

Sustainability, Stability and Security   
in Africa: Key Findings in the Sahel

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# Acronyms

ACCORD The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes

ACMAD African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development

AFDB African Development Bank

AFRIMETS Intra-Africa Metrology System

AGN-GAIN Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Index

AGRHYMET Centre Regional de Formation et d'Application en Agrométéorologie et Hydrologie Opérationnelle

APSA African Peace and Security Architecture

AQIM Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

AU African Union

AUPSC African Union Peace and Security Council

BMBF Federal Ministry of Education and Research

CASSIS Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies

CCCPA Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

CILSS Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel

CO2 Carbon dioxide

COVID-19 Coronavirus Disease 2019

COP Conference of the Parties

CSA Climate Smart Agriculture

DOD United States Department of Defense

EBRD European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

ECHO European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States

ESDP European Security and Defense Policy

ESSDS European Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel

EU European Union

EUCAP European Union Capacity Building Mission in Mali

EUTM Mali European Union Training Mission in Mali

FES Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

GCCA+ Global Climate Alliance Plus

GCM Global Compact for Migration

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GFC Global Climate Fund

GGW Great Green Wall

GHG Greenhouse gas

GSP Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik e.V

ICG International Crisis Group

IcSP Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace

IEA International Energy Agency

IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development

IOM International Organization for Migration

IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

ISGS Islamic State in the Greater Sahara

JNIM Jama'at Nusrat Al Islam Wal Muslimin

LCBC Lake Chad Basin Commission

LDN Land Degradation Neutrality

MIDWA Migration Dialogue for West Africa

MKW Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhein-Westphalia

ODA Official Development Assistance

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ROs Regional Organisations

RSCT Regional Security Complex Theory

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

SEF Development and Peace Foundation

3S Sustainability, Stability and Security

UK United Kingdom

UN United Nations

UNCCD United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNECA United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UNISS United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel

UNOWAS United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

UNU United Nations University

US United States

USAID United States Agency for International Development

USD United States Dollar

WAEMU West African Economic and Monetary Union

ZEF Center for Development Research

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# Executive Summary

In recent times, several geopolitical developments have stressed the importance of the Sahel region to sustainability, stability and security issues. The region faces the threats of sustainability, instability, and insecurity simultaneously. This report is anchored by a comprehensive and detailed analysis of three pillars of sustainability, stability and security in the Sahel, including climate change, security and migration. The intersections of climate change, security and migration, as mutually reinforcing constitutive elements, have scantly received scholarly and policy attention in the Sahel region. These issues, which are by nature traditional and non-traditional security threats, are considered threats in a landscape that has been described as transnational.

Strengthening relations with African countries has been of strategic importance for the European Union due to the pressing global challenges and the increasing geopolitical importance of the African continent, particularly the Sahel region as a hotspot for climate change, insecurity and instability, migration, extremism, terrorism, rapid population growth and rapid urbanisation. More importantly, the European Union has remained a critical partner of Africa in addressing these issues. Concerned by threats that these issues pose to traditional and non-traditional security, the Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security (3S Initiative) was launched to address Africa's daunting sustainability, stability, and security issues. The report seeks to reflect upon the current situation in the Sahel regarding non-traditional security challenges, particularly issues of sustainability, stability, and security. The objective is to analyze the intersections of climate change, migration and security and their impact on EU-Africa relations. The main goal is to enhance evidence on climate change security and migration.

The study draws upon climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ and a ‘wicked problem’ to show the various dimensions of securitization and their deleterious ramifications in the Sahel region, one of the hardest hit by climate change. As a threat multiplier and wicked problem, climate change is driving instability, triggering displacement and migration, worsening existing conflicts and threatening national, regional, and global security. Building on the qualitative method, the gathered data was collected through interviews via remote technology such as telephone, Zoom, Skype, and Microsoft Team. Grey literature was also consulted. Data from grey literature was analysed through content analysis where discourses were picked up.

What emerged from the findings is that despite heavy capital injections in intervention models such as the 3S Initiative and Africa-Europe relations, they have not paid climate security dividends in the Sahel region. Results show that sustainability, stability, and security hinge on the nature of the domestic political economy of the Sahel region. The political economy is characterised by two fundamental institutions: extractive political institutions and extractive economic institutions. These two institutions have combined to sire state fragility. The 3S Initiative won't take the same speed as expected by the EU or, if implemented, won't be sustained unless the African leaders' grievances on finance are resolved. As such, the 3S Initiative is likely to be short-lived. Findings show that Africans understand security from a state centric-traditional perspective. In contrast, the European conception of security is influenced by their foreign policy that perceives both hard (traditional) and human (non-traditional) security. Extractive economic institutions in the Sahel are not inclusive; they discourage participation by many of the citizens. which are central features of climate security or the 3S Initiative. Further evidence shows policy failure in the intervention strategies, namely the 3S response model and the Africa-EU dialogue. Results have proven that migration and insecurity will not stop unless these institutions are transformed or reformed. The political elites must feel secure first to create space for creative destruction and technological change necessary for climate security. Therefore, the puzzle is: how can the 3S or Africa-EU negotiations transform these extractive institutions without reducing the benefits of the political elites?

This research also discovered that concepts and intervention strategies on climate change, security and migration are invariably contested and conceptualised among the international community, national elites and local actors. Often climate change is treated in isolation from security and migration, resulting in piecemeal sector-specific intervention strategies. The findings reveal the lack of depoliticization of climate change, as power dynamics among the actors tend to carry the day. There is no evidence among scholars on how data and knowledge on the symbiotic relationship between climate change, security, and migration have been mined and reconciled. In the Sahel, these three domains are still treated in silos.

However, what is striking is the behaviour of Sahelians in their efforts to access and control the diminishing water and land resources in response to the vagaries of climate change - coalitions, alliances, and breakaways. It is a fluid situation, and complex to interpret and intervene in. In the Sahel, local communities have come together and coalesced in response to climate change. For example, women have organized themselves through groups where they farm each other’s land to fight desertification and soil infertility. Regarding security, youths and local communities who feel victims of state-sponsored poverty take up arms to obtain political power, significantly raising political and economic grievances.

Further findings show the selective securitization of climate change is increasingly influencing tension rather than collaboration among climate actors in the Sahel region. Each actor is looking to control the climate security narrative and take coercive and forceful action in defence, especially when they feel their vital interests are under existential threat. Results show the various tensions, contradictions, and complexities in the securitization of climate change by the EU, AU, regional organisations, ruling elites, and local communities, particularly the contentious mitigation, resilience, and adaptation elements. While the EU preferred securitizing climate mitigation, their African counterparts pressed for resilience and mitigation. At the local level, the ruling elites continue to take coercive or forceful action against the youths’ active participation in climate security. Such selective securitization has made other salient topics to have escaped a full-fledged securitization. The research concludes by observing that if adequate action on climate security remains elusive, the survival of Sahelian communities is seriously under threat.

# Introduction

This study is part of the CASSIS research project entitled "Cross-continental Security Cooperation: EU-Africa Relations in a World of Non-traditional Security Challenges", under the University of Bonn, and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhein-Westphalia (MKW). The report seeks to reflect upon the current situation in the Sahel regarding non-traditional security challenges, particularly issues of sustainability, stability, and security. The objective is to analyze the intersections of climate change, migration and security and their impact on EU-Africa relations. The main goal is to enhance evidence on climate change security and migration. The study uses climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ and ‘wicked problem’ lens as an analytical framework and incorporates a qualitative approach. Within this context, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

Main research question:

MQ1. How has the intersections of climate change, security, and migration framed and impacted EU-Africa relations?

Secondary questions:

SQ1. How relevant is the Sustainability, Stability and Security Initiative in addressing climate change-security-migration nexuses in the Sahel?

SQ2. How have African and European actors negotiated the response to climate security in the Sahel, and with what success?

# Objectives and Justification

The primary objective of this research is to examine the intersections of climate change, security and migration in the Sahel region and their related impacts on EU-Africa relations. The other objectives are to analyse the relevance of the Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa in addressing the three pillars of climate change, security and migration. Finally, the research analyses the negotiated responses to climate security and migration between African and European actors.

The intersections of climate change, security and migration, as mutually reinforcing constitutive elements, have scantly received scholar and policy attention in the Sahel region. Often climate change is treated in isolation from security and migration resulting in piecemeal sector-specific intervention strategies. This is the reason there is tension between the AU, which emphasizes resilience and adaptation to climate change, and the EU which stresses climate mitigation. The tension in strategies and understanding of climate security has, inadvertently, sired tension in policy interventions. For instance, while migration is rarely overtly labelled a security problem, inherently, the link between climate-induced societal pressures, political security, and terrorism frames the climate security challenges being faced by the Sahel region. Therefore, this report helps to add new knowledge to the significance of the three-tier framework for an in-depth understanding of the impact of climate change in the Sahel - insecurity and instability, migration, extremism and food insecurity

The report is organized into nine sections. **Section 1** provides an introduction and background to the study. In **Section 2**, the report presents the objectives and the relevance of the research. This is followed by **Section 3**, which gives a snapshot of the Sahel region, focusing on the geography and populations, political economy, and foreign influence in the region, particularly the role of the EU. **Section 4** describes the methodological approach of the study. **Section 5** discusses the conceptual framework for understanding climate change, security, and migration in the Sahel. In **Section 6**, the discussion delves into sustainability, stability, and security issues in the Sahel by focusing on the intersections of climate change, security, and migration. In addition, **Section 7** provides a detailed analysis of intervention models, concentrating specifically on the 3S Initiative. This section further discusses the strategic importance of the initiative at international, continental, and local levels. **Section 8** examines the various divides in the dialogues on climate security and migration between the EU, the AU, regional bodies, ruling elites and youth and local communities. It looks at the tensions, contradictions, and divergence in the conceptualisation and understanding of climate security and migration between these groups and how each selectively securitized climate change based on their perceptions of existential threats, interests, and incentives. Lastly, the discussion concludes in **Section 9**, emphasizing the importance and need for further research on the importance of local turn in climate security responses, why women have abandoned farming to join extremist groups and why pastoralists have also deserted cattle rearing to join jihadist groups in the Sahel.

# Sahel in Context

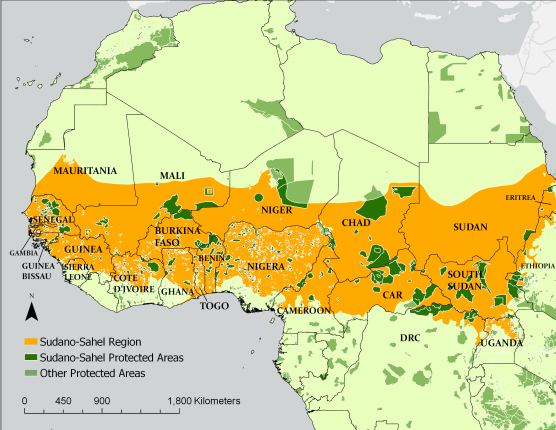
## **Geography and population**

In recent times, the Sahel region has been at the Centre of public, policy and research attention due to the overlapping occurrence of visible climatic changes, migration, conflict, and insecurity. In Arabic, the term the Sahel refers to “shore” and circumscribes a strip of land in Sub-Sahara Africa, south of the Sahara Desert, reflecting Sahara's boundaries (Kalilou, 2021). The Sahel is a 500km huge semi-arid region of Africa that lies between the Sahara Desert to the north and tropical savannas to the south (de Coning & Krampe, 2020; United Nations, 2021). However, various geographical demarcation of the region exists. Geographically, some scholars like Kalilou (2021) and Varga (2020) consider the Sahel to represent a semi-arid strip of land that stretches from Western Africa and the Atlantic to Eastern Africa and the Red Sea, thereby including 14 countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan, and Sudan. Other scholars like de Coning (2020) argue that the region borders ten countries between the Atlantic Coast and the Red Sea. Four countries encompass Lake Chad, including Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, while the other six are Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal (de Coning & Krampe, 2020; UNISS, 2021).

In addition, other geographical distinctions and conceptions of Sahel member states are oriented on socio-political terms. The UN, for instance, has used divergent delineations of the Sahel in their programs and support plans, sometimes omitting and sometimes including the eastern part. The Gambia and Guinea also represent states that occasionally fit the Sahel description (United Nations, 2018). More recently, the UN has also adhered to a demarcation of the Sahel by using only five countries, namely Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauretania, Niger and Nigeria (UNECA, 2016). In the wake of the development of the G5 Sahel strategy by the EU, the primary cooperation with Mali, Mauretania and Niger was then extended to include Chad and Burkina Faso (Varga, 2020). The inclusion of only five Sahel member states, as outlined in the G5 approach, is especially adhered to by research works that investigate the EU-Sahel relations, often based on security issues (D’Amato, 2021; Venturi, 2017, 2019).

It has about 300 million people (Climate Centre, 2018). The region is one of the poorest, and undeveloped and has the world's most youthful population, with 64.5% of the population being below 25 years (United Nations, 2021). The population grows at about 3.5 per cent per year, and it is expected to reach about 340 million in 2050 (UNDP, 2021). Massive demographic shifts in the Sahel rural areas drive migration trends, conflict, instability and insecurity. More generally, it is anticipated that more than half of global population growth between 2020 and 2050 is expected to take place in Africa, and the population of Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to double by 2050 (World Bank, 2019). However, the Sahel region is expected to have the highest growth in absolute numbers. According to the Africa Energy Outlook (2019) World Energy Outlook special report, Africa's population is among the fastest-growing and youngest globally.

Figure 1: Map of the Sahel Region



Source: Climate Diplomacy, 2019a.

## **Political economy**

Although there are varied leadership styles ranging from transactional, autocratic and liberal-technocratic, what is consistent are extractive political institutions and extractive economic institutions that govern incentives regarding who gets what and who should exercise power.

### **Extractive political institutions**

Extractive political institutions comprise two significant dimensions: political power is narrowly exercised, and the central state is weak and cannot deliver public goods (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013). Most African regimes, particularly the Sahel states, are clientelist in nature. This implies that political incentives are allocated based on patron-client relations, kinship or friendship. Particular ethnic or regional groups are often favoured in contrast to others, igniting and maintaining inter-state and inter-regional societal relations characterized by tensions. This contributes to the evolution of politically marginalized groups (Mbaye, 2020). Membership in a specific group or ethnicity still largely determines access to and use of natural resources, which can lead to conflicts at the local level, especially between pastoralists and farmers (UNOWAS, 2018). The reason Sahel leaders create extractive political institutions is to consolidate and safeguard power. In consolidating and maintaining power, a minority group of political elites have emerged that control the poor who are the majority. Political dominance is usually achieved by violence which has characterized most of the Sahel states, including Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, Chad and Nigeria. The prevailing instability is significantly correlated with the existence of vast and remote territories that remain difficult to control for political stakeholders, which means that state and administrative power are weak (Venturi, 2019). At the political level, leaders set up political parties with the ability to control through violence. They limit the distribution of 3S rents and wealth to the opposition groups contrary to the status quo. The nature of the political institutions is extractive, neo-patrimonial and authoritarian in the sense that leaders control all the institutions, thus, limiting political inclusion.

### **Extractive economic institutions**

Two forms of economy operate in the Sahel - rents from subsoil resources and a subaltern economy.

#### **Rents from subsoil resources**

Climate change has intensified the preexisting disproportionate distribution of rents, resulting in marginalized groups coalescing or creating alliances of insurgencies as a way of forming a formidable force to access the limited rents. Rents from subsoil resources are primarily driven and regulated by the political elites. The Sahel region is characterized by conflict over natural resource exploitation, distribution, and allocation and land-based grievances are increasingly enmeshed with religiopolitical tensions, whereby affiliation to religious, ethnic or political groups is instrumentalized to a heightened degree (Brottem, 2020; Morgan, 2020). The region is endowed with natural resources but is yet the poorest in the world. The economy heavily relies on primary commodities such as fossil fuel resources, including crude oil, natural gas and coal. Oil and gas are a significant source of export revenue for the central government. Still, they provide few jobs for locals who often bear costs of petroleum development like lost property rights and environmental damage (Ross, 2006, 2008; Rosser, 2006). Due to over-reliance on these commodities, regional oil demand has climbed to about 50%, while the demand for gas has grown from nearly nothing to 20% (IEA, 2021). Other reserves such as metals and minerals relevant to sustainable energy technology, like copper, zinc, titanium, and manganese, are found in the region (IEA, 2021). Although rich in natural resources, the economy still lacks diversification. Several studies show that natural resource breeds conflicts, and have minimally contributed to the welfare of Sahel countries (Ayantunde et al., 2014; Cooper, 2018a; Koubi et al., 2014; Vesco et al., 2020).

Other studies have shown that natural resource rents wreak havoc on politics and the economy (Obi, 2014; Obi & Oriola, 2018; Rustad & Binningsbø, 2012). Rents provide funding for insurgents (Collier et al., 2009; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Keen, 2012) and financial incentives for armed conflict between opposing interest groups in so-called “enclaved economies” resulting in economic crises, poorer living standards, slower growth rates, institutional breakdown, violence and bloodshed (Ackah-Baidoo, 2012; Hansen, 2014; Ross, 2008). To date, it is extremely difficult to decide whether the motive to take up arms is driven by greed and grievance. What is certain is that these are climate change induced conflicts as rebels take up arms to access the rents. The region is characterized by complex natural resource governance systems that blend orthodox traditions with colonial-era regulations, legislations and policies and democratic reforms initiated in the 1980s and 1990s (Cooper, 2018b; Eizenga, 2019; Gupta & Dasgupta, 2013). This has triggered communal tensions, resulting in the rise of Islamic jihadist terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa taking control over countries like Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Lake Chad, with each country facing different patterns of violence (Basedau, 2017; Nsaibia a & Duhamel, 2021). See **appendix 2.**

#### **The Subaltern economy**

While scholars and policymakers tend to conflate rents and subaltern economies, they have missed an opportunity to see how climate change disproportionately affects the two. The research findings reveal how the subaltern economy is the hardest hit compared to rents from the subsoil. The following section explores the link between the subaltern economy and climate variations.

Although the political elites engage in extractive economy involving rents from subsoil resources, the majority of the population engage in the subaltern economy primarily dependent on the agricultural sector, accounting for around 30% value-added since the 1990s, with about 80-90% of the population actively engaged in rain-fed agriculture (Doso, 2014; Osman, 2021; USAID, 2018). Most rural communities depend on agriculture for food security, income generation, and poverty reduction. Besides, livestock rearing, fishing and the trade of agricultural goods across borders contribute significantly to countries' GDPs (Piters et al., 2021; Puig et al., 2021a). Major crops of the region are sorghum, maize and millet, with rice as a novel addition as of late. The rural population relies heavily on fruits, tubers, crops, animal hunting and fishing.

There is a gendered dimension to the subaltern economy. In the Sahel, women provide 80% of the agricultural labour force and play a critical role in the agrarian sector in providing food security and resilience to their households and communities. Unfortunately, they have less access than men to production resources - land, inputs, equipment, digital tools, training, information and credit. Compared to me, they are disproportionately affected by climatic variations. Gender indicators for the region are shallow, with huge inequalities that hinder women's empowerment and the opportunity to accelerate countries' transition to stability and inclusive growth (Alliance Sahel, 2021). According to the African Development Bank's Gender Equality in Africa Index, the Sahel has an enormous gender gap, at 31.9%, lower than the continental average of 48.4 %. This results in a 68.1% gender gap across the three dimensions studied (economic, social and representation) (AFDB, 2020; Alliance Sahel, 2021).

#### **Shadowy economy and illicit trade**

Due to a dwindling resource base, and pronounced competition over limited resources, the disadvantaged members of the community resort to a shadowy economy and illicit trade. The region comprises primarily low-income countries where formal and informal economies coexist, taking advantage of the regulatory enforcement capacity gap and trying to avoid an unfavourable business environment. Before Islamic terrorism in the region, the informal business produced and traded authorized products and services. However, informality is progressively dominating the Sahelian economies. In most Sahel states, the joint impact of the fragile business environment and the weak state capacity executes private entrepreneurship rules.

Due to this, the economies are becoming increasingly focused on criminal and illegal activities. For instance, counterfeit commodities, narcotics, guns, and human trafficking are rife. As a result, state fragility and instability have strengthened informal activities and converted them into more criminal activity and networks which drives insecurity (Institut Montaigne, 2021). From the scholarly views and policy, we observe that very few comparative analyses have been done on the linkage between rents and subaltern economies. However, the subaltern economy is more hit by the impact of climate change.

The next section examines the positionality of foreign actors in the climate security dynamic. Research findings reveal the confluence of colonial legacy and development aid in climate security interventions by the Europeans.

## **Foreign Influence and the Role of the European Union in The Sahel**

### **Colonial Legacy**

External political influence and colonial legacy in the Sahel is still a perceptible and genuine process of decolonization that did not happen. This is crucial, given that Western Superpowers arbitrarily carved up the Sahelian countries during colonialism. Also, most of the states inherited the political systems of their colonial masters, and the “Western” state model is to date not suitable for the region. As a direct result of eroded trust, it is being resisted by the Sahel people (Pye, 2021). The decolonization process paid no attention to existing territories and social cohesion among different social or ethnic groups (Davitti & Ursu, 2018). As a strategic power, France has remained one of the key actors in the region and continues to exert its political-economic influence. With a reduction of direct, physical presence and a shift of the military power of France in the Sahel perceptible, a renewed form of “*multilateral interventionism*” (Erforth, 2020, p. 566) is now widely practised. However, the formerly colonized countries still cooperated with France in military matters and signed agreements that cater to a considerable external control level (Erforth, 2020).

### **Development aid**

International engagement in the Sahel region over the years has increased. Besides France, the UK, the US and recently China, Russia and Tukey are heavily invested in the region – also on a military basis (Pye, 2021). Traditionally, the EU played a significant role in providing aid to the Sahel countries and relations were restricted to donor-recipient ties. The World Bank indicated that in 2019 official Aid totalled 8% of the Gross National income of the region of USD 7 billion (IEA, 2021; World Bank, 2021). Sahel countries have received Aid and attracted investment in various sectors (oil and gas, minerals, electricity infrastructure, climate change adaptation, migration management, security and development). However, certain crucial factors like donor interests (self-interest), recipient's economic needs, and security purposes determine the conditions for receiving aid. (Bayale, 2020).

In recent times, the EU’s interest and focus have been centred on the emerging “climate-security” narrative and the attempts to close down migration from both the Middle East and Sub-Sahara Africa, particularly with the relevancy of migration confinement and terrorism control high on the domestic policy agenda as well as core stability and security challenges (Bøås, 2021). The EU's approach has been geared towards externalizing EU borders, a strategy that restricts the influx of migrants or terrorist organizations into the region's territories. This approach has focused on the securitization and politicization of migration, whereby migrants are relocated to Europe's fringes, cramped in states such as Turkey, Lebanon, or Libya, whilst conflicts and to-be migrants are '‘taken care of'’ in the regions of their respective origin (BenEzer & Zetter, 2015; Collyer, 2007, 2007; Hess, 2012).

In this vein, the research has shown the symbiotic relation between climate change and migration. Based on these reasons, the region is of strategic priority to the EU because it serves as a transit route and considerable presence of various terrorist groups with affiliations to Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. Also, it is of interest because the EU wants to lessen and regulate migration flows from the African continent and assist in reducing terrorist activity in the region (Pichon & Betant-Rasmussen, 2021). Through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Stability, the EU has contributed **€1.865 billion to address irregular migration** (Duggan & Haastrup, 2020). Recent evidence suggests that the EU's security policies toward Africa have unfolded simply because the continent fits as a “potential experimentation field” (Duggan & Haastrup, 2020) particularly the Sahel, where considerable financial and political capital, heavy security, humanitarian and development projects have been invested in the region (Pichon & Betant-Rasmussen, 2021; Pye, 2021). In other words, European policies towards Africa are more of a function of internal institutional dynamics and international ambitions than of specific goals in Africa. This implies Africa has become a training ground for the EU's European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), or rather “Africa policy serves as a way of creating a United Europe on the Cheap” (Duggan & Haastrup, 2020).

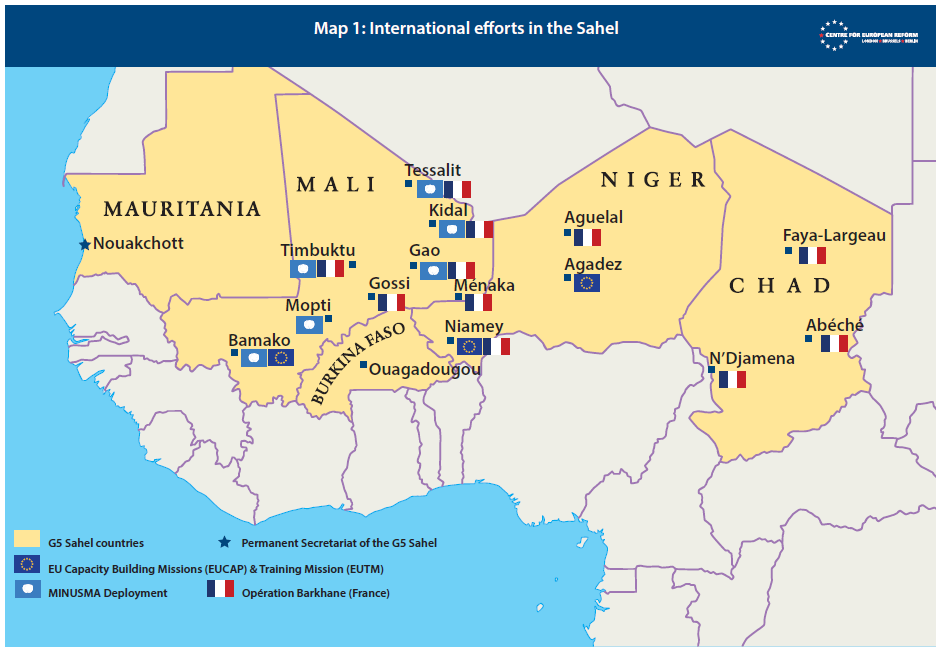
Further evidence indicates that the Sahel is a “laboratory of experimentation” for analyzing the interrelation of climate change, security, migration, and development – issues of vital importance for both domestic and foreign European politics (Venturi, 2017). Other countries such as China, the USA, Russia, and Turkey have been riding on climate security discourse to peddle or advance their interest in the region. Securitizing the Sahel helps the EU achieve its goal of externalizing sensitive security issues (Bøås, 2021). In response to the threats of irregular migration and terrorism, in March 2011, the EU adopted the first EU strategy for the Sahel known as “The European Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel”. The goal of the policy was to improve regional security while also fostering development in the Sahel in specific areas, including governance, development, international conflict resolution, regional politics, security, rule of law and the battle against extremist violence and radicalization (Council of the European Union, 2011; Pichon & Betant-Rasmussen, 2021). To achieve this, the EU and its member states have established close relations with the African States, regional organizations and institutions safeguarded by various treaties, agreements, and declarations. In April 2015, the Foreign Affairs Council established the Sahel regional action plan for 2015-2020 as the strategy's implementation framework, bolstering the strategy's security component (Pichon & Betant-Rasmussen, 2021).

The EU and its Member states are committed to efforts to address climate security issues in the Sahel. Among the actions include mitigation to cut greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen the communities in the Sahel's ability to cope with negative impacts. The EU's commitment is seen through the EU's 2020 and 2030 climate policy framework for greenhouse gas emissions reduction, and the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change. Between 2010 and 2012, the EU and its Member States provided €7.2 billion in “fast-start” finance for the climate in developing countries, including the Sahel. Also, €14.5 billion in 2014 was provided for climate change mitigation (63%), adaptation (16%) and crosscutting (21%) in the most vulnerable countries, mainly in Africa (European Commission, 2015, pp. 4–5). Recognizing climate-fragility risks in the Sahel, the EU, through the European Green Deal, aims to fight climate and environmental impacts that may intensify instability in the region. As such, the EU has provided support to the Sahel through different funding sources like the Official Development Assistance (ODA), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the EU initiative Global Climate Alliance Plus (GCCA+) (€102.5 million) (Wolfmaier et al., 2021, p. 5). The EU has pledged UDS 100 billion per year by 2020 to support developing countries to finance climate mitigation. Through the Green Climate Fund (GFC) in 2015, the EU gave USD 4.7 billion for mitigation and adaptation in Africa.

Since the establishment of the G5 Sahel group in February 2014, the EU‚ is the most significant financial contributor to the group, having provided €14 million to the G5 Sahel joint force and the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (ICSP) (Dieng, 2019; Duggan & Haastrup, 2020). Also, the EEU provided € 1.865 billion through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability to address irregular migration. In terms of development, the EU has provided US$8 billion as development support to the G5 Sahel countries (Rupesinghe, 2018). In 2021, the EU awarded €210 million to the Sahel and Central Africa as humanitarian Aid. The funds were allocated to eight countries: **Burkina Faso** (€24.3 million), **Cameroon** (€17.5 million), the **Central African Republic** (€21.5 million), **Chad** (€35.5 million), **Mali** (€31.9 million), **Mauritania** (€10 million), **Niger** (€32.3 million) and **Nigeria** (€37 million) (EU, 2021). An additional €15million was allocated in the same year as funding to address the food crisis in the region (ECHO, 2021).

Despite the massive capital injection, the region is still affected by poverty and low economic performance due to corruption, conditionalities from donors and the fact that the EU's strategy for development and security in the region has been used as a “laboratory for experimentation” and a way to “*project the EU as a normative power in the Sahel*” (Lopez, 2017; Venturi, 2017). The security-focused approach of the EU has not produced desired results since regional terrorist groups continue to operate and grow in the region, even threatening to expand farther into the Gulf of Guinea. As a result, in April 2021, the EU adopted the EU Integrated Strategy in the Sahel to address common challenges including climate change, demographic pressure, security, the increasing scarcity of natural resources, and pandemic risk-including Covid-19 (Council of the European Union, 2021). As a strategic partner to the African Union, the EU has been instrumental in supporting the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (African Union, 2020). As preeminent partners of the Sahel countries and regional institutions, the two largest “*brokers of cooperation”*, the EU and France, have taken the lead in unifying cooperative efforts thus far, leading to “*patchwork”* dynamics characterized by a diversity of actors on the playing field (D’Amato, 2021). Other EU Member states such as Germany, the Netherlands and Spain have increased their engagement in the region, particularly in counter-terrorism issues. For example, the direct interventions in the form of [EUCAP Sahel Niger](https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eucap-sahel-niger_en), [EUCAP Sahel Mali](https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eucap-sahel-mali_en), and the [EU training mission (EUTM) Mali](https://eutmmali.eu/). Figure 2 is a depiction of the interventions in the Sahel.

Figure 2:International efforts in the Sahel



Source: Pye, 2021.

Evidence shows that although the EU and its member states have endeavoured to provide security and stability in the Sahel, the measures have been hugely interventionist and military in nature. This is particular with the French intervention in Mali, which has been hugely criticized for massive human rights abuse, and in most parts, due to lack of success (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021; Pye, 2021). Scholars like Erforth (2020) argue that the interventionist approach showcases French and EU motives and agendas in the region. This argument corroborated Duggan and Haastrup’s (2020) finding that the EU might be a source of insecurity to ordinary people in the African continent.

# Research Approach

This research combined face to face interviews and remote approaches such as telephone and video conferencing technology such as Zoom, Skype, and Microsoft Teams to investigate the various tensions, contradictions, and complexities in the conceptualization of climate security at different scales, including international, continental, regional, national/state and community levels. The research approach was qualitative. Data was collected over a period of 8 months. In-depth interviews were carried out between June 2021 and January 2022, focusing primarily on nine countries in the Sahel Region - Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, and Morocco. Interviews were also conducted with European Institutions that work in the Sahel region.

Data were collected from 110 respondents through simple random sampling. Each of the selected participants had an equal chance of being selected for interviews. Participants were selected based on their positions of authority, knowledge about 3S issues and influence on decisions. Among the respondents, 15 were people in positions of authority and influence. Of these 15, 8 were African officials and 7 were European officials who have expertise in policy-making and implementation. They represented various ministries including the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture, Ministries of Finance and Economic Affairs, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Interior and Security and Home Affairs and Ministries of Youth Affairs. The rationale for choosing this group of people was to understand their interpretation and understanding of the relationship between the EU and Africa on mitigation, resilience and adaptation.

Another 25 respondents were youth from Africa who founded organisations that deal with climate change, youth who campaigned against climate change, unemployed, returnees and ex-insurgents. Of these, 13 were male and 12 females. They are the most affected and mobile. The reason for this choice was to find out how the youth are at the receiving end of the effects of climate security. It was also intended to get the perceptions, opinions and feelings of the youth and possible intervention strategies. Additionally, 3 security leaders were interviewed to understand the link between climate change, political turmoil and insurgencies in the Sahel. Experts in various fields were also selected – 4 in agriculture, 5 in mining and 3 in fishing. They were pastoralists and villagers that have been affected by climate change. The reason for interviewing them was to get their opinions on climate security and why people abandon farming to join extremist groups.

AU workers (10) were also interviewed. These were individual representatives of organisations that deal with resilience and adaptation of climate change, regional advisors, and research experts on the impact of climate change. They were selected to understand the efficacy of climate change policies, challenges and opportunities of intervention strategies. Equally, 5 EU think tanks were contacted. These are supported EU organizations that included experts on climate change especially those directly involved in the Trans aqua and the Green Deal, the environment and sustainability policy advisors, specialists in mitigation, advisors and researchers in climate change. They were interviewed to understand the efficacy of the mitigation strategies in particular the Trans aqua, Green Deal and renewal energy policy as an alternative for fossil fuels.

Another 20 respondents were from regional organizations. Among them were 5 ECOWAS workers responsible for spearheading the climate security strategy in the Sahel, 5 G5 Sahel representatives who are partnering with EU experts and have ratified the Paris Agreement and attended the COP26, 5 from the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and 5 from the Lake Chad Basin Commission. They were selected to understand the relevance of the 3S Initiative as a strategy toward climate change resilience and adaptation. Furthermore, 23 interviews were with members from 8 individual 3S Initiative countries including Nigeria, The Gambia, Niger, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Morocco) and 2 members of the 3S Initiative Secretariat. They were chosen to ascertain their success, challenges and level of coordination so far.

Ten international organizations were chosen made of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations University (UNU), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – that provide additional financial resources and expert advice, including monitoring and evaluation of climate change impacts. These organisations were chosen to get their perspectives on mitigation and the policies adopted.

The interview participants were snowballed as interviewers assisted in identifying the next possible research participants. Based on the preference of the research participants, interviews were done in either English or French. Thus, interview guides were designed in both English and French. Due to the current pandemic with many restrictions, only a few face-to-face interactions was carried out with the 3S Secretariat. This posed a considerable constraint in logistical and ethical challenges, particularly under lockdowns, social distancing, and travel bans.

Although the research was a success, there were some challenges. Getting direct access to European and African officials and institutions was challenging. I used preexisting networks as I have worked as a consultant with the UNCCD on the 3S Initiative. Even institutions involved in implementing the 3S Initiative and the Europe-Africa Dialogue on Climate Security were not willing to provide information since I was perceived suspiciously as an outsider coming from the West.

The selection of interview participants was based on previous experience, working for the Sustainability, Stability and Security 3S Initiative with UNCCD, with significant institutions and actors on national and regional levels, including governmental institutions, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and international institutions. Purposive, which is a non-random sampling strategy, was particularly preferred. The method is subjective and uses inductive reasoning in varied debates on 3S issues in the Sahel. The goal and scope of the research were explained to participants before the interview session. Participants were informed about transparency and confidentiality in the process.

Desk research was conducted to ascertain scholarly opinion about the intersectionality of 3S issues in the Sahel. Also, grey literature such as policy papers, government minutes, newspapers and archival data were consulted. Data from grey literature was analysed through content analysis where discourses were picked up. The contesting conceptualization of climate security was viewed based on three key categories: Youth (local communities) vs ruling and governing elites, Africa-EU relations and the relation of the AU/ECOWAS vs Individual countries to get the viewpoints of the Global North and Global South on the securitization of climate change.

# Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework guiding the analysis in this research is the view that climate change is “a security threat multiplier, therefore a wicked problem”. For instance, as succinctly captured by Knaepen et al., in the coming years, we will see the acceleration of the climate crisis and environmental degradation, resulting in extreme weather events and human suffering, especially in Africa and Europe. The stakes for both continents to take decisive actions on climate change and environmental sustainability have never been higher. Yet, their respective needs and interests tend to be very different, as several decades of climate negotiations have shown (Knaepen et al., 2021).

Climate change is a threat multiplier because it jeopardises the potential for peace and security and intersects with political, social, economic and demographic factors (United Nations, 2019). As a threat multiplier, climate change exacerbates the drivers of conflict by deepening fragilities within societies, straining weak institutions, reshaping power balances and undermining post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding (Steffen, 2015). Climate change's threat multiplier effect is commonly manifested in its impacts on food and water availability. Food and water shortages make communities, societies, countries, and regions more subject to stress, conflict, and migration (Barrie, 2019). Some researchers such as Werrell and Femia (2017) suggest that conflicts in Africa are exacerbated by climate change, while violence, in turn, can increase a society’s vulnerability to the effects of climate change and hinder adaptation processes. Other researchers point out that there seems to be no direct causal link between climate change and conflict; rather, climate change is a contributory factor in a complex interaction with other causes of conflict (Brown et al., 2007).

The European Commission recognizes climate change as an “existential threat to international security” (Youngs, 2021). In November 2021, the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) recognized the increasing risks of climate change as a threat multiplier to peace and security in the continent, hindering the achievement of the Agenda 2063’s economic and development goals and the ‘Silencing the Guns’ Initiative (African Union, 2021). Other actors, like the US Department of Defense (DOD), perceive climate change as a threat to national security with the need to incorporate climate risk analysis into the National Defense Strategy (US DOD, 2021). Beijing in 2017 broke with decades of reluctance to label climate change as a security issue by signing a joint statement with the European Union terming rising global temperatures as “a root cause of instability” (Moore & Melton, 2019). Other actors like the UN Security Council recognized the climate security nexus, and in November 2021, a resolution on climate security was vetoed by the UN (Security Council Report, 2021).

Although there is a collective agreement that climate change is crippling self-sufficiency in food, water, and resources (land, forest), embracing climate and security also reflects a calculation that enhances these countries and institutions’ interests and priorities. For example, while China wants to enhance its legitimacy at home and its influence abroad by embracing the climate security nexus (Moore & Melton, 2019), US interests embrace climate security for national security and defence purposes (US DOD, 2021). In contrast, the EU’s interests are to embrace climate security as a chance to advance international cooperation and development (Petri, 2020) while Africa, takes the threats of climate change to address “peace, security, and stability” challenges (Mbiyozo & Maunganidze, 2021).

Possibly, the diverse selective securitization of climate change, interests, and needs thereof, are influenced by the wickedness of climate security impacts. The concept of wicked problems is drawn from Rittel and Webber in 1973. They described wicked problems as those problems that are extremely difficult or nearly impossible to solve because the knowledge and requirements needed to solve them are incomplete, contradictory, and changing (Rittel & Webber, 1973). More importantly, they observed that the problems are interdependent to the extent that any resolve to one wicked problem will create other problems (Peters & Tarpey, 2019; Termeer et al., 2019). Because they are complex, wicked problems frequently mix with different challenges and are only noticed when their devastating consequences are perceived (Stang & Ujvari, 2015). As such, wicked problems cannot be efficiently eradicated or sufficiently addressed.

Lack of resolve and the multiplier effect of wicked problems leaves communities, ruling and governing elites regional and continental organizations to pursue conflicting interests. These competing ideas and strategies motivate influenced markedly selective securitization of climate change. Climate change has been identified as a high probability, high impact “security threat multiplier,” (IISS, 2019) which intersects with other factors to intensify the risk of conflict. The security threat multiplier means that compounding existing stresses and strains can trigger an already fragile context closer to the brim (Mazzara et al., 2019).

The UNFCCC is concerned that human activities have significantly increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, amplifying the natural greenhouse effect (UNFCCC, 2021a). The UNFCCC defines climate change as “a change in climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable periods” (UNFCCC, 1992). As such, under the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol urged industrialized countries and economies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (UNFCCC, 2021b). However, the Paris Agreement has gone beyond this Kyoto top-down approach to a bottom-up approach where climate change encompasses cutting greenhouse gas emissions but with a significant commitment from the international community regarding mitigation, resilience, adaptation, and financing (Klein et al., 2017). This shift in framing approaches indicates the intricacy of climate change as a wicked problem, which implies there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Saab argues climate change is a “super wicked problem,” with diverse and complex causes, unclear and interconnected repercussions, and proposed remedies that may produce even more challenges (Saab, 2019).

Climate change is a wicked problem because it is a security risk that “manifests themselves when the impacts of climate change aggravate the drivers of violent conflict and insecurity.” Climate change intersects with political, social, and environmental stresses to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and tensions (Puig et al., 2021a). This drives instability and insecurity to cause a massive humanitarian crisis, triggering thousands of people to be displaced and forced to move to other countries (UNHCR, 2020, 2021). It is a threat to regional security. It becomes a breeding space for extremist terrorist groups to flourish and launch their operations on vulnerable communities, particularly women and young girls (Raineri, 2020). Climate change has fueled and compounded violent conflicts over limited and disproportionately distributed resources (NUPI & SIPRI, 2021). See Figure 3 below, showing how climate change affects all domains and facets of life.

Figure 3: Compound Climate Phenomena: Risk Relationships

Diagram

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Source: Centre for Climate and Security, 2021.

As a threat multiplier and a wicked problem, the impact of climate change goes beyond food insecurity but also leads to environmental hazards, such as deforestation, loss of biodiversity, overpopulation, acidification of oceans, plastic waste, infectious diseases, land erosion, water scarcity, and toxic contamination of water, soil, and air which all combine to impede the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa (Turnpenny et al., 2009). It is not a secret that Africa is already lagging in realizing the SDGs and is already highly vulnerable to climate change.

What emerged from research findings is that although there is a common understanding that climate change is a ‘security threat multiplier’ and a ‘wicked problem’, there are divergences in how climate change, migration, and security are understood, interpreted and negotiated. As such, there are variations in the selective securitization of climate change by different actors identified in this study, with severe implications for policy and outcomes for climate security mitigation, resilience, and adaptation. The next section examines the diverse conceptualisation of 3S, particularly focusing on three issues–climate change, security and migration and how they intersect to produce a turbulent Sahel region.

# Sustainability, Stability and Security issues in the Sahel: Climate change, security and migration

The research findings show a circular relationship rather than a linear one between climate change, security and migration. Scholars and policy-makers tend to concur on the obvious relationship, yet interviews, knowledge and analysis point to circular connections and iterative relations. For instance, climate change causes insecurity which triggers migration, however, extraordinarily little is said about how migration exacerbates climate change and insecurity. Due to this, most policies and climate change sustainability, stability and security interventions have overlooked migration as a cause than an effect at the tail end of the three.

In Africa, stability and security are inextricably linked to sustainability. In the Sahel, the unsustainable use and decreased land and water availability lead to competition and conflict over access to resources. Also, instability caused by the lack of employment forces rural youth to seek alternatives far from their home communities. Furthermore, insecurity and risk of radicalisation are triggered by social and economic disenfranchisement and increased exposure to extremist groups (Bendandi, 2017).

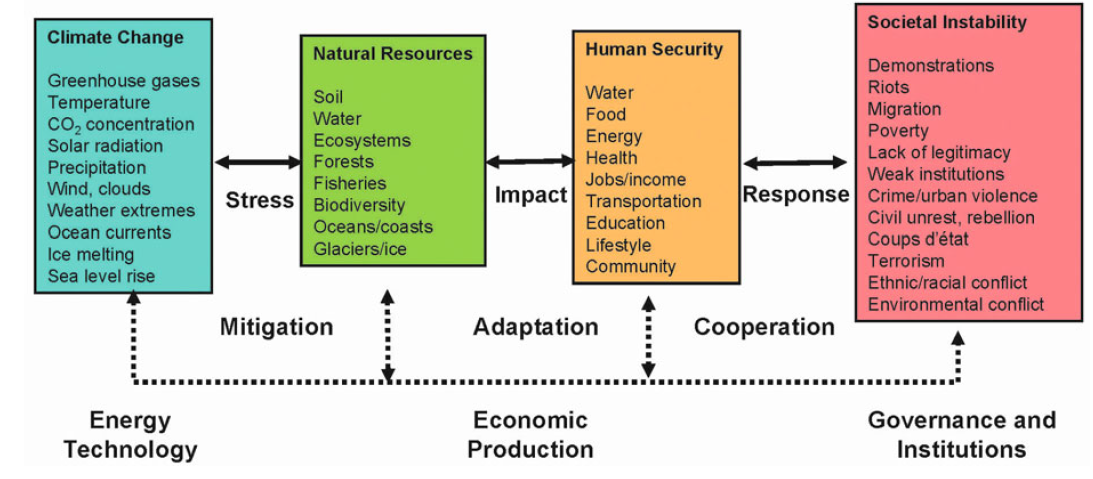
According to the UNCCD, sustainability refers to the sustainability of natural resources and their use. This involves land and nature-based solutions, protection of life support ecosystems, stopping and reversing the process of land degradation, and adaptation of agriculture and forestry to the impact of progressive climate change. The intent is to bolster the resilience of basic food and water systems to face the current crisis and prepare for future ones. In the context of the Sahel, stability is seen as the stability of human resources, involving investment in decent green jobs to stabilise rural economic livelihoods, providing viable opportunities in the local circular economy and practical alternatives to irregular migration. In addition, security is regarded as the absence of violence, maintenance of peace and reduction in risks of exposure to extremist activity and terrorism in fragile areas (UNCCD, 2018). The European Union External Action Service reported that security in the Sahel would entail strengthening the capacities of sectors to fight threats and handle terrorism and organised crime in a more efficient and specialised manner and link them to measures of good governance to ensure state control. It will necessitate the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation to help enhance the resilience of societies to counter extremism; to provide basic social services, and economic and employment perspectives to the marginalised social groups, particularly the youth vulnerable to radicalisation (EECAS, 2021).

Against this background, this section explores issues of sustainability, stability, and security in the Sahel, focusing on three main pillars: climate change, security, and migration. The Sahel faces simultaneously the challenges of climate change, security and migration, extreme poverty, frequent food crises, rapid population growth, rapid urbanisation, fragile governance, corruption, unresolved internal tensions, the risk of violent extremism and radicalisation, illicit trafficking and terrorist-linked security threats (EECAS, 2021). Climate change, security, and migration are some of the most pressing 3S challenges to a sustainable development pathway for the Sahel in the 21st century, concerning their independent characteristics and the existing interdependencies. These factors are already intersecting in ways that threaten national security and sustainability in the continent. There is a consensus among scholars, policy-makers, development agencies and interviewees that the Sahel is a hotspot for climate change, security and migration. Scholars such as Schraven et al. (2020; 2020), Rademacher-Schulz et al. (2014), Adaawen et al. (2019) and Abel et al. (2019) describe climate change as a security issue that contributes to amplifying conflicts that drive migration within communities, which is consistent with an interviewee who remarked that climate change is driving migration patterns that have triggered social tensions resulting in instability and insecurity.

This remark is further reinforced by the European Union (2008) and the United States of America (Kaufman & Goodman, 2021; The White House, 2021) that climate change is a threat to national, regional and international security. Climate change has been identified as a “threat multiplier”, an “instability and insecurity risk” and “an accelerant of migration”, exacerbating existing challenges (MOFA, 2018; United Nations, 2019; Werrell & Femia, 2015, 2017). Thus, climate change, security and migration play a significant role in states' and societies' fragilities, vulnerabilities and securities (Abel et al., 2019; Andreola Serraglio et al., 2021; Burrows & Kinney, 2016; van Schaik & Bakker, 2017; Werz & Conley, 2012).

The diagram below graphically represents how climate insecurity is unfolding in the Sahel. The impact climate change has on natural resources has some deleterious implications on human security. See **appendix 3** for more details. For example, depletion of natural resources such as water and land results in a lack of economic opportunities. This then encourages the recruitment of young people to fight for access and control of the meagre resources. The militias, insurgences and civil strife that ensues result in tremendous government failures. In the absence of a strong state, there are weak responses to water shortages and land disputes. This has a direct impact on sustainability, stability and security in the region.

Figure 4: Conceptual framework for the climate change–human security interrelation



Source: Scheffran et al., 2012.

Scholarly findings have already shown that the African Sahel is a region where simultaneous increasing climatic changes; migration, conflict, instability and insecurity are unequivocally apparent (Freeman, 2017; Mbaye, 2020; Puig et al., 2021a). It is now widely acknowledged that the Sahel will be one of the global hot spots of climate security, although coupled with considerable uncertainty regarding the actual magnitude and spatial distribution of environmental changes (Climate Centre, 2018; Eastin & Dupuy, 2021). However, although the link is obvious among these scholars, there is no evidence as yet on how the data and knowledge on the symbiotic relationship between climate change, security and migration has been mined and reconciled given that, in the Sahel, these three domains are still treated in silos.

Today, climate change, security and migration have become core subjects to unprecedented international attention from policymakers and the scientific community. Both scientific and policy-borne spotlight has been directed on the Sahel. However, this research discovered that concepts and intervention strategies on climate change, security and migration are invariably understood between the international community, national elites, and local actors. What emerges from the findings is the lack of depoliticization of climate change, as power dynamics among the actors tend to carry the day. Although climate change could be more anchored in the local communities that experience the most vagaries, international experts and national ruling and governing elites control the knowledge and implementation of action plans to the detriment of a bottom up-integrated approach. A detailed discussion of the tension between the international and political elites and local actors will be sufficiently explained in **Section 8**. It is important to understand how climate change, security and migration are understood, contested, and negotiated by different actors in the Sahel, and the implication this has upon sustainability, stability and security.

## **Climate Change**

Based on the conclusions of the Council of the European Union, the Sahel region has experienced complicated scenarios with mutually worsening vulnerabilities, fragilities and insecurity. During the 1970s and 1980s, the region was hit by severe drought (still dominant in current framings), with a decrease in rainfall of about 30% across most of the Sahel (Africa Renewal, 2013). Research findings show that climate change is a threat multiplier and a wicked problem in most Sahelian countries. As a threat multiplier, climate change exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instabilities. Climate change is a wicked problem because it is a security risk that “manifests itself when the impacts of climate change aggravate the drivers of violent conflict and insecurity.” Climate change intersects with political, social, and environmental stresses to worsen existing vulnerabilities and tensions drive instability and insecurity that has caused a massive humanitarian crisis, triggering thousands of people to be displaced and forced to move to other countries. The respondents concur that the region is most vulnerable to climate change because of the multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity, making it a security threat multiplier and a wicked problem in the region. Climate change is threatening the already stale peace and security environment in the region.

Furthermore, the respondents identified the disproportionately effect of climate change on their daily lives due to increased rainfall, droughts, and floods. In Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, for instance, heavy rains, higher temperatures, and violent winds are threatening the lives of many communities. In the case of Burkina Faso, there is a meaningful change in rainfall fluctuation, i.e., the beginning and end of rainy and dry seasons. Before, the first rains came around the end of May-June, but currently, the first rains come in mid-July. Also, in Northern Nigeria, the rise in rainfalls has intensified soil erosion and increased landslides and floods. However, a Lake Chad Basin Commission member indicated that flooding is more common in built-up regions with poor drainage, as seen in Ouagadougou, Niamey, and Dakar in 2020.

Moreover, evidence shows climatic changes threaten human security in the region. Respondents reported decreasing agricultural productivity, thriving pressures on the supply of fresh water and fertile land, and increasing aridity that has exposed several Sahelian communities and people to risk of food insecurity, poverty, malnutrition and conflict. The threat to human security is particularly felt by pastoralists and farmers, affecting farming, livestock breeding and fishery activities. Such deteriorating climatic conditions have forced pastoralists to desert cattle rearing to join jihadist groups. Results reveal that the motivation to join jihadist groups is a lack of access to resources, which often drives social tensions. Figure 5 shows the regions in Africa that were hit by droughts and incidences of deadly violence.

***Figure 5: Droughts and Violent Conflicts in Africa***

Map

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Source: GIGA(2020)

What emerges from this research is the multiplier effect of climate change on the youthful population in the Sahel. Findings show a new development in the Sahel caused by pressures of climate change where young people who are facing unemployment and challenges of livelihood are opting to join insurgent groups as an alternative. The resulting impact on the agricultural sector with soil infertility that has caused low agricultural yields has triggered the youth to abandon their lands to join insurgent and terrorist groups. A former youth militia mentioned unemployment and lack of opportunities as the reason he was lured into becoming a militia. Furthermore, increasingly in the Sahel, women are beginning to take up arms to control resources. Findings reveal that access to water resources is why women have opted to take up arms. With the dwindling of water resources, including water points, rivers, and basins drying up, which drives livelihoods insecurity, women are forced to take arms to control these water points.

In the Sahel, women account for about 60-70% of Sahel's poor and vulnerable, living on less than $2 a day. Women also make up 80% of the workforce in agriculture. Climate strongly influences the agricultural sector which women rely on for their daily subsistence and livelihoods, affecting food security. The United Nations estimates that roughly 80% of the Sahel's farmland is degraded, and climate change is already exacerbating the amount of arable land, yet the population of women increases, meaning the caring capacity of the land is no longer sustainable. Under such circumstances, when the land resource is increasingly depleting, it becomes a threat to livelihoods as women can no longer fulfil their responsibilities to ensure food and nutrition security for their families. Thus, the reversal of gender roles where now women take up arms to protect their pieces of land from other community members is observed.

## **Security**

 What is emerging from the research findings are two contrasting forms of security: traditional and human security. In the Sahel, these two intersect due to the influence of climate change. Also, results show that traditional security has scampered and scuttled climate change mitigation efforts as resources are misdirected to consolidate power and group cohesion.

### **Traditional Security**

In the Sahel, traditional security concerns are high-level security challenges or threats to the military, politics, and state welfare. Findings show the different existential threats that challenge state authority and legitimacy, triggered by fluid and fragile political systems. Most of the states are seeing increasingly systematized violence with political interest. Also, traditional security can be seen through the lens of ethnic and religious strives that result in national insecurity. Most states and military are key actors and central in providing security. Insurgency, terrorism and militarisation are the most challenging issues to traditional security in the Sahel. For instance, the emergence of armed insurgents and terrorist groups in the region and their violent activities, particularly in Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State vying to control resources, is a threat to the security of states and the region. Competition over access to natural resources is a crucial source of instability and insecurity. The competition is motivated by diverse groups such as armed insurgents and terrorist groups, military and communities wanting to control the depleting resources in the region. This is the case in the Lake Chad Basin, where terrorist groups have taken over control of the region. For instance, in Mauritania, the risk of youth radicalisation and recruitment into AQIM is exceedingly high. The activities of youth radicalisation and recruitment of AQIM are illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6: Activities of Al Qaïda in the Sahel

Map

Description automatically generated

Source: Council of the European Union, 2011.

With the rapid encroachment of AQIM, their radicalisation of young people and their various attacks on civilians in the Sahel, an EU official noted that there is also potential to launch attacks on EU territory. This argument is concurrent with Buzan and Weaver's (2003) argument that a perceived security threat in one region is a potential threat to another. According to an EU official, reducing and tackling drug, human trafficking, smuggling, and criminal networks targeted at Europe is crucial for the EU. As such, a stable and secure Sahel is of interest to EU trade and investment. This has been revealed by another EU official who mentioned:

“We need to improve security and development in the Sahel and create a stable, secure and peaceful environment for trade and investment” (EU Official 04, personal communication, 8 September 2021a).

Thus, fostering stability and security in the Sahel is critical to directly guarantee the protection of European interests and the EU internal security.

The security situation in the region is getting worse with increased militarisation due to increased state fragility. However, results show that the widespread militarization is driven by various actors that make the security setting complex, including insurgent terrorist organisations, government security forces and pro-government militias. Also, electoral violence, political corruption, recurrent coups, and coup proofing mechanisms are threats to the region's traditional security. Results reveal that insurgency and terrorism nowadays eclipse other security threats in most Sahel states. As such, the security issues in the region are reshaping the political arrangement and economy of the countries, admitting and co-opting new members into the rent-seeking elite club while demoting others into the group of opposition.

Concerned by the deteriorating security scenario, diverse groups have established tactical and counter alliances. For instance, in the case of Mali, where the Tuareg rebellion in the North against the Malian government developed into a violent extremist insurgency with some violent extremist/jihadist groups conquering parts of Mali's north and threatening the central government. In collaboration with the Malian military, the French military intervened in Northern Mali, known as operation serval. Also, to fight against transnational terrorism and extremism in the Sahel, the EU has been an incredibly significant actor, particularly the EU's direct military interventions in armed conflict, e.g., the EU's stabilisation mission in Mali and the joint force against Boko haram. What emerged in the findings is that civilians and local communities subjected to violence are in support of the rising coup d’états in the region. A good example is Burkina Faso. Also, local communities have established strong alliances to challenge political power and their leaders. Those who feel victims of state-sponsored poverty and disadvantaged have taken up arms to obtain political power, significantly raising political and economic grievances. This has raised serious security concerns in the region.

In the Sahel – there are a lot of forces - political elites, rebels and sobels fighting to control extractive institutions. This has unfortunately degenerated into civil strife. Results show that ruling elites and leaders have created strong alliances to sustain and consolidate power. These alliances have enabled them to control economic institutions that give wealth, rents, and power that help to consolidate political elites` control. For instance, the rents that the economic institutions generated have enabled political leaders to build up security forces – army, police, gendarmerie and private security, mercenaries, rig elections, and buy judges. Furthermore, the governments are no longer alone in creating extractive politics and extractive economics - rebels too. The rebels, bandits and insurgent groups have coalesced by engaging in economic exploitation in areas under their control. Therefore, how possible are the 3S interventions when the situation is out of control? How is the 3S Initiative possible when law and security have collapsed?

### **Human Security**

Furthermore, findings show that the human security sector has more challenges than traditional security. However, this dimension has been hugely ignored in the 3S Intervention model as the focus has been chiefly on counterterrorism. In the Sahel, human insecurity is driven by the increasing climatic changes (droughts, floods, desertification etc.) threatening food security and disrupting the livelihoods of people and communities in the Sahel. The impact of climate change on land, water and food usage has resulted in confrontation among communities. For instance, disputes between pastoralists (Fulani Peulh) and farmers revolve around contested land use (crazing versus crop cultivation) and access to water and forage, affecting human, national and regional security.

Interviewees cited examples of countries including Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin and Nigeria, where a diverse array of conflicts between pastoralists, fishers and sedentary farmers cater for a situation where different livelihoods and lifestyle types converge, sometimes leading to competition over access to land and natural resources. As such, this has forced many to be displaced internally and within the region.

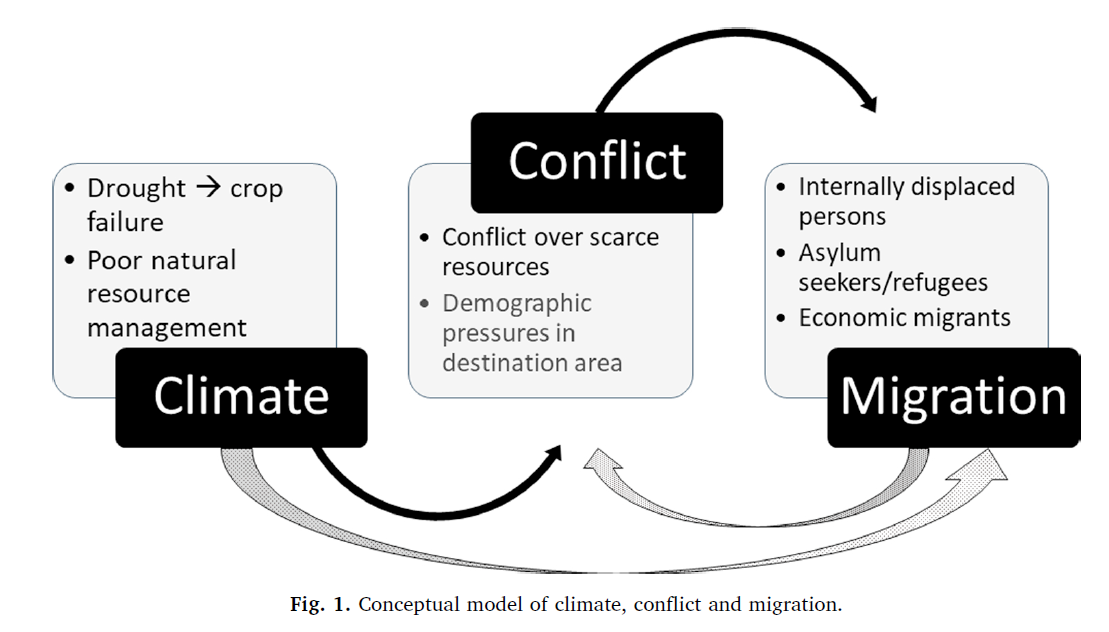
Moreover, food insecurity has resulted in widespread poverty, with far-reaching consequences on human, socio-cultural, political, and economic security. More so, a member of the European Think Tanks argued that poverty has an overarching impact on earlier, ongoing, and emerging security threats in the Sahel. Findings reveal that poverty is part of the motivation for organized crime activities such as drug and human trafficking, armed robbery and recruitment into insurgent and terrorist groups.

It has been seen that climate change is threatening both hard and human security. Findings show that both are circular and not triangular. Circular, because insecurities from hard security will impact human security and vice versa. The issues overlap and are not stand-alone because they feed into each other as the impact of climate change has taken an equal toll on both. Thus, the security concerns in the Sahel are many and manifest themselves in several ways. What is obtained from the interviews is that the patterns and trends of security are linear. The results showed that insurgency and terrorism are prioritized more than human security issues by both European and African actors.

## **Migration**

Migration in the Sahel as a standalone subject has been overly researched, with diverse findings emerging. Although this research builds on these findings, it goes further to narrow the focus on the connection between climate change and migration and how both link to sustainability, stability, and security issues. Climate change and migration are fuzzy and complex, given the overlapping issues. Policymakers, government institutions and the private sector lack knowledge or data on the scale of migration and the forms of migration in the region. Since there is no precise data that can disaggregate, income-related migration is usually undertaken by men in response to climate change and civils, whereas disaster-induced migration is usually undertaken by women and children fleeing from floods and cyclones. There is also climate mobility by cattle herders due to pasture failures and drought, and migration by returnees seeking integration into the communities. As such, there is still no clarity on how the policy and interventions address all the various scales and forms of climate mobility – voluntary migration, distressed migration, internal and cross-border movements. Although there is a fuzzy connection between climate change and migration, it is undisputed that conflict, as people respond to climate change challenges, would overlap climate and migration issues. Several people will be forced to move in a riddled conflict region, coupled with preexisting weak states due to a low degree of policy preparation, resilience, and adaptation. The diagram below by Abel et al. (2019) attempts to show a possible connection between climate change and conflict manifestation.

***Figure 7: Conceptual model for Climate-Conflict-Migration interrelation***

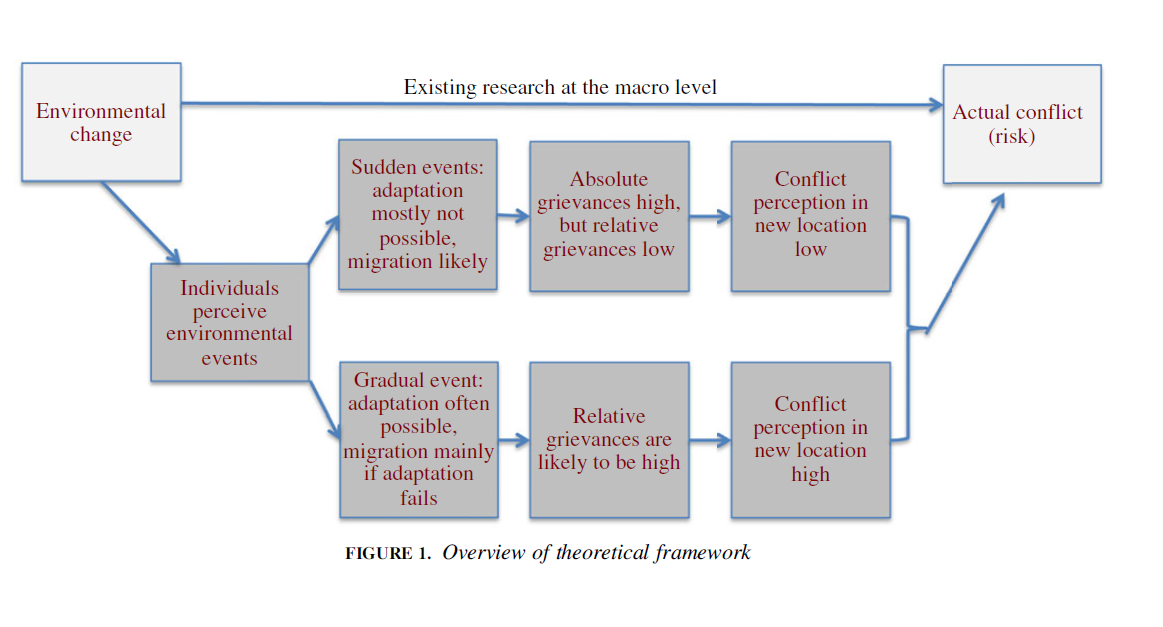


Source: Abel et al., 2019.

The research findings also counter-argue the dominant and long-held view that migration is extremely bad for the Sahel region. Instead, interviewees revealed that migration brings opportunities that are helpful to fight climate change through community resilience. As shall be shown in subsequent sections, respondents reiterated that migration brings remittances that have cautioned communities against low economic opportunities, and those who return usually bring with them new skills that are helpful to the communities. Some interviewees reveal that when they migrate to Ghana and Burkina Faso to work on farms, they learn new farming and agriculture techniques to restore degraded drylands and increase soil fertility. A good example is the “Zaï” or “Tissa” technique that involves digging holes in the soil during the preseason, 20-30 cm long, deep, and 90 cm apart to collect water and concentrate compost. Interviewees also mentioned they have acquired skills and practices in preserving agricultural products. For instance, how to preserve seasonal foods. Therefore, the research findings show that there are a lot of inbuilt developmental factors in migration. The questions I could not address are whether the returning migrants are integrating with sustainable ways and the extent to which climate change affects the integration, given that land and water are increasingly depleting. Another observation I feel has been missed by many scholars is that migration is not only an effect of climate change but a climate change adaptation strategy deployed by many Sahelians.

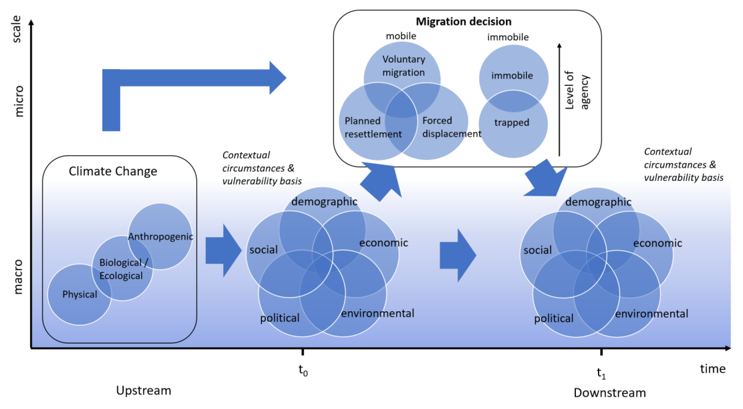
According to the respondents, migration to most Sahel communities is to adapt to adverse or variable climate conditions and search for available and usable resources. This is usually highlighted by increasing internal, rural-urban, and intra-Africa migration ventures. Figure 8 shows migration from an adaption lens, and figure 9 illustrates how climate change motivates people's choices to move to other areas.

Figure 8: Conceptual framework opposing complexity vs linearity



Source: Koubi et al., 2018.

***Figure 9: Impact of climate change on an individual’s decision to migrate.***



Source: Parrish et al., 2020.

Relatedly, although policy and scholarly attention has focused on nomadic Fulani migration and its impacts on stability and security, scant information is available detailing the nomads' increased resilience and adaptation strategies. The research findings illuminate how the nomads are now using technology to limit itinerants. For instance, in Nigeria and Burkina Faso, the Fulani are using fodder to feed their animals – thereby reducing environmental degradation caused by cattle movement and overgrazing. The Fulani have also shown some agency by agitating for land tenure, and some have diversified to become sedentary farmers. These findings have opened an opportunity to raise enduring questions on whether pastoralist migration is cultural, economic, or it is a practice that is more sensitive to water and pasture. How is it that among a group of pastoralists equally affected by climate change, some people decide to leave, and others stay put? How do people in the Sahel respond differently to the pangs of climate change? Therefore, future research needs to be conducted on the resilience and adaptation strategies of pastoralists communities. This will inform policy and interventions strategies that strengthen localized adaptation strategies.

Research is beginning to increasingly show a varied combination of push-pull factors that drive migration in Africa. The main push factors are conflict, instability, climate-induced insecurity, repressive governance, and limited economic opportunities (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021). In contrast, the primary pull factors include human rights, freedom of speech, good governance, and better economic opportunities (Ogeno, 2018). Research findings show that push factors contribute more to migration than previously assumed. One of the youths pointed out some of the reasons that motivated his choice to move. He remarked:

“It is not that I want to go to Europe; the question is, what can I do? I am finding it extremely difficult to get a job. Two years ago, I planted maize and plantains, the heavy rains destroyed all the crops…there was nothing left, and we could barely survive” (Africa Youth 20, personal communication, 7 July 2021)

This indicates that when people are faced with a crisis, such as climate-induced agricultural failure, they either take a fight or flight response. This observation has been made by the interviewees who mentioned that because of the worsening impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector, farmers had to abandon farming to become Jihadists.

One community member in Mali reinforced:

“My husband is a farmer... but with the decrease in rainfall, we cannot harvest much. The soil is very dry, and sometimes we dig wells to search for water with no success…before we used to have better yields, now that we could not harvest, and the kids had to go to school, my husband decided to abandon the farm and join the jihadist in the north. Our lives are better now” (Community member 02, personal communication, 18 October 2021).

Another youth from Cameroon remarked:

“Africa is opposite from Europe in terms of governance issues. Economic problems are better handled in Europe…in Africa, we see massive human rights abuse, with no opportunities for young people; we can't talk because if we do, we will be killed or jailed. Still, in Europe, there are human rights. Freedom is guaranteed; because of their liberal style of governance, they have better employment opportunities that cater for all types of skills for educated and uneducated people with decent paid wages” (Africa Youth 22, personal communication, 16 July 2021).

Further findings show that migration adds another layer to the complexity of climate change and cross border migration, given that migration itself is expensive. Those who usually migrate are the youth and men whose family members often sell a piece of land to pay for their travels. See **appendix 4** and **5** for more details on regions with more migrants emigrating. This implies that demography plays a crucial role in migration, particularly the youth, who are the most productive, economic active but most mobile. This view has been developed by scholars such as Hermans and Hermans (2015) that the Sahel region has one of the most mobile populations globally, with migration serving as a common household strategy to increase livelihood and social resilience. In the case of Burkina Faso, Niger, Niger, Mali etc., findings show that about 80-90% of people who leave their villages to border communities and neighbouring countries are young people and young men who go to work in mining sites. More evidently, many young people argue for push factors dominating their choices to move, and by doing so, they compared Europe and Africa.

One youth leader from Burkina Faso indicated:

“We do not want to leave our homes but are forced to do so because there is terrible politics, we do not have jobs, we are not safe because of attacks from the military and armed groups. We fear our lives; people are dying of hunger” (Africa Youth 25, personal communication, 21 July 2021).

There is a consistent pattern between the nature of domestic politics characterised by the political economy of extractive institutions. Of importance is that extractive institutions are the most emerging issues that contribute to the driving of migration in the Sahel. Findings show that extractive institutions do not give people opportunities but alternatives such as migrating. The rationale is that since extractive economic institutions do not provide economic opportunities, extractive political institutions are marred with governance issues and shrinking political space to accommodate descending voices. Therefore, those who speak against or contrary to what the government says are forced to leave the country for safety and security reasons. Most of the youth interviewees feel their governments are not responding to their demands. The lack of social contract between the state and the citizens has often resulted in rebellion and military repression.

In retrospection on the governance and security challenges in the region, one youth said:

“In 2015 we went to the street to demonstrate against the lack of jobs. The government sent the military to stop us. We were beaten, some were taken to jail, and others were killed… sadly, some people disappeared, and until today, their families cannot find them; we do not know if the government killed them in hiding. I was lucky, I managed to escape, and I am now in Nigeria…I can't go back because the military is looking for me…hahaha, you don't know what is on the ground. I mean, the governments are ruthless and oppressive; if you voice your dissatisfaction the next day, you will be no more or disappear. We have several cases where people have been jailed or killed for speaking their concerns” (Africa Youth 17, personal communication, 25 June 2021).

# Intervention Models: The Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa (3S Initiative)

Various policy initiatives and projects have been brought to tackle the diverse sustainability, stability, and security issues in the Sahel, which incorporate the interrelation of climate change, security and migration. Policy responses include the Great Green Wall Initiative[[1]](#endnote-1) (GGW), the Transqua Project[[2]](#endnote-2), Africa climate Mobility Initiative[[3]](#endnote-3) (ACMI) and the G5 Sahel joint force[[4]](#endnote-4) (FC-G5S). This report focuses on one of such approaches known as the Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa (3S Initiative). 3S stands for the interlinked dimensions of sustainability, stability, and security. This section explores the Initiative's relevance within the context of the Sahel region. It further reflects on the potential and challenges of the Initiative so far. Compatibility of the 3S Initiative with the dynamic evolution of climate change, migration, and security. This is achieved through coding and highlighting what interviewees thought and experienced concerning 3S. Assessment of the efficacy of the 3S Initiative will be limited to policy, implementation, and changes in place.

## **The evolution of the 3S Initiative**

In August 2016, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in response to a call from the ECOWAS Ministers of Interior to address migration and instability induced by climate change (land degradation) at the Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA), Morocco and Senegal launched the 3S Initiative (3S Initiative, 2018c). Against this backdrop, concerned by the vicious effects of climate change, particularly on fragility and instability in communities, African political leaders met at the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22) in Marrakesh, Morocco, and adopted constructive ways to address the continent's demanding security, stability, and sustainability challenges. On November 16 2016, African Heads of State endorsed the 3S Initiative at the first African Action Summit held on the margins of COP22 in Marrakesh (UNCCD, 2016). Given this development, they pledged to accelerate its implementation, build on their resources, and mobilise multilateral and bilateral donors (3S Initiative, 2018a). Recently, the 3S Initiative has been considered under Pillar 4 of the Great Green Wall Accelerator on a “favourable economic and institutional framework for effective governance, sustainability, stability, and security”. (GGW, 2021). The other pillars include:

* **Pillar 1**– Investment in small and medium-sized farms and strengthening of value chains, local markets, organization of exports
* **Pillar 2** – Land restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems
* **Pillar 3** – Climate-resilient infrastructures and access to renewable energy
* **Pillar 5** – Capacity building

### **Aims and objectives**

The Initiative aims to enhance stability and security in the face of migration caused by environmental degradation and climate change. To respond to these challenges, the Initiative pursues the following objectives:

1. Create two million green jobs for vulnerable groups, in particular, young people, migrants, displaced populations and individuals targeted by extremist groups, through the investment in the restoration and sustainable land management of ten million hectares of degraded lands by 2025;

2. Strengthen access to land and tenure rights to increase the sense of belonging to a specific community and place, particularly in fragile areas;

3. Prevent displacement by improving preparedness and early warning systems for drought and other natural disasters (3S Initiative, 2018c). Thus, a feeling of belonging and community shall be created that, in turn, undermines incentives for migration.

To achieve these wide-ranging and broad objectives, the 3S Initiative is guiding its actions along with the 3S (sustainability, stability, and security). More precisely, the project's setup along these three axes should cater to the conjoint and integrative implementation in-situ.

### **Composition/Governance**

The Initiative is led by a Task Force, composed of fourteen participating countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe,). Each of these countries is represented by senior officials who are directly appointed by the Heads of Government. Out of the fourteen countries, eleven are from the West African Sahel. However, Sahel countries including Cameroon, Guinea and Mauritania have not yet requested to be part of the Initiative. Morocco and Senegal are the co-chairs of the Task Force, and the Secretariat of the Task Force has been entrusted to the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) (3S Initiative, 2018b; Bendandi, 2017).

The Task Force guides the Initiative and promotes partnerships between the 3S African institutions and elements international development community and processes. The Task Force also coordinates efforts to mobilize expertise and financial resources needed for the project implementation.

***Figure 10: The Sustainability, Stability and Security in the Sahel***

Source: Author’s compilation

## **3S Initiative's strategic importance to the international community**

The Initiative is continuously embedded within international institutions and projects. As such, the international development community is being called to support investments in rural infrastructure, land rehabilitation tools and skills development in the sites identified as migration-prone and socially at-risk areas (Bendandi, 2017). For instance, the 3S Initiative forms part of the forthcoming Rural Resilience Program of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), an umbrella program addressing rural resilience holistically. IFAD offers African countries a platform with a proven record. It provides the institutional strength to allow funders to back the 3S Initiative with the necessary resources to deliver large-scale benefits across Africa (IFAD, 2021).

Significant negotiations for the inclusion of the 3S in important international events have been advocated. The Initiative has featured in several international events, including COP22 in 2016 in Marrakesh, the Senior Official Meeting of the Joint Valletta Action Plan adopted in Addis Ababa in 2018, the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), adopted in Marrakesh in 2018. On September 17, 2021, the 3S Initiative was mentioned at the Security Council Ministerial-level open debate on the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation on peace and security by the Executive Secretary of UNCCD. Also, the Initiative has featured in a broader donor community like the One Planet Summit on Biodiversity held on January 11, 2021. On November 19, 2020, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD presented the Initiative at the Webinar organized by UNCCD and Deutsche Welle to inspire young people in Africa to create jobs for youth in the land sector. The 3S Task Force Secretariat presented the Initiative at a training session entitled ‘Climate Risk Assessment Tools and Methodologies for National Planning and Programming in Africa’, organized by Adelphi, a think tank closely working with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Secretariat of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development and the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA) on September 30, 2020.

One of the members of the 3S Task Force Secretariat pointed out how the Secretariat has established synergies and built partnerships on the international level as she remarked:

“We achieved to create awareness at international, continental, regional, national and levels…we have pushed at various events, and the 3Spolicy has been adopted, and we have succeeded to foster public-private partnership; however, what is needed is the Africans to take ownership. They must win it and prioritize it. They made the case that they wanted to address these issues now; they must make a case that in negotiations over the money, ask for it and, in the implementation, to do it” (3S Secretariat Member 01, personal communication, 29 October 2021).

Moreover, the 3S initiative is aligned with several other projects, such as the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) concept championed by the UNCCD and the Great Green Wall Accelerator. Just like other initiatives, the 3S catalyzes resources across sectors-public and private and funds. It covers the interests and agendas of the international development community, particularly the Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Evidence from this research shows that the Initiative is of strategic importance to the international community because it shapes policy to address 3S issues such as climate change, security and migration, which have created unprecedented international attention in recent times. Also, results show that it is significant to include 3S in key international events, particularly on migration and security, including the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the G7 and the G20 and the Global Forum on Migration and Development. The objective is to mobilize technical and financial support crucial for project implementation.

## **3S Initiative's strategic importance to the African continent**

The 3S Initiative attempts to cover significant objectives of the continental Agenda 2063. “The Africa We Want", adopted by African leaders in 2013. As such, African governments are expected to create favourable conditions for new job opportunities and identify sites where land access rights are secured and given to vulnerable and socially at-risk people, including unemployed rural youth, returned migrants, former smugglers, etc.

Interviewees stressed the need for intervention models like the 3S to address challenges at all scales, including international, national, regional, local, modern, traditional, religious, and scientific viewpoints. This resonates with the views of a member of the 3S Task Force who remarked:

“…with the 3S Initiative, we want to implement a demand-driven approach that is a multi-sector, multi-level and multi-actor pathway to land restoration by specifically including small-scale farmers. We can only achieve this by promoting small-scale irrigation mechanisms such as drip irrigation, which offers economic and environmental potential for the poor in the Sahel” (3S Task Force Member 03, personal communication, 19 November 2021).

Interviews highlighted the importance of an integrative approach to tackling sustainability, stability, and security issues in the Sahel. According to an EU official, the goal is to ensure that the 3S Initiative is inclusive and integrative, addressing the needs of all people, including women, migrants, refugees, returnees, the poor and the vulnerable. This is also consistent with the Africans' views which see the challenges in their countries as complex and interlinked. As such, they underscore the significant role that inclusion can play in the success of the Initiative, particularly for the youth. It is important to emphasize that a lack of opportunity has forced young people to make tough decisions to abandon their villages and move to cities and other countries. Therefore, in implementing the 3S Initiative, ensuring that every section of society is included and relevant to avoid creating loopholes.

An EU official echoed:

“our goal is to ensure that the 3S Initiative is inclusive and integrative, addressing the needs of all people, including women, migrants, refugees, returnees, the poor and the vulnerable” (EU Official 06, personal communication, 25 January 2022).

Although there was a common consensus among the European and African officials that an inclusive and integrative approach at all scales (international, continental, regional, national and local) is significant for the successful implementation of the 3S, there has been an enormous gap in this respect. Evidence shows that at the continental and regional level, the African Union (AU) and regional organizations (ROs) like the ECOSWAS were not fully involved in the conceptualization and design of the Initiative. The focus was on individual country levels rather than AU and regional levels. Whereas the AU, Regional Economic Committees (RECs) and other organizations have made various political commitments to tackle the mutually reinforcing risks of climate change, security and conflict. In November 2021, the African Union’s Peace and Security Council (PSC) re-emphasized the “wide-ranging risks of climate change, as a threat multiplier, to the peace and security landscape” in Africa’s 1051st meeting. It pointed out that these risks were jeopardizing the economic and development goals outlined in Agenda 2063 and the security goals of the “Silencing the Guns” campaign. However, although regional organizations operating in the Sahel (ECOWAS; G5 Sahel, Sahel Alliance) have incorporated climate implications into their security priorities, agendas and work, the results have been limited thus far. A key argument is that regional and, to a considerable degree, continental and international organizations operate in silos. Their security, defence, and environmental agencies frequently do not communicate. A detailed analysis of why the AU and ROs were not directly involved in the 3S will be discussed in **Section 8**. However, it is observed that the Initiative does not have much support from many African countries, regional bodies, and the AU due to the lack of inclusion. The Initiative is likely to fail because it has ignored fundamental issues about Africa.

## **3S Initiative strategic importance to the local people**

The Initiative is significant at the local level as it has endeavoured to undertake projects in some Sahel countries. The first is a demonstration project, an initiative carried out in Agadez Niger, where plots of one hectare have been allocated to ex-smugglers, refugees, and returnees from conflict-driven Libya by the UNCCD. The project provided training for sustainable agriculture for farmers in collaboration with the IOM and the UNCCD, funded through the EU. The project is designed for migrants who wish to return to their countries of origin under the Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism. Although the project is still in its infancy, 30 Nigeriens have received plots. The project offers vulnerable communities and people an opportunity to create the livelihood they have been deprived of.

Another project in the Gambia targeting rural youths, returning migrants and small-to-medium-scale entrepreneurs in agriculture, aquaculture, agroforestry, and ecotourism were launched through the auspices of the Initiative. The project aims to rehabilitate about 50,000 hectares of land and create about 25.000 green jobs.

In addressing the impacts of climate change on local communities, the Agadez and the Gambia projects target land restoration and sustainable agriculture as significant for sustainable livelihoods, explicitly targeting the most vulnerable in generating employment. Based on the accounts of development agencies and government officials, it is crucial to address the problems of land/tenure security and rights for the local people to address climate change issues. As land is of paramount importance for the local communities, most people in the Sahel depend on rain-fed agriculture. Thus, according to a member of the 3S Task Force Secretariat and an IOM worker, ensuring tenure security is prime, especially giving land access to women and youth. This is because when people own land, they have a sense of security and obligation to protect the land. Also, this will foster stability, safety, and sustainable livelihoods for many poor people. This has been the case in Niger, where development agencies and European governments collaborate with national and local authorities, particularly in Agadez, where many migrants in transit centres and returnees have been given a piece of land for agricultural cultivation.

A member of the 3S Task Force Secretariat mentioned:

“IOM has supported us in implementing the Agadez project for migrants who want to return to their countries. This is a positive step to address the underlying issues of international migration... Through our Secretariat, we surveyed the root causes of migration; from the survey, we can clearly define the needs of various migrants, refugees and young people…we are still not there, but it is a work in progress that needs to be commended” (3S Secretariat Member 02, personal communication, 10 November 2021).

Although the Initiative has been significant at the local level by providing tenure security and reducing the incentives for migration, findings show that the Initiative has registered some gaps. First, evidence shows that local people do not understand the Initiative even though they are beneficiaries. The beneficiaries understand the different projects (Agadez and the Gambia). However, they do not know that the projects fall under the broader 3S Initiative. Responding to the understanding of the 3S to the local communities, a beneficiary who is a returnee from the Gambia remarked:

“I do not know what the 3S Initiative is. They did not tell us about that. I only know about the project for people who returned home. My friends and I were given a monthly income; I find this very good because it will help us sustain our families for the meantime until we start to reap the benefits of the lands we have been given to farm on” (Africa Youth 04, personal communication, 2 June 2021).

Another young returnee who is a beneficiary of the project reported:

“After we returned, we were contacted by an organization that there is a project they are implementing for people who have returned and do not have jobs. They asked us to register; my friends who came back and I recorded and were given a piece of land. They never mentioned 3Swhat is this 3S”? (Africa Youth 13, personal communication, 18 June 2021).

The locals' lack of understanding and disconnect is typical in most settings in Africa, and the Sahel, where interventions have been implemented from above often. This is, for instance, perceptible through underlying hierarchies, where national states and respective government departments must generate roadmaps for future development as opposed to participatory planning processes induced by grassroots institutions from below. An agricultural expert underscores this dilemma by stating that national adaptation and action plans need to urgently consider local and regional levels to offer genuine adaptive and preventative measures in the light of climate change, security, and migration. Thus, evidence shows that the 3S Initiative is a top-down approach rather than a bottom-up one. It ignores the ‘local turn’, which scholars like MacGinty and Richmond (MacGinty & Richard, 2013; Richmond, 2005, 2020), argue the need to embed local ownership in peace and security interventions rather than descriptive, prescriptive and interventional methodologies. Results show that the emancipation of responses like the 3S risks becoming dominating for local people. Policy framing tends to draw legitimacy from potential emancipatory projects but often uses this legitimacy to camouflage conflict and hegemony, prioritizing the beneficiaries of historical power relations rather than its victims. Emancipation risks becoming domination, in other words. Hence, local people are barely included or consulted yet they have their adaption mechanisms in a localized way, and the 3S has failed to coordinate that. The argument has often been made that if mitigating mechanisms are not thoughtfully designed and adjusted to local contexts, they might backfire and worsen resource and land scarcity issues. Mitigation mechanisms often rely on land availability, which exerts even more pressure on existing resources and land.

Furthermore, lack of coordination, logistics and communication has been registered as one of the pitfalls of the Initiative. Coordination among the participating countries and regional and sub-regional entities has been a problem in merging joint and concerted efforts in tackling climate change, security and migration. The lack of a coordinated approach among regional organizations will be discussed in detail in **Section 8**. Apart from that, there has been a lack of clarity in the project and a failure to include essential institutions. A development expert revealed that actions to promote resilience and adaptation in the Sahel are constrained by the fragmentation of separate initiatives and a lack of clarity regarding leadership in climate change action. This is also palpable in the setup of the 3S Initiative. Although Senegal and Morocco have taken the leading position, differences between states' interests have hampered the development of adequate roadmaps. Given the high rates of corruption and the proven misuse of power by stakeholders in many Sahelian countries, for example, the Ministries of Environment and Forestry or within local politics, the trust of local populations in projects implemented from above – especially in combination with external partnerships – might be kept within certain limits. However, some participants directly involved with the management indicated that part of the funds was misallocated. They were primarily used to organize meetings without conclusions and pay unnecessary travel expenses (including air tickets, hotels, and per diems).

It is, therefore, an essential task for the 3S Initiative to ensure the safe allocation of funds to the right partners, which requires a detailed and context-sensitive analysis of contemporary dynamics in the respective project areas beforehand. Peacebuilding and security strategies must increasingly incorporate bottom-up initiatives and refrain from large, overarching top-down projects without accountability. Therefore, attention must be directed to governance mechanisms on a locally sensitive basis and priority must be given to the involvement and inclusion of various security and migration mitigation mechanisms, as was initially outlined in the 3S Initiative plan. The 3S Initiative thus must ensure the right choice of partners on the ground that, irrespective of local petty corruption and misguided policies, guarantee a just and equitable implementation of advocated projects for the benefit of all and include in scale-transcending fashion traditional and modern, religious and scientific as well as local and international perspectives in an inclusive manner.

Although empowering people is critical, the Initiative is not participatory as advocated. So far, the existing projects have distinct visibility, such as large-scale tree planting or land allocation projects, but certainly do not tackle underlying root causes of instability and insecurity in the region, which are political, economic, historical, and cultural. Findings show the Initiative has ignored understanding the domestic politics of most Sahel countries, which is critical because extractive political and extractive economic institutions are significant in understanding the nature of domestic politics in the region. This view has been strengthened by a member from the ECOWAS commission who indicated:

“I think the Initiative, just like others imported in the region, has failed to consider the domestic context of the Sahel states. I have not seen any concrete measures to address the issues simultaneously; rather, there is a staggering increase in instability and insecurity in the region. Understanding and prioritizing issues of domestic politics is central because, without that, it is all waste of time” (ECOWAS member 03, personal communication, 8 December 2021).

Further evidence from the research shows that the projects implemented in Niger and the Gambia have focused on reducing migration. This reductionist approach conflates policy and politics as the Initiative tries to tighten the grip on migration and mobility by circumventing migration in the Sahel, thereby mirroring EU policies of migration confinement. This should come as no surprise, given that the EU and the UN, as helpful donors, advocate for the restriction of migration in the Sahel countries as part of an externalized migration management. However, historically and culturally, migration is crucial in the region as a strategy of adaptation to climate change. For instance, a participant from Nigeria argues that migration restriction in conjunction with the disproportionate promotion of sedentary agriculture hampers pastoralist mobility, although livestock corridors rightfully enable such movement. Crucially, evidence shows that the potential for conflict could be dampened by more open approaches towards trans-regional mobility for pastoralists and by providing clearly defined access to natural resources through the setup of livestock corridors. Paradoxically, restrictive migration policies might backfire and provoke more forms of irregular and clandestine migration. Policy recommendations made by the community members such as pastoralists and villagers in the Sahel firmly advocate for loosening the grip on migration control, arguing that such practices lead to an increased vulnerability of communities that are heavily dependent on migration and, in addition, to those associated with remittances. Moreover, they also underline that EU and UN driven migration policies in the Sahel, to which the 3S Initiative adheres, counteract African-based regional protocols, such as the ECOWAS regulations on free movement and historically established corridors and pathways of mobility. This is not only confining local populations in their free choices of living but also undermines the African partners and relegates them to mere assistants in the international policy arena.

# Divides within the dialogues on climate security and migration

## **Africa and EU divide on climate security**

Africa and the EU are perceived as equal partners, with a long-standing relationship in the areas of aid, fundamental rights, and development (Islam, 2022). However, historically, it has been an unbalanced relationship. There is evidence the new Africa EU partnership “seems to be moving in the right direction with a focus beyond development cooperation ad an emphasis on creating equal partnership” in climate security (Kaba, 2022). There is a common consensus among African and European political actors that climate change is a security threat multiplier. These perceived new partnerships tend to overshadow the Africa-EU divide, especially on matters of climate security. Although there is collaboration and partnership, both institutions have selectively adopted securitization of climate change as evidenced by contentious conceptualizations of existential and incongruent intervention strategies in areas of traditional vs. human security, fossil fuel vs. climate finance, and mitigation vs. resilience and adaptation. Research findings reveal how such selective securitization of climate change is informed and guided by interests, incentives, institutional arrangements, agendas, and priorities. For instance, the Africans viewed climate discussions at the COP26 as “imbalanced, driven by European and Western agendas and priorities to reduce emissions and transform energy systems without adequate support for managing the costs of climate change” (African Government Official 01, personal communication, 2 August 2021; African Government Official 08, personal communication, 12 August 2021). However, the African ruling and governing elites have a minimalist understanding of climate security as they perceive it from a state-centric-traditional perspective. They are more concerned about the pressing political emergencies, particularly threats to their sovereignty and power. Hence the reason African elites agitate on climate security to focus on resilience and adaptation rather than mitigation.

In contrast, the European conception of security is from a maximalist perspective, informed by its foreign policy that perceives both hard (traditional) and human (non-traditional) security. As such, the EU’s priority area is mitigation rather than adaptation. This perspective was captured by an EU official who reported,

“We need to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions not only CO2, but that is also why mitigation is important. I think we are gradually getting there; we are working with our African partners on mitigating the impacts of climate change in vulnerable communities in Africa” (EU Official 04, personal communication, 8 September 2021b).

This divergence has an impact on the outcome of negotiations as more strategies are geared towards counterterrorism. For example, findings show that responses for climate security like the Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa - 3S Initiative, will not take the same speed as expected by the EU or, if implemented, won’t be sustained because the African leaders who dominate or control politics are afraid of creative destruction brought by climate security interventions. Creative destruction entails coming up with new and innovative ideas. However, the tendency of innovation is that it destabilizes already established power and economic relations (van Nederveen Meerkerk, 2013).

A central reason African political actors selectively prioritize resilience and adaptation security is the nature of the political economy of African states. The political economy is characterized by extractive political and extractive economic institutions. Politics also governs incentives – who gets what and who should wield power. African leaders create extractive political institutions to consolidate and sustain power (Khan, 2015). Findings show that extractive political institutions and extractive economic institutions were focused on getting rents such as climate finance from the Europeans to finance their private security for coup d’états and coup proofing mechanisms. Consistent with rent-seeking behaviour, the political elites, who double as economic elites, are happy to extract subsoil resources without creating spaces for other economic activities hence the insistence on the continued use of fossil fuels. An African official posited:

“We can’t just cut off fossil fuels abruptly, our economies are not diversified, we need time to first diversify our economies” (African Government Official 06, personal communication, 9 August 2021b).

Because of rent-seeking behaviour, these economic institutions in the Sahel are not inclusive. They kill talent, skills, and choices as they do not create space for people to innovate and invest – which are central features of climate security or the 3S Initiative.

For purposes of analytical purchase and an in-depth understanding of the Africa-EU’s selective securitization of climate change and its consequences, let us further narrow the discussion to three areas (a) diplomacy and coercion on climate security, (b) to mitigate or adapt? and (c) green/climate finance.

### **Diplomacy and coercion on climate security**

Although there is evidence of collaboration or coalition of ambition, there are contentions between the EU and Africa on selective securitization strategies, as the EU seeks to control the narrative of climate security. The former is criticized for simultaneously taking a coercive and diplomatic approach to climate security to peddle its agenda to reduce climate refugees and counterterrorism. For instance, although the Africans are part of the Green Deal initiative, they perceive it as a forum of environmental imperialism characterized by diplomacy and coercion. The EU is very good at building climate alliances, including a partnership with the AU, that offers critical interventions, including massive climate finance commitments. For instance, as observed by Ahairwe, “despite the continent’s minuscule contribution to the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, most African countries have willingly signed on to international agreements to fight it, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change” (Ahairwe, 2019). However, the diplomatic approach is perceived to have emerged when previous climate finance pledges have not been met, despite new pledges being made. For instance, in the previous COPs – the Durban COP17 in 2011, Paris COP21 in 2015, COP25 in Madrid, and COP26 in Glasgow, more equitable partnerships with Africans, support the ambitious EU Green Deal, climate finances were recurring promises. The most disappointing for Africans is the commitment from developed countries to allocate $100 billion by 2020 for Africa's climate adaptation and mitigation needs. Diplomacy has got its limitations, especially in the context of selective securitization. However, where diplomacy fails, coercion and forceful action become alternative options (Yeo, 2019).

Selective securitization obtains when Africa and the EU’s interests are under existential threat. This is why the EU is alleged to take coercive or forceful action in climate security. Given that the EU mainly focuses on technical issues of climate mitigation and Africa focuses on the political issues of adaptation and resilience, the EU is coercively forcing African states to disband the use of fossil fuels and focus on renewable energy. This is not going down well with Africans who counter-argue for the need to use revenue generated from sub-soil resources to finance pressing adaptation and resilience needs such as desertification and drought. The main forceful action comes from the contention on who handles the most significant tremendous amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and how the costs of combating and adapting to climate change should be shared. Twenty-two percent of worldwide CO2 emissions are attributed to EU countries compared to 3 percent combined African countries’ contributions which are insignificant compared to the continents’ population size (Olivier & Peters, 2019). The disparity between countries’ emissions and their unequal obligations to respond to climate change is causing worry about equity (including adaptation and other impacts and risks). For the Africans, the most human-caused emissions in the atmosphere come from rich countries’ economic activity. Poorer countries in Africa are bearing a more significant share of the burden of climate change as they deal with climate-related environmental disasters.

African officials argue that they still have to benefit from these primary resources, although they are hardest hit by climate change. Their contention is related to the fact that their economies survive on such resource rents; divestment will crush their economies, risking fragility, rebels, and rebellion possibilities. Also, fossil fuel is central in powering the growth of the Sahel region. As climate security is a wicked problem, all forceful actions by the EU are quite complex processes, which have left the EU divided and therefore slow to meet the lofty expectations of Africans. A classic example is Poland, which insists that it should be allowed to use coal until 2040. Divisions in the EU were more pronounced in the most recent COP26 in Glasgow, where individual countries and coalitions made pledges and commitments rather than in unison. For example, while France, Germany, and the UK coalesced to support South Africa with $8.5 billion to facilitate ‘just transition’ from a coal-dependent economy to renewable energy, others refused to support this endeavour – as it fell outside the remit of their interests.

However, there are suspicions as to why Africans are securitizing fossil fuels. Africans want to have both rents from fossil fuels and development finance meant to tackle climate change and reduce violence. The ruling and governing elites want to secure rents that will assist in coup-proofing meant to consolidate and sustain power. Fossil fuel rents support a rentier economy since most African countries heavily rely on hydrocarbon subsoil resources, including crude oil, coal, and gas, for political survival. Thus, resource incentives buy peace, especially by checkering and rebalancing rebels and rebellion (which the EU overlooks). As such, good opportunities to use aid money have been blown away before; for example, finances paid by the EU for repatriated refugees meant for start-ups have been misdirected. In other cases like Covid-19 finances too have been looted and converted to rents. The call from African leaders for at least double Adaptation finance by 2025 and their commitment to preventing deforestation, peatlands, and Congo Basin with a pledge of $1.5 billion without accepting a ban on fossil fuel usage is very suspicious.

Africans are left in a precarious position to mitigate or adapt. Can there be a proper balance between mitigating and adaptation and resilience, given that they are already failing to address the already existing impacts of climate change?

### **To mitigate or to adapt?**

While the EU has set out to securitize mitigation (i.e., ways of preventing further damages), Africa has selectively securitized resilience and adaptation. Resilience here is conceptualized as the “capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation” (IPCC, 2014, p. 5). Relatedly adaptation is “the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. Adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities in human systems. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects” (2014, p. 5). More precisely, African states are concerned about adaptation and resilience while EU counterparts focus more on climate mitigation as they pursue their varied interests. The African perspective is premised that erecting rapid and harsh mitigation measures without any type of compensation or financial assistance is unjust. Against this backdrop, the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) has emphasized the need for significant technological and financial support for climate adaptation, not simply reduction, to minimize the effects of these trade-offs on the Sahel.

An EU official echoed:

“the goal is to reduce carbon emissions and switch to renewable energy. Yet, our African counterparts want resilience and adaption” (EU Official 07, personal communication, 28 January 2022) .

On the contrary, the African Government official counter-argued that

“We want adaptation because it will promote pro-poor and participatory climate change adaptation. I don’t think we are asking too much, mitigation is essential, but our context warrants more adaptation” (African Government Official 07, personal communication, 10 August 2021).

For them, damages have already been done, and they are more concerned about adapting the already incurred damages. Although the Africans acknowledge that cutting carbon emissions and investing in renewable energy is commendable nevertheless, they argue that trade-offs between industrialization and environmental sustainability appear to be unavoidable. Most Africans think that the EU does not understand or appreciate their level of precarity to manage climate adaptation and resilience.

Yet, the EU is not very keen on adaptation and resilience. Even the distress call to focus on adaptation and resilience by the African Group of Negotiators has not been sufficiently attended to EU counter-argued that, because of lack of clarity in the climate security action plans by African states, it is doubtful that climate finances for adaptation and resilience will go beyond simply addressing the consequences of climate change to include sustainable practices (Ahairwe, 2019). For example, to what extent can climate finances given to African states be directed to support grassroots climate actions when they are already side-stepping the youth? Could it be possible for African states to build the capacity of climate security specialists who can assist with advice in mining, land, forest, agriculture, and eco-friendly businesses?

The recurring arguments by EU interviewees are that the vast continent of Africa is emitting close to 6.0 billion tonnes of net carbon dioxide, especially in forestry, mining, and agriculture. The 6.0 billion tonnes are way higher than the USA’s 5.3 billion tonnes annual total emissions. Therefore, Africa becomes second to China in contributing to global warming, hence the justification to invest more in mitigation than adaptation.

Africans have been saying they are least prepared to tackle climate security as long as efforts are not expended towards climate adaptation. Evidence from research by Afrobarometer on Africa’s level of climate preparedness reveals a struggling continent. The observation is reinforced by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index, showing African countries dominating the bottom ranks (ND-GAIN, 2019).

In addition, the EU belief is that cutting down fossil fuels, including gas, coal, and oil consumption by closing the oil spigot, is the solution for climate security as well as pushing the green economy and clean energy through initiatives like the Great Green Wall and Sustainable Energy Initiative. In 2020, the EU had expected a cut of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions.

This perspective is evident in the narrative of the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who posited:

“The clear and present danger of climate change means we cannot burn our way to prosperity. We already rely too heavily on fossil fuels, and we need to find a new, sustainable path to the future we want. We need a clean industrial revolution”. (UN, 2011).

The view of the African political actors is that Africa is disproportionately positioned in the broader climate security dialogue, which is still hampered by inequities. According to them, such an unfavourable position could seriously affect climate security governance. To avoid this, they are pushing for the EU to allow them to use domestic resources for the adaptation. The Africans claim that the continent has not made use of the ample fossil fuel reserves and is moving away from hydrocarbons which will have huge implications on their economies since the EU is industrialized today because of the use of fossil fuels. EU has failed to recognize the severity of this economic stagnation and structural inequity. Reasons why the Paris Agreement intentionally left out the unique vulnerabilities of African Countries.

However, what seems lacking in the European securitization process is the lack of understanding of the connection between fossil fuels and peace and security in the Sahel. Oil cutting will mean tampering with the interests and rents of extractive political and extractive economic institutions, as the cut of oil revenue will pressure ruling elites to seek alternate income streams. Elites will make de facto agreements with armed militia groups to tax, loot, and raid the populations under their control, thus shifting from oil to predation. For example, an African Government official mentioned:

“You know we need to pay the rebels (boys) to come out of oil wells and stop illegal oil activities. The ‘boys’ are very dangerous, if we don’t pay them they will bomb the oil wells” (African Government Official 07, personal communication, 10 August 2021).

This equally implies cutting deals among contentious and often violent elite factions, supporting ‘big-tent’ patronage politics in which rivals have greater incentives to cooperate. What seems not to resonate with the European understanding is that fossil fuels, buy peace in the Sahel because political elites spread around oil-derived cash to pay off foes and keep allies loyal. For instance, in Nigeria oil rents historically provide 65 to 85 percent of government revenue –patronage politics termed by Bayart (2009) as “politics of the belly”. The puzzle is how possible can we imagine Nigerian political elites not receiving cash from oil exports?

The European perspective is anchored on the technical side of security, contrary to the Africans who are taking a more political construction of security. Hence, long-term climate security mitigation and adaptation measures cannot be harnessed without the proper understanding of the local context which has sensitive contextual factors that are unique to the domestic nature of politics of Sahel countries. A critical observation one can draw from Africa-EU arguments of building resilience and adaptation is the use of national interest as a justification for selective securitization and climate action. Possibly it could be that the majority of the African states have not clarified their climate security interests or specified their climate security actions. Research findings show that most of the goals and action plans from African states are more quantitative than qualitative.

### **Green/climate finance**

Although African states are expecting climate finance for adaptation and resilience, there is no clarity and clear crossover in terms of who is going to pay for the adaptation and resilience that Africans desperately need. There is also no clarity regarding the procedures around climate funding given the varied economic and political levels Sahelian states find themselves in. More precisely, the African elites have been left wondering who the real beneficiaries of climate finance are.

Finance has always been at the core of selective securitization processes between Africa and Europe. The slow and inadequate delivery of climate finance has also shown the gap between bold pledges and follow-through actions. The $100 billion by 2020 and $30 billion in fast-start finance for 2010-2012 (Kennes, 2015) pledged first at the Copenhagen COP in 2009 is unlikely to be put in place before 2023 (ReliefWeb, 2021). While the EU promised to finance the green economy and energy transitions, in 2020, they had pledged through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to go beyond 40% green climate finance (Ahairwe & Bilal, 2019). Also, they proposed that 25 percent of the new EU budget for 2021-2027 will be spent on tackling climate security (Mazzara et al., 2019). However, the Europeans have failed to meet their promise and engagements creating suspicion among the African leaders.

The proposals by climate-vulnerable countries for financing to deal with the losses and damages caused by climate impacts were observed during the COP26 in Glasgow (Oroz, 2021). The EU did not acknowledge or refer in the COP26 pact to a particular financial action for the ‘loss and damage’ that climate change has caused for Africans. Instead, they promised dialogue on the issues (Aljazeera, 2021). The least developed countries group (which includes 33 African countries out of a total of 46) expressed dissatisfaction that the ‘loss and damage’ facility was not included in the final Glasgow decision (LDC Climate Change, 2021). COP26 produced a mixed contradiction in climate financing with the EU not respecting its commitments to green climate financing, creating frustration and suspicion among the Africans (ReliefWeb, 2021). This violation of trust hampered further negotiations on a new financial target for the period following 2025. The Africans demanded a value of between $750 billion and $1.3 trillion. Still, European countries stayed silent on the amount (ReliefWeb, 2021). They have claimed that the European’s failure to pay for the damages has resulted in unbalancing the demands of climate-vulnerable nations (France 24, 2021). Added to this is the conversation on loss and compensation. The Africans believe they have contributed extraordinarily little to historic emissions of climate change and should be compensated for the loss and damages related to the adverse effects of climate change. Addressing the issue of compensation, an African official said:

“We are not asking for too much, we need compensation to allow us to address climate security. The Europeans are part of the problem. They want us to become climate neutral, to cut fossil fuels but they do not want to finance this. That’s not fair to the Africans” (African Government Official 03, personal communication, 3 August 2021).

In comparison, addressing the issue of finance, an EU official said:

“More than half a billion Euro is going every year to climate security…we are running out of money, that is why we are encouraging both public and private finance (EU Official 01, personal communication, 3 September 2021).

Therefore, the EU’s delivery of the Paris Agreement should be fully embedded in the financial structures that make transitions possible. African observers of COP26 often talked about a “two-faced” issue while the EU publicly cares about adaptation inside the talks, most of the money goes to emission reductions. Climate mitigation financing is more central to the Europeans while adaptation finance remains neglected or secondary. Data from the OECD shows that about two-thirds of climate money was spent exclusively on mitigation activities in 2017 instead of adaption and limited coverage outside the renewable energy sector. Mitigation finance from $28.2 billion in 2013 rose to $38.9 billion in 2017, while adaptation finance increased from $7.8 billion to $12.9 billion (OECD, 2018, p. 5). Adaptation finance accounted for around 5 percent of total climate finance, indicating no change from 2015/2016 as a percentage of tracked finance (Buchner et al., 2019; Padraig et al., 2018). Even though there was a spike in the adaptation finance in 2017/2018, increasing to $30 billion (35 percent increase) from $22 billion in 2015/2016, the adaptation funding is still far behind the annual average requirement of $230billion (Ahairwe & Bilal, 2019, pp. 5–6; Buchner et al., 2019, p. 21).

In comparison, mitigation finance accounted for $537 billion, making 93 percent of total flows in 2017/2018 (Buchner et al., 2019, p. 5). This indicates that although climate security action is vital, the Europeans highly neglected adaption. Therefore, another concrete way to rebuild trust with African partners will be for the EU to support partners dealing with the devastating loss and damage from climate change

See below Figures 11 and 12 for more illustration

Figure 11: Climate finance 2013-2018 (two-year averages; $ billion)

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generated

Source: Ahairwe and Bilal., 219.

***Figure 12: MDBs adaptation finance as a proportion of total climate finance (2018; US$ million)***

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generated

Source: Ahairwe and Bilal., 2019.

The figures above show the disparity in climate finance and that climate mitigation finance is given priority over climate adaptation which is a significant concern for Africans. Such a disparity in green climate funds not only weakens the Paris Agreement pledge, which pushes for equal mitigation and adaptation but further complicates climate security negotiations with an impact on implementation.

COP26 coalition-building between Europe and Africa was rare and certainly not as clear as earlier COPs. The outcome of COP26 reframed and reproduced the interests, contradictions, and state of political will of both European and African political actors. The EU pledged to pay 100 million Euro for mitigation and adaptation and at the same time, the EU was one of the blocs blocking the inclusion of the ‘loss and damage’ facility in the Glasgow Pact (Knaepen, 2021) focusing on cutting off funding for fossil fuel projects by the end of 2022. This will shift more than $24 billion a year of public funds from fossil fuels into clean, renewable energy (Hoicka et al., 2021). This move is a huge blow and betrayal to the Africans who argue that a complete cut of fossil fuels will further entrench poverty. The African political leaders raised concerns about how they will manage the increasingly youthful population and rising urbanization if they cannot use fossil fuels that their economies are primarily dependent on. Considering that most African countries are in huge debt-peonage and the EU is requesting focusing on renewable energy, how will this be possible to transition into renewable energy?

A critical concern that still lies unanswered is the link between development finance, Official Development Assistance (ODA), and climate finance. While the African's view is that climate finance should be new and addition as such must be distinct from ODA, the Europeans argue that this is not possible to separate climate finance from development finance regarding implementation of activities as ODA is equally climate-related (Kennes, 2015). However, Di Ciommo and Ahairwe argue that:

“Moving forward, they could use their finances to better target low-income countries, strengthen the gender perspective of green investments, balance and use more synergically mitigation and adaptation funds, and improve coordination and risk-sharing between them” (Di Ciommo & Ahairwe, 2021, p. 3).

The section which follows attempts to address the reason for selective securitization by the African Union to achieve its Agenda 2063, the continent’s master plan on climate security and issues of security as a threat multiplier and a wicked problem. A key argument is that regional bodies and, to a considerable degree, organizations operate in silos and sometimes with overlapping mandates. However, although regional organizations working in the Sahel (ECOWAS; G5 Sahel, Sahel Alliance) have made efforts to incorporate climate implications into their security priorities, agendas and work, the results have been limited thus far. Goal 7 is linked to the policy objectives of regional organizations (ROs), including environment and climate, energy, natural resource management, and water management. Although both AU and ROs are actively involved in these policy areas, ROs are primarily engaged in environmental protection and climate change. ROs like the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Sahel Institute, and the AGRHYMET regional centre in West Africa are involved in addressing climate security challenges in the Sahel and larger West Africa. Other continental bodies also include the Intra-Africa Metrology System (AFRIMETS) and the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) with particular scopes (Nolte, 2018).

## **African Union-Regional bodies and organizations**

Although Africa has called for a just and differentiated approach to climate mitigation and adaptation responsive to its needs, the interaction between African Union and Regional Bodies and organizations shows the contrary, as evidenced by a lack of communication, coordination, and overlapping mandates on climate security issues. The African Union acknowledges the threat that climate threats represent to peace and security in the continent and has urged states and regional economic entities to engage in addressing this (Aminga & Krampe, 2020). However, security, defence, and environmental agencies frequently do not communicate they attribute this to insufficient climate finance. Mali’s adaption alone will cost $8 billion. That is significantly higher than the $250 million it received from international climate funds between 2015 and 2022 and the $284 million it received from multilateral and bilateral public funding in 2016 (Salzinger, 2021). This funding gap poses a considerable challenge to states and regional organizations as regional organizations will be dependent on the financing from the international community, which is usually short-term, comes with conditionalities, and is not sufficient to address climate security issues.

Further findings show that a critical problem is some ECOWAS member states are unable to pay their contributions since their states do not have the economic and financial capacity to support them. An interviewee declared that funding for climate security is misdirected and misused. For instance, $14 billion was awarded to finance the Great Green Wall Initiative, a “mosaic of sustainable land-use practices” in the Sahel (FAO, 2020; Toumi & Ouedraogo, 2021). Yet, it is not delivering and is behind schedule. The Great Green Wall was only 4 percent complete in 2020, four years ahead of its scheduled completion date of 2030. Delays and missed deadlines are caused by various factors, the most common of which are a lack of funding, a lack of oversight, and inadequately assigned technical support hindering delivery/implementation (Bove, 2021).

The lack of a coordinated approach among regional organizations also accounts for this. For instance, several regional and international stakeholders are tackling climate change in the Sahel; however, there is no coordination as to who is doing what and how joint efforts could be concerted. Some scholars like Nolte and Gnanguênon have attributed this to the overlapping mandates of the organizations restricting complementarity and potential collaboration (Gnanguênon, 2020; Nolte, 2018). International donors have worsened this situation by providing funds to new and existing African regional organizations without considering the consequences. For instance, the creation of the G5 Sahel and Sahel Alliance to address hard security issues undermined the existence of ECOWAS. Also, ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), for example, both establish environmental policies and programs as regional ‘political leaders’, but there is no single common framework despite coordination attempts (Salzinger, 2021). Also, findings indicate that African regional organizations have substantially attempted to focus on security challenges, leading to an increase in adopting ‘hard/traditional security’ solutions at the expense of ‘people-centred’ methods. This resulted in added costs, including squandering resources, looting rents, coup proofing, and state leaders' forum shopping. This creates more complexity and further fragility.

The African Union as a continental organization was not directly involved in the 3S Initiative but selected countries under the AU. The choice of individual countries targeted countries significantly affected by climate security. The exclusion of the AU with the same level as the EU makes the African countries the least common denominator. During the climate security dialogue, the countries involved were not speaking with a common voice with the European Union. Africa does not have a plain strategy (especially AU and regional bodies, which should be assisting in the Sahel).

Apart from the AU, regional organizations like ECOWAS were not involved in the 3S dialogue. Several factors account for this. First, regional bodies make policies and enforce them through instruments. At the same time, countries handle implementing and enforcing the policies through institutions. By virtue, every African country belonging to a regional setting (AU, ECOWAS) could have seen the 3S duplicating activities and redundancy. Evidence has demonstrated that despite having these regional bodies, they lack efficacy and capacity to flex out and push the agenda of inclusive interest of most of these countries. Results from interviews showed that the regional bodies themselves are unsure of the stance to take to address climate security. Thus, this results in conflicting imperatives in terms of the strategy. For instance, where the AU is pushing for a dialogue, the ECOWAS would want to take a military stance against Boko Haram. African countries are at different developmental, political, economic, socio-cultural, and religious levels. Therefore, they do not come to the negotiation table at the same level. Countries are geographically different regarding land size, as some are very expansive. In contrast, others are geographically small and some have very few issues while others have got a lot of megatrends that intersect and affect them.

The next section examines how selective securitization of climate security relates to the nature of African domestic politics concerning megatrends[[5]](#endnote-5) such as a youthful population, technological advancements, and urbanization. Recognizing climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ and ‘a wicked problem’ shifts climate security from a low to a high priority concern with the need for action. The African ruling and governing elites’ securitization of climate change implies placing it under political control and removing it from ordinary public deliberation, discussion, and debate. It is essential to understand how this plays out by narrowing the discussion to the interaction between the youth and ruling elites.

## **Youth and ruling elites**

Evidence from interviews in the Sahel shows that the most crucial issue is that ruling elites regard climate security as largely a sole preserve of the state, and states are the ones who make major choices and decisions on issues related to budgets. This restricts the involvement of the youth in climate security. There is an intergenerational divide between the youths and elites on the conceptualization of climate security. While the youth are interested in addressing mitigation, resilience and adaptation, governance issues, youth unemployment, living standards, and delivery of welfare, the African elites focus on the threats that climate change poses, especially to their sovereignty and sustenance of power.

The Sahel region is witnessing the world’s most rapid population growth, intersecting with devasting impacts of climate change and land degradation (Potts & Graves, 2015). Robust adverse effects on agriculture in the region pressure the already growing population. The region is home to about 300 million people and is one of the poorest and undeveloped as well as the world’s most youthful, with 64.5 percent of the population being below 25 years (United Nations, 2021). The population grows at about 3.5 percent per year, and it is expected to reach about 340 million in 2050 (UNDP, 2021). The youth bulge is alarming, with young people having access to critical information and the desire for political and economic participation. UNICEF reports that between 2017 and 2050, the region’s child and youth population is predicted to more than double to 945 million, whereas other parts of the world are expected to drop (Godfrey & Tunhuma, 2020). Population growth far outgrows food supply in the conflict-ravaged Sahel. In the case of Mali, the population has more than doubled to 18.5 million in the last 30 years, with nearly half of Malians under the age of 15 (Gash, 2019). Food insecurity is becoming a humanitarian disaster as it will be difficult to feed the growing population with minimal agricultural yields. In 2020, about 14.4 million people were at risk of food insecurity in Burkina Faso (3.5m), Mali (7.1m), and Niger (3.8m) (Puig et al., 2021a, p. 18). Multiple causes contribute to food insecurity in the Central Sahel, including climate shocks and episodic violent conflicts, which displace people and disrupt production and market access in the short term, as well as chronic issues, such as extreme poverty and social marginalization (Puig et al., 2021b). According to the World Resource Institute, between 2014 and 2016, better rainfalls in many Sahel countries accounted for 1 percent better harvest compared to the five-year average but represent a 13 percent decline when adjusted for population growth (Potts & Graves, 2015). Due to this, in 2020, about 60 million people moved from desertified and degraded areas to other parts of the region, towards North Africa and Europe (UNCCD, 2014).

Since 2012, the region has undergone a severe climate security crisis where a drought, food, and refugee crisis continue to affect people in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mauritania, Senegal, and The Gambia. with severe implications for food security and livelihoods of local communities (Godfrey & Tunhuma, 2020). The impact of climate change on natural resources, including food resources and the water table, and rising desertification has amplified livelihood insecurity and social tensions (Gash, 2019; Nagarajan et al., 2018). This poses increasing vulnerability and risk, particularly as the Lake Chad Basin is drying up, affecting access to natural resources like the availability of fresh water, grazing lands, fish stocks, and vegetation that local communities depend upon (Nagarajan et al., 2018). Environmental stressors, government inadequacies, underdevelopment, and socio-economic suffering of rural populations residing in the Lake Chad Basin have resulted in insurgent groups like Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa taking control of the area to secure scarce resources (Adelphi, 2018b; ISS Africa, 2021). It has also resulted in young people joining these groups and women abandoning farming to join extremist groups. The outcome is widespread violence driving the displacement of millions of rural populations that daily rely on farming, fishing, and livestock activities (AFDB, 2019; Frimpong, 2020; UNHCR, 2019).

Coupled with population pressure, climate change is driving conflicts in the region. Gash argues that the influence of climate on matches would more than double, rising to rise to a 13 percent change (Gash, 2019). Extreme climatic variations have intensified incidences of natural resource conflicts (Adelphi, 2018a; Sparkman, 2019). Conflicts between farmers and herders and among various pastoralist groups in the Sahel usually revolve around contested land use for grazing of animals instead of crop cultivation competing and access to water (Climate Diplomacy, 2019). For instance, livestock raiding, and transhumance have been a potential source of tensions and violence between different herding and pastoralists communities in Niger, Niger, Mali, Benin, and Burkina Faso. Such has affected intercommunal tensions.

The Sahel faces severe challenges with violent extremism, especially in countries like Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria, where Boko Haram is operating, forcing farmers to abandon their lands. Most often, these people, young people, are targeted by terrorist groups and, in cases where they do not have any means of income, are asked to join the fight. Here we see an intersection of climate change, conflict, and militarism (extremism). Farmers and herders in the Sahel have had to abandon agriculture and cattle rearing to gain employability with extremized armed groups (Climate Diplomacy, 2019). The region has drawn international attention because of jihadist terrorism and extremism, trafficking of drugs, small arms, and light weapons and people. The growth of jihadist violence is linked with dwindling resources. Extremist jihadist and criminal armed groups have taken advantage of deprivation among the region’s youth to engage them in drugs and arms trafficking and people-smuggling operations to fund their violent activities (Royal African Society, 2019). For instance, over the years, Mali has been a victim of jihadist extremism challenging state authority. Economic losses resulting from climate and food insecurity, community tensions, and institutional disgrace have assisted armed groups indirectly by encouraging recruitment among excluded communities. Climate-conflict dynamics threaten livelihoods, intensify competition over natural resources, recruitment into armed groups and a heavy-handed military response (Arcanjo, 2019). The porosity of borders between countries like Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso have become drivers of conflicts and the rise in extremist armed groups. It is believed that conflicts could amplify if prevention, management, and resource distribution systems fail (Climate Diplomacy, 2021). There is also a significantly elevated level of extreme poverty (with children, women, and youth particularly exposed), food crises, inequalities and fragile governance, creating space for transnational organized crime networks and extremist terrorist groups to prevail. All these will shape the future of vulnerability in the region (Arcanjo, 2019; Godfrey & Tunhuma, 2020).

In addition, the region is experiencing an exponential increase in urbanization. It is projected that in 30 years, Africa’s population will double to 2.5 billion people, and 950 million people will be living in urban areas (OECD, 2021). The rate of urbanization in many Sahel countries, including Chad and Niger is increasing. Rapid population growth in these countries occurs in coastal areas that have been identified as hotspots for climate change (Godfrey & Tunhuma, 2020). About 6 in 10 Sahelians live in slums in urban areas, and young people are projected to make up about half of the population that lives in slums. There is an interconnection between urbanization and demography. These significant shifts in urbanization and population growth will have a critical role in climate change because rapid urbanization will affect existing and future climatic vulnerabilities if communities and systems are not well equipped to cope with climate security crises. Also, rapid urbanization will reframe and reshape the region’s economic, social, and political landscape. It will entail the need for Urban planning and management, local government and decentralization, investments, infrastructure development, reliable data, and new technologies (OECD, 2021). This will have enormous implications for both the governments and the citizens of Sahel for inclusivity, livability, and sustainability. Therefore, climate adaptation policies must consider these megatrends to transition urbanization as an opportunity to create new socio-economic and environmental development mechanisms. To reduce vulnerabilities, we need to understand the specific susceptibilities of communities.

The talk of urgent action on climate security does not align with the experiences and needs of the youth. Selormey, Dome, Osse, and Logan opined that the Youth want their governments to address the effects of climate change embedded in some of the other priorities such as water supply, food shortages, and conflicts (Selormey et al., 2019). The youth strongly feel side-stepped, as national visions, development plans, and budgets are centralized by the ruling elites. Some of the youths argued:

“Our leaders are more concerned about their pockets, families or anything outside that is of no interest to them. I have not seen any African leader that seeks to promote public interest and not their own personal interest or that of their friends and families…They have deliberately refused to include us in climate security negotiations, all they do is talk blah blah. This is not fair” (Africa Youth 02, personal communication, 1 June 2021; Africa Youth 06, personal communication, 3 June 2021; Africa Youth 14, personal communication, 21 June 2021).

Another youth who is dissatisfied with the lack of inclusion of young people in climate security negotiations mentioned:

“We don’t have public servants; the elites live in luxurious mansions, send their children abroad and squander state resources. We, the poor, are left with nothing. During elections, they manipulate vulnerable and ignorant young people to vote for them and immediately they are voted, they forget about them. The most painful part is they want to stay and die in power. We will not allow this; we will rise against them even when they send the military…we are determined to shed blood and set our country free…he who does not give peace will not have peace. We will make them and their families restless and sleepless until they live power. if they decide to stay in power forever, they will pay the price of violence and instability; when they torment us, we will maim them…Why do we need to have strong connections or come from certain family backgrounds to access certain opportunities? You know this issue of climate change affects everyone, particularly young people, but we are not included or even consulted during decision-making processes that concern us. We must fight for our rights to be included in the conversations” (Africa Youth 23, personal communication, 16 July 2021).

The young people concurred that there is no shortage of rhetoric commitment and continental and multilateral levels, as most of these commitments are enshrined in several climate security documents. For instance, African Union (AU) and EU leaders signed a joint declaration: ‘Investing in youth for accelerated inclusive growth and sustainable development’ in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire in 2017. The AU and EU have also set up the Youth Cooperation Hub, of which climate action was part of its key mandate. At the continental level, the AU has set up a Youth Division. Despite having these clear policies, there are still no opportunities for African Youth to be involved in climate change. Yet the future of climate security lies in the strategic and vital alliances that are formed between the youth and government officials. Again, as observed by Knaepen,

“What is so clear to young people, extremely concerned about their future, seems to be escaping the politicians’ attention and their ability to act, despite the seriousness and urgency of the issue: by 2030 already, climate impacts can push an additional 100 million people into poverty” (Knaepen, 2019, p. 3).

Young Africans “need to be given the space to act as climate diplomats and they need to feel that politicians are finally listening. Otherwise, the slogan of the UN Climate Summit in September 2019, “A race we can win, a race we must win”, will just be another catchy but empty policy slogan”.

Research evidence reveals four dimensions of tension between the youth and the governing elites and how climate change plays out as a threat multiplier and a wicked problem.While climate change is bringing states under pressure and constraining the capacity of the state institutions to deliver welfare, the youthful population is increasingly becoming younger and exponentially bulging leading to high demands for good living standards with its attended problem of increasing consumption. The increase in the youthful population puts pressure on land and all facets of economic fundamentals. A youth mentioned:

“African policymakers have not strategically planned and implemented climate security policies with Youth in mind” (Africa Youth 07, personal communication, 3 June 2021).

Interviewees indicated that “government officials have not yet spearheaded, for example, inclusive mass awareness campaigns, literacy talks, conferences, and workshops on climate security” (Africa Youth 10, personal communication, 16 June 2021; Africa Youth 11, personal communication, 17 June 2021, p. 11).

Others indicated that they are not learning about climate change in schools because the curriculum has not been updated. Indeed, the recent Afrobarometer survey has established that “four out of ten Africans have not heard of the term ‘climate change’ yet, and about 51 percent think ordinary people cannot do much to help abate the climate change problem. 67 percent of climate-literate Africans admit that global warming has made their lives worse” (Selormey et al., 2019). Most of the youth interviewed were not aware of the global ‘school strikes for climate change, a Global Climate strike initiated by the youth in Europe (Taylor, 2021). The reason is that youth who engage in environmental protests are misconstrued to peddle regime change agendas and are criminalized. Due to the politicization and criminalization of climate security, among other economic issues, most youth has fled their countries to become migrant refugees.

However, as observed by Knaepen, “To move towards long-term solutions”, she argues, “African and European governments need to find solutions together that will include the voice of the young people. Failing to do this will be a missed chance for speeding up global climate action” (Knaepen, 2019, p. 3). However, building climate security will require a committed effort from the youthful population, supported by significant resources and a form of education that prioritizes climate security.

The politicians are blamed for inaction to prevent climate-induced disasters. Although the youth feel that the governments are not responsive to climate change threats affecting them, climate issues are wicked problems. As such,

“Obviously, it is difficult for politicians to pursue a progressive political agenda on an issue lacking optimal solutions. The incomplete and often contradictory information around the nature of the problem and its solutions may challenge the agenda-setting process. Politicians may find it challenging to present a concrete and effective climate policy, given that any political proposal to deal with a wicked problem can be criticized for not addressing the problem in full or for causing other problems and triggering various social and economic disputes. Moreover, it can be difficult for voters to judge the success of a policy pursued and hold politicians accountable, particularly given that the effects of various measures are often ambiguous” (Lindvall, 2021).

## **Divide on migration**

There have been divisions and tensions among the Africans and Europeans on the migration dialogue as the debate on climate security. The study has discovered policy gaps in the migration debate based on two categories: climate-induced migration (migration linked to climate) and security-induced migration (migration linked to general insecurity). According to the Europeans, migration is linked to security and is tied closely to terrorism. To the Europeans, migration is synonymous with the movement of terrorists in the region with a spillover to Europe. A common view among the interviewees is that the free movement of people bothers the EU, and the EU member states are not willing to accommodate migrants. Migration is at the same level of threat as climate security. This view has been backed by an EU official who echoed:

“We consider migration a threat just like climate change and security in the Sahel” (EU Official 05, personal communication, 13 October 2021).

On the contrary, the European view that migration is at the same threat level as climate security does not reflect the African positions. Although the Africans recognise that migrants are a product of climate change and insecurity characterised by governance challenges, the African leaders do not see migration as essential. This is due to migration's historical, economic, and cultural underpinnings in African society.

In addressing the European conversation on migration, an African official remarked:

“The European perception that Africa is a 'continent on the move' is related to stereotypical ideas of Africa as a continent of poverty and conflict…Their argument that Africans are blotting Europe and the African leaders have abandoned everything is baseless…these people are making noise unnecessarily. People are not leaving because Europe is a paradise…when they get to Spain, they live on the streets. know the Europeans are afraid of the blackness and an Africanisation of Europe…People have been migrating for centuries with no problems…for once, we had to change the narrative; we needed our narrative to be heard” (African Government Official 06, personal communication, 9 August 2021a).

Another African official reacting to the dialogue on migration noted:

“…we were mad at this poisonous conversation and wanted to draw a firm line at an inflexible European position like Guns and borders and phone card shops and not get how differently they need to see it…Currently, I spend 90 percent of my budget on shooting bad guys; I would like to spend 10 percent of my budget on shooting bad guys and have 90 percent on doing something useful". We realized a lack of understanding of who identified people's smugglers as the root causes of migration. We told them that is not the root cause of migration. People's smugglers are a delivery mechanism and have nothing to do with root causes… it took them quite a long time to understand this” (African Government Official 05, personal communication, 6 August 2021).

Although there is a division in conceptualising migration, there is some agreement among the Europeans and Africans that aspirations also drive the motivations to move. A common consensus is that human beings make rational choices based on their perceived visions and aspirations.

Commenting on the aspirations to move, a European expert on migration echoed that:

“We should not overhype these issues; let us be realistic, this migration trend happened in Europe where people left the rural areas to urban areas searching for better opportunities… I did not stay in a shitty village in Europe. Why do I think or expect someone else will do so in Niger”? (European Expert 02, personal communication, 7 October 2021).

The above arguments are connected with the AU’s Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-2030) which acknowledges climate change as a major push factor for migration and mobility in Africa. However, the AU and ECOWAS have centred their attention on economic and development elements of migration, conceptualising it as an opportunity to enhance intra-African labour movement and strengthen trade relations among AU and ECOWAS states. For instance, as part of the AU Agenda 2063, attempts have been made to foster a “Visa-Free Africa” to facilitate intra-continental migration. Whereas responses to address climate-induced migration by the Europeans are lacking at the state/national level. This gap in policy must be filled in by the EU, AU, ECOWAS and African states.

# Conclusion and Future Research

Despite heavy capital injections, most intervention models in the Sahel are not reaping the climate security dividends. The study utilised the concept of climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ and ‘wicked problem’ as a framework of analysis to show the intersections of climate change, security, and migration in the Sahel. The report employs a qualitative methodology. Data was collected from various secondary sources and virtual interviews conducted via zoom, telephone, WhatsApp, skype etc.

Although most scholars and policymakers have constantly tried to draw a direct linear correlation between climate change, security, and migration, all the available evidence points to the contrary. Most of the interviews suggest a circular relationship between the three issues. Therefore, it will be instructive that policymakers and scholars revisit the policy formulation and research approach by incorporating the concepts and ideas from linear and circular models. It would be a fallacy if policymakers choose to use one of the two models to the exclusion of the other, as has been done before; it will be another failed attempt that will lead to disastrous consequences to arrive at meaningful policies that are aimed at designing interventions to mitigate the effects of climate change in the Sahel.

In addition, the study employed the 3S model in tackling climate change, security and migration in the Sahel. The study found that all attempts to address these issues do not reflect the region's realities, e.g., local populations are not included and consulted in policymaking, dialogue and negotiations on climate security. Like other international interventions where there is a lukewarm and passive consultation process with local populations, it is not surprising that the results were so obvious. Equally, the 3S model failed to seek consultations with regional bodies like the AU and ECOWAS but decided to work directly with individual Sahel countries. Thus, this seems to be the impetus why the initiative has failed to gain any serious momentum.

The research findings show that sustainability, stability, and security hinge on the nature of the domestic political economy of the Sahel region. Most scholars have overlooked the intricate interplay of extractive political institutions and extractive economic institutions in producing state fragility/failure. How can the 3S or Africa-EU negotiations transform these extractive institutions without reducing the benefits of the political elites? Although it is universally acknowledged that climate change, security and migration are complex overlapping issues, interventions such as the 3S Initiative still address the issues in silos. This illustrates the main argument for the divergence in conceptualisation, understanding and prioritization and, as a result, the selective securitization of climate security. Selective securitization of climate change is increasingly reaching a tipping point, with all actors engaging in the blame game. Consistent with selective securitization strategies, each actor seeks to control the climate security and migration narrative. The African Union, European Union, Regional bodies, ruling and governing elites, and local communities have subjected climate security to a process of securitization to serve their interests. For example, not all elements of climate security – mitigation, resilience, and adaptation - have been getting the security treatment with equal measure.

The restricted complementarity and potential collaboration have impeded progress on climate security. While the EU has securitized the lack of climate mitigation as an existential threat to any country's survival, the contrary, African Union has taken a hunch on resilience and adaptation. The African Union, regional bodies, and organizations tend to compete as they do not coordinate or communicate with one another despite working in the same region and on the same issue of climate security. This has resulted in the lack of consensus on significant climate security interventions and policy responses. Thus, it will be challenging to implement interventions. At the local level, the ruling elites continue to take coercive or forceful action against the youth to defend self-serving interests such as access to rents from fossil fuels. However, the overlapping mandates between AU and regional bodies and the intergenerational divide between the ruling and governing elites serve to point to the limitations of selective securitization in the context of shifting climate security trends.

These tensions at all levels militate against adequate action against the wicked problem of climate security. The reason interventions like the 3S Initiative are not inclusive is to ignore the fundamental issues of Sahel states, which are extractive institutions. Furthermore, such interventions widen the existing tensions between the AU and regional organisations through the overlapping of mandates. As a threat multiplier, the World Bank has warned that, if adequate action remains elusive, it will be tough to feed the estimated 10 billion people by 2050 since more frequent extreme weather events will affect crops and livestock. As a result, more than 140 million people from the developing world may become climate migrants. A 1.5°C average rise may put 20-30 percent of species at risk of extinction. At an increase of more than 2°C, most ecosystems will struggle. The impacts of climate change in Europe and Africa will be unprecedented in history. Africa has contributed very little to historic emissions but is currently the most vulnerable continent to climate variability and change, trying to develop its economies while adapting to climate change. As such, there is still no clarity on how the policy and interventions address all the various scales and forms of climate mobility – voluntary migration, distressed migration, internal and cross-border movements. However, the questions this study could not address are whether the returning migrants are integrating in sustainable ways and the extent to which climate change affects the integration, given that land and water are increasingly depleting.

To have a comprehensive picture of climate change, it will be imperative and constructive that all segments of the world's population must be studied, including Africa. The present studies and interventions on climate security in the Sahel do not include variables that look at the role of indigenous people, therefore a large perspective is left out. If this population is left out, how then can climate security issues such as droughts, floods, desertification, extremism, and terrorism be addressed when their lives are predicated on these issues? Climate change is not a static variable but dynamic and complex. What happens to the Sahel affects other regions and continents. Therefore, it would be compelling to examine how local people have responded to climate change. Further research should look at the local turn in climate security responses to ensure sustainability, stability and security, yet; the 3S Initiative was targeting the local communities instead from a top-down approach.

Furthermore, following that, the Sahel is increasing witnessing new developments with the rise of violent extremism, particularly the recruitment of women. Future research must focus on why women increasingly abandon farming to join extremist groups. Why are pastoralists deserting cattle rearing to join jihadist groups?

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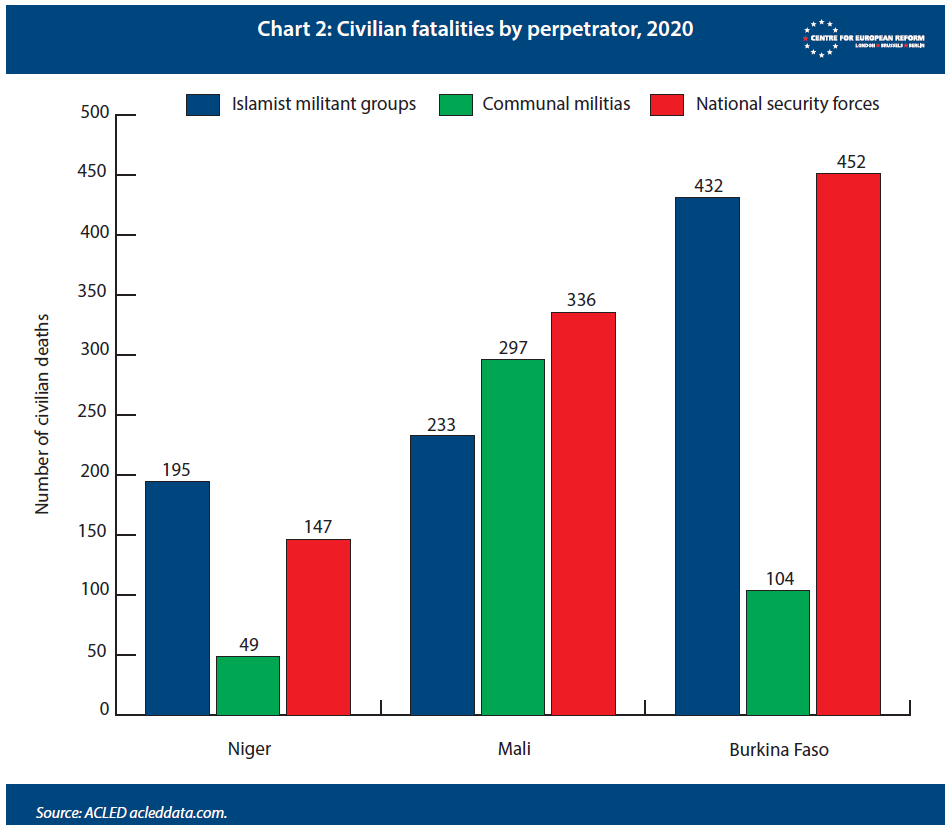
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# Appendix

# Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa: Key Findings in the Sahel Interview guides for Experts

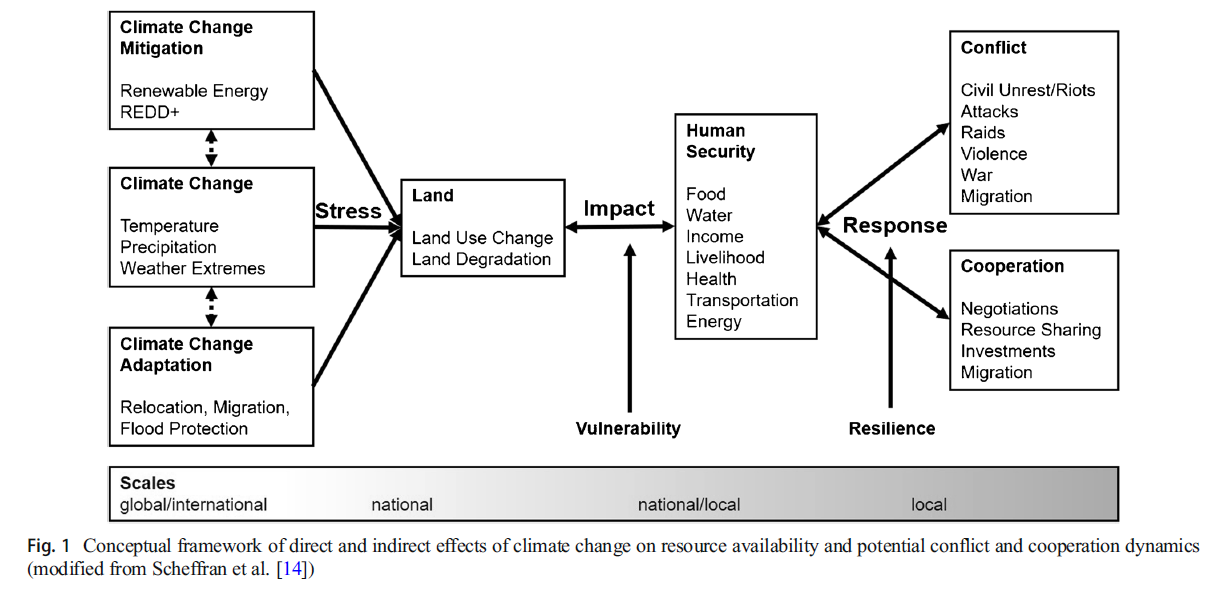
|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Introduction of interviewees** | |
|  | Could you please present yourself in a few words, position, institution/organisation and a short description of if and how your work is related to climate change, security and or migration? |
|  |  |
| ***Climate change*** | |
|  | Have you ever stayed, worked, or visited the Sahel before? And was your work linked to climate change/security/migration? |
|  | What do you understand about climate change in the Sahel? “Probe and prompt.” |
|  | What do you consider to be the relationship between climate change and security in the Sahel? |
|  | In your opinion, do you think climate change has affected people’s lives?... Would you mind saying more about how agriculture, livestock, access to water and natural resources are being affected? |
|  | Others think that climate change is the one which is causing insurgencies and terrorism in the Sahel. What is your view about this?... In your opinion: Is there a link between the two? |
|  | There is a view that climate change is a driver of migration in the Sahel. What is your view about this?... In your opinion: Is there a link between the two? |
|  | Some say migration also has some implications for climate change. Tell me what you think about it? |
|  |  |
| ***Sustainability, stability, and security*** | |
|  | Earlier, we discussed the relationship between climate change and security. Let’s now focus on the implications of climate change on sustainability, stability, and security. |
|  | In your opinion: What do you consider to be the major implications of climate change to (1) sustainability, (2) stability, and (3) security? |
|  | There have been several interventions on climate change for improved stability and security? |
|  | How many do you know or might have participated in? |
|  | How successful were or are these interventions? |
|  |  |
|  | **3S Initiative** |
|  | Have you ever heard about the 3S Initiative |
|  | In your view… what is the significance of the 3S Initiative at international, continental, regional, national, and local levels? |
|  | In your view: What concrete interventions within the 3S Initiative are being or have been implemented to address climate change, security, and migration at local, national or regional levels? (This question is specifically for those that have in-depth knowledge of the 3S through participation, conceptualisation, and implementation) |
|  | In a nutshell, would you say that the implementation of the 3S Initiative has been successful so far? and Why?... Are there obstacles, and how were they overcome? |
|  |  |
|  | **EU-Africa relations** |
|  | How would you describe the EU-Africa relationship with the framework of the 3S Initiative? |
|  | How would you describe the positions of African and European actors on climate security, and how does this impact their cooperation? |
|  | What is the future of the EU-Africa relations in relation to climate change |

# Fatalities by perpetrators



Data source: Pye, 2021.

# Conceptual framework of direct and indirect effects of climate change on resource availability and potential conflict and cooperation dynamics



Data source: Froese, & Schilling, 2019, adapted from Scheffran et al.2012.

# African Migration Trends 1

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generated

# African Migration Trends 2

Chart, bar chart

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1. Launched in 2007 by the African Union, aims to restore the continent’s degraded landscapes and transform millions of lives in the Sahel.The ambition is to grow an 8,000km natural wonder, across Africa, ushering in a new era of sustainability and economic growth. The project is implemented in 22 African countries. The objective is to restore 100 million hectares of currently degraded land; sequester 250 million tons of carbon and create 10 million green jobs by 2030. This will help and revitalize thousands of communities living along the Wall (UNCCD, 2019, 2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Developed by an Italian engineering firm Bonifica in the late 1970s. The Transqua is an initiative to replenish Africa’s dwindling Lake Chad. The goal is to solve the Sahel crisis, provoked by the progressive drying out of Lake Chad, which is driving an increasing flow of refugees into Europe. It involves 12 countries working together to build a 2 400 km canal to move about 100 billion cubic metres of water from the River Congo to the Lake Chad. The Lake Chad basin supports will stimulate development in agriculture, industry, transport and electricity for more than 20 billion people in 12 countries (Celani, 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. launched by the African Union Commission, the UN and the World Bank.

   The goal is to develop political momentum to identify recommendationss to address the African continent’s climate-forced mobility. At the regional and local levels, the ACMI will enhance data-based solutions to support people-centered resilience and adaptation to climate mobility – to protect communities and persons on the move (Schweiger, 2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Launched in February 2017, the FC-G5S forms part of the regional G5 Sahel organisation. The initial mandate of the joint force includes combating terrorism, organized crime, and human trafficking, as well as restoring state authority, assisting displaced persons in returning home, participating in humanitarian operations, and assisting in the implementation of development projects (ICG, 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Megatrends here refer to developments and transformations that are taking place straining the capacities of African states such as rapid population growth, rapid urbanization, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19, Conflicts etc. See (Tull, 2022) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)