



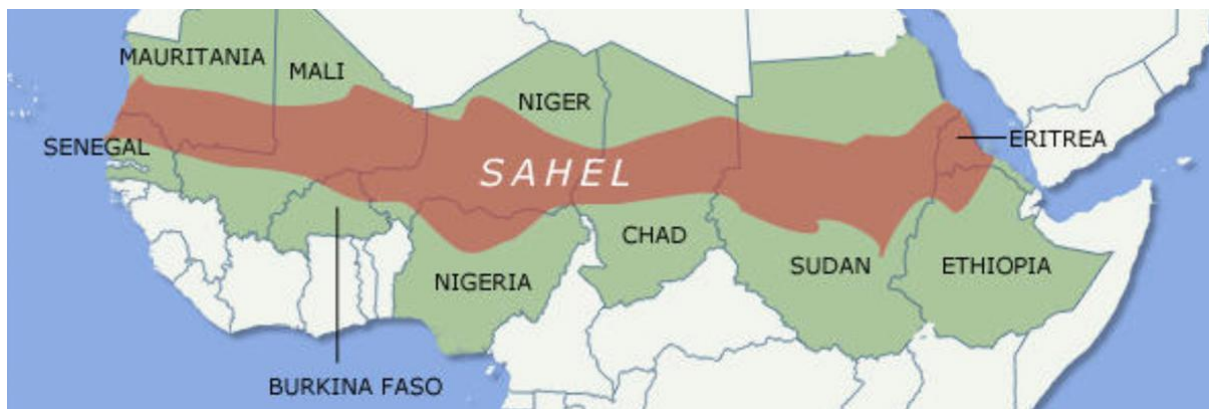
Issue: The question of achieving security and development in the Sahel

Committee: Political

Chair(s): Faustine de Lacheze-Murel and Camille Fleury

Introduction:

The Sahel is an African region located between the arid Sahara to the north and the belt of humid savannas to the south. It is one of the poorest regions of the world. It faces different challenges such as severe poverty, recurrent food shortages, rapid population growth, the effects of climate change, fragile governance, corruption, illicit trafficking, unresolved internal tensions, the risk of violent extremism and radicalisation, and terrorist-linked security threats.



<https://www.unav.edu/web/global-affairs/detalle/-/blogs/religious-terrorism-in-the-sahel-causes-means-and-impact-2>

Definitions of key terms:

Security : protection against harm, danger, or unauthorised access, achieved through measures and practices that ensure safety and integrity.

Development : the ongoing process of enhancing economic, social, and infrastructural aspects to improve citizens' well-being and overall national progress.

Security and development in the Sahel cannot be separated, because helping these countries achieve security is integral to enabling their economies to grow and poverty to be reduced.

Al-Qaeda: militant Islamist organisation founded by Osama bin Laden in the 1980s. Responsible for terrorist attacks that provoked several interventions of the American army.

AQIM (Al-Qaeda In the Maghreb) : both Al-Qaeda and AQIM share the same ideology. AQIM is a regional branch with specific operations and objectives focused on the Maghreb region, whereas Al-Qaeda is a broader global organisation with affiliates and supporters worldwide.

G5 Sahel or G5S: The Group of Five for the Sahel was founded in 2014 as an intergovernmental organisation. It provides an institutional framework to promote development and security within its five member countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) : a group of West African countries working together to improve their economies and cooperation. Their goal is to create a large trade bloc, enhance economic ties, and address regional challenges like poverty and conflict.

Key issues

The Sahel faces difficulties which prevent them from assuring security, assistance and development for the region.

Indeed, the insufficiency of financial and human resources, as well as public services for the local population are causing serious problems. The lack of education and employment pushes the ageing population to join AQIM, a terrorist organisation. Indeed, the governance in justice and social exclusion in regions affected by insecurity is weak in the Sahel which makes them vulnerable to the actions of AQIM and organised crime networks.

The corruption in the Sahel also harms the fight against AQIM and insecurity. It is hard to find solutions between the three states present in the Sahel since the security threats and their solutions differ from one state to the other. Their different perceptions generate poorly

coordinated actions. In fact, the legal frameworks as well as the operational and strategic capacities are insufficient to control the territory, ensure human security and to respond to security threats. More resources are needed to target terrorism and illegal activities. Finally, the interaction between factors such as poverty, social exclusion and unmet economic needs risks the development of extremism, along with radicalisation and recruitment of youth by AQIM.

General overview

Terrorism has been ignored in the Sahel and affected by political instability. Indeed, the geographical features generate a lack of cultural homogeneity and beliefs features, and don't allow the region to control borders. The fragility of the Sahel made it easier for the terrorist groups to act.

These groups are often religiously motivated terrorists wanting to establish a regime based on Islam. They don't allow any possibility of dialogue or understanding with others, only the establishment of the demand for righteous combat, using martyrdom as their weapon and putting in danger the inhabitants of the region. It appears as a response to colonialism and the practice of soft power by Western countries in Arab and Islamic cultures.

The West, such as France, has difficulties understanding these threats as they see the world in a secular way. Though, they have contributed financially to the region. In fact, the European Union provided 189.4 million euros and 3.97 billion euros from France during 2019 to 2020 for the region's security.

Statistics:

The region of the Sahel has encountered some difficulties as it can be seen with the following statistics.

Indeed, among 150 million people inhabiting the region of the Sahel, 64% of them are under 25 years old and mostly Sunni Muslims. In 2018, the mortality rate was high with 8.05 people per 1000 compared to some western countries where the average is 2.59. It is also the terrorist attacks through AQIM that led to a demographic crisis, with 4.2 million displaced persons and more than a million unable to find work. Attacks and fatalities started to become important in 2019 with an average of 69.5 attacks in the Sahel and Maghreb and in March 2021 with 438 fatalities. It is in 2020 that the terrorist activity has decreased with the COVID-19.

It is also known that Sahel is one of the poorest regions in the world with Nigeria which is one of the countries with the largest number of extremely poor populations. Furthermore, poverty obligates inequality between the ten countries of the Sahel. Indeed, data literacy rate for which data is only available for a few countries of the ten ones of the Sahel, averages 56.06%. Though, it is very unequal since Algeria averages 81.40% and Mali only 41.15%. Finally, economics hardly develops since it has been prevented by the environmental crisis. Temperatures have risen 1.5 times faster than the global average with an increase in droughts.

The terrorism finally brings political and social insecurity as well as economic insecurity since no investors are interested in doing business in an unstable area. This maintains the underdevelopment of the state, causing a large flow of migration.

Major actors:



EU: Improving security and development in Sahel has a direct impact on protecting European citizens and interest : preventing AQIM from carrying out attacks on EU territory, containing drug and other criminal trafficking destined for Europe, securing communication links (roads, pipelines) for trading...

Here is a list of actions already taken by the EU :

- The EU emergency trust funds for Africa : This fund has for objective to provide substantial financial support to Sahel countries to enhance stability, security, and development
(<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/eu-trust-fund-africa/>)
- European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali : established in 2013 to train and advise Malian armed forces. It also cooperates with the G5 Sahel member states in order to improve border control.
- EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger : civilian missions which aim to train the national police, gendarmerie and guard, as well as advise the national government on security reforms. EUCAP Sahel Niger was created in 2012 and remains in force. EUCAP Sahel Mali was established in 2014 and has been extended until 2023.

“New EU strategic priorities for the Sahel”:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/696161/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)696161_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/696161/EPRS_BRI(2021)696161_EN.pdf)



France :

- Operation “Serval” (2013-14) : has the objective of rejecting terrorist groups in northern Mali and other Sahel nations
- Operation “Barkhane” (2014-22) :
https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/operation_barkhane
- United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) : France was its precursor in 2017. It aims to provide assistance to Mali’s government in stabilising its country. It has over 15,000 civilian and military personnel that provide logistical and operational support.
- Takuba Task Force : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takuba_Task_Force



The United Kingdom : has invested heavily in humanitarian aid and development assistance in the most fragile States.



G5 Sahel : Because the G5 Sahel member states are directly affected by this matter, the organisation plays a pivotal role in advancing security and development within the region.

C The situation in Chad is key in fighting terrorism in the Sahel. The country lies across the Sahel and besides the Horn of Africa. It is the stabiliser of the region, as it has the

greatest joint force in the G5S. The removal or weakening of the troops in the country's borders represent a great risk not only for Chad, but also for its neighbours as they will be exposed to violent attacks by terrorist groups. The country has become the launch pad of the terrorist groups in Africa that are aiming to impose their will all over the continent.



The United States of America : The United States' engagement in the Sahel has been overly militaristic, with millions of dollars yearly spent for operations like the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP).

Questions to consider/reflect on (pistes de recherche):

- How to reduce terrorist activities and face AQIM?
- What solutions can be found to enhance political stability, security, good governance as well as social cohesion in the Sahel states and economic and education opportunities?
- How can the EU help and have an impact on the situation of the Sahel?
- How can the Western countries help and have an impact on the situation of the Sahel?
- How to fight against violent extremism and radicalisation?
- How to ensure ownership, coherence, and long-term impact for the development of the country?
- How has the situation evolved after the COVID-19?

Appendix:

A very complete document about the topic :

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/mali/strategy-security-and-development-sahel-european-external-action-service_en

“New EU strategic priorities for the Sahel”:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/696161/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)696161_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/696161/EPRS_BRI(2021)696161_EN.pdf)

Bibliography:

“Linking security and development, A Plea for the Sahel”

<https://ferdi.fr/dl/df-mmi8mZkJuCTrXgA6Lu7wmDX/linking-security-and-development-a-plea-for-the-sahel.pdf>

Religious terrorism in the Sahel. Causes, means and impact + The Western fight against terrorism

<https://www.unav.edu/web/global-affairs/detalle/-/blogs/religious-terrorism-in-the-sahel-causes-means-and-impact-2>