



The Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum

June 4, 2021

Demographics: implications for security in Africa and in Europe¹

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It is a challenge to discuss the relationship between demography and security in Africa and in the Sahel. The challenge is even greater if we consider the implications for Europe. From the African point of view, demography and security can give rise to suspicions of neo-colonialism and paternalistic Western intervention in the affairs of African states. From the point of view of Europeans, these two terms reveal a fear, whether justified or not since the great migration crisis of 2015, which translates into concern about the influx of young Africans into Europe, about a new unprecedented migration crisis and about the loss of identity. In short, an Africanisation of Europe.

¹ This analysis is part of an ongoing line of research by the International Security Centre on the Sahel. Following the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum organized in March 2021, speakers belonging to the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum Expert Group have deepened the themes of their conferences, analyzing the shared challenges, and the opportunities for cooperation on our common challenges. The political crises in Mali and Chad link the security crisis to governance challenges in these states, where the presence of self-defense militias and jihadist groups hinder economic and social development. In such a changing environment, with the Sahel being Europe's advanced frontier, it is now more important than ever to promote a space for dialogue in which both regions can share, cooperate and propose innovative solutions. This series of publications, as well as the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum, have received a grant from the General Secretariat for Defence Policy of the Ministry of Defence.

There is an indication of this widespread fear. The new European Commissioner for Migration, Margaritis Schinas, is also responsible for promoting the European way of life. Initially, when he was appointed, he was charged with "protecting the European way of life". The initial title had caused much controversy and the disapproval of outgoing European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker. Journalist and university professor Stephen Smith now sees Africa as the waiting room on Europe's doorstep. Only a distance of 15 km separates the two continents.

Demographics of Africa and the Sahel sub-region

It is also important to clarify the problem considering demographic data, while noting that data are not always reliable for African states and that forecasts are not always predictions. However, according to the UN, the medium-term trends are really worrying for the next thirty years, i.e., less than the lifetime of a human being.

In 1930, the African continent had a population of 130 million, at the time of independence 275 million, today 1.3 billion, and in 2050, there will be 2.5 billion Africans. By the end of the century, according to experts and considering an average evolution scenario, we could reach 4 billion Africans. Thus, from 1930 to 2050, the continent's population will increase 17-fold and the proportion of Africans in the world's population will rise from 17% to 27% in 2050. The trend is exponential, and the phenomenon is unprecedented.

If we were to give a concrete example by applying the same demographic progression to Spain, by 2050 there would be more than 400 million Spaniards, i.e., the entire population of Europe. Whether we like it or not, the migratory pressure from Africa on Europe will increase dramatically. The coming reality is inevitable and will affect many areas.

However, it would be wrong to make a blanket judgement on Africa. There are several Africas: North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, South Africa, Central Africa, and the Sahel. The demographic and development criteria are very different.

This is the case for the birth rate, the demographic transition, the dividend, and the psychological conception of the family. In addition, there are economic criteria, the state of resources, the political and social context and, of course, the security and stability conditions specific to each area of the continent. The most worrying developments concern sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel, for several reasons that will be mentioned later in this article.

Population growth in the Sahel sub-region will be incompatible with the unstable environment linked to terrorism and organised crime, climate change and the region's economic development prospects.

Demographic dynamics of the Sahel: the choice of the G5 Sahel zone

The Sahel is a strip of land that crosses the African continent in a slingshot shape between the Atlantic and the Red Sea (from east to west), stretching from the edge of the Sahel in the north to the savannah in the south. We thus have a Northern Sahel and a Southern Sahel, which together cover partially or totally some fifteen countries (Cape Verde; Senegal; Mali; Niger; Mauritania; Sudan; Ethiopia; Somalia; Chad, etc.). However, for this study, we have decided to focus on the Sahel G5 (Mali, Mauritania, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso).

The African continent is indeed characterised by strong population growth in general, but the overall demographic data conceals profound regional variations, depending on whether it is southern, northern, western, or eastern Africa. The main variation is between the Maghreb (which has entered the final phase of its demographic transition) and sub-Saharan Africa (which is lagging far behind in this transition). In addition to this fundamental difference between the north and south of the African Sahara, there are also differences between the sub-regions of sub-Saharan Africa, which is also not a homogenous region in demographic terms. While southern Africa has a much lower population growth rate of around 0.7 per cent, the other regions of sub-Saharan Africa have a population growth rate of between 2.2 and 2.6 per cent.

The choice of the G5 Sahel to address the African demographic question seems relevant to us because one of the most important demographic evolutions is expected in this area, which currently has 83.7 million inhabitants and is expected to reach 196 million in 2050, i.e., a demographic leap of 162%.

The demographic characteristics of the five countries are relatively similar, except for Mauritania, which differs from the other four countries in that its data are much less representative. Take Niger, for example, the country where the most significant changes are expected. Its total population is 23 310 715 (2019). The country's growth curve is steeply rising, from 3,388,764 in 1960 to 8,026,591 in 1990, and finally to 23,310,715 in 2019. The annual growth rate (2019) is 3.79% (the highest since 1960), and the fertility rate is over 7 children/woman (2019).

Having specified these demographic characteristics, it is worth remembering that it is a very poor country, like all the other G5 Sahel countries, which are among the poorest in the world.

One of the main problems that emerges from this observation concerns the demographic dividend, which is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve because these states do not create jobs in proportion to the mass of young people entering the labour market. Let us bear in mind that 60% of Africans are between the ages of 0 and 25. The result of this observation is that some of these young people - who make up most of the

population - engage in lucrative criminal activities: urban delinquency; enrolment in armed groups in exchange for money; or choosing the path of irregular immigration. Given the above, it could be said that Africa represents a "demographic bomb", which will inevitably provoke internal and external challenges in a sub-region that is already highly destabilised.

Consequently, if nothing changes, we will face not only a demographic shock, but also major security implications, both internally and externally. It should also be understood that the geodemographic parameters of each Sahelian country will be more important than the overall demographic evolution of the sub-region.

Finally, it is worth remembering that both pessimistic and realistic demographers consider that problems of overpopulation in a given and limited space and without taking appropriate measures are often regulated by wars, migrations, epidemics, and famines.

What are the challenges for the African continent? How will runaway demography affect the economy, resources, and state systems? What are the security threats to Africa and its partners? Is destabilisation of the Sahel inevitable?

Africa's internal and external challenges, implications for Europe

Three issues are directly related to demography. First, anarchic urbanisation reinforced by rural exodus and a high urban birth rate. Second, the development of increasing political violence in relation to a high proportion of young people in the general population. Thirdly, an increase in internal migration and probably subsequent conflicts.

To give an idea of the problem of urbanisation, the following paradox is worth noting. Although Africa has a low population density (47 h per square kilometre), especially in the Sahel region (37 h per square kilometre), the urban growth rate is 4.5 per cent per year, the highest on the planet. Moreover, almost 70% of Africans are expected to live in cities by 2050. In Africa, the area of arable land is less important than that of non-arable land. In short, the notion of density in Africa is very relative.

Some concrete examples illustrate the anarchic urbanisation in the Sahel: From 1960 to 2021, the population of N'Djamena has increased by a factor of 22 to the present day. Niamey's population has increased by a factor of 60 in the same period to 1.8 million inhabitants, Ouagadougou's by a factor of 50 to 2.9 million inhabitants, and Bamako's by a factor of 25 to 2.4 million inhabitants.

The demographic growth of these African cities has been exponential and has led to an anarchic expansion of the urban environment and disorganisation of services. The public

authorities have not been able to keep pace with population growth or to provide the services essential for urban life (public transport, health services, energy, sanitation).

Moreover, cadastral maps are non-existent or approximate in some urban areas. New neighbourhoods are developing as shantytowns and real estate speculation on viable land is increasing.

The area of the city of Niamey has grown from 5500 hectares in 1984 to 240 km² in 2020. Highly modern neighbourhoods have been built (Plateau, Kouara Kano) as well as very poor neighbourhoods (Koubia, Foualan Koubia). Social segregation has crept into the urban fabric. The proportion of young people in the general population reaches 57% and generates serious problems of juvenile delinquency (robberies, assaults, conflicts between criminal groups over available resources, begging). The inability of the police and the lack of local police stations have led to increased insecurity. This situation has led to the development of private security militias, the "Yam Banga".

The same phenomenon of urban insecurity can be observed in Burkina Faso, as well as the ineffectiveness of the internal security forces. Almost 40,000 people are registered with the "Koglweogo" militias. These private bodies aim to fight crime and compete with the state, which is losing credibility every day.

In Chad's capital, N'Djamena, the influx of refugees combined with rural exodus has increased urbanisation in flood-prone areas. These are slums with no power, no sanitation, and no paved roads. The area of the Chadian capital has grown from a few hundred hectares at the time of its creation to more than 390 km² in 2020.

The rise of political violence

In the Sahel countries, the proportion of 15-year-olds in the general population is increasing. In Mauritania it is 39 per cent, but in the other countries of the subregion it is between 46 and 49 per cent. The average age of the population in these countries is between 15 and 17 years. At the same time, there is a low proportion of adults. Several studies have shown that the higher the number of young people in a country's population pyramid, the higher the risk of urban unrest and unrest. Statistics even indicate that, if a proportion of around 30% is reached, there is a very high probability of increased social unrest and general insecurity.

One of the main elements of insecurity in Sahelian countries is the result of the combination of the number of young people and the lack of supervision of this segment of the population. This latter point is widely exploited by jihadist terrorist groups that recruit unemployed youth at low cost to destabilise the powers.

If we look at the very dangerous Liptako Gourma area, on the border of Niger, Mali and Burkina, confronted by terrorism and organised crime, it is clear that all the factors of instability and insecurity are present: High poverty (over 60% of the population), significant annual population growth in each country (Niger 3.9%, Mali 3.6% and Burkina 3.1%), a large proportion of children under 15 (between 48 and 53% of the general population), strong ethnic diversity (Fulani, Songhai, Dozos, Bambaras, Haoussa, etc.) and, finally, a growing number of refugees or internal migrants.



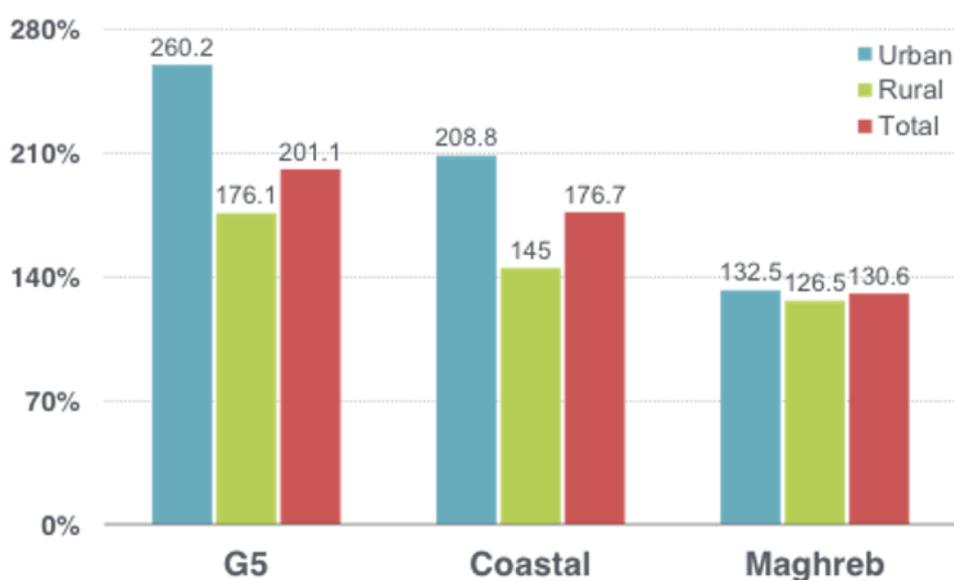
The increase in migration between Sahelian African countries and conflicts between indigenous and non-indigenous people constitute the third internal problem.

Migration within the African continent and the displacement of populations in border areas are very important. Seventy-five per cent of sub-Saharan Africans who have left their country have remained in Africa. The causes of migration are inherent in the search for economic activity, better living conditions, the impact of climate change and the search for greater security. African organisations such as ECOWAS also allow for greater integration and freedom of movement between member countries. This capacity for internal movement between neighbouring countries is accentuated by extremely porous borders.

In the medium term, however, there is concern that the level of jobs created, and the performance of the agricultural sector may not match the demographic growth of the Sahelian countries and actually favour population movements. A 2017 US National Intelligence Council report predicts an increase in youth migration from the Sahel to West and North Africa, and to Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, Ghana and Kenya. The migration pattern will involve movement from the countryside to cities, from cities to more urbanised ones, and from the latter to countries in Europe or North America. Experts predict that about 40 million Sahelians will be on the move by 2050.

This increase in internal movements within the various Sahelian countries could lead to tensions between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, between pastoralists and farmers over access to land, and between different ethnic groups whose importance could be affected by the demographic factor. In addition to this specific problem, there will be movements of climate refugees, victims of war and regional insecurity. For example, Chad currently hosts almost 600,000 refugees in camps in precarious conditions.

Population growth, 2018– 2040



Graph produced by the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC-OECD)

Demographic growth will bring external challenges that will have an impact on Africa's relations with its partners, especially with the European continent.

For the Sahel G5, and for a country like Mali, there are a number of challenges arising from high population growth, including (1) the security challenge; (2) the scarcity of natural resources which represents a source of inter-community conflicts, leading to the amplification of internal migration; (3) as well as food insecurity.

The demographic increase of young people, the chronic lack of employment and the poor quality of education, combined with the ability of armed terrorist groups to distribute a lot of money to gain their loyalty, are major destabilising factors in the West

African Sahel. Indeed, particularly in Mali - but also in other G5 Sahel countries such as Niger and Burkina Faso - armed terrorist groups are growing rapidly despite the strong foreign military presence in the Sahel. Mali's demographics, combined with unsatisfactory living conditions and a lack of prospects for young people, have provided armed terrorist groups with an inexhaustible source of fighters. This is not only true for young people in the peripheral territories occupied by armed terrorist groups. In Mali, we have seen many young men from the capital and other southern regions going to join armed groups in the north in exchange for payment.

The scarcity of natural resources is also a major challenge insofar as it also involves the issue of food security. In a context of worsening climatic conditions in the Sahel, coupled with the growing needs of local communities (linked to population growth) and the scarcity of natural resources, we are witnessing the emergence of violent and deadly clashes between communities over access to natural resources and control of land.

The case of central Mali is quite illustrative. Population growth in this area has gone hand in hand with the expansion of farms, because everyone needs to be fed. One of the consequences of this is that in areas where nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers coexist, key grazing areas are lost, and livestock corridors are blocked by new agricultural fields. However, the fact that pastoralists must move their livestock through blocked corridors very often leads to inter-community conflicts, with large internal displacements as a consequence.

External challenges for Africa and Europe

By 2050, Africa will have a population of about two and a half billion. The proportion of sub-Saharan Africans in the world population will rise from 14% in 2020 to 22% in 2050. It has already been noted that African immigration, according to the OECD, has doubled from 1990 to 2015. Immigration from the Sahel is expected to follow the same trend.

While internal movements within the African continent will remain the most important in terms of volume, there will be a mathematical increase in migratory movements to Europe. This assertion is corroborated by several effects. Between now and 2050, Africa's working population will increase by 815 million young people looking for work. It is not clear that African economies can provide the necessary jobs. The desire to emigrate to Europe or the mirage of the European economic miracle will then be very strong.

The various studies carried out reveal a paradox linked to economic development aid. Indeed, Europe has implemented economic development assistance programmes to settle young people in their countries of origin. It has been found that increased economic status enables migrants or their families to raise the money needed to make

the journey to Europe or other destinations. Development aid can thus contribute to transcontinental migratory movements, especially at the beginning.

Moreover, North African countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya) will not be a bulwark against migration flows from the Sahel. On the contrary, migrants will not be welcome in these countries and will be "invited" to continue their journey.

Another external challenge will be economic. The economy of the future in European countries will not be able to offer all jobs to migrants entering the labour market. African countries of origin will also lose an essential human resource for their development. Moreover, chronic insecurity in the Sahel countries could discourage foreign investment (which creates jobs) and tourism.

The scale of migratory movements could also provoke social tensions in European societies and weaken the integration process. The migration crisis of 2015 and the lack of solidarity between the countries of northern and southern Europe have encouraged the emergence of populist and even xenophobic parties in several countries (Italy, Greece, etc.).

Among the challenges, we cannot forget the activity of criminal networks, sometimes hybrid, which traffic in drugs, arms and human beings and sometimes act as vectors of terrorism. According to agencies involved in the fight against organised crime, criminal organisations and cartels involved in various forms of trafficking are estimated to make between 3 and 6 billion euros in profits each year.

The exodus of young people is one of the most sensitive issues for Africa. Why do young people want to leave?

It is important to understand the drivers of migration because the solutions envisaged must be based on them. There are many reasons why young Africans want to migrate. There is certainly a taste for adventure, i.e., the desire of some young Africans to discover the world. But for most of them, the desire to leave is fuelled by:

- Lack of employment and lack of prospects. Example: When we point out to them the dangers of the journey, they reply "why be afraid of dying, because we are already dead here anyway".
- The effects of global warming. The effects of global warming. The shortage of rainfall pushes many young people from the countryside into rural exodus (which represents the first stage of the migration process), and then into immigration beyond national borders.
- Poverty, which is increasing like nowhere else in the world.

- Widespread insecurity in the G5 Sahel, which is a major factor in population displacement.
- Strong pressure from their families. Young Africans also often migrate because of the pressure exerted on them by their families and relatives. Moreover, in many cases, it is the latter who raise the money needed for the dangerous journey.

Let us add that African immigration is not only the result of a totally destitute population in search of survival. It is also the result of an African middle class, also represented by the plethora of students who enter European universities every year. After their training, few of them decide to return to their country of origin. This observation brings us back to the question of the lack of employment.

Optimistic scenario inspired by African success stories

Population growth should not only be seen as a problem or a threat, but also as an opportunity for development for both Africa and Europe. We find that, compared to the 2.5 billion inhabitants expected on the African continent in 2050, Europe is an ageing continent whose demographic problems are beginning to threaten its social and welfare states. The African population could be an opportunity for the demographic balance of our two continents.

On the other hand, the wealth of natural and demographic resources (Africa has the youngest population in the world), if properly channelled, can lead to economic growth and prosperity on the continent. The goal for African countries must be to create local responses to absorb the young labour force so that they do not have to resort to illegal activities. Some success stories in Africa can inspire us: Rwanda, which has suffered instability and civil war with hundreds of thousands of deaths and is now cited as a model of good governance. If we look at Botswana, it is also a country with well-managed natural resources and free education for the entire population.

The success stories mentioned above show that there are models in Africa that can serve as a source of inspiration for the Sahel countries and if the international community does not want to export instability to Europe or even to the United States or the rest of the world, the paradigm needs to change and, as Merkel said, a new Marshall Plan is needed to preserve the interests of Africa and Europe.



Demography and security in Africa: what solutions?

The dialectic between demography and security in Africa is no longer a purely historical question, but is determined by geography, the governance of the countries concerned and development aid policies. It is now clear that the two neighbouring continents will be affected by major problems. It is more than necessary to be aware of this, to seize the enormous opportunities that the crisis will offer, to implement solutions accepted by the various actors and to strengthen our interdependence.

Given the importance of the demographic challenge ahead, especially for the Sahel sub-region, the solutions implemented so far may seem limited in scope. Several avenues seem to be emerging. They call for common sense and a genuine awareness of the African reality and the problems of demography, governance, economic development, and security. Relevant solutions involve measures endogenous to the African continent and the Sahel and must integrate long-term scenarios.

Better governance for Africa

Poor governance seems to us to be at the heart of all these crises. The countries concerned are certainly faced with a lack of economic means, but above all with strong prevarication on the part of those in charge: the lack of political will to initiate new dynamics; and the misappropriation of public funds for the benefit of a privileged few. To begin to solve the problem of African migration, better governance must be imposed on the African states concerned. This could be done through:

- Establishing control mechanisms (by donors) to ensure the proper use of funds allocated to African states.
- Strengthening investments in education with an emphasis on girls' education. This last aspect seems to be the best mechanism to promote responsible sexuality education, which is difficult in countries that are often under strong cultural and religious influence, and which view contraception in a negative light.

In a country like Mali, we see that the women who have the fewest children are those who have reached a certain level of education and are active.

We also note that since the outbreak of the Sahel crises (especially in Mali, with their ramifications in other countries in the region) from 2012 onwards, the military factor remains predominant in the search for solutions to the deteriorating security situation. We believe that the military strategy should be oriented towards greater development, combined with a dialogue with communities that frees them from the clutches of armed terrorist groups. This is very timely as there is a deep social and economic porosity between certain local populations and armed terrorist groups. In the current situation, the G5 Sahel states do not seem to be able to dispense with the presence of the Barkhane force, because the Sahelian national armies are not autonomous enough to be able to guarantee their own security. Only the empowerment of national armies could lead to the departure of foreign troops from the Sahel.

The definition of a real migration policy at the European level

It is high time for Europe to finally define a real migration policy. The problem is not whether immigration is good or bad. It is more a question of determining the acceptable level of immigration at the level of European countries and organising it in partnership with the countries of origin. European countries should show more solidarity and avoid policies guided solely by their interests (cf. the Višegrad group, etc.).

To this end, as Hubert Védrine, former foreign minister, points out, it could be interesting to study the concept of "circular economy". This changes the traditional paradigm of the economy. The migrant arrives in the host country, stays there for a defined period, and returns to his or her country of origin with real experience and, if necessary, capital to develop his or her activity. This concept is a win-win situation for both Europe and Africa. Legislation on the right of asylum needs to be revised and brought back to its original spirit. Today, most migrants arrive for economic reasons.

Strengthening police and military cooperation programmes

Strengthening police and military cooperation programmes seems essential. Without stability and security in the Sahel, there can be no real effectiveness of other aid and development programmes.

Several axes should be strengthened: firstly, joint teams made up of European and African police officers should be multiplied (see ECI-Niger, etc.). These teams should be set up in the countries of origin and transit of migratory flows. The objective is to

intervene at the highest possible level to combat human trafficking networks, then to strengthen the training and resource capacities of internal security forces in the Sahel countries, and finally to clarify military and police cooperation programmes to avoid duplication and to form part of a coherent scheme to combat terrorism and organised crime.

A win-win Africa/Europe strategic partnership

The real answer is to rebuild with the people, from their needs and Africa's natural resources, and from young Africans educated in Europe or the United States, who have few opportunities for integration in their countries. In this context, I believe we can make an extraordinary bet between us and the Europeans: let us try to exploit together Africa's enormous resources, but not in the classic colonial and asymmetrical way that has led to insecurity in Africa and Europe. Let us sustainably exploit them by trying to make a partnership in which all young Africans work in Africa and not in Europe. I believe this is entirely possible if we look at the problem differently, in a much more global, holistic, and multidimensional way.

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This article received a grant from the General Secretariat for Defence Policy of the Ministry of Defence.