



# From Epidemic to Pandemic: Covid-19, Insecurity and Development in the Sahel

Tope Shola Akinyetun\*

## Abstract

Security is a sine qua non for development. The Sahel is a troubled region and is described as the hotbed of insecurity in Africa. This state of insecurity was compounded by the outbreak of Covid-19. This article examines the regional impact of the pandemic on insecurity and development. It uses a meta-analysis and reviews secondary data to underscore the security and development imbroglio in the Sahel within the context of Covid-19. It was found that Covid-19 exacerbated the insecurity threat in the region due to pre-existing weak governance, poor capacity, grievances and climate change, which had already resulted in fragility, food insecurity, displacement, loss of livelihood, poverty, unemployment, hunger and a humanitarian crisis. The study concludes that armed groups took advantage of the health crisis to prolong conflicts which, coupled with the pre-existing economic conditions, became anathema to development. The article recommends that governments in the region should increase their health budget and enhance their capacity to respond to health emergencies such as the Covid-19 outbreak. The article further recommends that governments in the Sahelian states should prioritise good governance, improved security and regional cooperation to combat poverty.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; insecurity; development; Sahel; conflict; fragility; governance

---

\* Department of Political Science, Lagos State University of Education, Lagos, Nigeria.  
Email: [akinyetuntope@gmail.com](mailto:akinyetuntope@gmail.com)

## Résumé

La sécurité est une condition sine qua non du développement. Le Sahel est une région troublée et est décrit comme le foyer de l'insécurité en Afrique. Cet état d'insécurité a été aggravé par l'épidémie de Covid-19. Cet article examine l'impact régional de la pandémie sur l'insécurité et le développement. Il utilise une méta-analyse et passe en revue des données secondaires pour souligner l'imbroglio de la sécurité et du développement au Sahel dans le contexte du Covid-19. Il est révélé que le Covid-19 a exacerbé la menace d'insécurité dans la région en raison de la faiblesse préexistante de la gouvernance, du manque de capacités, des griefs et du changement climatique, déjà sources de fragilité, d'insécurité alimentaire, de personnes déplacées, de perte de moyens de subsistance, de pauvreté, de chômage, de faim et de crise humanitaire. L'étude conclut que les groupes armés ont profité de la crise sanitaire pour prolonger les conflits qui, couplés aux conditions économiques préexistantes, sont devenus un frein au développement. L'article recommande aux gouvernements de la région d'accroître leur budget santé et de renforcer leurs capacités à répondre aux urgences sanitaires telles que l'épidémie de Covid-19. L'article recommande, en outre que les gouvernements des États sahéliens accordent la priorité à la bonne gouvernance, à l'amélioration de la sécurité et à la coopération régionale pour lutter contre la pauvreté.

**Mots-clés** : Covid-19 ; insécurité ; développement ; Sahel ; conflit ; fragilité ; gouvernance

## Introduction

The Sahel is one of the most troubled regions in Africa due to its experience with poverty, low human-capital development and insecurity. The region consists of ten countries, namely Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. It faces a scourge of insecurity perpetrated by violent extremist groups, insurgents, separatists, militant Fulani herders, terrorists and other armed non-state actors. The most popular armed non-state actors in the Sahel (hereafter the region) are Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Ansar al-Din and Macina Liberation Front (FLM), Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), MUJAO/Al-Mourabitoun, Ansarul Islam and Katibat Serma/Katibat AAA. These groups are active in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, while Boko Haram and its splinter group, Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), are active in Nigeria and Chad (Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention 2020; Tarif 2022). These groups are responsible for kidnapping for ransom,

abduction, hostage-taking and human rights violations (Thompson 2021). The incessant violence, attacks, kidnappings and banditry are often cloaked as an ethnic-based crisis and competition for control.

The area is enmeshed in a spiralling crisis and confronted by other serious challenges, such as poverty, internal displacement, climate change and fragile institutions (Bøås and Strazzari 2020). Moreover, the Sahelian states score low on the world fragility index and are categorised as either alert or high-alert states (Fiertz 2021). Of course, the political challenge in one country assumes a transnational stance that affects neighbouring states. Thus, the security threat in one of the Sahel states has implications for the others (UNOWAS 2020).

Meanwhile, it is believed that the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated these security and developmental challenges (Columbo and Harris 2020), and as Lu and Lin (2021) claim, the pandemic led to an increase in economic uncertainty which stimulated insecurity and behavioural change. Such uncertainties, which include unemployment and underemployment, job instability, income loss, salary reduction and depleted savings, lead to mental stress and make people vulnerable to erratic (and violent) behaviour.

Although deadly and contagious diseases are not alien to Africa (it confronted the Ebola epidemic in 2014, for example), Covid-19 impacted the region in an unprecedented way, leading to the diversion of humanitarian and peacekeeping resources to combat it (Chukwufumnaya and Oghuvbu 2020). Further, the pandemic served as a threat multiplier and stressor of pre-existing grievances over perceived inequality, exclusion and marginalisation. As such, the pandemic fuelled long-standing tensions, exacerbated civil unrest and disrupted peacebuilding activities (Ossai 2021). This is corroborated by Obi and Kabandula (2021):

while there is an emerging consensus that Covid-19 is not directly triggering new conflicts or radically altering the levels of pre-pandemic conflicts, there is no doubt of its disruptive impacts in exacerbating socio-economic inequalities and provoking social tensions/unrest that feed drivers of conflict and insecurity. (2021:314)

Although it is suggested that there is little correlation between Covid-19 and conflict (Coning and Ngubane 2021), it is impossible to ignore the fact that non-state actors have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by the pandemic and the underlying prevalent inequality and social contradictions to further their interests (Obi and Kabandula 2021).

It is believed that the developmental and security challenges in the Sahel were exacerbated during the pandemic. Gain (2022) argues that the drop in oil prices led to recession in Niger, Nigeria and Mauritania, while the general restriction of movement inhibited transhumant activities in the Lake Chad Basin. By implication, the recession led to socioeconomic problems such as poverty and unemployment, while the tension between pastoralists and farmers intensified. Meanwhile, the closure of borders and reduction in agricultural activities also led to low agricultural productivity and food insecurity. The overarching effect of these is recurring violence, civil unrest and fragility that threatens to drive the countries in the Sahel to state collapse.

Undertaking this study thus becomes imperative, to pigeonhole the security and development imbroglio in the Sahel within the context of Covid-19. Development here is seen through the lens of Adamolekun (2018), who defines it 'as the enhancement of the quality of life of citizens: meeting the basic needs for food, shelter, good health and education, and a general sense of well-being' (2018:2). According to Al-Saidi, Saad and Elagib (2022), Covid-19 was a stressor for developmental and economic challenges, especially in a region with pre-existing vulnerability. Moreover, given that security is transnational, this challenge—if left unaddressed—poses a great risk to neighbouring African countries and may increase the incidence of migration and global humanitarian crises.

Although a plethora of studies have been devoted to the discourse on Covid-19 and its effect on society (Akanmu et al 2021; Akinyetun *et al.* 2021c; Chukwufumnaya and Oghuvbu 2020; Coning 2021; Iweze 2020; Lu and Lin 2021), a global crisis like the coronavirus pandemic alters the workings of the international system and disrupts the sociopolitical norms of regions differently (Chukwufumnaya and Oghuvbu 2020). It is given this realisation that this study examines the regional implications of the disease, particularly on security and development. This interest is based on the presupposition that security is a sine qua non for development and therefore the impact of the pandemic on the security of the region will have a knock-on effect on its development. This study, therefore, reviews secondary data sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, briefs, reports, working papers and Internet sources from notable and credible organisations to present a coherent discussion.

The next section is an appraisal of the Sahel as a troubled hotbed of insecurity. This is followed by an overview of the onset of Covid-19 in Africa. The fourth section reviews the impact of Covid-19 on insecurity and development in the Sahel with particular reference to security threats, human security and widespread economic challenges. The paper then ends with a conclusion.

## The Sahel

The Sahel defines the vast 5,900 km area of arid land in sub-Saharan Africa that spans the continent, from the Atlantic coast in West Africa to the Red Sea in East Africa. The region lies south of the Sahara Desert separating the desert to the north and the tropical savanna to the south (between 10° and 20°N). The region comprises ten countries (see Figure 1): Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Mauritania and The Gambia, as well as the states that border Lake Chad—Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and Niger (Biasutti 2019; Tomalka *et al.* 2021). The region has attracted enormous scholarship due to its strategic location and contrasting position as a land of opportunities and challenges. The Sahel is a region blessed with abundant natural resources, yet it is characterised by poverty and developmental quandaries. As a region with a youthful population, the challenge of youth unemployment and youth grievance has increased the chances of radicalisation and violence. In addition, the area is plagued with a humanitarian crisis, climate change, energy poverty and dwindling resources, thereby fomenting insecurity and insurgency in the region. As a result, this section examines the Sahel and discusses the main challenges undermining its development.



**Figure 1:** The Sahel region, Africa

Source: United Nations (2021)

### ***A Troubled Region***

The Sahel is a land of opportunities and challenges. It is richly endowed with human, energy and natural resources (UN 2020), yet it is the world's most neglected and conflict-ridden region (Skretteberg 2019). The Sahel is best viewed using a climatic and territorial prism, as it refers to the zone between the savanna and the Sahara (Kwasi *et al.* 2019). The region comprises poor and insecure countries with the world's harshest climate. Its low-income, least business-friendly and low-purchasing-power-parity states earn their income largely from minerals and oil. Over 40 per cent (about 33 million) of the 81 million people in the G5 Sahel countries (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad) live in extreme poverty, while the workforce is engaged in subsistence agriculture that is disconnected from the rest of the economy (Kwasi *et al.* 2019).

The region also has a significantly growing population, with a 2.5–4.0 per cent growth rate and a fertility rate between 4.1 and 7.6 children per woman (May and Guengant 2014). For instance, Niger's population, one of the fastest-growing in the world, is projected to increase by 175 per cent in 2050, from 24.2 million people to 65 million. However, the non-commensurate resource capacity means that competition for the available resources will continue to cause conflict. This was the case in Mali in 2019, when the dispute between Fulani herders from Burkina Faso and Malawian villagers in Mali led to the death of over thirty people (Vision of Humanity 2021).

Characterised by bad governance, a non-functional social contract and challenged state legitimacy, the Sahel is one of the most politically fragile regions in the world. This is the result of multifaceted challenges, such as the 2011 and 2012 Libya and Mali crises and the proliferation of jihadi insurgencies coupled with prolonged socioeconomic calamities such as climate change, population growth, widespread poverty and resource scarcity (Osland and Erstad 2020). The fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 saw an influx of armed Tuareg fighters from Libya to Mali, which became an enabler of armed rebels in the region. This, together with the rise of jihadist groups such as ISGS and JNIM in Africa saw the conflict in the region escalate. These groups took advantage of domestic conflict and anti-state proclivity to challenge state legitimacy by providing informal governance where the state was failing (Bøås, Osland and Erstad 2019). The groups have since multiplied and spread to neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso (Skretteberg 2019).

## Hotbed of Insecurity

The Sahel is described as a hotbed of transborder security threats that contribute in no small measure to illegal migration and the European refugee crisis (Osland and Erstad 2020). Insecurity in the region is contagious due to its vast ungoverned spaces with little or no government presence, which encourages violent extremists to move cattle and weapons across porous borders (Muggah and Cabrera 2019). The internal and external borders of these states allow transborder mobility and criminal activities such as trafficking, smuggling, illegal migration and terrorism (UNECA 2017). Insecurity in the area is perpetuated by multiple armed groups, state violence, counterinsurgency operations, inter-communal attacks, community attacks and Fulani-herder conflicts. This has led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and massive displacement in Northwest Nigeria, Tillaberi region in Niger, Mopti in Mali and Soum in Burkina Faso—among other areas. As a result, there has also been an increase in food insecurity, hunger and multidimensional poverty.

The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in the region increased from less than two million in 2014 to over seven million in 2021, three million of whom are from Nigeria. Meanwhile, the most vulnerable groups are girls and women who are susceptible to violence, physical, sexual and psychological abuse and limited access to education (Tarif 2022).

The security threats in the area are also attributable to the competition for scarce resources occasioned by climate change. There has been a long-standing conflict between the Fulani herders and farmers in Mali. This conflict is traceable to the domination of Ogossagou Dogon by the Fulani of Ogossagou Peul in the nineteenth century, and the subsequent displacement of the Dogon and their integration as slaves (Rimaybe). The conflict intensified in recent times and attracted international attention when Dogon hunters killed 175 Fulanis (a majority of whom were children) in Ogossagou, Mali on 23 March 2019, and when thirty-one Fulanis were killed on 14 February 2020. It is well beyond the popular ethnic conflict colouration or climate-change-induced conflict but results from insurgency by the Fulani and counterinsurgency by the Dogon militia (Benjaminsen and Ba 2021).

It is not uncommon for herders to migrate in search of fertile lands for their cattle to graze. This leads to a clash between them and farmers over farmlands and, sometimes, water. This is evident in Niger where the concentration of herders and farmers in pastoral and cultivation zones leads to competition for resource use. As a result, herders in Niger and Nigeria have become accustomed to carrying small arms and light weapons, which

eventuates in intracommunal violence. The farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria mirror the activity of an organised militant group that uses sophisticated weapons to raid villages in the Middle Belt region of the country, leading to loss of life and property, displacement and food shortages (Tarif 2022).

In 2018, the Sahel countries, especially Mali, experienced an unprecedented level of violence and fatality due to intercommunal conflicts between farmers and herders; Burkina Faso recorded an increase in jihadist attacks; in Niger, there were protests and border violence; in Nigeria's Middle Belt a herder-farmer crisis described as deadlier than Boko Haram was witnessed (Muggah and Cabrera 2019).

Combatting insecurity in the region has proven difficult due to the interconnectedness of the countries' security concerns, which is captured in the idea of a regional security complex. This is defined by Buzan (1983:105) as 'a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national security cannot realistically be considered apart from one another'. Indeed, the Sahelian crisis presents a fragility dilemma—the choice between providing external assistance and unintentionally promoting dictatorship or illegitimacy. Countries in the Sahel are caught in this trap, as they continue to receive aid for being potential sources of global terrorism, large contributors to illegal migration and nearness to Europe, yet are characterised by low administrative capacity and vulnerability to varying conditions (Bøås 2019; Osland and Erstad 2020).

## **Covid-19, Insecurity and Development in the Sahel**

### ***Covid-19 in Africa***

The discovery of a novel severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), dubbed Covid-19, was reported in Wuhan City, China, in December 2019. The highly contagious disease quickly spread around the world in a short period and was consequently declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020 (Lone and Ahmad 2020). The first case in Africa was recorded in Egypt on 14 February 2020, while the first sub-Saharan Africa case was reported in Nigeria thirteen days later.

That the impact of Covid-19 was devastating is an aphorism. By May 2022, there were 456,797,217 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 6,043,094 deaths globally (WHO 2022). The disease affected many countries of the world in different ways that some are yet to recover from. Africa was projected to be the most vulnerable continent to the pandemic due to its prevalence of poor health facilities, shortage of medical personnel,



environmental challenges, poverty and weak institutions (Lone and Ahmad 2020). However, countries such as the UK and USA with state-of-the-art health facilities and advanced preparation were more severely affected and struggled harder to contain the pandemic compared to the African continent (Awoyemi *et al.* 2022). By the end of 2020, with a fatality rate of 2.4 per cent compared to North America's 2.9 per cent and Europe's 4.5 per cent, it was clear that the anticipated disaster in Africa did not materialise (Obi and Kabandula 2021).

In May 2022, a total of 11,321,958 cases and 250,292 deaths were recorded in Africa (ACDC 2022) compared to Europe's 188,233,608 cases (WHO 2022). Africa's low fatality rate was attributable in part to limited testing capacity, which meant that it was likely there were many unreported cases (ACDC 2020). It was also attributable to Africa's youthful population and settlement patterns. More than half of the African population are rural dwellers with limited opportunities to travel (Coning 2021). However, although the cases of Covid-19 in the Sahel nations are low by international standards, the virus nonetheless had a devastating effect on the security and economy of the countries in the region.

Fragility is a subsisting crisis in the Sahel that created a fault-line for the aggravation of the region's vulnerability to Covid-19. This section examines the pre-existing insecurity and development imbroglio in the Sahel by comparing data of the challenges pre-Covid-19 and during Covid-19 to ascertain the nexus of the incidence of the pandemic and the intensification of these challenges.

There is a long history between epidemics and wars, dating to the Plague of Athens in the fifth century BCE. Meanwhile, about a century ago, a mass movement of the civilian population on the eve of the First World War sparked the spread of the influenza virus (Gugushvili and McKee 2022). However, the Covid-19 pandemic presented a greater challenge in sub-Saharan Africa due to its low health expenditure (about 5 per cent of total GDP) and shortage of medical personnel, which makes the states ill-prepared for a pandemic (ACDC 2020; UNDP 2020). Beyond the health implications, it is believed that the pandemic presented the opportunity for conflict escalation by fuelling pre-existing conflicts, especially between vulnerable social groups and the government, and evoking new geopolitical tensions which, if not properly managed, will lead to state collapse (Gugushvili and McKee 2022; WEF 2021).

Gugushvili and McKee (2022) claim that there is a symbiotic and bidirectional relationship between Covid-19 and conflict. They aver that 'circumstances associated with wars may facilitate pandemic spread; on the

other hand, Covid-19 has already heightened xenophobia and nationalism, which in turn can encourage armed confrontations' (2022:16). For instance, between March and April 2020, the number of violent attacks in the region rose by 37 per cent (Columbo and Harris 2020). The diversion of government and security forces to the pressing needs of the pandemic presented armed groups in the region with the opportunity to increase their transborder operations (Dahir 2020).

Further, Covid-19 got in the way of sustaining peace in conflict-ridden areas in Africa (Abdel-Latif 2020). Ossai (2021) observes that the Covid-19 pandemic hurt the peacebuilding process in Africa. The pandemic led to the suspension of democratic freedoms and increased the extent of government power, with the ability to declare lockdowns, restrict movement and encroach on human rights. The diversion of security forces towards ensuring compliance with Covid-19 protocols emboldened terrorist groups and increased the chances of resistance and violence. Obi and Kabandula (2021) add that government enforcement of lockdown protocols led to the violation of human rights in states like South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. As Chukwufumnaya and Oghuvbu (2020) argue, the pandemic posed a great threat not only to public health but to the guarantee of human rights. There were reports of human rights violations during the pandemic arising from the enforcement of lockdown rules, while people struggled to access health facilities, as in Mali and Burkina Faso. The activities of peacebuilding networks such as the African Union and the United Nations were halted by restricted travel (Coning 2021).

In addition, the countries in the region were challenged by governance crises, particularly in the delivery of public services. According to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (2020), which measures governance in African states using indicators such as security, participation, economic opportunity and human development, among others, states in the Sahel performed poorly in governance, except for Chad, Senegal and the Gambia, while some states experienced a negative trend. As presented in Table 1, Nigeria recorded an index score of -9 in the year of review (2010–2019), indicating that the country had the worst governance record in the region. This is followed by Mali (-8), Niger (-4), Cameroon (-3), Guinea (-2) and Burkina Faso (-2). By implication, six countries in the Sahel had a negative governance record between 2010 and 2019. This is an indication of a pre-existing governance crisis that aggravated vulnerability to the Covid-19 pandemic, an argument which is substantiated by Gain (2022) who opined that the crisis of weak governance that predated Covid-19 in the Sahel worsened the pandemic experience and threatened state legitimacy. Gain argues that the coup in Mali and civil unrest in Burkina Faso were indicators of poor governance. This subsisting governance crisis

impeded the ability of Sahelian states to respond to the daunting challenge of the pandemic, which revealed the governments' poor capacity to manage public emergencies and deliver public services. Although some governments announced palliative measures and conditional cash transfer schemes, these efforts were tarnished by corruption and insincerity.

As a result of the pandemic, some elections were postponed, and where they were held there was a low turnout in some cases. Chad postponed its December 2020 legislative elections to April 2021, whereas the elections in Mali and Burkina Faso took place in April and November 2020 respectively as scheduled, but with a low voter turnout. Mali recorded a 35 per cent voter turnout. The implication of this is that while many citizens could not perform their civic responsibility for fear of contracting the virus some governments used the opportunity to extend their stay in office (ACDC 2020). Meanwhile, in the elections in Niger and Burkina Faso there was evidence of manipulation, logistic challenges such as delays and reduced numbers of international observers, health risks and higher costs (Obi and Kabandula 2021). This is a dangerous precedent that has implications for voter apathy in a fragile society, as found in the region, and is an indication of how the pandemic threatened the level of fragility in the region.

**Table 1:** Governance Index in the Sahel, 2015–2019

LOCATION	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	RANK	CHANGE 2015- 2019
Africa	48.6	48.7	48.8	49.0	48.8	n/a	-
Burkina Faso	55.7	56.1	57.6	57.1	54.0	17	-2
Cameroon	45.4	44.9	43.9	43.2	43.5	37	-3
Chad	33.0	32.4	33.1	33.4	33.9	47	+2
The Gambia	44.6	44.9	55.3	57.4	55.9	16	+11
Guinea	41.8	43.0	43.1	42.9	42.5	39	-2
Mali	49.4	49.0	47.9	46.6	46.6	31	-8
Mauritania	38.6	39.6	39.9	40.3	41.6	40	+1
Niger	48.0	47.7	48.3	47.0	47.8	28	-4
Nigeria	48.9	48.4	46.7	46.6	45.5	34	-9
Senegal	62.8	63.4	62.7	62.8	63.2	9	0

Source: IIAG (2020)

According to the Fragile State Index (2019, 2020, 2021) presented in Table 2, most of the states in the region are described as alert (scoring between 90 and 100) or high-alert states (scoring between 100 and 110). The index, which measures indicators such as state legitimacy, public services, human rights, rule of law, uneven development, economic decline, group grievance and cohesion, reveals that most of the states in the region experienced a decline in score following the pandemic. In particular, Burkina Faso, which scored 83.9 (and ranked 47) before the pandemic, recorded an increase in score during the pandemic (85.9) and a further increase after the pandemic (87.1). In Mali, there was also an upward change in score and rank before, during and after the peak of the pandemic, while in Mauritania and Nigeria, the increase in scores was recorded after the peak. This indicates that the fragility of the countries in the Sahel was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is supported by Kristensen and Harrison (2021), who argue that Covid-19 restricted civic space and became a pretext for promoting political repression. They note that autocratic governments in Burkina Faso and Nigeria used the pandemic as a cover to subvert the hitherto weak democratic governance. The group (youth) grievance in Nigeria against police brutality, codenamed #EndSARS, and that government's repressive response is a case in point. The authors further note that Covid-19 increased the risk of fragility in the world.

**Table 2:** Changes in the Fragility Index in the Sahel, 2019–2021

COUNTRY	2019		2020		2021	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Burkina Faso	83.9	47	85.9	37	87.1	36
Cameroon	97.9	16	97.9	11	97.2	15
Chad	108.5	7	106.4	7	105.8	7
The Gambia	83.9	47	82.2	51	80.5	55
Guinea	99.4	11	97.2	15	97.4	14
Mali	94.5	21	96.0	16	96.6	19
Mauritania	90.1	31	88.7	33	89.1	33
Niger	96.2	18	95.3	19	96.0	21
Nigeria	98.5	14	97.3	14	98.0	12
Senegal	77,2	66	74.6	71	73.4	76

Source: Fiertz (2021); Messner, Latour and Grathwohl (2020); Messner (2019)

It is also believed that the political elite takes advantage of competition between groups and resource-based conflicts to escalate violence, particularly during election periods. This was the case in Mali and Burkina Faso where

the elite escalated local conflicts between identity groups to intensify conflict (Tarif 2022). Obi and Kabandula (2021) note that, like armed non-state actors, state actors also took advantage of state paralysis and poor economic conditions in the Sahel to drive social unrest and advance their agenda. In what is referred to as pandemic politics, governments used the pretext of enforcing Covid-19 protocols to promote repression against opposition and minority groups; in some cases, elections were postponed without justification. Such high-handed enforcement neglected the local risk factors of vulnerable groups and damaged trust in the government (Coning 2021).

Obi and Kabandula (2021) also claim that the pandemic impacted on regional and international responses to conflict in Africa. Due to dwindling resources and the economic demands of the pandemic, funds earmarked for peacekeeping missions were diverted to address the health crisis, just as travel restrictions and lockdowns imposed by various governments limited peace operations significantly, thus giving insurgents more opportunity to gather and sponsor attacks. In addition to increasing the spate of conflicts, this compounded the existing humanitarian crises in the region (Coning 2021) and increased the incidence of displacement. This was alluded to by Dahir (2020), who argued that Covid-19 further strained the violent situation in a volatile and vulnerable region like the Sahel and increased the spate of displacement. There was a rise in the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and people fleeing their homes. In mid-2019 in Mali, over 133,000 people had fled their homes; in 2020 an estimated 240,000 internally displaced persons were recorded in that country, while 489,000 and 921,000 had fled their homes in Niger and Burkina Faso and 25,000 refugees moved into Mali from Burkina Faso. Amid the lockdowns and movement restrictions many of these people were forced to live in underequipped and overpopulated camps located in border areas shared by Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso.

According to the WEF (2021), the humanitarian crisis created by the pandemic was aggravated by a lack of social protection for informal workers. This is supported by evidence from ACDC (2020), that the lockdown severely affected the informal sector, which accounts for a significant proportion of the population in the region. In Mali, the informal sector employs 73 per cent of the population, while 95 per cent of the urban population in Burkina Faso work in the informal sector. Moreover, given that pastoralism is a major occupation in the region, the attendant lockdown and movement restrictions constrained herders from roving with or trading their cattle, thus disrupting their means of livelihood. The containment measures introduced in African countries had unintended consequences on people's livelihood and particularly on the economy. Many Africans working in the informal economy lost their jobs and were unable to support their families.

The lockdowns also meant that job opportunities in the formal sector were reduced. This exposed prior susceptibilities, strained social cohesion and exacerbated frustration (Coning 2021).

### ***Deteriorating Human Security***

Human security is defined by Akinyetun *et al.* (2021c) as:

including peoples' safety from hunger, disease, and repression, including harmful disruptions of daily life. It focuses on social and economic causes and an assumed international responsibility to protect peoples from violence. It encompasses areas such as food security, health security, personal security, community security and the protection of women and minorities. (2021c: 43).

Given the above description, it is safe to aver that Covid-19 impacted negatively on human security in the region, considering its devastating effect on food security, hunger and the vulnerable, among other factors. As history has shown, the outbreak of infectious diseases weakens health, reduces productivity and leads to food insecurity and a low GDP (Ossai 2021). Before the outbreak of the pandemic, the Sahel had been challenged by food insecurity; the pandemic exposed the extent of lack of capacity and unpreparedness of the governments in the region and the susceptibility of the food sub-sector in Africa (Chukwufumnaya and Oghuvbu 2020). As the Global Food Security Index (2021) presented in Table 3 shows, most states in the Sahel experienced a decline in food security during the pandemic, with a significant decline recorded in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Chad.

**Table 3:** Food Security Index during the pandemic

COUNTRY	RANK	2019	2020
Burkina Faso	85th	49.5	46.8
Cameroon	92nd	44.4	43.9
Chad	99th	43.8	41.7
The Gambia	-	-	-
Guinea	96th	40.6	42.8
Mali	76th	53.1	52.7
Mauritania	-	-	-
Niger	88th	49.8	49.9
Nigeria	97th	42.6	41.2
Senegal	89th	48.1	45.5

Source: Global Food Security Index (2021)

## *Climate Change*

Before the pandemic, climate change had increased the temperature of the region by 1.5 degrees. As expected, this led to a decrease in farming activities and increased the chances of poor harvests, famine, hunger, drought and food insecurity. Meanwhile, the conflicts in the region were provoking massive displacements and disruption of economic activities. The Covid-19 pandemic curtailed agricultural activities further, thereby leading to additional loss of income and livelihood and intensifying food insecurity.

Climate change remains a major factor causing food insecurity in the region. It has affected not only agriculture but also up to 50 million nomads who depend on their cattle for a living. With limited access to water and scarce resources, when these nomads come into contact with farmers this often sparks conflict—as in Mali, Nigeria and Chad, among other pastoral regions—leading to further food insecurity. In 2017, about 33 million people in the region were food-insecure (Skretteberg 2019). According to FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2021), climate change has led to irregular rainfall and, in extreme cases, floods, which threaten the livelihood of rural households who are especially vulnerable to these worsening climatic conditions. Meanwhile, ‘climate change increase[s] both the risk and severity of violent conflict’ (Tarif 2022:1). This is because ‘conflict and war have long been accepted as significant constraints to development’ (Lone and Ahmad 2020:373). Herein lies the elongation of conflict in the Sahel as occasioned by climate change. As Osland and Erstad (2020) observe, where pastoralism is a key occupation, adapting to a deteriorating climatic condition is difficult.

Furthermore, there is the challenge of vulnerable groups—the elderly, women, youth, unskilled workers and minorities—being especially affected by the pandemic (WEF 2021). The pandemic affected men and women differently. According to the World Health Organization (2020), women make up a significant ratio of the labour in sub-Saharan Africa, and for them the impact of the pandemic transcended job loss. It exposed women to gender-based violence and limited access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services. The WHO claims that live births, use of control pills and cases of caesarean sections dropped by 21 per cent, 90 per cent and 42 per cent respectively in selected African countries. In addition, births with skilled attendants dropped from 30,826 in 2019 to 4,749 in 2020, indicating the absence of health workers; many had been reassigned to the frontlines to shore up the decline in professional health workers needed to care for Covid-19

patients. Obi and Kabandula (2021) claim that the pandemic increased the incidence of gender-based violence, following reports of security forces abusing girls and women for defying lockdown protocols; some were raped during patrols. This form of abuse during the pandemic has been described as a shadow pandemic—a pandemic during the pandemic.

### *Widespread Economic Challenges*

Except for Cameroon, a medium human-development state, all the states in the Sahel are low human-development states (UNDP 2020). They are generally characterised by a low human-development index, high multidimensional poverty index (which deteriorated in some states and remained stagnant in others with the occurrence of the pandemic), high gender-inequality index, high incidence of child malnutrition, a low health expenditure (as a percentage of GDP), high incidence of internally displaced persons, and a low skilled labour force (see Table 4). It is within this framework that the discussion on the Sahel is presented and the impact of Covid 19 is appraised.

**Table 4:** Development in the Sahel

COUNTRY	HDI 2019	MPI 2019	MPI 2020	GII	CM (%)	HE (% OF GDP)	IDP ('000s)	SLB	EIA (%)
Burkina Faso	0.452	-	-	0.594	24.9	6.9	560.0	5.0	25.2
Cameroon	0.563	0.243	0.232	0.560	28.9	4.7	969.0	19.9	43.4
Chad	0.398	0.533	0.517	0.710	39.8	4.5	176.0	7.6	76.6
The Gambia	0.496	0.204	0.204	0.612	19.0	3.3	-	35.0	27.1
Guinea	0.477	0.373	0.373	-	30.3	4.1	-	-	61.7
Mali	0.434	0.376	0.376	0.671	26.9	3.8	208.0	5.8	62.6
Mauritania	0.546	0.261	0.261	0.634	22.8	4.4	-	8.2	51.3
Niger	0.394	-	-	0.642	48.5	7.7	195.0	4.0	75.1
Nigeria	0.539	0.254	0.254	-	36.8	3.8	2,583	41.4	35.1
Senegal	0.512	0.288	0.263	0.533	18.8	4.1	8.4	10.8	30.0

Key: HDI – Human Development Index; MPI – Multidimensional Poverty Index; GII – Gender Inequality Index; CM – Child Malnutrition; HE – Health Expenditure; IDP – Internally Displaced Persons; SLB – Skilled Labour Force; EIA – Employment in Agriculture

Source: UNDP (2020, 2021)



Africa may have been spared the fatality rates of Covid-19 compared to the West, but it was not spared the intensification of vulnerabilities and the aggravation of pre-existing economic challenges (Abdel-Latif 2020). It is believed that Covid-19 affected development in the Sahel. To be sure, development is an important matter for all countries in the world. Among its indicators—such as education, social amenities, energy and healthcare (Edomah 2020)—health has serious far-reaching consequences for economic growth (Kinyondo and Pelizzo 2021). After all, health is wealth. If this is so, then the resultant effect of Covid-19 on economic growth is a reflection of the resilience of the health sector.

Kinyondo and Pelizzo (2021) claim that improved economic growth has been recorded in Africa since the beginning of the millennium. This is attributable to enhanced governance occasioned by the spread of democracy, increase in foreign direct investment, public health, the rise of new international players like China, and the cancellation of African debt. The absence of one of these factors, as occasioned by the pandemic, can lead to economic loss. The pandemic led to the loss of lives, the shutdown of key sectors of the economy, loss of income and reduced trade.

The majority of the countries in the Sahel are low-income states that are highly susceptible to external shock. As a result, the outbreak of the pandemic and its attendant lockdowns strained already embattled macroeconomic environments. The landlocked nations of Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali were seriously impacted because of their reliance on the seaports of their neighbouring countries. The pandemic denied them access to goods, basic commodities, exports and medical equipment (ACDC 2020). It was projected by experts that due to the continent's vulnerability to external shock, the continent would experience a recession not seen in over two decades, with a decline in growth from 2.4 per cent to -2 per cent to -5 per cent. Household income and consumption were projected to decline between 7 per cent and 14 per cent as a result of the food crisis (Micah 2020). According to the World Bank (2022), the states in the Sahel—except Guinea—recorded a downward revision in GDP during the pandemic (Table 5).

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, the drop in international oil consumption and price had severe economic impacts. Akinyetun *et al.* (2021a) observed that, as a result of the pandemic, Nigeria (a monoproduct and petrodollar economy) experienced reduced foreign exchange earnings, low fiscal revenue and an increase in the inflation rate, leading to a budget deficit of 50 per cent in 2020. The economic contraction increased the incidence of poverty and unemployment, which rose from 20.9 million in 2019 to 39.4 million in December 2020.

**Table 5:** GDP growth for Sahelian states 2019–2022

COUNTRY	2019	2020	2021e	2022f
Burkina Faso	5.7	1.9	6.7	5.6
Cameroon	3.7	0.7	3.4	4.0
Chad	3.2	-0.9	0.9	1.8
The Gambia	6.2	-0.2	4.0	6.0
Guinea	5.6	7.1	5.2	6.1
Mali	4.8	-1.6	4.0	5.2
Mauritania	5.8	-1.8	2.7	4.1
Niger	5.9	3.6	5.5	6.2
Nigeria	2.2	-1.8	2.4	2.5
Senegal	4.4	1.5	4.7	5.5

e= estimate; f= forecast

Source: World Bank (2022)

Coning (2021) claims that, excepting a few countries like South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, which provided an economic stimulus for businesses, tax relief and free water, most African states did not provide social protection measures and ended up deepening poverty in Africa generally, and in the Sahel region particularly. Although poverty was a common phenomenon in Africa before Covid-19, it is believed that the pandemic pushed 150 million people—9.4 per cent of the world’s population—to extreme poverty (WEF 2021). According to the World Bank (2021), the most vulnerable groups are youth, women and informal-sector workers who lack access to social safety nets. Workers of the informal sector are mostly employed by small-scale enterprises, which could not withstand the impact of the pandemic. Many enterprises stopped operations temporarily, whereas several closed down permanently. The effect was increased unemployment and pervasive poverty.

For an area characterised by a low human-development index, growing poverty and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, the development projections for the achievement of Agenda 2030 and 2063 suffered setbacks. The situation was further complicated by protracted conflict in the region (ACDC 2020). As Akinyetun *et al.* (2021b) note, sub-Saharan Africa—which before the pandemic had become a locus of insurgency and international terrorism—experienced an upswing in attacks during the pandemic, which led to the death of civilians and security forces, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin (Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon).

Extremist groups took advantage of the worsened economic conditions to radicalise frustrated and unemployed youths (Akinyetun *et al.* 2021c). The pandemic significantly increased youth unemployment and the contraction of GDP in many African countries due to low remittances and a decrease in exports (Abdel-Latif 2020). Even though the economic and environmental effects of the pandemic are yet to be fully quantified, it is clear that it increased unemployment: about 495 million jobs—14 per cent of the global workforce—were lost within six months (WEF 2021). The pandemic also increased the chances of inequality, business collapse, stagnation, loss of potential, uneven recovery and difficulty in achieving sustainable development. Indeed, the alteration to social interaction, the loss of jobs, social isolation and lack of education threaten social cohesion among the youth and may engender disillusionment, which further poses a threat to democratic consolidation. This is because the interplay of unemployment and inequality subjects youths to risks and, by extension, social cohesion erosion (Akinyetun *et al.* 2021c; WEF 2021). After all, ‘too many people have little left to lose’ (WEF 2021: 20).

In Nigeria, where about 39.5 million jobs were lost during the pandemic, Covid-19-induced unemployment became an enabler of cybercrime (Akinyetun *et al.* 2021c). This was occasioned by the extended lockdown and pre-existing food insecurity. Ossai (2021) concurs that cybercrime and robbery became an alternative in the south of the country, while in the north, communal conflicts, banditry and attacks by ISWAP increased during the period, leading to protests by residents of affected communities. This was amplified by anger against the government for not providing financial support to mitigate the effect of the lockdowns. Although ‘the damages inflicted through cybercrime usually take time to be noticed and may have far greater implications’ (Akinyetun *et al.* 2021c: 45), it contributes to economic instability and impedes economic security.

The pandemic also drove an estimated 768 million people in Africa into hunger (the number stood at 650 million in 2019). It has been particularly devastating for children under the age of five who experienced stunting and malnutrition arising from the lack of nutrition during the pandemic. There was a 1.5 per cent rise in undernourishment in the world in 2020, to 9.9 per cent. Of this number, Africa accounted for 282 million undernourished people—46 million more than in 2019 (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2021). The trend is also attributable to conflict and climate-related disasters that impeded the production, harvesting, processing, transporting, financing, marketing and consumption of products. The ongoing conflict in the region and climate variability not only destroyed agricultural products but

also disrupted the agricultural process, thus leading to low productivity, low income, food insecurity and hunger. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic restricted the movement of farmers, goods and services and increased the chances of hunger. The knock-on effect of these disruptions was the destruction of the food value chain and stunting of non-food agro-industry growth.

The disease also led to a decrease in income for most African states. For oil-producing countries like Nigeria, Angola, DR Congo and Algeria, the decline in oil consumption occasioned by travel bans and lockdowns led to a drop in income, economic growth and GDP. For countries like South Africa, where the mining industry employs about 420,000 people, the sector was impacted by the weakened demand for iron ore, steel and lithium, which left a huge number of people unemployed and vulnerable. Meanwhile, in countries where tourism contributes significantly to the economy, like Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia, the pandemic disrupted and impacted the sector, leaving many people unemployed. Generally, the aviation sector in various countries became unproductive due to the ban on travel in many parts of the world, leading to loss of revenue for private individuals and taxes for the government. Indeed, there was a reduction in the flow of remittances and foreign direct investments during the pandemic. The period also recorded increased capital flight (Lone and Ahmad 2020; Micah 2020).

## **Conclusion**

Insecurity in Africa is a complex situation that requires a comprehensive, yet dynamic framework to be understood, owing to its multifaceted causation. Conflict in the region was influenced by marginalisation, worsening living conditions, political grievance, competition for resources occasioned by climate change, environmental degradation, increasing migration, weak governance, identity politics, elite manipulation, and then the Covid-19 pandemic—a global phenomenon with regional implications. Security in the region came under further threat during the pandemic due to a repositioning of state priorities—from counterinsurgency to border security to contain the spread of the virus—and a shift in insurgents' operations as a result of their reduced income. The pandemic also affected regional and international responses to conflict in Africa. Due to dwindling resources and the economic effects of the pandemic, funds earmarked for peacekeeping were diverted to address the health crisis, and travel restrictions and lockdowns limited peace operations significantly. This gave insurgents the opportunity to gather and sponsor attacks. Put differently, as states find it difficult to fund military

operations due to the economic impact of the pandemic, new domestic and armed groups become encouraged and empowered to take advantage of the lacuna to renew conflicts and sponsor inter-group attacks.

It is believed that the economic impact of the pandemic varies across regions, with low-income countries—as found in the Sahel—the worst hit due to the pre-existing disparity in access to education, security, income, technology and healthcare. Meanwhile, limited access to technology meant that many were left behind when schools and businesses moved their operations online. The pandemic not only affected citizens' wellbeing by reducing household income but also led to a fall in fiscal revenue, foreign exchange and foreign financial flow due to travel restrictions and a decline in demand for oil products. It caused a rise in unemployment and a surge in crime, including cybercrime, gender-based violence, abuse, looting and brutality. Within a short space of time, Covid-19 disrupted the efforts and progress made by peacebuilders. It is therefore expected that these peacebuilding networks will need to adapt to the new arrangement of curtailed travel. This might have a long-term effect on the spate of conflict in the region because peacebuilding efforts and mediation require face-to-face communication to be effective.

Given the findings, the paper recommends that attention be paid to security in the Sahel through regional cooperation and by sustaining the existing joint force operations and creating more units to reduce the incidence of arms proliferation, illegal migration and transnational organised crime. In addition, policies targeted at mitigating the effects of climate change must be initiated and fully implemented across the Sahelian states. This will reduce confrontation between herders and farmers and enable farmers to withstand the environmental impact and prevent a food crisis.

Governments in the region should also increase their health budget and enhance their capacity to respond to health emergencies such as the Covid-19 outbreak. Moreover, efforts to combat multidimensional poverty and unemployment through wealth creation, entrepreneurship and other welfare schemes should be initiated and sustained. This will reduce the vulnerability to violence and set the stage for the rehabilitation of armed groups and insurgents. Furthermore, conflict resolution should be promoted, particularly among competing and identity-based groups. This will decrease the chances of conflict escalation and arms proliferation. In the same vein, education and peace programmes should be sponsored by the various governments in conjunction with civil society to build a society of cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Finally, it is pertinent that states in the Sahel promote good governance. As Kofi Annan said, ‘good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development’ (UN 1998). Good governance is not just about building a virile civil society or an effective state, it emphasises the promotion of development. It is recommended that states in the Sahel should promote good governance practices that emphasise civic engagement, inclusiveness, rural governance, citizen participation in decision-making, accountability, transparency, human rights, independent judiciary and the rule of law. This practice must give prominence to the vulnerable and marginalised groups—youths, women, minorities and the elderly.

## References

- Abdel-Latif, A., 2020, Covid-19 and North Africa: Impact and resilience. ACCORD. <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/covid-19-and-north-africa-impact-and-resilience/>.
- Adamolekun, L., 2018, Some reflections on democracy and development in Africa. African Peacebuilding Network Lecture Series No 2. [https://s3.amazonaws.com/ssrc-cdn1/crmuploads/new\\_publication\\_3/some-reflections-on-democracy-and-development-in-africa.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/ssrc-cdn1/crmuploads/new_publication_3/some-reflections-on-democracy-and-development-in-africa.pdf).
- Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (ACDC), 2020, The impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on governance, peace and security in the Sahel. Regional Brief. [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39871-doc-190121\\_impact\\_of\\_covid\\_on\\_governance\\_peace\\_security\\_in\\_sahel\\_version\\_9.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39871-doc-190121_impact_of_covid_on_governance_peace_security_in_sahel_version_9.pdf)
- Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (ACDC), 2022, Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19). <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>
- Akanmu, A.A., Salisu, U O., Daramola, O.P., Ogunsesan, A.S., Fasina, S.O., Adejare, J.A., Sanni, S.M., and Olatunji, O.M., 2021, The Covid-19 pandemic and insecurity: The furiousness in Nigerian communities, *Urban Planning and Transport Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 368–406. DOI: 10.1080/21650020.2021.1946420.
- Akinyetun, T.S., Bakare, K., Ahoton, A.S., and Oke, S.J., 2021a, The political economy of oil and coronavirus disease in Nigeria: Imperatives for diversification, *African Journal of Economic Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 106–128.
- Akinyetun, T.S., Erubami, H.P., Salau, J.A., Bakare, T.O., and Ahoton, A.S., 2021b, Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic and violent extremism in Nigeria: The two-faced agony, *African Journal of Terrorism and Insurgency Research*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 69–87.
- Akinyetun, T.S., Salau, J.A., Bakare, T.O., Ahoton, A.S., Alausa, J.A., and Odeyemi, D.D., 2021c, The effect of Covid-19 on youth unemployment, cybercrime and national security in Nigeria: Evidence from Nairaland, *African Journal of Sociological and Psychological Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 31–58.
- Al-Saidi, M., Saad, S.A.G., and Elagib, N.A., 2022, From scenario to mounting risks: Covid-19’s perils for development and supply security in the Sahel, *Environment, Development and Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-022-02303-9>.

- Awoyemi, T., Adenipekun, A., Chima-Kalu, R., Adedayo, O., Obaromi, J., Bello, O., Bello, O., and Adamu, D., 2022, Covid-19 in Africa: An explorative cross-sectional analysis of twenty-one African countries from January to June 2020, *Cureus*, Vol. 14, No. 5. DOI:10.7759/cureus.24767.
- Benjaminsen, T., and Ba, B., 2021, Fulani-Dogon killings in Mali: Farmer-herder conflicts as insurgency and counterinsurgency, *African Security*, Nov. 14, No. 1, pp. 4–26, DOI: 10.1080/19392206.2021.1925035.
- Biasutti, M., 2019, Rainfall trends in the African Sahel: Characteristics, processes, and causes, *WIREs Climate Change*. 10:e591. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.591>
- Bøås, M., 2019, The Sahel crisis and the need for international support. *NAI Policy Dialogue* No. 15. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Bøås, M., Osland, K.M. and Erstad, H.U., 2019, Islamic insurgents in the MENA region: Global threat or regional menace? Working Paper No. 884. Oslo: NUPI. <https://www.nupi.no/en/Publications/CRISin-Pub/Islamic-Insurgents-in-the-MENA-Region.-Global-Threat-orRegional-Menace>.
- Bøås, M., and Strazzari, F., 2020, Governance, fragility and insurgency in the Sahel: A hybrid political order in the making, *The International Spectator*, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 1–17. DOI: 10.1080/03932729.2020.1835324.
- Buzan, B., 1983, *People, states and fear: The national security problem in international relations*, 1st ed. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Chukwufumnaya, C.E., and Oghuvbu, E.A., 2020, The Corona-virus pandemic and its impacts on human security in West Africa, *AUDRI*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 36–46.
- Columbo, E., and Harris, M., 2020, Extremist groups stepping up operations during the Covid-19 outbreak in sub-Saharan Africa. Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/extremist-groups-stepping-operations-during-covid-19-outbreak-sub-saharan-africa>
- Coning, C., 2021, Covid-19 and the resilience of Africa's peace and security networks, *African Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 341–369. DOI: 10.1080/19392206.2021.2005912.
- Dahir, I., 2020, Extremism, displacement, and Covid-19 in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. *Global Observatory*. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/09/extremism-displacement-covid-19-sahel-lake-chad-basin/>
- Edomah, N., 2020, Regional development in Africa: An overview, in Edomah, N. ed., *Regional Development in Africa*. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.90423>
- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, 2021, *The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4474en>.
- Fiertz, N., 2021, *Fragile states index annual report 2021*. The Fund for Peace. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/fsi2021-report.pdf>
- Gain, M.A., 2022, Covid-19, security, and governance in the Sahel. Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/covid-19-security-and-governance-sahel>



- Global Food Security Index, 2021, Rankings and trends. <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/Index>
- Gugushvili, A., and McKee, M., 2022, The Covid-19 pandemic and war, *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 50, pp. 16–18. DOI: 10.1177/1403494821993732
- Ibrahim Index of African Governance, 2020, 2019 overall governance table. <https://iiag.online/data.html?meas=GOVERNANCEand loc=BF|CM|GM|GN|ML|MR|NE|NG|SN|TD|g1and view=table>
- Iweze, D.O., 2020, Covid-19 and Nigeria's counterinsurgency operations in the North-east. Social Science Research Council. <https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2020/06/04/covid-19-and-nigerias-counterinsurgency-operations-in-the-northeast/>
- Kinyondo, A., and Pelizzo, R., 2021, How Covid-19 has affected Africa's development, *World Affairs*, Vol. 184, No. 1, pp. 57–76.
- Kristensen, K., and Harrison, E., 2021, Secondary impacts of Covid-19: Closing civic space in fragile contexts. UNDP Global Policy Network Brief. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2021-07/UNDP-DFS-Secondary-Impacts-of-COVID-19-Closing-Civic-Space-in-Fragile-Contexts.pdf>
- Kwasi, S., Cilliers, J., Donnenfeld, Z., Welborn, L., and Maiga, I., 2019, Prospects for the G5 Sahel countries to 2040, Institute for Security Studies West Africa Report 25. [https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Prospects\\_for\\_the\\_G5\\_Sahel\\_countries.pdf](https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Prospects_for_the_G5_Sahel_countries.pdf).
- Lone, A., and Ahmad, A., 2020, Covid-19 pandemic—an African perspective, *Emerging Microbes and Infections*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 13001–308. DOI: 10.1080/22221751.2020.1775132
- Lu, X., and Lin, Z., 2021, Covid-19, economic impact, mental health, and coping behaviors: A conceptual framework and future research directions, *Frontiers in Psychology*. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.759974.
- May, J.F. and Guengant, J., 2014, Demographic challenges of the Sahel, *Etudes*, Vol. 4206, pp. 19–30. <https://www.prb.org/resources/demographic-challenges-of-the-sahel/>.
- Messner, J., 2019, Fragile states index annual report 2019. The Fund for Peace. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf>.
- Messner, J., Latour, D. and Grathwohl, F., 2020, Fragile states index annual report 2020. The Fund for Peace. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/fsi2020-report.pdf>.
- Micah, E., 2020, World Bank: No African country can face this crisis alone, *DW*. <https://www.dw.com/en/world-bank-no-african-country-can-face-this-crisis-alone/a-53142901>.
- Muggah, R., and Cabrera, J., 2019, The Sahel is engulfed by violence. Climate change, food insecurity and extremists are largely to blame. WEF. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/all-the-warning-signs-are-showing-in-the-sahel-we-must-act-now/>
- Obi, C., and Kabandula, A., 2021, Special issue on 'Covid-19, peace and security in Africa: Challenges and opportunities, *African Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 307–317. DOI: 10.1080/19392206.2021.2028116



- Osland, K.M., and Erstad, H.U., 2020, The fragility dilemma and divergent security complexes in the Sahel, *The International Spectator*, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 18–36. DOI: 10.1080/03932729.2020.1833474
- Ossai, E.C., 2021, Crises, conflict and cooperation: The two-sided impact of Covid-19 on peace in Nigeria, *African Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 410–438. DOI: 10.1080/19392206.2021.2008138
- Skretteberg, R., 2019, Sahel: The world's most neglected and conflict-ridden region. Norwegian Refugee Council. <https://www.nrc.no/shorthand/fr/sahel--the-worlds-most-neglected-and-conflict-ridden-region/index.html>.
- Tarif, K., 2022, Climate change and violent conflict in West Africa: Assessing the evidence. SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2022/3. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sipriinsight2203\\_ccr\\_west\\_africa\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sipriinsight2203_ccr_west_africa_0.pdf)
- Thompson, J., 2021, Examining extremism: Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin. Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-jamaat-nasr-al-islam-wal-muslimin>.
- Tomalka, J., Birner, J., Mar Dieye, A., Gleixner, S., Harper, A., Hauf, Y., Hippe, F., Jansen, L., Lange, S., Laudien, R., Rheinbay, J., Vinke, K., Loeben, S., Wesch, S., Zvolisky, A., and Gornott, C., 2021, Climate risk profile: Sahel. UNCHR. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/brochures/61a49df44/representative-concentration-pathways-climate-risk-profile-sahel-region.html>
- United Nations (UN), 1998, United Nations 'indispensable instrument' for achieving common goals, says Secretary-General in report to General Assembly. SG/2048 GA/9443. <https://press.un.org/en/1998/19980921.sg2048.html>
- United Nations (UN), 2021, The Sahel: Land of opportunities. United Nations Africa Renewal. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/sahel>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2020, Human development report 2020: The next frontier—human development and the Anthropocene. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2020-report>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2021. The 2021 global multidimensional poverty index (MPI). [https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2021\\_mpi\\_statistical\\_data\\_table\\_1\\_and\\_2\\_en.pdf](https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2021_mpi_statistical_data_table_1_and_2_en.pdf).
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), 2017, Conflict in the Sahel region and the developmental consequences. Addis Ababa.
- United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), 2020, Despite positive political developments, the region continues to witness a devastating surge in terrorist attacks. <https://unowas.unmissions.org/briefing-special-representative-west-africa-and-sahel-security-council-%E2%80%9Cdespite-positive-political>
- Vision of Humanity, 2021, The Sahel faces 3 issues: Climate, conflict and overpopulation. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/challenges-facing-the-sahel-climate-conflict-and-overpopulation/>
- World Bank, 2021, World Bank's response to Covid-19 (Coronavirus) in Africa. Factsheet. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2020/06/02/world-banks-response-to-covid-19-coronavirus-in-africa>

World Bank, 2022, Global economic prospects, January 2022. Washington, DC: World Bank. DOI: 10.1596/978-1-4648-1758-8

World Economic Forum (WEF), 2021, The Global Risks Report 2021, 16th Edition. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_The\\_Global\\_Risks\\_Report\\_2021.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2021.pdf)

World Health Organization (WHO), 2020, WHO concerned over Covid-19 impact on women, girls in Africa. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/who-concerned-over-covid-19-impact-women-girls-africa>

World Health Organization (WHO), 2022, WHO coronavirus (Covid-19) dashboard. <https://Covid-19.who.int/#:-:text=Globally%2C%20as%20of%205%3A23pm,vaccine%20doses%20have%20been%20administered.>