Sahel Crisis and Insecurity in the West African Region

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Abstract

The phenomenon of insecurity and political instability in Mali and the western Sahel cannot be isolated from the menace of climate change, terrorism, corruption and poor governance. The momentum of insecurity in Africa has led to chronic malnutrition, internal terrorism and food insecurity. The Sahel is also turned to home of drug traffickers and terrorist groups that are profiting from "ungoverned spaces" across the region. These, simmering humanitarian, development and governance crises are intersecting with global, regional and local security concerns. Mali and the Sahel are embedded in what might be called a regional conflict system. The system can be parsed into discrete levels: inter-state rivalries are often fused in to national political competition while sub national conflicts tend to feature political, ethnic, sectarian and territorial dimensions. The most destabilizing conflicts may not even be taking place at the regional level, but rather consist of vicious disputes within localities. The paper uses secondary source of data reviewing various literature on the subject matter. The paper is of the view that for African countries in the Sahel region to be respected in the comity of nation, the leaders in the region must pay serious attention to addressing insecurity and providing functional and effective governance in the region. Leaders should also find amicable means of sustaining regional economy for a better position in the global economic system.

Keywords: Insecurity, Regional issues, Terrorism and Climate Change

1.0   INTRODUCTION

West Africa and the Sahel are obvious examples of regions suffering from recurring violence, weak governance, development retardation and political instability as result of bad governance. The threats to state stability in the region have diverse sources and take different expressions. These include secessionist armed struggles and terrorism in Mali and Niger and unstable macrostates in Guinea-Bissau and Guinea. According to Shaw.S (2013) has argued that the financed by the influx of money from the trafficking of South American cocaine this has led to the presence of abject poverty and underdevelopment, state inability, neglect of citizen's needs and corruption have created unstable regimes with low internal and external legitimacy.

Bokhars (2013) has also cited the nature of how the conflicts that exist in many Sahel states have often been exacerbated by the government, due perhaps to a lack of resources or competence to deal with a crisis or conflict, but possibly also to active government complicity with organized crime, armed Islamists or other armed groups such as militias.

The conflict was escalated in the region as a result of poverty, drought and the inability of states to fend for their citizens. It was estimated that over 20 million people in the Sahel was in need of humanitarian assistance during 2014 and an increase of over 8 million in 2013. This demand has been growing year by year as result of insecurity, poverty, corruption in the Sahel region. The humanitarian situation in the Sahel has been seen as a threat not only to human security, but also to the security and stability of states in the region, as extreme poverty and desperation are important factors in people turning to violence and crime. (Than, 2015)

Saleh (2012) was of the view that the organized violence disrupting governance and hindering development takes many different forms. Apart from interstate warfare and major civil war, it also includes, for example, contests for state power, global ideological struggles and violence linked to the trafficking of illicit goods. These phenomena trap a number of countries in the world in recurring cycles of armed conflict and criminal violence.

The Andre, (2013) has argued that the international community is seized by the various crises unfolding across Mali and the Sahel. The French military intervention launched in January 2013

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illustrates European unease. Meanwhile, the United States has also sent a small number of military personnel to Mali to support allied forces fighting there and it also opens a drone base in nearby Niger

Experts and other stakeholders are of the opinion that the greatest security threats are not directly to Europe or the United States, but rather to the wider neighborhood – particularly the Maghreb and West Africa. The media is replete with stories of Boko Haram in Nigeria collaborating with Malian groups. Indeed, Boko Haram has reportedly become increasingly active, leading Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan to declare a state of emergency in three states in the country North East, states like Borno, Yobe and Adamawa which has bordering with Chad, Cameroon and Niger. The impacts of French-led pressure are already being felt. France's military intervention in Mali prompted Mokhtar Belmokhtar's "Signed-In Blood Battalion" to attack the Amenas energy facility in Algeria in early 2013. And Islamist militants are reportedly flocking to Mali from Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and even Syria (Thurston, 2015).

The nature of insecurity and poverty in the Sahel has today called for an urgent need for informed analysis of the opportunities and pitfalls of intervention in Mali and the Sahel region. Indeed, short-, medium- and long-term planning was been adopted by regional and global bodies to address the menace. In January 2013 at the African Union headquarters at Adisbaba in Ethiopia, donors pledged almost half a billion dollars for an international campaign to tackle Islamist militants in Mali. The European Union hold a separate conference in Brussels in May 2013 – *Together for a New Mali* – at which donor nations pledged US$4.22 billion for Mali over two years, an amount exceeding the US$2.57 billion requested by the Malian government (EU, 2013)

Zoubir (2013) has cite that the hallmarks of the old model of stabilization, the intervention in Mali is shifting from a French-led operation to activities supported by regional forces, operating under United Nations mandates. The "regionalization" of stability operations there, as in countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, underlines the ways in the West is reshaping its interventions in Africa.

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Ammour (2012) has highlighted for centuries, herdsmen across Africa's Sahel headed south during the long, hot dry season. Farmers typically welcomed them because their cattle and goats fertilized depleted cropland. While herders and farmers routinely competed over scarce resources, outright violence was restrained through customary arrangements and swift mediation from local leaders. But this symbiosis is crumbling. Instead, thousands of civilians from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria are killed every year in bloody inter-communal violence. Many more are caught up in deadly overlapping conflicts that are spinning out of control.

However, looking at the above discussion of scholars and other relevant stakeholders on the recurrent emergence of higher level of insecurity in the Sahel region has been connected to so many factors such as climate change and poor leadership style demonstrated by leaders in the region which has make the region remain in the circle of poverty, unemployment, insecurity, money laundering and human trafficking. Climate change and its impact have dominated international policy agendas and public attention in recent times. The focus of the security implications of climate change has helped to bring climate change to the realm of international policymaking by placing it as a key threat to state and global stability. Recent events in the Sahel, drawing attention to its role in the development of international terrorism and illegal trafficking and its particular vulnerability, place this region of Africa at the centre of global security concerns. This paper ''Sahel Crisis and Insecurity in the West African Region was aimed to increase understanding of the linkages and impacts of climate change and security and on how climate change could contribute to insecurity in the future and what need to be done to address the problem.

Statement of the Problem

Climate change in the Sahel region has directly influenced the lives of millions of peoples in the area. Over the past decade, however, a new focus on the possible impacts of climate change in all its myriad forms and aspects has emerged, including security implications.

Although, theories of scarcity-induced insecurity have been around for centuries, technological innovations, human ingenuity and adaptation, and growth in international trade over the past decades appeared to have overcome many traditional scarcities. Recently, however, these have resurfaced amongst other trends, with the effects of climate change being seen to be posing new threats to security and development. Given the lack of research on regional level impacts the

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French and British governments expressed the need to deepen understanding of what security implications of climate change could be in the Sahel. The Sahel is a region that is considered particularly vulnerable1 and that is gaining increasing attention due to security, energy and broader geopolitical interests, underlined by the recent statements of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union. As the International Panel on Climate Change states in its fourth Assessment Report, "…[Africa] is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change and climate variability, a situation aggravated by the interaction of 'multiple stresses', occurring at various levels, and low adaptive capacity." (IPCC AR4, 2007)

The Sahel as the area of Africa was lying between 12°N and 20°N. This area shares two climatic characteristics: one rainy season per year and August as the month of highest precipitation. The area covers all or part of 12 countries from the Atlantic coast to the Red Sea: Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti.

Mali and the Sahel offer an intriguing if depressing study of the archetypal conflict ecosystem. Layered atop so-called structural drivers of conflict are overlapping armed groups with converging and diverging interests. Many of these actors are able to draw on diverse sources of financing, many of them linked to international networks of organized crime and terrorism. What is more, the region has been subjected to prolonged and repeated interventions – including relief, development and military action. With support from analysts closest to the ground, this action of stability attempts to begin unpeeling these layers. It reveals a bewildering level of complexity that must be comprehensively engaged if genuine security is to be achieved in the region.

It's well known to humanitarian specialists, Mali suffers from entrenched poverty, unemployment, inadequate basic services, high rates of population growth and food insecurity (Gilpin, 2013). This is at least partly a product of its colonial legacy and considerable land mass. But under-development is also exacerbated by weak governance and corruption, widening the gap between elite decision-makers and citizens (Ould Bah, 2013). The country´s sharp socio-economic inequalities are reflected not just in relation to income, but also land ownership and ethnicity (Gilpin, 2013). Moreover, population displacement fuelled by conflict and food insecurity threatens to spread across the country´s borders throughout the Maghreb and West Africa.

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Research Questions

Amidst all of the preoccupation with Mali, it is worth asking what is actually going on in the Sahel. Why current of "model democracy" in Africa succumb to instability and poor leadership?

 i.   What are the causes of Insecurity in Sahel region?

 ii.   In what ways can policy makers at the African region and other International Organization address the problem?

2.0   CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The crisis

When the Sahel is in the news, it is often because millions of people are at risk of going hungry. A humanitarian crisis usually unfolds on the back of a food crisis. In 2012, the lives of up to 18 million people were put at risk following a major food crisis in the region. In 2013, more than 11 million are facing the same plight, while 1.4 million children are threatened with severe malnutrition. Even in normal years, millions are in a permanent state of food insecurity. Over the past five decades, persistent droughts have contributed to famine episodes. There is now a need to break the cycle of recurrent food crises in the region, many humanitarian actors say.

How is the UN Support in Food Security?

Throughout this year's lean season—the period between harvests from May to September—the World Food Programme (WFP) gave food to between 5 and 6 million people each month through its nutrition and food security programme. In 2012 the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) helped more than 5.2 million people through support to off-season food and crop production, soil and water conservation and rehabilitation projects, and desert locust control and monitoring. With its partners, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is also mobilizing resources and assisting communities in need.

The environmental crisis

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Historically the Sahel has been characterized by strong climatic variations and irregular rainfalls, which pose two of the biggest obstacles to food security and poverty reduction in the region, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Things have gotten worse in recent decades, experts say. Between 1970 and 1993, the region recorded 20 years of severe drought. The frequency and severity of droughts and floods has increased over this period. FAO reports that over 80% of the region's land is degraded. By 2050, writes Malcolm Potts of the University of California–Berkeley, with greenhouse gas emissions rising, temperatures will be warmer by 3 to 5 degrees Celsius and extreme weather events will have become more common.

Various factors account for the Sahel's environmental crisis. "Over the last half century," UNEP notes, "the combined effects of population growth, land degradation (deforestation, continuous cropping and overgrazing), reduced and erratic rainfall, lack of coherent environmental policies and misplaced development priorities, have contributed to transform a large proportion of the Sahel into barren land, resulting in the deterioration of the soil and water resources."

How is the UN assisting?

Among other recommendations, UN officials have urged regional cooperation to defuse tensions between countries of the region, and thereby reduce the risk of increased conflict and environmentally induced migration. Achim Steiner, executive director of UNEP, has pointed to "the urgent need for scaled-up investments in adaptation, moving forward on the Green Fund and supportive measures such as reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as well as realizing the climate finance of $100 billion a year by 2020."

Insecurity and political instability

Political instability has plagued some of the Sahel's countries for years. In Mali, the military coup of March 2012 brought an abrupt halt to 20 years of stable democracy. In its aftermath, terrorists who had occupied most of the northern region started heading south, intent on taking control of the whole country. In January 2013 a French-led and Chad-supported intervention stopped their advance. The conflict compounded the security and humanitarian crisis, in part by disrupting supply routes and causing food shortages.

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The crisis in neighbouring Darfur, Sudan, and the presence of an armed rebellion in the east did damage to Chad's security that will last for many years. During Niger's 50 years of independence, notes a report by the International Crisis Group, a think tank, the country has seen two armed rebellions, four coups, seven governments and periods of promising democratic change as well as reversals.

In a region with porous borders, a political or security crisis in one country is often a serious threat to neighbours. These borders have benefited criminal networks and drug traffickers. The UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has estimated that major illicit flows linked to criminal activities in the Sahel amounted to $3.8 billion annually.

How is the UN assisting?

UNODC recently helped broker an agreement among Mali, Morocco, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Algeria to address the problems caused by drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism. In July the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a peacekeeping mission to assist Mali on its way back to stability.

Fragile economy

Agriculture in the Sahel employs a majority of the region's work force and contributes heavily to its gross domestic product (accounting for up to 45% in some countries of the region). It also plays a central role in food security. Yet it remains highly underdeveloped and is characterized by an almost total dependency on three to four months of rainfall per year, as well as by low use of external inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, the absence of mechanization and poor links to markets.

According to UNEP, the recurrent droughts of the 1970s and 1980s caused massive losses of agricultural production and livestock, loss of human lives to hunger, malnutrition and disease, massive displacements of people and shattered economies. Climate change could also have negative consequences on agricultural production and food security in the Sahel, says UNEP. All

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in all, the countries of the Sahel perform poorly on UNDP's Human Development Index, a measurement of a country's economic and social well-being.

Raising tension between herders and farmers across the Sahel

Climate change is partly to blame. The United Nations estimates that roughly 80% of the Sahel's farmland is degraded. Temperatures there are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average. As a result, droughts and floods are growing longer and more frequent, undermining food production. About 50 million people in the Sahel depend on livestock rearing for survival. But the land available to pastoralists is shrinking. This is aggravated by surging population growth that is pushing farmers northward to cultivate more crops. And while adverse climate conditions are sparking violence, proliferating jihadi insurgencies are also creating no-go areas, turning a bad situation even worse (Oxfam,2013)

Climate risks, food insecurity and metastasizing violence are all set to intensify in the West African Sahel. The region is a canary in the coalmine; a presage of what is to come in other vulnerable parts of the world. Climate scientists believe that temperatures there could be 3-5°C warmer by 2050, and this in a region with monthly averages of 35°C. Rainfall is already erratic, and wet seasons are shrinking. There are lean times ahead. Still reeling from the food crisis of 2012, more than 33 million people in the Sahel are classified as food insecure. Declining grain and food production is forcing pastoralists into a desperate search for fertile pasture. When herders arrive too early or stay too long – violence is likely to follow.

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Food security, G5 Sahel group of countries
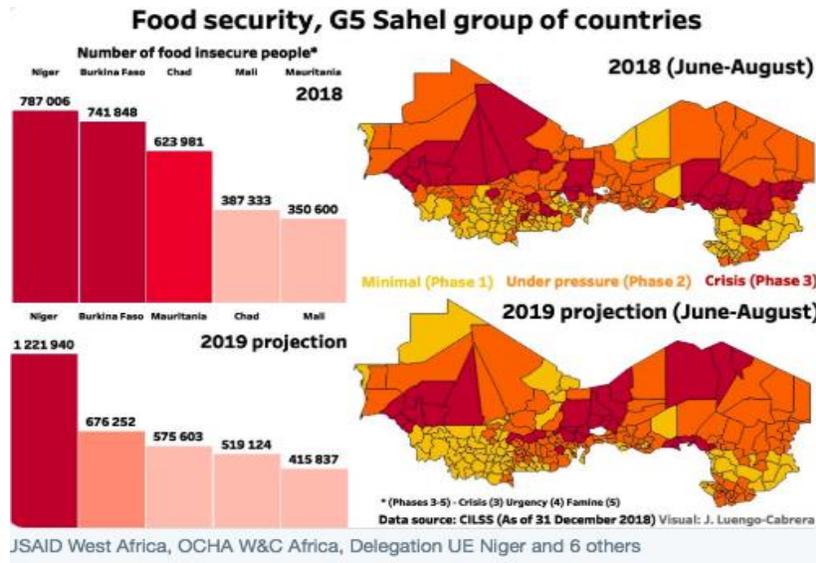
The region's violent conflicts are contagious. One reason for this is that national borders are porous and largely unguarded. Instead, they are crises-crossed with enterprising merchants and cattle herders, together with sinister extremist and criminal networks trafficking in toxic ideologies, drugs and weapons. Insurgencies in one country can and often do spill across borders, as was the case when conflict spread from northern to central Mali and into north and eastern Burkina Faso and southwestern Niger. Manipulated by government and business elites, marginalized pastoralists serve as the foot soldiers of the Sahel's interlocking conflicts. They are ready recruits precisely because of diminished livelihood options and social exclusion.

The Jihadist group and political militia have established footholds in remote parts of Africa's western Sahel. They are thriving owing to a combination of weak state authority, an abundance of firearms and the steady erosion of local dispute resolution mechanisms. They are also tapping a rich vein of recruits from nomadic communities such as the Tuareg, Dossaak and Fulani. Multiple foreign-supported counter-terrorism operations have made some gains, but are clearly failing to contain the spread of violent activities. If anything, extremist groups are fragmenting and deepening their hold of border areas. The military strategy of backing armed proxies (like the Self-Defense Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies (GATIA) or Movement for the Salvation of Azawad) in the Mali-Niger border area is also stoking up inter-communal conflict.

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There are good reasons to believe that climate-related shocks and organized violence will deepen in 2019. The UN special adviser on the Sahel, Ibrahim Thiaw, claims that the region is already home to the largest number of people who are disproportionately affected by global warming. It also has the conditions – a high dependence on agriculture, discriminatory political institutions and a past history of conflict – for war. According to Busby and von Uexkull, for example, countries with a history of conflict in the previous five years with over 40% of the population in agriculture and at least 20% of the population formally excluded from political power are most at risk.

The warning signs are flashing red after a combination of poor rainfall, livestock losses and pasture shortages contributed to historic food insecurity in 2018. At least 6 million people in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal required urgent food assistance at the end of last year. Another 8 million more people are currently receiving relief aid in Nigeria's middle belt provinces of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe and the Lake Chad basin. The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel is anticipating what it describes as "persistent food insecurity" for the foreseeable future. The combination of poor governance, languishing economies, depreciating local currencies, inflation, spiking migration and transhumance and violence are a volatile mix (UN,2019)

Regional deterioration

Sahel countries experienced unprecedented levels of organized violence in 2018. This is particularly the case for Mali and Burkina Faso, both of which registered the highest conflict-related death tolls in years. Taking all the G5 Sahel group of countries together, they experienced over four times the number of fatalities in 2018 when compared to 2012, with 62% of all reported violent deaths concentrated in Mali. At least 5 million people were displaced across borders or internally in 2018 and an astonishing 24 million people required food assistance across the region.

> The Sahel in Peril: This visualization shows how climate change and food insecurity are contributing to rising tensions in the Sahel, with armed groups spreading violence across the region. Earth Time and the Igarapé Institute have collaborated with the International

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Committee of the Red Cross to visualize these issues. To dig deeper into this visualization and explore this issue further on the level of insecurity in Sahel region. (OCHA, 2018)

Mali was a regional hotspot, experiencing a steep surge in violence against civilians in 2018. This was largely the result of intensifying inter-communal conflicts between herders and farmers, but also a result of shifting tactics of jihadist groups operating in the center and north of the country. According to the Armed Conflict and Event Location Dataset (ACLED), there were at least 882 civilian fatalities last year, more than eight times the figure in 2012 during the country's civil war. Most of these deaths were concentrated in the central region of Mopti (56%) and the northern territory of Gao (31%). In addition, over 80,000 people were internally displaced at the end of 2018, more than double the number at the end of 2016. The number of people in need of food assistance reached 5.2 million in 2018, up from 2.1 million in 2013.

Burkina Faso also witnessed a sharp increase in jihadist attacks in 2018, more than four times the number reported in 2017. ACLED researchers counted some 158 jihadist attacks last year, most of which were concentrated in the country's Sahel (78) and East (53) regions. Jihadi elements like the Group to Support Muslims and Islam (linked to al-Qaeda) have stepped up their targeting of government forces and civilians, and are increasingly stirring up communal tensions across the region. A state of emergency was declared across these two regions on 31 December 2018.

Niger registered a tripling of protests and riots and rising border violence in 2018. A new tax law and the spiraling cost of living sparked waves of unrest. According to ACLED, some 30 mass protests occurred in 2018, compared to just 11 in 2017. Roughly 60% of these events were concentrated in Niger's capital, Niamey. Inter-communal violence is also on the rise, including in western Niger on the border of Burkina Faso and Mali. More than 52,000 people were displaced in 2018 alone (added to the estimated 144,000 who are already displaced). Making matters worse, the number of people who are food insecure is expected to rise by over 55% this year, from 787,000 in 2018 to 1,221,000 in 2019.

Meanwhile, Nigeria's middle belt is on fire. Farmer-herder violence is now far deadlier than the havoc wreaked by Boko Haram. ACLED has documented violent escalation in Benue, Plateau,

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Taraba and Nasawara – with fluctuations aligned with dry and raining season – as well as with electoral cycles. Violent disputes involving herder militia are due to interplay of factors, including control over grazing areas, disputes over land, manipulation by elites and extremism. In a worrying sign, Fulani herdsman are increasingly confronting government forces (e.g. including, most recently, during military-led Operation Cat Race and Operation Whirl Stroke).

3.0 CONSEQUENCES OF CRISIS IN SAHEL

The cycle of conflict involving Tuareg groups and the state in Mali is an obvious example of how inadequate conflict resolution leads to the next outbreak of violence. Some of today's rebel leaders lost their fathers in the 1963 rebellion and some combatants have fought in all three successive insurrections. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, cited that the recurring clashes between the state and the separatists, as well as violent confrontations between groups in the north, have had a devastating impact on human security, with both separatists and government forces committing large-scale abuses against civilians. This has caused extensive refugee movements both to the south of Mali and to neighbouring countries that already lack the resources to care for their own impoverished populations. The judicial response to the human rights abuses committed has previously been inadequate, if not non-existent, and this is also the case for the crimes against civilians committed during 2012-2013, bringing the question of ending impunity to the core of the reconciliation agenda.

An effect of the deficiency in security is the creation of ethnically based self-defense militias. One example is the Songhai-dominated *Ganda Koy*, formed in 1994 in response to the deterioration of security caused both by armed conflict and by the different peace agreements. During the years that followed, fighting between the militia and Tuareg groups entailed a series of attacks and counter-attacks, including extensive killings of civilians. According to Thuston, L, (2015) has highlighted the several of the militias have been government allies, used as tools against separatist Tuareg units. During the occupation of northern Mali in 2012 by armed separatists and Islamists, an Arab militia was established to counter the MNLA and protect the Arab population. The group, which later renamed itself *Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad* (MAA), is one of the armed groups which have had several violent confrontations with the MNLA.

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Another consequence of the fighting is the decomposition of the social fabric. There is pride in Mali that the country contains a large number of ethnic groups living peacefully together. However, the conflicts reinforce the dividing lines and there is an apparent lack of trust that particularly challenges the relations between, in very broad terms, populations in the south and the north; between pastoralist and sedentary groups; between different Tuareg clans; and between separatist groups and other parts of the population in the northern regions.

Onuaha, T (2013) has cited on top of this crisis, the Malian government has previously used a strategy of divide and rule towards the north, pitting groups against each other by interfering with inter-and intra-group power relations by favouring some groups or individuals over others, further worsening community relations.

Armed Islamism

In Mali and the Sahel, armed Islamism is a serious and obvious security threat. The activity of armed Islamists has increased since the early 2000s and up to 2013 there were three main organizations namely, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and Ansar in Magrib operating in the area. The establishment of these groups can be linked to e.g. a tradition of state neglect, constant poverty and underdevelopment, lack of state territorial control and ethnic tensions. (Jebnoun, 2014)

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) traces its roots back to the Algerian civil war and the group GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, 2013)

The name change and affiliation with Al-Qaida took place in 2006 and brought with it change in the goals and aims of the organization towards a jihadist agenda, complementing the internal Algerian agenda. AQIM operates primarily in the Sahel and North Africa, with Algeria as its centre of operations. The main objectives are the fight against the Algerian state and the jihadist goal of establishing a global caliphate. AQIM mostly comprises native Algerians, but has also been able to exploit the social exposure and poverty in other states in the Sahel to gather recruits, predominantly young men. AQIM's presence in Mali has been dependent on the Malian state's inability to control its territory and also the government's previous lax attitude towards this organization.

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Onuoha, T (2013) has cited that the AQIM finances its operations mainly through kidnappings. Criminal networks and corrupt government officials in northern Mali provide AQIM with another source of income, namely trafficking in contraband, mainly cigarettes.

A local offshoot of AQIM, Mouvement pour le Tawhîd et du Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO), was founded in 2011, after alleged frustration at the Algerian dominance of AQIM. Thurston, L (2013) has cited the bulk of this organisation is made up of southern Saharans and several important members are Malians, who are also said to be involved in the trans-Sahel drug trade.

While the MUJAO is a jihadist movement, it is also highly integrated with organized crime, which contributes to both the operational and financial success of the group. (Lachre, 2015)

Defender of the Faith was founded in 2011 by Iyad Ag Ghali, Ansar Dine, has its roots in the traditionally secular Tuareg separatist movement. After being denied the leadership of the Tuareg Ifoghas clan and the leadership of the MNLA, which he sought to reform towards jihadist goals, Ag Ghali established the Islamist Ansar Dine in late 2011. Whereas AQIM is composed of mainly Algerian nationals, Ansar Dine is composed of mainly Malian Tuaregs, whose goal of establishing an Islamic state in Mali or northern Mali and instating sharia law in controlled regions coincides with that of AQIM, but not with that of the secular MNLA. (Jakobsson, 2017)

Links between the transnational threat

This paper tries to distinguish between political conflict, armed Islamism and organized crime, based on the categorization made by the World Bank in its World Development Report 2011. However, these categories are seldom clear-cut regarding either group affiliation or mode of operation. Cornel, S (2006) has highlighted the alliances and dynamics ruling the situation in northern Mali and the Sahel are fluid and allegiances change easily. The main distinction between the groups is not their methods but their goal, e.g. the goal of organized crime is not political or ideological but plain profit, in contrast to the political goals of separatists.

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According to the International Crisis Group, some individuals within the rebel groups MNLA, the HCUA and the MAA defend the aim of political Islam and some sympathize with the jihadist groups, which in some cases they temporarily joined during 2012 (ICG, 2014)

In some instances the separatists and armed Islamists have also formed more institutional alliances. The MNLA and Ansar Dine formed an unsteady alliance during 2012, providing manpower for the uprising. This was facilitated by the fact that both movements are predominantly made up of Tuaregs and that the founder of Ansar Dine, Iyad Ag Ghali, is a former Tuareg rebel commander. According to Global Initiatives (2014) has cited that after the collapse of the state in northern Mali, the alliance soon dispersed due to differences in goals and priorities.

While being a jihadist group, Ansar Dine shares at least one of its goals, that of an independent Azawad, with the MNLA. The difference is that while the MNLA wants to establish a secular state, Ansar Dine wants an Islamic caliphate in the whole of Mali or in an independent north (Klute, 2013)

AQIM finances its activities through organized criminal activities, predominantly kidnappings but also trafficking in illicit goods, especially cigarettes. According Schori, L (20011) there is no evidence connecting AQIM directly to the trafficking in cocaine, but it is likely that AQIM has imposed 'taxes' on trafficking operations in territories that it controls. Based on Lacher , (2012) has cited other researchers claim that AQIM is active in the trafficking of drugs, but hard facts are scarce. MUJAO is highly involved in drug trafficking, both in a first-hand capacity and as an ally to traffickers, offering protection in exchange for money. The organizations pragmatic and adaptable position on drugs has allowed the MUJAO to thrive both as a drug trafficking actor and as a jihadist organization. Like AQIM, the MUJAO also uses ransoms from kidnappings as an important source of income. According to a report by the Gorée Institute; Ansar Dine is not financed through criminal activities but through donations from Gulf countries and civil society organizations supporting their cause (Onuoha, 2013)

The criminal networks established in the Sahel have in some cases established contact with armed Islamist groups and have provided them with weapons, money and travel documents in exchange for protection or payment.

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4.0   THE LINKAGES OF CRIME WITH THE STATE

Apart from the individuals and periodic alliances linking these groups in Mali, they also have one important factor in common – they have all been enabled by the non-existent state presence in northern Mali and the general low state capacity in the Sahel. Long-held grievances with the state explain the outbreaks of separatist violence. The recruitment of locals by armed Islamists has been facilitated by the state's failure to provide security and basic necessities in the north and by the Islamists' ability to offer large incentives due to the incomes generated through trafficking and kidnappings. Organized crime established partly because of the lack of basic goods coming from the south and was made possible by the lack of territorial and border control in the region. Furthermore, all these groups are now complicating the efforts to (re)establish state legitimacy and presence in the area.

What makes the situation in Mali particularly alarming are the reported links between the state and organized crime. By the end of ATT's presidency, Onuoha, E (2012) has credited that it became increasingly evident that government officials were in collusion with organized crime. Prior to the armed revolt in 2012, the government sought to control the northern regions through the outsourcing of security functions to criminal networks, local strongmen and local militias. There are also examples of government officials intervening to encumber investigations into drug trafficking, implying that they had personal interests in the continuation of criminal business. Although the political leadership has changed in Mali, there is a widespread notion that these corrupt links still exist.

The kidnapping of mostly Western citizens by AQIM during the past decade and the payment of ransoms has also created dubious links between governments, intermediaries and the terrorists responsible. If successful as a go-between, it is believed that intermediaries can keep a substantial share of the ransoms paid. Being designated as a negotiator by the Malian government therefore became lucrative and it is believed that government officials also received a cut of the money paid for the release of hostages.

Countering crime

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The report of UN Security Council in 2015 has shows the nature of the action, the political will in West Africa to fight organized crime is absent. Smuggling of contraband and narcotics is often perceived by the elites in power as "business opportunities'' According to Interviews of Dakat (2014) has cited information that generate large incomes, money that also can be invested in legal markets such as agriculture and construction to the possible benefit of the country. It is telling that the fight against organized crime has been completely omitted from both the mandate of MINUSMA and the scope of operation serial.

As hard evidence is scarce, it is difficult to say exactly how the jihadist and French presence in north Mali has affected organized crime. However, existing sources indicate that neither the jihadist nor the French intervention has had any significant impact on cocaine trafficking in the region, which mostly follows the Mauritania-Mali-Libya route.

According to interviews conducted by an NGO in Mali, the only impact the French presence has had is that traffickers have decreased the size of their convoys, spitting them up in several consignments. (Global Initiative, 2014)

This is most likely due to the ability of the criminal organizations in the region to adapt easily to changing circumstances and to the Jihadists, MINUSMA and the French not confronting the traffickers.

Regional cooperation

The main regional cooperation organ in West Africa and the Sahel is ECOWAS. Within ECOWAS, several programmes and initiatives have been established to deal with regional challenges. These include control of small arms and cooperation against organized crime.

Shaw, R (2013) cited other regional initiatives include a joint Mali, Niger, Algeria and Mauritania intelligence bureau and anti-terror command in Tamanrasset, talks between, among others, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and Niger to cooperate on transnational issues and the establishment of what has been dubbed the *G5 of the Sahel* with the goal of strengthening cooperation on development and security in the Sahel.

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Apart from the regional initiatives, there are also externally initiated projects, among them the US-led and US-funded Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership which includes Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal and promotes cooperation with Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. It is tailored towards training and equipping the participants to counter terrorism. A military exercise, Exercise Flintlock, is conducted annually, with Special Forces from the US and other Western states training with their counterparts from the African states. The partnership has been troubled by fluctuations in funding and by lack of strategies for implementation. It has also been questioned whether all partnership states are dedicated to the goal of fighting terrorism, or whether they are only taking advantage of US funding to update outdated equipment. (Pan Sahel Initiative, 2004)

At the same time, some states in the region perceive cooperation against armed groups as a risk, since it increases the potential for attacks in their own territory. Organized crime is largely seen as a non-issue in the region, both by politicians and the public, creating a lack of will and initiative to deal with the problem. (Global Security, 2012)

Effective regional cooperation is stalled by insufficient trust between the states, lack of resources and capability and even lack of political will. Many regional initiatives have also been criticized for lacking understanding of, and failing to address, the underlying causes of the problems and therefore being ineffective. Furthermore, many initiatives regarding regional security are relatively new and any effects are difficult to measure. However, ECOWAS played an important role in pressuring the military junta that took power in Bamako in 2012 to hand over power to a civil interim administration. ECOWAS has also been active in the mediation process between the Malian state and the MNLA. (Larayu, 2014)

One critical problem for regional cooperation is the rivalry and tensions between Algeria and Morocco, which are not Sahel states per se, but are influential and integrated into the transnational problems in the Sahel. This rivalry is blocking cooperation, as Algeria does not want to participate in any endeavor of which Morocco is part, and vice versa. This is creating a situation where the two powerhouses of the extended region, with resources that can affect the situation, are unwilling to take part in encompassing regional initiatives.

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During 2014, both Algeria and Morocco have hosted talks with parties to the conflict in Mali. While Algeria has a history of involvement as a mediator, this is the first time for Morocco on the Tuareg issue. The involvement of the Moroccan king Mohammed VI is therefore interpreted as a desire to balance Algeria's influence in the region. Morocco has a broad policy approach to the Sahel, involving military aspects, but also social, political and religious aspects. According to Erickson, S (2014) has cited the Sahel politics of Algeria focus on security. Algeria is regarded as highly non-transparent on security policy and applies a principle of non-intervention in the region. However, Algeria engages in certain security cooperation's such as the mentioned bureau of intelligence in Tamanrasset founded in 2010.

Mauritania, Mali's Western neighbor, also struggles with armed Islamism and organized crime. Mauritania's reaction to the latest Mali crisis, namely increasing security along its border and stepping up military exercises and operations, has been interpreted as a determination to keep the armed Islamists on the Malian side of the border. Both the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott and Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, Mali's southern neighbor, are claimed to house senior MNLA leaders. According to Peace Process Slow down, (2014) has highlighted that the Burkinabé president Blaise Compaoré played a central role in the mediation during the occupation of northern Mali. However, since Mali returned to constitutional order, the democratically elected president has chosen to move peace negotiations from Burkina Faso to Mali and to alienate Compaoré from the process, claiming that he is close to several Tuareg rebel leaders.

Despite a number of regional initiatives on enhancing security cooperation, effective implementation remains a problem. In sum, the lack of interstate trust in the Sahel region undermines the information sharing and collective strategies that are needed for efficiently addressing transnational challenges to security.

5.0   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The climate change in the Sahel has been characterized by its extreme seasonal and decadal variability of rainfall. Rainfall variability in this region is likely to be driven by complex interactions between several processes and no process in isolation appears able to explain all the observed variability. Despite the large effort put into establishing the cause of the severe and long

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lasting drought period at the end of the 20th century, a full consensus on its origin has not been reached in the scientific community. These uncertainties as well as the large variability make climate projections for the Sahel particularly challenging and lead to significant disagreement between climate model projections. This is particularly true for precipitation where models disagree even on the direction of change. Given these uncertainties and awaiting more robust models, policies should focus on management of and lessen the impact of climate variability. The possible options range from improving seasonal forecasting, to investing in increasing observational capacity.

Our analysis of security events in the Sahel highlights the absence of a generaliseable and direct impact of climate change on security. It also found no deterministic relation between environment and security dynamics. Environmental variables are of secondary importance at best compared to political, historical and economic variables. We used a broad definition for security including 'human security' issues such as food crises and low-scale localised tensions, as well as more traditional concepts of security such as violent conflict and state security. This approach appears more instructive and constructive for the following reasons: first, it covers a more relevant range of potential security implications of climate change and second, it highlights the need to focus the policy debate on developmental, environmental and economic aspects. In this context, livelihoods and food security appear to be the most prominent transmission mechanisms between climate variables and security.

The transmission from climate variables to security via livelihoods and food security are based on two particular characteristics. First, the impact of climate and climate variability (in particular rainfall) on livelihoods and food security is direct and second, both are sensitive to sudden events. The great vulnerability of the Sahelian population to climate change is linked to its high dependence on agricultural activities and absence of alternative income earning activities. In the Sahel agricultural production is predominantly rainfed and therefore particularly sensitive to climate variability. Addressing these impacts require integrating the long-term features of climate change in national and regional development strategies. As concerns agricultural production opportunities to develop portfolios of climate resilient

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measures at different costs and time scales are ample. Based on the analyses following policy considerations have been derived:

→ Manage uncertainty: develop strategies that allow for better management of and lessen the impact of climate variability, options range from reducing certain forms of uncertainties (improved seasonal and long-term forecasting) to smoothing impacts (improved water management, more efficient management of food insecurity).

→ Promote open and constructive dialogue: dealing with climate change requires multilateral regulatory mechanisms. Taking into account national concerns and policy choices – including those in the Sahel – is the key to developing effective multilateralism. Bilateral and multilateral dialogue between Sahelian and OECD countries as well as at promoting dialogue at the level of regional African institutions should figure among priorities. International partners should support efforts towards the formulation of regional agendas and climate change policy responses, a cornerstone for enhanced coordination and effectiveness of activities. Propose a dialogue process on integrating environmental variables into the monitoring and analysis of early warning mechanisms.

Integrate climate change in development strategies: climate change impacts are a development concern and investment in development is the best instrument for promoting peace and security. Development strategies dealing sustainably with vulnerability to climate change should be based on an analysis of interactions between all vectors of change: climate change, population dynamics, migration, trade and economic development.

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