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No peace under the Shea tree

Climate change & conflicts in the Sahel: Debunking the myths

by Delina Goxho, Independent Security Consultant

Key findings & Executive Summary

Key Finding #1: Climate change is affecting livelihoods and food security in the Sahel region of West Africa, causing land degradation, shortage of water supplies and damaging cropping systems. However, this is not seen to have a direct impact on conflict. Thus, there is, as of now, no evidence of the existence of a direct nexus between climate and security, at least in the Sahel.

Key finding #2: External aid that seeks to tackle both climate change and development has important political significance and political consequences for the region of intervention and is not merely technical support. This means that it should be addressed at the political level, as well as at the technical level.

Key finding #3: When European actors choose to intervene to stem conflict, priority should be given to improving local governance and fighting weak or predatory state institutions, as they are the main drivers of conflict.

In-depth research into the alleged **nexus between climate and security has found that claims of a direct correlation between the two cannot be substantiated. It is incapable, unwilling or predatory state institutions instead** that contribute to conflict in areas where climate change is also affecting livelihoods. In addition, while it is evident that climate change is impacting on the subsistence of many Sahelian communities and that the strand of European support that looks into food security and natural disaster relief should be augmented, (1) **providing development aid disentangled from political and judicial action could at times be detrimental.**

Development and humanitarian aid focused on climate, much like security support, tends to be viewed by the European Union and its member states as purely technical, with no political consequences.

However, external influence tends to redesign power relations amongst communities, (2) not just with regard to security, but also with other types of aid. European funded development and climate projects in the Sahel if not accompanied by large investments (both political and financial) into inter-communal mediation, access to land, improved governance efforts and support to an independent and competent judicial branch, risk undermining the very solutions they seek to provide.

In sum, whenever a development project that seeks to tackle climate issues is set in motion, a strong mediation component should always be present, to account for potential disputes.

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1. Introduction: the EU approach to climate and conflict



In the 1950 neorealist Italian drama film *No Peace Under the Olive Tree*, (3) Francesco Dominici returns home after the end of the war to find that his 20 sheep have been stolen by a wealthier, more powerful shepherd, Agostino Bonfiglio. After asking local elders for support and receiving no guarantees, he decides to take back his herd during the night but is stopped by his rival and brought to court, where local officials are bribed and witnesses do not dare to speak up. As expected, a lot of drama and commotion ensues.

Much like with inter-communal conflicts in the Sahel, the story of Francesco and Agostino reflects some of the underlying themes of this policy report, first and foremost that the lack of a credible and capable government can fuel a cycle of mistrust and violence. Certainly, post-war pastoralist communities in Italy were struggling with poverty and scarcity of resources, but this was not the problem. The problem was a weak government at best, a predatory one at worst.

In recent years the European Union has been operating a significant shift in its approach to conflicts by advocating more strongly for an **integrated approach**, which does not just look at conflicts from a security perspective, but rather tries to integrate development, humanitarian aid and diplomacy into its toolbox of conflict resolution. The wealth of available information and recommendations on the Sahel region treat climate as yet another emergency unfolding in the region, which has the potential to engender further conflict. Indeed, **conflicts over access to natural resources** have been increasingly reported by local media and civil society organisations in the Sahel: the March 2019 massacre at Ogossagou and Welingara (Mali), in which 160 members of traditional Fulani pastoralists were killed by Dogon militias, is related not only to ethnic tensions, but also to control over land. (4) Analyses of the many Sahel crises however rarely look into research that focuses on climate per se, thus provided recommendations tend to be superficial at best, misleading at worst.



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2. Inter-communal conflict in the Sahel: does climate play a role?



According to the April 2020 report by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) (5) on climate-related security and development risks, more than half of the countries with the highest risk of climate exposure and political fragility are in sub-Saharan Africa.

This **susceptibility to multidimensional risks** is particularly evident in the Sahel region. On the one hand, the region is faced with a dramatic increase in violence perpetrated by armed groups since 2012, which overwhelms already fragile (and in some cases predatory) institutions and fuels violence, migration, and displacement. On the other hand, temperatures in the Sahel are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average, and at the same time, records show an increase in precipitation, which affects the livelihoods particularly in rural areas. (6) This variability in climate generates **season abnormality**, which damages cropping systems, aggravates land degradation and favours shortage of water supplies. (7) This has direct consequences on a number of sectors, such as for farmers cultivating beans and onions, which are now being imported from Nigeria and Benin. (8) Periodic droughts are characteristic in the region, but the interval between the years of poor agro-pastoral production has shortened. This is not necessarily unusual, but now on average one year in three is in deficit: 2005, 2009 and 2011 were all drought years. (9) Each drought makes it harder for households to recover: in the Maradi region of Niger, droughts are having a serious impact on the production of staple foods.

Such droughts have been seen as a direct driver of violence (10) in the region, pitting particularly politically marginalised groups such as herders and agricultural dependent groups such as farmers against each other. (11) The climate/ security nexus is one of several attempts to provide an explanation for the soaring levels of violence in the region. Some scholars support the idea that conflict is driven by climate factors. (12)

Thereby, the argument goes as follows: environmental degradation, coupled with a significant population growth, leads to increasing competition for access to dwindling natural resources, which in turn generates violence and conflict. While this argument is a captivating one, it is not always supported by conclusive and coherent evidence. (13)

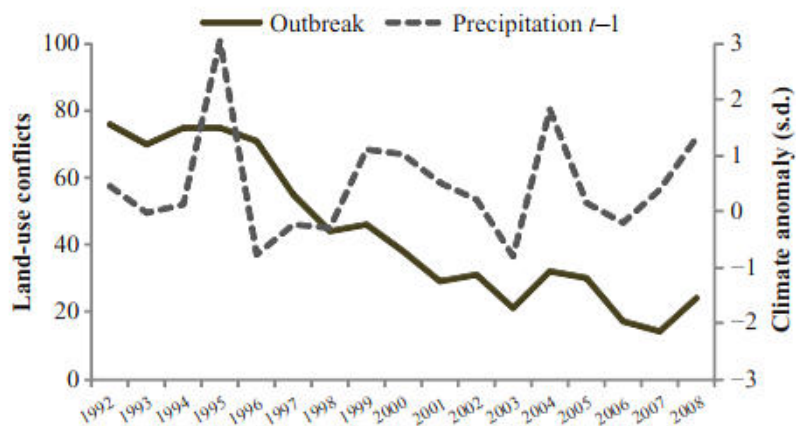
By drawing on extreme weather events such as droughts or floods and looking at climate variability over a certain period of time, e.g. precipitation and temperature rise, causal relationships are being established, which connect these events to the possibility of conflict and violence. (14)

While this might be applicable to other regions, the ambiguity is that these assumptions are not reflected and supported by credible data on the Sahel. (15)

Recent reports even questioned whether the Sahel is subject to desertification and in general criticise the proxies used such as short-term data on weather and extreme weather events. (16) Benjaminsen's et al. (2012) research in this domain provides sound empirical evidence which contrasts the direct climate/conflict nexus: analysing almost two decades of data on land use disputes from the Court of Appeal in Mopti and relating it to climate variability during this time revealed no significant correlation between the two (17) (see Infographic 1).

Infographic 1

Land conflict and rainfall variability (18)



Infographic 1: Outbreak of land-use conflicts and rainfall variability in Mopti. The figure shows statistics on the outbreak of land-use disputes in the Sévaré Court of Appeal in relation with data on climate anomaly in the Mopti region (one-year time lag), defined as significant deviation from normal annual precipitation.

Therefore, a closer look at sound empirical evidence shows that climate change is not directly connected to conflict in the region, despite it having very real consequences for livelihoods and food security. Some of the interviews we conducted throughout 2020 point at climate change as a risk multiplier, (19) meaning that the effects of climate change present an additional burden for already weak institutions and socio-ecological systems, further elevating the risk of potential onset of conflict. (20) Environmental factors, climate variability and conflict dynamics do interact, but the complexity in the nature of their interactions make it difficult to exhibit such causal relationships.

As a result, climate change should not be treated as a main driver for conflict, both **by policymakers in Europe and global donors worldwide.**

Failing to recognise that the climate/security nexus narrative is not backed up by credible data, would entail an inappropriate policy response from a substantive point of view and fuel a dangerous set of discourses from a rhetorical point of view. (21) On the contrary, what has been identified as a direct driver for conflict is bad governance such as weak state capacity and fragile institutions. (22)

Krätli and Toulmin (2020) have conducted important work (23) on the difficulty faced by **dry land farmers in a warming world**, confronted with shorter farming seasons and more intense rainstorms. They argue however that climate change is often not the most important stress on farming systems, as it is rather government neglect and disdain that make the life of farmers much harder. This is far from saying that climate change and extreme weather events do not have consequences for the region. The fact that the vast majority of people in the Sahel region, as well as their economies, are heavily dependent on resource-based sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fishing, show how climate-related developments have far-reaching effects.

In 2019, the agricultural sectors of Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, accounted on average for over 30% of the region's GDP. (24) In addition to a large number of people who secure their livelihood through farming, there are around 25 million pastoralists who move through the Sahel in search of fertile land for their cattle. (25)

Following old migration routes, they often cross private land, which is why they have established mutually beneficial trade relationships with farmers. Due to droughts, pastoralists are forced to **deviate from the old migration routes** in search of new ones, eventually crossing land where they have no pre-existing ties with farmers. (26)

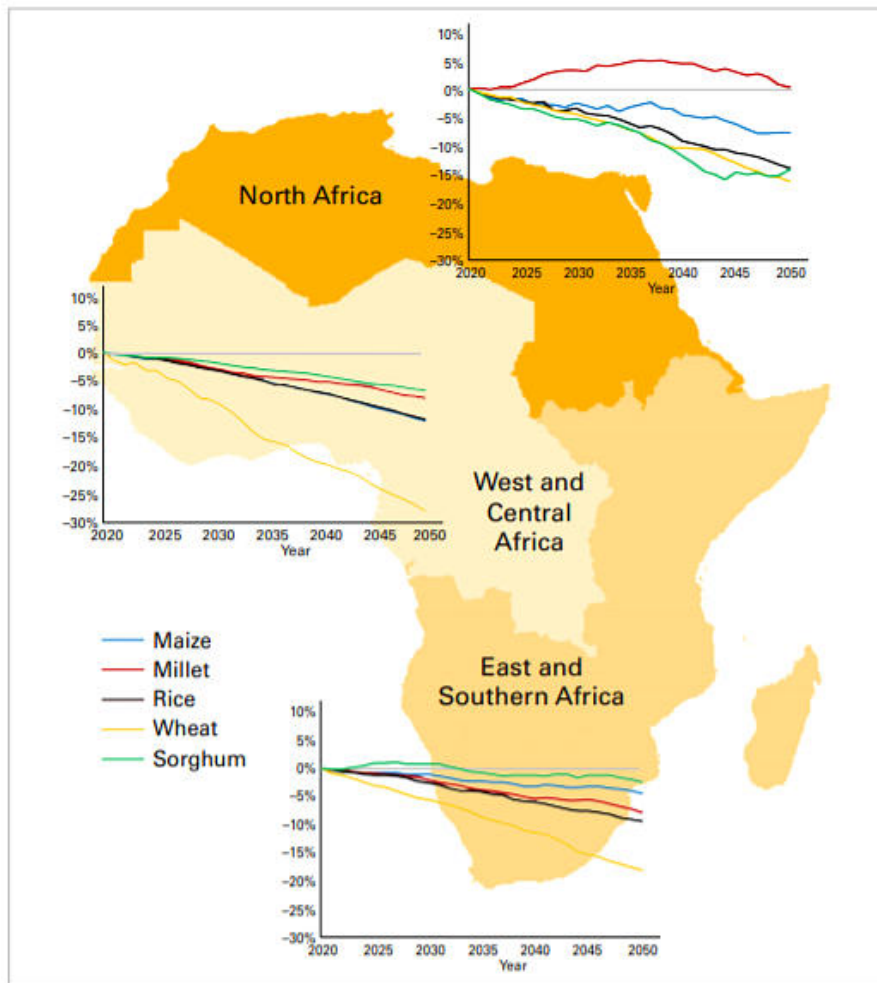
Farmers also struggle with climate variability and harsher living conditions, as cropping systems are damaged, which ultimately puts their livelihoods at risk of food insecurity. (27) In addition, long-term projections for climate in the Sahel show a deterioration of the current conditions with probably higher total rainfall, but more variability and a shorter rainy season, which will inevitably further affect water resources, agriculture and human movement. (28) This raises the question of how to build up individual resilience and extend adaptive capacity.



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Infographic 2

Crop yield changes (29)



Infographic 2: Crop yield changes (%) for West and Central Africa, North Africa, and East and Southern Africa under RCP 8.5 by 2050 Source: Elaborated from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Climate Adaptation in Rural Development (CARD) Assessment Tool for the five major cereal crops (in terms of production quantity) grown in Africa: maize, millet, rice, sorghum and wheat. Lines represent average changes in crop yield within a region.

2.1 How does this bias come about?

How does the security/climate nexus bias take shape and how is it reinforced? As one interviewee that was consulted for this Report put it, “In 2008, I accompanied a Minister to a 48 hour visit to Mali. It was clear to us all in the delegation that his main interest was climate change, as this is an issue that he was particularly preoccupied with back at home. Thus, most organisations and officials we met with in Bamako as well as in the Timbuktu and Mopti areas mentioned climate as one of their main concerns. This was the first time I heard people talk about climate change in Mali, and it **appeared to me as an artificial connection**, with very little evidence to back up this claim: as an outsider you often get the answers you are looking for. People are quite good at catching what you are interested in and provide the answer they think you are keen to get”. (30)

How then is this bias reinforced in the region? The interest from Sahelian governments and, in some cases civil society and local non-governmental organisations alike is attracting funds. “**We have to constantly switch the buzzword in order to get work done**, a while ago it was preventing violent extremism, then it was migration, now climate seems to have the upper hand” a Niamey-based NGO representative told us. The resulting quick shift in donor priorities means that it is then difficult in the medium and long term to measure the impact on preventing and combating violent extremism, curbing migration or limiting the effects of climate change respectively. For Sahelian governments, the intent may not be as noble as ‘getting work done’ however, as connecting rising violence and extremist attacks to climate change may provide yet another hook to attract investment or to stoke blame elsewhere. This is problematic for a further reason: as noted below, new research (31) points at volatility of aid as a driver of conflict and thus **switching priorities with regard to aid may prove counterproductive**. (32)

2.2 When abundance leads to conflict

Research on the so-called paradox of plenty (33) shows that scarcity of resources is not a driver of conflict. The opposite is in fact true: more conflicts take place in times of relative abundance of resources, as competition for land intensifies. (34) Quantitative research also shows that it is not desertification that leads to violence in regions such as East Africa, but rather an abundance of water: “the wetter the season, the more people are likely to die in violent livestock raiding”, (35) as the value of land increases. As reported by Crisis Group, the correlation is indeed stronger between the **proliferation of conflicts and the transformation of productive systems** – competition increases but the depth and wealth of regulatory measures around how to tackle such competition doesn’t: “paradoxically, while arable land in Sahelian countries is shrinking each year as a result of climate change, the areas under cultivation continue to expand, along with production itself”. (36) This does not take place evenly everywhere however: in the Agadez region in Niger, an increase in rainfall has meant that previously arid areas have been turned into arable land, drawing in crop farmer and excluding herders from a territory that they previously regularly crossed. (37) What directly leads to disputes in this case is not climate change or desertification, but a lack of proper regulation over increasingly sought after resources. (38)

In some cases, development aid can exacerbate such dynamics by increasing the value of land. What has been highlighted by recent literature to have an impact on the probability of conflict is the **volatility of aid**. (39) One example of when aid is counterproductive is provided by the work of the Opération de développement de l'élevage dans la région de Mopti (ODEM) (Mali), which supported the construction of the Tolodjé wells in a pastoral reserve. (40)

The construction of wells only exacerbated rather than relieved tension as it ultimately increased the value of land. Thus, European-funded development projects tackling climate change need to be revisited and credible mediation and law enforcement measures installed. Seeing external interventions merely as technical support ignores the **political dimensions of aid**.



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3. All roads lead to governance



Applying a **reversal of policies** that favours herders rather than farmers now would only end up stoking more tensions. Instead, a pragmatic approach to mediation and dialogue should be put in place. Conversely, focusing attention on climate change as a driver of conflict is merely a red herring, diverting attention away from more pressing issues.

First of all, the value of **functioning institutions** is particularly relevant whenever predictions of conflict are made: political instability and malfunctioning institutions are positively correlated with the incidence of violence in a country. (41)

In addition, **politically marginalised groups** are also **not just prey** to armed groups and state security forces **but self-organise and target rival communities**. (42) Following a natural disaster such as extensive flooding, those who do not receive state support to adjust for their loss may resort to violence to protect their land or cattle. Violence by security forces also plays a role in stoking tensions and leading to reprisals: the MINUSMA Human Rights section (43) has recently been reporting on security forces abuses in the region, which account for more than 1/4 of civilian casualties in Mali.

Secondly, the eternal question in the Sahel is whether it is a matter of **lack of capacity** (44) or lack of political will: when the 2008 Investment Programme for the Niger basin (ABN) was launched, only 3,3% of funds came from Niger and Mali, the states most affected by such Programme. (45) Each state was initially supposed to pay a percentage, but even in its strategic documents, (46) the ABN built scenarios with the explicit hypothesis that Mali and Niger would not finance their part and that other donors would be needed. (47)

Whether this is due to a lack of capacity or a lack of will is hard to tell, but being able to assess this would determine policy responses on the part of external donors such as the EU. Certainly, as a whole set of literature on institutional change demonstrates, **innovation is hard to implement** (48), but **Sahelian states are also responsible for the shortcomings**.

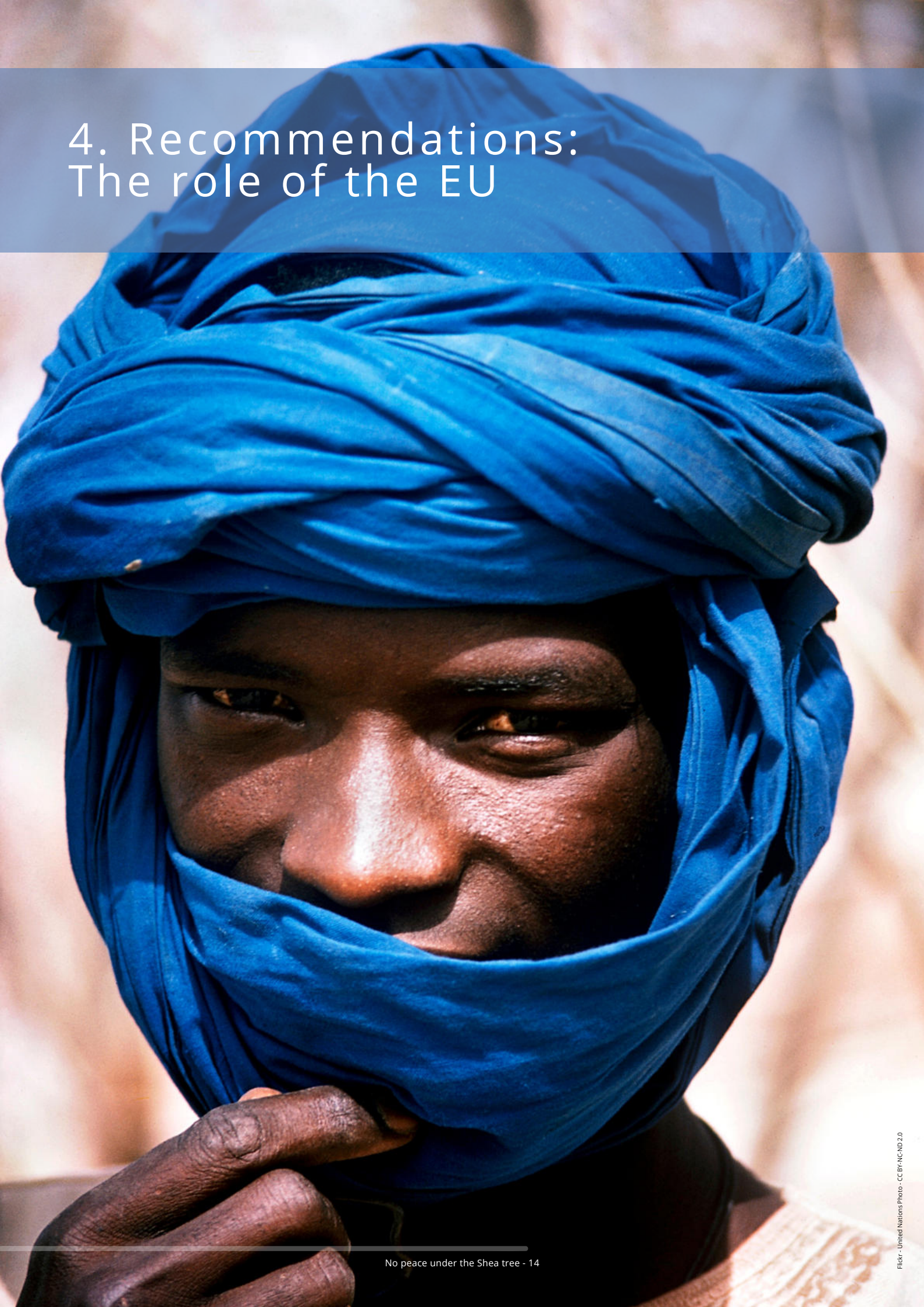
One example pertains to Niger: as mentioned by one interviewee, (49) due to customary law, women cannot inherit land, thus cannot cultivate. (50) The Nigerien state should increase investment and political commitment to raise national awareness that, according to modern and religious law, women are allowed to own land.

Thirdly, **weak or predatory judicial systems**, lacking resources or willingness, are responsible for exacerbating the potential for conflict. (51)

Discriminatory practices make ethnic conflict more likely: one interviewee (52) mentioned that erratic rainfalls make it harder for herders to provide for their cattle, which they sell in larger numbers into markets. Security forces tend to connect this with terrorism financing, thus grow suspicious and punish Fulani herders whenever they see them sell larger quantities of cattle. (53)

The points above emphasise how tackling governance is paramount to achieving security and interventions that deal with the lack of capacity or lack of willingness of state institutions prove to be beneficial in tackling violence.

4. Recommendations: The role of the EU



The new **European Green deal and a renewed European focus on climate** are welcome developments, especially in that they view the issue of climate as not just localised in regions such as West Africa, but as a more global concern and adopt a **holistic approach** to tackling climate change. As for the Sahel in particular, **climate-related adaptation techniques** such as transhumance, reforestation and conservation of sacred forests, (54) insurance mechanisms for crops, post-harvest management, construction of water collection pipes, improved crop variability and better technology for early warning systems (55) are sorely needed. At the same time, focusing efforts on climate adaptation for farmers only will not limit the impact of climate change in the region: providing mobile clinics for vets to travel across the region and support herders in need, building barns to protect animals from high temperature (56) and other **herder-focused solutions** should also be reinforced. The EU, the biggest development donor for the region, has a relevant role to play.

Nonetheless, as we explored throughout this report, **development aid should always be accompanied by substantial mediation and conflict sensitive programmes** in order to counter potential outbreaks of conflict when development makes land more valuable. Such **recommendations to partner governments need to be strengthened and, if necessary, aid needs to be made conditional on reform**: it is vital to call for higher investments in climate adaptation, but this needs to be paired with state reform, inter-communal mediation, trust-building and an independent judiciary. **Solutions on both conflict mediation and climate change can and should come from the region**: it is not only the political elites who can propose solutions for tackling both phenomena but also local leadership which is often more engaged and knowledgeable in rural power dynamics. (57)

5. Conclusion



Certainly, climate change is affecting livelihoods in the region, and the aid provided to halt such a phenomenon should continue to be delivered. However, it is fundamental not to make two crucial mistakes: such support should not only be considered from a technical point of view, as whenever support is provided to a region or an area outside of European borders, such aid will also inevitably have **political consequences**, no matter the type of aid. This means that the ramifications of development and climate-related aid, which increase the value of land, should go hand in hand with broader institutional changes and mediation mechanisms. Secondly, it is important for the EU **not to support uncertain causal links** such as the climate-conflict nexus: this may contribute to setting up policies, which are then difficult to renegotiate. It may also increase the volatility of aid and provide predatory Sahelian state institutions with yet another opportunity to stoke the blame for political and economic instability elsewhere.

In the De Santis film, Francesco is blamed for leaving his sheep and family to go to war. However connecting the loss of his herd to the fact that he went to war is misleading: the primary responsibility here, as in the Sahel, is the lack of credible governance structures that would prevent abuses from being committed and that should strive for justice to be guaranteed to all.



**THE PRIMARY
RESPONSIBILITY FOR
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- 1 Also following recent natural emergencies in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. [\[link\]](#)
- 2 As analysed by Guichaoua (2020), The Bitter Harvest of French Interventionism in the Sahel, International Affairs.
- 3 Giuseppe de Santis, with Raf Vallone, Lucia Bosé and Folco Lulli, 1950, Lux Film.
- 4 Africa Insiders, 'Insiders Insight: Explaining the Mali Massacre', African Arguments. 26 March 2019. [\[link\]](#)
- 5 C. de Coning & Krampe, F (2020). Multilateral cooperation in the area of climate-related security and development risks. The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Policy report.
- 6 NUPI report.
- 7 A. Mbaye (2020). Climate Change, Livelihoods, and Conflict in the Sahel. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, Volume 21, pp. 12-20.
- 8 Interview Ministry of Planning, Niger. This of course has consequences for labour as well, as it creates jobs outside of Niger.
- 9 As reported by the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice. [\[link\]](#)
- 10 K. Mach et al. (2019). Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict. *Nature*. 571, 193-197.
- 11 N. von Uexkull et al. (2016). Civil conflict sensitivity to growing-season drought. *PNAS* 113 (44), 391-396.
- 12 T. F. Homer-Dixon (1999). Environment, Scarcity, and Violence. New Jersey: Princeton. Princeton University Press; C.P. Kelley et al. (2015). Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought. *PNAS* 112 (11), 241-246.
- 13 M.D. Turner (2004). Political ecology and the moral dimensions of „resource conflicts“: the case of farmer-herder conflicts in the Sahel. *Political Geography* 23: 863-889; L. Raineri (2020). Sahel climate conflicts? *European Union Institute for Security Studies*. November Brief no. 20.
- 14 J. Scheffran et al. (2012). Climate Change and Violent Conflict. *Science* 336: 869-871; M. Brzoska (2018). Weather Extremes, Disasters, and Collective Violence. [\[link\]](#)
- 15 L. Raineri (2020).
- 16 L. Raineri (2020); Scheffran et al. (2012).
- 17 T. Benjaminsen et al. (2012). Does climate change drive land-use conflicts in the Sahel? *Journal of Peace Research*, 49(1) 97-111. DOI: 10.1177/0022343311427343.
- 18 T. Benjaminsen et al. (2012): Does climate change drive land-use conflicts in the Sahel? In *Journal of Peace Research*. Page 104
- 19 November Interviews, 2020.
- 20 K. J. Mach et al. (2019). Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict. *Nature* 571, 193-197.
- 21 L. Raineri (2020).
- 22 O'Neil C. & Sheely, R. (2019). [\[link\]](#)
- 23 Toulmin C. & Krätli, S. (2020). Farmer-herder conflict in sub-Saharan Africa? IIED, London. [\[link\]](#)
- 24 [\[link\]](#)
- 25 [\[link\]](#)
- 26 Interview November 5th.
- 27 Crisis Group Africa Briefing (2020). The Central Sahel: Scene of New Climate Wars. N°154 Dakar/Niamey/Brussels. [\[link\]](#) In addition, as mentioned by Mbaye (ibid.), on the banks of Niger river, farmers grow rice whereas herders grow burgu for their cattle. Burgu grows in deeper water and in dry periods farmers tend to use the same waters to cultivate rice.
- 28 Garba Hima Mamane Bello, Maman Nafiou Malam Maman (2015) A Ricardian Analysis of the Impact of Temperature and Rainfall Variability on Agriculture in Dosso and Maradi Regions of Niger Republic. Agricultural Sciences, Interview November 3rd; WMO Report (2019), [\[link\]](#); Interview November 3rd.
- 29 WMO Report 2019, Future trends (p.23).
- 30 Interview November 12th.
- 31 M. Nourou (2020). Foreign Aid and Development: The Civil Conflict Channel Reexamined. *International Economic Journal*. Vol.34 (1), 1-15. [\[link\]](#)
- 32 As mentioned in a 2019 Crisis Group report, President Issoufou himself was quoted as saying that "the birth and development of Boko Haram is partly linked to the impoverishment of populations due to the withdrawal of Lake Chad, which has had an impact on agricultural, pastoral and fishing resources". In February 2019, a Climate Summit in Niamey gathered 17 West African leaders to coordinate a EUR350 billion programme focused on climate change in the region. As of the insecurity angle were not enough, Issoufou added that "the Sahel will probably be one of the origin regions of the 250 million migrants in the world in 2050". This is very obvious strategic thinking on the part of Issoufou, as whenever the word migration is mentioned, loud alarm bells toll in the ears of European policy makers.
- 33 Refers to the paradox that countries with an abundance of natural resources tend to have less economic growth, less democracy, and/or worse development outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources.
- 34 Adano et al. (2012). Climate Change, Violent Conflict and Local Institutions in Kenya's drylands. *Journal of Peace Research* 49, no.1.
- 35 Adano et al.
- 36 Crisis Group Africa Briefing (2020) N°154 Dakar/Niamey/Brussels.
- 37 History also plays a relevant role here: **colonial archives (Toulmin, 2020) illuminate the widespread prejudice against pastoralist communities** in the region and the clear preference for sedentary farmers, which were provided by the rulers with better irrigation, access to healthcare and schooling. Such prejudice has persisted post-independence, well after the end of French colonial rule. This has led not just to neglect on the part of local and national governments, but also in some cases has contributed to the implementation of policies entrusting farmers with land and denying access to herders. Governments have sought alliances with farmers, viewed as productive, and have tried in turn to tame the demands of herders, who have in some cases looked for protection elsewhere. However, as reported by pastoralist rights defender group Veterinaires Sans Frontières, the narrative whenever pastoralists are mentioned in the Sahel is generally one that pits them against crop farmers. While this is true to some extent, both groups are nowadays equally marginalised by a lack of proper government policy response.
- 38 Crisis Group Africa Briefing (2020) N°154 Dakar/Niamey/Brussels.
- 39 Nourou M. (2020). Foreign Aid and Development.
- 40 Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim (2020). The Africa Report.
- 41 [\[link\]](#)
- 42 [\[link\]](#)
- 43 [\[link\]](#)

44 What Benjaminsen et al. (2012) call 'political vacuum', which leads to opportunistic behaviour.

45 ABN (2018), ETUDES ENVIRONNEMENTALES ET SOCIALES STRATEGIQUEDU PROGRAMME INTEGRE DE DEVELOPPEMENT ET D'ADAPTATION AUX CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES DANS LE BASSIN DU NIGER (PIDACC/BN). [\[link\]](#)

46 Ibid.

47 S. Vaucelle (2015). Le fleuve Niger et son bassin: aménagements, gouvernance et stratégies d'adaptations au changement climatique. Open Edition Journals, 243-270. [\[link\]](#)

48 E. Clemens& Cook, J. (1999). Politics and Institutionalism: Explaining Durability and Change. Annual Review of Sociology. Vol.25, 441-466. [\[link\]](#)

49 Interview Ministry of Planning, Niger. November 2020.

50 With increased climate variability, those who are the most fragile tend to pay a higher price. Projects such as the Women and Land Initiative in Maradi tackle the trend of excluding women.

51 SIPRI [\[link\]](#)

52 S. Wesch et al. (2019). Warum Klimaschutz Krisenprävention ist: Das Beispiel Burkina Faso. Peacelab blog. [\[link\]](#)

53 Consequences of curfews and restricted mobility are particularly damaging for pastoralist communities, who depend on movement to be able to provide for grazing opportunities for their livestock. A researcher at the Nigerien Ministry of Planning told us that 2017, 122 villages were closed off for security reasons – this made subsistence for these villagers extremely hard.

54 These are community-led practices to deal with climate hazards.

55 S.Wesch et al. (2019); Interview November 2020.

56 [\[link\]](#)

57 Krätli and Toulmin (2020). In addition, in the Sincina rural community of Sikasso region of Mali for example, there are governance actors who work on pastoral resources. The *Groupements Socioprofessionnels des Hommes* (GSH) and the *Groupements Socioprofessionnels des Femmes* (GSF), rural women's assemblies etc. also play a role in defining priorities and mediating conflict. There is a wealth of information over rural associations that could be supported by both Sahelian governments and European donors.

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