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Rida LYAMMOURI



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OCP Policy Center

Ryad Business Center – South, 4th Floor – Mahaj Erryad - Rabat, Morocco

Email : contact@ocppc.ma / Phone : +212 5 37 27 08 08 / Fax : +212 5 37 71 31 54

Website: www.ocppc.ma

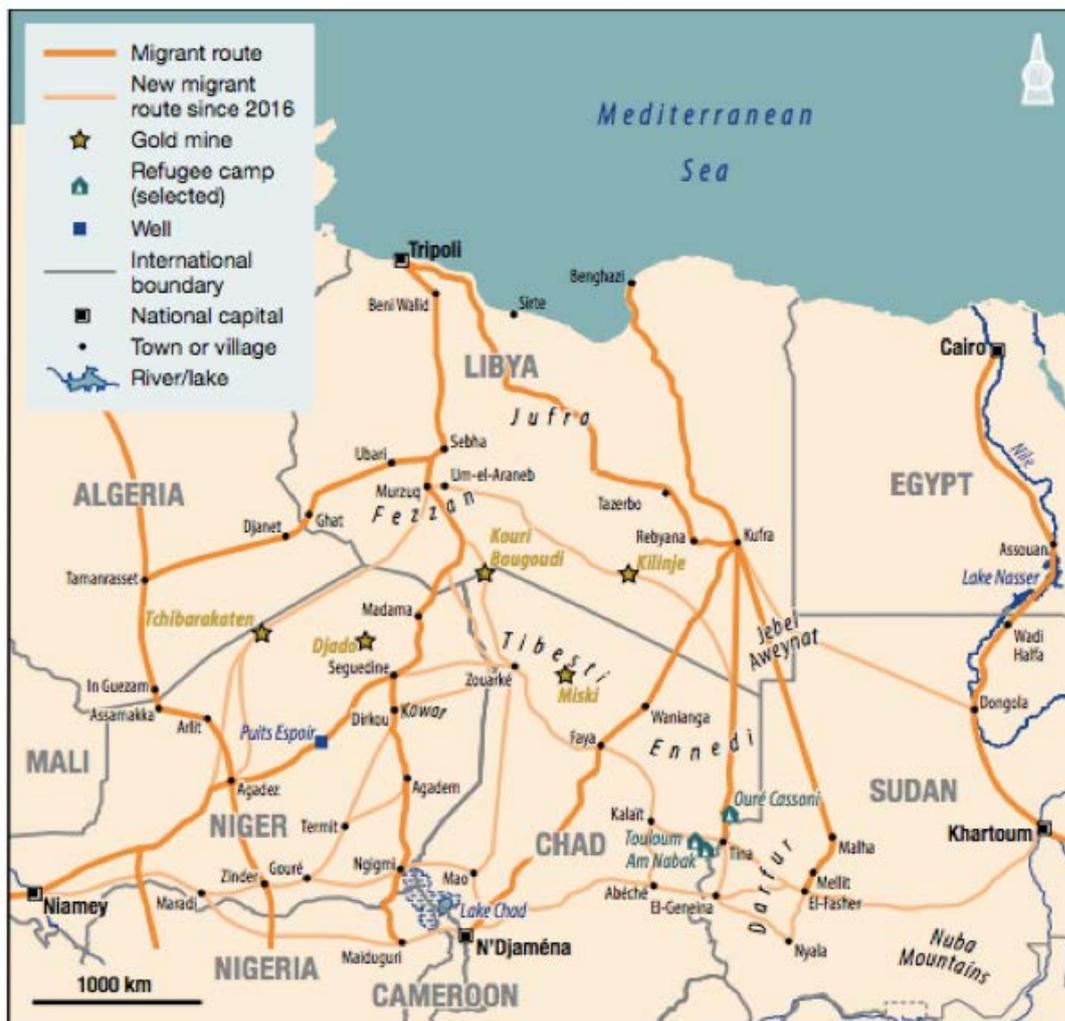
About the Author

Rida Lyammouri

Mr. Lyammouri has more than eight years of experience focusing on the North Africa and Sahel regions. His extensive experience supporting governmental and non-governmental organizations includes the areas of international development, security, countering violent extremism, and counter-terrorism. Mr. Lyammouri has elaborated more than 200 in-depth research reports that cultivate deeper understanding of regional and domestic challenges. He has also frequently made programming recommendations to address various security, economic, and political challenges related to a specific region or a country in Africa. Mr. Lyammouri has also presented as an expert at various conferences, including at the National Defence University (NDU), the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), in addition to multiple contributions to well-known media outlets such as BBC, NPR, and France24. Mr. Lyammouri holds a Master of Public Policy with an emphasis on National Security from the school of Policy, Government, and International Affairs at George Mason University.

Abstract

Livelihoods of northern Niger's population depended for centuries on trade and cross-border movement of licit goods with Libya. Historical trends of domestic and regional shocks demonstrated the ability of local communities to adapt and adjust to transformations caused by these shocks to survive. People moving through and living in the area have different motivations and reasons to cross to Libya and beyond, but economic drivers remain the key factor. The local economy has suffered and continues to struggle in response to recent transformations caused by regional conflicts and migration. However, despite apparent tensions and frustration, northern Niger's communities have demonstrated resilience towards domestic violent conflict.



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Migration and People Movement Routes between Niger, Chad, Sudan, and Libya.*

* Jérôme Tubiana, Clotilde Warin, and Gaffar Mohammad Saeneen, "Multilateral Damage: The Impact of EU Migration Policies on Central Saharan Routes," The Clingendael Institute, September 2018.

Overview of Key Livelihood Activities in Northern Niger

Introduction

The Agadez Region population in Niger depended for centuries on trade, commerce, and cross-border economic activities as their main livelihood. The regional population continues to live in the area and to rely on existing networks of people established thousands of years ago despite climate challenges and harsh living conditions.¹ The area shares borders with Libya, Algeria, and Chad, and it's the least populated region of Niger. However, historical trends demonstrated movement of goods and people have been more important and frequent with Libya than other neighboring countries. Economic interactions and ethnic affiliations between communities from both sides of the borders helped establish strong ties that were impossible to break despite national boundaries established in the post-colonial era in the 1960s. Since then, the region has witnessed a number of transformations that affected the area, such as repeated droughts, migration, gold rush, tourism, uranium exploitation, rise of militancy, instability, insecurity, and the collapse of Muammar Qaddafi's regime in 2011.

This research paper focuses on important livelihood activities in the licit economy of northern Niger and how it evolved. This paper will attempt to highlight the important historical dates that changed the dynamics in northern Niger, and different motivations for different groups of people crossing borders into Libya. While the main focus is on the Agadez Region, the paper touches on the important trends in Libya that had a notable impact on the livelihoods of northern Nigerien communities. It then identifies and defines today's different livelihood activities benefiting the Agadez population. Licit goods in this report refer to items that are legal, regardless if they entered Niger legally or not. For the purpose of this paper, illicit trafficking of drugs and arms will not be discussed.

This research was conducted through extensive desk research in addition to a result of multiple trips made to the region since 2014. The research was also complemented by several interviews with northern Nigeriens directly affected by the local economy's transformation and regional trends. Local contributors include members of civil society, a migrant transporter, a tour guide, and gold miners.

Brief historical overview of Niger-Libya cross-border movement

The rich history of the Sahel – and northern Niger in particular – is impossible to cover in so few pages or even books. This section will attempt rather to highlight important dates that contributed to shaping the livelihoods of the area. It will also attempt to demonstrate adaptability of the local population that inhabited or passed through northern Niger to survive. This remains true today, as northern Niger's communities in the past two decades faced major economic challenges but remain resilient and avoided domestic violent conflict.

1. Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK), "Traffickers and Terrorists: Drugs and violent jihad in Mali and the wider Sahel," Foreign Office Research Analyst Papers, 12 November 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53f361204.html>

“Trade between Niger and Libya has always been important to the people of northern Niger. All Agadez markets are filled with products brought from Libya, so as markets of villages in Agadez region. Prices of these goods are affordable and matche (the) population’s demands.”²

Pre-Colonial

Population movement and trade between Niger and Libya existed for centuries but motivations, economic practices and dynamics in the area shifted to adapt to domestic and regional shocks.³ In the pre-colonial era, people moved through northern Niger into Libya while transporting salt, spices, textiles, foodstuff, gold, artisanal items, and camels.⁴ This movement of different licit goods was a key economic activity. West Africans traveling to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage also used the Trans-Saharan route through Agadez. With mostly camels as methods of traveling, these trips through the Sahel would take months. Consequently, inhabitants of towns and villages in northern Niger, especially the city of Agadez, benefited economically from caravans passing through seeking to resupply in food and water, and places to rest. Trade was often conducted through the exchange of commodities, livestock, or gold. The livelihoods of communities located where caravans are passing through depended on these commercial transactions and having access to essential living commodities.

After Independence

The free movement of people and goods suffered a blow with the institution of national borders after most countries in the Maghreb and Sahel Regions achieved their independence in the 1960s. Trading and smuggling-subsidized goods from Libya and Algeria into northern Niger dominated the new post-colonial era. This new trend allowed Arabs and Tuareg communities to generate wealth but also to establish strong networks with cross-border counterparts in Libya and Algeria.⁵ Despite national boundaries, the movement of goods and people continued to grow, transforming trade and social interactions between communities in the region.

In addition to trade, northern Nigerien communities relied on agriculture and livestock farming. However, economic revenues and livelihoods from both practices were not significant and created low seasonal jobs during rainy season from June to September every year. Furthermore, the Agadez Region between the Sahel and the Sahara is arid with insufficient rainfalls, and is inadequate for farming. Furthermore, economic activities, agriculture and livestock farming suffered following the severe droughts in the 1970s that coincided with the oil boom in Libya.⁶ Consequently, oil discovery in Libya and ensuing severe droughts in the Sahel encouraged economic migration north, mostly to Libya. Young Nigerien Tuareg started settling in Libya, seeking work available in oil fields while opportunities in northern Niger remained limited.⁷

During this same period, young people from Niger, notably Tuareg, also traveled between Niger, other Sahel countries and the Maghreb in search of adventure and exploring. Additionally, the 1970s marked by young

2. Interview with Tuareg resident in Agadez, September 2018.

3. Judith Scheele, “Circulations Marchandises au Sahara: Entre Licite et Illicite,” 2011, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-herodote-2011-3-page-143.html>

4. Ines Kohl, “Terminal Sahara: Sub-Saharan Migrants and Tuareg Stuck in the Desert,” 2015, http://www.ror-n.org/uploads/7/3/0/9/73095249/stichproben_28_kohl_pp55-81.pdf

5. Adamou Aboubacar, “Entre l’Afrique au Sud et au Nord du Sahara: la Ville d’Agadez, Carrefour d’Hier et d’Aujourd’hui,” Accessed September 2018,

<http://www.abhato.net.ma/maalama-textuelle/developpement-economique-etsocial/developpement-economique/commerce/echange-commercial/entre-l-afrique-au-sud-et-au-nord-du-sahara-la-ville-d-agadez-carrefour-d-hier-et-d-aujourd-hui>

6. Frederic Wehrey, “Insecurity and Governance Challenges in Southern Libya,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2017, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Brief-Wehrey_Southern_Libya.pdf

7. Ibid.

generations of Nigerien and Malian Tuareg people that travelled and joined the Libyan Army in the hopes of acquiring Libyan citizenship and accessing the financial benefits offered by the Libyan government.⁸

Post-Libyan Revolution

The 2011 Libyan revolution did not only contribute to insecurity of the Sahel but also negatively impacted the already struggling economy of communities in northern Niger. The tourism industry had already been destroyed following the rise of militancy in the Sahel in mid-2000s and the 2007 Nigerien Tuareg rebellion. Inter-communal tensions forced Nigerien Tuareg families to flee southwest Libya and return to Niger.⁹ As a result, Niger found itself facing multiple economic challenges, the loss of remittances sent by the Nigerien Tuareg diaspora to their families and the increase of unemployed youth returning from Libya. Moreover, transportation of goods from Libya to northern Niger decreased since merchants were less willing to travel across the border to Libya due to fear for their safety.

People moving between Niger and Libya and their motivation

Economic incentives appear to be the key factor behind northern Nigeriens' cross-border movement between Niger and Libya. Throughout history, northern Nigeriens have traveled to Libya to seek work because they are unable to find jobs in Niger. Additionally, working in Libya is most likely more financially rewarding than in Niger, at least prior to the 2011 revolution and subsequent fall of the Libyan currency. Free movement between the borders has been a lifestyle that existed and allowed the nomadic population inhabiting northern Niger to survive. Thus, it is beyond just generating wealth, but it is a way of life in an area with little to no presence of the state. The lack of sufficient state presence and development in the region made it difficult for the people of northern Niger to engage in a legitimate economy, leading them to rely on trafficking.¹⁰ People traveling [or who have traveled] between Niger and Libya include traders, smugglers, irregular migrants, seasonal workers, and Tuareg youth, though the latter have decreased significantly after the fall of Qaddafi's regime in 2011.

Traders and Mobile Merchants

Historical trends indicate various groups of people travel from Niger to or through Libya for different reasons, with economic incentives remaining the key driver. Mobile Nigerien traders, from Agadez for instance, travel to Libya to sell and buy goods and do not intend to settle in Libya for more than a few days or weeks at the most. These merchants, similarly to caravans traveling through the area centuries ago, contribute to local economies of transit hubs during their journey, notably the towns of Dirkou, Séguidine, and Bilma. Although traders have relied on four-wheel drive vehicles to travel faster to Libya from Agadez in the past three or four decades, they still depend on wells and population centers on the way. Traders would most likely make stops in these villages to sell some of their goods and acquire additional stock for their long trip in the desert to the Libyan borders. Supplies include water, fuel, food, medicine, and auto parts. Traders based in transit hubs would also place orders to traveling merchants for products to bring during the next visit. The local economy and population of these villages in northern Niger depend heavily on merchants passing through.

8. Baz Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara: The Teshumara Nationalist Movement and the Revolutions in Tuareg Society," *International Review of Social History*, 2004, p.102.

9. Peter Cole, Brian Macquinn, "The Libyan Revolution and Its Aftermath," by Rebecca Murray, 2015, p.303.

10. United States Institute of Peace, Mark Shaw and Fiona Mangan, "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses," pg. 11, 2014, <http://www.usip.org/publications/illicit-traffickingand-libya-s-transition-profits-and-losses>

Migrants

There are two types of migrants that travel to Libya from and through northern Niger: irregular migrants and seasonal migrants. Seasonal migrants are mostly Nigeriens who usually stay for months to work in agriculture during the farming season, and then return to Niger at the end of the harvesting season. Sometimes this also coincides with the dry season in Niger, which goes from October to May every year and heavily limits work in the agriculture sector. Irregular migrants on the other hand are not limited to Nigeriens but also include West Africans trying to reach Europe. They tend to seek long-term to permanent stays in Libya. However, since 2011 they prefer to cross into Europe instead of remaining in unstable Libya where in addition to the unsafe conditions, employment opportunities have become increasingly limited.

Ishumar

Another group of people previously motivated to travel to Libya from Niger and Mali included a generation of young Tuaregs in the 1970s. Thousands of Malian and Nigerien Tuareg people, also known as Ishumar,¹¹ enlisted within the Libyan security forces for different reasons. They were motivated by the financial reward provided to members of the security forces, in addition to the valuable military experience. Additionally, Qaddafi promised Libyan citizenship to those enlisted as well as support for their cause back home to establish a Tuareg independent state, promises which Qaddafi failed to fulfill. Despite some economic advantages compared to back home in Niger and Mali, the Tuareg remain marginalized and living in underdeveloped areas of southwest Libya. After the end of the Chad and Lebanon wars, a number of Ishumar returned to their respective countries where they launched Tuareg rebellions in Niger and Mali in the 1990s. The latest rebellion of January 2012 in Mali came after the fall of the Qaddafi regime when most of Ishumar returned to Mali armed with weapons seized from ransacked Libyan military barracks.¹²

Smugglers and traffickers

Smugglers and traffickers constitute another group of people that travel back and forth between Niger and Libya. It is the most organized group because of the nature of the business, which is the most lucrative in the region. Drug and arms trafficking flourished in the 1990s and continued to become even more financially rewarding in the 2000s with cocaine trade, which was then followed by an arms¹³ and human trafficking¹⁴ boom post-Libyan revolution in 2011. The financial incentive was too good to ignore and encouraged former contraband traders to abandon licit trade for illicit trafficking. While human and drugs trafficking moved north from the Sahel to Libya, arms moved the opposite direction. Between 2011 and 2016, human smugglers made fortunes by being able to travel frequently back and forth between Niger and Libya.¹⁵ As a result, smugglers between Niger and Libya had the tendency to only remain in Libya or Niger for a few days or weeks and avoid staying for an extended time, thus diminishing risk to their operations. However, their movement has been limited since the summer of 2015 due to new strict laws criminalizing human smuggling implemented by the Nigerien government.

11. Delphine Perrin, "Tuaregs and Citizenship: The Last Camp of Nomadism," 17 November 2016, <https://hal-amu.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01395167>

12. Adam Nossiter, "Waddafi's Weapons, Taken by Old Allies, Reinvigorate an Insurgent Army in Mali," 05 February 2012, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/06/world/africa/tuaregs-use-qaddafis-arms-for-rebellion-in-mali.html>

13. Conflict Armament Research, "Investigating Cross-Border Weapon Transfers in the Sahel," November 2016, <http://www.conflictarm.com/publications/>

14. Peter Tinti and Tuesday Reitano, "Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Savior," 2016.

15. Ibid. Also phone interview with migrant driver in Agadez, Niger, September 2018.

Evolution of mobility and livelihoods in northern Niger

The Agadez Region was, and is, equally important to Nigeriens and to sub-Saharan Africans. The area might have been considered a passage to those trying to reach Libya, but these travelers depended on the communities settled in population centers on the way. Simultaneously, inhabitants depended, and continue to depend, on business transactions and trade conducted with travelers.

As discussed in previous sections, the region of Agadez witnessed major transformations since Niger's independence in 1960 but remains important to people passing through and living in the area. Traveling routes shifted but almost everyone traveling between Libya and other parts of West Africa must go through Agadez. Prior to the 1960s for instance, people trying to reach Libya from Niger or West Africa passed through Agadez before crossing to Tamanrasset in southeast Algeria, and then headed east to Djanet before arriving to Ghat in Libya.¹⁶ In the 1960s and 1970s, movement shifted to a new route but still through Agadez. More reliable vehicles encouraged traders and travelers to go through less developed road infrastructure, taking them to Libya without passing through Algeria. This shift contributed to the development and growth of transit villages between Niger and Libya, including Bilma, Dirkou, Siguédine, and Madama, in addition to smaller villages. While transit population centers were vital for travel supplies, it was and is still equally important today for the inhabitants to have access to necessary commodities, such as foodstuff, fuel, water, medicine, furniture, and clothing brought by mobile traders.

After the 1960s, Agadez and other transit towns in northern Niger continued to be transformed and adapted to different shocks. Urban centers in the north, notably Agadez, grew rapidly following the droughts of 1966, 1968, 1969, and the most severe one of 1973.¹⁷ The majority of farmers and herders were forced to abandon their rural activities, lands and livestock to settle in urban areas in search of alternative economic activities. The discovery of uranium in 1957 in the Agadez region¹⁸ also attracted not only Nigeriens from the south but also migrants from other West African countries seeking work in the uranium extracting business. The extraction of uranium also encouraged the construction of a paved road between Niamey, Agadez, and Arlit to facilitate the transportation of uranium to Niamey then to the port of Cotonou, Benin, 1,900 kilometers (1,180 miles) away.¹⁹ Such a project attracted more West African workers during a time when Niger in general, and the Agadez region in particular, were in desperate need for an economic boom.

The local economy continued to grow and Agadez became even more important in connecting West and North Africa. The Tuareg population was not the only one to benefit, but also Arab traders. Arabs based in Agadez reported to have generated wealth from road construction projects and subsequently became influential businessmen.²⁰ Strong ties in Maghreb countries, notably Libya and Algeria, further lamented their trade advantage. The Northern Nigerien local economy suffered once again a setback during the Tuareg rebellion of

16. Adamou Aboubacar, "Entre l'Afrique au Sud et au Nord du Sahara: la Ville d'Agadez, Carrefour d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui," Accessed September 2018, <http://www.abhato.net.ma/maalama-textuelle/developpement-economique-etsocial/developpement-economique/commerce/echange-commercial/entre-l-afrique-au-sud-et-au-nord-du-sahara-la-ville-d-agadez-carrefour-d-hier-et-d-aujourd-hui>

17. C.T. Agnew and Adrian Chappell, "Drought in the Sahel," February 2000, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226394080_Drought_in_the_Sahel

18. Emmanuel Grégoire, "Niger: un État à Forte Teneur en Uranium," 2011, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-herodote-2011-3-page-206.htm>

19. Armin Rosen, "One Uranium Mine in Niger Says a Lot about China's Huge Nuclear-Power Ambitions," Business Insider, 24 October 2015, <https://www.businessinsider.com/niger-uranium-mine-and-nuclear-china-2015-10>

20. Adamou Aboubacar, "Entre l'Afrique au Sud et au Nord du Sahara: la Ville d'Agadez, Carrefour d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui," Accessed September 2018,

<http://www.abhato.net.ma/maalama-textuelle/developpement-economique-etsocial/developpement-economique/commerce/echange-commercial/entre-l-afrique-au-sud-et-au-nord-du-sahara-la-ville-d-agadez-carrefour-d-hier-et-d-aujourd-hui>

1990 but started to recover soon after the peace accord was signed in 1995.²¹ The recovery was further boosted by a new Libyan visa policy when Qaddafi decided to waive visas for West Africans.²² The new policy encouraged economic migration, which boosted local economy due to the increased number of Sub-Saharan migrants passing through the Agadez region. Despite the policy change in 2007 to impose visas on people coming from all nationalities with the exception of Maghreb countries,²³ the movement of goods and people sustained.

The tourism industry flourished in the late 1990s and early 2000s before being destroyed in 2007. The region of Agadez enjoyed a good reputation in the international tourism market for the quality and diversity of its cultural potential and history. Being a melting pot of cultures and civilizations since prehistoric times made it [Niger] an attractive tourist destination. The National Nature Reserve of Air and Ténéré contain many rock paintings and engravings, for instance.²⁴ The arts and crafts of multiple ethnicities living and traveling through Agadez region fascinated western tourists while local festivals and camel races connected people from all over the world. Sleepless nights in the desert under the moonlight became a favorite among tourists seeking a unique experience. The industry then suffered major setbacks following the emergence of kidnappings of westerners in the Sahel by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Tuareg rebellion of 2007. Northern Niger was never able to recover and western tourists and expatriates working in uranium mining gradually disappeared, with foreign governments strongly advising to this day to avoid the area. In the last couple of years however, western tourists started to return, though only for special events.

Despite current security challenges, the population of Agadez remains optimistic and engaged. Local witnesses told the author that festivals, camel races and similar socio-cultural activities are returning to northern Niger and have attracted western and local tourists. The Nigerien government managed to organize in recent years the Festival de l'Air in Iferouane and Cure Salée in Ingall. A number of camel races and cultural events have also been organized by traditional local authorities in Agadez, Timia, and Ebalak.²⁵ Tuareg from Agadez living abroad have also organized two editions of an international marathon in Agadez since 2014, and third to take place in December 2019.²⁶ These events are attracting western, local, and regional tourists, however still far from the tourism boom of late 1990s until 2007.

Most of the tourists now are coming for specific events rather than organized trips with lengthy stays. Tourists' stays don't exceed the days of the event and do not include exploring locations outside where an event is held. Furthermore, westerners attending festivals and social-cultural events are mostly expatriates representing embassies and international organizations based in the capital Niamey with few in the City of Agadez. However, a journalist of Tuareg origin, who attended the Festival de l'Air in Iferouane in February 2018 and Timia's camel race in September 2018, told the author that tourists outside the diplomatic and NGO



Timia Camel race of September 2018. Source: Author.

21. Yvan Guichaoua and Mathieu Pellerin, "Making Peace, Building the State. Relations Between Central Government and the Sahelian Peripheries in Niger and Mali," March 2018.

22. Migration Policy Centre, "Libya: The Demographic-Economic Framework of Migration; The Legal Framework of Migration; The Socio-Political Framework of Migration," June 2013, pg. 7, http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/migration_profiles/Libya.pdf

23. Ibid.

24. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Historic Centre of Agadez," Accessed September 2018, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1268>

25. Phone and e-mail interviews with members of civil society and tour guides, September 2018.

26. Conversation with Agdal Weissan, Founder of "Grand Marathon du Ténéré," April 2018.

workers' circle also attended the events. While these are encouraging signs and promising events in terms of promoting the tourism industry in northern Niger, the economic impact remains very limited to a small community [event location] and for a short period of time [days of the event].

Tribal dynamics and the economy in northern Niger

Tebu – Tuareg Dynamics

Historically, northern Niger avoided notable violence related to inter-communal tensions and divisions. Competition over natural resources, control over trading routes, and political gain have led to acts of atrocities and violence between rival communities in northern and central Mali,²⁷ and in southwest Libya.²⁸ While similar drivers of inter-communal conflicts exist in northern Niger in addition to ethnic diversity, the area somehow remained resilient and avoided similar tragedies. Based on conversations the author had with the local population of northern Niger since 2012, this peaceful existence has been tested, but was further intensified following violence between Tuareg – Tebu fractions on September 2014 in Ubari, Libya.

Tuareg – Tebu dynamics are important to observe because of their historical relationships related to smuggling routes on the borders between northern Niger and Libya, and to less of an extent, Algeria. The number of Agadez population based on ethnicity is difficult to identify, however the general assumption is that both Tuareg and Tebu make up the majority of Agadez Region inhabitants. For centuries, Tuareg and Tebu communities dominated and peacefully controlled smuggling and trading routes between Niger and Libya.²⁹ Prior to 2011, both groups honored an agreement signed in late 19th century known as *midi-midi*.³⁰ The accord identified routes and areas each group would control, Tuareg area was west of Sabha toward Algeria, and Tebu east of it towards Chad. Despite series of droughts and economic struggles the region witnessed, the accord was never broken and hardly ever resulted violent clashes.

Following the fall of Qaddafi's regime, initially Tebu and Tuareg militias recognized the existing agreement over southern borders control. However, this changed in September 2014 when first violent clashes occurred between Tuareg and Tebu militias in Ubari. Unsurprisingly, economic competition was the leading factor to the break of *midi-midi* accord. After 2011, both factions attempted to maintain access to economic resources even if that required violence. As a result, instability in the south expanded to other major economic hubs in southwest Libya in an attempt to control smuggling routes and oil fields.³¹ It is important to note that similar trends of violence connected to smuggling routes and oil fields competition were observed in other parts of southeastern Libya between Tebu and Arabs.

Violence might have disrupted Libya-Niger cross-border movement but [violence] did not reach northern Niger. However, despite this peaceful existence, locals are not shy to express existing and growing tensions.³² The economic situation continues to deteriorate following the crackdown on people smuggling between Niger and Libya. Due to the attack by AQIM forces in the East Algerian oil field near the town of In-Amenas, Algerian authorities closed its borders with Libya and Niger to reinforce its security in the area. Furthermore, French and Nigerien security forces jointly strengthened their presence on the Salvador passage to disrupt arms smuggling

27. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Regions at Risk, Preventing Mass Atrocities in Mali, April 2018, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Mali_Report_English_FINAL_April_2018.pdf

28. Frederic Wehrey, "Insecurity and Governance Challenges in Southern Libya," *Garnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2017, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Brief-Wehrey_Southern_Libya.pdf

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Midi Midi* originates from Tuareg language *Tamasheq* and means friendship.

31. Jérôme Tubiana, Clotilde Warin, and Gaffar Muhammad Saeneen, "Multilateral Damage: The Impact of EU Migration Policies on Central Saharan Routes," *The Clingendael Institute*, September 2018.

32. Phone interview with youth Tuareg in Agadez, Niger. September 2018.

by militant groups operating in Mali. As a result, smuggling territories shrank and shifted cross-border movement of goods and people to less controlled borders between Libya and Niger. The complex relationship between Tebu and Tuareg based on economic interests were further tested and are threatening northern Niger's community cohesion.

Cross-border sustainable livelihoods in northern Niger

People Smuggling and Migration Industry

The Libyan conflict threatened the Tuareg-Tebu relationship, but also provided the latter with an opportunity to expand its influence over economic resources. Tebu militias based in south Libya were among the first to support the Libyan revolution, and exploited the chaos to generate unprecedented wealth through licit and illicit trafficking in the south. The Tebu community became further ambitious and went beyond controlling routes and areas highlighted in the midi-midi accord to control all southern borders of Libya, and to expand it into Nigerien territory. A Tuareg transporter of migrants told the author that prior to 2013,



Migrants' transporter outside Agadez, September 2018. Source: Author.

he was able to make the journey all the way to Sabha, Libya. However, in 2014 that changed and Tebu smugglers forced him to stop outside Madama on the border with Libya and to hand the migrants to them.³³ Tuaregs involved in smuggling and trade in general between northern Niger and Libya were forced to collaborate or abandon their smuggling activities. As of today, human smuggling from Niger into Libya has shifted and became run almost exclusively by Tebu smugglers, referred to today as the "new masters."³⁴ Still, few Tuareg drivers remain engaged in irregular migration in collaboration with Tebu smugglers. The author spoke to a Tuareg driver who still transports migrants to the borders of Libya where they are transferred to Tebu smugglers.³⁵

Tuareg and other community members of northern Niger are not only engaged in people smuggling, but play many other roles. Locals in Agadez, mostly Tuareg and Hausa decent youth, are hired to watch over migrants in safe houses. Their roles include shopping and cooking food, providing water and additional services needed.³⁶ The safe houses are often owned by local Arabs while recruiters are hired to bring the maximum of migrants once they arrive to Agadez in exchange for a commission. Despite ethnic background differences, the money generated motivates individuals engaged in these activities, and they are unlikely to find alternative livelihoods as financially rewarding.

For instance, besides leaders of organized smuggling networks, drivers are the biggest earners. Speaking to a transporter of migrants between Niger and Libya in September 2018, the driver told the author that prior to 2016, drivers earned around 860 USD for each trip from Agadez, Niger to Sabha or Ubari in Libya, and so did other drivers.³⁷ The earning is close to the number (750 USD) found by Peter Tinti while conducting field research (2016)

33. Phone interview with Tuareg transporter in Agadez, Niger. September 2018.

34. Peter Tinti and Tuesday Reitano, "Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Savior," 2016, p.164.

35. Phone interview with Tuareg transporter in Agadez, Niger. September 2018.

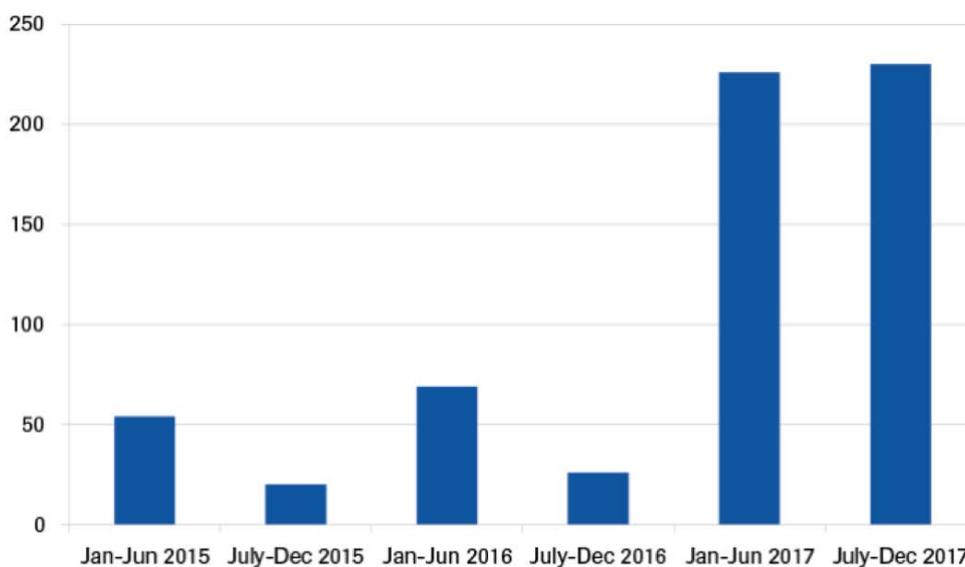
36. Peter Tinti and Tuesday Reitano, "Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Savior," 2016, p.172.

37. Phone interview with Tuareg driver in Agadez, Niger. September 2018.

in Agadez for his book confirming the driver's claim to the author.³⁸ The decline in the number of trips resulted in changes in prices after 2016 but this "industry" remained rewarding and enticing. Prior to 2016, the driver told the author that he makes five trips per month meaning an income of 4,300 USD per month. Furthermore, according to the International Organization of Migration (IOM), around 333,891 migrants passed through Agadez in 2016.³⁹ However, in current conditions created by Nigerien government law to crackdown on migration flow through Niger, the driver said he is now only able to make one trip every two months for an income of 2,290 USD (1,145 USD per month), far less than previous years.

Despite this loss of income, migrants' transporters continue - and would most likely continue - to take the risk of being arrested due to lack of alternative sustainable livelihoods. Increased security measures implemented by Nigerien government and international partners will not stop the flow of migrants between Niger and Libya. Instead, people smugglers are taking different and more dangerous routes. As a result, the number of migrant casualties in the northern Nigerien desert have increased from 71 in 2015, to 95 in 2016, and to 427 in 2017 (see graph below).⁴⁰ Furthermore, since 2016, Niger's security forces have arrested at least 282 drivers, vehicle owners, and intermediaries while more than 300 vehicles have been confiscated in Agadez and other areas of northern Niger toward Libya.⁴¹ Taking extra risks means increases in prices for migrants trying to reach Libya and Europe, while security forces ask for higher bribes at checkpoints and for the release of vehicles seized. One Agadez resident told the author: "Since Niger applied the new law, human smuggling became a discrete operation and more expensive than before." Thus, the business of migrant smuggling is not disappearing, just evolving.

Number of Migrants Dead or Missing in Niger between 2015 and 2017, by half-year.⁴²



38. Peter Tinti and Tuesday Reitano, "Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Savior," 2016, p. 169.

39. International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Statistical Report, Niger Flow Monitoring Points (FMP)," December 2016.

40. Jérôme Tubiana, Clotilde Warin, and Gaffar Muhammad Saeneen, "Multilateral Damage: The Impact of EU Migration Policies on Central Saharan Routes," The Clingendael Institute, September 2018.

41. Ibid. p. 23

42. Ibid.

SPOTLIGHT

Economic competition over this increasingly pressured lucrative business would make northern Nigerien communities more fragile and vulnerable to inter-communal violence. Northern Niger cohesion and resilience is threatened by unstable southern Libya and the unpredictable situation of northern Chad. The flow of people between Niger and Libya, and trade in general are linked and influenced by ethnic and family ties, and unlikely to change.

A 2017 study indicated that at least 6,000 people were generating income directly or indirectly from the flow of migrants in Agadez.⁴³ Following the new law of 2015 criminalizing transportation of migrants, the government created a converting program called “Conversion of Former Smugglers” led by Haute Autorité et la Consolidation de la Paix (HACP) in collaboration with other local NGOs. Data collected by HACP is highlighted in the table below, which the author had access to. The data provided indicate that only 371 actors have received financial support while another approved 687 actors waiting on their allowances out of the initial 6,565 active actors registered. The outcomes of these ambitious efforts remain to be seen and it’s unclear how financial support from the EU to Niger to tackle migration related issues and other development projects would look like beyond 2020.⁴⁴

Frustration is apparent in the conversation with local populations of northern Niger. One resident told the author that people who used to make a living from people smuggling are getting frustrated and losing trust toward the government. Reportedly, association of former smugglers held meetings with local authorities on October 13-14, 2018 to express their frustration. Representatives demanded more transparency and acceleration in delivering promised financial support.⁴⁵ Their claim is that the Nigerien government and EU made promises but not all of them materialized. A recent policy brief by Andrew Lebovich, a visiting fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations, pointed out that the EU has also been slow and failed to deliver promised funding to support those who depended on migration, thus fueling anger toward the Nigerien government and their foreign allies.⁴⁶ Frustration toward the government will likely increase since the northern Nigerien population often felt neglected and marginalized by the central government, and repeatedly demanded improved conditions of public services and economy, and migration crackdown will likely intensify those grievances.

43. Molenaar, F. et al., “A Line in the Sand: Roadmap for Sustainable Migration Management in Agadez,” CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute, October 2017.

44. European Commission, “L’Union Européenne Renforce son Soutien au Niger avec 609.9 Millions D’euros,” Press release, 15 December 2016.

45. Issouf Hadan, “Réunion d’Urgence du Comité des ex Acteurs de la Migration,” Journal la Nation, 16 October 2018.

46. Andrew Lebovich, “Halting Ambition: EU Migration and Security Policy in the Sahel,” European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), September 2018.

Active Actors Counted		6 565
Number of Requests Received and Reviewed		2 345
Number of Requests Declared Eligible		981
Requests Selected		294
Number of Actors Benefited	435,279,746 XOF ~663,587 EUROS	371
Eligible Requests Waiting to be Financed	1,162,000,000 XOF ~1,171,477 EUROS	687
Remaining	7.120 500 000 XOF ~10,854,486 EUROS	4747

Former Smugglers Data. Source: Haute Autorité pour la Consolidation de la Paix (HACP)

Fuel Transportation

In addition to Tuareg and Tebu communities, northern Niger is also home to Arab, and a smaller number of Fulani, Hausa, and Djerma families. Because of family ties in Algeria and Libya, Arabs dominate the trade of goods between northern Niger and both countries, notably transportation of fuel. Fuel prices in the black market of Agadez are relatively cheaper than in the gas station, making it affordable and in high demand.⁴⁷ One liter of fuel costs 450 XOF (~0.78 USD) in the black market while it costs 540 XOF (~.92 USD) in the gas station.⁴⁸ With a struggling economy, fuel consumers such as families, transporters, and farmers are more inclined to buy Libyan and Algerian subsidized fuel illegally transported to northern Niger than going to the gas station. Beyond arms, drugs, and human trafficking, fuel trade is a lucrative business merchants practiced between Sahel countries and Libya and Algeria for decades, and will most likely continue. Fuel and other goods smuggling have been interrupted by instability in southwest Libya and increased security in south Algeria but did not stop.

Vehicles

The collapse of Qaddafi led to thousands of northern Nigerien families to return to their homes in Niger. Most of these families returned with vehicles and trucks. The increase of number of vehicles smuggled from Libya after 2011 contributed to the local economy by creating new jobs. Local residents told the author the increase of car dealerships was difficult not to notice. Despite security challenges, locals would travel after 2011 to southwest Libya to buy stolen vehicles at negotiated prices, then drive them back to Agadez to trade. Because of increased demand, Libyan authorities in 2012 backed out of its intention to regulate the number of foreign vehicles imported.⁴⁹ This policy was largely due to domestic demand in Libya but also influenced by increased demand from northern Nigeriens and Chadians for vehicles, especially with the people smuggling boom and gold mining discovery in 2012 and 2014 respectively. For financial gain, young Nigeriens demonstrated willingness to risk their lives traversing the desert and facing armed bandits' constant threats. In order for the vehicles to reach Agadez, drivers often have to pay fees to security forces at checkpoints. Vehicle smuggling is so important to local economy that sometimes security forces would agree, for a fee, to convoy [smuggled vehicles] to avoid being robbed.⁵⁰ Reportedly, buyers from neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Mali would

47. Phone interview with Agadez resident. September 2018.

48. Ibid.

49. Libya Monitor, "Libya Now a 'Gateway' for Car Smuggling," 29 June 2012, <http://www.libyamonitor.com/news/transport/libya-now-gateway-car-smuggling>

50. Issouf Hadan, "Transit de Vente de Véhicules d'Occasion Libyens à Agadez," 09 May 2017, <http://www.tamtaminfo.com/transit-de-vente-de-vehicules-doccasion-libyens-a-agadez/>

come to Agadez specifically to buy a vehicle.⁵¹ Agadez residents told the author in September 2018 that the prices did not drop despite the increased number of vehicles available for sale due to a high demand, thanks to the discovery of gold in 2014 to transport gold prospectors from Agadez to gold mines.⁵²

Locals told the author that vehicles smuggled from Libya are mainly controlled by Tebu in the last couple of years, and is creating concerns with Arab and Tuareg businessmen running car dealerships in Agadez. Regulated car dealerships import their vehicles through a more organized and legal process, and these vehicles normally arrive to West African ports, notably those of Cotonou, Benin and Lomé, Togo. There appears to be competition in the business of vehicles in Agadez between vehicles brought in legally and those smuggled. However, the industry continues to employ a number of locals and is creating jobs.



Lot of vehicles for sale in the city of Agadez, September 2018. Source: Author.

Some people are working as intermediaries finding clients, and others rent their empty lots to car dealerships, while local authorities are benefiting through different taxes collected.

Gold Mining

Since early 2014, gold mines in northern Niger became the destination of thousands of prospectors. The majority were Nigeriens but the industry also attracted prospectors from neighboring countries, including Chad, Libya, Mali, Algeria, and Sudan. The discovery came at a moment of critical economic conditions due to insecurity. Northern Nigerien communities were feeling the aftermath of the Libyan revolution, while the threat of increased militant groups in the Sahel Region made the tourism industry collapse. Due to irregular rainfalls, agriculture and herding lacking the resources and capabilities to becoming reliable and guaranteeing economic resources in the area, gold mining became a major source of income not only to prospectors searching for gold, but also to communities in the area, and those engaged in side jobs created due to the gold rush.

The two main gold mining sites are located in Djado valley and Tchibarakaten. According to the Nigerien mining administration, experienced prospectors from Chad first discovered Gold in Djado on April 13, 2014.⁵³ The extraction of gold initially did not require major tools and the first prospectors managed to generate notable wealth. The Djado site was home to more than 10,000 prospectors within two weeks.⁵⁴ In addition to gold miners, vendors of food and livestock, water, fuel, coal, four-wheel drive vehicles, equipment and tools established a market near the main site. Relying on large generators, restaurants and lounges with television also emerged in the middle of the desert. The number of gold miners increased rapidly and demand for necessary goods increased as well. Drivers were also earning their livelihoods transporting gold miners, food, water, and other supplies to the site. Within weeks, these activities created multiple sources of income to the unemployed and struggling population. However, on November 29, 2016 the Nigerien government announced the closure of the site due to increased armed banditry and tensions between Nigerien and foreign prospectors.

51. Ibid.

52. Phone interview with Agadez local researcher. September 2018.

53. Emmanuel Grégoire and Laurent Gagnol, "Ruées Vers l'Or au Sahara: l'Orpaillage dans le Désert du Ténéré et le Massif de l'Air (Niger)," September 2017, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01591003>

54. Ibid.

The second most important gold mine in northern Niger is Tchibarakaten, where gold was discovered in July 2014. Since Djado is closed, today the Tchibarakaten site is the largest artisanal gold mining site in Niger.⁵⁵ Initial exploitation started back in 1999 by GeoAfrica Gold Corporation and concluded since it was not profitable due to the inaccessibility of the site.⁵⁶ Gold miners, mostly merchants and former Tuareg rebels started artisanal exploitation in the summer of 2014. The quality of gold found was not as good as Djado and wasn't found on the surface. In Tchibarakaten, it was necessary to dig deeper wells of 30-to-50 meters or more to extract the rock. This required more equipment such as chisels, metal detectors, jackhammers, compressors, and explosives, grinding and processing tools. The Tchibarakaten site extends onto the Algerian territory and gold miners on the Niger side repeatedly cross the border despite risks of being arrested by Algerian security forces.⁵⁷



Image of gold mining wells in Tchibarakaten site, July 2018. Source: Author.

The Tchibarakaten site also attracted a significant population increase but different than that of Djado. The number of prospectors varies between 4,000 and 10,000 depending on the season and most of them are from the Agadez Region. Perceived as more financially rewarding, farmers and herders abandoned their farms and animals to engage in illicit gold mining. Nigeriens recently returned from Libya and former uranium mine workers were also reported to be present.⁵⁸ In Tchibarakaten, there are less Chadian and Sudanese miners compared to Djado, in addition to few Malians, Burkinabe, and Nigerians. A gold miner who was in Tchibarakaten site last July indicated that Algerians and Libyans are present but working as transporters and merchants; supplying the site with subsidized foodstuffs brought from Algeria and Libya. While he also pointed out that it was mostly northern Nigeriens, from Agadez, Iferouane, and Timia who run the shops.



Market established at Tchibarakaten gold mining site, July 2018. Source: Author.

55. Mackenzie Knowles-Coursin and Joe Parkinson, "Thousands Flock to Remote, Lawless Sahara in Search of Gold," 16 October 2018, Wall Street Journal, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/stirring-the-pot-thousands-take-a-shine-to-a-gold-mine-in-the-sahara-1539682201>

56. Emmanuel Grégoire and Laurent Gagnol, "Ruées Vers l'Or au Sahara: l'Orpaillage dans le Désert du Ténéré et le Massif de l'Air (Niger)," September 2017, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01591003>

57. Mathieu Pellerin, "Beyond the Wild West: The Gold Rush in Northern Niger," Small Arms Survey, June 2017, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-SANA-BP-Niger-Gold.pdf>

58. Phone interview with gold miner, July 2018.

SPOTLIGHT

Crossing borders and migration are not always a negative trend but rather a way of life and existence in northern Niger. For instance, the presence of multiple nationalities playing different roles in illicit gold mining indicates the importance of cross-border movement of people from communities living in the area, regardless of their ethnicity and nationality. There are maybe tensions and differences, but they are willing to collaborate and rely on each other to survive the harsh economic conditions.

Artisanal gold mining in northern Niger has created many direct and indirect employment opportunities. Despite the Nigerien government's repeated threats of closing all mining sites, it is undeniable noticing the effect on the regional economy. Gold mining has provided alternatives to struggling seasonal economic migration to Libya. Working in Libya has also become less profitable since the exchange rate of the Libyan dinar dropped significantly since 2011. Former irregular migration transporters threatened by the new migration law in Niger converted to gold mining work and goods transports to and from mining sites. Finally, frustrated former uranium mining workers found an alternative income generating activity.

The economic and political effects of informal exploitation of gold mining are too apparent to ignore. Exploitation of gold offered employment opportunities in the Nigerien desert that helped ease the frustrated population, especially after the impact of Libya's instability on the region's economy. It is difficult to know the exact number of people employed or who has benefited from it, however there is an estimation of at least 70,000 men who have travelled to different gold mining sites in northern Niger.⁵⁹ The impact was also evident across different towns of northern Niger and their population. Timia residents told the author that individuals who generated wealth from gold mining, invested in new transportation vehicles, trucks, water pumps, and building new houses; creating jobs for locals as construction workers and drivers.

Uranium Mining

Uranium exploitation has been a major economic source to Niger since its discovery in 1957, especially to northern Nigeriens. The industry constitutes the main currency earner of one of the poorest countries in the world, and which ranked fifth globally in uranium production by the end of 2017.⁶⁰ Uranium mining, which is operated by the French nuclear-energy-services company AREVA, is the second largest employer in Niger after the government, and makes up for more than a third of its exports as of 2016.⁶¹ The Nigerien economy and northern Nigeriens in particular, however, suffered a major economic blow in early 2015. Following the drop in uranium prices between 2009 and 2014, AREVA closed one of the main sites, Imouraren, which was under development to become the largest production mine.⁶² The drop in prices and environmental issues also halted production on another site called Azelik, run by SOMINA (Mining Company of Azelik SA), a Chinese-Nigerien joint partnership.⁶³ Both closures have resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs, in addition to temporary closures

59. Emmanuel Grégoire and Laurent Gagnol, "Ruées Vers l'Or au Sahara: l'Orpaillage dans le Désert du Ténéré et le Massif de l'Air (Niger)," September 2017, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01591003>

60. World Nuclear Association, "Uranium Resources by Country, Updated July 2018," Accessed 11 October 2018, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/nuclear-fuel-cycle/mining-of-uranium/world-uranium-mining-production.aspx>

61. Armin Rosen, "One Uranium Mine in Niger Says a Lot About China's Huge Nuclear-Power Ambitions," 24 October 2015, Business Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/niger-uranium-mine-and-nuclear-china-2015-10>

62. Rémy Carayol, "Areva au Niger: Plan Social d'Envergure sur le Site d'Imouraren," 05 March 2015, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/226023/economie/areva-au-niger-plan-social-d-envergure-sur-le-site-d-imouraren/>

63. Armin Rosen, "One Uranium Mine in Niger Says a Lot About China's Huge Nuclear-Power Ambitions," 24 October 2015, Business Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/niger-uranium-mine-and-nuclear-china-2015-10>

of the other two sites during negotiations between the Nigerien government and AREVA between 2013 and 2016.

Reportedly, AREVA let go at least 225 full-time employees (all Nigeriens) in early 2015.⁶⁴ Only 40 remained employed while a small number were transferred to the two remaining uranium exploitation sites in Agadez Region, SOMAIR (Mining Company of the Air) and COMINAK (Minerary Company of Akouta).⁶⁵ However, locals estimated the number of people to be affected by the closure in the area to be in the thousands.⁶⁶ A research by Clingendael Institute reported that at least 3,000 jobs were lost following the closure of SOMINA site alone while northern Niger's revenues also dropped in recent years.⁶⁷ According to Jeune Afrique, the workers union claimed employees were promised 30-to-40 years of work, which encouraged them to start a family, but they now are likely to struggle to provide for them.⁶⁸ According to locals the author spoke to, most of the former uranium workers converted to migrant drivers, gold miners, agriculture, and livestock farming.

Agriculture and Livestock

Agriculture and pastoralism are two practices northern Niger's population relied on for centuries. The main products produced in Agadez Region include a number of vegetables and fruits with only onions being the major produce destined to export, while the rest are consumed domestically.⁶⁹ Local production of onions attracts merchants from West Africa who travel to Agadez every November and December specifically to buy onion crops. Despite being a major source of income to many farmers and workers, onion production remains vulnerable to shift in the rainy season, leaving farmers and workers at risk of losing [maybe] their only income. A local farmer of Timia in the Agadez Region told the author that despite the importance of onion farming in the area,⁷⁰ methods used barely changed and remain rudimentary. For instance, a catastrophic harvest could easily lead to major food insecurity and local economic crisis similar to the one that occurred in 2012.⁷¹ Another local farmer, however, pointed out to limited support from the German development agency to local farmers. Still, lack of sufficient resources and investment from central government is preventing agriculture and livestock from noticeable progress. For instance, the local population still depends on milk powder imported legally or smuggled from Algeria and Libya.

The region lacks infrastructure and equipment to exploit its potential of producing additional fruits and vegetables, thus making more profits. For example, to prevent an onion crisis similar to 2012, farmers would benefit from adequate storage to store their crop until prices in the market are favorable.⁷² Furthermore, livestock herders struggle during the dry season to feed their animals, and thus are forced to sell and abandon their livestock at lower prices. The nomadic lifestyle is at risk in northern Niger. Youth in the region are deserting their farms and animals to engage in illicit gold mining or other lucrative livelihoods.

64. Rémy Carayol, "Areva au Niger: Plan Social d'Envergure sur le Site d'Imouraren," 05 March 2015, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/226023/economie/areva-au-niger-plan-social-d-envergure-sur-le-site-d-imouraren/>

65. Ibid.

66. Phone and E-mail interviews with Agadez and Arlit residents. September 2018.

67. Anette Hoffmann, Jos Meester, and Hamidou Manou Nabara, "Migration and Markets in Agadez: Economic alternatives to the migration industry," Clingendael Institute, October 2017.

68. Rémy Carayol, "Areva au Niger: Plan Social d'Envergure sur le Site d'Imouraren," 05 March 2015, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/226023/economie/areva-au-niger-plan-social-d-envergure-sur-le-site-d-imouraren/>

69. Anette Hoffmann, Jos Meester, and Hamidou Manou Nabara, "Migration and Markets in Agadez: Economic alternatives to the migration industry," Clingendael Institute, October 2017.

70. Laurent Gagnol, "Les Sociétés Nomades sont-elles Solubles dans la Sédentarisation? Le Contre-Exemple des Touaregs Kel Ewey (Aïr-Niger)," 2006, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-espace-geographique-2006-4-page-367.htm>

71. Laura Angela Bagnetto, "Agadez Onion Crisis Adds to Niger's Food Problems –Africa," RFI, July 2012, <http://en.rfi.fr/africa/20120906-agadez-onion-crisis-adds-niger-s-food-issues>

72. Anette Hoffmann, Jos Meester, and Hamidou Manou Nabara, "Migration and Markets in Agadez: Economic alternatives to the migration industry," Clingendael Institute, October 2017.

The story below told by one young Tuareg to the author in September 2018 provides an example of the struggle many northern Nigeriens are facing. It also shows the dynamics in the region shape the livelihoods of youth and northern Nigeriens in general. Since 2011, Libya's collapse, insecurity, migration, uranium and gold mining all played a role transforming, and will continue to transform, the Agadez Region.

"I abandoned my high-school education in 2010 to join my brother who was a driver transporting goods and people between Libya and Niger. After learning how to drive myself, it was hard for me to find a driving job immediately because of lack of experience. So in 2011, I returned to our little farm inherited from our father to help my other brothers. However, that year was disastrous and we didn't make any money. We all wanted to go to Libya and support Qaddafi during the revolution, however, only my older brother managed to go and ended up getting injured in Tripoli, then evacuated to Djanet, Algeria to be treated. As for me, I moved to the capital in Niamey searching for work since after 2012, it was difficult to find opportunities in [the] Agadez Region. I was working as a baker, 17 hours a day, for a monthly salary of 70,000 XOF (~124 USD). I returned to Agadez where I was doing little jobs, then headed to Libya for three months before I returned in the summer of 2014 to try my luck in gold mining. I made some money but I didn't manage well what I earned, so I soon found myself unemployed and poor. I returned to our little farm, it requires a lot of work but not much revenue in the past three seasons. To survive, I travel with my brother, who still transports migrants to Libya, to help him and do some work in Sabha when there is no violence."

Conclusion

The local economy of the Agadez Region suffered major blows since its independence and especially in recent years. Since 2011, northern Niger also witnessed the emergence of new economic resources that contributed significantly to the livelihoods of the Agadez population and beyond. After a decade of glorious days, the tourism industry vanished since 2007 and is struggling to regain its reputation despite recent efforts by Nigerien government and locals to revive tourism once again. Persistent insecurity in southwest Libya would most likely delay the return of western tourists anytime soon. For the time being, thousands of local youth are content trying their luck searching for gold. While some made fortunes early on, others will continue searching as long as the only remaining main gold mining Tchibarakaten remains open. Thus, the [Tchibarakaten] site will continue to employ drivers to transport gold miners and goods to the site, and create jobs for merchants importing and selling goods at the shops established to supply gold miners.

Since 2012, irregular migration created a significant number of jobs and provided sustainable livelihoods to different groups of people in northern Niger. The impact of criminalizing people's smuggling was certainly felt in the area, and thousands are reported to have lost their sources of income. Locals' frustration is apparent despite the Nigerien government and EU partners' efforts to compensate those affected. Transportation of irregular migrants has decreased but hasn't stopped, but is instead becoming more dangerous and expensive. Prices of uranium don't appear to be rising and thus, it's unlikely for uranium extraction to be a major employer of locals in Agadez Region as in the past.

Transportation and smuggling of licit subsidized goods from Libya, and Algeria, will continue. Northern Niger's local markets depend on foodstuff, goods, and fuel from Libya and Algeria due to affordable prices. With cracking down on migration, more drivers will engage in transporting and trading goods to generate income. Persistent demand for reliable vehicles at affordable prices will continue to encourage vehicle smuggling from troubled southern Libya. Finally, without international support providing advanced techniques and tools, agriculture and livestock activities contribution to local economy in the north will be very limited.





OCP Policy Center

Ryad Business Center – South 4th
Floor – Mahaj Erryad - Rabat Morocco

Website: WWW.OCPPC.MA

Email: CONTACT@OCPPC.MA

Phone: +212 5 37 27 08 08

Fax: +212 5 37 71 31 54

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