SH

SAHEL

Officer Block 2 and Enlisted Block 3

An Introduction to the Sahel Region

Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization (RCLF) Program

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Introduction

One must distinguish between the study of regions, countries, and cultures. Chapters 1 through 6 in this document introduce a region and provide some information about its countries and their relationships. They do not introduce a culture or cultures. Those chapters simply provide knowledge about the region and the environment in which people with different cultures live.

Regions and states do not have a single culture; instead they have multiple, diverse cultures. Cultures are not necessarily bound by national borders. There may be multiple cultures in a single state, while people sharing a single culture may live in more than one state.

The case study in Chapter 7 is about one specific culture in the region. Building upon the information provided in chapters 1 through 6, Chapter 7 introduces one of the many cultures in the Sahel region, using concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document.

Why This Region Matters to You as a Marine

The Sahel is considered a priority region for the U.S. because of the growing threat posed by extremist groups and terrorism. In 2012, the Sahel captured the world's attention when the heavily armed Tuareg of Mali revolted against the Malian government, followed by a *coup d'état*.[1] Conflict, poverty, disease, and terrorist recruitment in the Sahel could affect U.S. homeland security. The United States Africa Command (U.S. AFRICOM) posture statement from March 2013 highlights the partnership between the United States and 10 northern and western African nations (including countries in the Sahel). The goal of the partnership is to support counterterrorism efforts under the umbrella of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP)[2], which has in turn bolstered the region's engagement in Mali under the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA).[3]

The United States is actively engaged in training forces in this region to mitigate threats to civilian and regional security.[4] The Marine Corps now deploys forces in support of U.S. AFRICOM missions.[5]

U.S. forces often work alongside the French Army and partner nations in counterterrorism operations, especially in Niger and Chad. Other operations in this region include countering drug trafficking and mitigating humanitarian disasters, including a food crisis triggered by a drought in 2009.

Special-Purpose MAGTF Crisis Response Africa engaging troops. Each year, Marines take part in a variety of exercises in Africa (Source: Cpl Timothy Norris, courtesy of Defense Imagery)

Americans are generally perceived as neutral when it comes to the strategic posture of Sahel nations. The U.S. has a long-term relationship with partner nations in this region, bolstering capacity in an effort to stem threats.

The three significant threats in this region include Al-Qaeda in Libya, Boko Haram in Nigeria and Niger, and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Chad and Mali.[6] U.S. military assistance ranges from training missions to logistical assistance and intelligence-sharing. For instance, in 2013, the U.S. sent 10 service members to support French and African troops in Mali engaged in a mission to stem the threat of extremists in northern Mali after the ousting of the democratically-elected president in 2012.[7] Then, in 2014, the U.S. sent 80 troops to Chad to help find 200 girls kidnapped by the terror group Boko Haram.[8] Additionally, a public health crisis emerged in West Africa that involved the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. The U.S. deployed approximately 3,000 Marines in support of Operation United Assistance, a United Stated Agency for International Development (USAID) led operation to contain the spread of the virus.[9]

Geographic Overview

Why a Geographic Overview Matters to You as a Marine

Geographic features include physical and biological factors tied to the location, topography, climate, soil, environmental hazards, flora, and fauna. These features influence human and social characteristics such as beliefs, behaviors, social organization, economy, and politics, to name a few. This is not to say that geography determines how people and societies behave, but rather that it has varying effects on what they believe and do.

The locations of rivers, mountains, deserts, and coasts have great influence on where people live, what crops can be raised, and what modes of transportation are suitable.

Climate and weather influence how people dress, work, and earn a living. Natural disasters such as hurricanes, flooding, and earthquakes can devastate a region and dislocate a great number of people.

Global Location

The Sahel is a semi-arid belt that stretches 5,400 km (3,300 mi) across northern Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Red Sea in the east. It is a geographically diverse transition zone between the arid Sahara desert in the north and the more fertile savannas to the south, extending from approximately 14°N to 16°N.[10]

Countries

Geographically, the Sahel stretches across several countries in West, Central, and North Africa. This includes large parts of Libya, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, and the northern parts of Nigeria and Burkina Faso. However, for the purposes of this module, the following countries are covered under the Sahel region:
- Libya
- Mali
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Chad
- Sudan
- South Sudan

Note: Libya is not geographically located in the Sahel belt, but it has enormous geopolitical impact on the Sahel countries.
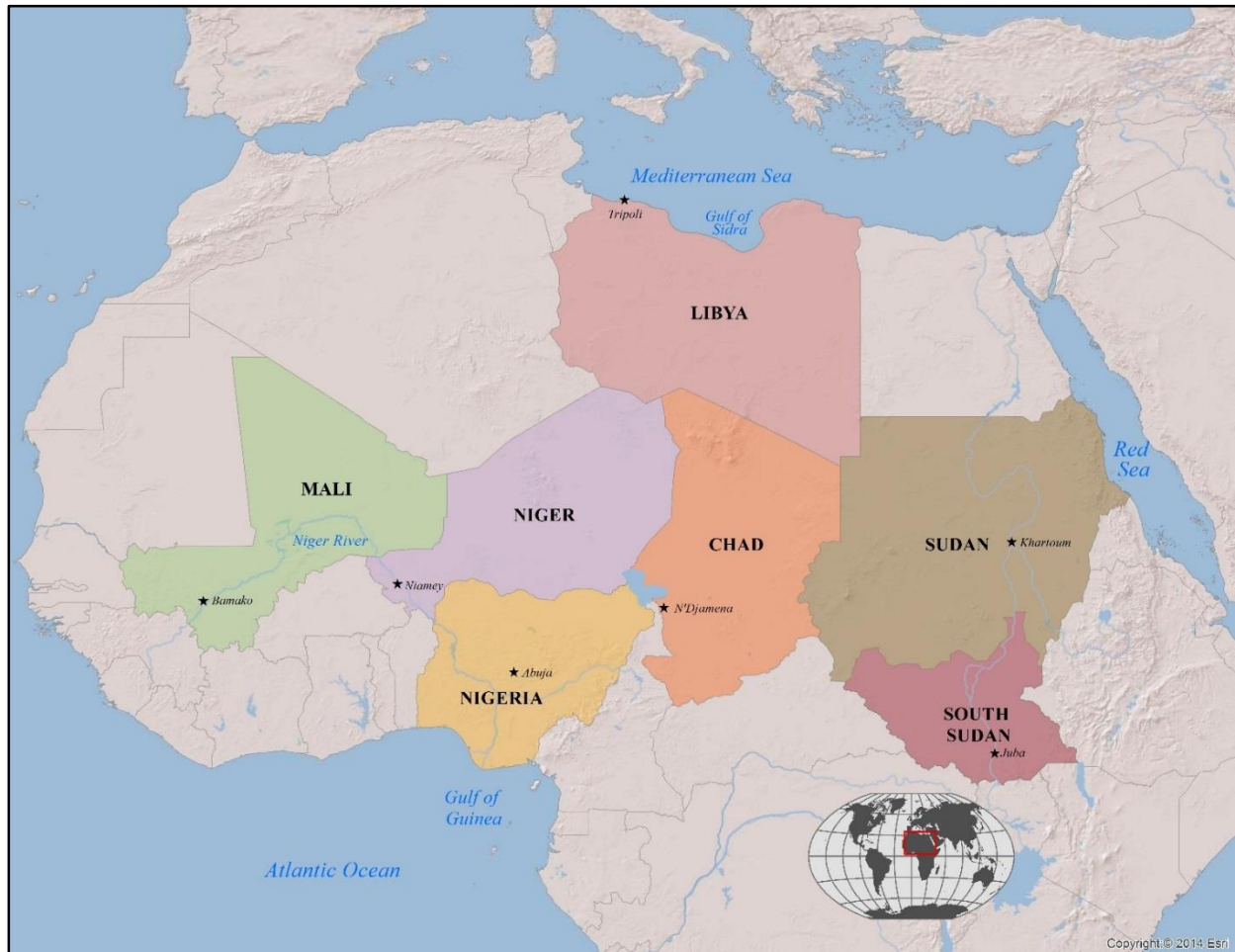
Map of Sahel Region (Source: Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL)

Topography

Topography has an important impact on cultural, political, and social structures in the Sahel. The locations of rivers, mountains, deserts, coasts, and boundaries have contributed to population density, economic activity, and cultural diversity. The terrain of the Sahel is made up of flat, barren plains. The most notable features are the Sahara Desert to the north, the Jebel Marra Mountain in western Sudan, which is 3,042 m (9,980 ft) high,[11] and the Tibesti Massif Mountain Range, which extends from northern Chad to Southern Libya, covering an area of 100,000 km² (38,610 mi²).[12] This mountain range is volcanic with an elevation of 3,394 km (2,108 mi) above the Sahara Desert.[13] Most volcanic activity is in the southern region commonly referred to as the Tibesti Volcanic Province (TVP), and is reported to exhibit hydrothermal activity.[14] Generally, the Sahel's mountainous north transitions to flat rolling plains and savannas to the south.

Land

The Sahel is defined by the Sahara Desert and plain flatlands that span across 11 countries, including parts of Libya, Niger, Mali, Chad, and Sudan. The desert environment and hot climate make the northern plains unsuitable for agriculture. However, this region has vast oil reserves and -- although there are severe water shortages in Mali, Niger, and parts of Nigeria -- the southern regions are arable

and constitute the breadbasket of the region. This region has, however, been under severe strains due to low yields, leading to food insecurity.

Land is used for production and oil extraction in this region. Land is also an emotive subject, with a vast number of the population being displaced in places such as the Darfur region of Sudan, eastern Chad, and Mali. At the same time, populations have adapted over the years, utilizing irrigation and wells to water crops, and working on sustainable farming systems to ensure a harvest. There is a constant struggle between communities and animals; for example, the nomadic tribes, such as the Tuareg in Mali, have turned to sedentary agriculture, but must share the water they use for their farms with elephants.

Water scarcity in Darfur (Source: USAID)

Land is also used as a commodity that is bought, sold, and passed on as an inheritance. Traditionally, chiefs were responsible for land allocation, but customary land allocation structures are no longer in use. In fact, they are contentious and often lead to conflict. Traditional leaders, however, are instrumental in mediating land disputes in rural areas. In South Sudan for example, there is a legal vacuum that has led to land-grabbing; the new government is still in the process of forming institutions and building capacity to govern the country.

At the same time, the Darfur region provides a good example of how land has become the root cause of conflict. Pro-government militias have settled in the region and other ethnic groups, like the Salmat, graze their animals on land previously inhabited by the Masalit and the Fur − the primary occupants of the land.[15] Because of limited resources and an over-reliance on livestock as the main income generator, the locals compete over fertile grazing land for their cattle. (The Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa are all pastoralists.) This has been worsened by arid environmental conditions that have added a strain on access to water and fertile land for agriculture or grazing.

Darfur (Source: Wikipedia)

Waterways

Although the region is semi-arid and drought prone, it contains the fertile Nile Delta and the Senegal River. These rivers originate from the south, providing perennial water flow and extensive floods after the rainy season. The rich silt brought down during the flood season provides areas of cultivation and pasture.

Nile River (Source: USGS)

The Chari and Lagone Rivers flow from the southeast into Lake Chad, the largest lake in the Sahel. The size of the lake changes from one year to the next, depending on the amount of rain in the southern highlands and the temperature; but it shrank by 95% between 1963 and 1998.[16] The decrease in size is attributed to increased hot temperatures, low rainfall, and increased irrigation.[17] Also significant is the Nile River, which flows north from the highlands of southeastern Africa, running about 6,693 km (4,200 mi) through two Sahelian countries, Sudan and South Sudan, before flowing through Egypt into the Mediterranean Sea. The volume of flow and the extent of flood in the rivers also changes from year to year, depending on the rainfall.

Senegal River (Source: UNESCO)

"Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and semi-humid environments as a result of climate variation and human activities." - **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

Today, the Niger, Senegal, and Chari Rivers are major lines of communication; they are used for moving people and goods, for tourism, for

Lake Chad (Source: Wikipedia)

agriculture, and for supplying thirsty settlements. However, drought, deforestation, and intensive agriculture have made the region vulnerable to desertification.[18]

Climate and Weather

The Sahel has shifting weather patterns with climatic conditions worsening over time. Despite daytime highs that can reach 122° F (50° C), cold weather is also a concern in the Sahel. In a few hours, temperatures in the Sahara can drop by as much as 70°-80° degrees F (20°-27° C).[19]

From May through June, cold Atlantic Ocean water sends monsoon winds over the Sahel, creating too much rainfall.[20] Additionally, the "El Niño effect" (a semi-regular weather pattern caused by warmer waters in the Pacific Ocean) will sometimes force Sahelian governments to plan around the seasons to ensure that food targets are met.[21] As recently as 2010, Niger, Chad, and Sudan experienced some of the world's hottest temperatures.[22]

Droughts occur in two out of every five years. Rainfall is irregular and ranges between 100 mm (3.9 in) in the north and 600 mm (23.6 in) in the Sahel's southern limits. Agriculture in the region depends on the rainy season, which can last up to four months from June to September, with August having the most rainfall.

Dry periods lead to the uncertainty of major food and cash crop harvests and affect food supply and the overall economy of Sahel countries. However, Sahelians have adapted to the annual cycle of wet and dry seasons, and can survive through long-term periods of drought by saving surplus grain for the anticipated dry seasons.[23] However, the reserve food supplies are not always enough. For example, in 2011, a drought caused by a combination of low rainfall, high grain prices, and a refugee situation necessitated a humanitarian intervention to mitigate the effects of the drought. The United Nations (UN) and USAID worked with other aid organizations to provide food aid in the region.[24]

TACTICAL TIP: Sandstorms are a safety hazard and may also cause maintenance problems in vehicles, generators, and computers and other electronics, thereby impeding logistics and communication.

Another significant feature in the Sahelian climate is the *harmattan*, a hot dry windstorm that blows southward from the Sahara. The fine dust carried in the wind reduces visibility and causes overcast skies, affecting livestock and agriculture. The *harmattan* season is from November to March.[25]

Environmental Hazards

Drought

The most significant environmental event in the Sahel region is drought. Experts differ on whether drought is the sole contributor to crop failures in this region -- and the resultant famines. Some experts attribute persistent food shortages to anthropogenic causes, meaning that the mismanagement of natural resources has accelerated the rate of desertification in this region. However, other scientists believe that oceanic temperatures are to blame for shifting climatic patterns and recent droughts.[26]

The U.S. has given USAID the task of working with countries in this region to build resilience in order to mitigate, adapt, and reduce the risks associated with drought conditions in Chad, Niger, and Mali.[27]

Recommended Reading:

For more on drought in this region, see:

Translating Famine Early Warning into Early Action: A Sahel Case Study by Paul Melly (Chatham House)
http://www.stabilityjournal.org/article/view/sta.bs/96#cc-by

In 2010, a drought in Mali led to a humanitarian emergency, which was made worse by the 2012 political crisis. As a result, over 300,000 displaced Malians sought refuge in neighboring Mauritania, Niger, and Algeria. The international response to this crisis, led by the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP), extended across countries in the Sahel and West Africa, including Chad, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gambia, northern Nigeria, and Cameroon.[28] UNWFP has since 2010, continued to work to develop drought resilience programs as well as to provide food assistance to millions in this region.
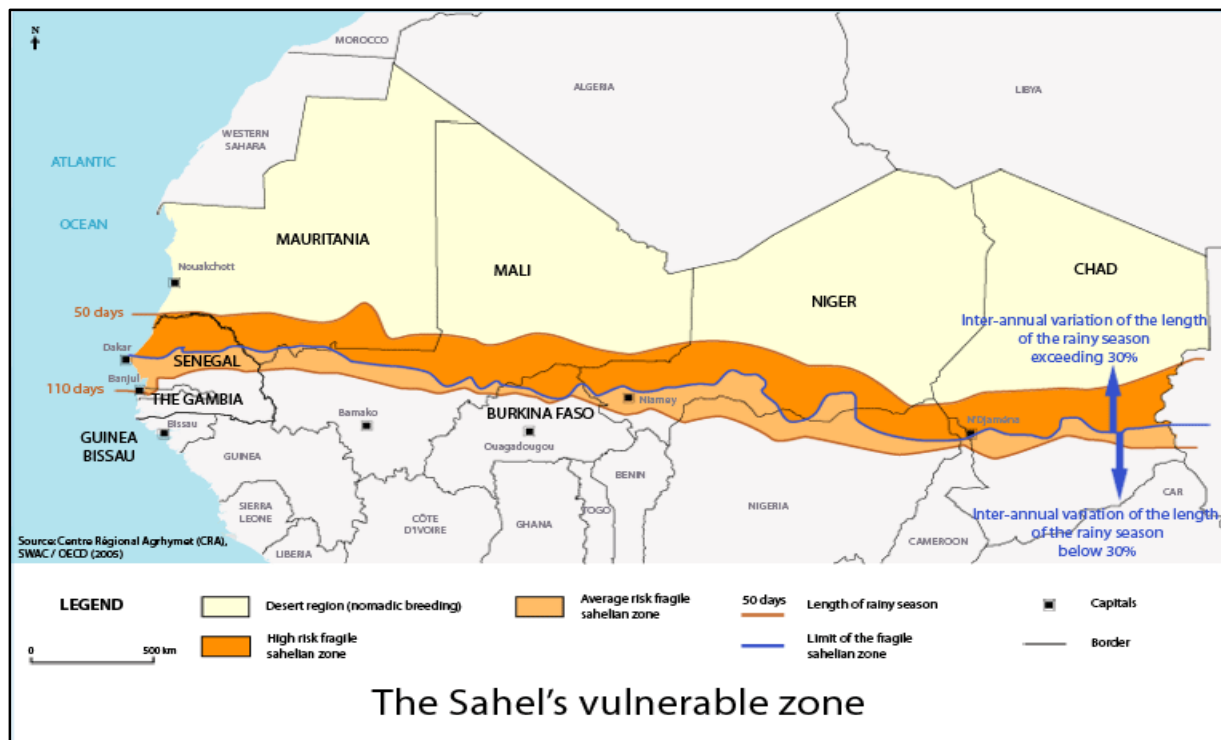
Drought-Prone Zones in the Sahel (Source: USAID)

Flooding

The main bodies of water in this region are the Senegal River, the Chari River and the Niger River. The Senegal River is a confluence of the Bafing River in Guinea and Bakoye River in Mali. The Bafing and Bakoye rivers merge on the Senegal-Mauritania border and flow north into Mauritania; the Chari River in Chad; and the Niger River, which flows through Niger, Mali, and Nigeria. Heavy annual rains cause many rivers in the Sahel to overflow their banks. For example, in 2010 5,000 people lost their homes when the Niger River overflowed;[29] another

Flooding in Darfur (Source: UNHCR)

9,000 people in Chad also lost their homes.[30] Sudan also experiences seasonal flooding from the Nile River: in 2014, heavy rains – and the resultant flooding -- displaced of over 40,000 Sudanese.[31]

Additionally, drinking water in the Sahel is polluted. The pollutants are largely man-made: raw sewage, untreated industrial waste, and agricultural run-off. Other man-made harzards in this region include deforestation and soil erosion.

Historical Overview
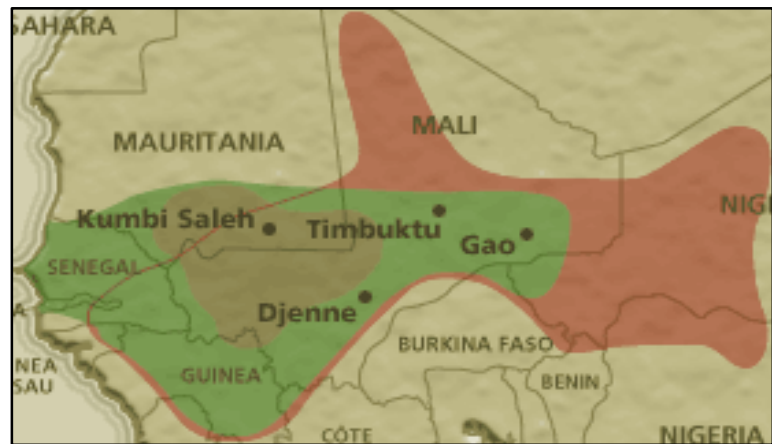
Why History Matters to You as a Marine

History provides a knowledge of how people, institutions, and states in a region evolved into what they are today. It also provides insights into people's collective memory about their group and others. In other words, history not only shapes a region's current affairs, but also tells us something about the historical roots of the individual and group identities of its inhabitants.

History does not predict how groups, institutions, and states in a region may behave in the future. Instead, it provides insights into what is possible and probable.

Pre-Colonization

In ancient times, the Sahel served as a trade link between North Africa, the Mediterranean, and sub-Saharan Africa. Recorded history in the Sahel began with a series of three empires, the Ghana Empire, the Mali Empire, and the Songhai Empire, all of which centered in modern-day Mali.[32]

The Ghana Empire began in the eighth century AD, and lasted through the tenth century AD. Unlike the empires that followed, the Ghana Empire was not founded by Muslims. Trade drove the Empire's

The Kingdoms of Western Sudan: Ghana, Mali and Songhai Empires (Source: Smithsonian Institution)

development, helping it expand from southwest Mali to what are now Mauritania and Senegal. The rulers of the Ghana Empire enjoyed good relations with Muslim traders from the north, but never fully adopted the Muslim faith. Sahelian traders exchanged gold, cotton fabric, metal ornaments, and leather goods for copper, horses, salt, cloth, and beads.[33]

Muslim Berbers invading from North Africa conquered the Ghana Empire in 1076. The Berbers ruled until the rise of the Mali Empire, which lasted from the 1200s to the 1400s. Today, history remembers the Mali Empire for the city of Timbuktu, a major Islamic spiritual crossroads and—in its time—a

world-renowned center of learning. Malian rulers adopted Islam early in the Empire's development and possessed a wealth of gold. Mali's most famous ruler, Mansa Musa, a devout Muslim, attracted the attention of the Arab kingdoms during his reign, because of the lavishness of his gifts, including gold, when he made his Muslim pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca. However, the Mali Empire began to weaken in the late 1300s due to numerous secessionist disputes.[34]

The last great empire, the Songhai, rose in the 1400s during the Mali Empire's disintegration. The Songhai and Mali Empires were similar in several ways. Like the Mali Empire, the Songhai was both a trading empire and an Islamic state. The Songhai Empire covered a region similar to the Mali's, but also included the northwestern corner of what is now Nigeria. In addition to internal problems like those suffered by the Mali Empire, the Songhai Empire was attacked by North African invaders from Morocco, who hastened the Songhai Empire's collapse.[35]

Colonization
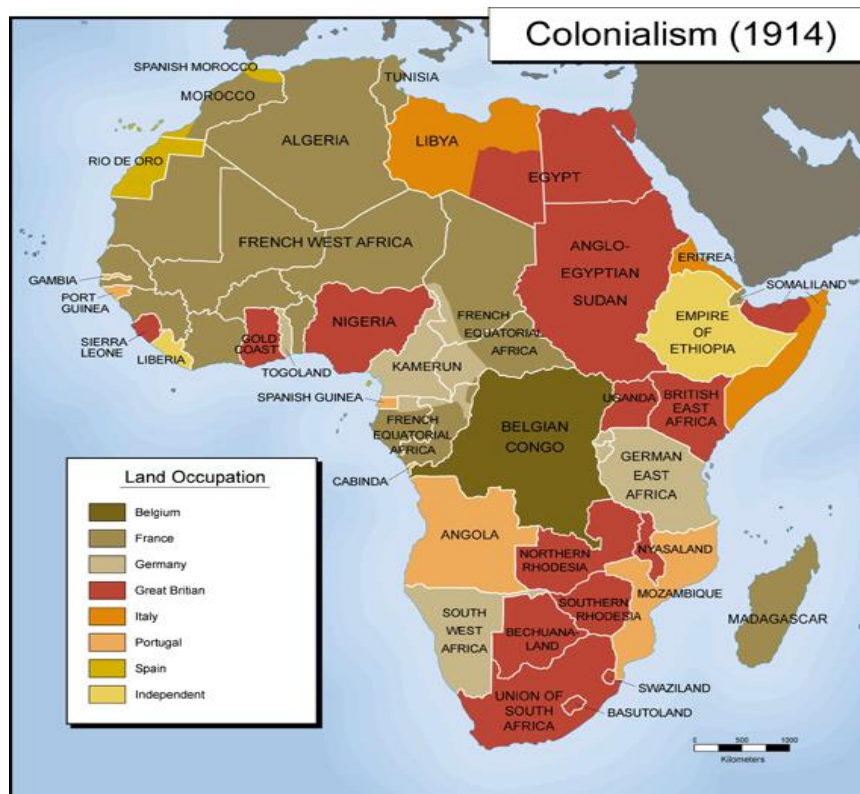
African colonies (Source: Michigan State University)

Throughout the Sahel, outside influences—notably trade and interaction with Arabs—shaped religion, language, and other aspects of regional cultures. These experiences, coupled with ongoing social and political changes, especially in North Africa, continue to define regional history and politics.

While Islamic and Arab influences date back to ancient times, Sahelians have also adopted many customs from the European countries that colonized them from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s.

The French began exploring the Sahel in the 1880s. Within ten years of their initial explorations, France made serious efforts to occupy the interior of the region.

France's conquest of the Sahel followed the course of the Niger River. Mali, Niger, and Chad were colonized by France. In these countries, the French ruled through traditional authorities who acted on their behalf, a process called assimilation where the colonial government's policy was to create a society similar to that in France, including governance structure, language, and culture.[36]

The colonial government in French-Sahel territory upset the order of the existing governance structures by deposing existing chiefs and appointing new ones according to the level of their

collaboration. Naturally, the new chiefs supported the colonial government's interests. This antagonized the local population, and soon precipitated a resistance movement led by Samory Touré, a famous Sahelian. Touré organized an indigenous army of 30-35,000 men, instilling discipline and a camaraderie that allowed them to resist the French Army.[37]   Touré led several battles to resist French occupation in West Africa but was eventually captured by the French army and exiled in French-Congo (now Gabon) where he died in 1898.[38]

Today, police departments in many former French colonies (notably Mali and Niger) are modeled on the French *Gendarmerie Nationale*, one of the oldest law enforcement institutions in France.[39]

The most significant event in the pre-colonial era is the 1884 Berlin Conference, where European nations agreed to end the slave trade and partition the African continent amongst themselves. The process that they used involved drawing arbitrary borders on a map, ignoring the cultural and linguistic boundaries already established by African societies.

Under the terms of the Berlin Conference, the Sahel was partitioned as follows:
- Great Britain: Sudan, Nigeria
- France: Mali, Niger, Chad
- Italy: Libya
- Egypt: Sudan, South Sudan

The impact of the colonization era can be seen in regional infrastructure, culture, education, and language. French is the official language in Mali and Chad, while Arabic is the official language in Libya and Sudan. Arabic is also spoken in South Sudan and has official language status in Chad. Nigeria and South Sudan are the only countries in this region with English as their official language. The use of Arabic is a by-product of the Sahel's geographic proximity to, and trade links with North Africa.

In order to transport goods to coastal areas for overseas shipment, the various European colonists established complex networks of roads and bridges. The transportation routes, in turn, were soon dotted with towns and urban centers. The British colonial government, for example, constructed the Lagos-Ibadan Railway Line at 193 km (119 mi) long, and the Kano-Maiduguri Railroad, which added an additional 640 km (397 mi) by 1964.[40] Today, there is a network of roads, airports, and rails that connect major cities. However, the north is still underdeveloped and inaccessible, with porous borders.

Post-Colonization

Libya gained independence in 1951, followed by Sudan in 1956.[41] In 1960, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, and Chad also gained their independence. South Sudan is the newest country in Africa after separating from Sudan in 2011.[42] Today, many of these former European colonies are experiencing instability due to a lack of strong governing structures, ethnic disagreements, poverty, extremism, and competition over resources. The result: cross-border conflicts, insurgencies, and humanitarian crises.

A cessation of hostilities between Sudanese government forces and rebels in its southern region led to the signing in 2005 of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which laid the foundation for South Sudan's independence. However, tensions persist over the oil-rich region of Abyei. Additionally, the Darfur conflict is one of the longstanding conflicts in the region that has attracted international

attention. The role of Chad in the conflict and the ensuing humanitarian situation in eastern Chad are also issues of concern.

The most significant issues precipitating these post-colonial conflicts include:
- Ethnic, tribal, and religious rivalries
- Corruption and bad governance
- Mismanagement of mineral resources
- Political disagreements between nations

The United States is keen to build the capacities of nations in this region in order to stem the spread of extremist elements operating in the remote north—in Niger, Chad, and Mali. The U.S. is also a partner for peace in South Sudan, a young nation whose structures are still forming. Experts agree that the U.S. is perceived as the lead peace negotiator and financial backer in South Sudan's peace process. Therefore, U.S. forces will most likely be present in this region for years to come.

Traditional Rulers

Sahel after the Berlin Conference

Oil becomes main economic driver

Libyans celebrate Qaddafi's ouster

Rise of Islam and spread of Arab culture

Rise of Mali and Songhai empires

The Berlin Conference

European countries set up systems of governance

Most countries gain independence

Oil becomes a major income earner; Nigeria and Libya became power players

The rise of extremist groups after September 11, 2011

Toppling of Muammar Quaddafi in Libya; *Coup d'état* and Tuareg insurgency in Mali; South Sudan gains independence from Sudan

700-1100   1700-1884   1885- 1900   1930-1950   1960s   1990s   2010-2013   2014- Ongoing

600   800-1600   1884- 1885   1900-1914   1950-1960   1960-1980   2000-2005   2010-2013

Rise of Ghana Empire

Arab explorers & trans-Sahara trade under the Ottoman Empire

The Sahel was colonized by England and France

Resistance movements grow; Belgium, France begin to lose control of colonies.

Governance structures formed; Leaders solidify authoritarian rule

Darfur conflict; influx of refugees in Chad and South Sudan

Economic and governance reforms

Elections in Libya and Mali; the rise of Boko Haram; foreign troops deploy in Mali and Nigeria

Cecil Rhodes, the great imperial expansionist

Muammar Qaddafi

People and Society

Why People and Society Matter to You as a Marine

Many missions within the range of military operations require Marines to understand and work with foreign populations. Knowing the peop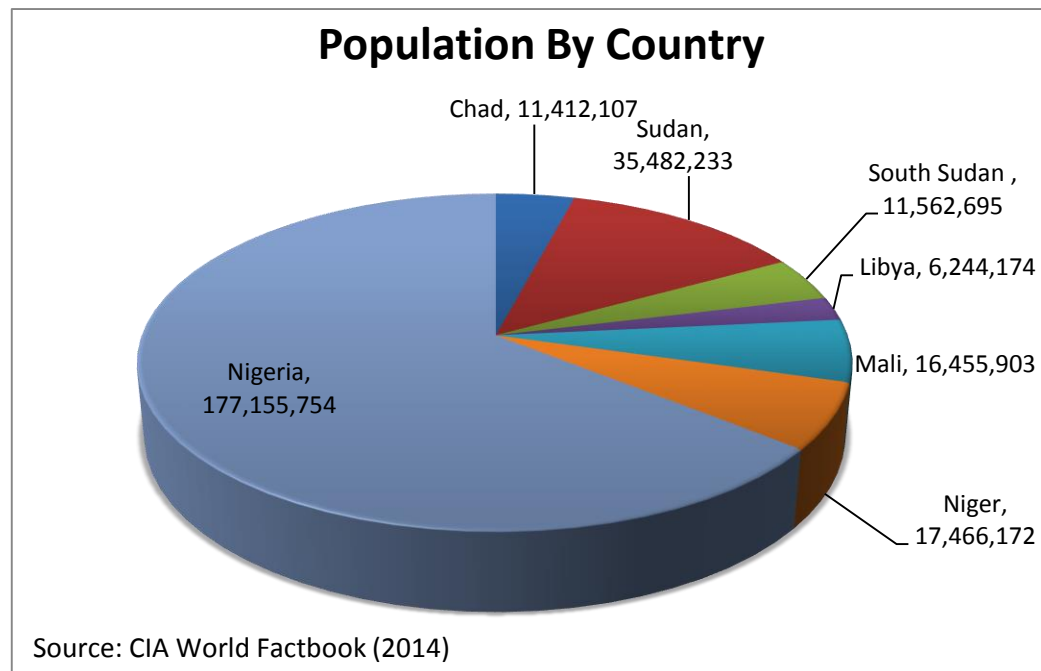le in the region -- including their ethnicities, languages, and religions, as well as the way they live in social entities -- enables Marines to create a mental picture of the human dimension of the region.

Demographics

In 2014, the Sahel had an estimated population of approximately 279 million people across eight countries.[43] The region's population is about 87 percent of that of the U.S. Most people live in rural areas. Rapid population growth will

Population By Country

Chad, 11,412,107
Sudan, 35,482,233
South Sudan , 11,562,695
Libya, 6,244,174
Mali, 16,455,903
Niger, 17,466,172
Nigeria, 177,155,754

Source: CIA World Factbook (2014)

likely increase urbanization. Nigeria is the region's most densely populated country, with a population of approximately 177 million.[44] The Sahel's population grows at an annual rate of 2.6 percent, more than double the global rate. Additionally, the UN predicts that Africa's share of the global population will increase to 24 percent (2.2 billion) of the total world population by 2050. The Sahel is a major contributor to the rapid population growth in Africa. Niger's population, for example, is predicted to increase from 18 million to 69 million by 2050.[45]

Population Statistics by Country

One notable feature of the Sahel's demographics is migration. Conflict is a major driver of displacement in this region. In 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded the highest number of refugees in this region in Chad and Sudan, with 434,479 and 159,857 respectively.[46]


Refugees awaiting food aid at a camp (Source: USAID)

The numbers of internally displaced people and refugees are seldom included in official population estimates. Additionally, census, birth, and death registrations in some countries may not be accurate due to inadequate capacity and the absence of transparent and accountable governing structures.[47] Initiatives to strengthen existing civil registration systems in this region for administrative and political purposes are a high priority. As a result, personnel accountability across the region is expected to remain a challenge for many levels of government for years to come.[48]

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are not included in government censuses for a variety of reasons, including political considerations and the lack of technical capacity to collate official UN numbers and government statistics. The chart below shows the segments of the population that may not have been accurately counted toward official population statistics.

The following chart depicts the population of concern, which includes asylum seekers and stateless persons.
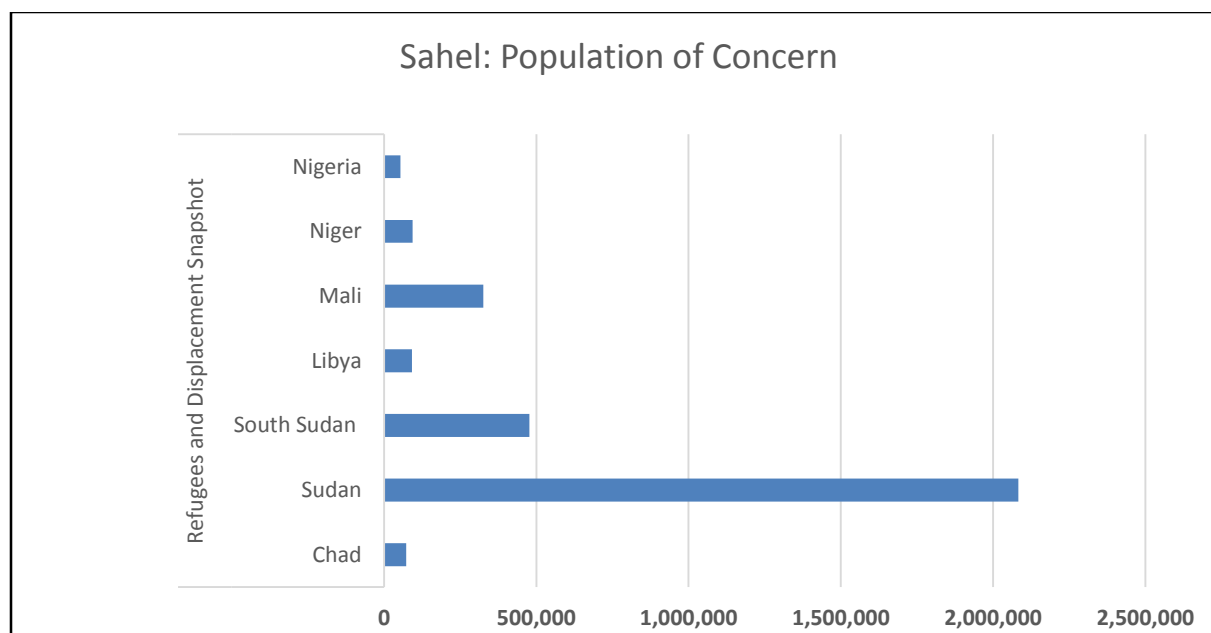
Population of concern in the Sahel (Source: UNHCR)

Religion

John Mbiti, famed African author and theologian, succinctly summed up spiritual life in Africa: "Africans are notoriously religious."[49] Religion plays a significant role in every aspect of African life, shaping cultural values and identity. Religious practices in Africa are heavily intertwined with culture. Spirituality is the basis for their worldview; it is the basis of morality, happiness, fear, and existential purpose. Religion connects the present to the past and the future.

Mosque in Niamey, Niger (Source: Wikipedia)

The major formal religions practiced in the Sahel are Islam and Christianity. Animism, which accounts for religious practices known as "traditional beliefs," is also normally attributed as one of the major religions in the region, although it is not widely accorded the same status as Islam and Christianity in the Sahel. Animism is sometimes included among religious practices known as "traditional beliefs." Islam is practiced widely in Sudan, Libya, Chad, Niger, and Mali. Christianity is the predominant religion in Nigeria and South Sudan.

Islam

Commerce and conquest helped to spread Islam throughout the Sahel. Muslim ethnic groups, such as the Fulani [Foo-LON-ee], brought their religion with them when they migrated into the Sahel from North Africa. The northern part of Nigeria has a significant Muslim population enhanced by geographic proximity to Niger and Chad, both of which have majority Muslim populations. Founded in the early seventh century in western Arabia, Islam teaches that there is one God, Allah, and that the Prophet Mohammad is his messenger. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the final divine revelation of God and guides their spiritual practice.

Muslims in the Sahel adhere to the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad and practice it within the five pillars of Islam:

1. Profession of one's faith (*shahada*).
2. Prayer (*salat*) five times a day.
3. Giving alms (*zakat*) which requires giving 2.5% of a person's money each year, and a varying percentage for other assets held for the entire year.
4. A pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*)
5. Fasting during Ramadan (*sawm*)

A majority of Muslims in this region are Sunnis who practice Sufism. Sufism promotes inclusiveness and is considered moderate, unlike Wahhabism and Salafism. Wahhabi doctrines were adopted by the early leaders of Saudi Arabia. The Wahhabi, and the closely related Salafists, demand literal and strict interpretation of the Qur'an and the Hadith (traditional sayings of the Prophet Mohammad). Sufism is practiced under three Sufi orders (*tariqah)*: Qadriyya, Muridiyya, or Tijaniyya. Tijaniyya is the most widespread, and is found in Mali, Niger, and Chad.[50]

> **TACTICAL TIP:** When deployed to this region during the month of Ramadan, do not eat, drink, or smoke in public. Also, do not offer a Muslim food, drink, or tobacco products during this time. Be aware that observant Muslims are sometimes less productive during Ramadan. Therefore, you may need to adjust your working schedule during this stressful time in order to accommodate Muslim workers.

The practice of Islam was initially limited to Trans-Saharan traders who traded with North Africans along the salt routes.[51] Trade facilitated the religion's growth through the use of Islamic moral precepts in the development of contracts, extensions of credit. Trade also facilitated formal learning in schools that taught the reading of the Koran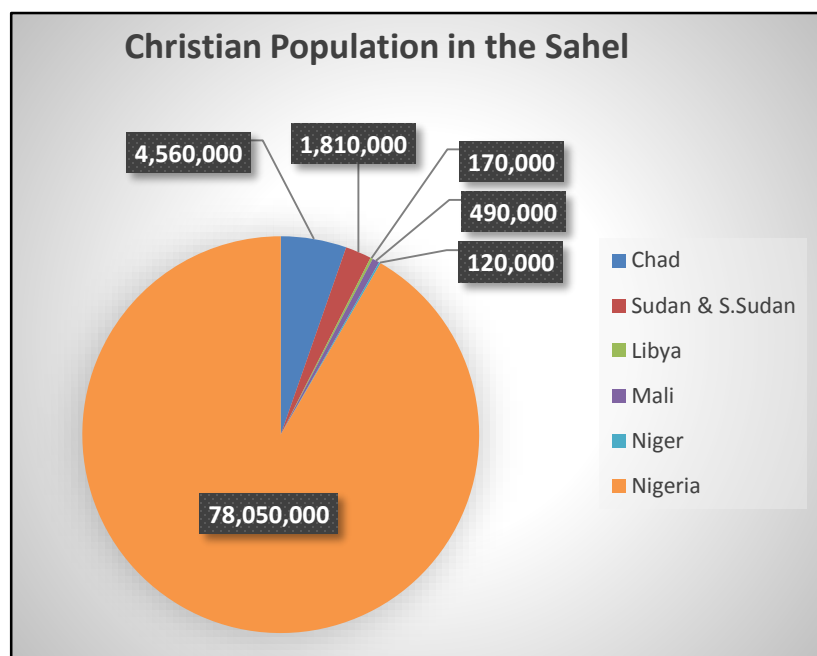 and the Arabic language. Additionally, the Mali and Songhai Empire adopted Islam; the populations of these countries blended Islamic practices and traditional religious practices. Sonni Ali, who ruled the Songhai Empire between 1465 and 1492, persecuted Muslims who engaged in pagan practices.[52] These ancient Kingdoms facilitated the construction of mosques and cities like Timbuktu in Mali.[53]

Although the presence of extremist groups in the Sahel has only become evident in the past 20 years, the first known Jihad in this region, the Sharr Bubba, led by Nasir al-Din occurred in Mauritania in the seventeenth century.[54]

Christianity

Although Christians in the Sahel are a minority group, Nigeria has the largest Christian population in Africa: approximately 80 million people.[55] The two most common Christian denominations in the Sahel are Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

Many Sahelian Christians practice syncretistic forms of Christianity. This includes elements of animist or "traditional" worship styles and rituals. These elements continue to influence followers of mainstream Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church today.

Christian Population in the Sahel

4,560,000 · 1,810,000 · 170,000 · 490,000 · 120,000 · 78,050,000

- Chad
- Sudan & S.Sudan
- Libya
- Mali
- Niger
- Nigeria

Source: Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project

The prevalence of superstitious beliefs permeates organized religion; for example, though Catholicism is widely practiced, the individual actions are dictated by a set of beliefs from both Catholicism and traditional beliefs. It is common to see an individual wearing a rosary around his neck, as well as a traditional charm band on another part of his body. The evangelical movement is growing and has real day-to-day impact, offering spiritual help as well as attending to physical needs. Communities rely on their religious experiences to guide their daily lives, from family decision-making to influencing decisions at a community level.

Animism

Animist practices or traditional beliefs are more widely practiced than Christianity and could collectively be considered as the second-largest religion practiced in the Sahel. Animists believe that the universe contains three worlds: the past, present, and future; and that all three worlds are interconnected.

> Traditional beliefs and superstitions are part and parcel of religious practice in the Sahel. Charms are used to keep evil spirits away, and rituals are undertaken to dedicate or pay homage to ancestors. At the same time, it is common for people to share their faith in the workplace. It is not uncommon to be invited to a Bible study with the host military members at lunch break.

Animists, or "traditional believers," tend to seek harmony between these worlds. There are no animist holy texts or official places of worship. Instead, the rituals are considered part of one's ethnic identity. Each ethnic group has its own animist creation story, creator-god, spirits, and rituals. Beliefs in witchcraft, sorcery, and magic are ubiquitous in this region, though specific rituals and beliefs vary across tribes. Child soldiers recruited into the militia believe that they can repel bullets after being anointed with protective water by a witch doctor.

> African traditional beliefs tend to share common themes:
> - Universal forces created the earth and remain present.
> - Spirits fill the natural world and mediate between the past and future.
> - These spirits determine the course of present life. This often leads to a fatalistic view of events.

Animism is a communitarian concept, meaning that the community suffers or benefits from the consequences of one person's actions. Ancestors are believed to be participants in the present world and can pass on good or evil to the community. Elements of the rituals practiced have influenced Islam and Christianity in this region. According to data, 63 percent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa lives in the rural areas.[56] Although organized religion (Islam & Christianity) has spread across rural Africa, the presence of African traditional belief systems is still evident. For example, traditional and animist concepts are used to prescribe meaning to an event. In the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, traditional beliefs permeated prevention and treatment efforts. Reports from the region revealed a widespread belief that the virus was not real and that the disease was brought about by witchcraft. This was more common in rural villages, which are still strongly tied to traditional beliefs.[57] Traditional beliefs and perceptions of life and events are important factors to consider when operating in Africa.

> *"Because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life…Where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious being. It is this that makes Africans so*

religious: religion is in their whole system of being…What people do is motivated by what they believe, and what they believe springs from what they do and experience. So then, belief and action in African traditional society cannot be separated: they belong to a single whole." [58]
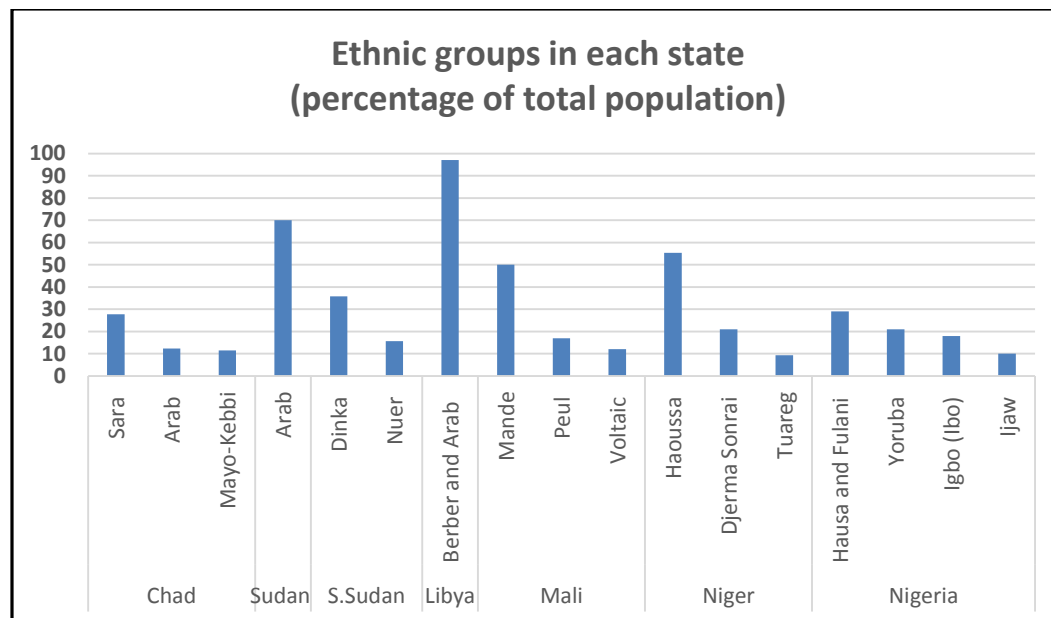
Ethnic Groups

The Sahel is home to hundreds of tribes. The major tribes in the Sahel are: the Mande (including the Bambara, Malinke, and Soninke) of Mali; the Hausa of Niger; the Sara of Chad; and the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo of Nigeria. Each tribe has its own distinct language, which is part of its identity.

The two main ethnic groups in the Sahel are the indigenous black Africans and the Arabs. In the eastern Sahel and central Chad, many centuries of religious and commercial exchange with Sudan and Egypt -- along with intermarriage, migration, and settlement -- contributed to the spread of Islam, modes of dress, and diet.

The majority of Sudanese people are Arab-speaking Muslims divided into numerous tribal groups. Black African Muslim groups include the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit, living in Darfur in western Sudan; and the Nuba, who live in the Nuba Mountains in southern Sudan. [59] In South Sudan, the dominant groups are non-Arabs, Christians, and animist Dinka and Nuers. [60]

The following chart provides a summary of ethnic groups in this region.

Source: CIA Factbook

Throughout the Sahel, people have strong loyalties to their extended families. Concentrations of ethnic groups often create a climate of ethnic favoritism. Government officials are expected to take care of their kinsmen with jobs or special favors, often at the expense of other ethnic groups. This sometimes creates public discontent and has frequently precipitated insurgencies led by groups excluded from receiving basic government services. For example, the Zaghawa comprise five percent of the population in Chad. However, they wield a significant amount of power, especially because Chad's President Idriss Déby is a member of the Zaghawa tribe. However, there are divisions within the

Zaghawa clans themselves due to charges that President Déby allegedly favors members of his own clan.

Other ethnic groups in the Sahel are the Fula and Bambara, who are the majority in Mali. In all there are twelve linguistically distinct ethnic groups in Mali, including the Tuareg.

Many people in the Sahel identify themselves more with their ethnic group than with their region.[61] Political affiliations, however, are not ethnically divided, and political parties do not champion ethnic causes – which was the case of the Zaghawa clan in Chad. Thus, ethnicity has a minimal role in politics in Mali. However, there are cross-cutting links between ethnic groups that unify them into a cohesive unit.

One phenomenon in Malian society is the kinship tie between ethnic groups. The *sinankunya* or "cousinage" relationship, is a kinship tie established between ethnic groups, families, or clans. This relationship can best be described as a "joking relationship" where ritual teasing is acceptable between extended family members, clans, and ethnic groups. In essence, members of a family (including cousins), or members of an ethnic group, can mock or tease members of another ethnic group, family, or clan without consequences.

Such verbal confrontations are used to break the ice or ease tensions. As a result, linked families or ethnic groups seldom fight. For instance in Mali, there is a cousinage relationship between the Dogon and the Bozo ethnic groups, and rudeness and insults are commonplace in opening a conversation. Mocking dialogues are used to further link the groups together. Listening to an opening dialogue, especially in ceremonies like weddings and funerals, offers an insight on the relationships between families, clans, or ethnic groups. Any conflict between groups that have a cousinage tie is normally resolved amicably. This social system has enhanced cohesion between groups. However, for various reasons, the only persistent ethnic conflict in this region is in areas like the northern parts of Mali and Niger, where the Tuareg live.

The Tuareg are not part of the cousinage system. The Tuareg people are commonly referred to as the "Blue Men of the Desert" because of the color of their clothing.[62] Tuareg speak Tamasheq, and are ethnically related to the Berbers of North Africa. They inhabit northern Mali, Niger, Algeria, and Libya. They are organized in tribes and clans that are further stratified by castes of nobles, freemen, and slaves.

Tuareg leaders in the Mali peace talks in Algiers, 2012 (Source: AFP via Voice of America)

Slavery, or the vassal caste, is an important part of the Tuareg culture and economy, as slaves provide labor in the salt trade, trade caravans, and animal husbandry. Tuareg do interact with other tribes, especially because they need foods outside the meat and milk diet. For centuries the Tuareg have traded with other tribes for grain; historically, the Tuareg taxed communities around the Niger valley, and taxes were remitted in the form of grain, gold, or slaves.

The Tuareg are generally perceived by other tribes as a threat. They are often associated with bandits who have no respect for borders or trade networks. They are ridiculed for being un-Muslim because they charge interest on unpaid debts, and because their women do not cover themselves. Analysts point out that ethnic tensions in the north may ignite ethnic conflict in southern Mali, especially because of the migration of Tuareg and Arab Malians to the south in search of economic opportunities.[63]

Languages

Nelson Mandela succinctly summed up the power of language in communication when he said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language that goes to his heart."[64]

Because of the numerous languages spoken in this region, a Marine deployed to the Sahel who is unfamiliar with any of the predominant local languages (French, Bambara, Zaghawa or Krio) should use an interpreter while interacting with the indigenous people.

The ethnic diversity of most Sahelian nations has resulted in several languages being spoken within each country. Arabic and French are the two most commonly used languages, while English is the official language in Nigeria and South Sudan. Official languages reflect the region's history of European colonization and its religious and economic exchange with the Arab world. These languages are:
- French in Mali and Niger
- Arabic in Sudan and Libya
- English in Nigeria and South Sudan
- Both French and Arabic in Chad

Although Arabic, French, and English are taught in the countries where these languages are spoken officially, these three languages are often associated with a person's social class: people who use Arabic, French, and English in informal settings are considered more affluent. Rural communities tend to use tribal languages and dialects. Apart from educated people, relatively few Sahelians speak their country's official languages. Other languages help maintain tribal and ethnic identities. Each ethnic group has its own language or dialect, but some languages are dominant in several Sahelian countries.

For example, several dialects of Fula are spoken by approximately 18 million people across West Africa and the Sahel, including in Nigeria, Mali, Niger, and Sudan.[65] The Zaghawa language, which is less common, is spoken in southern Libya, eastern Chad, and southwestern part of Sudan.[66] In Mali, while 50 percent of Malians are Mande, nearly 80 percent of the country speaks Bambara, which serves as the language of day-to-day life and commerce. A majority in Niger are Hausa and speak the Hausa language, but the Djerma language is also spoken in the country. Other indigenous African languages spoken in the Sahel are Hausa in Niger and Nigeria; Yoruba and Igbo in Nigeria; Sara in Chad; and Dinka and Nuer in South Sudan.

Language Groups in Africa (based on similarity of linguistic structure):

- **Afro-Asiatic:** Also known as the Hamito-Semetic language family. It includes Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Ancient Egyptian, Omotic, and Semetic spoken in northern Africa.
- **Nilo-Saharan:** These are languages spoken in North Africa and the Sahel in Sudan, Libya, Egypt, and Algeria. They include Old Nubian and Arabic.
- **Niger-Congo A:** These are spoken in West Africa. Examples include Yoruba, Igbo, and Fula.
- **Niger-Congo B:** These are spoken by the Bantu group, which originated from Cameroon and migrated across East, Central, and Southern Africa. Examples are Shona and Zulu, but the most common is Swahili.
- **Khoisan:** These are spoken by the Khoi Khoi in Southern Africa and the San (Bushmen) of the Kalahari in Namibia. It is commonly identified by its "click" sound.
- **Austronesian:** These are spoken in the island nations of Mauritius and Madagascar. One example is Malagay.

Language Groups in Africa by Country (Source: Nations Online)

Family Structure

The extended family is an important unit in all Sahelian countries, though the concept of family in the Sahel is different from that of the West. Polygamy is widely practiced. In a polygamous home, labor is split between the wives and children. In rural areas, the household economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, and the wives and children provide the labor. In urban areas, the extended family shares a home, and the man becomes the main income earner while the wives manage the home together.

Family is important. However, the extended family in this region has been impacted by war and poverty. In many cases, one or more of your counterparts may have lost a close family member through war, famine, or disease. Use your judgment when making inquiries about relations. Additionally, note that the concept of "brother/sister" may not refer to a blood relative. Therefore, when your counterpart takes a day off to bury his/her "brother," it is generally safer to simply express your condolences but not make further inquiries.

In the social structure, authority is structured around kinship, and the head of the family is usually the eldest male member. The tribe, clan, and family are taken into consideration in decision-making. There are advantages to the large familial homestead. For instance, in times of war, the larger homesteads can better protect themselves from their enemies. Larger homesteads also have a larger workforce, especially because most of the Sahel countries rely on livestock for their livelihoods. Nomadic tribes rely on family members to graze and water their livestock.

Nuclear Family Common in Urban Areas (Source: USAID)

Division of labor is distinct; women are responsible for domestic chores including basic food supply for the family. In urban areas, most families in are monogamous, but the extended family is consulted on important occasions such as birth, marriage, and death. Members of the extended family residing in urban areas are relied upon for financial assistance by family members residing in rural areas.

The modern family structure has been affected by war in this region. Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, and Mali have been impacted by the high rate of migration and displacement. The economy and humanitarian situations such as famine have also negatively impacted the family unit, shifting alliances among family members. This, however, has not diminished the value of the family unit in society.

Income Distribution

The extraction of minerals—mainly uranium, gold, phosphate, and iron ore—plays a crucial role in the Sahel's economies. Nigeria, Libya, Sudan, and Chad extract and export oil. Apart from mineral natural resources, soil and water are the most important resources in the Sahel.[67]

The gap between the rich and the poor is expanding due to corruption and the absence of accountability, depriving the population of viable and continuous income streams. Additionally, low pay for civil servants, government bureaucracy, lenient record-keeping, and a lack of transparency abet corrupt behavior.[68] As a result, citizens are forced to pay bribes to government employees in order to obtain public services.[69]

Although there is a growing class of small-scale entrepreneurs who conduct their businesses in the informal sector, the price of staying in business is high due to inflated licensing costs that factor in bribes for public servants.

The gap between the urban and rural population is growing, and available data paints a stark picture: a majority of Sahelians live on less than a dollar a day.[70] Much of the rural population in most countries across this region engages in subsistence agriculture and pastoralism. Nigeria is an exception, due to increased training in varied sectors, from technical trades to new media.

As in many African countries, there is an income deficiency for those ready to enter the workforce. Youth unemployment in the Sahel is high and poses a stability risk. Although unemployment and underemployment in this region is difficult to measure, the youth bubble is evident. In Mali for example, approximately 300,000 people join the job market each year, and unemployment is highest among 15 to 39 year-olds.[71] Both skilled and unskilled youth lack opportunities and resources to sustain livelihoods, and many end up in the informal sector. Thousands remain unproductive and are thus exposed to mobilization and recruitment

Youth unemployment is a threat to stability in Africa (Photo by Tommy Trenchard; Source: IRIN)

efforts by terror groups such as Boko Haram in northern Nigeria and AQIM in Chad, Mali, and Niger.
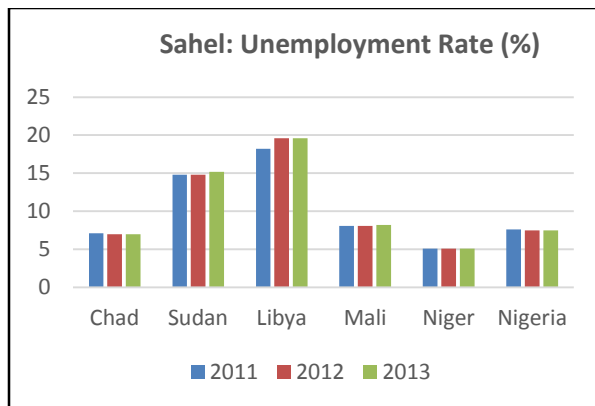
Unemployment rate 2011 - 2013 (Sahel) (Source: World Bank)

USAID-sponsored billboard in Tanzania proposing an approach to youth unemployment (Source: United Nations)

One major concern in this region is the impact of conflict on livelihoods. Mali, Chad, Sudan, and South Sudan have large numbers of displaced populations, which has impacted income and further widened the poverty gap in the region. Additionally, displacement has also put a strain on urban areas, especially with regard to health, sanitation, housing, education, and the crime rate.[72]

Education

Traditionally, education in Africa has been an informal process lasting throughout a person's lifetime. Participation in work, community celebrations, religious traditions, and rites of passage guided a person's educational development.

Formal education was introduced in the pre-colonial era by missionaries; by the 1950s, most missions had established a school. However, only a few advanced past primary school.

USAID is working to boost access to education in the Sahel (Source: USAID)

The literacy rate in the Sahel varies because of the impact of long-standing conflicts, especially in Sudan and South Sudan. Even in the most stable economies, such as that of Nigeria, the quality of education has improved, yet is far from perfect, especially in the area of information technology.

Technical and vocational schools offer a few specializations, but annual enrollment in these schools is low. Through USAID, the U.S. has boosted primary school education in the region, increasing both access to and the quality of education.[73]

In most Sahelian countries, the quality of a person's education reflects their socioeconomic background. Wealthy parents send their children to private schools, while poor children must attend underfunded public schools staffed with poorly-trained teachers. For example, the student-instructor ratio is deficient which is problematic because it impacts enrollment rates for the youth. The shortfall is also a challenge to policy makers who have to address the youth bulge and employment options for the youth. Although there are various programs in place to enhance youth employability, many do not offer skills training that meets market relevant needs.

Other factors that interfere with education include natural disasters, civil conflict, famine, and drought. In conflict areas, children are often forcibly recruited into militias. In South Sudan, where the militias have disbanded, there is a vast number of demobilized youth in need of skills training. Though many disarmed youth have entered the informal mining sector, the government of South Sudan has initiated programs to absorb this vulnerable population into other sectors.

Healthcare

The Sahel is considered a high-risk area for vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, and waterborne diseases, like typhoid and hepatitis A.[74] By world standards, medical capabilities in the Sahel region are below average. Some of the major challenges facing the health sector include inadequate access to healthcare and emergency facilities, a lack of essential medicines, and insufficient capacity to respond to outbreaks.[75]

Unlike other countries in East Central and Southern Africa where HIV/AIDS was a major challenge to the health sector, the infection rates in this region have been relatively low compared to other infectious diseases.[76] Additionally, the availability of trained professionals and medical supplies varies from country to country and by region within each country. Poverty, conflicts, and an underdeveloped infrastructure limit the availability of medical care.[77] Sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, including rape, have had multiple effects on populations in this region. Psychological and social effects include the stigmatization of victims, as well as anxiety disorders that have been insufficiently treated.


USAID works to boost primary healthcare at the community level (Source: USAID)

TACTICAL TIP: A vector-borne disease is a disease transmitted by pathogens and parasites. They are common in subtropical regions and in areas without access to safe drinking water. The most common diseases in this region are malaria, typhoid, and cholera. When deployed to this region, Marines should take prophylactic drugs, use mosquito nets, and drink treated water.

One other area of concern is infant mortality. Although there has been significant improvement in tackling infant mortality, more still needs to be done due to the large numbers of refugees and displaced persons who lack adequate healthcare.

The Sahel's high mortality rate results largely from malaria pandemics and other infectious diseases. These diseases contribute to the region's low life expectancy rate of below 50 years[78] (compared to 78 years in the United States[79]) and high child mortality.[80] Chad has the region's lowest life expectancy (48.9 years), while Sudan has its highest (63 years).[81] The following charts depicts the high rate of infant mortality in this region.
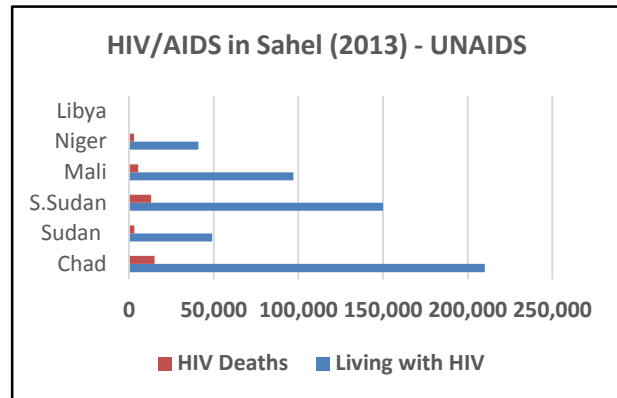
HIV/AIDS statistics in Sahel (Source: UNAIDS)
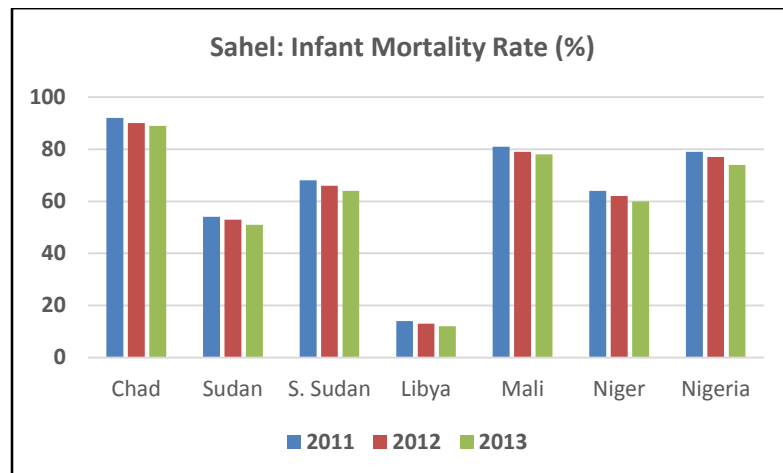
Infant mortality statistics in Sahel (Source: World Bank)

Government and Politics

Why Government and Politics Matter to You as a Marine

Most people live in states governed by formal and informal institutions. Marines need to learn how power and authority are distributed in the state by studying the formal and informal structures of governments in the region. In addition, Marines need to understand how people, groups, and institutions exercise power and authority—in other words, what comprises politics in a culture.

Political Systems

Most countries in the Sahel gained independence between 1950 and 1960, except for South Sudan, which gained independence in 2011.[82] Since then, ethnic groups, religions, and traditional leaders have influenced the evolution of national political and legal systems.

Though Sahelian countries have functional national and local governments, they rely on informal leadership structures to meet the needs of the population. Traditional elders and chiefs, as well as non-governmental actors, are instrumental in the delivery of services, especially in the health sector.

Subordinate to the national (or central) government, there are subordinate government bodies that are typically structured in three tiers; these three levels of governance are intended to give citizens a greater degree of self-rule: in the top tier, provincial governments (similar to state governments in the U.S.); in the middle, county-like district governments; and, at the bottom, town or village councils.

A USAID official consults a chief. Local leaders engage in development activities at the village level (Source: USAID)

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, a traditional chief exercised political leadership at the provincial, district, and village levels. Today, central and local governments perform these functions, effectively removing the political and economic power of most chiefs. Additionally, national governments in this region use traditional authority as a form of indirect government. This system is used in Niger and Mali's rural communities to defuse the conflict between the northern communities and the politically dominant southern communities.[83]

Many chiefs and traditional leaders inherit their titles. When national governments are unstable or ineffective, the rural population turns to traditional leaders—a form of government that has worked for generations.

In farming communities, a leader's power comes from his ability to manage and collect profits from the land. In remote areas of the Sahel countries (particularly those neglected by central governments), chiefs continue to rule and provide governance.[84] Chiefs have a finger on the pulse of the community; they continually engage in conflict resolution, and are consulted by elected leaders and civil society.

Negotiation and consensus are very important in the Sahel. Village chiefs, councils of elders, and other leading citizens specialize in peacemaking. A *griot,* a local historian and poet, is considered a "wise man" in the village community and often serves as a peacemaker in the Bambara and Mandinka cultures. Many governments in the Sahel recognize that informal negotiation and problem-solving play a critical role. In Mali, for example, officials often include traditional peacemakers in their own problem-solving efforts.

On the other hand, formal government structures are vital in governance. Although there have been challenges in effecting control over the vast, remote northern territories, Sahelian governments have succeeded in working together to counter extremism and humanitarian crises such as droughts.

One of the major shortfalls of governance in this region is corruption, which can trigger unrest. Countries with natural resources, such as Sudan and Nigeria for example, may earn large amounts of revenue, but the benefits do not trickle down to aid development at the local level.

Corruption Perception Index 2013: Sahel	
Country	Ranking (of 177)
Chad	163
Sudan	174
South Sudan	173
Libya	172
Mali	127
Niger	106
Nigeria	144

Corruption Perception Index (Source: Transparency International)

TACTICAL TIP: The term "corruption" does not have a direct translation in many African languages. This is because reciprocity and gift-giving are cultural concepts that are expected as forms of gratitude. In most African countries, it is difficult to conduct business without a "facilitation fee."

Nationalism

Nationalism, in this context, refers to the feeling of kinship and belonging based on shared values and beliefs, which usually translates to an identity.[85] Colonization fomented disaffection and resistance; because people were prevented from organizing country-wide resistance, communities galvanized and mobilized ethnically. The result is that in this region, populations now identify first with their tribe and then with their nation. When nations gained independence in the 1960s, the national flag became a symbol of national pride. However, self-governance saw its share of challenges, and the any sense of newfound national pride soon began to erode.

Nationalism in the Sahel can also be seen in language. Although local languages such as Dinka, Zaghawa, Yoruba, Bambara, and Tamasheq are among the languages spoken in this region, Arabic, French, and English have been used to promote national cohesion in a region that is ethnically diverse with hundreds of linguistic groups. However, language has also been a source of contention because, in many cases, indigenous languages have often been marginalized.

National pride is not normally observed in the Sahel, especially due to poverty and other socio-economic issues—even in nations that have enjoyed relative stability.[86] However, soccer is one sport that has united not just the country, but the region. In 2014, Nigeria played in the World Cup in Brazil. Although the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) suspended Nigeria, its national team still inspires the youth in the region, fueling patriotism and national pride.

Rule of Law

Most countries in this region are currently undergoing institutional reforms aimed at strengthening the judiciary.

South Sudan is a good example of progress and adherence to the rule of law, especially in light of the fact that it is a new country. Like other countries that have undergone conflict, judicial structures were dominated by executive power and a culture of impunity. After independence, the South Sudanese judiciary was left in ruins, incapable of delivering justice for victims.
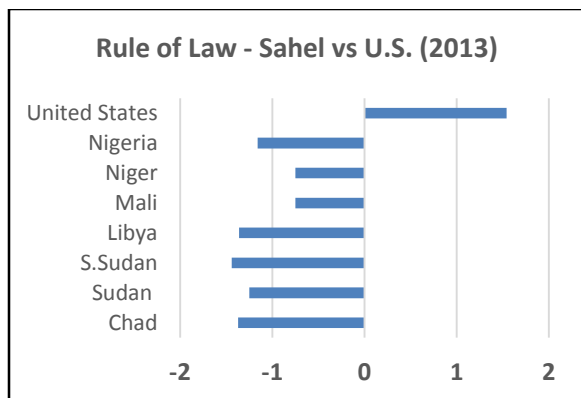
Access to justice in many Sahelian countries is minimal. However, in eastern Chad—a region that has been unstable for a number of years due to the situation in Sudan's Darfur region—international partners funded a program to train auxiliary legal officers to meet the needs of communities.[87] This region is plagued with a number of other legal issues as well, including the use of child soldiers and traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) that have been outlawed by legislation, yet persists in rural areas. Governments have partnered with international groups to sensitize communities to these issues in an effort to eradicate such practices.

In Nigeria, corruption and a culture of impunity remain major hindrances to the rule of law. Although democratic structures exist and the judiciary has a wide reach, bribery and other corrupt practices are rife, compromising access to justice and legal processes.[88]

Other hindrances to the rule of law in this region are conflict and instability. Mali and Libya are two countries that have experienced conflict in the recent past, and their judicial structures are in need of reform.

> *"The crisis in Mali led to a rapid deterioration in [the] human rights situation, with reports of human rights abuses committed by rebel groups and the Malian army. These violations exacerbated inter-community divisions and further undermined respect for the rule of law. With the end of hostilities in northern Mali, the Malian government is now tasked with crafting transitional justice policies that reflect the needs of victims, facilitate the implementation of the government's pledge to pursue national reconciliation and reestablish respect for the rule of law in the country."*[89]

The following chart compares public confidence in the rule of law in the Sahel and the United States.[90]

Rule of Law - Sahel vs U.S. (2013)

The World Bank's assessment of rule of law reflects perceptions of the extent to which people have confidence in and abide by the rules of society; and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence. Measures of governance performance rank from weak (approximately -2.5) to strong (approximately 2.5).

Rule of Law Comparison (Source: World Bank)

Political Conflicts

This region has experienced a significant number of conflicts that are interconnected and, therefore, directly affect each other. The ethnic violence that led to the Darfur genocide spilled over into Chad and South Sudan. Additionally, political instability has impeded development gains, and the region has undergone a series of political misadventures with recent upheavals in Mali and Libya.

The Sahel has had a treacherous political history. For example, Chad has experienced continuous conflict and rebellion since its independence from France in 1960. Changes of government between 1960 and 1991 were the result of military coups. Chad's government has used torture and massacre as tools to control rebellion. Hissène Habré, the former president of Chad, was indicted for political executions and other crimes committed during his eight-year rule (1982-1990).

Muammar Qaddafi, former leader of Libya (Source: Wikipedia)

Additionally, Idriss Déby, the president of Chad, who came to power through an armed rebellion, has won elections in 1996, 2001, 2006, and 2011 amid numerous voting irregularities at the polls. Questionable election outcomes are among the many reasons why Freedom House, a Washington-based research and advocacy group, categorizes Chad as "non-democratic."[91]

In 2011, a Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali, followed by a military coup that overthrew President Amadou Touré, opened up Mali to new threats. The prevailing instability facilitated the rise of extremist groups such as the Islamist group Ansar al-Din (Arabic for "Defenders of the Faith," a splinter group of AQIM), which took control of northern Mali in March 2012.[92]

In February 2011, nationwide political violence erupted in Libya following the government's brutal crackdown on popular protest against President Muammar Qaddafi. The unrest in Libya was one of the many regional uprisings collectively referred to as the "Arab Spring."[93] By September, Libyan rebels had captured and killed Qaddafi, bringing an end to his 42 years in power. In August 2012, Libya's General National Council became the first democratically-elected parliament in Libya since its independence. Subsequently, in October 2012, the National Congress and an interim government were collectively tasked with preparing the groundwork for a new constitution and fresh parliamentary elections, which were ultimately held in 2014.

Economic Overview

Why Economy and Infrastructure Matter to You as a Marine

The goods and services that people exchange, the infrastructure that people use to move them, and the formal and informal structures that make exchange possible all play critical roles in survival. A thorough understanding of a region is impossible without knowledge of its economy. This is because the region's political, social, and cultural trends both reflect and shape economic developments and trends.

Nature of Economic Systems

There are various economic systems in this region built on formal and informal sectors based on fishing, pastoralism, and agriculture. Manufacturing and mining are two main economic drivers in this region. Minerals such as uranium, gold, phosphate, and iron ore play a crucial role in the Sahel's economies. Additionally, Nigeria, Libya, Sudan, and Chad extract and export oil, while Mali is the third-largest producer of gold after South Africa and Ghana.[94]

The traditional economic system today is evident in rural and Saharan communities, where subsistence production is localized and is often cashless and unregulated by the central government. For example, the economy of the Tuareg functions across the boundaries of Libya, Mali, and Niger. Tuareg caravans were the backbone of the Sahara trade, transporting goods such as salt and gold across North Africa, West Africa, and the Sahel. Today, the Tuareg still buy grains such as sorghum from farmers along their nomadic routes; they also buy harvested crops from farming communities in order to have an adequate supply of food during the dry season.[95]

Subsistence farming in the Sahel is vital to the local economy. Farmers sell reserves in markets, enhancing the reach of a cash-based economy at the local level.

Additionally, traditional banking systems such as *hawala* are used extensively in this region.[96] *Hawala* is a parallel banking system that exists outside of formal structures.[97] *Hawala* banking is based on trust; families often use this informal financial system to remit money across great

> Hawala is popular because it is fast, cheap, and reliable. Hawala functions outside regulation; it does not leave any record and is not subject to taxation.

distances to family or friends. Although rural communities, especially in Nigeria, Sudan, and South Sudan, have relied on *hawala* for decades, a negative light has lately been cast on *hawala* because the system is being exploited by terrorists and traffickers of weapons, drugs, and human beings. Many

governments in the Sahel are working to strengthen official financial institutions by imposing a system of taxation.

The other type of economic system in this region is the market economy, which relies on consumer choices. However, instability and the presence of aid organizations providing assistance to refugees and displaced populations – sometimes in the absence of government – have created a hybrid economy. For instance, in Sudan and eastern Chad, where the number of displaced people is high, refugees exchange food aid with locals for firewood, soap, and other supplies.

Economic Trends

Although the countries in this region rely on pastoralism, fishing, and mining, their economies vary widely in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) growth. Economic indicators point to a region with a lot of potential whose growth is hindered by corruption, a harsh investment climate, conflict, and an absence of the capacity for governments to accurately measure growth.

In Niger, there is need for a viable structures that research, document and monitor economic indicators for policymaking purposes. Additionally, in a cash-driven economy where alternative systems like *hawala* exist, it is difficult to accurately depict economic trends.

Nigeria, one of the rare stable countries in this region, derives most of its wealth from oil, but corruption and unequitable distribution of resources has led to conflict in the oil-rich Niger Delta. Further, although new industries are opening up, Nigeria's poverty rate worsened from 65 percent in 1996 to 69.5 percent in 2008. Generally, poverty is higher in rural areas (73.2 percent) than in urban areas (61.8 percent).[98]

Several factors restrict the Sahel's economic development. These factors include environmental threats, such as drought and locust invasions that have endangered agricultural potential;[99] increased migration from rural to urban areas; and the ongoing conflict between farmers and pastoralists. Natural disasters have also heightened the risks of food shortages, famine, and poverty.

The following chart shows the region's GDP growth in recent years.

Source: World Bank

Because of the Sahel's over reliance on oil as an economic driver, any interruption to production due to instability directly impacts GDP growth. In Libya for example, oil and gas production constitutes 95% of exports and 98% of government revenue. The disparity in GDP growth, as illustrated above, is directly linked to interrupted production during the Arab Spring in 2011. The GDP surge in 2012 is thus a direct result of resuming oil production.[100] Similarly, South Sudan's economy is oil driven and oil production is key to GDP growth. A disagreement between Sudan and South Sudan in 2012 resulted in a complete shutdown of oil production by South Sudan, after Sudan seized its oil while in transit, over unpaid transit costs.[101]

Natural Resources

The Sahel is endowed with vast natural wealth, including uranium and oil and natural gas.[102] Niger is the fourth largest uranium producer, having two significant mines that account for 7.5% of the world's uranium.[103] Nigeria is the largest oil and natural gas producer in Africa.[104]

Sudan was the second largest oil producer in Africa prior to South Sudan earning independence in 2011. However, oil production in South Sudan has declined since 2011 due to disagreements with Sudan over revenue sharing, coupled with disputes over the rights to oil and natural gas deposits.[105]

Oil has impacted the environment and stability of the region (Source: UNEP)

South Sudan's independence deprived Sudan of nearly 75% of its oil revenue. It is estimated that the oil sector provides 98% of South Sudan's government earnings, and contributes to over 60% of the country's GDP.[106] Sudan has lately focused on alternative sources of income, such as gold mining.[107] Sudan currently operates 120 gold mines.

In Nigeria, drought, desertification, corruption, and instability in the Niger Delta have undermined economic growth. Minerals have contributed to instability as opposing groups vie for control of resource-rich areas, thereby exacerbating the situation.

Remittances

External financial resources in the form of official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investments (FDI) have been on the rise in the Sahel in recent years.

Sahelian economies also depend on the remittances of workers living abroad. When Sahelians migrate to neighboring countries or Europe, they typically send a portion of their earnings back to their families at home. Many families depend on this income to live. Remittances to Mali have steadily increased over time; in 2013, they reached over $530 million.[108] In the same year Niger received $153 million in remittances, while Sudan received $1.1 billion.[109] Nigeria received $21 billion in remittances in 2013.[110]

Like many countries in Africa, remittances have exceeded ODA and FDI; on average, remittances are 1.7 times as large as FDI flows and over 6 times as large as ODA. Of note, these numbers are based on official data. However, informal banking and money transfer systems such as *hawala* bring in

millions of dollars that go unaccounted for, significantly increasing the amount of cash in circulation in this region.[111]

Agriculture

Though there are many areas in the Sahel that have the potential of supporting agriculture; growing crops in these areas, however, is an enormous challenge. Cultivation is timed with the seasons, with most crops grown during the rainy season and harvested at the beginning of the dry season.

Most families in rural areas engage in subsistence farming, planting wheat, sorghum, millet, cowpeas, rice, and dates. Crops are grown to first meet the needs of families; the surplus is sold at the local market. Crops such as groundnuts (peanuts) are grown and consumed locally across the region and are a major part of the cuisine. The arid northern regions of the Sahel are home to pastoral communities. Livestock is a major commodity and is a status symbol.

Agriculture was an economic lifeline in Sudan before the discovery of oil. The three major cash

A woman prepares her commodity for sale (Source: USAID)

crops in this region include sesame, gum arabic, and cotton. Today, Darfur is a major producer of gum arabic, which is used in soft drinks as an emulsifier.

"Export subsidies encourage the overproduction of cotton, which in turn induces a downward pressure on world cotton prices. This pressure lowers the export earnings of cotton-dependent countries such as Mali."
Source: The Cotton Sector in Mali (OECD)

Another major regional export is cotton, which is grown in Mali, Chad, Nigeria, and Sudan. Mali is the largest regional producer of cotton, with output accounting for 8% of GDP. On average, Mali produces 600,000–800,000 tons of cotton a year and generates up to $5.3 million a year.[112] Additionally, a quarter of Malian households rely on cotton for their livelihoods. However, cotton subsidies in developed countries have encouraged cotton production, which has directly and negatively affected export earnings in Mali and Chad.[113]

Informal Economy

The Sahel lacks sufficient formal jobs to meet the demand of new arrivals to its cities. Many people work as unregistered street vendors, forming the backbone of Sahelian urban marketplaces. A large number of these workers in the urban informal economy are self-employed laborers working in industries from textiles to construction. Some employees face dangerous working conditions, and most lack the benefits and job security that come with jobs in the formal economy.

Informal commerce is the economic engine in most of these economies. In Lagos for example, there is a bustling underground electronics market, with vendors importing cell phones and computers from China through regional transit points and selling them locally. Nigeria's significant oil revenues keep the government afloat; thus, there is no urgency to regulate informal entrepreneurial industries. The informal sector in Nigeria is said to be approximately two-thirds the size of the formal economy and growing.[114]

The fact that much of the region's economy operates outside the tax system puts a strain on government treasuries, especially in the non-oil-producing countries. Corruption plays a significant role in a person's decision to work outside the formal economy; this is because many people believe that a substantial portion of tax revenues goes into the pockets of government officials instead of paying for legitimate government services.

The poorly regulated transportation industry, including non-motor transportation, is exploited by cross-country smugglers who rely on locals to carry goods across the border into neighboring countries. The trade of contraband items ranges includes cigarettes, illegal arms, and drugs. Additionally, human trafficking and kidnappings are common, which has given rise to a new social class comprised mainly of entrepreneurs who handle logistics for illegal merchandise or negotiate ransom payments. Drugs transshipped through Africa usually originate in Guinea-Bissau, pass through the Sahel and the Maghreb, and end their journey in Europe.

Terror groups also engage in kidnappings for the purpose of getting money from ransoms. However, the use of *hawala* has made it difficult to track the financing of terrorism in this region. As a result, thousands of dollars change hands between smugglers, middlemen, and local porters every year. Many families depend – legitimately – on payments made through *hawala* for their daily subsistence.

Infrastructure

Transportation

Foreign direct investments have benefitted telecommunication and transportation infrastructure in urban areas throughout the region. Although rail transportation is limited in this region, air transportation is adequate and has boosted trade ties. However, air and rail travel are still too expensive for the general population, and most people travel by bus and taxi between major cities and villages.

Additionally, most roads in the Sahel consist of two lanes. There are few divided highways, most of which are found in major cities. During the rainy season, roads are extremely dangerous; traveling at this time of the year can only be done safely with off-road-capable vehicles. Though gas and diesel are readily available, the quality is sometimes poor, especially in rural areas and landlocked countries.

TACTICAL TIP: Poor infrastructure will impact the mission. It is important to plan ahead and to be prepared for all eventualities. There is often no power and supplies are often difficult to acquire.

All Sahelian countries have at least one international airport that accommodates international, national, and local flights. In most countries, private airlines fly out of the many smaller airports that dot the region. Corruption and high tariffs are the greatest hindrances to the flow of goods in the region.
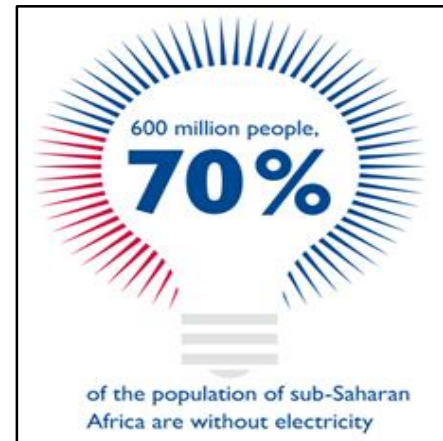
Utilities

Wood and charcoal provide the majority of the region's energy needs and are used mainly for cooking. Oil, electricity, and commercial energy are also used widely in urban centers.

Rivers play a critical role supplying the region's electric power. This power, generated by hydroelectric dams, is usually inexpensive. The Kandadji Dam is a major hydroelectricity supplier in Niger that provides irrigation and electricity, among other economic opportunities in the region.

Additionally, The U.S. launched the Power Africa Project to increase access to power in Sub-Saharan Africa by utilizing alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, hydropower, natural gas, and geothermal resources.[115] This initiative is expected to have a significant impact on people's quality of life as well as their cost of living.

600 million people, 70% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa are without electricity

The U.S. plans to bridge the power gap in Africa (Source: USAID)

Drought often causes water levels to drop in lakes and rivers. This has seriously impacted Lake Chad, and there are currently initiatives in place to halt the shrinkage of this water source. Water scarcity seriously affects the capacity of the region to generate hydroelectric power. This, in addition to limited access to electricity, outdated equipment, poor maintenance, and increased demand, contributes to power shortages and frequent power outages. Many businesses, upper-class residents, and expatriates have diesel-fueled power generators to augment their spotty supply of electricity.[116]

Communications

The quality of service delivered by the region's landline telephone system is poor, but wireless communications systems can match the standards set by any Western mobile telephone service. Several European cell phone companies operate in the area, and cell phones and internet cafes have proliferated in the past decade. Mobile telephone service is a particularly reliable source of communication in most urban centers.[117]

Cell phones have changed the way communities interact (Source: USAID)

Internet connectivity, however, remains poor. This is due to limited landline communications and the slow roll-out of fiber-optic broadband services. Limited public access to the Internet has slowed economic development in the Sahel. Wireless communications solutions are beginning to facilitate better access to the internet, primarily for people living in cities or near cell phone towers.

Although most families in urban centers have access to television and international media outlets, the best way to communicate to the masses is through text messaging. In fact, many established news

outlets across the continent are competing with social media—particularly Twitter, which is also accessed via a short message service (SMS) platform.

In rural areas, poverty and limited power infrastructure are responsible for limiting public access to television and the Internet. However, phones are competing with the radio and are better suited for public service announcements. In 2013, Malian election officials deployed to polling stations throughout the country monitored voting processes and result via text message.

Press freedom in most Sahelian countries is nominal at best, though the situation is considerably better in Nigeria. Press freedom tends to be greater in areas where central government control is weaker; the ability of political opposition groups to legally exist also fosters a free press.[118]

Although governments do not practice outright censorship, the manner in which facts and opinions get reported is often affected by who owns a media outlet (much of the media in the Sahel is owned by the government or politicians), arbitrary regulations, strict defamation and security laws, violence, and harassment of journalists limit the facts and opinions that are reported. Journalists and publishers often practice "self-censorship" for fear of reprisal. Actors other than governments, such as businesses and criminal organizations, may also intimidate journalists.[119]

English-Language Mass Media

Countries where English is an official language, like Nigeria, have English-language TV, radio, and newspapers. English-language media, especially newspapers and online news outlets, may be found in other countries as well.

Regional Security Issues

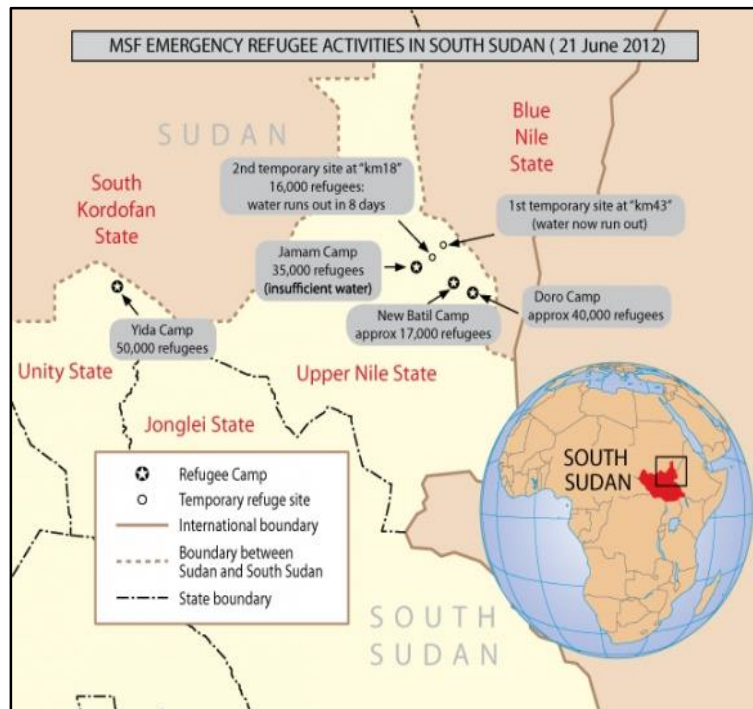**Why Regional Security Issues Matter to You as a Marine**

A thorough understanding of a region is difficult without an awareness of its most significant security challenges. These challenges tend to affect not only relations between states in the region, but also the behavior of its people and the choices they make. Regional security issues encompass a host of topics ranging from wars between states, to insurgencies, to organized crime, to weak institutions, to systemic corruption. Some of them involve violence, while others weaken states and societies and have the potential to turn low-level conflicts into violent confrontations.

Introduction

The Sahel region is one of the most vulnerable regions in Africa because of its geography and environment. Because this region borders on the Sahara, environmental challenges, porous borders, and enduring humanitarian crises have made the region vulnerable to a host of threats. These threats include terrorism, human trafficking, and a thriving illegal arms trade.

Niger and Mali have porous borders and a lack of security resources, making it difficult for these governments to secure remote parts along their shared borders. These areas are now a haven for terrorist groups linked to Al Qaeda.

Refugee camps in Sudan and South Sudan (Source: Medecins Sans Frontiers/ Doctors Without Borders)

Eastern Chad's volatility and the enduring situation in Darfur and South Sudan has displaced over 3 million people[120], and has generally exacerbated the overall threat level. Instability in this region is preventing local government from dealing with other challenges, such as the 2012 drought.

Sudan and South Sudan have found an amicable political solution to the North-South divide. Although South Sudan is now an independent state, tensions persist. There are over 200,000 refugees in South Sudan from Sudan's South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.[121] In Darfur alone, the conflict has so far claimed over 400,000 lives and displaced more than 2.6 million people.[122]

In December 2013, political violence in South Sudan broke out after an attempted coup displaced thousands of civilians in and around the Unity State, which borders Sudan. Interethnic rivalries have continued to impact communities in South Sudan since it gained independence in 2011.

In Niger, a military junta overthrew the government in 2010, and installed a civilian-run transitional government that vowed to put in place democratic structures. True to its word, Niger held elections in early 2011.

Security was destabilized in North Africa and the Sahel by the overthrow of Libyan President Qaddafi. (This was one of many regional uprisings commonly referred to as the "Arab Spring.") Stockpiles of Libyan arms flooded a region that was already battling extremist threats from groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM).

There is evidence that some Libyan weapons were used by Tuareg insurgents operating in northern Mali in 2012.[123] Additionally, the situation in Mali was worsened when a section of Mali's forces mutinied to protest an alleged ineffective military strategy, a food shortage, lack of ammunition, and inferior weapons. These internal struggles further undermined operations intended to suppress the Tuareg insurgency in the north.[124] Since then, Mali has navigated itself out of the crisis and held elections in 2013.

In Nigeria, U.S. training assistance is strengthening counterterrorism operations of the Nigerian military.[125] Our goal is to also build the capacity of other militaries in this region so that they can deal with a variety of security threats.[126]

The following sections focus on regional security challenges that directly affect U.S. strategic goals.

Although this region is complex, and the security issues are numerous, this section will only discuss four main root causes of instability. They include:

- **Conflict**
- **Armed Groups**
- **Terrorism**
- **Organized Crime & Terror Financing**

Conflict

Conflicts in this region have had a major impact on regional security. Porous national borders permit instability in one country to spill over to neighboring countries. For example, the conflict in Darfur in Sudan has had a direct negative impact on Chad and South Sudan. Similarly, the situation in Libya has had a negative impact on the entire region: Libyan small arms have flooded the region, facilitating resurgence of cross-border criminal activity like narcotrafficking.

Darfur Conflict

The Sahel is made up of several hundred ethnic groups. In some cases, ethnic tension has escalated into conflict. In Sudan, ethnic tensions precipitated a genocide.

In 2004, the U.S. government declared the simmering conflict in Darfur a "genocide" after the government of Sudan embarked on an ethnic cleansing campaign against Darfuris for allegedly supporting an insurgency against the central government.[127] The genocide claimed approximately 300,000 dead, and displaced 2 million people.[128]

The situation is Darfur is representative of ethnic violence in this region. Darfur, which means "the land of the Fur people," is in western Sudan; it borders Chad to the west and the Central African Republic (CAR) to the south.

Darfur region (Source: Wikipedia)

Darfur is embroiled in tribal conflict over land, water and grazing rights.[129] This dispute has pitted nomadic Arabs against farmers from the *Fur, Masalit*, and *Zaghawa* communities. Additionally, fertile land in the region has attracted nomadic Arab tribes from Chad and Libya, creating a competition for resources (and, as a result, tensions) between local people and the incomers.[130]

In 2003, two non-Arab groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), accused the government of Sudan of neglecting problems in the region, and took up arms against the government.[131]

The two groups posed a significant threat to the government of Sudan. There is strong evidence that the government exploited these ethnic tensions by calling upon local tribes to help fight the rebels. The Arab nomadic tribes rose up in support of the government, hoping that their allegiance would eventually earn them the right settle in the region.[132] The government also supported a militia to help stem the insurgency.[133] The world finally took notice of this conflict after the killing of 400,000 people, the displacement of 2,500,000 refugees from their homes,[134] and the rape of countless women.[135]

In 2004, the United States passed a resolution labeling this conflict a genocide under the United Nations (UN) Genocide Convention.[136] Later, in July 2007, the UN Security Council voted to send about 26,000 peacekeepers to Darfur to protect civilians.[137] Since that time, violence in Darfur has decreased, but tensions have increased between the *Berti* and the *Zaghawa* groups over land ownership in the same area.[138]

Although violence in Darfur has subsided since 2003 and 2004, a new surge of clashes erupted in early 2013, forcing an additional 250,000 people to become internally displaced and some 30,000 to cross the border into neighboring Chad.[139] There are currently over 350,000 Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad.[140]

The renewed situation in Darfur has adversely impacted eastern Chad, transforming Darfur's internal issues into regional s that directly affect Chad's stability. First, the declining security situation exacerbated by the porous border and situation in Libya after the fall of Qaddafi has prevented the Chadian government from responding effectively to the new crisis. U.S. forces, under the auspices of the TSCTP, are now supporting Chad's counterterror campaign. Secondly, the influx of refugees in eastern Chad, coupled with marginalization of the local population by two successive regimes, has exposed Chad's vulnerability and risk for conflict. The reemergence of crisis in Darfur in 2013 has clearly highlighted this threat. Chad could be well on its way to a full-blown conflict that could destabilize the region. Additionally, environmental threats that have in recent years led to a food crisis in Chad and Darfur, and have set the stage for additional U.S. involvement in support of potential Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief (HA/DR) missions.

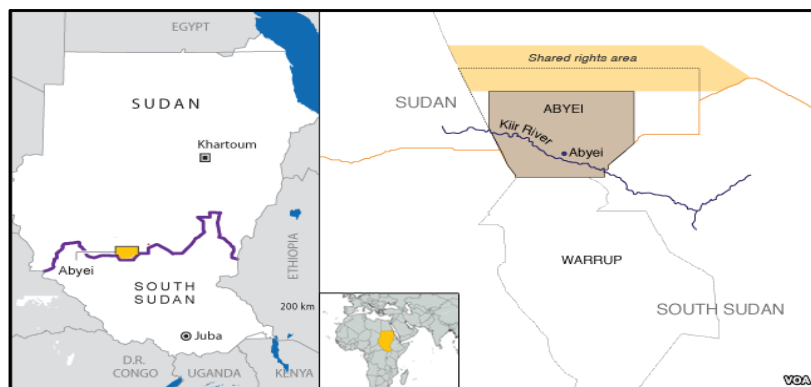### Sudan/South Sudan Border Demarcation Dispute

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 between the government of Sudan and the Sudan's People Liberation Movement (SPLA) which represented the southern regions. The CPA ended two decades of civil war and stipulated the demarcation of the border between North and South Sudan, and set a timeline for granting South Sudan independence. South Sudan gained its independence on 9 July 2011, yet the ill-defined border issues remained unresolved.[141]

A series of agreements were signed between the two countries to resolve the issue, but the Abyei area, which was left unresolved, remains one of the most contentious. The disagreement stems from the definition of the term "residents" of the Abyei area; semi-nomadic Arab Misseriya travel through Abyei seasonally, while the African Ngok Dinka permanently reside in Abyei. This dispute remains a source of tension between the two groups.[142] This border region was the site of a series of clashes in the first half of 2012, when South Sudan invaded Hejlij, leading to widespread international condemnation.[143]

Abyei Stalemate[144]

Abyei remains one of the most contentious areas between Sudan and South Sudan. Competition for resources, particularly oil, plays a major role in the dispute.

Abyei Region (Source: Voice of America)

The Abyei Protocol grants Abyei special administrative status and guarantees the "residents" of Abyei a referendum to decide if they want to be part of Sudan or South Sudan. The referendum was to have been conducted simultaneously with the referendum of South Sudan in January 2011, but it did not take place. Disagreement arose regarding the composition of the Abyei Referendum Commission created to manage the process and make crucial decisions such as establishing the criteria for residency status. [145]
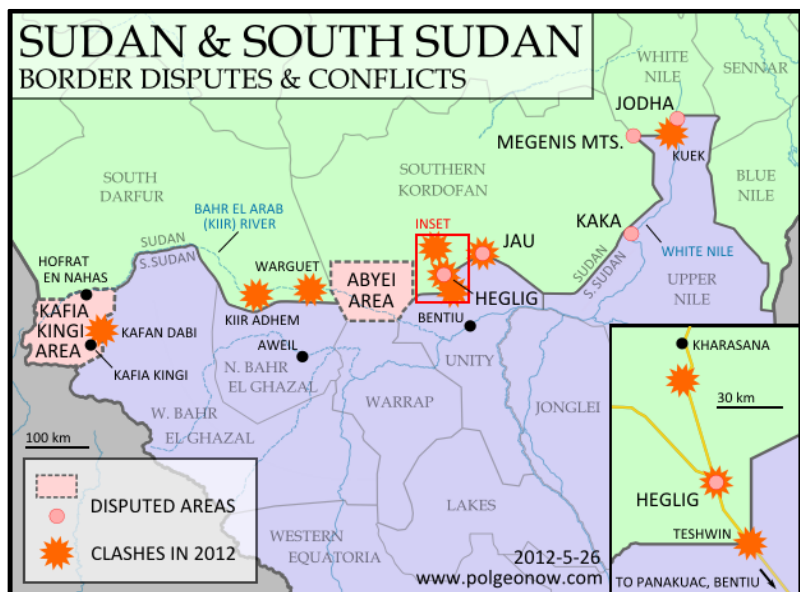
Abyei became a major battleground in the Sudanese civil war, displacing tens of thousands of inhabitants, mostly Dinka Negok.[146] In 2011, a series of clashes erupted between "armed elements associated with Arab nomads and local police" that caused villages to be burned and the killing of more than one hundred people. [147]

The Other Five Disputed Areas

The border disputes between Sudan and South Sudan occur mainly because the border land is rich in oil reserves, consists of fertile land for agriculture, and provides grazing areas crucial to seasonal transhumant pastoralist groups. Unlike nomadism where only male members of a household move with their livestock in search of water and pasture, "transhumance pastoralism" refers to the movement of entire households and their livestock in search for water and pasture.[148]

Other disputed areas include:

- **Kaka -** Located between Upper Nile in South Sudan and Southern Kordofan in Sudan
- **Megenis Mountain (Jebel Megenis) -** Located between Upper Nile in South Sudan and Southern Kordofan in Sudan
- **Dabat Alfakhar (South of Jodah) -** Located between Upper Nile in South Sudan and White Nile in Sudan.
- **Kafia Kingi and Hofrat al-Nahas -** Locatedbetween Western Bahral-Ghazal in South Sudan and Southern Darfur in Sudan

Disputed Regions in Sudan and South Sudan (Source: Political Geography Now)

- **Safaha (also called 14 Miles) -** Located between Northern Bahral-Ghazal in South Sudan and Southern Darfur in Sudan.

Because the border between Sudan and South Sudan remains contested, ongoing tensions could possibly lead to a war between the two countries, further destabilizing the already vulnerable region. Any worsening of the security situation is expected to directly involve the U.S. The U.S. is seen as a key player in the region due to its role in the peace process and the subsequent referendum for South Sudanese independence. When fighting later broke out in South Sudan in 2013, the U.S. again became a key supporter of the mediation process and a key provider of humanitarian aid. As a result of the renewed violence, U.S. Marines evacuated American nationals from the areas hardest hit by rebels.[149]

U.S. Marines evacuate U.S. nationals from South Sudan (Source: Defence.gov)

Further complicating the security situation in the region, especially during times of crisis, are remnants of Africa's colonial past. In Mali for example, a former French colony, France sent troops to help suppress the Tuareg insurgency in 2013.

The Fall of Muammar Qaddafi

Since the 2011 fall of former Libyan President Qaddafi, hundreds of militias at one time or another assumed the role of Libya's *de facto* police department and army.[150] These forces fought in the 8-month revolution that toppled Libyan President Qaddafi.

The forces that successfully battled Qaddafi were geographically-oriented and identified with specific neighborhoods rather than specific ethnicities. The Misrata Brigade (sometimes called the Misrata Union of Revolutionaries), based in the central city of Misrata, is but one example; it encompasses more than 200 registered militias -- what are known as revolutionary brigades and other "unregulated brigades."[151]

However, there are other militias that are Islamist in nature and follow a radical ideology, such as "Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya," which emerged officially in 2012 and is based in Benghazi.[152] Thought to be a local front for Al-Qaeda, this group calls for the implementation of strict *sharia* law, and is believed to be responsible for the September 2012 attacks in Benghazi that led to the burning of the U.S. Consulate and the killing of the U.S. Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens.[153]

Though these militias were part of the efforts to oust Qaddafi, they have since become a "significant threat to the country's security."[154] This is because Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC) and the newly elected post-Qaddafi government failed to bring these armed militias under state control. There are reports of rival militia clashes and revenge killings, as well as looting and robbery by gunmen targeting civilian residents.[155]

> **TACTICAL TIP**: Marines deployed to this region should know that communities, especially those in remote places, keep arms to protect their animals and their property. The Libya crisis was responsible for a significant influx of arms in this region.

One of the most serious security threats in the region is the easy availability of military weapons in Libya (which at one time were in the possession of pro-Qaddafi forces) that have been routinely smuggled out of the country and sold on the black market and to militant groups in the Sahel region. There is also alarm over the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and other weaponry[156], such as portable surface-to-air missiles and shoulder-fired missiles known as MANPADS (man-portable air defense systems) abandoned by the Qaddafi's regime in Libya.[157]

Internally, Libya's fighters refuse to put down their arms, instead using them as a negotiation tool with the government to gain more influence and future benefits.[158] More broadly, Libya's unsecured borders have helped create smuggling routes for these arms, where they have found their way into the hands of different terrorist groups in the region. There are also reports that these weapons have been acquired by AQIM through links to drug dealers and gunrunners.[159]

The Tuareg Insurgency in Mali

Tuareg are a seminomadic people descended from the Berbers who are indigenous to North Africa. The Tuareg live in the Saharan parts of Niger and Mali, and geographical areas inhabited by minority groups such southwestern Libya, southeastern Algeria, northern Burkina Faso, and northern Nigeria.[160] Their grievances relate mainly to underrepresentation in governments and militaries, neglect within society, and high poverty rates.[161]

The Tuareg started migrating to Libya for economic reasons following Mali's and Niger's independence in 1960. In the 1980s, Libya attracted more Tuareg when Libyan President Qaddafi aggressively recruited them into his Islamic Pan-African Legion. The Legion was to be the military cornerstone in his vision of a united Muslim state in North Africa.[162]

Following several failed military campaigns, the Islamic Legion was disbanded and the Tuareg were eventually absorbed into the Libyan army under special brigades.[163] Qaddafi also offered the Tuareg rebels aid and shelter, as their significant desert fighting skills made the them more appealing to the regime in Libya.[164]

Qaddafi recruited the Tuareg again as mercenaries during the 2011 Libyan civil uprising. After the fall of Qaddafi's, the Tuareg rebels returned to Mali, now armed

Tuareg leaders in the Mali peace talks in Algiers, 2012 (Source: AFP via Voice of America)

with significant combat experience and weapons looted from Libya.[165]

In October 2011, a coalition of political factions, including the Tuareg from Libya, merged to create the *Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad* (MNLA). MNLA served as a political-military platform to fight for independence from Mali.[166] Concurrently, a group of officers in the Malian government led a military *coup d'état* on March 21, 2012.[167] The MNLA-led fighters took advantage of the ensuing chaos by seizing control of all of the major northern towns, and to declare the secession of the region as the independent country of Azawad.[168]

In May of the same year, MNLA and the Ansar Al Din Islamic rebel group agreed to merge forces and establish an Islamic state; however, Ansar Al Din, backed by AQIM, turned against MNLA and seized control of the territory.[169] This prompted French intervention to restore governance in Mali. U.S. AFRICOM has also provided support to the French and African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA).

Armed Groups

The 2011 fall of former Libyan President Qaddafi, facilitated the development of between 100 and 300 armed militias. Some of these militias were formed by communities to address security issues and police neighborhoods, while others were remnants of the forces that had previously fought to overthrow the regime. From within these militias there emerged criminal gangs, jihadist groups, and revolutionary groups.

The following are a few specific groups that pose a threat to the region.

Sudan: JEM and Janjaweed

In Sudan, The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) organized militia cells in Darfur and Khartoum in 1993. It was only after 2000, when they began acting alongside the Sudan Liberation Army, another rebel group, that they were seen as a significant threat by the Khartoum government.[170]

TACTICAL TIP: Marines deployed to Chad should know that communities in eastern Chad may harbor rebel elements active in Sudan's Darfur region. It is common for them to cross the border into Chad for recuperation as well as for medical treatment.

The Darfur Liberation Front (DLF), is another militia group operating in Darfur and across the border in Chad.[171] In addition to these groups, the Janjaweed operates with impunity within Darfur, as do Chadian rebels.[172]

The conflict in the Darfur impacted the relationship between the Sudan and Chad, leading both governments to back opposing rebel groups. JEM's initial backer was the national government in Chad; however, Libya also funneled millions to JEM to destabilize Sudan's government. Since the fall of Qaddafi, the group has been supported by various non-state actors, including Darfurians now living in the West.[173]

JEM have been active in South Sudan as well in support of the government in its fight against rebel groups such as the White Army in the Unity State.

The White Army [discussed at length, below] is a rebel group operating in the Unity State; it is comprised of members of the Nuer ethnic group – the second largest ethnic group in South Sudan. The Nuer and the Dinka, the largest ethnic group in South Sudan, have engaged in several political and ethnic feuds in this disputed territory over the last 20 years. The most recent conflict was politically instigated following an attempted coup in 2013. Government-backed forces, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA,) have been fighting the White Army in the Unity State, a region in South Sudan which has a Nuer majority.

In addition to JEM, the Janjaweed militia—which was known for its terror campaign against civilians in Darfur—is another group that has caused civilian deaths and mass displacement in Sudan and Chad. The Sudanese government had officially distanced itself from the group because of the mass atrocities committed in the Darfur region.

In 2014, the Janjaweed militia was reconstituted under a Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of the Sudanese paramilitary and deployed in support of the governments' counter insurgency campaign in Darfur.[174] This newly constituted Janjaweed/RSF force is better equipped and has integrated former Janjaweed militia as commanders and fighters; this, in effect, grants them immunity "for any acts committed in the course of duty".[175]

> ## Recommended Reading:
>
> For more on conflict in this region, see:
>
> Governance and Conflict in the Sahel's 'Ungoverned Space' by Clionadh Raleigh and Caitriona Dowd (International Journal Stability of Security & Development) http://www.stabilityjournal.org/article/view/sta.bs/96#cc-by
>
> Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/13/organized-crime-and-conflict-in-sahel-sahara-region

The RSF is by no means reformed and have the capacity to destabilize the region: the United Nations estimates that over 300,000 have been displaced in Darfur since the resurgence of the conflict in January 2014.[176]

South Sudan: White Army and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

The independence of South Sudan in 2011 converted the South Sudan People's Liberation Army from an armed group fighting for the liberation of South Sudan to the new nation's official army. However, an alleged coup in December 2013 sparked a civil war pitting rebel

> In 2013, three CV-22 Osprey aircraft on an evacuation mission were shot at by rebel groups in South Sudan's Unity State at the height of the conflict. Three service members were injured in the operation. (BBC News)

groups against the new government and its recently legitimized army.[177] Leading up to this incident, cattle rustling in Jonglei Province perpetrated by Nuer and the Dinka tribesmen had taken a toll on communities and livelihoods, displacing over 100,000 people.

Soon after the alleged coup, the Nuer White Army, who had previously focused on protecting their own cattle, organized a 50,000 strong army to fight against the South Sudanese government forces in support of Riek Machar, the leader of the opposition.[178]

Fighting slowed after the government and the opposition signed a peace deal in Addis Ababa in

November 2014, yet tensions persist.[179] The rebel groups in South Sudan, now known more formally as the White Army, have not been disarmed and continue to pose a threat to national and regional security, especially because of the vast oil reserves located there are vulnerable to attack.

Apart from the White Army, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which rose out of Northern Uganda, has infiltrated South Sudan, among other countries. The LRA been in existence since 1986 and is Africa's oldest insurgent group. The group operates in South Sudan, Darfur in Sudan, northeastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the CAR.

The LRA was started by Alice Lakwena from remnants of the Uganda People's Democratic Army, which was comprised of the Acholi ethnic group in Northern Uganda. Consequently, Joseph Kony rose to lead the movement.[180] Originating in Uganda, just outside this region, the group purportedly fights for the interests of the Acholi people of Northern Uganda.

In 1987, a coup in Uganda prompted many members of the Acholi tribe to move into Sudan. The LRA has since launched a brutal campaign in Darfur in Sudan and in Raga County in South Sudan, which borders Sudan's Darfur region. LRA fighters have largely targeted civilian populations, killing, maiming, and abducting children for military service.

In 2008, Uganda launched Operation Lightening Thunder to counter and pursue the LRA. In 2010 President Obama signed the Lord's Resistance Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act and deployed troops to the region to support ongoing operations to neutralize this threat.[181]

Nigeria: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)

In Nigeria, the inhabitants of the oil-rich Niger Delta region do not trust the central government in Abuja because the oil revenues have not equated into economic development and the per capita household income continues to be low. This has led to violence directed at the foreign-run oil companies by militants from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

MEND was organized in 2006 under a banner of "economic justice" on behalf of the 30 million residents of the Niger Delta region.[182] Soon after, the group launched attacks on expatriate employees of the oil companies working in this area. MEND has claimed responsibility for oil spills that have impacted the environment and disrupted crude oil supply.[183]

In 2008, MEND renewed its guerrilla campaign against the Nigerian security services and foreign energy companies in pursuit of a greater share of oil and gas revenues. Over time, this group perpetrated kidnappings for profit and offered itself as a hired militia.[184]

Although the group's principal commanders accepted the terms of the Nigerian government's 2009 amnesty program, suspected MEND militants have since been linked to at least eight attacks in the Delta region since 2010.[185] Unlike other militant groups in the Niger Delta, MEND does not have a centralized structure but has managed to attract frustrated young men who are either unemployed or sympathetic to the cause.

MEND'S main tactic is kidnapping for ransoms extorted from foreign oil companies operating in the region.[186] Though the Niger Delta conflict effectively ended in 2011, tensions persist, fighters

remain largely engaged in the theft of oil, and they have also been accused of engaging in piracy on the Gulf of Guinea.[187]

Terrorism

Although this region has been fighting terror and crime for the past decade, one of the main concerns in this region is the possible emergence of cells backed by global terrorist groups. International terror organizations have been emboldened by the failing security infrastructure in Libya, the massive movement of weapons into the region following the fall of Qaddafi, and the resulting impact of the events in the Middle East—particularly incidents orchestrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

After uprisings related to the so-called "Arab Spring" in Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, there was a security vacuum in North Africa, which impacted the porous Sahel region and exposed it to a higher threat of and infiltration by terror groups. This section will cover two of the most dangerous groups in this region.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is the main transnational terror group in this region. AQIM began as an offshoot of the *Armed Islamist Group,* an insurgent group that fought against the Algerian government in the 1990s, and later rebranded itself as the Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).

The group evolved into AQIM after the September 11, 2001 ("9/11") attacks in the U.S.[188] The loose security environment in the Sahel further contributed to the expansion of groups such as AQIM. The porous borders and lack of infrastructure in the unsecured northern areas bordering Algeria and Libya have challenged the security forces in Chad, Niger, and Mali. Additionally, depressed socio-economic conditions such as poverty and high unemployment also provided ripe conditions for radicalization, the growth of terror cells, and criminal activity.[189]

Although the TSCTP has been working with partner nations in the Sahel to counter violent extremism, AQIM is still active and has formed partnerships with criminal and terror groups in the region. One such group is Ansar Al Dine, a radical Islamist Tuareg group operating in northern Mali, as well as Boko Haram and Ansara in Nigeria.[190]

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a jihadist group founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf it has waged a terror campaign in northern Nigeria since 2009. The group's ideology is rooted in the Sunni Salafist branch of Islam; it fights for the implementation of *sharia* (Islamic law) in Nigeria.[191]

Boko Haram operates in the northern states of Yobe, Kano, Bauchi, Borno, and Kaduno. The group has evolved into an armed insurgency, characterized by suicide bombings, shootings, and bomb attacks.

Boko Haram became operationally active in December 2003, when approximately 200 militants attacked several police stations in Yobe, near Nigeria's border with Niger. By January 2004, Nigerian

security forces had successfully put down this uprising. Between 2004 and 2009, Boko Haram rose again, repeatedly engaging in a low intensity conflict with Nigerian security forces.

Sectarian violence in northern Nigeria escalated since Boko Haram came onto the scene. In 2011 alone, over 600 people were killed in various attacks; terrorism-related casualties in Nigeria were double the rate of the previous year during the first four months of 2012. One of the deadliest attacks killed more than 200 people in Kano, Nigeria.[192]

> Sectarianism refers to adherence to a particular sect (political, ethnic, or religious) leading to conflict with those of different sects or possessing different beliefs. In Northern Nigeria, this has manifested in frequent clashes between Christians and Muslims.

Boko Haram has reportedly expanded its operations into Cameroon and Chad, thereby posing a graver threat to Nigeria and to regional security. The U.S. State Department designated the group as Foreign Terrorist Organization in 2013, which is a significant step in the fight against terror in this region.[193] The 2014 kidnapping of 250 school girls in northern Nigeria and the subsequent public campaign to rescue the girls drew the attention of international actors, including the U.S., which sent a team to assist the Nigerian military in tracking and rescuing the girls. Efforts to rescue the girls were hindered by various challenges common to this region, including the terrain.

**Organized Crime and Terror Financing**

Narcotrafficking

AQIM more than any other terror group in this region has been sustained by criminal enterprise. Cocaine smuggling to West Africa from Latin America is transshipped by drug cartels through the Sahel.[194]

Prior to the arrival of the drug trade in West Africa and the Sahel, contraband consumer goods such as alcohol and cigarettes were smuggled through across porous borders and became part of the informal sector. However, criminal networks have now expanded this trade to include cannabis and weapons. This increase in illegal trade has further worsened conditions on the ground for civilian populations, and has enabled AQIM to successfully challenge counterterrorism operations mounted by regional governments.[195]

Narcotrafficking in this region is a major financier of terrorism. Illegal drugs from South America are transshipped though the Sahel to Europe. The Sahel and Western Africa became popular transshipment zones after law enforcement officials cracked down on traditional trafficking routes.[196]

The trafficking route for cocaine in this region now begins in Guinea Bissau (cocaine is now a major economic activity in Guinea's informal sector).[197] From Guinea Bissau, smugglers coordinate logistics with regional networks and corrupt politicians in order to move the cocaine through Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and North Africa. From ports in North Africa, the drugs eventually make their way to Europe.[198] Most of the narcotrafficking activities in the Sahel are connected to armed extremist militias, notably the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), an off-shoot of AQIM.
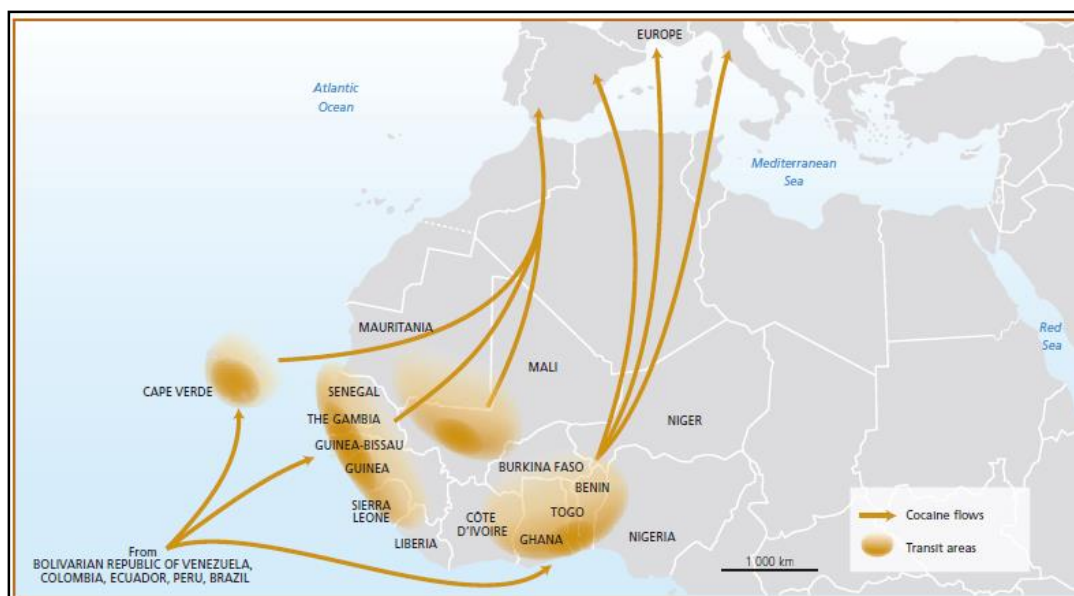
Drug Flows Through the Sahel (Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

Drug Seizures in West & Central Africa (in Kg.)						
Heroin and Morphine	Cocaine	Cannabis Herb	Cannabis Plant	Cannabis Resin	Amphetamines	Ecstasy
107.6	14,578.9	207,820.0	928.4	10,426.0	517.7	3.5
Source: UNODC (Estimate as of 2008)						

Note that the figures in the table above only represent the UN estimates; they should only be used in reference of the types of drugs trafficked through this region. Notwithstanding, narcotrafficking poses a significant regional threat and contributes directly to terrorism in the Sahel.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that the value of these criminal activities to be $3.8 billion annually.[199] Reports also point to the financial muscle of AQIM (derived from the illegal drug trade) and how it is used to influence groups such as Boko Haram.

Kidnapping for Ransom

In addition to narcotrafficking, groups like AQIM have kidnapped foreign nationals to exert political leverage and to obtain ransom money. Kidnappings reached a peak shortly before the French military intervention in Mali after the 2012 *coup d'état*. Since then, the U.S. has provided support to African militaries to counter the kidnapping threat (and other threats) posed by AQIM and other extremist groups in this region.[200] The U.S. is offering counterterrorism and military assistance in the region through the TSCTP.[201] In the Sahel, funds for TSCTP are provided by U.S. AFRICOM, under the auspices of Operation Enduring Freedom Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS).[202]

Criminal activity in this region is the key financier of terror networks. In Mali, for example, the rise in kidnapping for ransom has spawned a cadre of ransom negotiators. AQIM has been grabbing and ransoming Westerners traveling through the region, and uses the payoffs to recruit new members and

to fund training camps.[203] According to sources, AQIM received an average of $5.4 million in ransom per hostage in 2011[204]. Estimates show that in 2011 alone, AQIM kidnapped 60 foreign nationals.[205]

The oil industry in the Niger Delta in Nigeria has been the focal point of a contentious battle between the local communities and Nigeria's central government over money derived from oil. As a result, foreign oil workers are routinely kidnapped by local militia groups such as MEND. In addition to demanding money, the kidnappers seek political renegotiation and community support from oil companies and the national government. Although oil companies such as Shell have engaged the community with public outreach projects in health and education, the central government has not lived up to its end of the public interest bargain – largely because promised funds are routinely pocketed by corrupt local officials. Corruption in the oil sector is the primary reason why development has not trickled down to improve the standard of living for the residents of this region. The end result is an increase in kidnappings for ransom that target employees of multinational companies.[206]

Human Trafficking

Apart from kidnapping, human trafficking contributes to terror financing; the Sahel is frequently used as a human trafficking source, transit area, and destination point.

Although official human trafficking statistics for all of the countries in this region are not available, it is estimated that there were over 1,300 men women and children trafficked for work farms and in mines Mali.[207]   Additionally, migrant workers are smuggled through this region to Europe in search of better opportunities. In October 2013, a boat carrying migrants from North Africa capsized, killing 360 people. These migrations are enabled by unstable or weak governance, corrupt customs officials along Sahelian and North African borders, and criminal cartels who coordinate cross-border smuggling.[208] Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Libya, and Sudan are source countries for irregular migration; these countries are linked to smuggling routes that converge in Libya, the main port used to smuggle migrants to Europe.[209]

The initial driver of migration flows to Europe was to fill vacancies in the fishing and agriculture sectors. Soon the profit potential attracted smugglers who began to hire sailors to ferry workers from Tunisia and Libya to Italy. Soon after, however, both Libya and Italy increased maritime patrols, causing decline in the movement of illegal human cargo.
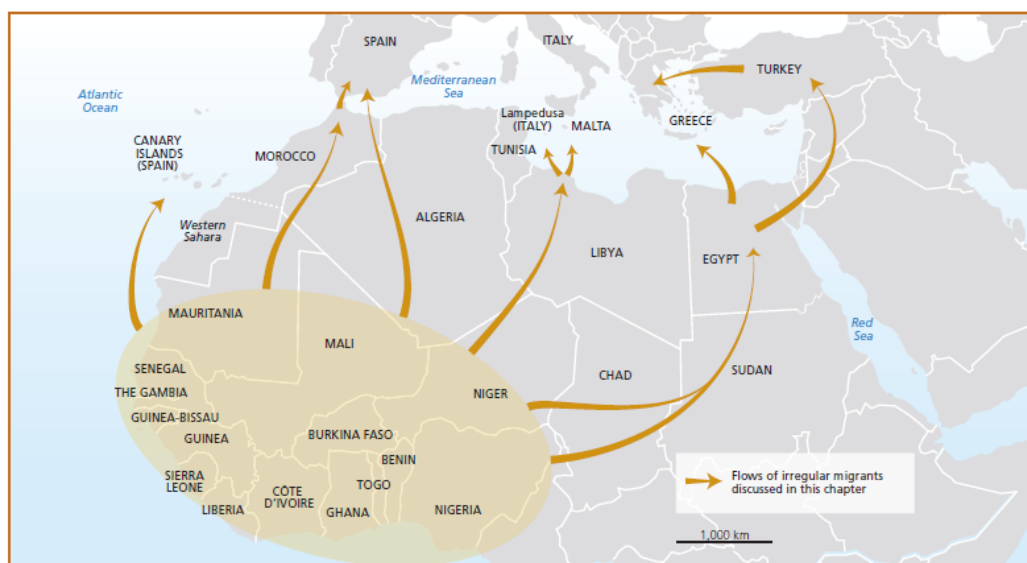
Following the fall of Libyan President Qaddafi, Libya once again became the point of exit for many migrant workers looking for opportunities in Europe. Although the European community has escalated efforts to curtail migrant smuggling, the unstable political situation in Libya and the Sahel's depressed economy hinder any effort to stop migrant smuggling in this region.[210]

Flows of migrants (Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

All of these criminal enterprises pose a risk to regional security. Further, the prevalence of the use of traditional banking systems such as *hawala* are used extensively in this region. [211] Hawala is a parallel banking system existing outside formal structures.[212] Although rural communities -- especially in Nigeria, Sudan, and South Sudan -- have relied on Hawala for decades, its exploitation by criminals and terror groups has cast a negative light on this informal financial system. The hallmark of this banking and money transfer system is that it is paperless and untraceable. Hawala relies on trust. Each year, millions of dollars are routinely remitted through this region using this informal banking system.[213]

> "Although international institutions argue that terrorist financiers are employing "new modalities," the opposite is true. Terrorist financiers are reverting to traditional ways such as Hawala, trade-based money laundering, and cash couriers, particularly in countries with non-existent or weak national anti-money laundering systems to move their funds to finance their terrorist activities."
> -U.S. Dept. of State

Conclusion

The Sahel has experienced significant security challenges that have attracted recent international attention. France and the U.S. have offered assistance in the form of capacity building support and training and support for counterterrorism operations. However, the underlying causes of conflict -- underdevelopment, poverty, and youth unemployment -- complicate conditions on the ground.

Additionally, environmental conditions make this region vulnerable to drought and famine. The U.S. has promptly and generously assisted Sahelian countries during environmental crises – to include the delivery of food aid, and the funding of sustainable development projects managed by USAID.

Due to the unstable security condition in the Sahel, especially since the fall of Libyan president Qaddafi, the U.S. is likely to be engaged in this region well into the foreseeable future.

Case Study: The Culture of Tuareg 'Kel Tamasheq' in the Sahel

The case study in this chapter introduces a culture from the Sahel region, using the concepts introduced in the Operational Culture General (OCG) document (see attached document).

Introduction

The Tuareg, or *Kel Tamasheq or Tamacheq (*meaning *"the speakers of tamasheq,"* which is their language[214]) are seminomadic Berbers[215] who live in the Saharan parts of Niger and Mali. Small groups of Tuareg are also found in southwestern Libya, southeastern Algeria, northern Burkina Faso, and northern Nigeria.[216]

The Tuareg, often referred to as "light-skinned Berber," are an ethnic and cultural minority in all the nations where they reside.

Although the Tuareg live within national boundaries inherited from the colonial era, the Tuareg identity is linked to an imagined stateless nation called "Azawad". The Azawad is comprised of Tuareg-populated territory in the Sahara and the Sahel which transcends national borders. Azawad territory is mainly in northern Mali, northern Niger, and southern Algeria.[217] Tuareg are

Tuareg from Algeria wearing the classical indigo turban (Source: Wikimedia)

divided into confederations that span a range of five mountains, constituting the corners of a virtual parallelogram across these countries.

While there are no accurate figures for the Tuareg population, official agencies estimate their numbers to be around 1.5 million.[218] However, the Tuareg believe there are close to three million Tuareg collectively in all the countries where they reside.[219]

The Tuareg language, typically referred to as Tamasheq, is closely related to regional dialects such as the Tamaheq, Tamacheq, and Temajeq. However, Tuareg living in cities are also fluent in the local *lingua franca* (i.e. French, Bambara, Hausa, or Arabic).[220]
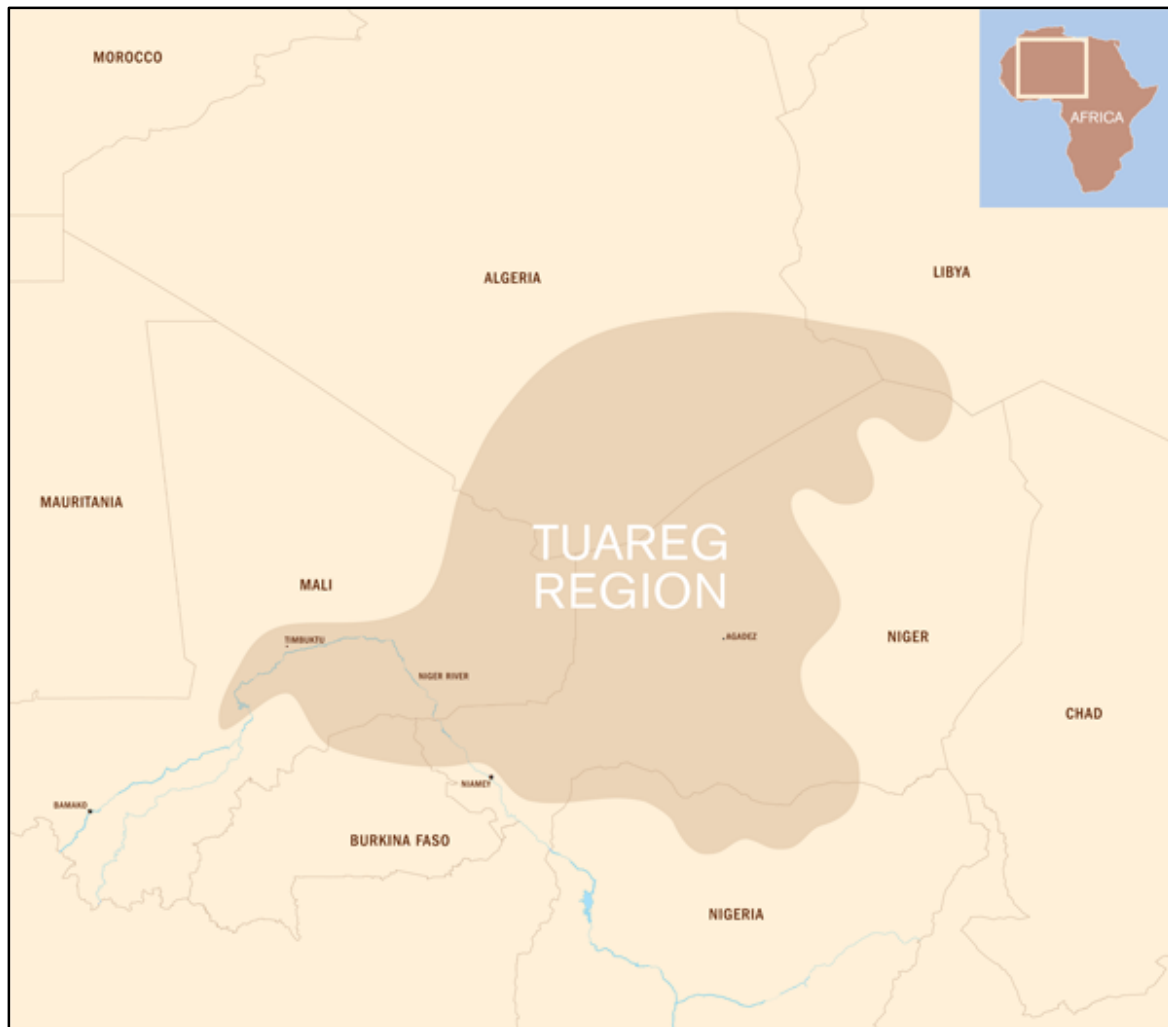
Areas where significant number of Tuaregs live (Source: Smithsonian Institute)

Physical Geography

The Tuareg live in the arid and semi-arid zones of the Sahara and the Sahel, which experience very limited rainfall and have little vegetation cover. The majority of the rain comes during the rainy season which runs between May and September.[221]

The water scarcity and dryness of the region makes it difficult to grow crops without regulated irrigation systems, therefore the areas are primarily used for herding livestock. Thus, nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles are well-suited to the region as the ability to be highly mobile in the search for water is essential.

Further complicating the issue is the dry season's *harmattan winds*, or the *khamseen (khamsīn),* which is a hot, dry, dusty windstorm that blows south from the Sahara Desert, producing a fine dust that reduces visibility and causes overcast skies. This sandy windstorm causes problems for livestock and agriculture, and contributes to desertification[222] as the winds cause soil erosion, particularly on overgrazed land.[223]

Despite the unforgiving nature of this environment, the Tuareg demonstrate variation in their response to these climatic changes; some maintain their seminomadic pastoralist lifestyle, others opt to become sedentary farmers, and other favor migration to new countries.

During the rainy season, the Tuareg move frequently in search of the greenest pastures for their livestock. During the dry season they move further afield to find water, but prefer to stay in the locality of their home territory.

Nomadic Tuaregs (Source: Wikimedia)

Sedentary Tuareg villages have become more common in the region as a result of reduced areas caused by shorter rainy seasons and longer droughts[224]. This acceptance of a less nomadic lifestyle is a good example of the Tuareg's ability to adapt to an imposed environment change. However, even these newly sedentary groups usually abandon their villages during the harshest months of the dry season when water becomes scarce.

Land Ownership and Access to Wells

Due to their nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle, the land where the semi-nomadic Tuareg have established a village is "owned" by whoever lives on it.

Although there is no need to purchase land, the building materials for tents and houses must be bought. However, these organic and peaceful agreements have been disrupted by arising disputes over the use of oases. Disputes over the rights to natural resources such as uranium (which was discovered and mined by the government on the Tuareg's traditional grazing lands), has lately became an issue, especially in Niger.[225]

Wells and access to water were traditionally the rights of whoever dug them. Traditionally, "ownership" of a well is passed down to generations. As for the use of the well, Tuareg understand that anyone is welcome to draw water so long as there is sufficient water for everyone. However, during water scarcities only the clan of the well-owner is allowed to draw water. Moreover, if the water scarcity worsens, only the well-owner's extended family can draw water. During an extreme drought, only the owner and his immediate family can draw water from the well.[226]

Changes in Tuareg life: Teshumara

Climate change and harsh waves of droughts have forced the Tuareg to adapt a new way. This change was reflected in every aspect of Tuareg life from economics to social relationships to politics.[227] This new era in the life of the Tuareg has produced the term *Teshumara*, which is how the Tuareg refer to the new social and cultural way of life that was shaped during the late 1960s-1990s. The term is the

Tuareg's derivative of the French word *chômage*, which means "unemployment."[228] As you may notice the meaning of the word confirms the economic aspect that originated this term.[229]

As it became more difficult for the Tuareg to sustain a living from pastoral nomadism, migration to new countries increased substantially.

The beginning of the 1960s witnessed a wave of many Tuareg youth migrating for economic reasons to Algeria and Libya.[230] Tuareg refer to these emigrants as *ishumar (sing. ashamor),* which means "unemployed."

The significant increase in the number of people looking for jobs outside the pastoral realm[231] and outside *Tamasheq*-speaking areas transformed the *Teshumara* from simply an economic way of life to its own culture.[232] In fact the term went through several modifications and now refers to the trans-regional mobility of former pastoralists Tuareg residing in the borderlands of regions once occupied by them.

As the migrants integrated into their new host societies, they became sedentary, married, built houses and reduced their border crossings to annual family visits. In their new countries, *Ishumar* migrants were considered irresponsible due to their continuous cross-regional mobility; however, marriage and bearing children changed their social status, and made them respectable *Ishumars.*[233]

Diet

The Tuareg diet consists of non-meat protein and relies heavily on grains. They mainly consume milk, millet porridge, grains, wheat, and rice. Meat is a delicacy eaten on special occasions such as holidays and rites of passage.[234]

Eghajira, a very sweet, thick millet based beverage-- often mixed with goat's cheese and dates -- is consumed on special occasions as well.[235]

When Tuareg cannot find fresh dairy products, they substitute milk with powdered milk, and butter with olive or peanut oil.

The consumption of pork and alcohol is uncommon due to the deeply held Islamic beliefs of the Tuareg.

A central part of the Tuareg social life is the afternoon tea ceremony where three cups of mint tea must be drunk at each sitting. The first cup is said to be "as harsh as death," the second "as sweet as life," and the third "as light as love." All three must be served "hotter than hell."[236]

The Economy of the Culture

The Tuareg economic mainstay is nomadic pastoralism, supported by agriculture and trade[237].

Historically, Tuareg managed trans-Saharan trade routes, and the trading of gold, ivory, salt, and slaves[238]. However, trading hubs such as Djenne, Gao, and Timbuktu collapsed in the sixteenth century following the development of the European maritime trade, which weakened the trans-

Saharan commercial routes.[239] Tuareg people subsequently took up nomadic pastoralism and limited scale agriculture as alternative means of livelihood.[240]

Tuareg have always maintained a reciprocal relationship with neighbors who were sedentary farmers. The two groups enjoyed a mutually beneficial trading relationship where they bartered animal products and food crops.

In the postcolonial era, drought, conflict, and reduced rainfall have devastated the Tuareg herds; subsequently there are fewer animals to provide milk and meat. This limited their ability to barter and trade for goods. Therefore some Tuareg groups opted to settle into small villages in an attempt to live off of subsistence agriculture, growing traditional coarse grains like millet and sorghum.

Most Tuareg now combine livestock herding, oasis gardening, itinerant trading, and migrant labor[241]. Others produce arts and crafts for the tourist trade, or work as security guards in the towns.
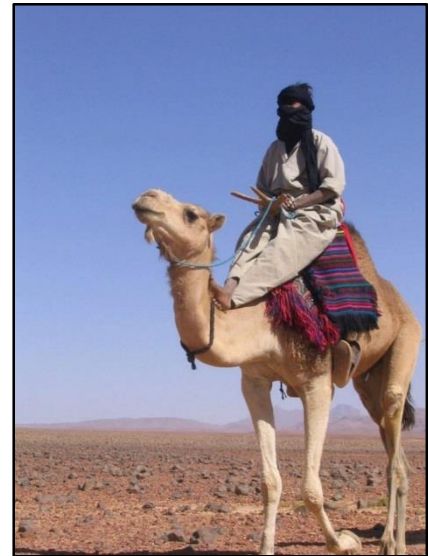
Tuareg man (Source: Wikimedia)

As for the informal economy, Tuareg's way of life, knowledge of the terrain, and desert-survival skills, helped turn them into an active and powerful smuggling network in the region. Furthermore, their smuggling of illicit goods, drugs, illegal immigrants, hostages and -- most recently-- weapons from Libya brought them in close contact with terrorist groups operating in the region such as AQIM.

In the past, many *Ishumars* smuggled goods from Algeria and Libya, and sold them for *Communauté Financière Africaine* (CFA Francs) in Mali and Niger. They brought back the CFA Francs to Algeria, which suffered from a shortage in foreign currency at the time. CFA Francs were in high demand and were exchanged in the black market, which doubled the profits the *Ishumars* received from smuggling.[242]

CFA Francs is the name of two currencies used in Africa which are guaranteed by the French treasury. The two CFA Franc currencies are the West Africa CFA Franc and the Central Africa CFA Franc.

Social Structure

Clans and Class

Tuareg social and political structure is both diverse and intertwined, as they cluster into multiple interrelated social and political groupings which are often called confederations. This social-political system can be described as a hierarchy and the clan (*tewsit*) is considered the basic social structure, which is also divided into social classes or caste.

Caste identity is based on five social categories: the noble (*imushagh*) or the noble warriors; the religious expert (*ineslemen*); the vassal (*imghad*); the craftsman (*inadan*), also referred to as "blacksmith"; and the laborers or slaves (*Iklan*).[243] Although slavery was formally abolished in French West Africa back in

1905 and Tamasheq slaves were gradually emancipated since the 1940s, these classes and social classification continue to have an impact on Tuareg society.

> There are various groups inside and outside Tuareg society who are divided between those who want to abolish either the hierarchical relationships, the clans, or both; and others, who want to maintain the status quo and reinforce the different roles and classifications. Moreover, the previously held notions of work, class, and gender meant that noble women were not to engage in manual work.[244]

The *Kel Adagh* Tuareg of Mali tried to live up to these perceived noble values, but as many persons of both noble and nomadic origins are now impoverished, formerly noble women are now forced to work and perform hard physical labor. To the Tuareg, this is considered both humiliating and physically challenging for the women involved.[245] On the other hand, educated Tuareg who went to universities and got prestigious jobs in government or international organizations, now claim a new form of elite status. [246]

The noble: they are racially described as white-skinned and distinguish themselves by a culture of honor and shame called *temushaghaor* meaning "the way of the *imushagh*," which is common among the Mediterranean cultures.

The religious experts (*ineslemen*): a status of a group of free or noble Tuareg, also racially described as white-skinned and who specialize in religious affairs.

Vessal (*imghad*): this group consists of free, white-skinned Tuareg who are not considered noble but who try to live according to the *temushaghaor* "the noble way of the life," It is believed that they are referred to as vassals because they were often described as dependent on the nobles for protection and rearing their cattle although there might be no truth behind this claim.

Craftsman (*inadan*): this group is racially classified as "black" but free and they are generally referred to as blacksmith. In the past, they enjoyed certain freedom that the "slaves," who are also black but not free, did not. This group did not adhere to the *temushaghaor* or the "noble way of life."

Slaves (*iklan*): this group is divided into several subgroups which were racially categorized as "black."

Marriage

In the Tuareg culture, marriage and bringing up children is equated to leading a useful life.[247] Furthermore, women are not accepted as full members of society until they marry and bear children.

Most Tuareg are traditionally monogamous, and many women have shown their opposition to polygyny by divorcing their husbands. Although Islam accepts polygyny, the practice was limited to religious members of the society, the *ineslemen*. Today, however, in some groups, polygyny is becoming more common among wealthy men especially if their wives are generally dependent on them, or do not have the means to oppose a husband's additional marriages.[248]

Gender Relations

The Tuareg is both a patrilineal and matrilineal society; however, the majority of the clans are matrilineal as descent is traced from the mother. Also, property, wealth, and -- often -- political power are passed down through the maternal line.

In Tuareg pastoral communities, the women own the tent and the household items; these are things that she traditionally receives as gifts from her mother and female relatives during her wedding. The husband becomes her tenant, and he becomes homeless in the event of divorce.

In urban Tuareg societies, the man will build or rent a house before moving his wife into the home. The opposite is true of Tuareg living the pastoral life: the wife is the husband's tenant, and she becomes homeless if the marriage is dissolved.

Tuareg woman (Source: Wikimedia)

Women in the Tuareg society often own or control land and production. They enjoy a considerable measure of freedom in their involvement in public life and politics, which is considered exceptional in the Muslim world. Women often share power with men and occupy some powerful roles in society (often alongside men). Tuareg women are therefore a powerful constituency within Tuareg communities.[249]

Female virginity is not highly prized among the Tuareg, and female sexual contact does not affect a family's honor. These attitudes differ significantly from attitudes in much of the Muslim and Arab world. Extramarital affairs are only considered shameful for an unmarried woman if she becomes pregnant.[250] Although virginity is still not related to honor, recently, many men individually reject potential wives for what they view as "loose" sexual conduct or "knowledge of too much men" from their potential wives.[251]

The traditional Tuareg view of female beauty encouraged female fattening, as a portly female body was the standard of beauty and sex appeal. However, this practice is diminishing due to food shortages and lifestyle challenges associated with obesity. Like everything else, standards of beauty and sexual attractiveness have also changed due to the influence of Western standards.[252]

Political Structure

Traditionally, Tuareg are loyal to their individual clan, as this type of political and social organization suits their nomadic lifestyle. A supreme chief has a legal authority, but little power today.

Beyond the clan, identity and loyalty is tied to the larger Tuareg population. Concepts of national identity or patriotism are yet to be adopted by most Tuareg: a vast majority of Tuareg do not identify themselves as citizens of any country.

Politically, the Tuareg are grouped into autonomous federations, which are broadly divided into northern and southern groups.[253]

As colonialism was winding down in this region during the 1950s, the Tuareg aspired for an independent state, called Azawad. The proposed state of Azawad would have been comprised of Tuareg-populated territory in northern Mali, northern Niger, southern Algeria, and southern Libya. However, the Tuareg community have never mobilized, as a whole, to achieve independent statehood.

Revenge as a Motive for Rebellion and Mobilization

In order to understand the first Tuareg rebellion, one must understand the concept of *egha* (revenge) and its relevance to the Tuareg culture.

Revenge is a close translation of the more complicated Tuareg concept of *egha*. *Egha* is closely connected to two other important concepts in Tuareg society: *eshik*, meaning "honor," and *takaraket*, meaning "shame." To the Tuareg, *egha* is considered a debt one indentures against those who have stained one's honor, and who have thus caused one a great deal of shame. The contracted *egha* can be either individual or on the collective level of the entire clan. Only those perceived to be of equal status can stain one's honor: i.e. the free and noble. The contracted debt of *egha* remains unresolved until the attack on one's honor is countered, and can only be repaid and settled through violent revenge. Therefore, *egha* is of critical importance as a motive for resistance and in mobilizing Tuareg communities.

An excellent example of the *egha* concept is the story of Alla ag Albachir, a notorious rebel, who led the Kel Adagh Tuareg in their resistance against the French colonial conquest in Mali.

Alla ag Albachir was captured and decapitated by French *goumiers* (soldiers serving in special units) in July 1954. His head was put on public display, and the story surrounding his treatment at the hands of the French was known to all Tuareg communities.

 Alla ag Albachir's son Elledi, who was only seven years old when his father was killed, later started the first Tuareg rebellion in 1960s, also known as *alfellaga.,* Elledi took up arms because he wanted to avenge his father's death. He soon became the rebellion's most prestigious and charismatic leader. Understanding these cultural concepts reveals how the Tuareg understood these events. Alla was viewed as repaying the Kel Adagh honor debt towards the French who had defeated the clan and colonized their area. The violation of Alla's body damaged his honor. This also violated the honor of his entire clan and all of the Kel Adagh Tuaregs. Kel Adagh's son rose to avenge the honor of his father's clan.[254]

Post-Independence Tuareg Rebellions

French colonial policies in Mali and Niger favored the southern farming regions, and disrupted the mutually beneficial reciprocal trade relations between the different ethnic groups in the northern regions.

When Mali and Niger became independent from France in 1960, national leaders and civil servants were drawn from these southern farming populations. Post-colonial rulers were drawn from the

Bambara in Mali and the Zarma-Songhai region in Niger, while the northern, predominantly Tuareg regions of Mali and Niger were consequently sidelined and economically marginalized.

Over time, unaddressed and growing grievances held by the Tuareg in Mali remained unaddressed over time, resentment continued to grow, eventually precipitating three rebellions: the first in 1962–64, the second in 1990–96, and the most recent in 2007.[255] The key actors, and the claims for which they fought, are common to all three rebellions.

There have been two Tuareg rebellions in Niger: the first in 1990-95; the latest in 2007. The 2007 rebellion by the Tuareg of Niger centered on two grievances: the belief by the Tuareg (who lived in the northern part of the country) that they had received almost no benefits from the central government (whose capital was located in the south); the second grievance was the belief that much of the money earned in their region – mostly from uranium exports – went directly to the south [256].

They Tuareg also sought restrictions on the expansion of the uranium mines; this effort was intended to protect their nomadic way of life. Following these reoccurring conflicts, a peace agreement was signed between the Nigerian government and Tuareg rebels in 2009.

Thousands of Tuareg mercenaries who had served in the Libyan army in support of the Qaddafi regime during the insurgency eventually returned to Mali in the second half of 2011 [257] and established the *Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad* (MNLA). Simultaneously, a group of officers in the Malian government led a military *coup d'etat* against the Malian government on March 21, 2012.[258]

MNLA took advantage of the ensuing chaos by seizing control over all of the major northern towns, subsequently declaring the region occupied by MNLA forces as "the independent country of Azawad[259]." No country in the international community recognized Azawad as an independent nation.

Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA): The English translation for the MNLA is, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad.

In May 2012, MNLA and Ansar al Din agreed to merge forces and transform the territory that they controlled into an Islamic state.[260] However, this pact was short-lived. Ansar al Din and its ally, AQIM, turned against the MNLA. The AQIM-led forces soon captured three major cities that are spiritually significant to Muslims: Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal.

The international community played a pivotal role in halting the advance of the Islamist militants. In June 2013, the government of Mali signed a peace agreement with Tuareg nationalist rebels to pave way for the elections that were held a month later.[261].

Ansar Al Din means "Defenders of the Faith": it is an Islamist militant group believed to have links to Al-Qaida and AGIM; these linkages were formed at the end of 2011 by Iyad Ag Ghali[262], a former Tuareg rebel leader often described as a pragmatic opportunist.[263]

Libya's Role in the Militarization of the Tuareg

Beginning in the 1960s, many young Tuareg men from the entire sub region had moved to Libya to work as wage laborers in the oil industry or as mercenary soldiers in Muammar Qaddafi's army.[264]

While some were incorporated into the regular Libyan military forces, others were inducted into the Libyan-sponsored "Islamic Legion" of militants who were dispatched to Lebanon, Chad and Sudan, where they acquired considerable combat experience.

The dissolution of the Islamic Legion in the late 1980s and the end of multiple conflicts involving Libyan forces saw the return of young male Tuaregs to their home areas throughout the Sahel. However, many of the migrants who settled in Libya were issued identity cards, thereby adding a new component to their identity, namely citizenship and political integration into Libya.[265]

More recently, the Libyan civil uprising (also known as the "Arab Spring") inspired a revolution in Libya in 2011; young Tuareg men were recruited from Northern Mali and Niger into pro-Qaddafi forces in the first months of the uprising. Libyan rebels fighting against Qaddafi's regime reported that these Tuareg fighters had a vested interest in preserving Qaddafi's power structure because of their heavy reliance on the Libyan economy.[266] This highlights the complicated and intertwined nature of these ethnic-political conflicts in the region, and how they can spill over and transform from a local national conflict into a regional one.

Tuareg armed militia (Source: Wikimedia)

Belief System

Belief, Behavior and Practices

Tuareg are predominantly Muslim, but are not regarded as strict observers of Islamic custom. Their religious practices display syncretism[267] and pluralism. Also, elements of pre-Islamic influences persist in some rituals, such as spirit possession, exorcism, and non-Qur'anic healing (mediumship, divination, and herbalism)[268]. Tuareg hold deep belief in spirits, which they consider mostly evil. These spirits are thought to inhabit isolated, deserted places, and are believed to inflict illnesses.

Qur'anic scholars (*ineslemen* or *marabouts*), play an important role in the Tuareg belief system. They are noble men and considered "people of God," and are believed to possess special powers of benediction (*al baraka). Marabouts* also perform important Islamic rituals, such as marrying couples and participating in the "name day" celebration held one week following a child's birth.[269]

A major part of the Tuareg belief system is *Al hima* (meaning "sacred"), which is a Tuareg concept that refers to a protected area or preserved place. This includes tombs as well as other spaces of cultural or religious significance, such as shrines.

Chiefs, healing specialists, and Qur'anic scholars protect *al hima* spaces.[270]Tuareg's cultural beliefs and rituals discourage certain persons from entering *al hima* spaces, or restrict their activities inside them. Such persons include youths, persons of ambiguous status (e.g. artisans), and those of low prestige (e.g. former slaves). *Al hima* spaces are threatened with destruction, whether intended or unintended, by local residents, tourists, government officials, and soldiers who break taboos within these spaces.

Dangers to *al hima* are not limited to secularists and non-Muslims, but include fellow Muslims, like the Arab invaders of the past, and the AQIM militants of present-day.

Music and Festivals

Ichumar (also called *tichumaren* in some regions), is a type of guitar-based music popular among young Tuaregs in Niger and Mali. This music was originally composed and performed by Tuareg rebels, but has since been taken up by bands with a "rock-style." They perform at rites of passage, urban and cultural festivals, holidays, and political rallies.

Ichumar music was originally highly political (and somewhat forbidden) because it criticized colonial and postcolonial domination, and warned of threats to the Tuareg's cultural survival. Currently, these songs address broader themes, but some lyrics continue to commemorate ideals and heroes from the Tuareg rebellion.[271] Additionally, Tuareg host parties called *Zahutten* (from the Arabic word *Zahu*, meaning "pride"). These are regular events staged at the houses of young women. While women are singing at these events, the men are expected to serve food, tea, sugar, and tobacco while women sing.[272]

Another significant Tuareg event is the *Cure Salee* festival ("Festival of the Nomads"), which is an annual gathering of Tuareg and Wodaabe people in the northern Niger town of Ingall. It occurs in the last two weeks of September, and marks the end of the rainy season. Thousands of people from Niger and neighboring countries such as Nigeria, Benin, Algeria, and Libya congregate for this three-day festival. This event has

Tuareg band at a music festival (Source: Wikimedia)

been taking place for hundreds of years, but civil unrest and AQIM activity in the region has hampered these festivities.[273]

Traditional Dress as an Expression of Cultural Values

Tuareg are often referred to as the "People of the Veil" or the "Blue people of the Sahara."[274] This name is derived from the deep blue, indigo-dyed garments that they wear. The name also stems from the fact that perspiration will sometimes transfer dye from these garments to a wearer's skin.

The cultural values of modesty and reserve are expressed in dress and bodily conduct: men almost always wear a face-veil, and women always wear a head scarf.[275] The Tuareg use of head dress is unique; men wear veils instead of the women, and many men will not remove the veil in front of strangers.[276]

Tuareg men wearing their traditional indigo head turbans (Source: Wikimedia)

Tuareg men start wearing the famous blue head cover and veil when they enter the realm of manhood, roughly around the age of 18. Wearing a veil indicates a man's readiness to marry and establish a family. A formal veiling process is performed by the religious noble men in a special ritual.

The fabric that veils the mouth is called *eghewid*; it can indicate the wealth and prestige of the owner. *Eghewid* is considered the main symbol of expressing male honor, pride, and dignity.[277] It is believed that the veil covering of the mouth and nose is to demonstrate respect to chiefs, elderlies and in-laws.[278] Moreover, the mouth of a Tuareg man is considered a private part, and a man preserves his honor by reducing the visibility of his face. This is why they veil the mouth, especially in the presence of a female.

Most women who migrated to the Maghreb maintained their customary dress: a *pagne* and a *tasirnest* (*melhafa* in Arabic), a long veil wrapped around the body, knotted on the shoulders, with the end forming a loosely draped headscarf while their face remained unveiled. Women who had migrated to coastal West Africa adopted the local dress fashion of *boubous* and headscarves.[279]

Conclusion

In identifying several dimensions of the Tuareg culture, this case study highlights the concepts of identity, holism, change, variation, mobilization, and reciprocity in this particular Sahelian community.

This case study has shown that the marginalization of Tuareg in the countries they inhabit have led to their mobilization and rebellion against the governments.

The Tuareg, who refer to themselves as Kel Tamasheq, identify themselves as one big group that extends across several national borders. Most of these people do not consider themselves citizens of any specific nation.

The Tuwareg consider the area that they occupy, 'Azawad,' to be the equivalent of an independent country. Over the years, there have been several unsuccessful attempts by the Tuareg to secede. The Tuareg will very likely continue to aspire for an independent homeland of "Azawad."

Holism is demonstrated through the effect of environmental and political changes on the economic activities of the Tuareg. The arid environment where they live caused most of the Tuareg to become pastoralist.

Changes in the environment, such as desertification, droughts in the 1970s and 1980s, and political unrest, killed a majority of Tuareg livestock. However, the Tuareg demonstrated variation in their response to these changes; some maintained their pastoralist lifestyle; others opted to become sedentary.

Harsh changes in the environment also restructured their social relations after large numbers of Tuareg migrated to other countries to find work. The occasional migration of the Tuareg eventually ceased to be tied to economic necessity: it became a lifestyle that had a culture unto itself.

Finally, reciprocity is evident in the Tuareg community because pastoralists Tuareg have always bartered animal products with food crops from their neighbors, the sedentary farmers.

You might have noticed that the case study does not include all, or even many, of the concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General (OCG). This is only natural: a comprehensive body of literature devoted to the study of a single culture is rare. In fact, Marines are frequently called upon to operate in areas where current information on local culture is scarce.

What the OCG and the chapters in this document were designed to help you learn more about your assigned region. We are offering you the skills and concepts that will help you to operate more effectively in complex cross-cultural situations in any part of the globe, particularly when information is scarce or rapidly changing.

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