



And Then Things Got Complicated: Addressing the Security-Climate-Migration Nexus in the Sahel

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Times are changing. The intersecting challenges of climate change, human migration, and instability present a unique problem for many local and regional actors in crisis regions. They also represent a mounting concern for European and U.S. foreign policy and multilateral governance institutions. In decades to come, this dilemma will broaden and intensify. Already, these issues are beginning to overlap in ways that undermine traditional notions of security and development policy – and they offer ample reason to revisit deeply ingrained policy siloes of diplomacy, development, and defense.

The nexus of climate change, human mobility, and instability demands new forms of multilateral engagement and an end to the outdated divisions of labor within governments. However, bureaucratic inertia is strong, and there is often an inadequate understanding of the urgency of this far-reaching transformation among political and military leaders; many still try to make sense of the world through the dated perspectives of the past century. In the 21st century, security needs to be defined more broadly – complex crisis scenarios revolve around the ability to compel collective action to address fundamental transnational problems. Mobilizing this sort of action to address the nexus between climate change, human migration, and instability will be *the* political litmus test of our time.

Climate, migration, and security in the Sahel: Need for nexus thinking

As one of the regions in the world facing a combination of security, governance, developmental, and environmental challenges, the Sahel has been a magnet of international attention in the recent past. These challenges

overlap and intersect in complex ways, while often going beyond the borders of a single state or the limits of the region as a whole (see the example of human mobility, transnational terrorism, or climate change). Parallel to an intensification of such border-crossing challenges, the relevance of the Sahel has increasingly grown also as an area of transit connecting Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Europe. It comes therefore as no surprise that policy actors with development, humanitarian, climate, migration, security, or peacebuilding portfolios, regional and multinational organizations, civil society stakeholders, as well as the research community have increasingly dedicated their attention to the region.

Despite such growing interest from a diverse range of actors, policy responses and multilateral collaboration struggle in matching the complexity of the challenges unfolding in the Sahel and spilling over to other parts of the world. On the one hand, institutional approaches remain largely compartmentalized across different sectors in terms of their conceptual premises, strategic goals, and policy instruments. On the other hand, even when integrated approaches are promoted, the prioritization of a single policy goal (e.g., stemming irregular migration, counterterrorism) remains problematic in the face of the multifaceted and interconnected nature of the challenges.

For multilateral responses to do better justice to the complexity of these multidimensional, interconnected, and transnational challenges, *nexus thinking* needs to be incorporated into every aspect of policymaking: from the conceptualization of policy problems to the identification and cross-fertilization of objectives, and the development, funding, and implementation of instruments. Further, nexus thinking necessitates prioritizing joined-up strategy development, coordination, and coherence: not only across



multiple policy portfolios within national governments, regional bodies, and multinational organizations, but also among different levels and actors relevant for multilateral governance.

This paper departs from such thinking and focuses on the case of the Sahel and the wider Mediterranean, where the interplay between climate impact, migration patterns, and security concerns shapes the shared and interconnected policy challenges of today and tomorrow. The paper seeks to *launch a broader policy conversation* as part of a larger Nexus²⁵ project of international partners. The project aims to foster reflection on the need for a *context-sensitive and human-centric reconceptualization of security* so as to better account for its complex interplay with climate, migration, and (fragile) governance. Another question crucial to this conversation is *what applying a nexus lens means for the definition of policy goals and the design of policy instruments* within, and more importantly, across different portfolios (e.g., security, defense, diplomacy, development, climate, humanitarian, migration). Finally, the project aims to foster debate on the *implications of adopting a nexus perspective for multilateral collaboration* by asking: What role for different institutional and non-institutional stakeholders at national, regional, and multinational levels? How and among which actors can strategic partnerships be formed? How to improve comprehensiveness, coordination, coherence, and economies of scale? The brief examination of the complex interplay between climate, migration, and security in the Sahel, and the regional and international response in the face of these challenges, provided in the following pages, aims to serve as an entry point into these overarching issues and questions.

The Sahel: Understanding the context

The definition of the Sahel as a geographic area is still largely debated. More commonly, it is considered to be limited to West Africa including Niger, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Chad. In its broadest definition, it is home to over 300 million people, of whom over 70 percent live in rural areas.¹ The region has been experiencing strong demographic pressure, with population density increasing by over 65 percent between 1970 and 2010 (compared to a 25 percent increase worldwide over the same period). Five of the most populous countries in the region (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) are expected to double their population from 80 million in 2018 to 160 million in 2040.²

About half of this population is estimated to derive their income from farming, herding, or fishing. Agriculture, which is adopted most frequently for subsistence purposes, is mainly rain-fed. Livestock farming is more common in Western Sahelian countries, although its prevalence is expected to decrease in the future due to climate-induced degradation of pastureland. This has already forced herders to move progressively into farmers' territory all over the region, often leading to violence and conflict as in the case of Northern Nigeria.³ The fast urbanization of the region – driven both by migration and high demographic pressure since the 1960s, and more recently, by security

¹ Based on World Bank estimates for 2020. See World Bank Data: *Rural Population*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL>.

² For updated figures on the population in the region see Jean-Marc Pradelle, "Rapid Population Growth of the Sahel Region: A Major Challenge for the Next Generation", in *ID4D*, 17 June 2021, <https://ideas4development.org/en/population-growth-sahel-challenge-generation>.

³ See International Crisis Group (ICG), "Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence", in *ICG Africa Reports*, No. 262 (26 July 2018), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/node/6209>.

threats in rural areas that forced people to live closer to urban centers – has generated informal and low-paying city jobs.

The prevalence of subsistence agriculture, grazeland-dependent pastoralism, and informal employment make the Sahel a poor region – with up to 80 percent of its population living on less than 1.90 US dollars per day.⁴ In such a context, climate shocks can have a massive impact on people’s lives and livelihoods. Energy security (or the lack thereof) is another element that should not be underestimated.⁵

In addition, state fragility often exposes the failure of public authorities to protect communities from adverse events, including climate shocks, loss of livelihood, or food crises. The series of *coups d’état* in Burkina Faso and Mali and the military intervention on the power transition process in Chad, all happening since 2020, are a testament to state fragility and institutional weakness. In a context where governments struggle to act as effective security providers, tackle poverty, and provide access to basic services, societal grievances grow. This dynamic of cumulative challenges provides fertile ground for non-state armed groups to capitalize on discontent and ethnic and regional divisions in their struggle for territorial control. A prime example is the jihadist attacks of Boko Haram in Borno State, Nigeria, or the militant Islamists of Ansar al-Din in Mali.

⁴ See Ernest Harsch, “The New Face of the Sahel”, in *Africa Renewal*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (August-November 2017), <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/node/10520>.

⁵ With an average annual increase of 4 per cent in energy demand between 2000 and 2019 in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Mauritania, and electricity supply remaining far below demand, energy poverty is widespread. Among other harms, it hinders human development, and is often correlated with food insecurity. For more on the topic of energy poverty in the Sahel, see International Energy Agency (IEA), *Clean Energy Transitions in the Sahel*, September 2021, <https://www.iea.org/reports/clean-energy-transitions-in-the-sahel>.

This paper will illustrate how climate impacts manifest themselves in the region. We will focus on how climate change acts as a multiplier of existing risks and fragilities, and present how regional actors and the international community have been addressing the nexus between climate, migration, and (human) security.

Climate and livelihood in the Sahel

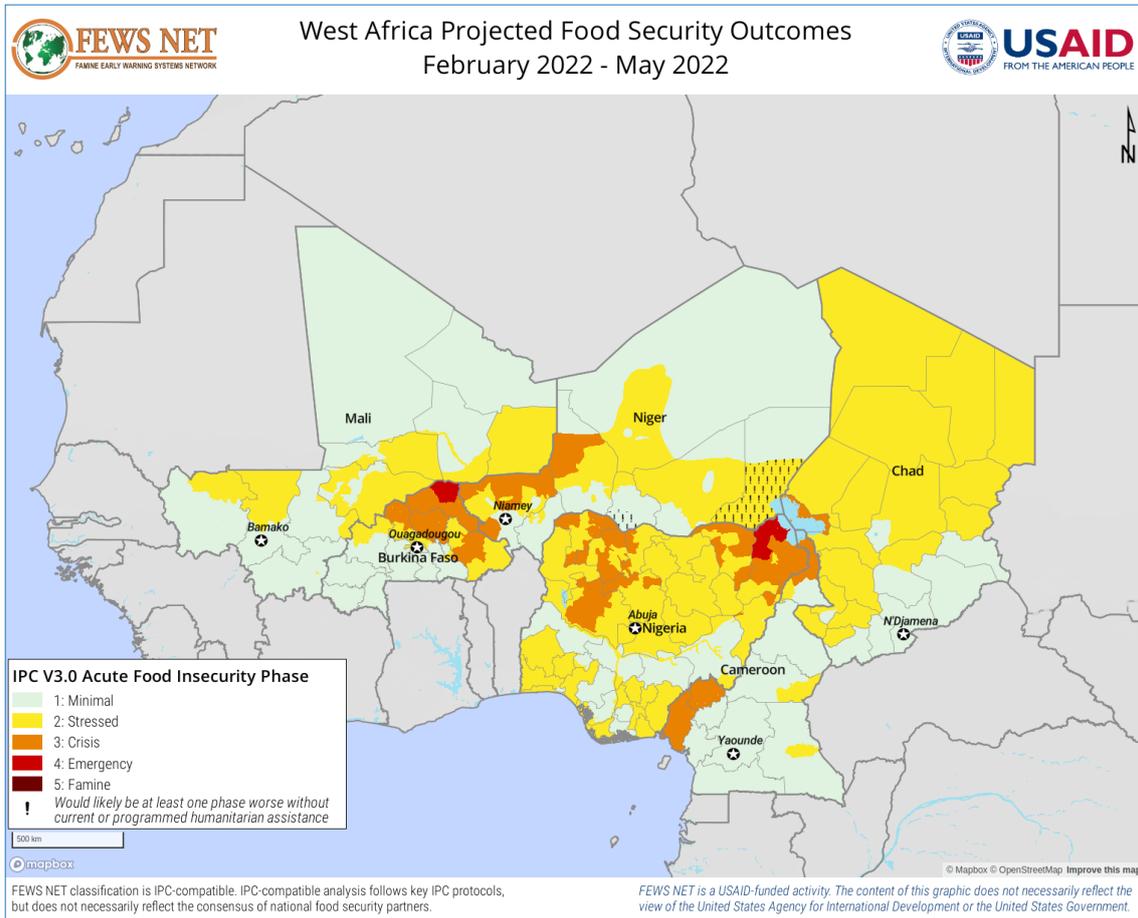
Climate variability in the Sahel results in temperature and rainfall changes throughout the year, leading to desertification (or greening), as well as more frequent drought and flood occurrence in the region.⁶ The most severe drought was recorded in 2010, caused by extreme heat destroying crops.⁷ The subsequent famine starved over 350,000 people, and put an additional 1.2 million at risk of hunger.⁸ The biggest impact was felt in Niger, while Sudan and Chad experienced temperatures over 47 degrees Celsius (116 Fahrenheit). Heavy rains are also recurring in the Sahel, and often cause flash floods with recent events mainly affecting Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, and Togo.⁹

⁶ See United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Livelihood Security. Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel*, Nairobi, UNEP, 2011, <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/8032>.

⁷ See Henry Foy, "Millions Face Starvation in West Africa, Warn Aid Agencies", in *The Guardian*, 21 June 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/p/2hznb>.

⁸ See UNEP, *Livelihood Security*, cit.

⁹ Ibid.



Source: Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), *West Africa Food Security Classification (January 2022-May 2022). Medium Term Projection, January 2022*, <https://fdw.fews.net/ipcpngmap/region/901/ML2/2022-01-01>.

Climate models from Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are uncertain on whether the region will become wetter or drier. Recent estimates predict monsoon precipitation to increase over the central Sahel and decrease over the far western Sahel. Temperature projections do suggest that the whole area will see an increase of about 2.5 to 4 degrees by 2100.¹⁰

¹⁰ See IPCC estimates. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2021. The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report*

Such a development would not only exceed thresholds for avoiding irreversible climate change; for a region where the population is highly dependent on agricultural activities and has limited access to alternative income sources, it will cause particularly severe and long-lasting damage. Increasing temperatures and a drier climate will also reduce hydropower potential of the region substantially, as well as reducing cultivable and grazing land. The cumulative effects of these nexus challenges are already generating significant impacts on livelihoods and competition over natural resources, and indirect repercussions on local governance and mobility patterns.

The climate, migration, and security nexus

Migration has long been used in the region to adapt to progressively harder environmental conditions. The Sahel has seen an increase in internal and international movements in the past decade.¹¹ In northern Burkina Faso and Mali, frequent droughts depleted resources and decreased fertile land, forcing pastoralists further south and causing migration to rapidly growing urban centers. Often, cities have not been able to digest increased populations, lagging in services and employment opportunities and further fueling out-country migration.

Given the cumulative effects and the interconnection of climate change, internal mobility, and fragile governance, over the past decade the region has become the most important transit point for northbound migration from Sub-

of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1>.

¹¹ See Jean-Marc Pradelle, “Rapid Population Growth of the Sahel Region”, cit.

Saharan Africa to North Africa and across the Mediterranean. Libya's role as a destination country for labor migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa or the Sahel has been significantly toned down due to extreme insecurity in the country, contributing to the Sahel's role as a transit hub and to growing migratory pressure across the Mediterranean. From a European perspective, the Sahel has become the main gateway of irregular migration, dramatically shaping national and EU policy responses towards the region. This crisis in the Mediterranean has taken the lives of at least 20,000 migrants since 2014, with 2021 being the deadliest year so far.¹²

As a result, Agadez, in northern Niger, and its broader region, has become a major migration hub, with approximately 1,700 people passing through it every day in 2019.¹³ Historically, the city has served as a gateway to North Africa and the Mediterranean. With growing volume of transit migration, a significant mobility infrastructure composed of facilitators or accommodation providers has been developed, while the proliferation of smugglers (in Niger as well as in Libya) has exposed migrants to forced labor, sexual exploitation, torture, kidnapping, and even death. While measures to stem transit movement promoted by the EU and its member states since 2015 has reduced irregular crossings via the Sahel, smuggling networks' adaptation to enhanced border and mobility controls has also led to the opening of more dangerous routes, exposing people on the move to greater risks.

¹² See, The Migrant Project, *Migrant Deaths in the Mediterranean Exceed 20,000 Since 2014*, 9 March 2020, <https://www.themigrantproject.org/?p=43072>; and Isambard Wilkinson, "4,400 Migrants Were Lost at Sea Trying to Reach Spain in 2021", in *The Times*, 4 January 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/4-400-migrants-were-lost-at-sea-trying-to-reach-spain-in-2021-vcc0rccl5>.

¹³ See IOM estimations. International Organization for Migration, "Population Flow Monitoring: Niger", in *Flow Monitoring Reports*, No. 29 (November 2019), <https://dtm.iom.int/node/5738>.

While trans-continental movements are on the rise, migration remains mainly intraregional, with over 90 percent of migrants moving within the Sahel. This mobility intersects with climate effects and consequently takes a toll on the region's development. Niger is expected to become more prone to drought, erosion, and deforestation due to climate change. Demographic pressure further complicates the picture: the country's population grew from a little over 2.5 million people in 1950 to 26 million inhabitants, and is expected to grow to 65 million in 2050.¹⁴ Against such a background, international migration contributes to depleting scarce food and energy resources and exacerbates the enduring conflict between marginalized northern Tuareg communities and the government.

Interconnection of climate, mobility, fragility, and security risks is also visible in the Lake Chad basin, a region encompassing Chad, Nigeria, and Cameroon, often described as caught in a "conflict trap".¹⁵ Climate events and overuse of resources have caused Lake Chad basin to shrink considerably in the past decades, losing over 90 percent of its extension.¹⁶ With diminishing resources, herders who rely on pasturelands often relocate to areas with better opportunities. Over the past years, pastoralists have moved towards areas historically used by farmers, creating land competition and the revival of ethnic, tribal, and religious ruptures and, in some cases, open conflict.¹⁷

¹⁴ Statista, *Niger: Average Age of the Population from 1950 to 2050*, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/447733/average-age-of-the-population-in-niger>.

¹⁵ See Janani Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability. Addressing Climate and Fragility Risks in the Lake Chad Region*, Berlin, adelphi, 15 May 2019, <https://shoring-up-stability.org/?p=15>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See ICG, "Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence", cit.

Complicating things even further, non-state armed groups such as Boko Haram (an organization that controls a sweep of land in the Lake Chad basin) displace households by making life in rural areas too dangerous.

The last dimension of this complex crisis scenario is the lack of robust governance structures, making longer term planning impossible. Military pushback against non-state groups is often heavy-handed, and imposes movement restrictions that further reduce access to resources.¹⁸ Instances of communities being exploited by the military are common, and women in particular are mistreated.¹⁹ This dynamic further erodes social cohesion and trust in the government, providing fertile ground for armed group recruitment and unchecked criminality.

Human security strongly relates to food insecurity, compounded by unpredictable climate events and diminishing resources. The nexus is clear: livelihood insecurity caused by the destructive impact of climate shocks and their long-lasting effect on the economy overlaps with conflict-related insecurity, and inter-communal tensions. Such interrelated issues cannot be addressed separately as they are mutually reinforcing and exacerbate adverse climatic events in ever larger regions.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See Amnesty International report on this issue in the Lake Chad Basin: Amnesty International, *They Took Our Husbands and Forced Us to Be Their Girlfriends: Women in North-East Nigeria Starved and Raped by Those Claiming to Rescue Them*, November 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/9122/2018/en>.

Multilateral responses to complex crises in the Sahel

The Sahel region requires a broader, multifaceted, and human-centric strategy of sustainable security and comprehensive political solutions.

One example of better addressing nexus issues into multilateral efforts is a more systematic focus on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus within the UN system – even if implementation challenges remain, also in the particular context of the Sahel.²⁰ At the same time, international and regional policy responses remain in need of reform to better match the complexity of overlapping climate, migration, livelihoods, governance, and security challenges. We look next at some of the key shortcomings.

One such shortcoming derives from looking at (in)security in the region through a narrowly defined hard security lens. This tendency can be observed both in some of the regional initiatives and in the engagement by international actors. Hard security approaches have led to results in terms of, for example, containing the expansion of violent non-state actors, as in the case of reducing Boko Haram territorial control in the Lake Chad basin.²¹ The comprehensiveness and sustainability of solutions such strategies could provide in a context like the Sahel remain nonetheless questionable. These approaches tend to prioritize one policy dimension over (and often at the expense of) other inextricably linked issue areas, and to fall short of understanding the complexity of (in)

²⁰ More on this in UN, *United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). Progress Report 2018-2019*, June 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/node/3648531>.

²¹ See Saskia Brechenmacher, "Stabilizing Northeast Nigeria After Boko Haram", in *Carnegie Working Papers*, May 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/79042>.

security as experienced by local populations. Short-sighted interventions might do little to contribute to sustainable security in the area, while they might generate repercussions on existing governance fragilities.

An example of such interventions is the experience of the G5 Sahel (an institutional framework created in 2014 between Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger). The initiative was initially devised to pursue an integrated approach to development, governance and security, as illustrated by its stated priorities, which included “security, the anchoring of democracy and participation of the populations in the promotion of the less developed areas, [...] infrastructure, [...] food security and pastoralism, human development [...] and adapting to climate change and water management”.²²

The G5 has however been heavily reoriented towards restoring conditions of stability in the region.²³ In terms of its outcomes, while the initiative did not lead to a substantial de-intensification of conflict in the three-border area, the armed forces deployed by the G5 have been accused of scarce accountability and abuses against civilians.²⁴ This has contributed to deepening societal grievances vis-à-vis the state in G5 countries, where 600 unlawful killings have been attributed to security forces since 2019.²⁵ Ultimately, these abuses feed

²² See G5, *Communiqué final du sommet des Chefs d’Etat du G5 du Sahel*, Nouakchott, 16 February 2014, <https://www.g5sahel.org/?p=549>.

²³ Bernardo Venturi, “An EU Integrated Approach in the Sahel: The Role for Governance”, in Bernardo Venturi (ed.), *Governance and Security in the Sahel: Tackling Mobility, Demography and Climate Change*, Brussels, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Rome, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), April 2019, p. 101-124, <https://www.iai.it/en/node/10476>.

²⁴ Bernardo Venturi and Luca Barana, “Lake Chad: Another Protracted Crisis in the Sahel or a Regional Exception?”, in *IAI Papers*, No. 21|10 (March 2021), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/12950>.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Sahel: End Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations*, 13 February 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/13/sahel-end-abuses-counterterrorism-operations>.

into weak governance structures and fragile state-society relations providing fertile ground for insurgencies and other non-state groups. Further, the relative empowerment of military actors relative to other societal and political forces should be taken into account when considering the military coups and disputed transitions of power that took place over the last two years in three G5 members: Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad.

Similar approaches focusing on addressing symptoms through security means rather than tackling drivers of insecurity more broadly, have been adopted by important external actors such as the United States or France. The United States channels significant amounts of humanitarian assistance to the region mainly aiding the provision of emergency food assistance, clean drinking water, shelter, sanitation and hygiene services for refugees, internally displaced people, and vulnerable host communities.²⁶ The main focus of the country has nonetheless been on fighting terrorist groups under the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). Over 1 billion US dollars has been spent on military support and training since 2005. According to an audit of the Department of State Bureau of African Affairs the initiative provided “limited assurance that TSCTP is achieving its goals of building counterterrorism capacity and addressing the underlying drivers of radicalization in West and North Africa”.²⁷ France also prioritized the counter-terrorism dimension as expressed in operation Barkhane, launched in 2014, with its particular focus

²⁶ For example, in 2021 the U.S. development aid agency, USAID, has confirmed additional humanitarian assistance to Sahel for a total of 55 million US dollars. See USAID, *United States Announces Additional Humanitarian Assistance for the Sahel Region*, 19 March 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/node/397551>.

²⁷ The citation is from an unclassified audit of the Department of State Bureau of African Affairs presented in September 2020. See US Department of State, *Audit of the Department of State Bureau of African Affairs Monitoring and Coordination of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program*, September 2020, p. 28, <https://www.stateoig.gov/reports/10745>.

on transnational jihadist groups operating across the region. Here again, few results have been obtained despite the heavy investment.²⁸ The operation has been criticized for largely failing to protect civilians, and its support for Kidal separatist groups in Mali has caused resentment among the Malian population. As the operation is coming to an end in 2022, France is forced to reconsider its involvement in the area to sustainably address security issues.²⁹

Mismatch between regional and international perspectives

Another major difficulty for coherent multilateral responses addressing the nexus of climate, migration, sustainable development, and human security in the Sahel arises from a mismatch between regional perspectives and priorities and those adopted by international actors.

One example of such divergence is the perspective on human mobility and how it relates to security and development issues. Here, the example of the European Union and regional organizations such as ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) is telling. ECOWAS' free movement regime inscribed in the 1979 Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment reflects the regional perspective, attaching a significant role to human mobility in diversifying livelihoods, coping with crises, and fostering sustainable development. This perspective increasingly collides with the EU approach to the region, which has been mostly driven by stemming potential EU-bound irregular migration and was translated into

²⁸ Bernardo Venturi and Nana Alassane Toure, *Out of the Security Deadlock: Challenges and Choices in the Sahel*, Brussels, FEPS/Rome, IAI, June 2020, <https://www.iai.it/en/node/11716>.

²⁹ See Mady Ibrahim Kanté, "France Has Started Withdrawing Its Troops from Mali: What Is It Leaving Behind?", in *The Conversation*, 25 October 2021, <https://theconversation.com/france-has-started-withdrawing-its-troops-from-mali-what-is-it-leaving-behind-170375>.

the prioritization of limiting human mobility (even within the region) through enhancing border controls and local migration management capacities.³⁰ For instance, the EU has invested in improved migration management in Niger using the funds devoted to the country through the EU Emergency for Africa Trust Fund, while sponsoring new national policy tools, like the Nigerien Law n. 36-2015, which penalizes irregular entry or exit for both migrants and smugglers.

Future policy conversations need to reconcile diverging priorities in ways that account for complexity of interconnected challenges and accept the resulting policy trade-offs. As the case of Niger shows, a focus on enhancing cooperation with local authorities on reinforcing borders can lead to significant reduction in irregular transit migration. At the same time, it has to be recognized that such a focus deprives local populations of important strategies for coping with climatic or conflict-driven shocks.

An additional example of mismatch between regional and international perspectives is the EU approach to climate mitigation and adaptation vis-à-vis Africa. The EU plan to mainstream climate-related measures in its engagement with African countries (including on development and displacement) is an important step from a nexus perspective. However, Brussels' approach mainly tackles mitigation rather than adaptation, whereas the latter is the main priority for many countries in the region. Three regional organizations – ECOWAS, WAEMU (West Africa Economic and Monetary Union), and CILLS (Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) – have recently taken this query to COP26, by issuing a joint declaration underlining

³⁰ Luca Barana, "EU Migration Policy and Regional Integration in Africa: A New Challenge for European Policy Coherence", in *IAI Commentaries*, No. 18|42 (July 2018), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/9429>.

the “very high vulnerability of West African countries to climate change”, and the need to compensate for irreversible “loss and damage” from climate change by giving “priority [...] to adaptation”.³¹ While nexus thinking necessitates mainstreaming climate action into renewed conceptualizations of security and development, this example illustrates the importance of multi-stakeholder policy conversations that pay greater attention to regional needs and priorities, while supporting emerging regional initiatives and strengthening local ownership and capacities.

Recently, nuanced approaches aiming to deal better with the complexity of policy challenges in the region are increasingly being promoted. For instance, the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) and the World Bank community-based recovery and stability plan for the tri-border region (i.e., between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) present solid attempts to move towards a coordinated, multi-agency, multidimensional, and community-based approach to address deeply embedded and interconnected drivers of complex crises, rather than their outcomes.³²

The emphasis on tackling “the fragility of the social contract” and weak governance in the EU 2021 Integrated Strategy in the Sahel³³ also indicates

³¹ Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), *ECOWAS, CILSS and WAEMU Communiqué on COP26 and Climate Change*, 11 November 2021, <https://ecowas.int/?p=51884>.

³² See UN, *United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). Progress Report 2018-2019*, cit.; World Bank, *Think Regionally, Act Locally: A New \$350 Million Project Supports Community-Based Recovery and Stability in the Sahel*, 15 June 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/06/15/think-regionally-act-locally-a-new-350-million-project-supports-community-based-recovery-and-stability-in-the-sahel>.

³³ Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the European Union’s Integrated Strategy in the Sahel*, 16 April 2021, point 5, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7723-2021-INIT/en/pdf>.

a turn towards a more context-sensitive reading of the region, while the attention paid to the close links between development assistance, the fight against climate change and its “direct consequences for populations, including in terms of security”³⁴ constitutes a welcome step towards a nexus perspective. Similarly, the U.S. administration’s recent focus on climate security as a national security issue and the acknowledgment of its impact on migration trends, geopolitical tensions, and instability and conflict in developing countries provides an indication of the White House’s interest in making climate security a key foreign policy issue.³⁵

In recent years, there has been greater alignment to foster a policy conversation on multilateral partnerships that can effectively address complex crises in the Sahel and other regions of the world. Such an effort should include regional and international, institutional and social stakeholders. Equally importantly, a continuous push for the development of nexus thinking is required to adequately address the challenges of this region. It is high time to start understanding complex crises for what they are and develop strategies that include encompassing solutions that work at the intersection of security, development, human mobility, and climate adaptation and mitigation.

³⁴ Ibid., point 35.

³⁵ In a report published in October 2021, the White House has acknowledged for the first time the interrelation between climate change and migration. For more on the topic see Emily Dai, “Biden Administration Releases Reports on National Security Risks Posed by Climate Change”, in *Lawfare*, 21 October 2021, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/node/21829>.

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