

prepared by



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THE GEOSTRATEGIC DYNAMICS OF NORTH AFRICA AND THE SAHEL: THE STRATEGY OF EUROPE

The European Union's interest and challenges in
the North African and Sahel quadrants

31 ottobre 2022

LE DINAMICHE GEOSTRATEGICHE DEL NORD AFRICA E DEL SAHEL: LA STRATEGIA DELL'EUROPA

L'interesse dell'Unione europea e le sfide
dell'Unione nei quadranti del Nord Africa e del
Sahel



commissioned by

**IDENTITÀ
E DEMOCRAZIA**

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The EU's Strategic Interest in North Africa

a. Introduction (Rabe)

Bound by geography, Europe and the North of Africa have always had separate, but intertwined fates throughout history. From the Roman Empire, which included vast swaths of the northern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, to contemporary bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations, the continent of Europe and the European Union is irrevocably tied to events that take place in the North of Africa. In particular, recent events in the North African region have seen an increase in tribal rivalry, tangible impacts of climate change, and an increase in the trafficking of migrants, organized crime, and terrorism. The North of Africa is thus a territory of urgent interest for the security of the entire Union. This report analyzes the current risks within the North African countries of Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, and offers a panorama of relations between the EU and such countries, as well as proposals for cultural diplomacy initiatives between the EU and North African countries.

I. Geography and Environment of North Africa



Figure 1, Stylized Map of the World, United Nations Geospatial, February 1, 2021

As mentioned, all 5 countries of North Africa share a northern coastline on the Mediterranean Sea. Generally speaking, the majority of the countries of North Africa host a desert environment (the immense Sahara Desert, which extends into the Sahel and Horn of Africa), with sparse stretches of greenery along the Mediterranean coast and waterways. Mountain ranges run through the northern areas of Algeria and Tunisia, while separate ranges run through various parts of Libya and a small portion of the southwestern corner of Egypt (FAO). These mountain ranges, especially in Algeria and Tunisia, constitute important sources of water runoff in the perennially dry environment of the four countries.

Despite such runoff, which feeds important river systems such as the Medjerda River (which runs from Algeria through Tunisia), rainfall in the area remains erratic (EU ISS, 2021). Other major water sources in the North of Africa include the Red Sea in Egypt (salt water), as well as several lakes and

several oases' systems (OECD, 2014)).

In regard to proximity from the European Union, there are several points that are of interest: for example, the distance between Tripoli (Libya) and the island of Lampedusa (Italy) is 298.4 km. The distance between Tunisia and the island of Pantelleria (Italy) is even smaller, at 75.9 km.

II. Socio-Political Contexts of Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt

The governmental and political structures of the four countries under analysis are in a highly mutable state. Within the last decade, all countries have undergone modifications in their Constitutional and governing structures, with varying results.

1. Algeria

Algeria (in long form the “People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria”, capital: Algiers) is considered to be a presidential republic. From 2018 to 2020, the country experienced political instability due to popular protests demanding Constitutional reform, which arrived following a referendum in November of 2020. Nevertheless, the perceived lack of consultation with the protests’ representatives, as well as the decision to maintain a strong executive branch, likely diminished the popular legitimacy of the referendum (European Parliament Research Service, 2021). The possibility for socio-political stability in the country therefore remains dubious.



Figure 2, General Map of Algeria, ReliefWeb, 1 January, 1992

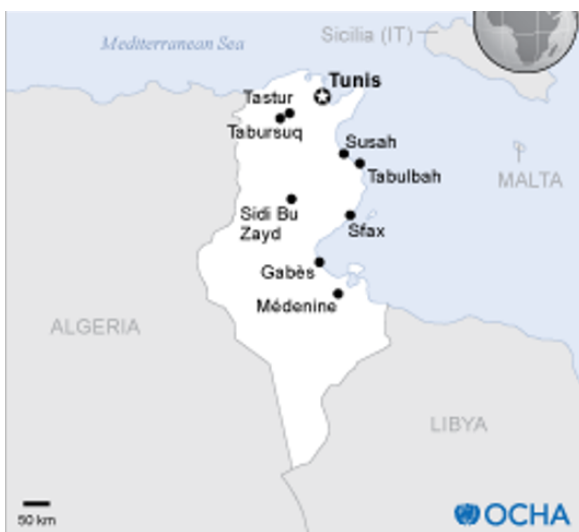


Figure 3, Tunisia: Location Map (2013), ReliefWeb, 25 September, 2013.

2. Tunisia

Tunisia (“Republic of Tunisia”, capital: Tunis) is a parliamentary republic. Since the revolution of 2011, Tunisia has undergone a range of democratic reforms, which succeeded in ousting former long-term president Ben Ali but have increased the country’s political instability (European Parliament Research Service, 2021). The latest attempt at a Constitutional Referendum took place in 2022, and the consequences on the country's stability are yet to be fully determined.

3. Libya

Libya (“State of Libya”, capital: Tripoli) is currently under a transitional government. Elections that were planned for December of 2021 were postponed indefinitely due to disagreements between political factions over the electoral process. The indefinite postponement of elections has exacerbated political polarization and mistrust in the electoral process, thus prolonging the country’s state of uncertainty, and leaving a vacuum in which criminal and terrorist groups have flourished (United Nations).

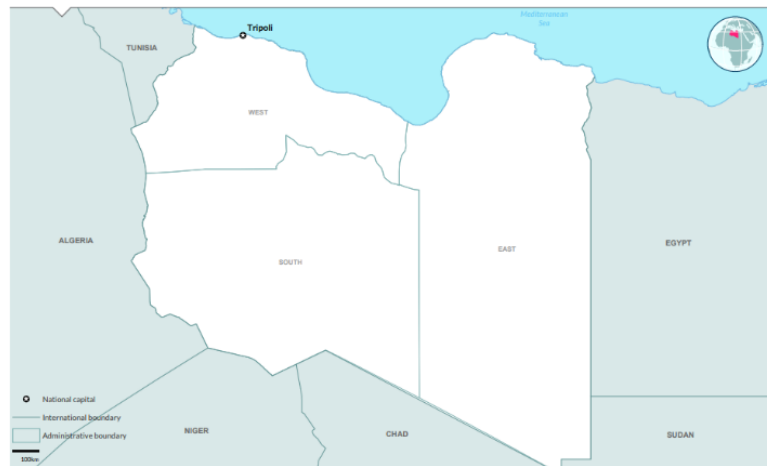


Figure 4, ARABIC 4: Administrative Map of Libya, ReliefWeb, 8 December, 2020

4. Egypt

Egypt (“The Arab Republic of Egypt”, capital: Cairo) is officially a presidential republic. Within the context of the Arab Spring, street protests in 2011 forced long-term President Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak to resign. President Abdel Fattah Saeed Hussein Khalil el-Sisi was elected in 2014 (the same year as the latest referendum modifying the Constitution) and re-elected in 2018. Nevertheless, the military maintains dominance over the country’s political direction (European Parliament Research Service, 2021).



Figure 5, Egypt: Location Map (2013), ReliefWeb, 25 September, 2013

III. EU-North Africa Relations: The Context of the Analysis (Frigoli)

Volatile socio-political and economic situations, combined with increasingly severe effects of climate change, have brought North Africa to a high position on the European Union’s list of priorities for ensuring security and stability on the European continent and, in particular, in the Mediterranean basin. From a broad security perspective, the analysis will consider the interplay of issues arising from economic, societal, environmental, political, and military factors, breaking down the actions undertaken by state and non-state actors, as well as the impact of external and internal influences on North African security. Ultimately, it is concluded that states with governments that are financially, organizationally, or politically weak become more inclined to experience political disorder and to be the target of terrorism.

Such threats to security are present to varying degrees in the North African context and have challenged the legitimacy and authority of the state, engaging the local state and its armed forces and leading to loss of life and property.

Furthermore, in the North African region, the presence of “ungoverned spaces” have added an additional layer of burden and complexity to states’ ability to deal with these emerging security challenges. Such challenges include transnational threats, international crime in the region, violent extremism, organized crime, and problems related to poor border security governance. Armed insurgents and terrorist organizations have amassed vast instruments of warfare and are capable of challenging the legitimacy and integrity of the state. North African states are under the dangers purported by a “crisis of legitimacy” as a result of poor governance, imprudent management of resources, corruption of officials, and failures in welfare provisioning. Thus, several states have failed to meet the security needs of their internal institutions and societies.

At the same time, the conventional security approach of the state in managing the challenge is both inadequate and overstretched. The Arab Spring of 2011—the origin of the states’ constitutional and governmental transitions—brought about a surprising public mobilization that has deeply impacted the institutions of North African countries thoroughly. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, the rebellion has not necessarily brought a democratizing or stabilizing effect on institutions or society.

Security is not a narrow concept, and its effectiveness is deeply linked to the implementation of the principles of good governance. Indeed, security is linked with other fundamental factors, such as those of an economic, societal, and environmental nature. For most North African countries, security issues are linked to economics or poor governance. Resources in Africa are often referred to as a “curse”. Competition over access to resources continues to be a top source of violent conflict. This last point is crucial, as “security” encompasses the security of states as well as individuals. There is a low probability to maintain a stable and secure state’s institutions without taking into account the degradation of the North African countries’ economy and societal issues.

In order, this analysis examines first the general security situation in North Africa and the causes of local instability and terrorist insurgencies. Subsequently, the analysis focuses on the sociological aspects of insecurity and instability in each of the four countries. The third section moves to a general overview of the economies of the four North African countries, as well as detailing the issues of employment precarity and the illicit/informal sectors. Lastly, the report moves to describe the present and future environmental issues within the North of Africa, as well as potential geopolitical implications of such issues.

The Conclusions of this report offer a general outline of the relationships and initiatives that the EU is currently engaged in with the countries of North Africa, to set the stage for broad proposals for future EU-North Africa cooperation and cultural diplomacy initiatives. We conclude that to effectively engage with North African countries and set conditions for security throughout the area and—by proxy—throughout Europe, there must be a greater focus on:

- 1) Cultural Diplomacy initiatives with the countries of North Africa,

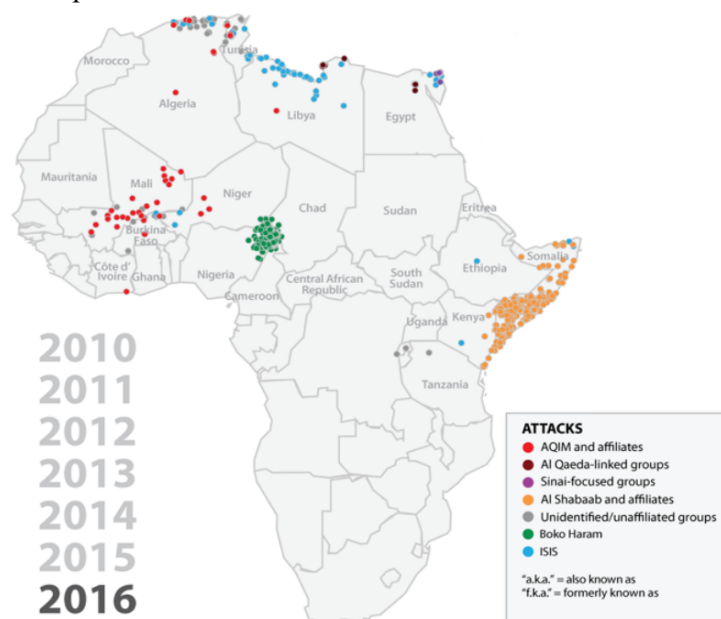
- 2) A greater focus on *multilateral* cooperation efforts with the entire region,
- 3) Reform of the security sector (especially along borders), and
- 4) Greater focus on security and empowerment, rather than on safety.

b. Threats to Security for the European Union: Actors, Systems of Governance, Terrorism, and Organized Crime (Frigoli)

States, according to Max Weber's familiar definition, are the political entities that have a monopoly of force in a territory. While many of the world's states approximate the Weberian ideal, in much of North Africa the geographical territory extends beyond the government's grasp. The void between the territory controlled by the central government and the borders may be occupied by populations indifferent to the authorities or by militant insurgent groups. These "ungoverned territories" have recently generated concern among Western policy analysts insofar as they allow terrorist groups or other organizations which might jeopardize Western interests to operate (EPRS, Mapping Threats to Peace and Democracy Worldwide, 2021). Importantly, the fact that these territories are referred to as *ungoverned* does not mean that there are no governing structures. In several parts of North Africa, rebel movements, warlords, and unrecognized authorities control territory and sometimes even govern their inhabitants.

Because political borders seldom change to reflect the limits of government control and because it is in these spaces where challenges to the recognized rulers emerge, North Africa will remain susceptible to perpetual conflict. To date, neither democratic elections nor negotiated power-sharing arrangements have rectified this problem.

The sources of North Africa's instability are not merely rooted in the structural weakness that came as a result of Africans being alienated from the pre-colonial state. The "scramble for Africa" was prompted by intra-European competition, but once the continent had been successfully partitioned, Europeans lost interest and did little to promote development within its vast colonial territories. The colonial state in North Africa



generally did not serve the purpose that states did in Europe: that is, to defend citizens in a given territory from threats from another state. The African state system is reconfigured in some way, states cannot be consolidated and instability will remain a permanent feature of the continent's political life.

I. Security within the North African Region

Today's security challenges in North Africa are connected with political change, termed the Arab Spring or Jasmine Revolution.

Indeed, starting in December 2010, there were popular uprisings against some of the longest-serving despotic rulers in some North African countries, namely Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. While Hosni Mubarak and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Egypt and Tunisia, respectively, bowed out amidst the protests, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi unleashed a violent response against anti-government protestors and civilians. Subsequently, a United Nations Security Council resolution (Resolution 1973) sanctioned the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces to use all means possible to protect civilians against the systematic violence of Gaddafi's regime (UN 2021). Gaddafi was eventually ousted by rebel forces, captured, and killed. The Arab Spring has had two-sided effects. On the one hand, they were remarkable examples in the continent's political history of ordinary people rising against dictatorships to force leaders out of office (Sturmann 2021).

On the other hand, the violence that ensued, especially the deadly conflicts in Libya, resulted in civilian

Figure 6: compiled by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies from Armed Conflict Location & Event Data

casualties and the extensive destruction of infrastructure. Civilians figured in large numbers as victims – both casualties and refugees (International Crisis Group 2021). In Libya, post-conflict reconstruction and development are a challenge. The country is awash with small arms and light weapons, which constitute a major threat to achieving sustainable peace and stability, even once a constitutional government is put in place. With so many non-state actors and idle ex-combatants wielding arms, insecurity and criminality are likely to linger.

At present, the critical security issues taking place on the continent include the fallout of the NATO-led intervention in Libya in the North and the subsequent infiltration of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other nefarious interests which infiltrated the ensuing civil war. Sentiments from the Arab Spring that led have not yet completely died down. The democracy of Tunisia is yet to be consolidated. Egypt experimented with democracy but quickly reverted to military rule through a coup d'état that brought the current president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to power. The consequent fallout is still working its way through the system. The Arab Spring spared the strong man of Algeria Abdelaziz Bouteflika, but in 2019 widespread protest evicted him from power. The security situation in Algeria is still tense.

II. The Threat of Terrorist Networks and Insurgencies

Closely linked or perhaps fuelled by transnational organized crimes are the growing activities of radical Islamists and terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM).

North Africa began witnessing radical Islamist insurgencies in the 1990s. Key jihadist actors in north Africa today include AQIM and local branches of the Islamic State.

It is important to state that radical Islamist movements are immersed in politics, negotiating political relationships not just with the forces surrounding them, but also within their own ranks. As large organizations, they are not merely “terrorist groups” or “networks”, but rather, they are insurgencies and multi-dimensional bureaucracies. They sometimes use terrorism, including against remote targets, but their primary context is fighting in civil wars. These organizations all theoretically belong to the “global jihadist movement,” but their strategic vision is largely local and regional, just as al-Qa‘ida’s vision was during its formative period (Tomolya, White, 2016).

Large jihadist organizations are political actors. They are political not merely in the sense that they fight in wars and have radical visions of politics, but also participate in local, national, and regional politics, through both intimidation and the management of strategic relationships. They negotiate with power brokers, build alliances, and respond to the demands of constituencies. They are, meanwhile, prone to politicking within their own ranks. Like other rebel organizations, jihadist movements “are coalitions that depend on cooperation among differentiated, heterogeneous units” (Woldemariam 2018). The negotiations, rivalries, and conflicts between those units represent another kind of jihadist politics.

The interconnected issues of political Islam and terrorism are of increasing concern for North Africa, as these have begun to provide new dimensions to conflict both within states and across sub-regions. Political Islam now serves as a medium for political mobilization in various forms (EUISS 2021). With particular reference to AQIM, a violent criminal group that operates from the Saharan region, its main activities in the form of hostage-taking, bomb attacks, and terrorizing tourists and travelers constitute an enormous challenge to regional peace in north Africa as well as at a global level.

AQIM was born from Algeria’s decade-long conflict with Islamists in the 1990s and it is the only significant militia force remaining from the struggle. It was created when the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) pledged allegiance to the senior leadership of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in January 2007. In December of that year, the group conducted simultaneous bombings in Algiers of the UN office complex and the Constitutional Court (Le Sage 2021). AQIM’s sustained upsurge in kidnappings, attacks, and bombings has heightened concerns that the group is gaining ground in North Africa.

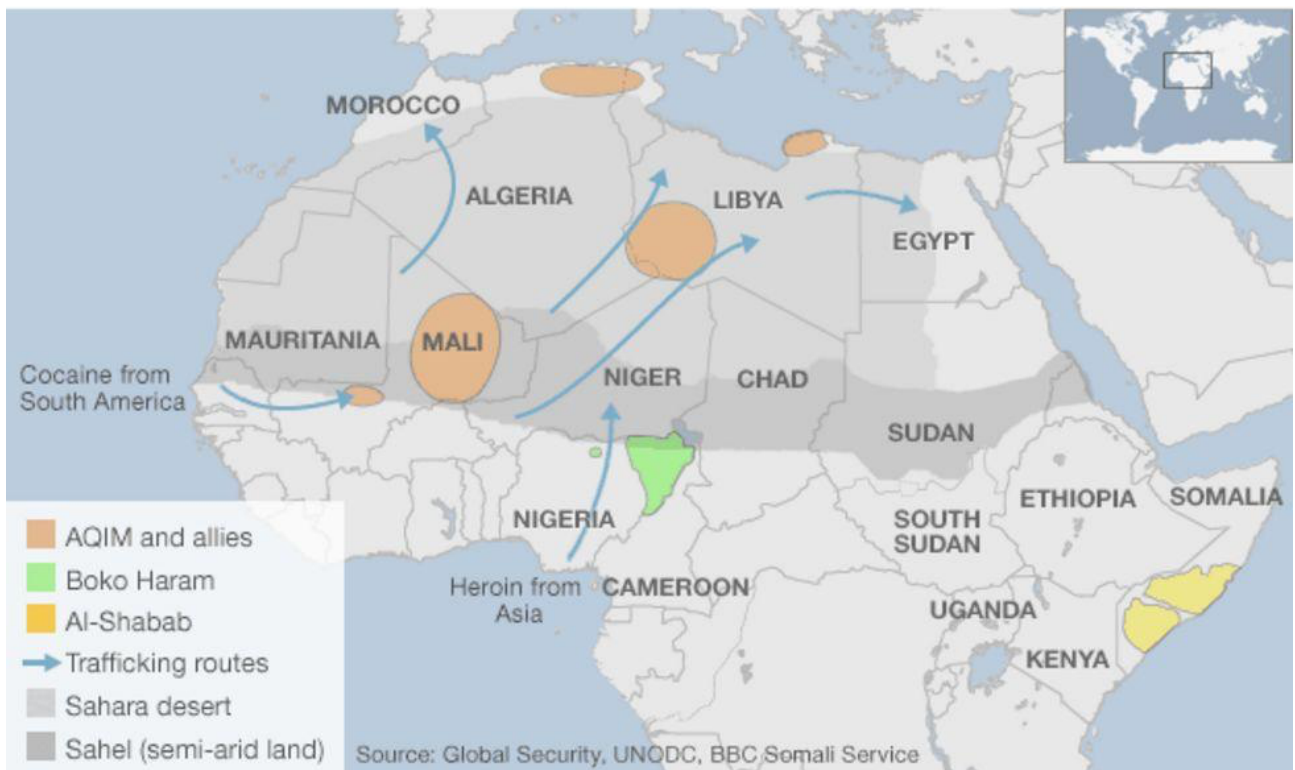


Figure 7, Source: Global Security, UNODC

An important set of key north African security issues can be briefly listed:

Libya has the most complicated security situation as all parties engaged in the power struggle for the control of the country are militias that are divided on basis of religion, ideological beliefs, or tribal affiliations. Libya's current political framework revolves around the International Follow-Up Committee on Libya and the UN-facilitated Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF). In 2020, the LPDF produced a transition roadmap, including the organization of national elections by December 2021. Despite the initial broad consensus, the roadmap hit a political impasse in the second half of 2021, failing to hold elections by the December deadline.

The political crisis culminated in a vote in the House of Representatives in February 2022 to elect Fathi Bashagha as Prime Minister in place of Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, the interim prime minister in the GNU. Since then, the two parallel executives—Bashagha and the HoR in eastern Libya and Dbeibah and the High Council of State (HCS) in Tripoli—have competed for power, with increasingly frequent clashes in the capital and other parts of western Libya.

The fight against militias continues to be a public concern for several reasons, including restoring complete order, stopping terrorist operations, and paving the way for dialogues about the politico-constitutional, economic and developmental future of Libya. Competition for territorial control among armed groups continues to threaten the cease-fire, particularly in Tripoli and towns in the northwest. In recent months, several disputes between brigades affiliated with Khalifa Haftar's Tobruk-based Libyan National Army and forces supporting the GNU have escalated, resulting in casualties (EPRS 2021).

Meanwhile, **Egypt** started a counterinsurgency campaign against Islamist groups in Northern Sinai. The militants have targeted police and army assets. In May 2022, at least 16 Egyptian troops were killed in two separate attacks in the Sinai Peninsula. The attacks were claimed by Wilayat Sinai or Sinai Province (SP), Egypt's branch of the so-called Islamic State (IS), which has been actively conducting assaults on the Egyptian military for the past eight years.

Algeria experienced more than one thousand terrorist attacks within its borders between 2001 and 2021. While the Algerian government has traditionally taken a hard-line approach against terrorism, this strategy appears to have had limited success in recent years due to a lack of cooperation with neighboring countries and changing nature of the threat. One of the main reasons for the fragmented regional response to AQIM and other Islamist groups is the inability of regional governments to define the enemy (Ammour, 2013). The Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa, (MUJAO) has also carried out several attacks in Algeria.

In the extant literature, AQIM is increasingly being viewed as a criminal organization rather than just being perceived through the Islamist terrorist lens (Ammour 2012). AQIM is currently divided into separate cells, with a northern cell based in Kabylia and the Algiers hinterland, and two southern cells operating in the Sahel. The northern factions of the group have remained more focused on the struggle against the Algerian government and their aim of establishing an Islamic caliphate. In contrast, the southern cells have increasingly turned to transnational criminal activity. Several sources cite the possibility of links between AQIM and the Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram.

Tunisia's counterinsurgency forces are carrying out campaigns in Mount Chaambi, Sidi Bouzid, and Kasserine against Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups and pro-IS militants. Tunisia and Algeria are cooperating in military and intelligence affairs as some of the operations take place near border areas (Hijab Shah, Melissa Dalton, 2020). As is the case with Egypt, the threat of Islamist insurgencies has existed in Algeria for decades, and clashes between the Algerian security forces and the insurgents will likely continue in 2019. In addition, porous borders and the increased availability of weapons from post-Qaddafi Libya jeopardize Tunisian security. Violence in neighboring countries has the propensity to spill over into Tunisia, as it did in 2011 when Libyans crossed the border and briefly engaged Tunisia's Armed Forces. Arms from the Libyan conflict, available on the regional black market, support the reprehensible activities of criminals and pro-Salafist groups.

Nearby conflict and chaos have resulted in other problems as well. Tunisia is a country of origin, destination, and transit for human trafficking due to its proximity to Europe and various African trouble spots. Tunisian smuggling and human-trafficking networks have been especially busy during regional unrest and are adaptable to a range of illicit purposes. In contrast to the prior government's tendency to ignore the trafficking activity, the interim government drafted laws to combat the problem (EPRS 2021).

Regional terrorist groups like al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and others in Mali, Algeria, and elsewhere threaten Tunisia's security. Several Tunisian nationals involved in terrorist activities abroad have turned their attention to Tunisia intending to spread Islamic law. In the summer of 2013, the government declared the Tunisian Salafist group Ansar al-Shari'a a terrorist organization after it had violent clashes with

the Armed Forces. Members of this and other suspected extremist groups have been arrested since 2011. In 2015, Tunisia experienced 3 acts of terrorism; ISIL claimed responsibility for the attacks. In addition to jeopardizing Tunisia's internal security, increased terrorist activities could undermine tourism and foreign investment (Handbook of Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Africa, 2021).

c. Social Challenges for Europe: Ethnicities, Languages, Traditions, Religions, and Cultural Cross-Correlations (Frigoli)

Within North Africa, challenges to national security connected with a socio-political perspective of security can be listed as follows:

- *The Lack of Inter-group Non-violent Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:* In North Africa the lack of a resolution mechanism for settling questions between large groups is absent. While North African justice systems perfected the means of resolving conflict between individuals and small groups, the many cases of inter-ethnic conflict seen across the continent show that most large group conflicts were generally resolved through secession.
- *The Inability to Change Leaders:* Changing leadership brings the fear of plunging a country into conflict. In addition, if a leader is forcibly changed, s/he often tries to hang on to power indefinitely, often by force. This means the incumbent becomes less responsive and accountable to the people under government rule. This situation often leads to impunity and bad governance. The lack of good governance from a regime that is not willing to relinquish power, in turn, provides an incentive for rebellion and insurgency. In other words, changing leaders constitutes a source of national security threats, and maintaining leaders in power who perpetuate bad governance also constitutes a source of national security threats.
- *Militarism:* The challenges faced by north African governments and governance, as shown above, means that many African governments rely on force to keep their countries together and themselves in power. The inequality emphasized by the small size of the African elite means the majority will want to revise the status quo. This constant threat forces African governments to use the military in politics. As indicated above, the use of the military in politics predisposes these governments to intimidation, brutality, and widespread violence. Such practices create grievances, radicalize populations, and feed new conflicts. Militarism also means that peaceful means of changing governments are limited. In a militarized state, the constant tension created by the risk of actual rebellion and preparation against rebellion constitutes an inherent national security challenge.

These three concepts can be used as conceptual lenses to analyze the following different security socio-political scenario of Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia.

I. Egypt

Egyptian society has historically been enlightened, restive, assertive, argumentative, agitated, active, and politically dynamic. There has been intense political fragmentation in Egypt since the country gained independence from the British in 1922. The curious contradiction that characterizes Egyptian society is the diversity of interests, even as a predominantly Muslim country. Egypt is 90% Muslim and 10% Coptic Christians in composition; yet, this factor has failed to cultivate or ensure a legacy of robust political stability and enduring social order (Handbook of Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Africa, 2021). Most of

Egypt's post-independence history has been under authoritarian rule. Democratic rule in Egypt was kept at bay between 1952 and 2011; in 2011, following the Arab Spring, Hosni Mubarak (the ousted leader) did not appoint a Vice-President, as prescribed by the constitution of the Republic of Egypt, until the 25 January 2011 popular uprising which removed him from office, an example of brazen constitutional misbehavior.

Poverty is one of the critical drivers of insurgency and terrorism is widespread in Egypt. The lamentable material condition of many Egyptians makes them helplessly vulnerable to the manipulative skills of those pursuing a sinister agenda against the state. The common belief among ordinary Egyptian citizens is that socioeconomic prosperity is limited to major settlements such as Cairo and Alexandria, while most Egyptian settlements including the Sinai Peninsula feel alienated and excluded from the benefit of common patrimony. This feeling of extreme marginalization among the vast majority of Egyptian society makes them easy recruits to help drive insurgency and terrorism projects in the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt is a developing country characterized by a fast-growing population which places acute strain on the economy. The youth component of the population is not only huge but also scarcely considered. The gap between the rich and the poor in Egypt is quite pronounced. The per capita income in Egypt is about \$4,000 per year (TradingEconomics). This amount is grossly inadequate to guarantee decent survival for an average Egyptian citizen. The limited available economic opportunities in Egypt mean that the unemployment rate is frightening. Many youths who are energetic and productive are left to drift. Consequently, they become readily available to be mobilized for any subversive agenda.

II. Libya

The regime change in Libya arising from NATO's humanitarian intervention not only created a political vacuum, but also provided an opportunity for the numerous ideologically diverse militia groups to integrate into local law enforcement agencies in many cities, including in the capital, Tripoli. With the destruction of Libya's armed forces, security agencies, prisons, and the justice system during NATO's intervention, militia groups quickly transformed themselves into *de facto* structures for the maintenance of law and order. For example, the National Transitional Council carved up about 6,000 kilometers of Libyan borders to militia groups, including ports, and recognized militia powers for unilateral detention and incarceration of over 8,000 detainees. Militia commanders thus wielded the powers of police, judges, juries, and executioners. While the NTC tried to embark on a process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of rebel forces to rebuild the security apparatuses of the Libyan state, the *Thuwwar* (the self-professed guardians of the revolution) rejected any attempt at disarmament. They suspected that the NTC was mainly composed of ex-Qaddafi officials and that if they surrendered their weapons, Qaddafi's henchmen would strike back at them. The Misrata Brigade maintained its dominant presence in Tripoli while the Zintan militia and their allies held on to the national airport (Handbook of Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Africa 2021).

Khalifa Haftar and his Libya National Army (LNA) continued to battle Ansar-al-sharia and other extremist elements of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Libya Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), which resisted Qaddafi's regime in the 1990s, changed its name to "Libya Islamic Movement for Change" (LIMC) and retained its

weaponry. Also, a coalition of several militia groups under the rubric of Libya Shield, led by Wissam Ben Hamid, established a rapid reaction force that could be deployed to southern parts of the country to ensure control of smuggling routes, and consequently “Subsidized petrol, flour, and guns went out; alcohol and migrants came in” (Pelham, 2012). In eastern Libya, the bastion of the revolution against Qaddafi, militia groups and government forces clashed over who should maintain law and order, as well as control of oil ports and cities.

Consequently, Libyan state and society, as well as armed militias, engaged in violence aimed at protecting the interests important to them. The momentum of terror and internal conflict stepped up, spilling over into civil war. Its accelerated disintegration placed Libya in ISIS crosshairs as easy prey, and ISIS rushed to exploit the military security void to promote its ends.

Other actors which have entered both sides of the conflict include foreign fighters, including Syrian, Chadian, and Sudanese mercenaries, as well as members of the Russia-based Wagner group. The latter are known to be engaged in Libya and reported to have been involved in direct combat in the fight for the capital in 2019 and 2020; considering the group is known to act without impunity and to have engaged in disinformation campaigns in support of the employing governments, the potential for further socio-political instability and violence remains high (UN OHCHR, 2020).

III. Algeria

In Algeria, power has never been generated through the political party process. Rather, it has consistently emerged from the barrel of a gun since the country emerged victorious from the 1954-62 war for independence from France. Although numerous political parties do exist, power remains solidly in the hands of the military-civilian elite that came to power upon independence. The military apparatus remains the source of decision-making in Algeria with a firm grip on Algerian society and politics. Officially, Algeria is a Republic with a strong presidency, but, in practice, any presidential initiative must be approved by the military (Human Rights Watch, 2020)

Algeria tried twice to change the nature of its political system. The first attempt led to a ten-year, incredibly violent war that lasted through the 1990s and failed to change the source of power in the country. The second, peaceful attempt started in 2019 with thousands of demonstrators taking to the streets, week after week, first to protest the decision by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to run for a fifth term, and later to fight for free elections that could give the opposition a fair chance. The *Hirak*, as the movement came to be called, succeeded in preventing Bouteflika from standing for election again, but not in dislodging the old military-civilian regime that has controlled the country since 1962. The struggle for political change created many parties but no new leadership or an alternative source of power has materialized.

IV. Tunisia

The Tunisian revolution was driven by a politicized, younger segment of society committed to taking to the streets to express their demands for political liberties and a more equitable distribution of economic goods. Not only did the mass uprising culminate in the fall of the Ben Ali regime, but it also established protest politics as an element of political expression routinely employed in the ensuing transition period (Weipert-Fenner and Wolff 2019). Moreover, it prompted substantial popular engagement in the rewriting of the country's political order (Maboudi 2020). In contrast to other MENA countries, Tunisia is also home to strong civil society actors. In particular, the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT), Tunisia's most influential labor union, has emerged as an effective broker between partisan interests during the transition. It is important to note that, despite its active role in the establishment of democracy, the UGTT remains an ambivalent organization with a history oscillating between collaboration and contention with the state in the authoritarian era (Bishara 2020).

Since the fall of Ben Ali, the UGTT had emerged as a powerful actor outside of parliament and government, with a heterogeneous membership structure and competing interests within its organization, aggregating different social interests from Islamists, secularists, revolutionaries, and supporters of the old Ben Ali regime (Hartshorn 2017). Tunisia's democracy is currently impaired due to internal political turmoil. Indeed, the parliament that came out of the 2019 elections was fragmented, with the biggest political party, Ennahda, controlling only 52 out of 217 seats. This led to governmental instability. The Fakhfakh government (February–September 2020) was dominated by forces that approved Kais Saied's policies with the support of Ennahda and Tahya Tounes (the main remnant of the formerly dominant Nidaa Tounes). After Elyes Fakhfakh was accused of a conflict of interest, Ennahda eventually caused his fall. This failure symbolizes the incapability of the parliamentary system to address major underlying issues such as corruption and youth unemployment. The new government of Hichem Mechich was accused of corruption, but also the tug of war between the presidency, the head of government, and the parliament's speaker (Rached Ghannouchi, the leader of Ennahda) led to a state of paralysis. A wide popular discontent began to manifest—especially in the Centre and the South—with the multiplication of protests against Ennahda, who was accused of being infiltrating the state administration. In July 2021, the headquarters of the Islamist party were burned down by protestors in several cities. On July 25, President Saied reacted to this situation by declaring a state of exception and suspending the activities of the parliament and concentrating legislative and executive powers in his hands with a presidential decree, while abolishing the provisional body for monitoring the constitutionality of laws. In the frame of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has been actively involved in the preservation of Tunisia's stability and the support for the Tunisian democratic transition. Thus, the derailing of the transitional process during the second half of 2021 constitutes a major concern for the EU. The failure of the only democratic experience to date in the region would compromise the stability of North Africa by preventing segments of the opposition from participating in the elections and leading them to opt for more radical courses of action instead.

d. Economic Analysis of North Africa for the European Union: Economic Development, Unemployment, the Impact of Covid, Tertiary and Agricultural Sectors, and Prospects for Growth (Rabe)

The European Union is the largest trade partner of all four of the countries under analysis. In 2020, 70.9% of Tunisia's exports went to the European Union, while 48.3% of Tunisia's imports arrived from the EU (Delegation of the EU to Tunisia). Meanwhile, the Union receives approximately two-thirds of Algeria's exports on a year-to-year basis (Delegation of the EU to Algeria). In regard to trade with Egypt, in 2021, the EU's share in total Egyptian imports amounted to 24.7%, while the share of total Egyptian exports which were destined for the EU was 29.6%. The EU also represented 51% of Libya's total global trade in goods in 2020 (European Commission, 2022).

Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, the economies of North Africa face multiple issues stemming from socio-political instability and lack of good governance, the consequences of which are generally high levels of unemployment, youth unemployment and disenfranchisement, overdependence on unstable sectors, and the growth of the illicit or informal sectors.

I. Overview of Unemployment Rates and Main Sectors of Employment by Country

The North African country with the highest level of unemployment, as of 2021, is Libya, with an unemployment rate of 19.6%. Libya is then followed by Tunisia (16.8%), Algeria (12.7%), and the Arab Republic of Egypt (9.3%) (World Bank).

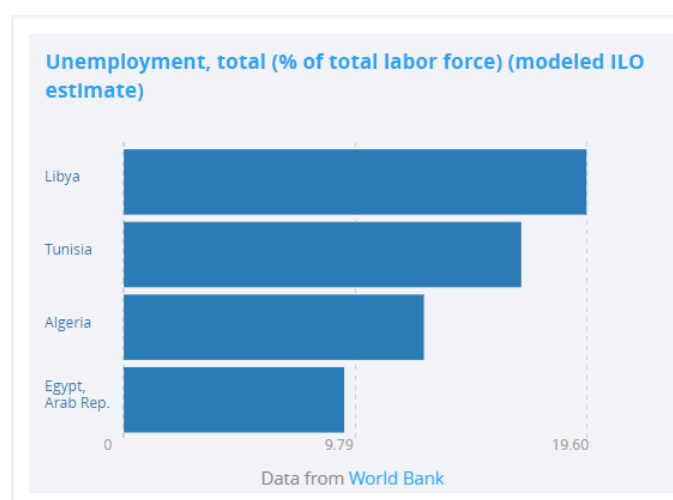


Figure 8, Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) modeled ILO estimate, World Bank Database

Meanwhile, the Labor Force Participation Rate, useful for understanding both the percentage of people employed and actively seeking employment, presents a slightly different picture; according to the World Bank, Libya's Labor Force Participation rate (as a percentage of the total population over the age of 15) in 2021 was 48%, presenting the highest LFP rate of any of the four North African countries (see figure below). This figure

indicates that, as of 2021, almost half of the Libyan population above the age of 15 was either employed or actively seeking employment. Libya's LFP rate was then followed by that of Tunisia (46%), Egypt (41%), and, lastly, Algeria (40%).

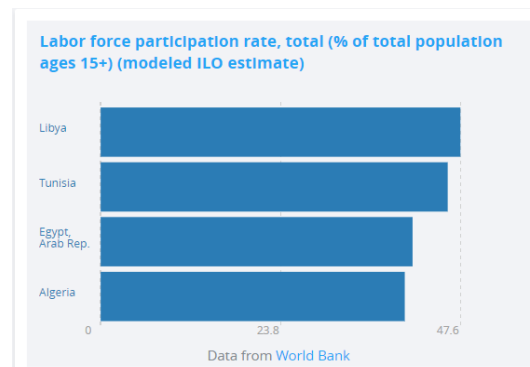


Figure 9, Labor force participation rate, World Bank Database

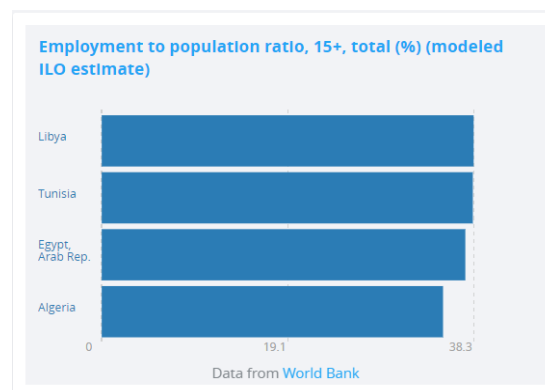


Figure 10, Employment to population ratio, 15+, World Bank Database

When compared to the Employment-to-Population Ratio, the Labor Force Participation Ratio reveals the discrepancy between who is actively employed and who desires employment (see following formula):

$$\text{Percentage of the population unemployed but actively seeking employment} = \text{Labor Force Participation Ratio} - \text{Employment to Population Ratio}$$

For example, Libya's employment-to-population ratio, at 38%, indicates that 10% of the Libyan population is unemployed but desires and is actively seeking employment. Tunisia's, at also at 38%, indicates that 8% of the population is unemployed and seeking employment, Egypt's (37%) that only 4% are unemployed and seeking employment, and Algeria's (35%) that 5% are unemployed and seeking employment (World Bank). Such measurements demonstrate the ability of citizens to obtain employment when they so desire.

Moreover, youth unemployment throughout North Africa is often an even more pressing issue; based on data between 2010 and 2018, workers aged between 15 and 25 experienced a 27% unemployment rate in Algeria, 30.8% in Egypt, 35.8% in Tunisia, and 48.7% in Libya (compared to an average of 14% across other middle-income countries), due to high pressure from a youth population bulge (NATO, 2019). The issue is so persistent that countries with the highest levels of youth unemployment were those most affected by political instability

during the Arab Spring, thus demonstrating the correlation between youth disenfranchisement and political instability in North African countries (OECD, 2022).

II. Main Sectors of Employment

Despite North Africa's high potential in the energy sector (especially in Libya, Algeria, and Egypt, which rank 10th, 16th, and 26th in terms of global oil reserves on the global market), a majority of employed residents of North African countries work in the service sector, as shown in Figure 11. Between 2000 and 2020, the service sector has continued to grow in terms of proportion to the total population (OECD, 2022). Meanwhile, the proportion of the total population working in the agricultural sector has continued to decrease throughout the 21st century, while the proportion of the total population employed in the manufacturing and mining/industry sectors has remained steady.

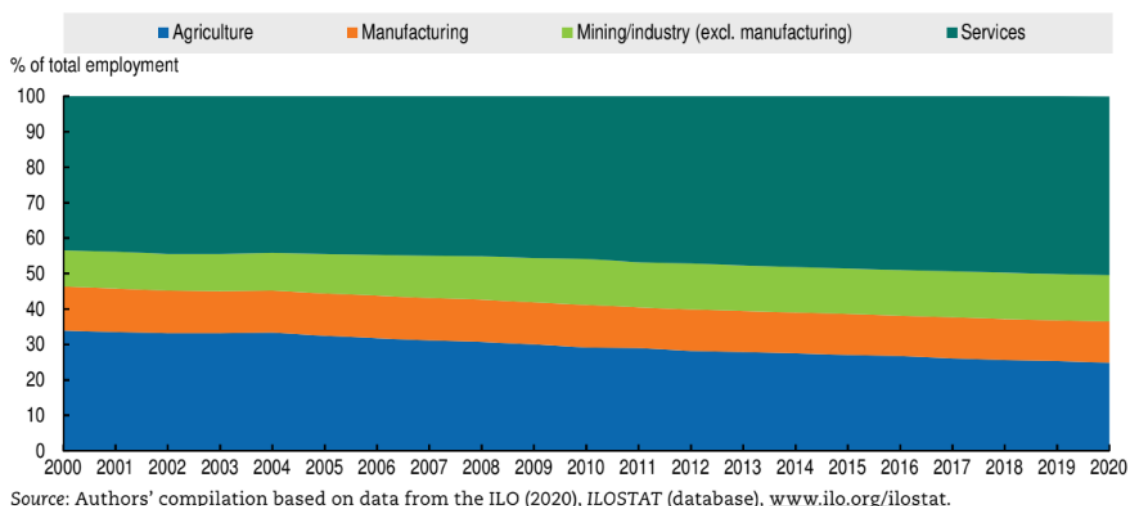


Figure 11, Sectoral Distribution of Employment in North Africa, OECD, 2022

III. The illicit and Informal Sectors in North Africa

Of all the sectors listed, the service sector, the sector which produces "untangible" goods such as transportation, messaging, and administration, is the most likely to generate precarious jobs. Due to North Africa's heavy dependence on the service industry for employment, as well as generally high levels of unemployment, the informal sector and job precariousness are persistent issues; the industrial sector (comprising manufacturing, shipping, and production), which is the most likely to produce stable jobs, only employs approximately a quarter of the workforce in North African countries. Overall, a substantial informal sector accounts for between 30-70% of all economic activity in Northern African countries; thus, a lack of stable employment opportunities leads to a widespread dependence on the informal sector, and dependence on the informal sector, in turn, leads to further precariousness (OECD, 2022; EU).

Furthermore, conditions for illicit trade, defined as "illegal trading, selling or dealing in specified goods", have been exacerbated following the Arab Spring but predate the Arab Spring itself. Illicit trade routes throughout

North Africa often follow trade routes traditionally run by nomadic tribes such as the Toubou, Tuareg, and Berber peoples, while the lack of state presence has also created a lack of clarity around the fine line between what constitutes ‘lawful’ and ‘illicit’ trade (NATO, 2018).

Following the Arab Spring, power vacuums have widened the spaces in which illicit trade may take place, while constant socio-economic crises have incentivized people to seek profit with organized crime and terror groups (which often overlap). The following maps demonstrate several of the illicit trade routes that are known to run throughout North Africa (NATO, 2018):

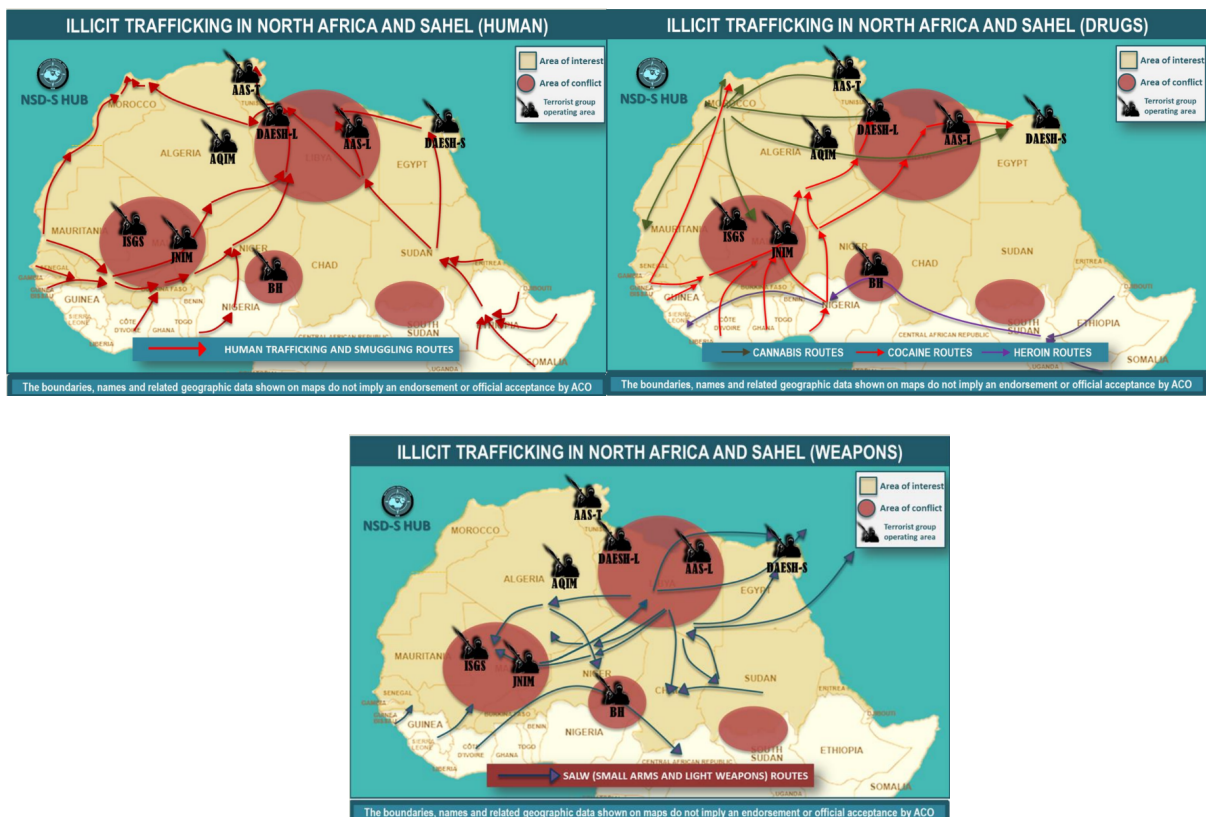


Figure 12, *Illicit Trafficking in North Africa and Sahel (Quick Overview)*, NATO Strategic Direction - South Hub, 2018

IV. The effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on North African Economies: An Overview

All African countries, including those of North Africa, experienced double-edged shocks in both supply and demand as the Covid-19 virus spread across the globe: first from China, as the Chinese lockdown immediately led to lower Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and weakened trade channels, secondly, from the OECD countries (mainly the European Union and the United States) due to reduced demand and halted tourism; and finally, from other African countries, as lockdown measures eventually led to reduced household and business spending, hampered regional sourcing, and endangered informal trade across borders (OECD, 2022). Among North African countries, those most dependent upon the services sector were particularly affected by the supply-and-demand shocks caused by global lockdowns in terms of reduced FDIs, as shown in Figure 13:

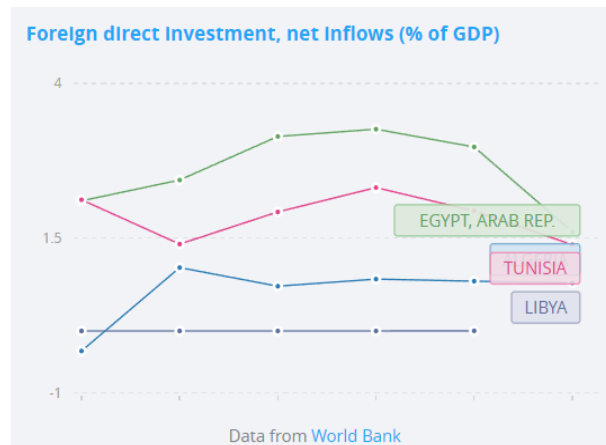


Figure 13, Foreign direct investment, net inflows (% of GDP), World Bank Database

Between 2019 and 2020, FDI's percentage of GDP in Egypt collapsed from 3% to 1.6%, while in Tunisia it went from 1.9% to 1.4%. In Algeria, it remained constant at 0.8%, while in Libya it has remained at 0% since 2014. The fluctuations in FDI as a percentage of GDP in Egypt and Tunisia are likely due to these countries' relative stability and foreign investors' willingness to purchase business interests in such countries. Furthermore, the role of tourism in these economies partially explains the reduction in FDI as a percentage of GDP in 2020 (World Bank Database).

Moreover, in terms of well-being and employment, living standards decreased throughout the pandemic due to precarious employment and changes in income; for example, in Tunisia, income rebounded for private sector workers in 2021, but not for the self-employed, as there were fewer consumers willing to spend on sectors with high numbers of self-employed individuals (World Bank, 2021).

V. Particularly Vulnerable and Volatile Sectors

While, in terms of FDIs and business interruptions, the Covid-19 pandemic had the greatest effect on the North African countries most dependent on the service industry (i.e. Tunisia and Egypt), the greatest *economic and social volatility* took place in more oil-dependent countries. This phenomenon, known as the 'oil-conflict nexus', arose due to the crash in oil prices throughout 2020, as oil-exporting countries struggled to break even in balancing their oil production with the average 2020 crude oil price (see Figure 14) (EU ISS, 2021).

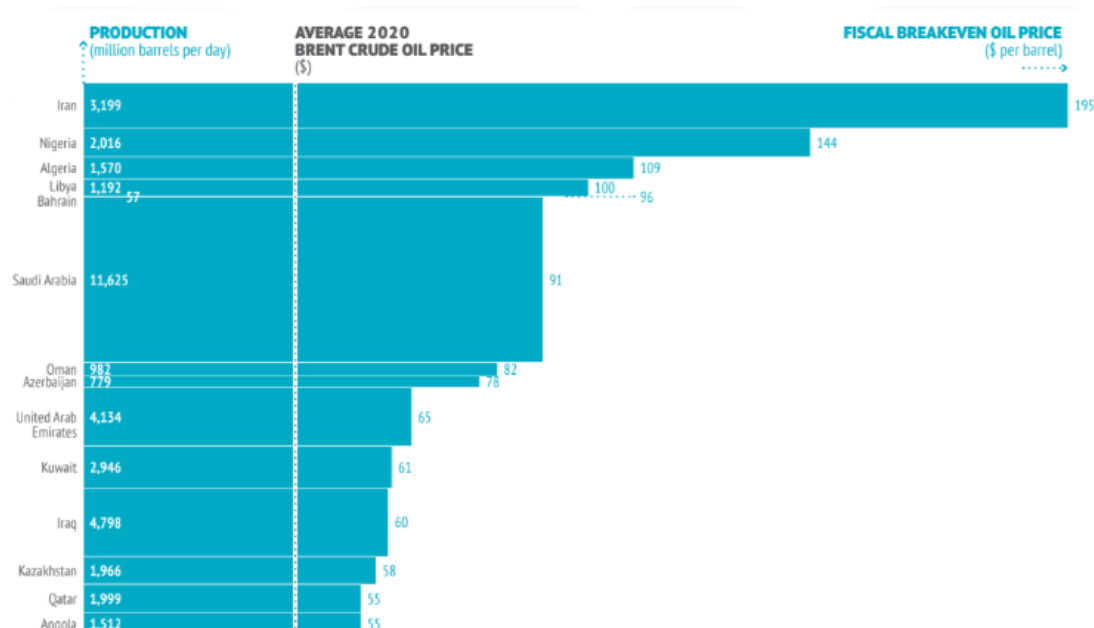


Figure 14, Source, European Institute for Security Studies Source: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2021

Such a phenomenon, in the oil sector, is a concrete example of the resource curse theory, which generally posits that countries which find themselves awash with abundant natural resources are, paradoxically, more likely to spiral into poverty and conflict (World Bank, 2012). In Libya, for example, the fall in crude oil prices in 2020 was a direct cause of the internationally recognized Libyan Government of National Accord's (GNA) slowing military momentum in their war against the Libyan National Army (LNA) and, ultimately, of their decision to work out an agreement with the LNA. The LNA was thus able to take advantage of the economically crippled state of Libya's oil sector to reinforce its position in political talks (EU ISS, 2021).

e. Climate Change and the Impact on Society, Economy, Health, and Migration: The Correlation Between Security and Climate (Rabe)

I. Overview: Desert Environment and Rising Temperatures

North Africa, which possesses a hot, arid environment, is, like many other areas of the world, projected to experience a further increase in temperatures over the coming decades. According to the World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal, assuming each of the 4 countries encounters “high challenges” for mitigation and adaptation¹, the countries would experience the following temperature increases by 2100:

	Year 2021	Year 2100
Algeria	24.11° C	26.24° C
Tunisia	21.06° C	22.87° C
Libya	23.47° C	25.26° C
Egypt	23.75° C	25.63° C ²

II. Water in North Africa: Between Scarcity and Floods

Given the vast swaths of desert land in Northern Africa and the Middle East, access to water in the North African region was, historically, often a deciding factor in the rise and fall of empires and societies; even before the effects of contemporary climate change, water governance in the region was often poor, as governments would subsidize water in ways to encourage overuse and waste. Consequently, of 2019, 60% of citizens in the entire MENA Region live in an area under some sort of water stress (NATO, 2019).

¹ Defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as “high challenges for mitigation (regionalized energy / land policies) and adaptation (slow development)” (SSPs 2-4.5) For more information see https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/part1_iiasa_rogelj_ssp_poster.pdf (UNFCCC, 2016).

² Median country-wide yearly temperatures.



Figure 15, NATO Defense College Foundation.

Ironically, despite falling rainfall levels and recurring droughts, the main sources of water in North Africa (i.e. the Mediterranean Sea and rivers) are also at a higher risk of flooding, due a combination of glacier melt and more torrential rainfalls³. Considering that a large majority of urban centers in North Africa are either on the Mediterranean coast or bordering a major river (Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, and Alessandria are on the Mediterranean coast, while Cairo sits along the Nile River), projected flooding along major bodies of water would have both human and economic costs, as a large portion of North Africa’s countries’ population and GDP are in urban areas (EU ISS, 2022).

Another essential point is that of the current geopolitical dispute over what is arguably the African continent's most important source of fresh water: the Nile River. From both an environmental and geopolitical perspective, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (see Figure 15) would pose a further possible threat to the question of water sufficiency and sovereignty in the North of Africa. The Dam is projected to pull approximately 74 billion cubic meters of water from the Blue Nile, the Nile’s main tributary, to create a reservoir that would activate the turbines of a power plant intended to fill Ethiopia’s long-time energy gap. Such a reservoir, of course, will gradually constrict the flows of the Nile River, which Egypt relies on for 90% of its national water supplies, and the potential for a water conflict between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt remains high due to a lack of cooperation and accord between the countries (NATO Defense College, 2020).

III. Agricultural Production, Food Security, and Food Self-Sufficiency in Northern Africa

The amount of agricultural land in North Africa—defined by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations as “The total of cropland and permanent meadows and pastures” (FAO, 2020)—varies widely by country and has remained relatively stable over the past decades, despite the general desert environment and increasing temperatures (see figure below for years 2013-2018). In particular, Tunisia has a high potential for agricultural production, as the percentage of Tunisian land area which is agricultural land is 62.7%, compared to a worldwide average of 36.9%.

³ This is due to hotter air being able to absorb and hold more moisture than cooler air.

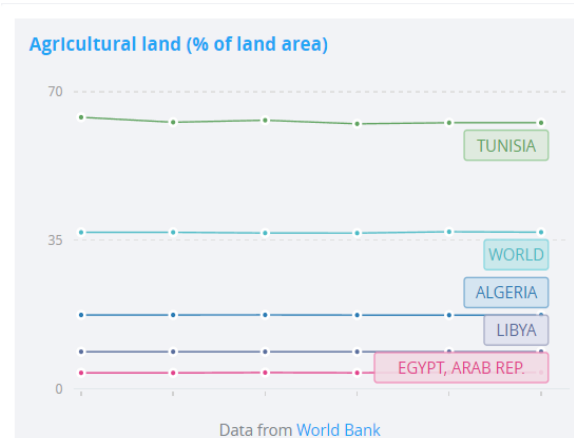


Figure 16, Agricultural land (% of land area), World Bank Database

Despite this relative stability in agricultural land, the aforementioned water scarcity and flooding pose a potential threat to the ability to irrigate crops and, consequently, to agricultural production and food security.

Food security, which was defined by the 1995 World Food Summit as existing “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2008), is closely intertwined with the topic of water scarcity. In fact, according to the United Nations and NATO, approximately 40% of people living in Arab countries had already experienced drought-induced food insecurity as of 2019, while supply chain shocks due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have, as in other areas of the world, caused food prices in North Africa to rise (NATO, 2019; EU ISS, 2021).

Furthermore, although agriculture constitutes a relatively small part of North African GDP, the agricultural sector is one of the main sectors of employment for rural peoples. Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of the North African population relies on rain-fed crop production for subsistence, income, and/or food. Moreover, farmers dependent on mountain snow melts will also be affected by climate change as snows become rarer. These combined factors will ultimately push agricultural producers to seek employment elsewhere, either abroad or to urban areas, where their skills are likely to be undervalued or unvalued (EU ISS, 2021).

Beyond the issue of food security, all of the above also contribute to a precarious food *self-sufficiency* situation in Northern Africa. Food self-sufficiency (or ‘sovereignty’), as defined by the FAO, is “generally taken to mean the extent to which a country can satisfy its food needs from its own domestic production” (FAO, 2016). Even before the contemporary effects of climate change, the MENA Area was the most import-dependent area of the world in regards to food supplies (NATO, 2019).

Naturally, such a lack of food self-sufficiency poses a threat to current and future levels of food security in these countries, as it renders them more dependent on imports from abroad and consequently subject to supply chain shocks and geopolitical events in the exporting countries.

IV. Urbanization, Tourism, and the Population-Climate Change Nexus in North Africa

As previously mentioned, as agriculture becomes a less viable source of income for the rural peoples who constitute a large portion of the sector's workforce, many rural people may be forced to move into urban areas either to seek alternative work—in which case, their skills would be less applicable in local contexts—(EU ISS, 2021) or to join family members for financial support (removing them from the workforce altogether).

Such a migration would only compound the already existing (albeit projected to slow) global trend of the push towards cities; according to the United Nations, the African continent experienced the largest increase in the urban population in the world, increasing 16-fold between 1950 and 2018 (from 33 million to 548 million).

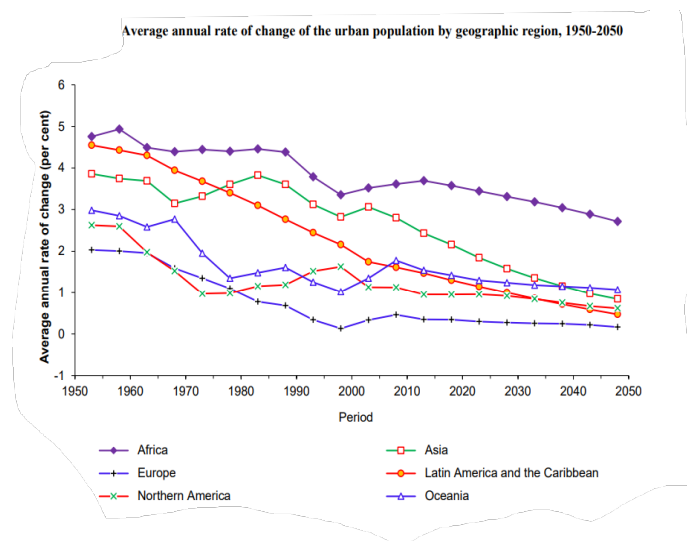


Figure 17, Average annual rate of change of the urban population by geographic region, 1950-2050, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018

Population throughout North Africa and the Middle East is projected to double by 2050, and paradoxically, just as climate change will presumably push rural peoples into urban areas, urbanization will make—and has already made—cities hotter, as solar radiation and CO₂ emissions tend to concentrate within cities, exponentially raising the temperatures within urban areas. Of the four North African countries under analysis, Egypt appears to be the most vulnerable to rapid urbanization and its effects on climate change; Cairo's population is projected to reach 38 million by 2050 (from 23 million in 2020), leading to a projected large increase in the number of 'extreme heat days' after 2040⁴ (EU ISS, 2021).

Furthermore, considering that all North African countries (and in particular, Egypt) are heavily reliant on the service and tourism sectors for employment, shocks may occur in these sectors as well, as urban North African destinations become less attractive for tourists due to increasing occurrences of extreme temperatures (OECD, 2022; EU ISS, 2021).

⁴ From less than 10 per year before 1990 to approximately 60 per year after 2040.

V. Meeting Energy Needs: Toward the Green Transition?

Beyond the emerging threats of urbanization, climate change, food security, and water scarcity, a hallmark of the North African region is several of its countries' dependence on oil (a finite resource) for both domestic consumption and foreign export; in particular, according to the Embassy of Libya in Washington, D.C., the oil and gas sectors account for approximately 60% of the country's GDP, while hydrocarbons constitute approximately 75% of government revenues in Algeria (Embassy of Libya; World Bank, 2016). Overall, in terms of both exports and domestic consumption of energy, North Africa and the Middle East regions are the least diversified in the world (NATO, 2019).

VI. Looking toward the future? Potential for solar power

Of course, the advantage of the climate in the MENA region is that the area possesses the world's highest rates of sunshine, making solar energy a viable alternative to oil and gas for both domestic consumption and international exports. In particular, Algeria has the strongest potential for solar energy production (see graph below); in fact, Algeria alone has the potential to reach not only energy self-sufficiency through solar power, but also to become the EU's main provider of electricity (see graph below: EU ISS, 2021).

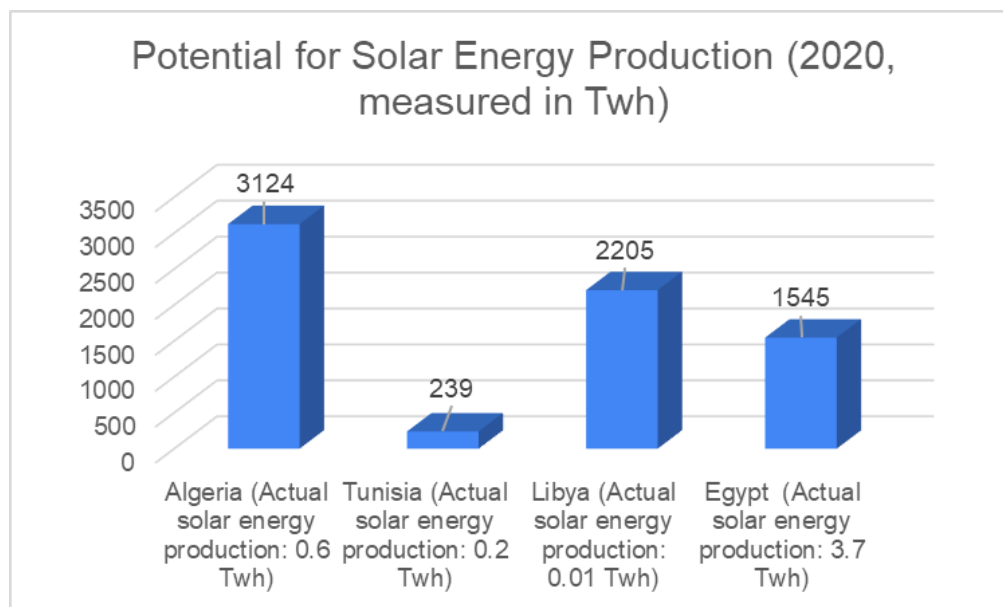


Figure 18, Potential for Solar Energy Production. Data: EU ISS 2021. Graph by MInter Group Ltd./Mondo Internazionale APS ETS

Nevertheless, despite the long-known potential for solar energy, issues relating to transportation, cost, political cooperation, and conflict have inhibited the successful implementation of solar energy cooperation efforts between North Africa and the European Union⁵. In particular, Libya, which announced its strategic energy

⁵ For example, the Desertec Foundation, a planned energy grid which would deliver renewable energy from North Africa throughout the region and Europe (see <https://www.desertec.org/about-us/>) under the framework of the Mediterranean Solar Plan of the Union for the Mediterranean (see <https://ufmsecretariat.org/the-mediterranean-solar-plan-at-the-european-parliament/>).

plan intending to achieve 7% of the electricity mix with renewables in 2020, was still far behind its goal as of 2020 due to recurring conflict (EU ISS, 2021). Despite these setbacks, there is growing institutional awareness on the part of national governments to diversify their energy mixes and incorporate more renewable energy sources into their total power generation; for example, Tunisia aims to boost the share of renewable energy from 12% to 30% of power generation by 2030, while Egypt launched a national strategy to diversify its energy mix that aims to raise its share of renewable energies to 20% of domestic production by the current year, and to 42% of domestic production by 2035 (OECD, 2022).

e. Recommendations

Given the precariousness of stability within North Africa due to the factors detailed above, and the EU's inherent geographic and security connections to North Africa, it is necessary to evaluate current EU-North Africa relations and initiatives to suggest productive paths for the future.

Many, but not all, of the funds which arrive from the European Union to North Africa are dispatched bilaterally under the framework of the European Neighbourhood Instrument, which aims “to establish an area of prosperity and good neighborliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation”⁶. Another instrument in which the EU invests is the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, in which 900 million EUR was invested in North African countries, mainly for the management of the refugee and migrant crisis (EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, 2021). Furthermore, the Instrument for Stability and Peace is active in all 4 countries and operates in the fields of crisis response, conflict prevention, peace-building, and cultural cooperation (EU, 2021). Meanwhile, the Union for the Mediterranean, of which Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt are members and Libya is an observer, is an initiative aimed at cooperation with Mediterranean countries and, differently from the previously mentioned projects, engages in multilateral dialog and projects with these 4 countries and other countries of the Mediterranean (EEAS).

1. Libya

Relations between the European Union and Libya are governed by the European Neighborhood Policy. Due to the lack of stability within the Libyan government, an Association Agreement between the EU and Libya has not been concluded. The European Union is, according to the European External Action Service, “one of the largest providers of assistance in Libya. EU projects mainly aim at strengthening civil society, human rights and free media, democratic governance, health services and COVID-19 response, entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, and gender equality”. Due to the multitude and gravity of the security issues within Libya, the European Union funds which go to Libya are some of the most complex of any which arrive in North Africa.

In regards to specific projects, under the EU Integrated Approach for Security and Peace, between 2011 and 2020, the EU supplied 75.3 million EUR to humanitarian aid to Libya, 455 million EUR to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, 46.8 million EUR to the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, and 98 million EUR to the European Neighborhood Instrument in Libya (EU ISS, 2021). The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace⁷ has activated new crisis response initiatives in Libya since 2019 (EU, 2021), and funds from the European Neighborhood Instrument are distributed from the EU to Libya bilaterally (EEAS).

⁶ Text of the Treaty of the European Union.

⁷ Active since 2014, replaces the now-defunct Instrument for Stability.

More recently, on June 15, 2021, and partially in response to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European External Action Service announced 6 million EUR in humanitarian aid to Libya as part of a 20 million EUR package to North Africa (other countries including Egypt and Algeria). According to the EEAS, the “€6 million will help extremely vulnerable people in Libya access healthcare, education, shelter, protection services and meet their basic needs”. In particular, the main areas of intervention of these funds are reinforcing the healthcare system, supporting the post-crisis economic recovery, and fighting disinformation (EEAS, 2021).

A large portion of EU projects are thus engaged in humanitarian efforts, migration and refugee management, and crises response.

2. Tunisia

EU-Tunisia relations are governed by an Association Agreement. Tunisia, within the framework of a ‘privileged partnership’ established in 2012 following the Arab Spring, has received a total of 1.704 billion EUR from the Delegation of the European Union in Tunisia, a majority of which currently go toward projects focused on Democracy and Governance (24.0% of total funds, Economic Development and Private Support (18.8% of total funds), Regional and Local Development (17.2%), and Environment, Sustainable Development, and Water (15.2% of total funds) (Delegation of the EU to Tunisia). Therefore, EU projects in Tunisia tend to be focused on social stability and empowerment.

3. Algeria

The EU and Algeria also share an Association Agreement. Between 2014 and 2020, under the framework of the European Neighborhood Instrument, bilateral assistance from the EU to Algeria amounted to €241,3 million and focused on 1) economic governance and support for diversification of the economy, 2) territorial development and participatory democracy, and 3) energy, environment and climate change.

Meanwhile, since 2013, a further 239,998,500 EUR in humanitarian aid has been dedicated to the Sahrawi refugee crisis, mainly in food aid, water access, health, and medicine (Delegation of the EU to Algeria). 9 million EUR of this amount comes from the previously-mentioned 20 million EUR package dispatched to Libya, Egypt, and Algeria in 2021 (EEAS, 2021).

4. Egypt

Like in Algeria and Tunisia, Egypt and the EU share an Association Agreement. Under the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy and, more specifically, the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for the period between 2021-2024, €240 million has been allocated for EU bilateral cooperation with Egypt. In particular, the goals of the MIP are: “green and sustainable development, human development, economic resilience and prosperity building through green and digital transition, and social cohesion, and the development of a modern and democratic state” (European Commission, 2022).

The largest EU-Egypt cooperation instrument for 2021-2027, however, is the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, which will amount to 240 million EUR, allocated with the goal of supporting “green and sustainable development, human development, economic resilience and prosperity building through green and digital transition, social cohesion and rule of law” (European Commission, 2022). Egypt also benefits from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, mainly in the realm of refugee and migration management and protection, and from the previously-mentioned 20-million EUR Covid-response package (of which it receives €5 million).

f. The Challenges for the European Union in the North African Quadrant: New Strategic Priorities

In summary, the European Union and European External Action Service operate in North African countries through several instruments, many of which are carried out bilaterally and with respect to the unique situations in each country. Due to the precarious socio-political structures following the Arab Spring, various refugee crises (Mediterranean migrants and Sahrawafi refugees in Algeria, for instance), and the Covid-19 pandemic, a large focus on EU-North African relations has, over the past decade, been placed on the themes of democracy and governance, humanitarian aid and Mediterranean border security, and the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, considering the EU is the largest trade partner for each of the four North African countries under analysis, economic, commercial, and financial cooperation is also a common theme in the relations between the EU and each of the four countries. Most recently, as a result of environmental factors, changing climates, and the energy crisis, the EU has initiated a series of projects (mainly in Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia) aiming toward sustainable development and the digital green transition.

The following four proposals take into consideration the broad goals of EU-North African relations to offer wide, short-term proposals for future relations:

1. Greater focus on Cultural Diplomacy and Educational Initiatives

Of the four countries under analysis, Algeria is the only country with which the EEAS has explicitly denoted “Cultural Cooperation” as a main area of focus and through which events surrounding intercultural dialogue are carried out. The aim of these events, according to the EEAS, is to “make known the variety of European culture in Algeria, but also to promote young Algerian talents” (EEAS).

While initiatives directed toward human security, humanitarian aid, political stability, and economic development are undoubtedly of great importance for the very foundations of EU-North African relations, a greater focus on Cultural Diplomacy and Cooperation projects is recommendable throughout all of the countries. Even as socio-political stability wavers in a given state, the main elements of a culture (in terms of religion, social norms, forms of entertainment, cuisine, and values) tend to persist. Cultural understanding between peoples leads to a stable basis for international relationships.

In the contemporary geopolitical context, educational efforts within the framework of Cultural Diplomacy are particularly important for preventing internal and international instability due to radicalization, disinformation, and disenfranchisement. Due to fragile socio-economic and political situations, all four of the countries under study are at risk for further destabilization due to disinformation and radicalization. This is especially true in the context of Libya, where foreign influence contributes to internal violence and instability. In fact, as previously mentioned, the recent EU Aid package toward Libya with the goal of fighting disinformation is a commendable beginning.

While several projects which may be deemed to be “Cultural Diplomacy” exist between the EU and North African countries—such as their eligibility for certain Actions of the Erasmus+ program—Cultural Cooperation and Diplomacy constitutes a fundamental instrument in international relations. Therefore, it is recommendable that Cultural Diplomacy initiatives be added as one of the priorities in relations between the European Union and Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt.

2. Focus on North Africa as a Singular Region and Reinforce Multilateral Cooperation Efforts

As previously stated, many of the projects and funding the EU engages in with the North African countries are carried out bilaterally, “in due respect for [each country’s] specific features” (EEAS). Given the diversity of issues within each country—as Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt present unique opportunities and challenges—tailoring projects to the urgencies of each country is essential to investing in situationally informed and productive projects.

Nevertheless, a greater focus on multilateral cooperation between the EU and North African countries is equally advisable; as unique as each country is, their similarities often outweigh differences in terms of geography, environmental phenomena, and threats to social stability. For instance, the phenomenon of illicit trade and movement of goods, weapons, drugs, and humans often takes place at porous points in the borders between the countries, implying that each country’s border (and overall) security is intertwined with that of the others.

Furthermore, pressing environmental issues and opportunities are shared not only among North African countries, but also with the countries of the European Union; for example, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and European countries in the Mediterranean basin all face the potential issues of drought and flooding. Thus, these countries would mutually benefit from cooperation in terms of water governance and management of rising sea levels, both with each other and the European Union. Furthermore, the common potential of Algeria and Libya (and to a lesser extent Egypt) to generate solar power as an alternative energy source—both for internal use and international export—would best be implemented with the participation of all countries to resolve issues inherent in cross-border solar projects.

As an example, with the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008, the EU initiated a multilateral rapport with the four countries. A wider range of such initiatives, in the form of both short-term projects and long-term bodies and forums, would allow the EU to build stronger relationships with and between the countries of North Africa.

3. The Need for a Reform of the Security Sector

The Security Sector could play a relevant role in the stabilization of North African countries by creating a fundamental layer on which to build the principles of good governance: (1) accountability; (2) transparency; (3) public participation; (4) respect for human rights; and, (5) rule of law.

Nearly four years after the beginning of the Arab Spring the prospects for meaningful security sector reform in most North African countries are bleak. The primary exception is Tunisia, the country where the regional revolution began. In the security sector, there are signs that internal reforms are taking place.

In Egypt, the military reasserted control, banished the elected Muslim Brotherhood government of President Mohamed Morsi, and cracked down hard on any indication of dissent. In Libya, early optimism about building democratic security institutions was replaced by a confrontation between two rival governments, parliaments, military forces, and their foreign supporters that led Libya toward institutional chaos.

The EU can play a role in promoting and sustaining security sector reform in North Africa, but it must be based upon the art of the possible. Effective reform programs involve obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the security sector, beginning with the identification of entry points to address specific problems. These last include:

- cooperation and coordination of member states against existing, evolving and emerging transnational security threats
- enhancing of member states' capacities and encouraging the development of regional and international policies, frameworks, and programs to deal with transnational security threats.

Resolving pressing problems builds trust and creates the momentum required to deal with greater challenges. The EU needs to develop a track record of success in a region where initial optimism has given way to doubts about the possibility of meaningful progress. North Africa has witnessed a significant inflow of Security Sector Assistance (SFA) from the international community in terms of boosting the capacity of the Africa Union (AU), Regional Economic Co-operations (RECs), and security and bureaucratic apparatus of the various individual states to counterterrorism, insurgency, and organized violence in the region.

From an external perspective, it is clear that the North Africa region requires external donor expertise, plus political, financial, and material support.

Enhancing North African states' capabilities to respond to transnational threats and international crime in the region is crucial. The initiatives include counterterrorism, countering violent extremism, countering organized crime, cross-border security governance, maritime security, extradition of criminals, and border control for small arms trade, among others. It conducts continuous threat assessments and analysis, which is shared with the member states.

Dealing with these security needs necessitates the development and implementation of processes and mechanisms focused on North African regional issues, dealing with terrorism, transnational organized crime (TOC), maritime security, and security institutions' capacity building.

4. Balancing Safety and Security

It is important to broaden the analysis of security in North Africa in order to include threats that may arise from other security sectors such as economic, societal, environmental, and cyber. Indeed, such sectors have a

direct impact on the safety of North African institutions. Security in North Africa to the military sector should not be perceived purely from a defense perspective, as security construed in this manner gives the concept of security a severely narrow scope. Security is supposed to defend as well as empower. It is therefore argued that (aside from the traditional political and military sectors) it is possible to broaden the study of security to include threats that may arise from other security sectors such as economic, societal, environmental, and cyber. For the ends of this analysis, this concept could be referred to as "safety".

Safety could be defined as the underlying layer of action that governments need to provide in order to guarantee ready access to the means necessary to meet basic human needs.

The safety of the institution of North African countries, therefore, is access to the resources, finance, and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare for the population and enhance the power and prestige of the state.

In fact, in North African countries, the lack of institutional safety leads to:

- 1) the inability to sustain the basic human needs of the population;
- 2) the disruption of society caused by poor welfare;
- 3) third, the inability to resist the pressures from external actors.

Indeed, one of the motives which lure parts of the populations of the north African countries to transnational crime organizations or into religious radicalizations is poverty and unemployment.

It is, therefore, crucial to support and sustain North African countries' institutions in dealing with these issues. These last encompass civil as well as military instances. The EU support is relevant in order to provide the institution of North African countries with basic security and safety layer to build a good governance model.

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The EU's Strategic Interest in the Sahel

a. Introduction (Lesti)



Figure 1, Sahel Factsheet, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 1 July 2022.

The war on Ukraine certainly represents the most serious security crisis in Europe in decades, but the threats to this security come from other sources, including from the Sahel. Given its economic and demographic growth, the African continent has considerable potential; however, ongoing conflicts, poor governance, and terrorism across the continent affect the security of both Africa and Europe. This is particularly the case in the wider Sahel region, where instability, terrorist groups, weak state structures, mercenaries, and widespread poverty constitute a dangerous mix. Stability in the Gulf of Guinea also remains an important security imperative for the EU, as it hosts key trade routes.

At the same time, we are witnessing increasing geopolitical competition in Africa, with a greater presence of global and regional actors. Some of such actors do not hesitate to use irregular forces in areas of instability, thus undermining international efforts toward peace and stability. (Strategic Compass, 2022). The armed actors involved in violent extremism on the continent are affiliated with Islamic militant groups and organizations and in particular with the Salafi-jihadist ideology. The proliferation of militants linked to the Islamic State (IS) and the infighting and complex links between groups affiliated with different jihadist networks are causing growing alarm among observers (EU ISS, 2021). The rise of terrorist activity in the Sahel, Lake Chad, Great Lakes, and Horn of Africa region, and more recently in northern Mozambique, cannot be attributed solely to the influence of jihadist ideology from the Middle East. In Mali, transnational jihadist groups emerged from the conflict sparked by the Tuareg separatist movement. The insurrection is also a protest against socio-economic asymmetries and inequalities (European Parliament, 2021).

The consequences of the military coups in Mali confirm the fragility of this country and the region as a whole, while the continuing threat posed by terrorist armed groups and increasing violence between communities over land and resources has led to both internal and cross-border displacement in Sahel countries (European Parliament, 2021). Community violence and jihadist uprisings have significantly undermined the control of

local states over much of their territories, particularly in the area of the three borders between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Amid the proliferation of non-state armed groups, attacks by terrorist groups linked to al-Qaeda or Islamic State networks have increased significantly since 2015.

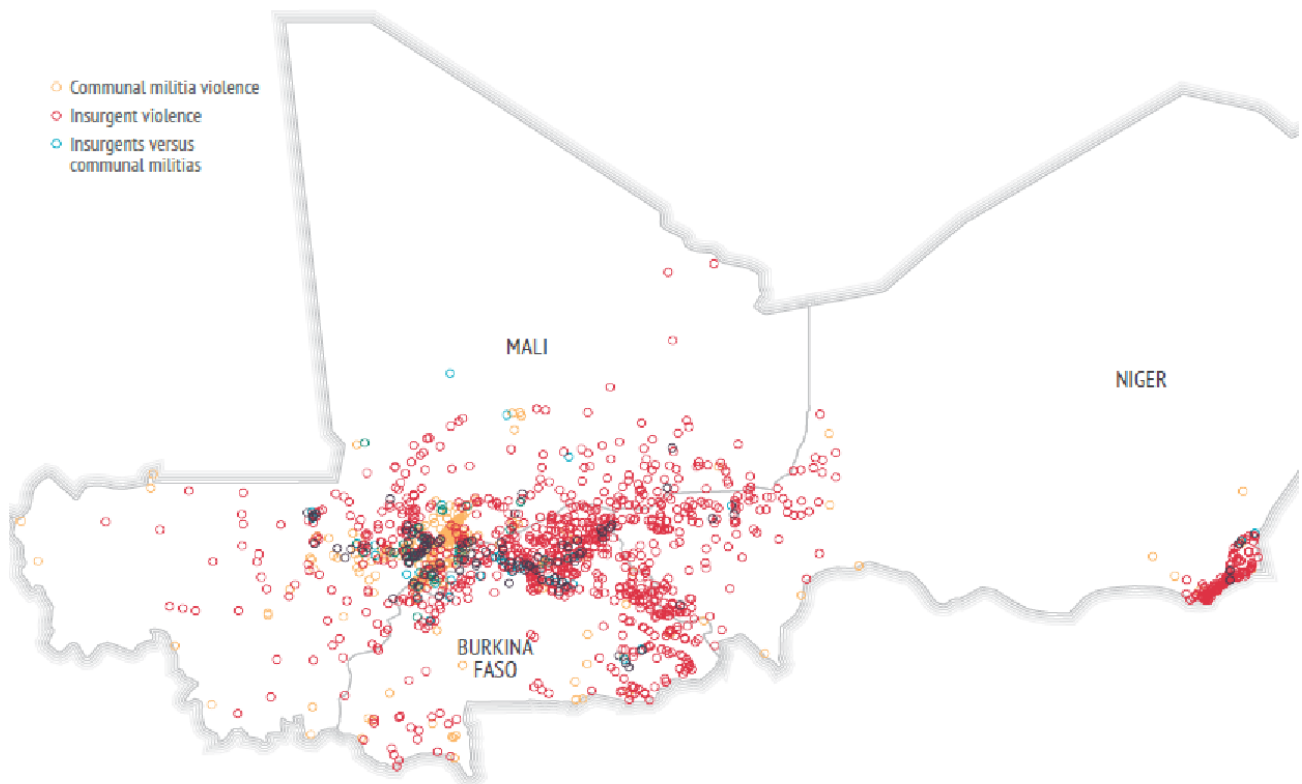


Figure 2, Salafi-Jihadism in Africa, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Brief 12, June 2021, Mutually enforcing escalation of insurgent and communal violence Sahel, January 2018 to March 2020, Data: ACLED, 2021; Natural Earth, 2021.

In the Sahel, a region characterized by environmental degradation and sustained population growth, climate change has the potential to exacerbate competition over dwindling resources, thereby fuelling conflict and radicalization (EU ISS 2020). Furthermore, in sub-regions such as the Sahel, organized crime involved in smuggling of weapons or migrants and trafficking in drugs, people or wildlife is also becoming an important source of instability. (EU ISS 2021).

Climate change, environmental degradation, and natural disasters will also impact the global security landscape in the coming decades and are proven factors of instability and conflict around the world, from the Sahel to the Amazon and the Arctic region. Competition for natural resources such as agricultural land and water and the exploitation of energy resources for political purposes are concrete examples of this. Another factor of regional instability is the high dependence of the population on agriculture fuelled by rains. Drought has led to poor harvests, causing food and pastoral crises, and putting millions of people in extreme poverty and at risk of hunger, malnutrition, and disease (NATO SDSH, 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic fuelled international rivalry and demonstrated that disruptions to major trade routes can put pressure on critical supply chains and impact economic security (Strategic Compass, 2022). Extreme poverty, weak government, land tensions, rapid urbanization, or population growth may explain why Africa is

becoming less secure. The ECOWAS leadership, therefore, had the intuition to prioritize the development and construction of the state itself. This policy has been pursued by coastal West African countries, while the Sahel has encountered greater difficulties in increasing resources for public services due to the weakness of political institutions. (EU ISS 2021). Despite the remarkable progress achieved, the continent still faces some major challenges, for example in poorly governed areas such as the Sahel and areas of the Lake Chad basin. Poverty rates have remained particularly high throughout the Sahel, the region is affected by climate change and rapid population growth, and rivalries over access to livelihoods exacerbate grievances against states. Instability in this region has direct consequences for the security of the European Union's neighbors and for itself (European Parliament, 2020).

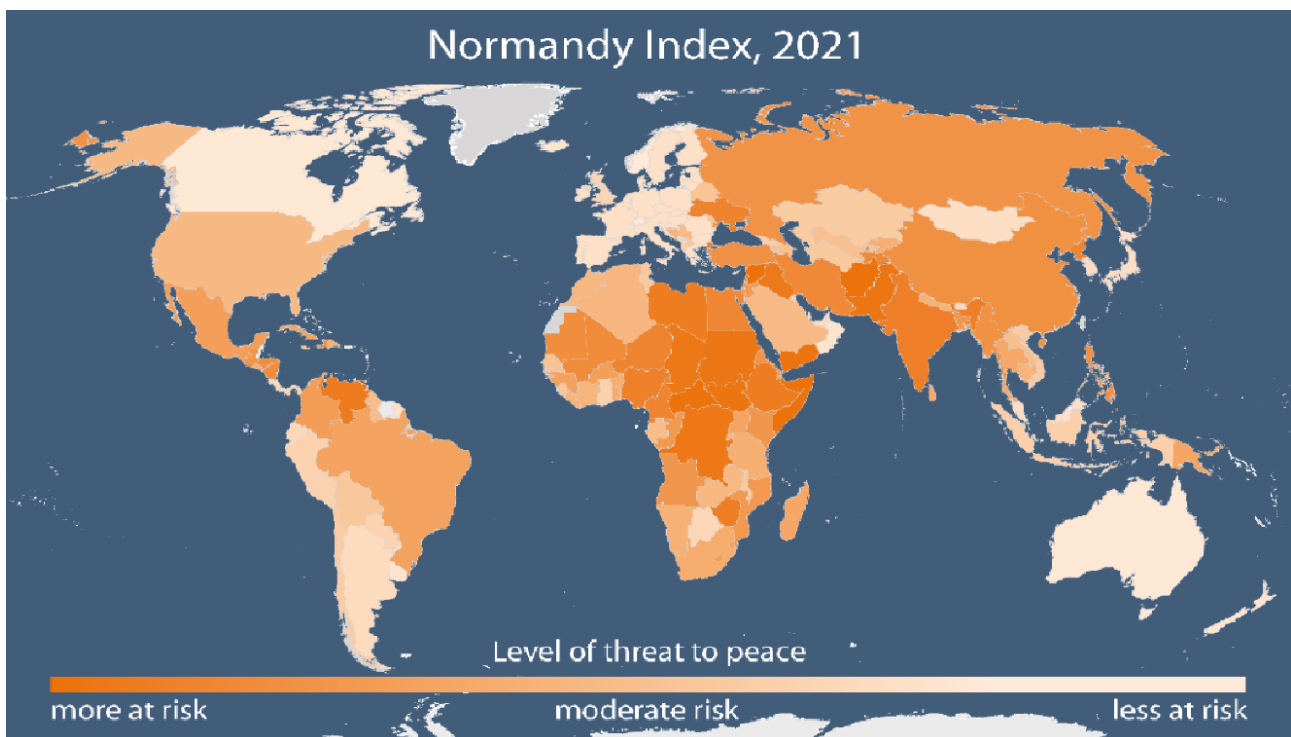


Figure 3, Normandy Index, 2021, Mapping threats to peace and democracy worldwide, Normandy Index 2021, European Parliamentary Research Service, Members' Research Service, PE 690.670, July 2021

The graph shows the level of threat to peace indicated based on the so-called Normandy Index, a tool used to assess the most at-risk countries in the world according to the EU's global strategy and to guide EU action. It is not a ranking of countries based on their tranquillity, but a ranking of specific threats to peace.

Factors examined include Climate Change, Cybersecurity, Democratic Processes, Economic Crises, Energy Insecurity, Fragile States, Crime, Disinformation, Terrorism, Violent Conflict, and Weapons of Mass Destruction. The indicators of threat to peace showed 2021 Peace and Security Outlook and the EU Global Strategy are added to the quality of the Democratic Process, since support for democracy is a fundamental dimension of the EU's external action, and a composite indicator of crime (European Parliament, 2021).

The 2021 Normandy Index ranks Sahel countries as among the most vulnerable to threats in the world, particularly in terms of terrorism, violent conflict, climate change, and state fragility. Since 2011, the region has been marked by jihadist violence and increasing municipal conflicts over land and resources. Meanwhile,

weak state structures and the government's lack of legitimacy hinder efforts to address threats to peace and security (European Parliament, 2021).

In 2020, the EU pledged to strengthen its partnership with Africa, stating that a prosperous, peaceful, and resilient Africa is in the fundamental interest of the EU (UE ISS 2021). The many Member States identify West Africa as a priority region, with a particular focus on the Sahel, the Lake Chad basin, and, recently, an increased interest in the Gulf of Guinea. This results from a combination of several factors, including the management of migration flows, security threats, as well as organized crime, illicit trafficking, and piracy. (EU ISS 2020).

Nevertheless, the coronavirus epidemic has delayed the adoption of a common strategy. At the same time, it highlighted the need to strengthen ties between the two continents to address the most pressing global issues. (European Parliament 2022).

In its first part, the analysis will address the security aspects of the threat posed by jihadism, crime, and tribal conflicts. In the second part, the global overview of the economy of the Sahelian region will be described. In the third section, the multiple sociological aspects that characterize the Sahel will be summarized. Finally, in the fourth part, the physical environment that characterizes the region will be analysed in light of ongoing climate change. General conclusions and suggestions for improvement interventions will follow the topics covered by the analysis on safety, economy, society, and the environment.

b. Security Threats to the European Union: Actors, Governance Systems, Terrorism and Organized Crime (Lesti)

The problem of the security of the Sahel is an issue that goes beyond the high level of conflict that the region is experiencing; the topics covered by this analysis are terrorism and armed groups, piracy, illegal trafficking, and Russian presence.

I. Terrorism and Armed Groups

Terrorist networks in the Sahel include both al-Qaeda-aligned organizations and Daesh-affiliated entities (NATO SDSH, 2021):

- The Qaedist Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) was born in March 2017 from AQIM, Ansar Dine, Macina Liberation Front (MLF), and Al Mourabitoun: extremely active in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. According to existing estimates, it includes about 2000 fighters. The JNIM obtains its funds mainly from kidnappings, extortion, smugglers, and traffickers who pay a transit fee and illegal taxation of local populations.
- The Islamic State in the Great Sahara (ISGS) emerged in 2015 from the split of the Al-Mourabitoun group, and Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali are highly active (NATO SDSH, 2021). Militant extremist groups expanded into Cameroon, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger at a record pace in 2019 (NATO SDSH, 2021). It is estimated that 500 fighters are deployed and are probably financed by smuggling activities, local donations, taxation, and kidnappings for ransom.

Violence and organised crime

The Sahel as a hub for illicit trafficking

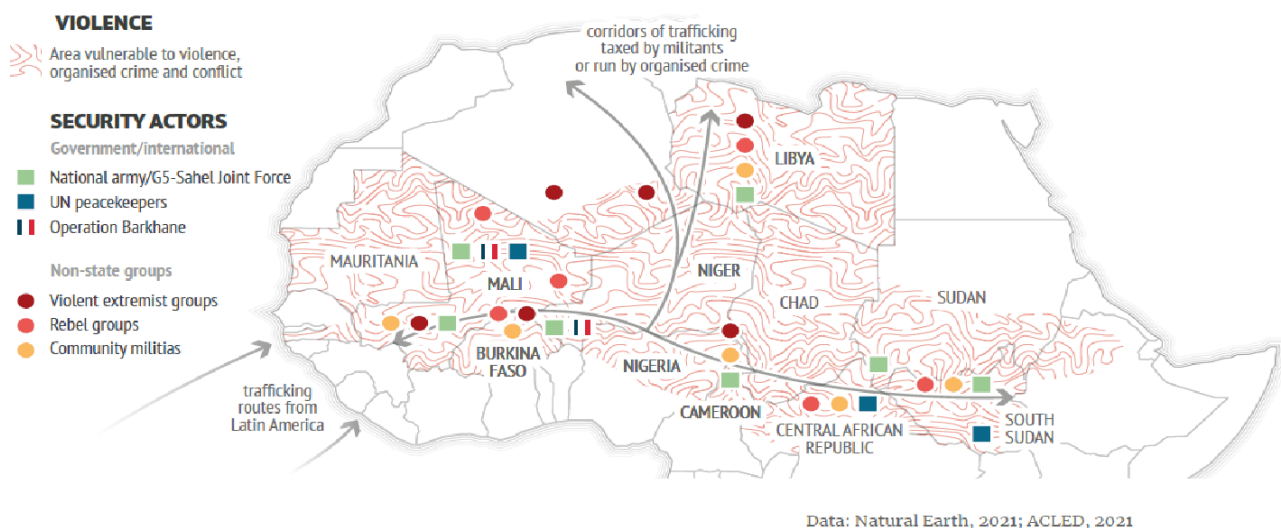


Figure 4, *African Futures 2030*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Paper 164, February 2021.

The areas where jihadist and armed groups are active are (European Parliament, 2021):

- **The Sahel and the Liptako-Gourma region:** ISGS and JNIM. Jihadist activity began in the 2010s, arriving first in Mali and then in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Chad. In 2012, jihadist groups allied

with the Tuareg of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), until the 2015 peace accords between the Tuareg and the Malian government. Desertification and environmental degradation have led to land and resource conflicts between Dogon farmers and Fulani herders.

- **Lake Chad basin:** Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). The jihadist group Boko Haram or ISWAP emerged in 2002 in north-eastern Nigeria, spreading to Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Instead, in addition to the jihadists, security threats come from: clashes between local communities over the earth's resources; criminal groups engaged in robberies and kidnappings; arms trafficking between criminal groups and jihadists in the Lake Chad region.

Among the root causes that play a role are structural motivations such as economics, politics, social issues, and inclusiveness; enabling factors and group dynamics such as religious radicalization; and individual incentives such as a better quality of life (NATOSDSH, 2021). Organized crime is fundamental for the financial support of jihadist groups; transit taxes, escort, protection, or transportation services, product sales, and gold mining in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali include sources of income for local jihadist groups. The links with the traffickers allow the jihadists to obtain means of subsistence (food, medicines, etc.), operational means (weapons, ammunition, motorcycles, spare parts, fuel), and means of communication (European Parliament, 2021).

The EU has supported the G5 Sahel since 2014 as an institutional framework for cooperation on development policies and security issues of terrorism. EUTM Mali is active with 770 men from 22 member states and Georgia, Moldova, and Montenegro for (EUTM Mali, 2022) supporting the G5 in the fight against terrorism and illegal trafficking, training and consultancy for the Malian Armed Forces, improving the military education system, and consulting and training at the headquarters of the G5 Sahel Joint Force. In the Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon) the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) operates in the following areas: assistance in response to crises or emerging crises to prevent conflicts; assistance for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and crisis preparedness; assistance to address global and trans-regional threats (IcSP, 2021). The IcSP has ongoing activities for an amount of 35,708,000 million euros (European Union, 2022). Finally, the European Peace Facility (EEAS, 2022) is also active in financing military operations and assistance activities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), with a budget for 2021-2027 of 5.692 billion euros (European Union, 2022).

II. Piracy

The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) has simultaneously experienced the largest increase in maritime insecurity of any region in the world. West and Central Africa, like all regions of the earth, rely on maritime dominance to

Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Safety and Security

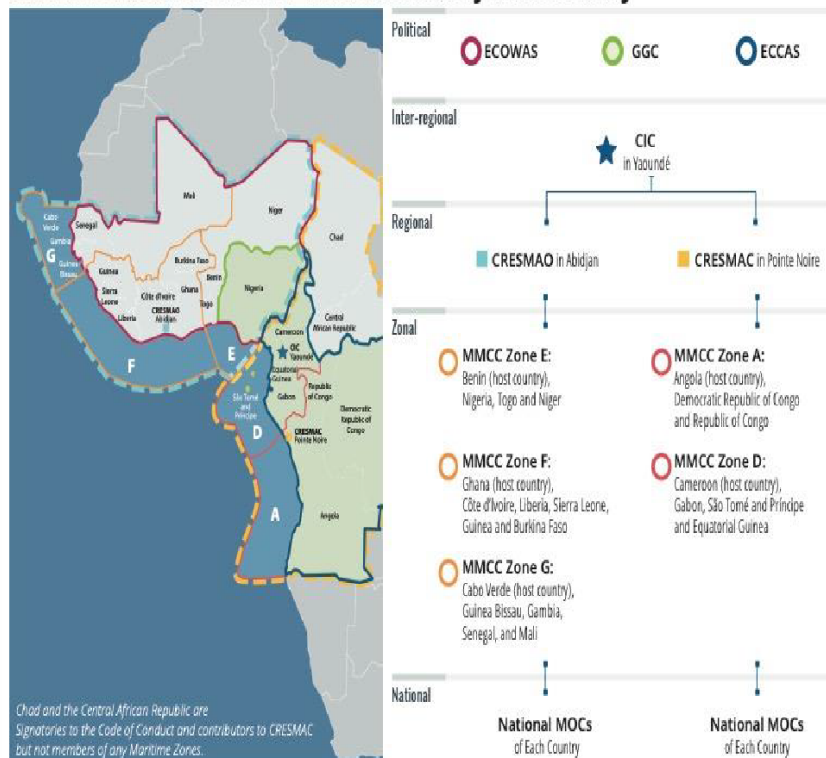


Figure 5, Gulf of Guinea: Improving Maritime Security, NATO SOUTHERN HUB, March 2021, Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Safety and Security. Map Credit: I.R. Consilium.

transport goods. Maritime crime, like piracy, is so critical that it affects the engines of economic activity on land (NATO SDSH, 2021).

Piracy, sea robberies, seafaring abductions, illegal fishing, smuggling, trafficking, and transnational organized crime pose a serious threat to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea (EEAS, 2021).

In 2014 the EU adopted an EU strategy for the GoG to support the objectives of "Yaoundé Architecture", the intra-regional engagement between the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS), the Central African Economic Community States (ECCAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) signed in 2013 to combat maritime crime.

The EU has activated the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) which can be deployed in any maritime area of the world determined by the Council of the EU as a Maritime Area of Interest by operating in the following areas: use the naval resources of the Member States present or deployed on a voluntary in the maritime areas of interest; greater coordination of naval and air resources under national command; ensure continuity, complementarity, and synergy between the actions of the Member States; improve awareness, analysis and information sharing among the Member States through the Maritime Area of Interest Coordination Cell (MAICC); use the MARSUR network in an operational effort.

III. Illegal Trafficking

The Sahel, populated by nomadic tribes, has always been a profitable area for illegal trade, with the main communication routes controlled by tribes such as the Tuareg, Fulani, Berbers, and Tobou (NATO SCCE, 2018). Economic insecurity, poverty, and unemployment, and lack of essential infrastructure and services have given a strong impetus to illegal activities related to trafficking in arms, drugs, and people (EU ISS, 2021). Illicit trafficking in the Sahel is an important element in the financing of local armed and terrorist groups (EU ISS, 2021). Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) controls drug trafficking, kidnappings, and the influx of weapons in northern Mali (NATO SDSH, 2018). The jihadist group Boko Haram (BH) manages the

"taxation" of drug trafficking, tobacco, energy resources, and fish in the Lake Chad area (NATO SDSH, 2018). There are three main types of illegal trafficking affecting the Sahel:

- **Human Trafficking.** Irregular migration routes cross the Maghreb and Sahel but have their points of origin in the coastal countries of West and East Africa (NATO SCCE, 2018). The western route crosses the Sahel, starting from Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Nigeria, passing through Mali, Burkina Faso, Algeria, and Niger, and ending on the coast of Morocco or Libya (NATO SCCE, 2018).

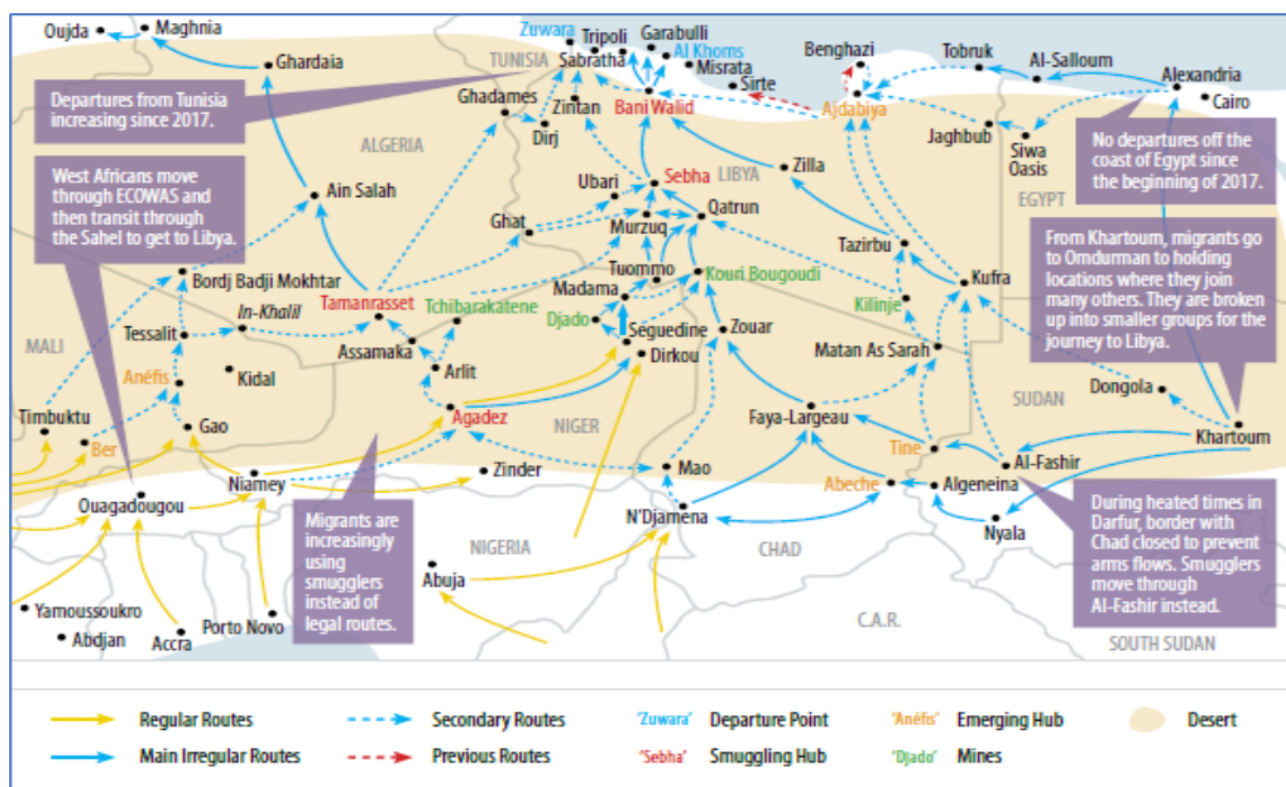


Figure 6, Main migratory routes from West Africa to the Sahel and North Africa, *The Intersection of Irregular Migration and Trafficking in West Africa and the Sahel*, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime and Clingendael Institute, 2020.

Trafficking in human beings is an important source of income for criminal organizations, terrorist groups, militias, and tribes; the terrorist groups JNIM, ISGS, AQIM, AAS-L, and DAESH-L obtain economic benefits by collecting taxes from traffickers and smugglers (NATO SCCE, 2018). According to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GIATOC, 2020), human trafficking occurs throughout Niger, Nigeria, and Mali in the Sahelian area. In the two years 2018-2019, immediately preceding the onset of the global pandemic of Covid-19, 236,330 people arrived in Europe through the western, central, and eastern Mediterranean routes (GIATOC, 2020).

- **Weapons.** The trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Africa is a criminal market that responds to demand, generated by conflict, crime, and insecurity. The main source of weapons is official state stocks, legitimately purchased but diverted to the illicit market or international routes (EU ISS, 2021). Libya, with its unguarded arms depots, has recently been the main source of supply (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2020). Arms trafficking by terrorists and other armed groups passes through the Algerian,

Nigerian, and Malian borders, the Taoua and Tillabéry regions of western Niger, the Niger-Mali-Burkina Faso border area, the Tibesti region in Chad (NATO SCCE, 2018).

- **Drugs (Cannabis, Cocaine, Heroin).** The increase in demand has motivated transnational criminal organizations to include Africa in international drug trafficking routes (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2020). The Tuareg population and terrorist groups such as Jama 'at Nasrul Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) Islamic State of Greater Sahara (ISGS), AQIM, AASL, DAESH-L, and BH have helped drug criminal organizations in West Africa (NATO SCCE, 2018). Cannabis departs from Morocco and passes through Mauritania and Algeria in the direction of the Sahel and Europe. Cocaine comes from the coasts of West Africa, then passes through Mali, Algeria, Libya, and Europe. The heroin crosses the continent to Nigeria, then passes through Europe. Countries located in the Sahel / Sahara region are transit locations for overland drug shipments to Europe. However, the West African coast, from Mauritania to Nigeria, may have lost importance as a transit area in recent years (EMCDDA/Europol, 2019).

In the region under study, three EU missions are active in the field of combating transnational criminal activities to strengthen internal security:

- **EUCAP SAHEL Mali** (EEAS, 2021). It is a civilian crisis management mission, providing strategic advice, training, and assistance to the Police, Gendarmerie, National Guard, and relevant ministries of Mali. The mission has three lines of action: support for structural capabilities, strengthening the operational capabilities, and ethical standards of the internal security forces. For the period 2021-2023 it is planned to introduce better governance and fight impunity in the security forces, the re-deployment of the internal security forces and the return of the state and civil administration, and improve the operational efficiency of the transitional authorities and the internal security forces to ensure the elections scheduled for 2022.
- **EUCAP SAHEL Niger** (EEAS, 2020). It is a civilian mission of the EU and assists the country in the fight against terrorism and organized crime. It aims to support the Nigerian internal security forces and build their capabilities through training, strategic advice, and equipment. As part of its mandate, the Mission assists Niger in better management and control of its borders and in the fight against smugglers and traffickers who take advantage of desperate migrants.
- **EU RACC SAHEL** (EEAS, 2022). The need to tackle common challenges within the G5 Sahel - security, terrorism, illicit trafficking, and transnational organized crime - is at the heart of the EU's intervention in the region. The EU Regional Coordination and Advisory Cell for the Sahel contribute to peace and stability in the region. The RACC supports the strengthening of regional cooperation and operational capabilities in the field of defense and security within the G5 Sahel, in compliance with international law, human rights, and the EU strategic approach to peace and security for women.

These initiatives, sharing procedures and practices relating to police and internal security capabilities, are to be considered an EU cultural diplomacy tool. Through these actions, the European heritage concerning the organization and use of police forces is shared and made available to countries in difficulty. This set of rules,

norms, and procedures must be lowered and adapted to the local context, allowing, through cultural diplomacy processes, the strengthening of the rule of internal law and the correct application of the international protection of human rights.

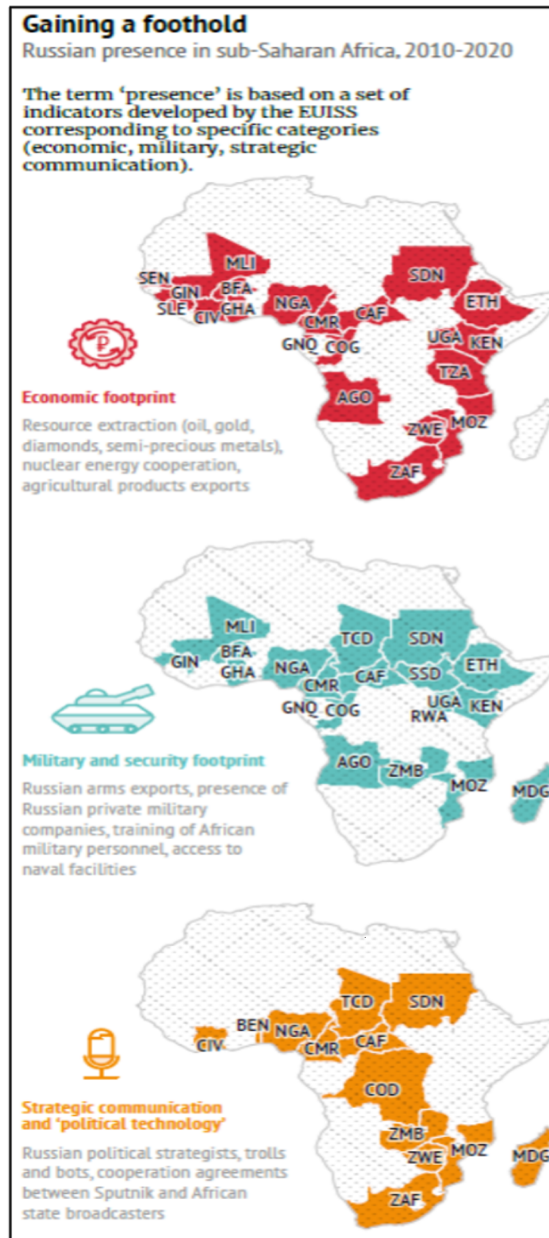


Figure 7, Gaining a Foothold, Russian Presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2010-2020, African Strategies, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Data: Natural Earth, 2020; 88 unique public sources were consulted when preparing this map.

The creation of an adequate internal security framework, through strong legal cooperation and collaboration, makes it possible to pursue the overall objective of the EU of guaranteeing the stability of the region and with it its strategic interests.

Russian Influence and Presence in the Sahel

Since the end of 2010, Sub-Saharan Africa has returned to the Russian political discourse, increasing diplomatic and commercial exchanges and the presence of the Wagner Group, a PMC linked to the Kremlin (NATO SDSH, 2020). Today, the Russian government still sees the African continent as a geopolitical and commercial opportunity. Russian economic commitments abroad follow the political guidelines of Moscow. Although Russia does not have the financial resources of its direct competitors, its presence in Africa is rapidly increasing, taking advantage of the energy sector and the arms trade. There are three areas of interest for Russia (EU ISS, 2020):

- **Economically**, Moscow aims to gain access to natural resources while increasing exports of agricultural products, fertilizers, weapons, and nuclear, digital, and space technologies.
- **Militarily**, Russia defines itself as an anti-jihadist force to establish and deepen security ties with African armies and ensure access to infrastructure to ensure the supply and maintenance of its navy.

- **Diplomatically**, Russia seeks votes in support of its positions at the UN or political acts that support Moscow's diplomatic position internationally.

From the Russian point of view, Sub-Saharan Africa is another field of confrontation between established and rising powers to obtain resources, market share, and political influence. The Kremlin guidelines plan to exploit the renewed contact with African elites through niche sectors in which Russia can be politically and economically competitive.

Moscow sees *Strategic Communications* (StratCom) as an instrument for creating favorable conditions. In recent years, Russian spin doctors and/or trolls have operated in various sub-Saharan countries. Billed as a private enterprise initiative, this "election assistance" is provided in parallel with security cooperation, Russian diplomatic protection, and loans. (EU ISS, 2020). Russia's communication strategy toward Africa is based on the following pillars (NATO SCCE, 2020):

- Lack of a colonial past in Africa.
- Presenting tied loans as investments or aid (NATO SDSH, 2020).
- Using political advisers, or "*political technology*", to help allies achieve political goals.
- Education as a means of cultural diplomacy, with programs aimed at African students, creating Russian cultural and scientific centers with Rossotrudnichestvo, and organizing associations of former African alumni.

c. Social Challenges for Europe: Ethnic Groups, Languages, Traditions, Religions and Cultural Cross-Correlations (Silvestri)

The Sahelian Region is characterized by a complex set of ethnic and social factors that affect the structure of the societies and states present in the vast territory under analysis. In addition to this dynamic socio-cultural substrate, there are a number of aspects of social insecurity inherent in the very structure of most of the countries in the area. The social situation of the states under analysis will be addressed at the macroscopic level in order to provide a holistic and multidisciplinary understanding.

I. Ethnicity

Ethnic belonging plays an important role within the social communities in the Sahel region. Being raised in one tribe or another makes a great difference regarding social status, life expectancy, and work opportunities in a certain region. The following map shows the enormously complex ethnic group divisions in West Africa and how these kinds of dynamics deeply interact with language and intercultural communication.

The great ethnic fragmentation of the Sahelian area and, more generally, of West Africa, brings with it a series of socio-anthropological consequences that must not be neglected in the overall analysis of the societies implemented in the area.

The ethnic issue is an intricate and complicated aspect of the social sciences. In general, "ethnicity" may be defined as the following:

“Ethnicity is an identity based upon a presumption of shared history and common cultural inheritance. Ethnic identity is shaped by both ethnic affiliation and ethnic attribution. Ethnic affiliation refers to individuals' own sense of group membership and the characteristics of the group as defined by its members. Ethnic attribution concerns the characteristics of the group as defined by outsiders.

States acted opportunistically and inconsistently in dealing with ethnicity. Sometimes they suppressed ethnic affiliation to weaken the resistance of subject groups to the state.” (Brumfiel, 2001)



Figure 8., Nigeria Benin Cameroon languages, 2007. CC work.

Getting to know how different peoples perceive their reality and how they sustain their own social and cultural productions is fundamental to avoiding tensions and to adequately build effective mass communication strategies to foster governance in peripheral areas of a certain State.

The most important and influential ethnic groups of the region are the following:

The Tuareg: The total Tuareg population has been estimated at about 1 million, yet true data may vary. It is an extremely influential population living in the Sahara Desert. It is semi-nomadic society based on solid tribal hierarchies and transhumant pastoral activity. The integration of the Tuaregs has led to considerable challenges in the 5 countries where their presence is strongest, and in almost no scenario has full integration been achieved. During the last decade, several groups within the Tuareg community have chosen to affiliate themselves with Jihadist movements such as AQIM (Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb).

The Soninke (Sorakollè) are an ethnic group that founded the Ghana Empire. The modern Soninkés live on the Senegal River and in Senegal's neighboring countries. Contacts with the Fulbe and Mauri influenced their culture; long-time Muslims were the first propagators of Islam in western Sudan. The bulk of the group is stationed between Senegal and Niger, but merchants and smugglers meet everywhere, up to the Atlantic ports.

The Songhai, founders of the Songhai empire, live in the southern parts of the Sahel, mainly in western and southern Niger, eastern Burkina Faso, and along Niger River within Mali.

The Hausa and Fulani represent one of the major groups living in Nigeria, the State has a deep influence on western African culture and economic development so these ethnic groups and their inner social dimension represent a crucial aspect to be addressed in any governance initiative within Nigeria or bordering countries. Other notable ethnic groups include Igbo and Yoruba People.

It is deeply important to note that Arabs are the dominant population in the Sahelian countries of Sudan and Mauritania and are also present in other countries. Their presence has deeply influenced the social and economic relations between the people of Sahel, mostly of Muslim faith.

Other notable ethnic groups in the Sahel include the Kanuri in and the Fur of Western Sudan, Darfur.

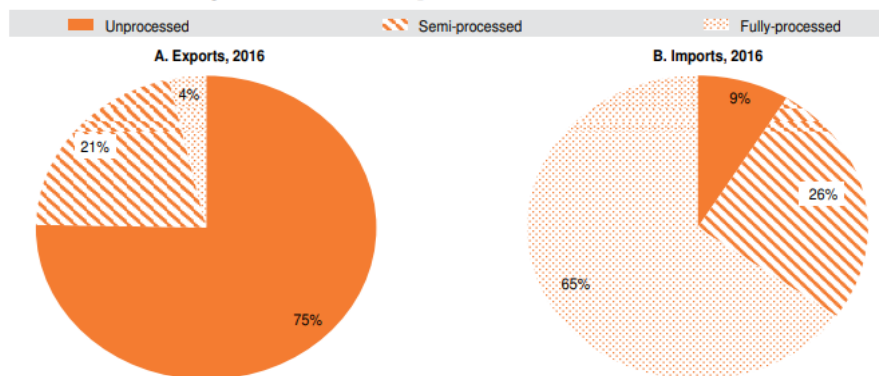
Ethnic confrontations are a very common issue in each and every region since very different ethnic groups have been led to share territories and resources in certain states. Most governments use deterrence strategies to tackle the problem but the outcomes deeply vary from country to country, sometimes causing even further violence (Crisis Group, 2018).

II. Social inequalities

Social inequalities still represent one of the most significant aspects of the interpretation of Sahelian societies. The most common social issues and public governance dilemmas regard the following aspects in every country involved:

- Ethnic and religious discrimination
- Extreme and relative poverty
- Occupational inequality
- Food insecurity
- Radicalization
- Internal displacement
- Forced migration

Figure 7.2. Trade composition in West Africa, 2016



Source: Authors' calculations based on UNCOMTRADE (2017) data.
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933784064>

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AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT DYNAMICS 2018: GROWTH, JOBS AND INEQUALITIES © AUC/OECD 2018

Figure 9, Trade Composition in West Africa, 2016, UNCOMTRADE 2017.

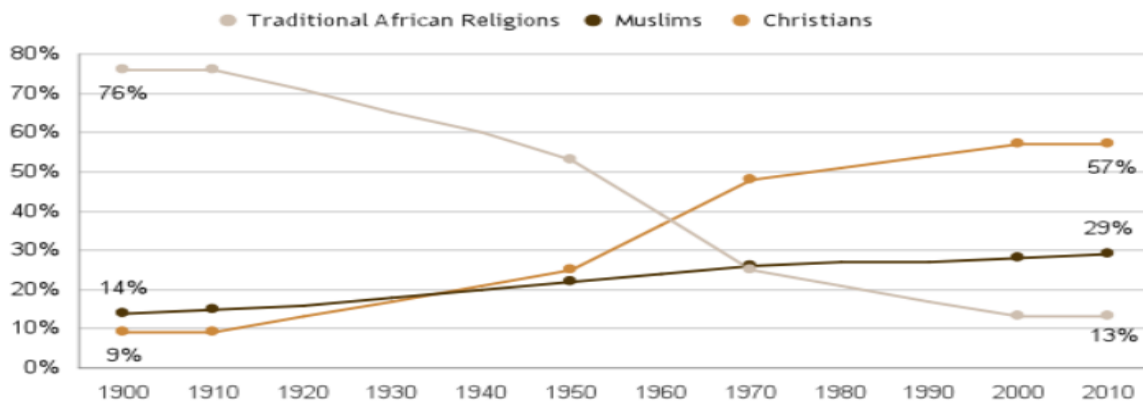
III. Religious aspects

The religious aspect is strongly characterized in all the societies of West Africa. In fact, religion does not only influence purely spiritual dynamics but also acts as a social regulator within communities strongly interconnected by structural dynamics unique in the world. Religion is often used as a source of hope in rural areas but it can also involve the pretext for forms of radicalization that can change the priorities and the feeling of specific fringes of the population.

The main axes of religious analysis within African context always regard the following 3 major religions:

- **Christianity:** Christianity represents one of the two main religions that divide the Sahelian world and the area of West Africa. The Christian religion is divided into numerous churches, especially of Protestant denominations, including Baptist and the Evangelist (local churches of other denominations are also very common). In certain territories, such as northern Nigeria, the triggers that lead to violent tensions also stem from religious as well as ethnic factors.
- **Islam:** Islam is, together with Christianity, the main source of spiritual inspiration for the people of the Sahel and West Africa. It attests to its ultra-widespread presence in almost every state in its Sunni school. In some countries such as Mali or Senegal, Islam takes on particular and unique forms thanks to a mixture of local faiths prior to the spread of Arab-Sunni. In some disadvantaged areas, also thanks to the development of terrorist groups, the faith is taken to its extremes to embrace the fringes of a jihadist matrix in search of greater political and economic weight by the faithful.

Growth of Islam & Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa Since 1900



Source: World Religion Database. Historical data draw on government records, historical atlases and reports of religious organizations at the time. Later figures draw on U.N. population estimates, surveys and censuses.

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, April 2010

Figure 9, World Religion Database, Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2010.

- Traditional religion and syncretism:** Traditional African religions are a complex subject with a difficult objective definition. Often defined as "natural religion", these ancestral and unwritten forms of magical and spiritual beliefs represent the substratum religion that influences every other religious form present on the territory as far as local communities are concerned. This extremely common dual religious affiliation is defined as "syncretism".

d. Economic Analysis for the European Union of the Sahel: Economic Development, Unemployment, Impact of Covid, Tertiary and Agriculture, Growth Prospects (Lesti)

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the countries of the Sahel, in 2021 the countries of the region experienced a significant recovery in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) concerning the growth of the different groupings of countries. In the oil exporting countries (Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria), the GDP contracted by 2.0% in 2021, while the estimates for 2022 gave a recovery of 3.7% due to the increase in the cost of hydrocarbons (UNESCO, 2022). In resource-intensive economies (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger), as the prices of natural resources and exports rise, growth of 4.8% is expected in 2022, following a contraction of 0.1 % in 2020 (UNESCO, 2022). Growth in Sahel countries was not inclusive in 2021 and on average 62.6% of the population is multidimensionally poor (UNDP, 2021).

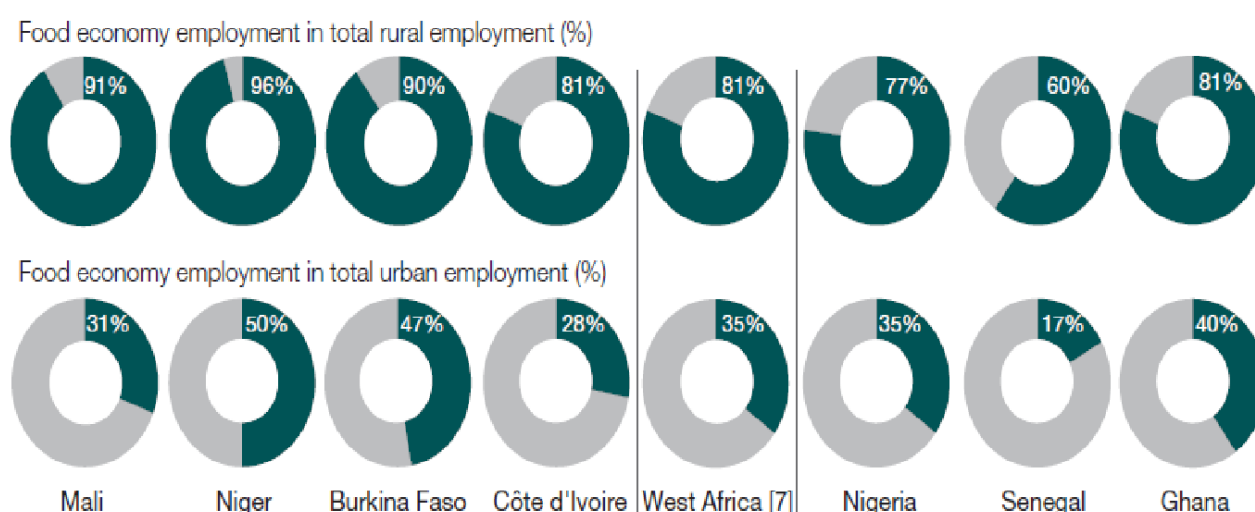
In the context of chronic poverty and high demographic growth, insecurity and the negative impacts of climate change have remained key factors in the growing food insecurity in the Sahel. This has seriously affected both the local populations and the agro-forestry-pastoral landscapes of the Sahel, aggravating food and nutritional insecurity and compromising the sustainability of livelihoods (UNESCO, 2022).

The sector accounts for 66% of total employment, with 78% of agricultural workers employed (OECD, 2018). The other sectors of the food economy - food processing, food marketing, and out-of-home food - account for

22% of the employment in the sector (OECD, 2018). Non-agricultural jobs in the food sector also represent an important employment sector. The three segments of food marketing, food processing, and food away from home, represent 22% of the total employment of the food economy at the regional level, employing, respectively 15%, 5%, and 2% of the workforce (OECD, 2018).

These sectors combined account for 31% of total non-agricultural employment in the region (OECD, 2018). In terms of non-agricultural employment in the food sector at the regional level the percentages of employed are (OECD, 2018): food processing 30%; food marketing over 70%; transport, storage, wholesale, and retail trade 27%; food outside the home 10%. Below are the employment data in the food sector in rural and urban areas.

Share of food economy employment in total employment by location



Source: Authors' calculations based on ANSD (2015), World Bank (2017a), INS (2012).

Figure 10, *Agriculture, Food And Jobs In West Africa*, *West African Papers*, April 2018 No. 14, OECD Publishing.

The Sahel region, and Africa in general, offer a wide range of resources and raw materials related to the following sectors: Energy, Industrial Minerals (NATO SDSH, 2019). China, Russia, the United States, and some European countries are the main importers of African products, but not all actors have the same interests or capabilities. China, for example, is extremely interested in economic domination but less in security, given the geographical distance from Africa. European countries, on the other hand, are more interested in both economic and security dominance due to their proximity to the African continent. In detail, the main sectors of African raw materials object of interest by international players are:

- **Energy Resources.** Regarding energy resources, a further subdivision into three strategic resources is necessary: oil, gas, and uranium. The oil market is changing, and shale oil and new reserves make this economic sector increasingly uncertain. Africa accounts for a good share of world oil exports and African producers represent a viable alternative to the Persian Gulf to ensure a reliable and accessible oil supply. Evidence of this relevance is the large number of foreign oil companies involved in Africa, mainly from the United States, Europe, and China. (NATO SDSH, 2019). African gas, particularly North African gas,

is becoming increasingly relevant on the mainstream geopolitical scene. North African gas represents an alternative to a part of Russian gas as it was identified in the report "Energy as a tool of the foreign policy of authoritarian states, in particular, Russia" (European Parliament, 2018), which also recommended "Supporting the exploitation of new gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean". The recent conflict in Ukraine has made gas supply from various African states even more strategic. This makes African gas, today even more than in the past, an object of geopolitical struggle involving actors interested in the mere control of this strategic resource. (NATO SDSH, 2019). Uranium is found only in certain geographic areas and its demand is on the rise. Also extracted in Africa, uranium statistics show African uranium reserves amount to around 888,000 tons, with Niger being the 4th largest producer in the world. (NATO SDSH, 2019).

HYDROCARBONS

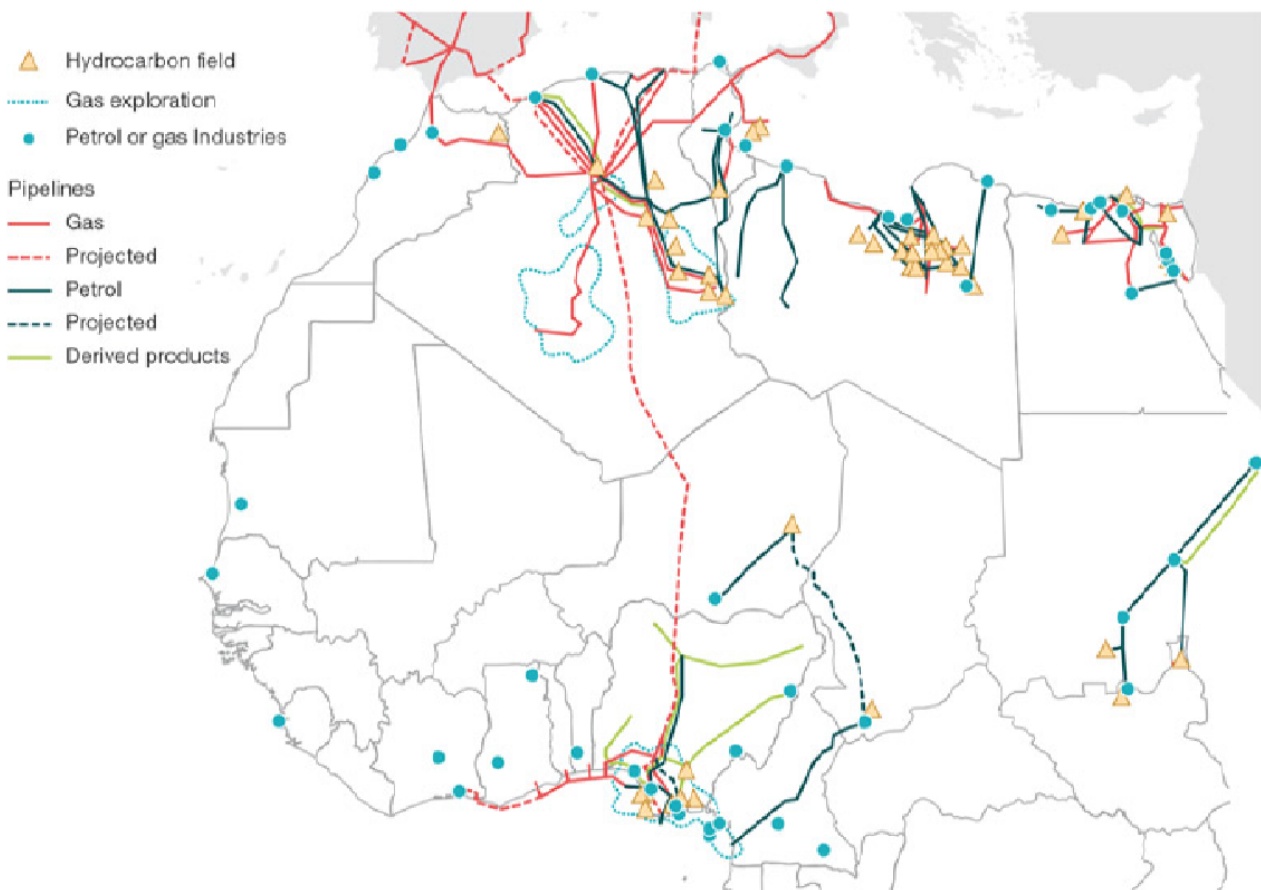


Figure 11, *An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics, and Security*, OECD Publishing, 2014.

- **Industrial Minerals.** Africa has for years been one of the theatres of global competition for the mineral resources it possesses. The Sahel is no exception, being one of the richest regions in the world in terms of natural resources. In addition to the hydrocarbon and uranium reserves previously described, the region is also rich in gold, phosphates, diamonds, copper, iron, bauxite, and precious wood (UN Support Plan For The Sahel, 2018).

METALS AND MINERALS

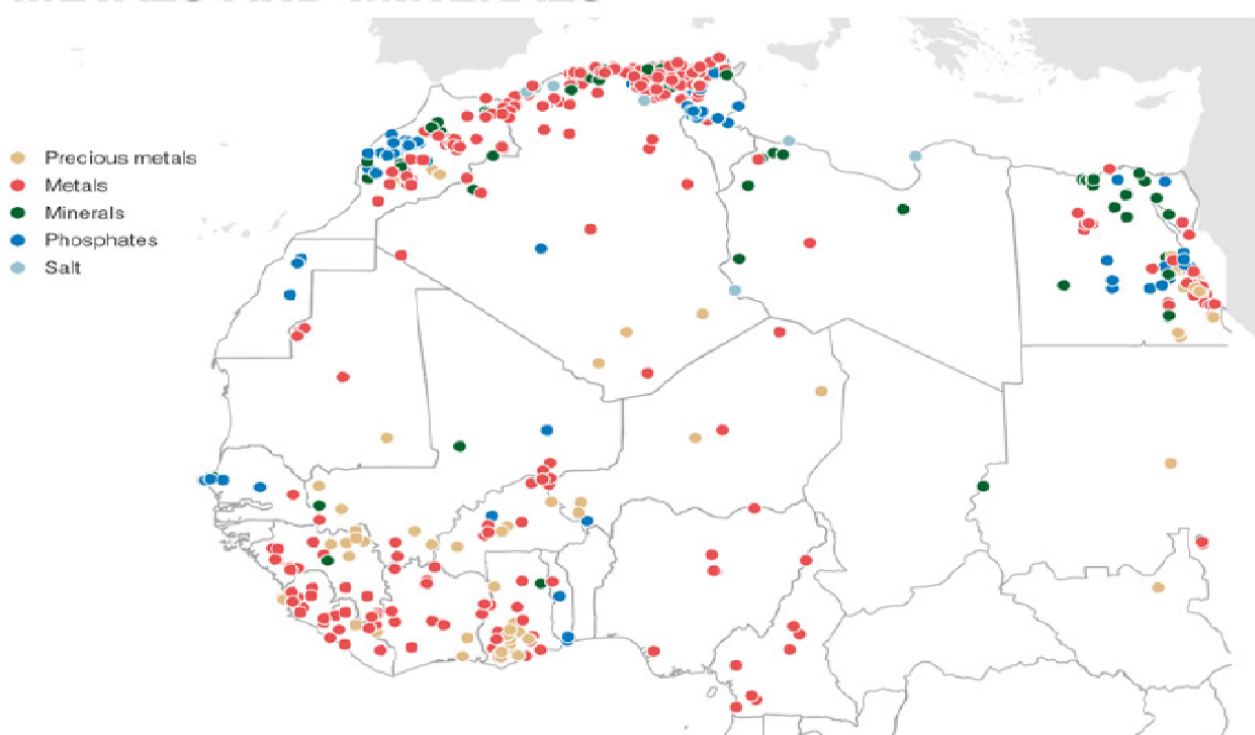


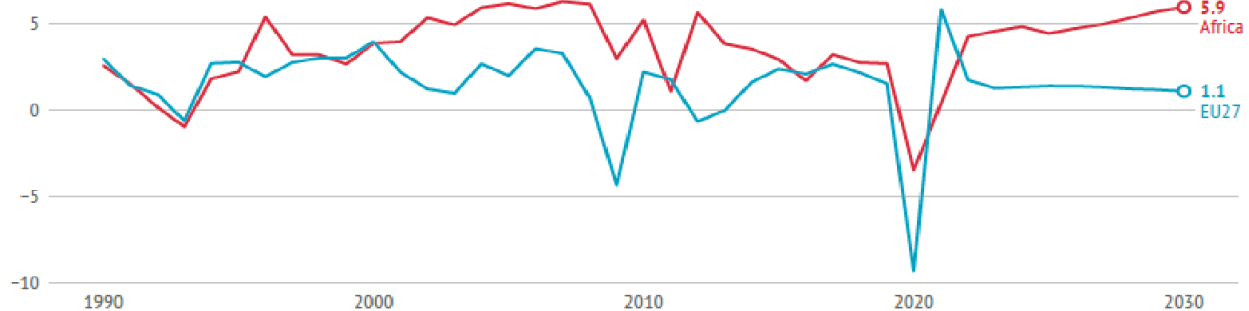
Figure 12, *An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics, and Security*, OECD Publishing, 2014.

A major break in the continent's economic development is given by unemployment and the problems of the labour market. In sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) is 19% (NATO SDSH, 2021). The continent and the Sahelian region need to find ways to accelerate job creation for young people in the formal sector of the economy. Without significantly higher rates of economic growth, it will not be able to reduce the size of the informal sector and unemployment in general. Since Covid-19 hit Africa after China and Europe in mid-2020, the continent has suffered a double blow (EU ISS, 2021).

The effects of the global economic downturn were felt first when Africa's main trading and tourism partners closed their borders. Then, in 2021, came the impact of the pandemic on its national economies with the acceleration of infections and deaths. Compared to the IMF's pre-Covid-19 growth forecast, Covid-19 led to losses of approximately \$ 200 billion from the African economy in 2020 alone. About 14 million more Africans fell into extreme poverty than previously predicted, making it clear the pandemic could undo a decade of development progress.

GDP growth

Africa and the EU27, 1990–2030, %

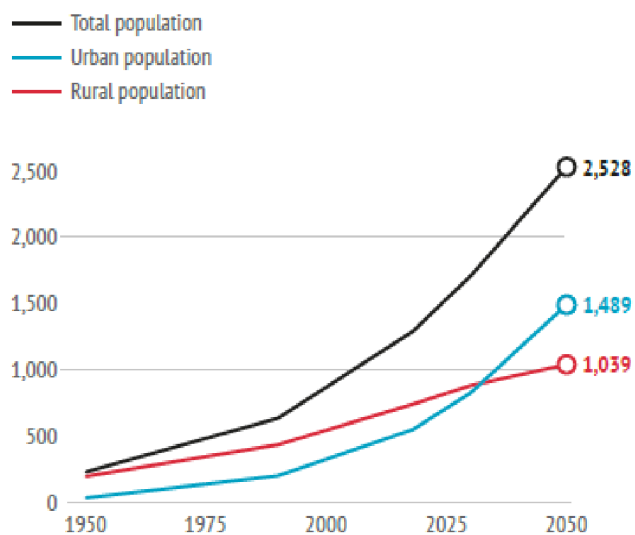


Data: History from IMF; Forecast in International Futures (Ifs) v 7.45 (University of Denver)

Figure 13, *African Futures 2030, Free trade, peace and prosperity*, Chaillolt Paper / 164, European Union Institute for Security Studies, February 2021.

Urban-rural population balance

Africa, 1950–2050, million



Data: UNDESA, 2018

For the economic development of the Sahelian region and the continent in general, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is the most ambitious economic integration project of the AU's Agenda 2063. To this end, the AfCFTA members have agreed to liberalize at least 97% of the tariff lines (EU ISS, 2021).

The AfCFTA is a framework agreement that covers trade in goods and services, including the following protocols: Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Dispute Resolution, Investments, Intellectual Property Rights, and Competition Policy. In the context of this economic cooperation agreement, some challenges are central to the continent's economic development.

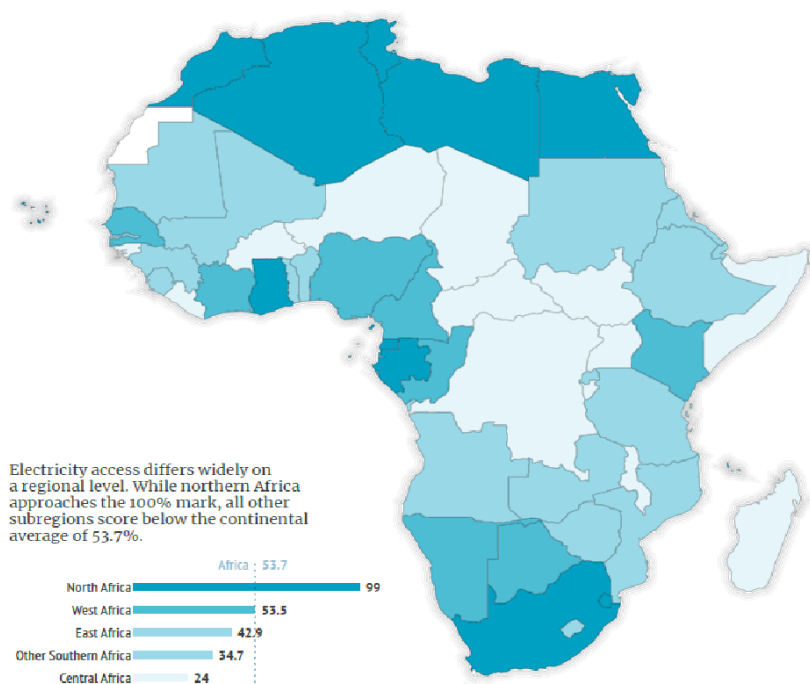
One of these is to responsibly manage growing urbanization: city dwellers are expected to be 824 million in 2030 and 1.5 billion in 2050 (EU ISS, 2021). Urbanization in Africa is only partially driven by rural-urban migration: 60% of urban population growth comes from the predominance of births over deaths in urban areas.

The structure of African cities hinders economic reforms that should underpin the AfCFTA, thus preventing job creation of work and the industrialization process that underlies beneficial urbanization (EU ISS, 2021).

Figure 14, *African Futures 2030, Free trade, peace and prosperity*, Chaillolt Paper / 164, European Union Institute for Security Studies, February 2021

Electricity access Africa, 2018

Percent
0-25 25-50 50-75 75-100



Data: International Energy Agency (IEA), 2019; Natural Earth, 2020

Figure 15, *African Futures 2030, Free trade, peace and prosperity*, Chaillolt Paper / 164, European Union Institute for Security Studies, February 2021.

Another critical aspect of the development of the Sahel region is the lack of sustainable energy supplies, especially limited access to electricity services.

The continental situation is extremely heterogeneous and characterized by an enormous north-south divide. In North Africa, access to energy is almost universal, while in sub-Saharan Africa, except in South Africa, the access rate to electricity is dramatically low. In Central and Southern Africa, respectively, 76% and 65% of the population still do not have access to any type of

electricity service, while there are signs of progress in East and West Africa, with electricity reaching only about half of the population (EU ISS, 2021).

This situation has enormous implications for the daily life of Africans, as access to reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity services is a key factor for human progress, economic development, peace and stability, and continental integration. Several sectors are negatively affected by low electrification rates: from trade to industrial development, from water distribution to food management, and from education to health.

Demographic expansion is a key trend with fundamental implications for the continent's energy profile. Concerning sub-Saharan Africa, its population is currently growing by 2.7% per year. As a result, 77% of the African population is currently under 35 and has a growing appetite for modern and efficient energy sources, driven by the demand for industrial production, communications and connectivity, cooling, and mobility (EU ISS, 2021). Significantly, this growth is concentrated in urban areas, making sub-Saharan Africa the fastest-urbanizing region in the world. Today, the 143 cities in sub-Saharan Africa generate a total of 0.5 trillion dollars per year, for a total of 50% of the region's GDP, representing most of the current and future energy demand (EU ISS, 2021).

The EU and Africa have a strong relationship, whose strategic importance has grown in a dynamic geopolitical context. The EU, together with its Member States, is Africa's largest trading partner, as well as its main source of foreign investment, Official Development Assistance (ODA), and humanitarian aid. In 2019, the EU and its

Member States invested € 75.2 billion in ODA, 55.2% of total global assistance (European Parliament, 2021). According to the European Commission, the total trade in goods between the EU-27 and Africa in 2018 was € 235 billion, while Africa's total trade in goods with the EU-27 in 2020 attested to 25.6% (European Parliament, 2021).

To support the development of the African continent and common interests, the Union has launched the EU-Africa Global Gateway initiative, a program that includes a € 150 billion aid package to support Africa's development in the following sectors: green transition; digital transition; sustainable growth and decent job creation; strengthen health systems; improve education and training (European Commission, 2022). The investment package will be implemented through Team Europe initiatives, where the EU, its Member States, and European financial institutions will work together in the following (European Commission, 2022):

- Accelerate the Green Transition. Support for sustainable energy to increase the share of renewable energy, improve access to economically accessible, reliable, and sustainable energy sources, and supporting market integration and reforms in the energy sector. Creation of sustainable agri-food systems, supporting the agri-food and processing of fishery products.
- Accelerate the Digital Transition. Proceed to strengthen secure digital connections between Europe and Africa and across the African continent. The investment package will facilitate projects involving submarine and terrestrial fiber optic cables as well as cloud and data infrastructures.
- Accelerating Sustainable Growth and Creating Decent Jobs. The aid package will strengthen the transport system, mobility, and trade within Africa and between Africa and Europe, by developing strategic corridors and multinational transport infrastructures. It will support new businesses to consolidate and develop sustainable, solid, and inclusive ventures. It will also support initiatives for African economic integration, such as the African project of the AfCFTA as a continental trading and investment system. Furthermore, it will give assistance to African partners to extract mineral raw materials and give them added value at the local level.
- Investing in education and training. Support African partners in offering modern and quality education and training, helping to provide training that matches the opportunities offered on the job market. Team Europe will strengthen the mobility of young Africans, with programs such as Erasmus +, scholarships, and internships, with funding of € 970 million.
- Contribute to Sustainable Financing for Growth. The Global Gateway investment package includes bilateral help from the EU and its member states, grants, and loans. The project will also attract private funding, while the EU will help mobilize investment by sharing the related risks. Partner countries will be supported in developing and expanding green bond markets. The redistribution of part of the EU's special drawing rights in favor of Africa is planned. Rights will be transferred from EU member states voluntarily through the Trust Fund for Poverty Reduction and Growth and the Trust Fund for Resilience and Sustainability of the IMF.

f. Climate Change and the Impact on Society, the Economy, Health and Migration. The Correlation Between Safety and the Climate (Silvestri)

Desertification and the widespread water crisis are just some of the many aspects characterizing the complex territorial and environmental nature of the Sahel and the basin of Lake Chad. We will analyze in detail some typical aspects of these areas, which are strongly affected every year by the effects of climate change and the increase in average temperatures. The most significant environmental shocks of recent years, caused both by human beings and by independent factors, will also be considered. (UNCCD, 2014).

The Sahelian region represents a transition between the northern desert and the forests of sub-Saharan Africa. Environmental factors may deeply affect not only the actual state of agriculture and, therefore, food security within the country but also the trans-regional security state for the population. Scientific evidence has not yet shown a direct correlation between the worsening climatic conditions and the rise of armed conflicts within the Region, although suspicion of a correlational relationship remains high among scholars and researchers.



Map showing the extent of the Sahel region of Africa.

Figure 16, World Atlas, Sahel. (<https://www.worldatlas.com/regions/sahel-of-africa.html>)

I. Desertification

Within the many worrying aspects of climate change in the Sahelian strip, the theme of desertification is crucial for the international agendas of the major institutions such as the European Union, NATO, and the specialized UN agencies such as WFP, FAO, IFAD, and UNDP.

“Environmental security policies in the Sahel are, by and large, shaped by policy, military and non-governmental organisation (NGO) actors who appear to see limited added value in the inputs of social science. As a result, climate change mitigation and environmental protection measures in the region have mostly failed to keep up with the standards of evidence-based policymaking.” (ISS, 2020)

The progress of the Sahelian strip within the African continent is an important indicator to be taken into account during the coming years. Although the data is still relatively mixed in some studies, it is very important to remember that most of the problems related to the poor performance of agriculture and the consequent malnutrition that leads the population to crime or migrate abroad derive largely from problems related to poor soil performance, increasingly sandy and quickly permeable to water (UNCCD, 2014).

Several studies show how the **Sahelian Line** is constantly broadening (UNCCD, 2014). The issue of the desertification process does not only involve the Sahelian strip but also the rest of the African continent and related interested powers. The following map shows how the line has spread during the last few crucial years:



Figure 17, Reto Stöckli, NASA Earth Observatory.

II. Water Scarcity

Water scarcity is of great concern to the Sahelian countries. Most of the agricultural development depends on water sources which are constantly being depleted by complex geo-climatical factors along with human activities which speed the degenerative process of certain dynamics.

The Sahel and, more generally, the western area of the African continent are subject to profound geomorphological changes due to the water distribution on the Earth's surface. This particular condition depends largely on geographical and topographical factors of the territory but also in large part on the socio-cultural habits through which the population perceives and changes the environment.

These particular factors are added to the innovations brought to the area by global climate change and the increase in general temperatures. Such shifts in the delicate climate composed of hybrid seasons of the Sahel

risk upsetting an already very complex territory in its geothermal balance and in its rainfall stocks, central in the management of transhumant livestock farming and rotation agriculture.

III. Lake Chad Basin

The Lake Chad basin is one of the largest water sources in West Africa. It borders 4 deeply strategic countries in the area: namely Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and of course the State of Chad itself. Due to complex climatic factors, water capacity in the lake has significantly varied during the last decades, although scholars and researchers have not yet understood the main reason behind the fluctuations. Nevertheless, the issue of a poor water supply in Lake Chad is a crucial matter to be addressed before it may cause further damage in West Africa.

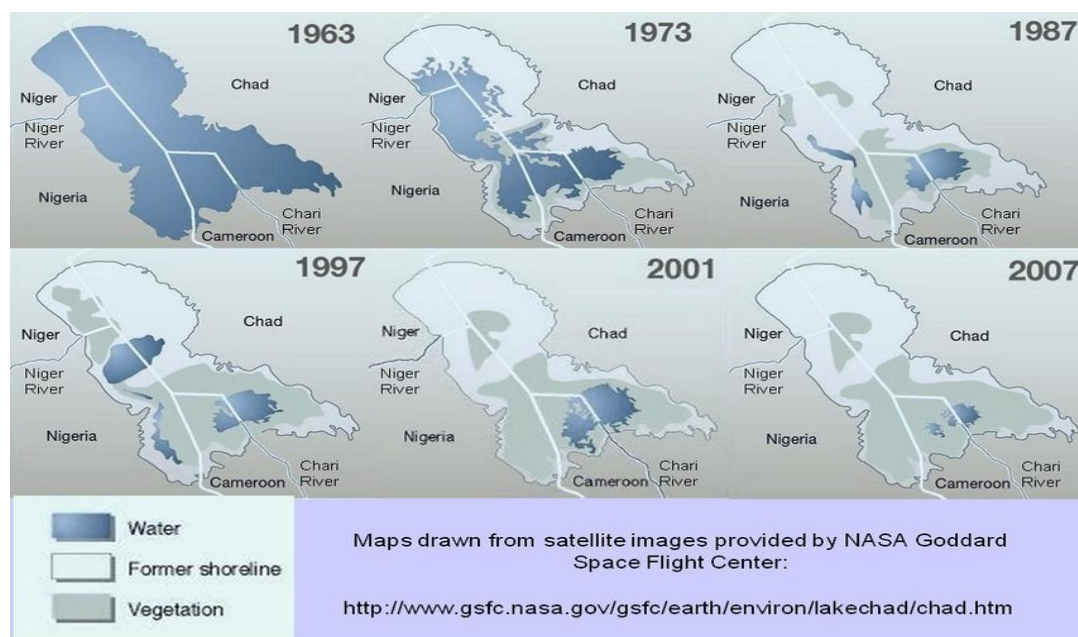


Figure 18, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.

IV. Food Security

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. (World Food Summit, 1996)

The definition is widely accepted throughout the international institutional community and highlights how food is also and above all a social and environmental fact. Without the right territorial characteristics and without the right agricultural social structure it is impossible to produce, distribute, and trade quality food, in the right quantities and at affordable prices for each local population.

The **following 4 phases** of true food security regard each region of the world and most of them are not fulfilled in the virtual totality of all Sahelian and West African countries:

- **Food access:** Access by individuals to adequate resources for acquiring appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Entitlements are defined as the set of all commodity bundles over which a person can establish command given the legal, political, economic, and social arrangements of their community.
- **Food availability:** The availability of adequate quantities of food of appropriate quality, provided by national production or imports (including food aid).
- **Utilization:** The use of food through adequate nutrition, clean water, sanitation, and healthcare to achieve a state of nutritional well-being where all physiological needs are met.
- **Stability:** To be food secure, a population must have access to adequate food at all times. They should not risk losing access to food as a consequence of sudden shocks or cyclical climatical events. (World Food Summit, 1996)

Pastoralism and agriculture play a fundamental role in the production of reliable food in all societies worldwide, and in particular in the Sahel. Unfortunately, the two production systems are deeply intertwined and in constant competition for the Sahelian soil and resources. Climate change is rapidly changing the very nature of many ancestral traditions over the management of food distribution, and oftentimes violent escalations rise from farmer-herders confrontations:

“Violence between Nigerian herders and farmers has escalated, killing more than 1,300 people since January 2018. The conflict has evolved from spontaneous reactions to provocations and now to deadlier planned attacks, particularly in Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Nasarawa and Taraba states”. (Crisis Group, 2018).

Meanwhile, absolute and relative **malnutrition** is still an enormous problem in the Sahelian area since the fast demographic growth and continuous internal and external migrations are leading large portions of the population to urban areas where alimentary distribution is insufficient and sometimes slow.



Figure 19, United Nations, SDGs.

g. Recommendation

1. Security and Economic Aspects (Lesti)

The Sahel region faces several complex regional economic development and security challenges, which are essential for restoring stability and prosperity to this part of the African continent. The threat of jihadist terrorism is certainly the main factor of instability, with consequences that also affect other critical aspects such as the economic and social development of the region. Despite the long French military intervention in Mali, and the presence of various EU and UN missions, the security situation has not improved and remains critical especially in the region where the borders of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso meet.

The connivance between the Qaedist and Islamic jihadist movements is strong in some areas, as they exploit conflicts between local communities and the absence of the central state. JNIM and ISGS, although they have different approaches to the relationship with the population and the modalities and extent of the implementation of Sharia, use informal governance as a tool to obtain and maintain control over new territories and populations. State authorities and the international community are seen as the main enemies. Even though JNIM and ISGS entered into conflict with each other in 2020, this clash has only led to a brief interruption of their activities against local governments and international military units.

The growing threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea must be added to jihadist terrorism, which puts trade routes in that strategic region at risk, as well as compromising access to one of the main sources of economic development in the region, given the need for the Sahel to have access to the coastal regions of West Africa.

The economy of the Sahelian region is highly varied, ranging from pastoralism and agriculture to natural resource markets that allow a certain degree of development, especially for those countries who hold crucial energy resources. There is a considerable amount of literature on commodities in Africa, focusing on the causal relationship between conflict and natural resources and also on the strategies employed by emerging external actors. However, the current situation could change rapidly. On the one hand, some variations can reduce the risk of conflict; the use of new materials in advanced technology can make strategic minerals and rare earth irrelevant, and new resources can be discovered in the immense and relatively unexplored regions of Africa. On the other hand, other alterations can increase the likelihood of conflict: interruptions in the supply of hydrocarbons can cause African reserves to become the most strategic resource.

The agricultural and food processing economy is the region's largest employer, and its potential will continue to grow as population, urbanization, and income grow. The potential exists to increase agricultural productivity and provide decent livelihoods.

The economic development of the region must deal with the growth of the urban population and the need to guarantee adequate access to the electricity grid, which is to the energy sources necessary to support production activities and the same urbanization and related services.

Linked to the economic development of the region is also the increase in education and professionalization of the population to promote stable and balanced growth. Given the expected population growth over the next 30 years and the initial structural difficulties, Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the most significant challenges in youth education and employment. The region will have to prioritize investment in education to ensure strong, sustainable, and inclusive growth, which is essential for stability.

Furthermore, the economy of the Sahel has always developed through autonomous structures as opposed to the traditional state ones, which have allowed the trade of goods of all kinds. This area has become in recent years one of the most important hubs for the fusion of transnational organized crime, terrorism, and trafficking networks. This illegal economy has ensured minimal economic support to local communities, fuelling the finances of terrorist groups, and strengthening local and international illegal activities. Furthermore, terrorist groups seem to consolidate their ties with local tribes by conducting increasingly social and welfare functions in the place of the states which mainly propose only a “strong action” and are not yet able to offer together a valid development alternative.

The informal economy of the Sahelian region is also fuelled by the migratory flow that crosses this region towards the Mediterranean and Europe. Although the crossing of the region is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive for those who undertake the journey, this has not reduced the influx of migrants in transit. On the contrary, the growing difficulty in entering Libya and crossing the country to Italy has pushed traffickers in their countries of origin to other business models. This includes the connection with new destinations but has also led to the mixing of various forms of trafficking in human beings no longer linked only to the migratory aspect. The data suggests that exploitation and abuse are widespread in Niger, Mali, Algeria, and Libya. Collusion between traffickers and government officials and traffickers and government officials is commonly reported and often facilitates abuse.

An element that has recently been gaining economic and political weight in the Sahelian region is the penetration of Russia. Arms exports are part of Russia’s economic and political strategies and, a tool to strengthen or even create an asymmetrical relationship in which Russia has the upper hand. Despite highly publicized actions, Russia is still a minor player in Africa, as its policies are elite- rather than population-oriented. Russia relies on and seeks favor from local rulers, including dictators, who often engage in corruption.

This pragmatic policy focuses on short-term gains and consequently does not provide long-term stability to the continent. In the short term, Russia’s operations and agreements in sub-Saharan Africa will not pose a direct threat to Europe but could undermine the EU’s interests and its external action. Eventually, if Russia were to strengthen its influence, the implications for Europe could become increasingly negative. As the expulsion of TF Takuba troops from Mali demonstrated, Russian soft power and disinformation campaigns help fuel anti-Western sentiment and hinder democratization and good governance throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Social and Environmental Aspects (Silvestri)

Retracing the individual elements analyzed within the text is useful to draw useful insights to trace possible scenarios for future development in the environmental and ecological sector. Within the analysis it has been repeatedly proposed that most of the environmental issues do not concern us only because of a mere ecological problem but also and above all of the pull factors that determined climatic and territorial conditions might generate against civil society and the States under analysis.

Issues such as social inequality, exclusion, terrorism, and organized crime are strongly influenced by the environmental aspects in the sub-Saharan area and therefore need to be constantly monitored in order to take useful, sustainable, and timely countermeasures.

h. The Challenges for the European Union in the Sahel Quadrant: the New Strategic Priorities

After summarizing the complex overall picture that afflicts the Sahel region in a transversal manner in all its aspects of security, development, and stability, some proposals are presented below to make the EU's action more effective in the strategic region subject to this analysis.

1. Comprehensive Regional Approach

In the face of the challenge posed by the Sahel, the EU must review its method of intervention. It is no longer sustainable to maintain multiple political, military, and economic interventions in the region that fail to have a global impact on the region. It is necessary to be inspired by the UN, planning an intervention that is integrated into all its components.

It is necessary to renew the political-diplomatic approach that takes local development into account, support that does not turn into a presence that evokes the ghosts of the colonial past. A far-reaching and unified effort is needed, which actively involves all state, international and humanitarian actors who have an interest in acting in the Sahel. Military, political-diplomatic, economic, and social dress must be coordinated to maximize the resources of the subjects involved and create a critical mass to achieve a concrete result.

The EU has the theoretical and practical skills to develop an integrated mission concept, adaptable to the scarce military resources that can be used and capable of exploiting the experience gained in economic-political assistance and cooperation with African states. With this in mind, the support of those Member States operating in the region and having the pulse of the situation and the risks connected to it, primarily Italy and France, must be mobilized, also promoting forms of enhanced cooperation.

Attention must be placed on advising, assisting, and accompanying regional states in a path that puts their needs at the center, in particular by acting on the solution of the socio-economic imbalances that are the basis of support for local jihadist and criminal movements, promoting social development which is the driving force for the subsequent growth of the political and economic institutions of the region.

With this in mind, the EU RACC SAHEL mission could be reconfigured as an integrated instrument of action that acts as a center for coordinating cooperation between the EU, Member States, and International and Humanitarian Organizations already operational or with an interest in doing so in this region. The coordination of hitherto autonomous initiatives is also part of the revision of the EU's approach to the Sahel, which must be oriented towards a more comprehensive and comprehensive approach than in the past.

2. Piracy

Given the importance of the Gulf of Guinea for the economic development of the Sahel, representing for many countries the closest sea route for exports as well as an important food reserve, the threat posed by piracy should not be taken lightly.

This stretch of sea is also becoming central to global commercial traffic, so much so that the Member States have set up their naval presence in the area. In the future, given that the EU itself plans to strengthen its naval presence in the area, the establishment of a lasting and articulated deployment should be considered, on the model of what has been done for the Horn of Africa.

Furthermore, given that the coastal countries of West Africa have their coordination tool through the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Safety and Security, the EU can cooperate with this system to provide assistance, training, and even resources otherwise not available at the local level.

3. Cultural Diplomacy

Another aspect in which action is needed is the fight against Russian diplomatic-military penetration in the region, a factor that has increased the instability of the Sahel and Mali in particular. Although Moscow has been successful in promoting friendly elites in power, the impact on the military level has been limited and indeed counterproductive.

It is necessary to counteract the Russian narrative that rides the anti-colonial sentiment of local populations, showing a new course no longer entrusted to the actions of individual Member States but to collective action aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the populations, exploiting the financial instruments of which the EU is equipped.

In this regard, the tools relating to cultural cooperation, such as student exchanges and the possibility of conducting periods of study on the European territory, represent a useful tool for the formation of a potential ruling class that is not hostile towards the Western presence.

4. Military Aspects

For the aspects relating to security, both in the fight against jihadism and local crime dedicated to international trafficking, the EU must review its approach to make it more effective. Given the limited military resources

that can be used at the Community level, it is necessary to involve the Member States that have an active role in the Sahel in the missions in progress.

A new location and a new mandate must be found for the French-led TF Takuba, not to forget the MISIN mission conducted by Italy in Niger. These interventions must be harmonized and must lead to processes of enhanced collaboration between the EU Member States, to also involve other interested state actors.

The control and elimination of jihadism is an essential step to restoring peace to the Sahel and promoting its development, even more so if we consider that terrorism is interconnected with local criminals engaged in the trafficking of various illegal goods, first of all. all trafficking in human beings.

The problem of the migratory phenomenon, now increasingly linked to economic purposes that partly finance Sahelian jihadism, has direct repercussions on the policies of some EU members, as well as constituting a potential pressure weapon part of Russia which is now present in areas affected by these phenomena.

The past interventions in the Sahel and West Africa area by major international institutions have brought positive effects and dynamics in many sectors. Unfortunately, the environment still has many limitations and causes considerable concern in the region, which is why new proposals need to be planned, discussed and implemented.

1. Lake Chad Basin

The strategic importance of Lake Chad as a water catchment area and as a border location in deeply unstable areas cannot be overlooked in the near and distant future.

The great weakness of the continuous changes in water flow is that they have not yet been completed from a scientific and geological point of view; the scarcity and cyclicity of water in the lake does not necessarily imply an unequivocal signal of climate change per se but can be seen as a multifactorial element of derived instability.

In order to constantly monitor the development of the situation in Lake Chad we propose to establish strong multilateral agreements involving the countries concerned in order to create a communications bridge between the ethnicities that inhabit the shores of the lake and the institutions themselves, so as to gather objective information from those living around the economy of the Lake Chad basin.

2. Great Green Walls Initiatives

The major reforestation initiatives which have affected the Sahel have had uneven effects in the different areas because of a complex set of environmental and social factors.

Reforestation of areas surrounding the desert should continue and be further enhanced mainly by two actions that can be linked to rural development projects or similar at both international and local levels.

However, the operations of reforestation and sustainable and conscious cultivation must be supported by local communities, be they peasant or pastoral.

In addition to the planting practices themselves, proper monitoring should be provided to understand which areas are best suited to the different plants that can be used in projects of this type.

3. Local Empowerment and ownership

Encouraging belonging to ecological and innovative ideas in the field of environmental sustainability requires concrete actions that start from policies already established a priori and that are then scalable and adaptable in complex local realities such as those of the Sahelian countries.

To this end, we propose the creation of multiplication and dissemination hubs of the most innovative and up-to-date policies of the European Commission and the United Nations in the field of sustainability.

These hubs, which were initially operated as bilateral institutions and then made independent at the local level, would promote mainstream and later popular political dissemination of practices related to the reduction of waste, recycling, and respect for biodiversity.

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