’Afrique” (French Community of Africa)
Françafrique (France influence over Africa)
Messieurs Afrique (the gentlemen of Africa)
Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (National Research Institute for Sustainable Development)
Réseaux (networks)
Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine, UEMOA (The West African Economic and Monetary Union)
List of Figures.

Figure 1. Possible narrative about Nexus

Figure 2. Where CFA franc is used in Africa

Figure 3. Africa-France summit held without African heads of state 2021

Figure 4. American troops train soldiers near Agadez, April 12, 2018

Figure 5. Françafrique is like an iceberg

Figure 6. President Macron with Gabon’s President Ali Bongo Ondimba in Libreville 2023

Figure 7. Migrants in Agadez, Niger heading towards the desert to Libya

Figure 8. Françafrique
1. Introduction

The emergence of African states on the world stage took place under remarkably calm conditions. Africans were generally spared the traumas of war and revolution that usually accompany the process of state-building. The nationalist movements predominantly made demands for independence, which were met by the incumbent colonial regimes under varying degrees of internal and external pressure (Engel, U., & Olsen, G.R. 2004: 15). However, the issue of sovereignty in francophone African countries is highly controversial, especially when the continent is viewed in a global context. This shows that most of them are dependent on the international system created by the West, even though they are very rich in raw materials, labour and many other resources. Looking at the mechanism that explains the emergence of modern states in sub-Saharan Africa, independence and the political institutions that have governed them so far are seen as a continuation of colonial states (Lock, E. 2019).

Political instability and weak institutions were inherited from colonial France against the will of the Francophone population of Africa, which today raises the problem of the legitimacy of these institutions. This is evident in many countries where elections are contested and labelled fraudulent, such as in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon. Chad and Cameroon are also among the countries where fundamental freedoms are disregarded and human rights are trampled on. The security problems in countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are also difficult to contain (IMF, 2023). Almost all francophone African countries are characterised by the fact that they have not yet been able to promote an acceptable level of prosperity for their populations in the areas of education, health, security and development. However, many of the francophone African states are considered failed states (Husson 1997 in Lock, E 2019: 247), where military organisation is very important to ensure the sustainability of the weak regime.

To put the issue of security and development challenges in context, it is easier to conduct a case study on a specific country that is particularly struggling with this problem. Among the African Francophone countries that have recently experienced a coup d'état, i.e. the seizure of power by a group to paralyse the nerve of an existing government, is Niger (Bartelson, J 1997: 324). This country is the focus of this study for the following reasons: First, it is a country with a population of 27.2 million people, mostly young people (UNFPA 2023), located in the heart of the Sahel. The country's economy is not very diversified and is categorised as a low-income country (World Bank 2023a), where 40% of GDP depends on agriculture. The level of extreme poverty in Niger is expected to rise to 44.1% due to negative per capita growth and rising inflation. This will increase the number of poor people by 700,000 to 12 million in 2023 (World Bank 2023b). Although the country has a variety of minerals such as uranium, coal, gold and many others, its economy remains a major challenge for development (World Atlas 2019).
Secondly, Niger has experienced a series of coups and political instability since its independence from France in the 1960s. However, the recent coup d'état by the military juntas was due to the "continued deterioration of the security situation and poor economic and social governance" (Security Council Report 2023). Although coups d'état by military juntas had already occurred in Burkina Faso and Mali, this never attracted much international attention compared to the coup d'état in Niger against President Mohamed Bazoum, which was carried out by his own presidential guard that was supposed to protect him.

The Global Peace Index (GPI), which measures not only the presence and absence of war, but also the absence of violence or fear of violence in three areas such as security, ongoing conflict and militarisation, has ranked Niger 137th out of 163 countries, showing that peace is urgently needed in this part of the Sahel (GPI 2021). This coup has only deepened the pattern of instability in the Central Sahel, as stability in these regions has always been a major problem for insurgencies and extremist movements (USIP 2023). According to the Normandy Index, a research project conducted by the Institute for Economics and Peace in collaboration with the European Parliament and the Normandy Region, which analysed eleven indicators: such as homicide rates, terrorism and the assessment of hybrid threats affecting peace in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the vulnerability of its states to conflict, Niger ranks 119th out of 137 countries (Normandy Index 2019). The same applies to the Human Development Index (HDI), which is a summarised measure of average performance in key dimensions of human development. These include a long and healthy life, a high level of knowledge and an adequate standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of the normalised indices for each of the three dimensions. Niger ranks 189th out of 193 countries (UNDP 2022).

All these index values have shown that it is worth carrying out this research in order to maintain the necessary stability in the Sahel, which is required for long-term security and development co-operation between France and Niger. Even though they have been under French influence through EU structures for so long, it remains crucial to examine the channels and methods by which France has maintained this influence through EU structures, mechanisms and strategies with their impact on Niger’s security and development. Recent events in Niger have made it clear that anything France does, good or bad, provokes an allergic reaction from the population, which has long been conditioned to distrust French motives and assume the worst (Shurkin, M 2023).

In 2003, the EU adopted a Common Security and Defence Policy, which provides an institutional framework for the deployment of military, police and crisis management missions to restore peace in Africa and elsewhere (Bromley, 2014: 133-4 in Hahonou, E.2016). In Niger, the EU intervenes through the Delegation of the European Commission (the executive body of the EU) and a programme called EUCAP Sahel Niger, which is a civilian mission. Officially, the European Commission's main objective is the stability of Niger, with a focus on improving the management of border regions. The EU's main
financial instrument is still the European Development Fund. Its defence-related expenditure is borne bilaterally by the EU member states due to limited financial resources.

This topic falls within the academic field of peace and development studies, and international relations, as it reflects security challenges, economic dependencies and historical legacies that have never been questioned if France priorities are in line with broader EU objectives in Niger. Instead, their influence was more nuanced, its boldness and effectiveness characterised by the personality of individual African leaders and their perception of ‘national interests’ (Gros, Jean-Germain 1997:127).

1.1 Relevance

Security and development as one of the most important challenges of the twenty-first century. Economic stagnation and rampant inflation are paralysing national economies and leading to high levels of debt, unemployment and underdevelopment. The economic disparities between the rich industrialised countries and the poor underdeveloped countries are partly responsible for wars and uprisings within and between nations. In the eyes of many, development is the best strategy to avoid violent conflict and avert political upheaval in the future (Pease, K 2014:185). Niger remains a country that faces security and development challenges and has a wealth of natural resources that cannot change its security and standard of living. The insecurity and development challenges that have led to an increase in the number of poor people by 700,000 in 2023 (World Bank 2023b) show that this needs urgent attention with a rapidly growing population of youth. This remains very important not only for Niger, but also for the West, as Niger is used as a centre for migration to Europe.

1.2 Research objective

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the mechanisms and strategies used by France to influence EU structures, particularly in relation to security and development policy in Niger. The secondary objective is to analyse the role of France within the EU institutions, such as the European Commission, the EU Parliament and the European External Action Service, in shaping security and development policy in Niger. Based on the link between security and development, the research will identify the main security challenges for Niger, including terrorism, insurgency and cross-border threats. Similarly, the different variables will be analysed to identify specific factors hindering development in Niger. The role played by France through the EU structures, the US and other international organisations will provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of this study in order to answer the research questions. The aim is to add to the existing literature on related topics such as security and development, support policy making and promote peace and stability. Achieving sustainable growth in Niger, where many countries, not only France,
the EU, the US and the UN, have similar security and development challenges and goals, will also be addressed.

1.3 Research questions

The following research questions will provide an explicit statement of what should be known about this study, and it will also guide the decisions about what type of data to collect and from whom (Bryman, A. 2021).

1. What are the mechanisms through which France utilizes EU structures, such as the European Commission and the European External Action Service, to assert its interest in Niger?
2. Are there tensions or alignments between French priorities and broader EU objectives in Niger, and how do these dynamics influence EU-policy making and engagement in the region?
3. How do geopolitical considerations, such as competition with other external actors like the United States and regional security challenges like terrorism and migration influence France’s engagement with EU institutions regarding Niger?

1.4 Structure of the study

This refers to the organisation and structure of the study, which consists of seven chapters. The first chapter of this study begins with an introduction. In this chapter, the researcher provides background information on Niger, including the research objective and the research problems arising from the French EU structures and mechanisms and their impact on security and development in Niger. The second chapter is the literature review with the aim of deepening the knowledge of the extensive problems of Niger as a result of the influence of France through the EU structures and its impact on the security and development. It identifies the gaps that this study aims to fill, namely the specific role of EU institutions in facilitating French influence, which has so far remained ambiguous, and provides a theoretical basis for this study. The third chapter is the theoretical framework that explains the nexus between security and development in the case of Niger. The use of the security-development nexus has shed more light on Niger's needs as the UNDP's new definition has been changed from security to human security and from development to human development. The fourth chapter is a methodological framework that describes the research design, methods and procedures used to collect the analysed data. The fifth chapter summarises the research findings to illustrate the main findings on France’s influence on EU structures: Mechanism, strategies and impact on security and development in Niger. The sixth chapter is the analysis of the findings with an interpretation and contextualisation
within the nexus of security and development to answer the research questions on France's influence in the EU structures: mechanism, strategies and impact on security and development in Niger. It also emphasises the potential benefits of cooperation between France and Niger towards the goals of stability and development growth in the region. The seventh chapter is the conclusion, which reaffirms the importance of research and emphasises its contribution to peace and development studies. Recommendations for future research are also given.

2. Literature review

As the former colonial power of Niger, France occupies a special position in Niger. Its influence on Niger’s economy, politics and military largely reflects the close relations that were maintained after Niger's independence in 1960. Jackson (1990 in Engel, U., & Olsen, G.R. 2004) said that Niger’s independence only served to gain freedom in the global system, aptly termed ‘quasi-statehood'. This means being treated as if you are fully sovereign. But France is also highly dependent on Niger, as the country is the main supplier of the uranium used in French nuclear energy. The French military intervention in Niger is reminiscent of the “gendarme role" that France plays in its former colonies. They justified their intervention with the lack of ability of Niger and other Sahel countries to defend themselves against terrorist threats. The French security services argue that France’s special and historical ties to Niger justify its leading position among EU member states. They further stated that France has an advantage that other cooperation agencies do not have (Hahonou, E. 2016). This was an elaboration of Tamar Golan's words that "two decades after independence, this “special relationship” between France and Francophones is still alive (Chafer, T. 2002: 2).

As trade and development cooperation were the first areas of common external relations established by the European Community (EC), their study allows analysts to trace the changes in the objectives and instruments of European external relations over time. In 1957, the first European Development Fund (EDF) was established for the former colonies of the European states. In addition, since the first Lomé Convention (1975) between the EC and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) countries, the Community has also signed several joint partnership agreements with developing countries in the areas of development, trade and, more recently, security and environment. Some Member States seem to pursue national strategic objectives when allocating funds, just as France favours its former colonies like Niger (Sicurelli, D 2011).

Since 1962, French special advisers have held key positions in the Nigerien state apparatus, with the technical assistants fully integrated into the security services. France co-operates and competes with other donors in the training of the DSF. However, it remains uncertain to what extent France utilises EU institutions and resources to assert its political influence, and protect its economic interests in Niger. Therefore, the French presence in Niger gives rise to speculation about "Françafrique",(France's influence over Africa) (Hahonou, E. 2016).
Since early 2013, the new French interventions have led many to wonder what role, if any, the security of strategic supplies has played in French strategy, particularly the uranium mines exploited by Areva in Niger. (Tertrais, B. 2014). Areva's activities in Niger have been highly visible for many years. French nationals working for Areva were among a number of workers who were taken hostage. In response, France announced that its special forces would contribute to the security of Areva’s activities in Niger. Despite the importance of uranium from Niger to Areva, it is not as important to the French national nuclear programme as many believe. Niger is less important to France than it used to be, even if it remains an important partner (Tertrais, B. (2014).

Areva has at least not seriously reconsidered its overall strategy in Niger, because the company has presented its alliance with the ruling elites in Niger as a win-win situation. Not only has this relationship been close, but many observers, including civil society organisations (in France and Niger), Nigerien opposition parties and even members of the donor community in Niamey, are increasingly critical of the alliance. This alliance between France and Niger’s ruling elites allows the former to protect its investments and the latter to ensure stability at the top of the Nigerien state. Many questions have been raised about the relationship between France and the independent state of Niger, such as why independent Niger placed itself under the protection of France in order to exert influence over the country (Harshe, R 1980). The tacit acceptance of human rights violations committed by the Nigerien government and the DSF should be seen in this light. The lack of sanctions against the Nigerien government means that Niger is not accountable to France, which is detrimental to human security and long-term development prospects for Niger (Hahonou, E. 2016: 10).

Kwame Nkrumah, a pan-African visionary, argued that the attainment of political sovereignty did not automatically lead to independence, but rather strengthened the weak economies of developing countries, as capital and entrepreneurial skills were needed. This made them dependent on their former colonial masters or the rich industrialised countries that could control the economic destiny of the world. Nkrumah went further and condemned organisations such as the European Economic Community (EEC) which, once united, aimed to exploit developing countries (Harshe, R 1980: 160).

France supports Niger as part of the G5 Sahel region, which includes Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, all of which are struggling with poverty and security threats. The coalition is tackling these challenges with four pillars: Counter-terrorism, military capacity building, state restoration and development coordination. The N'Djamena Summit in February 2021 focused on civilian measures and state reintegration in remote areas (Permanent Representation of France, 2022). To improve stability in the Sahel region, France, Germany and the EU launched the Sahel Alliance in 2017. It improves the efficiency of development aid and coordinates with the G5 Sahel countries on development issues. The alliance accelerates measures that are tailored to local needs and mobilises 12 billion euros, with France contributing 1.6 billion euros. The UN is also involved in the Alliance through the UNDP. (Permanent Mission of France, 2022). To support the
France's Operation Barkhane (l’Opération Barkhane) in the Sahel aimed to neutralise terrorists, but delivered mixed results. Around 3,000 soldiers from the G5 countries took part in the operation, which is estimated to cost between 650 million and 1 billion euros per year. Despite the challenges, the initiatives have improved local cooperation in the fight against terrorism. In 2020, over 130 combat missions and 100 civil-military operations were carried out to improve access to water, energy and education. France has also provided tactical and material support, strengthening the efficiency of the Nigerien army. The French bases in Niger, Mali and Chad play an important role in local security, especially given the poverty in Niger and the dependence on external support for the protection of the civilian population (Olech A. 2023). One of the biggest operations that the French armed forces can be proud of was the neutralisation of Bah ag Moussa, the military commander of the terrorist group Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). Also worth mentioning is Monclar or Bourrasque, an operation carried out within the framework of Barkhane. It was an operation involving 5000 to 3000 soldiers at a time, which was carried out in March 2020 and lasted three weeks. It aimed to neutralise the jihadists, as their involved units and numerous hideouts were found and destroyed. This operation also contributed to weakening the military capabilities of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in North Africa (Olech A. 2023).

The failure of Operation Barkhane became clear when French President Emmanuel Macron announced a significant reduction of French forces in the Sahel from 5,100 to 2,500 in June 2021. Macron declared Operation Barkhane over, addressing security concerns in the Sahel, which is categorised as a high-risk region by Western countries. However, EU High Representative Josep Borrell emphasised in 2021 that Europe must recognise stability in the Sahel as crucial to European security and called for a greater European commitment to achieving stability. Despite Borrell's words, the reaction of European capitals to Macron's announcement was minimal. The deteriorating situation in the region and the importance of France had already led to a change in the deployment model being considered long before Macron's announcement. The shift in military presence has revealed the limited impact of Operation Barkhane, which was disproportionately costly and brought little stability. The reduction in French activity allows Niger to look for alternative solutions, but also invites greater involvement from other nations such as China and Russia, which could potentially exacerbate terrorism. (Olech, A. 2023).

A critical review of the Nigerien economy sheds light on the challenges facing the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Due to its historical ties to the former colonial power France, Niger is heavily dependent on French trade, which is characterised by considerable
asymmetry. France buys over 60% of Niger's exports, including 80% of its uranium, and supplies 35-40% of its imports. Despite this dependence, Niger has had a current account deficit since its independence, which limits its negotiating power with France over commodity prices and conditions (Charlick, R. 1991).

France has traditionally provided the largest share of official aid to Niger. This includes technical assistance, project aid and budget support and amounts to 45-75% of Niger's total budget. In addition, French influence facilitates European Community aid, including funds for economic development and stabilisation of raw material supplies (SYSMIN, STABEX). This guarantees an additional loan of $15m to $25m per year. French commitment to Niger extends as well to monetary policy and credit. As a member of the franc zone, Niger must work closely with the French Ministry of Finance to manage its money supply and exchanges. The purchasing power of its currency is tied directly to the decisions made in Paris. French public institutions (Caisse Central de coopération économique, CCCE) and private banks backed by Coface (Commission nationale des garanties) hold a large percentage of Niger’s $1.7 billion foreign debt, giving the French Ministry of Finance and the International Division of the Treasury major roles in the Paris Club of creditors which decided how to deal with outstanding third world public debt. For decades, the Nigerien leadership has countered its dependence on France by offering interests in order to secure favourable conditions, subsidies and market access. In return, they accept unfavourable conditions, support French positions in international forums and work in francophone institutions (Charlick, R. 1991).

Niger continues to be plagued by authoritarian, narrowly based governments, characterised more by personal organisation and faction fighting, than by parties of instruments of institutional control and competition. As long as France assured its rulers that they would intervene to protect French interests against foreign enemies (notably Libya) and domestic rivals, or that they would not intervene to check the worst human rights and economic abuses of the regime, the balance of power was clear. Despite internal opposition to the Niger government, these weak opposition groups, principally its students and unions, could do little to further their political and economic demands (Charlick, R. 1991). Some analysts see these relationships largely in the neo-colonial terms viewing Niger as dependency or enclaves for French interests. The main concept of neo-colonialism is based on the idea that ending colonial rule did not fundamentally end the exploitation of developing countries, but remained an effective weapon that guaranteed the colonisers' re-entry into independent Niger (Harshe, R 1980: 159).

French state aid to Niger is of course important for Nigeriens, but it is also historically important for France. To a small extent in economic terms, but mainly in terms of the notion of power and status shared by the French and their leaders. This consensus changed only slightly when French politics shifted from the right (the Gaullists) to the left (the Socialists). Both continued to emphasise the importance of Franco-African relations, albeit with significant differences in style and rhetoric. French governments continued to be criticised for having “no clear policy in Niger, only bad habits”, as they had not done
enough to promote development or integrate the country more fully into the global economy (French, H. W. 2024). France, the EU and Niger are in a phase of transition, the final direction of which is not yet clear. Although the disbursement of aid has not deviated from the established pattern, France continues to represent Niger's interests in trade and aid talks in the EC Council of Ministers. French aid continues to be implemented by the Agence française de développement (AFD, French Development Agency). Its priorities are: Improving food security, supporting economic development and investing in human capital and the development of young people and women. Between 2010 and 2019, Niger received commitments totalling 590 million euros from the AFD, including 280 million euros between 2017 and 2019. In 2019, France provided 119.27 million euros in official development assistance, including 71.74 million euros bilaterally (Diplomatie. n.d)

2.1 Research Gap

While the presence of French technical assistants in the Nigerien state apparatus is well documented in the literature and their cooperation with various international donors, including multilateral and bilateral organisations, is acknowledged, the specific role of EU institutions in promoting French influence remains unclear. Important questions arise about the mechanisms by which France uses EU structures to advance its interests in Niger. This includes analysing the extent of coordination between French actors and EU institutions such as the European Commission and the European External Action Service in shaping policies and initiatives in relation to Niger. In addition, the research gap prompts an examination of the strategies that France employs within the EU framework to promote its agenda towards Niger, particularly in the areas of economic cooperation, security and development assistance. In order to understand the dynamics of the relationship between France and the EU in relation to Niger, it is also necessary to analyse possible tensions or convergences between French priorities and the EU’s overall objectives. This means analysing whether France’s pursuit of its national interests in Niger aligns with or diverges from the EU’s broader policy objectives in the region, such as the promotion of stability, good governance and economic development. Overall, examining the role of EU institutions in promoting French influence in Niger offers insights into the complex interplay between national and supranational actors in shaping postcolonial relations and international dynamics. This research gap emphasises the need for nuanced analysis to decipher the mechanisms and effects of French engagement in EU-Niger relations that have led to security and development challenges.

3. Theoretical framework

Security and development nexus provides an important framework for addressing complex challenges in regions like Niger. Insecurity hinders development, while underdevelopment fuels instability. Integrated approaches that take into account social, economic and political factors can prevent conflicts from escalating. Development initiatives such as education and
economically empower and counteract radicalisation and thus promote stability. Coordination between aid organisations such as France, the EU, the USA and the UN improves humanitarian efforts. Improvements in governance combat corruption and strengthen trust in state institutions, which promotes security. An integrated approach tackles the root causes and strengthens resilience for long-term stability in Niger.

Security and development was an international system created on a global scale at the end of the Second World War (Nilsson, M 2020: 2). To understand France's influence on Niger through the EU structures, the “nexus” between security and development has become an important issue. This is very important for policy makers and analysts trying to solve the problems related to “failed” and “fragile” states. At the African Union Heads of State and Government meeting, it was stated that one of the principles of the proposed Common African Defence and Security Policy is “the fundamental link and symbolic relationship between security, stability, human security, development and cooperation”. At the United Nations (UN), former Secretary-General Kofi Annan also concluded that in an increasingly interconnected world, progress on development, security and human rights must go hand in hand. There will be no development without security and no security without development, because both depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law (Spear, J., & Williams, P 2012:7).

To get a clearer picture, the nexus of security and development has been understood as a network of connections between different ideas, processes or objects, as there is an infinite number of possible connections and relationships (Stern, M & Öjend, J 2010: 11). The traditional definition of security is the protection of the territory, integrity, stability and other interests of states through the use of political, legal or coercive instruments. In the 1990s, this definition was expanded to include non-military threats that can lead to violent conflict and affect the security of individuals, communities and the state. Security therefore refers to the process or means of avoiding, preventing or reducing violent conflict, regardless of the source of the threat, e.g. other states or non-state actors. Development today also focuses more on improving people’s lives than on the national economy (Nilsson, M, 2020:1), which has remained a major challenge for the people of Niger who are unable to diversify the variety of natural resources. The United Nations development bureaucracy also favours a bottom-up approach to development rather than a top-down approach by considering the ability to meet basic needs such as clean water and good sanitation rather than increasing a nation’s GDP per capita (Pease, K 2014:198).

The relationship between security and development is conceptualised as a zero-sum game and a hierarchical relationship, as security priorities should determine the selection of development projects. Although the existing academic literature does not come close to providing a systematic account of the possible ways to conceptualise the relationship between security and development, Björn Hettne has recently argued that from a macro-historical perspective “it is abundantly clear that the ‘nexus’ between development and security is anything but static or one-dimensional.” (Speer, J., & Williams, P 2012:21).
The efforts of France and the EU to establish a link between security and development in Niger have revealed a gap between political intentions and action on the ground. Critics criticise the focus on security rather than development, which has led to limited success. After 11 September 2001, stabilisation of control and order was prioritised over social change and development was limited to risk management. Militarised approaches overshadowed broader development objectives and limited interventions to emergency relief and small-scale reconstruction. The view that the EU prioritises security over development is widespread. Critics accuse European donors of providing only superficial support, which allows the authoritarian regimes in Niger to exploit them for their aid. However, this prioritisation encourages corruption and autocracy, even if it potentially undermines development efforts (Nilsson, M 2020: 4). Understanding the impact of globalisation on Niger's politics, culture and society is crucial to gaining clarity on security and development. It highlights the links between global food security, conflict and terrorism. The nexus concept underlines these connections and emphasises accountability and responsibility in the midst of insecurity and subjectivity (Stern, M & Öjend, J 2010: 20-21).

Figure 1. Possible narrative about Nexus?
With these boxes, we try to understand how the meaning of security and development and ‘the ‘nexus’ between them can shift and relocate even in these short quotations and in our critical reading. It is clear that the ‘boxes’ used to label the different approaches are undoubtedly leaky and change shape. Other ‘boxes’, not described or presented here, will certainly influence the articulation and practise of the ‘nexus’ in different contexts. However, the reference to a ‘safer world’ relies on the phrase ‘globalised security and development’, which lends legitimacy and urgency to the call to ‘give poor countries a real chance to develop’, as this is the only viable way out of the implied ‘unsafe’ world we live in today (Stern, M & Öjend, J 2010: 22). The fact that Niger is not pursuing the right development policies has also led to the country being ranked 118th out of 125 countries in 2015 and 120th in 2023 according to the Global Hunger Index (Global Hunger Index 2023). This index covers three dimensions of hunger: insufficient availability of food, deficits in the nutritional status of children and child mortality (World Health Organisation 2024). The structures of economic and political power at regional, national and global levels determine access to the planet’s resources and social product, as well as the extent of deprivation that leads to poverty and hunger (Veltmeyer, H. & Bowles, P. 2018).

These boxes illustrate the link between security and development and contribute to a better understanding of French and EU policy in Niger. As the Nigerien authorities are allegedly unwilling to fight terrorism after the coup, French President Macron justifies the deployment of 1,500 soldiers in the Sahel to fight the jihadists, emphasising their dependence on the French military (Agence France-Presse 2023). This has drawn attention to the quote from the Department for International Development (DFID) documents, although few documents make the one-to-one link between (in)security and development as clear as this one:

Wars kill both development and people. The poor therefore need security as much as they need clean water, education or affordable health.................DFID, working with poor people and their governments and international partners, can help create a more secure future for us all (DFID, 2005: 3 in (Stern, M & Öjend, J 2010: 24).

Prior to Bazoum's presidency, Niger had no autonomous control over its resources. This study assesses France's dependence on these resources, which led to insecurity and obstacles to development. Former French President Jacques Chirac and his predecessor François Mitterand said: “Without Africa, France will be a third world power in the 21st century”. In their statement, they criticised development as colonial control and questioned the homogeneity of the "Third World" (Stern, M & Öjend, J 2010: 12). Narayan in his project ‘Listen to the Voices of the Poor’ (Narayan et al., 2000) found that the poor spoke less about their income and more about how they felt ‘powerless’, trapped in a structure of unfreedom and disempowerment. It is no coincidence that the largest pockets of poverty in the world are in the Global South, such as Niger, one of the former colonies of the rich countries of the Global North, such as France, which exploited them for centuries and created the North-South divide (Veltmeyer, H. & Bowles, P. 2018).
France's focus on security may have overshadowed broader development priorities in Niger. While security is undoubtedly crucial, an overly militaristic approach can neglect the underlying socio-economic factors that contribute to instability, such as poverty, inequality and lack of access to basic services. This imbalance can hinder long-term development efforts and exacerbate grievances that fuel insecurity. Similarly, France has prioritised short-term security gains over sustainable development outcomes in its interventions. This can lead to a narrow-minded approach that fails to address the underlying structural problems that contribute to insecurity, such as governance failures, economic marginalisation and social exclusion. If these root causes are not addressed, security efforts may only provide temporary relief instead of promoting lasting stability.

4. Methodological framework

In order to comprehensively address the research objectives, this study applies a comprehensive methodology that draws on a variety of sources and techniques. By synthesising findings from various sources, the study seeks to present a comprehensive and well-rounded perspective on Niger's security and development challenges posed by France's EU structures, mechanisms and policies.

4.1 Research design and research method

The research design chosen for this study was a qualitative case study with abductive reasoning. Abductive reasoning was used because in qualitative research the perspective of the research is the empirical starting point. Many authors have argued that this type of reasoning is better labelled as abductive rather than inductive reasoning (e.g. N. Blaikie 2004a; Charmaz 2006). In abduction, the researcher bases their theoretical understanding of the contexts and people they are studying on the language, meanings and perspectives that make up their worldview. The crucial step in abduction is that the researcher must arrive at a social scientific account of the social world from the perspective of those who have provided the data. This includes the processing of existing knowledge and theories that facilitate comparisons and interpretations. Furthermore, the scientific account must not lose touch with the world as it is seen by those whose voices have provided the data. In reality, this looks like inductive logic, but there is actually an element of induction in the process. What is unique about abduction, however, is that the theoretical account is based on the worldview of those being analysed. Abduction is broadly an inductive approach, but it is characterised by the fact that it relies on the explanation and understanding of worldviews (Bryman 2021).

Abductive reasoning uncovers the factors fuelling security problems such as terrorism and insurgency in Niger. By analysing the historical and socio-economic context, researchers
hypothesise about the causes of instability and poverty. This analysis can be used to assess whether current strategies meet Niger's urgent need for change. According to Stake (1995), studying Niger as a case study is about the complexity and specificity of the case in question, an in-depth study of a particular case or phenomenon in its real context. It allows researchers to examine complex issues in detail and provides rich, context-specific data that can shed light on underlying processes, mechanisms and dynamics. The most common use of the term 'case' associates the study with a site that involves the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. (Bryman 2021).

Niger was chosen as a case study for this research because of its multidisciplinary research capabilities and its strategic location in West Africa. Despite rich resources such as uranium and oil, the country struggles with high unemployment and poverty. This study analyses the underlying problems such as food insecurity and infrastructure gaps and evaluates the development measures in terms of their sustainability. Political instability and security threats enable an analysis of counter-terrorism strategies and the impact of external interventions on security policy.

In order to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the challenges in Niger, qualitative research, one of the two main approaches of research methodology, was used. This research focuses on non-numerical information and emphasises the interpretation of social phenomena. In qualitative research, data is usually collected in the form of words and images, including interviews and participant observation. It has been used to explain and develop a deeper understanding of the security and economic situation in Niger, as it requires a deep understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that drive it (Bryman, A. 2021: 116). In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research tends to look at social life in terms of processes that manifest themselves in different ways to show how events and patterns evolve over time. As a result, qualitative data often give a strong impression of change and transformation. As Pettigrew (1997: 338 in Bryman, A. 2021: 402) aptly puts it, a process is "a sequence of individual and collective events, actions, and activities that unfold over time in context".

To elaborate more on the advantages of qualitative research over quantitative research: Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in its approach and structure. Qualitative research allows concepts and theories to emerge from data collection and provides depth and exploration. In contrast, quantitative research uses predefined concepts and structured methods to focus on specific topics that have been determined prior to data collection (Bryman, A. 2021: 408). Both qualitative and quantitative research aim to answer research questions, albeit with differences. Qualitative studies often ask open questions, while quantitative studies focus on specific investigations. Nonetheless, both methods ultimately aim to understand aspects of social reality (Bryman, A. 2021: 409).

In essence, qualitative data provides insights that go beyond quantitative measurements and are essential to understanding the complex and interconnected challenges in Niger. Qualitative research uncovers hidden realities, captures intricate social processes and
everyday dynamics, and enriches our understanding of security and development issues in the region.

To recognise reliability and validity, are very important criteria for assessing the quality of a study. Some authors have suggested that qualitative studies should be judged or evaluated by very different criteria than those used by quantitative researchers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994 in Bryman, A. 2021: 390) suggested that it is necessary to establish terms and methods for determining and evaluating the quality of qualitative research. As it provides an alternative to reliability and validity. They proposed two main criteria for evaluating a qualitative study: Trustworthiness and authenticity. A major reason for Guba and Lincoln’s discomfort with the simple application of reliability and validity standards to qualitative research is that these criteria assume that a single absolute representation of social reality is possible. In other words, they criticise the view that there are absolute truths about the social world that it is the task of the social scientist to reveal. Instead, they argue that there can be more than one and possibly multiple representations (Bryman, A. 2021: 390). One of these is triangulation, which involves the use of more than one source of data when analysing social phenomena. The term was used more broadly by Denzin (1970: 130 in Bryman, A. 2021: 392). This refers to an approach that utilises "multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, data sources and methods", although the emphasis is more on the research methods and data sources. One of the reasons Webb et al. (1996 in Bryman, A. 2021: 392) argued in favour of greater use of unobtrusive methods was their potential in relation to a strategy of triangulation. Triangulation can be used both within and between research strategies as it was originally conceptualised as an approach to developing measurements of concepts. By using more than one source of data to develop measurements, confidence in the results is increased (Bryman, A. 2021: 392). The question of internal validity, which has to do with the credibility of the research findings, was answered in this study by triangulating the way the research was conducted (Merriam, S. B & Tisdell, E. J 2016).

4.2 Data Collection

Data collection is a crucial step in any research process. Effective data collection is essential to achieve meaningful research results. This requires careful planning and attention to detail throughout the process. Interviewing and observation are the two data collection strategies that aim to gather data specifically related to the research question. Documents are also data sources for qualitative research. In fact, they are an easily accessible source of data that can exist in both a physical and online environment. Common documents include official records, newspapers and government documents that are available on websites or in the physical environment. Some researchers use the term visual methods to refer to the many types of visual documents and images that can be collected and analysed in qualitative research (Grandy, 2008; Pink, 2013 in Merriam, S. B & Tisdell, E. J 2016: 162-163). Society also produces materials to inform, entertain and perhaps
persuade the public. These are inherently public and are therefore sometimes summarised under the term "public record". Popular media forms such as television, radio, newspapers, cartoons and the internet are sources of 'public data' (Merriam, S. B & Tisdell, E. J 2016: 167). The use of these documents and articles as data is not significantly different from the use of interviews or observations, as data collection is guided by questions and resulting insights. (Merriam, S. B & Tisdell, E. J 2016: 175). Observation of news sources: Regional and international news sources will be closely monitored to capture the latest developments, reactions and evolving narratives about the coup attempt and AU responses.

In this research, secondary sources were used to track international news sources and the latest developments and reactions after the coup d'etat in Niger. Also the reactions of the AU, Ecowas, France, the EU, the US and international organisations, semi-structured dialogues, academic documents, books, scientific articles and news articles on security and development in Niger. In addition, reports from politicians on the influence of France on security and development in Niger. By using secondary sources, the researcher had more time to analyse the data to find new interpretations and identify important thematic strands. This offered numerous advantages, such as access to high quality data for a tiny fraction of the cost of data collection (Bryman, A. 2021). Secondary sources were researched using Google Scholar, Research Gate, public libraries, Linnaeus University's online library, and the university's student account credentials, which the researcher used to access websites such as jstor. Jstor is a digital library with over 12 million journals, articles, books and images. However, to gain access you must either be a registered user or your institution must be recognised by jstor to gain access. A semi-structured dialogue also took place between the researcher, some UN observers, politicians and civil societies to gather more data on security and development in Niger. This is discussed in more detail in the section on ethical considerations. The researcher analysed previous research on security and development in this area as well as relevant documents and articles from international organisations to get a picture of the current situation in Niger. In selecting the texts, the researcher had no problem orienting himself to the research questions or the theoretical framework as both have similar functions. The information collected were: political statements by President Emmanuel Macron (French President's speech on Françafrique), Mrs Catherine Colona (Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, speech justifying the French presence in Niger), Mr François Hollande (former French President, speech on Françafrique), Mrs Meloni Giorgia (Italian Prime Minister who is a critic of French policy in Niger), in order to understand the channels used by France to influence Niger (Françafrique) and the impact on the people of Niger.

To get a clearer picture of the research problems, media websites such as African News, Aljazeera, Agence France-Presse and France 24 were used to understand the security and development challenges in Niger. Google Scholar was also used to find articles from these two NGOs: Suvie (an NGO speaking out against Françafrique) and Institut Montaigne (an NGO advocating for France's presence in Niger). Both NGOs have contributed to listening to the views of civil society in order to make this investigation credible. The New
Humanitarian, an independent journalistic publication that is a trusted source of news on conflict, was also analysed by the researcher.

4.3 Limitations and delimitations

As a researcher, one encounters several potential limitations when analysing the question of French influence on security and development in Niger through EU structures. The availability of comprehensive and up-to-date information on specific diplomatic negotiations, policy decisions and their impact can be limited. Especially on sensitive issues such as security co-operation and the allocation of development aid. Niger is a linguistically and culturally diverse country where several ethnic groups and languages are spoken. As the official language of the country is French, the interpretation of some policies was translated by experts for better understanding. Even though the researcher has some basic knowledge of French. The researcher made sure that there is no bias towards the subject that could influence the interpretation of the data or the framework of the analysis. Conducting an in-depth study on a complex and multifaceted topic such as international relations requires a lot of time and resources, which were also limited. Given the broad scope of the topic, it can be challenging to comprehensively address all relevant aspects in a single research project. The reliability and accuracy of data, especially from sources such as government reports, international organisations and the media, can vary and was carefully checked by the researcher. As the data collection for this study was mainly from secondary sources, the following limitations existed: Inadequate access to data from Niger on various aspects of their security and development. This was due to the fact that there were not enough experts dealing with security issues and development challenges in Niger. Secondly, the security situation, including the insurgency, made it risky to travel to Niger to research and gather first-hand information. Finally, Niger relies heavily on external aid and international partnerships to address its security and development problems. The dependence on foreign aid and the involvement of external actors in research initiatives can influence the results by limiting the articles available on the Internet.

As delimitations are important to ensure the feasibility and manageability of research projects by ensuring that they remain focussed on their objectives, this study was limited to Niger. The reason for this was that other Francophone African countries have similar security and development problems as France. Secondly, the study was limited to certain types of security threats such as terrorism and border security rather than looking at inter-ethnic conflicts. Third, the focus was on certain dimensions of development such as the economy, infrastructure development and poverty reduction rather than education and health. Fourth, the researcher focused on areas for which reliable data is available, rather than analysing aspects for which data is scarce or unreliable. Finally, this research was limited to qualitative research and a case study rather than quantitative mixed methods research and a comparative case study to understand the security and development challenges in Niger.
4.4 Ethical considerations

Research should be designed and reviewed to ensure integrity, quality and transparency. The guidelines for ethical considerations on anonymity and privacy of high-level policy makers in Europe and sub-Saharan Africa with whom the researcher had an informal semi-structured conversation was observed. This method is used in qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewees’ feelings in the context of an open discussion in which they can fully express themselves. As most of them are still in service while some are already retired, their identities are kept confidential due to the sensitive role they play in terms of democracy, security and development.

Initiating a conversation with a person or group of people has been recognised as an integral element of qualitative research for well over 100 years. Conversations were considered a method in their own right and were at the centre of early social research methods. Informal conversations formed the basis for data production in numerous studies by sociologists (Swain, J., & King, B. 2022). The key guiding principle for this research remains that it is informative and descriptive rather than authoritative or strictly prescriptive (SRA 2003).

As this research is not intended to harm any participant, the issue of informed consent form was raised by the researcher. The advantage of such forms is that they give respondents the opportunity to be fully informed about the nature of the research and the implications of their participation (Bryman, A. 2021). The consent form for the semi-structured discussion contains information such as:

- The opportunity for participants to ask questions about the study.
- Participants are aware that their personal data, such as their name, will not be shared with anyone outside the project.
- Participants understand that their words may be quoted in publications, reports, websites and other research, but that their names will not be used.
- Participants may withdraw from the study without being asked why they are no longer interested to take part.

But due to the way the semi-structured discussion was conducted, those who participated with the researcher did not fill any information sheet or consent form, although they were informed that it was research. After the regular meetings between the United Nations observers, civil societies, parliamentarians and politicians, the evening session is set aside for discussions between all parties. During this time, you can raise any pressing issue that interests you to hear the other parties’ impressions on the subject. It was more of a relaxation as the researcher used this opportunity to meet with two groups. They were informed about the purpose of why the researcher will focus more on certain topics, which
was accepted by all participants. The first group consisted of five people (4 gentlemen and 1 lady), including former and current senior political leaders in Africa.

The topic of discussion was security and development between the West and sub-Saharan Africa in landlocked countries and the EU. This discussion on landlocked countries was very easy for the researcher and the participants of this study to verify as they had already met during the 5th UN Conference on LDCs in Doha, Qatar from 5-9 March 2023. The researcher also raised the very important question of whether only France is involved in influencing its former colony. The answer to this question can be found in Chapter 5 of this study. The second group the researcher met were the Europeans, a group of 2 gentlemen and 2 ladies. They hold important development policy positions in their respective EU countries and discuss how to better deal with security issues and development in Africa, including lessons to be learnt. The researcher focussed more on Niger and all participants agreed that no consent form should be filled out as the researcher was no stranger to them. Read more about the semi-dialogue in Chapter 5.

5. PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Since Niger's independence in 1960, French interests have influenced successive heads of state, often through electoral fraud, coups and military support through secret defence pacts (Survie, 2016). These "réseaux " (networks) are France's post-colonial means of maintaining relations with its African colonies (Chafer, T 2002:347). The changes in the post-Cold War era forced France to adapt its Africa policy. The war provided France with strategic leverage within the Atlantic Alliance, enabling it to pursue its national foreign policy objectives while acting as an impartial mediator with African governments and thus maintaining its influence (Chafer, T 2002:353). France's shadow diplomacy was at odds with its public stance on African self-determination. In practice, the Élysée bureaucrats exercised unofficial influence on Niger's political landscape. African leaders and intellectuals who oppose France's neo-colonialism are threatened with dismissal, removal or worse. It is worth noting that 78% of coups in sub-Saharan Africa since 1990 have taken place in Francophone countries (Mbaye Bashir, 2023). This French domination has continued to this day in various forms, such as, economically through the exploitation of raw materials, politically through the retention of power by Nigerien political elites and in terms of security through a “war on terrorism” (Survie 2016).

5.1 EU: Ensuring stability in Niger and Europe through EUCAP Mission

The EU plays a central role in the integration of Africa, with interpretations of its involvement ranging from self-serving to value-orientated. Sicurelli argues that the EU functions as a multi-level actor, with different interests being represented by national and supranational institutions. Sociological institutionalism offers insights by linking norm dynamics and interest politics within an institutional framework. It highlights how socialisation processes shape decision-making based on logical appropriateness, promote
constitutive norms and shape perceptions of appropriate behaviour. While this perspective provides a nuanced understanding of interactions between international institutions, organisational dynamics also encompass self-interested behaviours (Powell and DiMaggio, 1983; March and Olsen, 1998 in Sicurelli, D 2011). The relationship between European institutions sheds light on the process that leads actors to promote certain norms over others. This approach offers the opportunity to analyse the institutional channels that political actors in the EU can use to promote their interests and identities in the decision-making process (Sicurelli, D 2011).

The mission of the EU Delegation in Niger is to promote and defend the values and interests of the EU and to ensure all activities related to the monitoring of bilateral relations in the fields of political and economic relations, trade and cooperation. In particular, it ensures:

- Information on EU development and policies as well as the role and actions of the EU in Niger.
- Monitoring of the political, economic and social development of Niger as well as the monitoring of economic, political and cooperation relations with the WAEMU and ECOWAS countries.
- Management of community external aid to Niger
- Support for the negotiations of economic partnership agreements between the EU, UEMOA, and ECOWAS. In Niger, the management of aid constitutes the most important and certainly the most visible part of the tasks of the Delegation.

ECHO and EUCAP Sahel Niger are active in Niamey, Niger. The European Commission's relations with Niger date back to 1960, a year characterised by the Treaty of Rome and the establishment of the first European Development Fund (EDF). Reforms in the 2000s strengthened the Delegation in Niger by improving staffing, communication and training in aid management. Following the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 and the establishment of the EU, the Delegation is now known as the "Delegation of the European Union" (EEAS, 2021). EUCAP Sahel Niger, part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), aims to strengthen Niger's internal security sector and combat major security threats. Since 2012, EUCAP Sahel Niger has been supporting Nigerien authorities and non-state actors with programmes that include interoperability, strategic advice, technical expertise, justice, human rights and gender initiatives. Escalating violent extremism and organised crime pose a threat to local and European stability. Neighbourhood conflicts in Mali and Burkina Faso are placing an additional strain on Niger's resources. Around 120 Europeans are supporting the mission, which is of central importance to the EU's security and development strategy in the Sahel region (Eucap-sahel, 2024).
5.1.1 Political Relations (Legal and operational framework for EU-Niger relations)

The relations between the EU and Niger are expressed primarily in terms of development and generally within the framework of:

- The coherence of internal and external development policies, ensuring a link between diplomacy, defense and development.
- The national indicative (cooperation) program funded by the 11th EDF (2014-2020) and the continuation of the 10th EDF (2008-2013)
- The European strategy for security and development in the Sahel.
- The recent socio-economic development program (PDES 2012-2015)

5.1.2 Development Cooperation (objectives and intervention framework)

Support includes political, economic, financial and administrative governance, the promotion of democracy, human rights and the effective management of public affairs, including health and education. The cooperation programmes, which are financed by the European Development Fund (EDF) and translated into National Indicative Programmes (NIPs), are aligned with Niger's priorities. The 2014-2020 cooperation strategy, which is part of the 11th EDF and has a budget of 596 million euros, implements the Niger-EU framework in partnership with governmental and non-governmental authorities (EEAS 2021).

It is built around four main components, for a total of EUR 596 million:

- Food and nutrition security, and resilience (EUR 180 million, 30.2%)
- Strengthening of the State’s capacity for the implementation of social policies (EUR 200 million, 33.6%)
- Security, governance and peacebuilding (EUR 100 million, 16.7%)
- Opening up of region affected by insecurity and risk of conflict (EUR 90 million, 15.1%)

Certain activities are carried out outside the areas of concentration such as support to civil society (16 million euros), support to the National Authorising Officer (Ministry of Finance) or even the technical cooperation facility (10 million euros for these two interventions).(EEAS 2021).

In accordance with the principle of alignment of aid effectiveness, the programming of the 11th EDF is aligned with the programming cycle of the Nigerien economic and social development program (PDES) 2015-2016.

The five strategic axes of the PDES are:

- The establishment of conditions for the sustainability of balances and inclusive development.
• Consolidation of the credibility and efficiency of public institutions.
• The promotion of food security and sustainable agricultural development, with the priorities of the initiative of the Nigerien authorities entitled “3N” (Nigeriens feed Nigeriens).
• Support for a competitive and diversified economy capable of delivering accelerated and inclusive growth.
• Social development which integrates, among others, the sectors of health, education and the principles of gender equality, access to drinking water and sanitation.

With regard to the “Good Governance” section supports the development and implementation of the sectoral program for judicial reforms (PARJ) through the support project for justice and to the rule of law (PAJED). The judicial reforms improve the performance of the system and thus bring justice closer to the people. In addition, with a view to strengthening to fight organised crime and trafficking, the EU has committed since the 9th EDF to provide support in the area of internal security. The target groups for this support include the security forces, the judicial police and other elements of the judiciary who fight against crime. Other instruments, besides the EDF, are used by the EU to support Niger in this sector and to contribute to the efforts for stability and peace. In this perspective, the interim Response Program (PRI) of the instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) with a budget of 18.7 million euros for the period 2014-2016. It was aimed to reduce risks of insecurity and to support economic and social activity in 61 communities identified by the Niger authorities as priorities in terms of security and development issues (EEAS 2021).

5.1.3 Economic Relations and Trade between EU and Niger

Niger's economy is mainly based on agriculture and livestock, with a significant mining and petroleum sector. The tertiary sector includes telecommunications, transport, trade and public administration services. The EU, Niger's most important trading partner, imported goods worth 158.79 million dollars in 2022, according to the UN COMTRADE database (Trading Economics, 2024a). The export to Niger was also $415.86 million during 2022 (Trading Economics 2024b). Despite the EU's dominance in Niger's trade, the country has a significant trade deficit with the world and relies on external support for 45% of its budget. Key donors include the EU, the World Bank, the UN, the African Development Bank and individual countries such as France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Denmark (which provide 25% of external support). Niger wants to attract foreign investment by improving its investment code and fighting corruption. The revitalisation of the agricultural sector and the exploitation of mining resources, especially uranium, oil and gold, are economically promising, provided the country is politically stable and manages its resources prudently (EAD, 2021).
Cooperation between the EU and Niger focuses on budget support through the European Development Fund, which supports Niger's macroeconomic reform programme. This includes improving public expenditure management, tax collection, budget transparency and external control of public administration. The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) promote trade, regional integration and growth in West Africa, with a focus on the private sector as a driving force for sustainable economic development. The EPAs, which have been negotiated between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries since 2008, are intended to replace the trade component of the Cotonou Agreement. Over time, they will gradually reduce import restrictions to comply with WTO rules and extend duty-free access to the EU market for the least developed countries (LDCs). (EEAS, 2021).

At a meeting with ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, praised Niger as an “economic engine for the Sahel"." The EU promised to support Niger's regional vision of economic development that combines security and growth (African News, 2023a). The EUCAP experts point out a challenge in implementing a cooperative approach and note that there is a lack of ownership on the part of trainees and state institutions. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of a coherent national security strategy despite repeated calls from the EU and member states. The EU is accused of having a vested interest in supporting security policy in Niger. Some European experts argue that EUCAP Sahel Niger acts more like a French mission under a European flag (Hahonou, E. 2016).

5.1.4 How effective is the EU mission in Niger and challenges

Since 2017, EUCAP Sahel Niger has been supporting the Nigerien troops in the implementation of their national internal security strategy. They provide training in the areas of technical skills, irregular immigration, border control, justice, human rights, gender and civil society engagement. This approach aims to create an environment conducive to development and to recognise the link between economic growth and social progress (Sempijja, N & Eyita-Okon, E 2022).

The focus shifts from political competition to economic growth and welfare projects that depend on good governance to create a favourable environment. Effective institutions such as parliament and the judiciary mitigate group grievances, while free elections allow for political expression. Despite EU investment, there have been no tangible improvements in Niger. Development partnerships are criticised by Charles Abugre and Gordon Crawford for obscuring power dynamics and serving external interests in conflict zones (Sempijja, N & Eyita-Okon, E 2022). External actors in Niger have used development discourse as a conflict resolution strategy while pursuing their interests, leading to securitisation of development in conflict areas. This interest-driven and non-people-centred approach to tackling instability in Niger offers little improvement or solutions (Sempijja, N & Eyita-Okon, E 2022). The EU has expressed regret over the cancellation of the controversial 2015 law aimed at curbing the influx of migrants. The EU Commissioner for
Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, warned that this could lead to increased illegal migration attempts to Europe and poses a significant risk that could potentially lead to new deaths in the Sahara Desert (France24 2023b).

5.2 France aims and objectives in Niger

As one of the least developed countries in the world facing a complex security crisis in the Sahel (particularly in Tillabéri and Diffa), Niger must prioritise its development strategy. Challenges include access to basic services and preparing youth for the labour market. Despite these obstacles, Niger has national unity, rich natural resources, agricultural potential and international support. France, particularly through the French Development Agency (AFD), has been a key partner for 65 years, prioritising basic services such as water, energy, health, education and employment to ensure a better future for Niger's youth. In the midst of the security crisis, France continues to support governance and provide security for stability, with a focus on poverty reduction and sustainable development (Agence française de développement, n.d.). To better understand the role of AFD in the energy sector in Niger. Despite its great potential, less than 20% of households have access to electricity. To meet the growing demand for energy, the country has launched major power generation and distribution projects. The aim is to diversify the energy mix of power generation and secure the supply. AFD is supporting the project with a focus on renewable energies through projects for the generation, expansion and management of electricity grids in urban and rural areas (Agence française de développement. n.d). As part of the 3N initiative “Nigeriens nourishing Nigeriens”, AFD is helping to improve food security in almost all regions of Niger. This is done through local and territorial development and the management of natural resources (Agence française de développement. n.d).

5.2.1 Political channel used by France to Influence Niger

France and Niger have a strong historical relationship. The two countries are linked by numerous agreements in many areas, such as cultural and legal cooperation, and there have also been numerous bilateral visits between the political leaders of the two countries (Diplomacy 2022a). Niger and other Francophone countries have offered France a privileged role to secure great power status, as French politicians always say that Africa represents a sphere of influence where France is not challenged by any superpower. As one of Giscard's foreign ministers, Louis de Guiringaud, put it: “Africa is the only continent where France has the opportunity to make a difference ... and the only place where it can still change the course of history with 500 men”. France's influence in Africa really paid off because, firstly, it presented itself in old-fashioned geopolitical terms as a power to be reckoned with and, secondly, it enabled France to present itself as a champion of Third World countries as its activities in Africa enhanced its credibility in two roles in international politics - that of an alternative world power to the United States and the Soviet Union and that of a mediator between the North and the South (Staniland, M 1987:57).
France's French-speaking allies strengthen its diplomatic clout, especially in the UN Security Council. Former colonies such as Niger are considered to be within France's sphere of influence, giving the country considerable voting power and influence over UN actions. However, critics argue that this exploits African nations for French purposes. (Pigeaud, F., & Sylla, N. 2020). France's influence on Niger and other francophone African countries also extends to the CFA franc, a currency created by France in 1945. Originally pegged to the French franc and now to the euro, the CFA franc originally stood for "Colonies françaises d’Afrique" (French colonies in Africa) before becoming the "Communauté française d’Afrique" (French Community in Africa) (Aljazeera 2019). The CFA franc zone comprises 14 sub-Saharan African countries and is linked to one or two monetary unions. Niger, for example, is part of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which has the task of overseeing the African Financial Community (IMF n.d.).

Figure 2.

Critics argue that the CFA franc undermines Niger's monetary independence as it requires countries, including Niger, to deposit 50% of their reserves with the French Treasury. Coordination with the European Central Bank further restricts autonomy. (Aljazeera 2019). Although many African politicians and economists had tried to replace CFA Franc to a West African currency ('Eco') but all failed, due to the social network of French and African political leaders, the 'messieurs Afrique' (the gentlemen of Africa). These are the ones benefiting from the system (Kohnert, D 2022). Since CFA-franc is relatively strong, goods produced by CFA-franc countries are less competitive than goods produced by countries with cheaper currencies (Aljazeera 2019).

5.2.2 Economical & Developmental channel used by France to influence Niger

France's economic influence on Niger through the CFA franc is considerable. A report by the French Economic and Social Council in 1970 emphasised the advantages for France, including more reserves, stable export markets and free movement of capital, which
guaranteed the protection of French interests and access to raw materials (Pigeaud, F., & Sylla, N 2020:86). Civil society groups such as M62 are calling on Niger to end the uranium trade with France due to the unequal terms of the negotiations. France, which gets two-thirds of its electricity from nuclear power, sources about one-fifth of its uranium from Niger. France also exports electricity to European countries that do not have nuclear power plants (Schwikowski, M & Sandner, P 2023). Mahaman Laouan Gaya, former Nigerien energy minister and chairman of the African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO), said of the uranium deal between France and Niger: “Everyone in Niger has the feeling that this partnership is very unequal”. This is because the uranium, which was exported to France in 2010 to the value of 3.5 billion euros (3.8 billion dollars), only earned Niger 459 million euros. “If Niger decides not to export uranium to France, this will have dramatic consequences for France, but hardly any impact on the Nigerien economy, as the revenues from uranium exports to France are not worthwhile” (Schwikowski, M & Sandner, P 2023).

5.2.3 Aid, development, culture, scientific and technical cooperation

France is strengthening its influence in Niger through aid, cultural initiatives and scientific co-operation supported by agencies such as the French Development Agency (AFD). AFD's priorities include investing in human capital, promoting economic development and supporting demographic change. Niger received 590 million euros in AFD funding between 2010 and 2019 (Diplomatie 2022b). In the 2019/2020 academic year, France hosted 1,088 Nigerien students and co-financed education and mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ in the fields of agriculture, health and political science. It is also supporting the Sahel Climate Commission with a climate investment plan worth USD 1.3 billion.(Diplomacy 2022b).

Macron's "Africa-France" summit broke with tradition by prioritising the voices of African youth, for the first time since 1973 without African heads of state. Entrepreneurs, artists and athletes discussed the reorganisation of economic and cultural relations and strived for transparency and inclusion, moving away from the opaque practices of the past. Macron envisions a partnership centred on the aspirations of African youth.(France24, 2021).

Figure 3. Africa-France summit held without African heads of state (2021)
The Africa-France summit took place amid growing Russian and Chinese influence in Niger and across Africa (France24, 2021). Russia, in particular through the Wagner Group, prioritises security in Niger. The reduced US involvement since 2018 has allowed Moscow to intervene quickly and strengthen its image as a reliable ally. President Putin further consolidated Russia's position with the first Russia-Africa summit in Sochi in 2019. (Droin, M & Dolbaia, T 2023).

5.3 Françafrique

For more than 60 years, Paris has been interfering in the politics and business of Niger, known as “Françafrique”. Pilling, D (2023) says this continues to be a focal point for French officials to favour presidents and French companies in obtaining lucrative contracts. However, in an article titled ‘A Certain Msýsteria’, Tamar Golan says: ‘How can France do all the things it does in Africa and get away with it?’ Similarly, she was surprised that ‘two decades after independence, this “special relationship” between France and Francophones is still alive, which shows that this should be an issue of concern to us (Chafer. T 2002: 2).

"Françafrique" refers to the political and institutional system by which France maintains its influence over former colonies, secures access to resources and asserts its global power. This includes the exploitation of resources, development aid, support for dictatorships and military interventions. (Survival 2016).

"Françafrique is like an iceberg. You have the face of the top, the tip of the iceberg: France, Africa's best friend, the homeland of human rights, etc. And then you have 90% of the relationship that is submerged: all the mechanisms for maintaining French domination in Africa with African allies. — François-Xavier Verschave, former president of Survie, author of La Françafrique, le plus longest scandale de la République, 1998, Stock (Survival 2016).

Figure 5. Françafrique is like an iceberg
5.3.1 Speech by French political leaders to put an end to Françafrique

Despite former President François Hollande's declaration in Dakar in 2012 that "the time of the Françafrique is over", France continues to use these mechanisms to maintain its influence, albeit in a modified form in the context of globalisation, particularly following the extensive privatisation of national companies (Survival 2016). On 2 March 2023, President Emmanuel Macron declared during his trip through four African countries in Libreville that French interference in Africa was "finally over". He attributed the anti-French sentiment to the growing Russian and Chinese influence in the region and reaffirmed France's disinterest in returning to its previous policy of interference (Aljazeera 2023b).

Figure 6. President Macron with Gabon’s President Ali Bongo Ondimba in Libreville (2023)

5.3.2 Political statement from the Italian Prime Minister Meloni Giorgia against Françafrique:

At the "ATREJU18" conference in September 2018, Ms Meloni Giorgia, speaking for the Italian right, accused French President Emmanuel Macron of contributing to the migration flows to Italy. Her remarks were prompted by Macron's criticism of Italy on 13 June 2018 for turning back a ship carrying hundreds of refugees across the Mediterranean, which he described as "shameful and irresponsible" (Sahara Reporters 2022). In her response, Giorgia Meloni pointed to the continued influence of France, citing the exploitation of Francophone African countries through practises such as printing money for 14 African nations, levying coinage fees and child labour in mining in Niger to extract raw materials for France. She argued that Africans are leaving their continent because of France's actions and emphasised that the solution lies in freeing Africa from European influence rather than bringing Africans to Europe (Sahara Reporters 2022).
5.4 Debates on French influence in Africa: *A statement made before the French National Assembly in accordance with Article 50-1 of the constitution by Catherine Colonna, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, on 21 November 2023:*

She emphasised the importance of Africa in French foreign policy and referred to the economic, diplomatic and demographic significance of the continent with over 1 billion people. Despite the criticism that blames France for Africa's challenges, she emphasised the interest of young people in sustainable development partnerships (Diplomacy 2023).

Catherine Colonna emphasised France's commitment to investing in sectors that ensure economic growth and empowerment in Africa and positioned Paris as a hub for African creativity. She defended France's economic successes in the Sahel and rejected reports of disproportionate military investment. Since 2013, France has provided substantial bilateral aid amounting to 3.5 billion euros, 80% of which in the form of donations, and mobilised over 7 billion euros in European aid. Colonna was proud of France's security policy successes in Niger (Diplomacy 2023). Analyst Nathaniel Powell supported this stance, pointing to the importance of Niger for intelligence gathering, suggesting that the French are not ready to give up this territory. The US refrained from labelling recent events in Niger as a coup d'état in order to maintain relations given the presence of its drone military base (Voa Africa 2023).

With regard to the recent events in Niger, Colonna emphasised the importance of governance for stability. She called for France's successes since 2013 not to be undermined and rejected France's sole responsibility (Diplomacy 2023). Finally, France cannot continue
to fight terrorism alongside the coup plotters, it cannot continue to fund development projects that support them, but it will continue to provide humanitarian aid so that the population does not suffer from the behaviour of their current leaders (Diplomacy 2023).

The youth of Niger, unencumbered by colonial history, joined the intellectual emancipation movements. They drew parallels with the struggles of African Americans and allied themselves with nationalist figures. Amidst the distractions, France had to focus and stand up for its values and interests (Guiffard, J 2023). Many Nigeriens harbour negative feelings towards France because the country has supported autocratic and corrupt regimes in the past. Despite Niger's modern security capabilities, scepticism remains, fuelled by France's perceived failure to combat terrorism in Mali. Former French diplomat Gerard Araud agrees and criticises the "stabilisation mantra" as flawed (Kleinfeld, p. 2023). France's negative influence on Niger's development is reflected in the presence of companies such as Areva that exploit natural resources, even though Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, with many people living below the extreme poverty line of $2.15 a day (Statista 2024). The challenges posed by France go beyond security and economics and emphasise the need to move away from its colonial past and see Niger as a partner, even if such a rapprochement could prove difficult for both sides (Mbaye Bashir, 2023).

5.5 United States mission strategic framework in Niger

Niger, the largest country in West Africa, serves as a linchpin for the stability of the Sahel region and the fight against terrorism against groups such as ISIS-Great Sahel, ISIS-West Africa, Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and Boko Haram. Although the country ranks 189th out of 193 in the UN Human Development Index 2021, the adult literacy rate is below 30% and the population is growing by 3.9% annually, the government of Niger has actively cooperated with the United States. Their cooperation focuses on diplomacy, development, democracy and defence to address the country's challenges (Department of State 2022).

The US mission goal 1 in Niger is: Strengthen Democracy, Human Rights, and good governance.

- Mission objective 1.1: Government institutions are more transparent, accountable and responsive to citizen needs.
- Mission objective 1.3: Democratic institutions provide for peaceful political competition and representative political processes.

Mission Goal 2: Strengthen Niger’s Capacity to counter Regional Threats and Criminal Activity.
Mission objective 2.1: Increasingly professionalised Nigerien security forces by countering violent extremism, to provide internal stability by enhancing regional security in accordance with democratic norms and observance of human rights.

Mission objective 2.2: Niger’s government institutions, security forces, and civil society collaborate to reduce vulnerability to violent extremism.

Mission Goal 3: Increase inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth.

Mission objective 3.1: Investment and broad based employment are increased, leading to growth and diversification of Niger’s economy.

Mission objective 3.2: Niger’s government institutions improve delivery of public services and programmes that reinforce livelihoods of rural poor, viability of key productive sectors and sustainability of natural resources.

The U.S. is addressing the growing threat of violent extremism in Niger by focusing on social cohesion, dialogue, employment, judicial accountability, and civil-military coordination. USAID-funded research identifies economic, social and political factors fuelling recruitment to violent extremist groups in the Sahel. Reducing poverty through market integration, empowering women and youth and improving livestock value chains are important development strategies. USAID programmes focus on cash-for-work initiatives and human capacity development. Niger wants to utilise the African Continental Free Trade Agreement for regional trade in the midst of the unstable Sahel region. Strengthening democratic institutions remains critical to security and development..(Department of State 2022).

Figure 4. American troops train soldiers near Agadez, Niger. April 12, 2018.
5.5.1. The U.S is Failing the Sahel

The coup d'état in Niger on 26 July, which overthrew President Bazoum, is a blow to democracy and stability in the Sahel region. The dwindling influence of the US since 2021, despite years of aid, is exacerbating regional unrest. With 13 coups attempted in 30 months, a stable Sahel is vital for the US and its allies. The consequences of this coup could exacerbate extremism, humanitarian crises and migration problems. (Rauch-Mannino, N 2023). Niger remains unstable even after the military coup, President Bazoum is under house arrest. Protests broke out, citing colonial tensions and alleged Russian support. US condemnations were ineffective and risked the suspension of aid. Dialogue has stalled, embassies have been evacuated and ECOWAS support is non-existent. The US must act decisively to protect Niger's democracy and past investments (Rauch-Mannino, N 2023).

After the collapse of democracy and the eviction of the US embassy, policymakers need to reassess the effectiveness of US strategy in Africa, starting with the Biden administration's "US Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa". The Biden administration's approach to Niger is not focussed on economic needs and contrasts with the previous administration's clear stance on national security. (Rauch-Mannino, N 2023).

5.6. Security and development situation in Niger under EU, France, and US military watch

The EU and the US have significantly expanded their engagement in Africa since the early 2000s, guided by the principles of regional integration, African ownership, stability and international law. Both organisations adhere to the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and focus on conflict management and humanitarian interventions in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Sicurelli, D 2011). France uses security as a means to exert influence in Niger and deploys more than 5,100 military personnel, mainly to protect French uranium interests. While the US focuses on counter-terrorism, EU security policy in Niger aims to prevent migrants from sub-Saharan Africa from travelling to Europe via Niger (USIP 2020). Operation Barkhane, launched in 2014, demonstrates France's commitment to the Nigerien armed forces and the G5 Sahel Joint Force for cross-border operations (Diplomacy 2022). The EU supports Niger's security capacities, in particular border security and initiatives to repatriate migrants. Following the criminalisation of migrants, Niger received USD 1.16 billion from the EU for security assistance to curb migration. However, Niger's history of military coups, weak governance and politicised security services requires foreign aid to strengthen security in the long term. However, if governance and accountability issues are not addressed, security assistance can inadvertently encourage corruption and hinder government transparency (USIP 2020).
5.6.1 The French and EU, the US, and the UN comment after the Coup and consequences

The coup in Niger escalated political tensions and led to the expulsion of the French ambassador by the military junta, which worsened relations with France. Despite diplomatic efforts to restore democracy, the new government under the leadership of General Tchiani announced a three-year transition period (Caulcutt, C & Hülsemann, L 2023). Despite threats of sanctions from France, the EU, the USA, the AU, ECOWAS and the UN, the military junta in Niger strengthened its alliances with Burkina Faso and Mali, as it suspected French influence in ECOWAS, which favoured Bazoum's return. The EU considered breaking off relations, while the US, given its military presence in Niger, maintained communication to avoid further tensions (Europarl 2023; Gordon, C. 2023). Maintaining relations with Niger serves regional stability and counteracts Russian influence. The US suspended development aid after the coup was recognised, demonstrating a cautious approach to diplomatic action (Takambou, M 2023).

The sanctions against Niger, including the suspension of AU activities, the interruption of electricity supplies from Nigeria and the interruption of EU aid, exacerbated food insecurity. The Ecowas sanctions, designed to put pressure on the junta, exacerbated food shortages (Obasi, N 2023). Ecowas Chairman Tinubu proposed military intervention, which the Nigerian Senate rejected due to internal security concerns (Europal 2023). International condemnation followed, but military intervention was not favoured. Algeria, fearing disruption of the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline (TSGP), a multi-billion dollar project spanning Nigeria, Niger and Algeria, is seeking stability (Africa News 2023b). The pipeline, which is expected to benefit from increased European gas demand, promises economic benefits for the nations involved (S & P Global 2023; Kohnert, D 2023:6).

In response to the international reaction to the coup d'etat, Niger's military junta tightened its alliances with Burkina Faso and Mali and warned of military intervention, citing a possible destabilisation of the region (Aljazeera 2023a). In retaliation for the sanctions, international organisations and diplomats, including the French ambassador Sylvain Itté, were expelled from the country, with France refusing to recognise the junta (Caulcutt, C & Hülsemann, L 2023). Uranium supplies to France's nuclear power plants were halted and Nigerien airspace banned French flights, with the exception of commercial flights (France24 2023a). Niger also cancelled the tax cooperation agreements concluded with France in 1972 (Reuters 2023). In addition, a law restricting migration routes was cancelled, raising concerns in the EU about increased migration despite the expected local economic benefits (France24 2023b).

Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali have withdrawn from ECOWAS. They argue that ECOWAS does not support their fight against terrorism and insecurity and claim that it is influenced by foreign powers. The sanctions imposed by ECOWAS have been labelled "illegal,
illegal, inhumane and irresponsible" by the military juntas. ECOWAS expressed surprise at the cancellation, as its protocol provides for a notice period of one year. However, ECOWAS intends to lift travel and economic sanctions against Niger to encourage dialogue and persuade the military-led nations to reconsider leaving the bloc (Al Jazeera 2024b; Asadu, C 2024).

5.7. Semi dialogue the researcher had from ethical consideration

The first group the researcher met with consisted of 4 gentlemen and 1 lady, including former and current high-ranking political leaders in Africa. We talked about the landlocked countries, including Niger, and their security and development co-operation with the EU.

The following questions were asked:

Question 1: The questioner wanted to know if it is only France that is fully engaged in the activities of its former colony?

Answer: It is not only France that is heavily involved in the political and development activities of its former colony. All colonisers still directly or indirectly control the policies that determine daily life in their former colony. It was also noted in the discussion that most former and current EU heads of state and government are always the political leaders in Africa that they look to for support and assistance from investors. Once these investors have invested in sub-Saharan Africa, their interests and investments must be promoted. For them to continue receiving privileges in the form of tariffs, they need to be supported by those in power to protect those interests. Sometimes African leaders want legitimacy and recognition before they come to power, so it is a bilateral deal between them and Western partners, interest groups and their political donors. The discussion moved on to the behind-the-scenes preparations that must have taken place before the election date when voters will cast their ballots. Voters only go to the polling booth, but many discussions and negotiations must have taken place before the election date. Elections should not be based on selection but on number of votes. If a political leader needs help from the international community in any form, they need the support of the West on both the security and development agenda, otherwise one of these leaders from the global North could block their proposals.

Question 2: What impact does corruption have on security and the development framework?

Answer: It has led to a deterioration of the system because the grassroots, who are supposed to be the beneficiaries, do not benefit from the aid provided and those who really need it do not have access to it. The distribution of aid was inadequate in most cases, which repeatedly led to conflicts, as some villages felt marginalised and excluded from any form of infrastructure project. The problem of corruption was also raised. No one from Nigerien civil society asked the government what it was doing with the money from the migration
agreement with the EU. It was agreed to continue to advocate for measures to hold African leaders accountable at home and abroad.

Question 3: Does the EU have confidence in the security structure in Niger and Africa without its full involvement?

Answer: The answer was no, because most of the militaries in Africa do not have the necessary experience in the fight against terrorism, as most of these terrorists have usually also been trained abroad and have more sophisticated weapons. The presence of the Western military is a deterrent to the terrorists, otherwise they could have carried out even worse attacks than those recorded so far. So it is better to keep them in check before the total outbreak so that they do not carry out foreign attacks like 9/11. The West is also there to protect not only its citizens but also the investments and natural resources before the terrorists turn them into sources of revenue.

Do not forget to talk about landlocked countries, how to help them see Doha over landlocked countries

The second group the researcher met was the Europeans, which consisted of 2 gentlemen and 2 ladies. They are in a position to discuss the development policy between the EU and Africa.

Question 1: What are the main security challenges in Niger and Africa for which the general security policy framework does not really deliver the right outcome?

Answer: The security problems were under control until an Islamist group pledged allegiance to ISIL and Al-Qaeda and began a campaign to destabilise Niger. The weapons that came from Libya after the collapse of the Ghaddafi regime were also seized by these Islamist groups. The terrorists are always on the lookout for a weak state in which they can spread their ideology via the Islamic religion. Poverty in Niger and underdevelopment encourage young people to join the Islamic militants as they find it lucrative.

Question 2: What is the impact of corruption on security and development?

Answer: How is it possible that African heads of state can deposit so much money in a foreign account without facing consequences when the West is so transparent? This simple answer is due to the immunity they enjoy while in office, but as soon as their country brings a case of embezzlement against them, it is dealt with accordingly.

Question 3: How can development between landlocked countries and the West be improved?

Answer: The researcher made some remarks that brought great relief: If the West has not found most of these natural resources and does not know what they can be used for, then the people of Niger and Africa may not know how important they are. This is the reason
why both parties need to come to an agreement as business partners in this globalised world, even if each party is more interested in personal interests. But it is better to keep negotiating to find a compromise than to tear the ties.

5. 8. Niger’s partnership with China and Russia.

China’s economic presence in Niger surpasses that of Russia. Trade relations totaled 441 million dollars in 2021 (OEC 2021a), compared to 4.58 million dollars (OEC 2021b) for Russia. Despite the Russia-Africa Summit 2023, China’s economic engagement remains significantly higher (Droin, M & Dolbaia, T 2023). Niger welcomes China's commitment, particularly in connection with the Belt and Road Initiative. China is seeking a 300 billion dollar trade agreement with Africa. Over next three years (Fmpre 2021). However, the question arises as to what influence China will have compared to France, especially with regard to uranium deposits, whether China will leave Niger in a better condition than the French (Mdoe, G 2023).

Niger, along with China and Russia, is part of the BRICS alliance, which focuses on sustainable development. Goldman Sachs predicts that the BRICS will dominate the global economy by 2050 (The Economic Times 2024). Both China and Russia are facing sanctions from the US and EU targeting their main sources of revenue related to the Ukraine war (Lyngaas, R. 2023) and Chinese companies for alleged links to the Russian defence and security sector (Aljazeera News 2024a). The BRICS bloc, composed mainly of nations from the Global South, with a population of 3.27 billion people (as of mid-November 2022) (UN, 2022) and a combined GDP of $25.85 trillion, poses a challenge to the Global North and demonstrates its current strength in the world economy (O'Neill, A. 2023). New BRICS members such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are strengthening the bloc's influence and demonstrating its rapid growth (Monteiro, A 2023).

6. Analysis

Niger is a landlocked developing country (UNCTAD, n.d) with 27.2 million inhabitants (UNFPA 2023), rich in natural resources such as uranium, coal and agricultural products: millet, rice, vegetables and cotton (World Atlas 2019). Despite these resources, the country remains a low-income country (World Bank 2023a). As it is a landlocked country, it has no direct territorial access to the sea. The country relies on international trade to drive its economic development, which poses a major challenge to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, n.d.)

After Niger's independence in 1960, it was clear that nothing had changed in the country's political, economic and security situation as a result of French influence. Even though the French have promised on many occasions not to interfere in the issue of Niger’s sovereignty, their actions speak a different language than their promises (Aljazeera 2023b).
But as a prominent member of the European Union, France has considerable influence within the EU institutions and uses this position to assert its interests.

6.1 The EU structures and mechanism used by France in Niger

This section analyses how France has influenced Niger through EU structures and mechanisms and what impact this has had on security and development in Niger by exploiting the nexus between security and development. As the specific role of EU institutions in facilitating French influence remains unclear, the following key research questions emerged:

1. First research question: What are the mechanisms through which France utilizes EU structures, such as the European Commission and the European External Action Service to assert its interest in Niger?

France has been using different mechanisms within the EU structures, including the EC and the EEAS to assert its interest in Niger. Here are some ways in which France has been engaging with different institutions within the EU:

6.1.1 Diplomatic channels used by France within the EU and Niger

After Niger gained its independence in 1960, its new leaders were forced to adhere to the existing French system because they were already anchored in it. These Nigerien political elites were ill-prepared for the challenges of the transition of power (Harshe, R 1980). Jackson (1990, cited in Engel, U., & Olsen, G.R. 2004: 16) described this independence as a purely symbolic gesture that led to what he termed 'quasi-statehood'. In this framework, African states such as Niger were treated as sovereign members of the international community even though they did not fulfil the necessary criteria. This was made possible by the support of the leading world powers (Engel, U., & Olsen, G.R. 2004: 16). France played a central role in ensuring Niger's political stability. This was in line with the traditional concept of security and development, which places the state at the centre and thus protects Niger's sovereignty.

As a prominent EU member, France exerts diplomatic influence within the EEAS to assert its interests in relation to Niger. This includes coordinating with other EU states to promote a coherent strategy for Niger's security, development and political stability. Through such engagement, France effectively steers EU policy towards Niger towards its objectives. In addition, France uses EU platforms to engage with the Nigerien authorities and civil society on issues such as democracy, human rights and governance. This engagement extends to diplomatic dialogues, election observation missions and the strengthening of democratic institutions in Niger (EEAS 2021).
6.1.2 Security Cooperation

Peace is urgently needed in Niger, a country that already ranks 137th out of 163 countries in the GPI (GPI 2021). This shows that the cost of peace in this region is worth more than the consequences of a growing, deep-rooted crisis that has reached a point where not only diplomats should have a common understanding of the issues at hand, but also researchers, development experts and civil society should work together to find a lasting solution for the necessary peace. France's position in the EU was utilised to work with other EU countries through institutions such as the EEAS to improve security cooperation with Niger. EUCAP in Niger and the G5 Sahel has been used for counter-terrorism, capacity building for the Nigerien security forces and initiatives to address cross-border security issues (Olech, A. 2023)

6.1.3 Economic/ Development

Development is one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century, as chronic poverty, disease and economic stagnation with high inflation have paralysed Niger’s economy and are now leading to high levels of debt and unemployment (Pease, S. 2014). As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has changed the definition of development by advocating a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach, development is now seen as the ability to meet basic human needs such as clean water, good sanitation and adequate housing, rather than a simple increase in a nation's GDP per capita (Pease, S. 2014).

France provides development aid to Niger through the EDF and the EC, focussing on poverty reduction, infrastructure and capacity building in the areas of education, health and agriculture. It influences EU trade policy and negotiations with Niger and is in favour of trade agreements and market access for French companies. In humanitarian crises, France works with the European Commission to provide emergency relief, food aid and refugee assistance to minimise instability and conflict risks. This comprehensive approach combats socio-economic inequalities and strengthens the resilience of communities.

6.1.4 Implications of these structures and strategies through the EU on Niger’s security and development

France’s actions within the EU structures have domestic political implications in Niger, as many of their political elites are seeking closer ties with France. After their independence, France officially supported democracy, as the new constitution was written with the help of French constitutionalists who closely modelled it on the constitution of the Fifth Republic. Very quickly, the one-party system replaced the multi-party system and military coup d'etat became endemic until international public opinion was alarmed by gross human rights violations, forcing France to intervene to protect its image. The French authorities believe
that a strong man in power in Niger is the best guarantee of political stability, which is never in the interest of Nigeriens, but in the economic interest of France (Engel, U., & Olsen, G.R. 2004: 37). As far as politics is concerned, many people in Niger do not believe in elections because electoral processes always end in manipulation and conflict (Survie 2016), causing them to lose hope in democracy and good governance. Good governance is essential as it links security and development by promoting stability, prosperity and resilience through the rule of law, effective institutions, transparency and accountability.

If stability is not achieved through good governance in Niger, it will spread to other neighbouring countries and the whole world. This is the reason why the EU should enter into a dialogue with the military junta, because sanctions usually do not bring the desired result, but only lead to more suffering for the citizens (Asadu, C. 2024). The world is too interconnected for sanctions to be one-sided, just as Niger ended its cooperation with the EU by repealing the law that criminalised the illegal trafficking of migrants (France24 2023b) “It was the EU itself that suspended its security co-operation with them after the coup d'état because it no longer wants Niger and neither they,” as quoted by one of Niger’s officials saying. “Our alliances with the West have existed since colonisation and have not brought us any happiness. We have to get rid of them and move closer to other countries” (Le Cam, M 2023).

The security and development nexus should be utilised to give Niger a chance to develop. It is at a critical point where security takes precedence over sovereignty, which also reflects France's concerns. Donors should scrutinise the actions of aid recipients, as French and international aid is not transparent and does not promote long-term development. Politically, aid often enriches the elites, while citizens perceive it as embezzlement, which prevents a real impact at the grassroots level. There are still misunderstandings between donors and recipients. Aid sometimes serves political goals rather than real development (Stern, M & Öjend, J 2010). Similarly, they support authoritarian regimes that can effectively use the nexus between security and development to solicit development assistance to mitigate security threats (Nilsson, M 2020).

Security and development issues discourage investment and emphasise the need to empower the youth to reduce the lure of terrorism. Nigeriens deserve better education, sanitation and housing which are essential for human development (Pease, K. 2014). With the resources available, it should be possible to achieve these goals. However, the increasing Russian expansion in Niger and Africa harbours risks due to the young, rapidly growing population. The West must not take a passive stance, but must actively engage, because the stakes are too high (Droin, M. & Dolbaia, T. 2023). In general, the mechanism and strategy of the EU and France was that of their own interests. Some European experts argued that the EU strategy was more of a French mission under a European flag (Hahonou, E. 2016). French politicians put the defence of the French economy above the development of Africa. They took measures such as withholding 50 per cent of Nigerien foreign currency in France in order to regulate the trade deficit. The blockade of the "Eco" currency was aimed at preserving France's economic dominance, which hindered competitiveness and
trade within ECOWAS and hampered Niger's economic growth and regional integration (Aljazeera 2019).

Similarly, development aid was used as a means to promote French exports and investments, which was later linked to corruption. Accordingly, French policymakers had to cater to the demands of businessmen who did business with Niger and politicians and parties who needed money. The substantial economic aid Niger received in the form of development assistance did not raise serious concerns, as part of it was reclaimed by French companies (Engel, U., & Olsen, G.R. 2004). The possible imbalances in trade flows and French investment in Niger when considering one of its resources, uranium. The uranium exported from Niger to France in 2010 was worth 3.5 billion euros ($3.8 billion), but Niger received only 459 million euros for it (Schwikowski, M & Sandner, P 2023). These low revenues are not enough to transform a key sector of a country's economy such as energy, transport and industry. As Niger remains the third largest supplier of uranium to France to fuel its nuclear power plants, despite the majority of Niger's population having no electricity, France is expected to balance the economic interests that could benefit both nations with the promotion of long-term benefits. France should have changed its African foreign policy towards development with Niger as a business partner to end Françafrique instead of maintaining the coloniser's influence over the colonised.

Figure 10. Françafrique

Niger's natural resources, especially uranium, are essential for the French nuclear power plants. Niger needs stable energy for sustainable development. With 44.1% in extreme poverty, energy is crucial (World Bank 2023). France must use EU structures to advance mutual interests and work with member states for Niger's security and development.
6.2 **Second research question**: Are there tensions or alignments between French priorities and broader EU objectives in Niger, and how do these dynamics influence EU-policy making and engagement in the region?

The analysis of security and development in Niger shows the tensions between French priorities and the general objectives of the EU. France prioritises security, which is in line with EU objectives for regional stability. However, this prioritisation can overshadow the EU's focus on development and governance. This leads to political tensions and calls for a balanced approach. France maintains strong bilateral relations with Niger due to historical colonial ties and is engaged both bilaterally and in multilateral efforts led by the EU. However, tensions can arise when French priorities clash with the EU's broader approaches and raise questions of coherence and coordination. Italian Prime Minister Meloni, who is one of the political leaders in the EU, criticises and underlines concerns about French policies, including migration and economic exploitation in Niger (Sahara Reporters 2022).

In terms of resource allocation, French priorities in Niger, particularly in the area of security, can require significant resources and attention. This can sometimes lead to debates within the EU about resource allocation and prioritisation. Some EU member states have argued that too much focus on security risks neglecting other important areas such as development, governance and human rights (Charlick, R 1991) Reconciling these competing priorities in EU policy was a challenge and required compromises in order to fulfil the interests of the various member states. While France and the EU share concerns about the humanitarian crises and the plight of vulnerable populations in Niger, there may be differences in approaches and priorities. France may prioritise security-oriented responses to crises, while the EU prioritises humanitarian principles, human rights and long-term development solutions (EEAS 2021). These differences may shape the EU's policy responses and influence the allocation of resources and aid in Niger. In addition to the tensions between French priorities and the EU's broader objectives in Niger, Mrs Catherine Colonna has stated in the French Parliament that France is being used as a ‘scapegoat’ (Diplomacy 2023). The term 'scapegoat' implies that France has been unfairly singled out and made the target of criticism.

States need better ways to pursue national interests, which should be based on mutual benefit for all parties to achieve security and development growth. Without both, the nation will remain a fragile state. Overall, while there may be tensions between French priorities and broader EU objectives in Niger, there is also a recognition of the need for coordination and cooperation within the EU framework. Finding a common ground and aligning priorities to the security and development nexus will address the complex challenges facing Niger. By negotiating, dialogue, and compromise among EU member states, including France, will ensure a coherent and effective policy approach to give the much needed result on the security and development in Niger.
French priorities and the EU’s broader objectives have had a dynamic impact on EU policy-making and engagement in Niger in the following ways: France's influence in the EU institutions and its alignment with the EU's objectives characterise the negotiation and compromise processes in EU policy towards Niger. They can advocate for specific measures or provide resources within the framework of the EU. Likewise harmonising national interests with EU policy and ensuring coherence between the various actors and policy areas are ongoing efforts.

To summarise, the interplay between French priorities and the EU’s broader objectives in Niger shapes EU policy-making and determines the agenda, priorities and approaches in the areas of security, development, governance and migration. Coordination, negotiation and balancing of interests are crucial for effective EU action while respecting national sovereignty and the local context.

6.3 Third research question: How do geopolitical considerations, such as competition with other external actors like the United States and regional security challenges like terrorism and migration influence France’s engagement with EU institutions regarding Niger?

Geopolitical dynamics, competition with external actors and regional security challenges have a major impact on France's engagement with the EU institutions in relation to Niger. France is competing with the US for influence in Niger, focusing on security, development and political influence. By capitalising on its position within the EU, France shapes its policies to suit its interests and maintain its competitive advantage. Niger's strategic location in the Sahel makes it a focal point for the fight against terrorism and the management of migration. France is keen to promote regional security and protect its economic interests, as many French companies are active in the region. France's engagement with the EU institutions on Niger is therefore driven by its strategic security and economic objectives (Kleinfeld, P. 2023). France agrees with the EU's objectives by supporting security initiatives in Niger, including military support and information sharing. Recognising the need for a comprehensive approach, France also relies on humanitarian and development aid to address the socio-economic factors contributing to instability. In cooperation with EU institutions, France is coordinating initiatives to maximise impact and leverage resources and expertise. The engagement in Niger reflects geopolitical factors, competition with external actors and regional challenges and aims to promote strategic interests while supporting the EU’s stability and development objectives in the Sahel.

The examination of France's mechanisms within the EU shows how national interests intersect with regional and global priorities. This understanding is crucial for assessing the French influence through EU structures on security policy in Niger to fight against terrorism. Analysing the development aid that France supports through EU structures
assesses its impact on Niger's socio-economic landscape and tackles corruption and inequality. This provides policy makers with information for decisions on security cooperation, development aid, youth empowerment, and promotes transparency in relations between states. Understanding French influence through the EU deepens insight into Nigerien dynamics and emphasises the need for effective interventions to combat insecurity and poverty and promote stability and development (Bisong et al. 2023).

7. Conclusion:

In summary, the efforts of the EU, the USA and other international organisations to tackle Niger's security and development problems have failed. France's influence through EU structures on security and development in Niger is a nuanced landscape characterised by both potential benefits and ethical challenges. While France's engagement can bring much-needed resources and expertise to address security threats and development deficits, it also raises concerns about neo-colonialism, transparency and the effectiveness of interventions. Going forward, France must prioritise ethical principles such as transparency, accountability and local ownership in its strategies and mechanisms for engagement in Niger within the EU. This includes fostering genuine partnerships with Nigerien actors, empowering local communities and ensuring that interventions are in line with the country's long-term development priorities and aspirations.

France should also proceed with caution in its security interventions in Niger and emphasise respect for human rights, the protection of the civilian population and compliance with international law. With a holistic and ethical approach, France can maximise its positive impact on security and development in Niger while upholding the principles of sovereignty, dignity and self-determination of the Nigerien people. Given the current challenges, good governance is crucial. Effective governance ensures efficient allocation of resources, customised public services and promotes transparency and accountability. Upholding the rule of law mitigates the abuse of power and promotes stability, which is crucial for economic and social progress. A true democracy, free from outside influence, gives citizens the opportunity to elect politicians who will work for their interests rather than cronyism.

Engagement in Niger should prioritise citizen participation and empowerment and enable local participation in decision-making and economic growth. A renewal of Franco-Nigerien relations within the framework of the EU mechanism should promote partnership and job creation and respond to the needs and aspirations of citizens. Scepticism towards development aid underlines the importance of sustainable development initiatives that respond to local priorities and build capacity for self-reliance. Security and development in Niger are closely intertwined and require a comprehensive approach. Neglecting development exacerbates vulnerabilities and favours criminal activities such as banditry and terrorism. Sustainable development programmes tailored to Niger's needs are essential for
long-term stability. A Eurocentric approach must give way to a genuine partnership based on trust and mutual understanding. Western interests are intertwined in addressing Niger's challenges. Development in Niger is central to regional security. Cooperation should prioritise local needs, community empowerment and the promotion of sustainable growth. Building trust and genuine partnership is crucial for effective interventions that ensure Niger's path to stability and prosperity.

Food for thought: Any form of political, economic and security challenges in Niger will undoubtedly transcend its borders and affect not only the immediate region but also the international community, especially the Western world. Niger's geographical location in the Sahel, a region already struggling with various security threats such as terrorism, organised crime and human trafficking, makes the country a key player in regional stability. An unstable situation in Niger could spill over to neighbouring countries, exacerbating existing security concerns and impacting the Sahel region as a whole. In addition, Niger's strategic importance as a transit route for regular and irregular migration flows to Europe is another important factor for the country's stability. Political instability or an economic downturn in Niger could lead to increased migratory pressure, affecting European countries that are already struggling with migration problems. Economically, Niger's natural resources, including uranium and gold, are important to world markets. Any disruption to Niger's economy due to internal unrest or instability could affect global commodity prices and trade dynamics, which could impact economies worldwide.

7.1 Future research

Future research cooperation between Niger, China and Russia holds immense potential for exploring different dimensions of cooperation in different sectors. With increasing global interdependence and changing geopolitical dynamics, the study of evolving relations between these countries presents an interesting opportunity for scholarly enquiry. Future research could focus on several key areas. First, exploring the geopolitical implications of increased engagement between Niger, China and Russia would shed light on how their interactions influence regional dynamics in Africa and beyond. This includes analysing economic partnerships, diplomatic initiatives and security cooperation.

Secondly, analysing the socio-economic impact of Chinese and Russian investments and development projects in Niger would provide valuable insights into their impact on local communities, governance structures and sustainable development goals. This research could assess the benefits and challenges of such collaborations, including issues related to labour practises, environmental sustainability and cultural exchange. Examining China and Russia's engagement in Niger provides insights into their foreign policies and objectives in Africa, including geopolitical competition and competition for resources. Exploring the potential for trilateral cooperation in infrastructure, energy and technology would enhance understanding of regional stability and implications for global governance.
Overall, future research on Niger-China-Russia relations should take a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from international relations, economics, sociology and other relevant fields. By filling these research gaps, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving dynamics and implications of trilateral cooperation in the 21st century.

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