

Obstacles to state-building in the African Sahel: An analytical study before, during, and after colonization

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Abstract---The process of state-building in the Global South has passed through several phases. In some cases, this process gained momentum, while in others, it faced stagnation and hesitation. In many instances, states were exposed to risks and threats that weakened their structure and questioned their survival. These threats also reduced their performance and undermined their regional and international standing. The Sahel region of Africa has not been immune to these challenges. It has become a hotspot for crime, the spread of terrorism, drug and human trafficking, and rising migration rates. These problems can be traced back, in part, to the colonial era, which bears responsibility for many of the current issues. Additionally, the post-independence period brought with it several obstacles that affected the state's stability and development across economic, social, and military dimensions.

Keywords---state-building, regional and international standing, terrorism, migration, colonization, independence.

Introduction

The African Sahel is one of the most important geopolitical areas in the world. Its strategic location and wealth in oil, gas, and mineral resources have made it a center of global interest and competition among major powers. The region known as the Sahel includes five countries: Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Mali, and Burkina Faso. The geography and environment of the Sahel—vast areas, desertification, and extreme heat—have had a deep impact on its social structure. These conditions turned the region into a haven for:

- Criminal networks and terrorist groups that pose a real threat to peace and security in the Sahel and its surrounding areas.

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- Organized crime, as the region has become fertile ground for transnational criminal activities such as drug trafficking, illegal migration, cybercrime, and money laundering. These problems represent major security threats both regionally and globally.

Each time the countries of the region attempted to build strong and stable states, they were confronted by one or more of these challenges. These issues have delayed the region's progress before, during, and even after colonization.

This situation in the Sahel reflects a paradox. On the one hand, the region holds potential for economic growth and development. On the other, it suffers from fragmentation, fragility, and internal unrest. This has made the region a battleground for geopolitical rivalry among major powers such as the United States, France, China, and more recently, Russia.

This paper addresses the following central question: **What are the key obstacles that have hindered state-building and stability in the African Sahel?**

The study is divided into two main sections. The first addresses the characteristics of the Sahel region before and during colonization. The second focuses on the major problems that the state has faced after independence.

First: Obstacles to State-Building in the African Sahel Before and During Colonization

A. The State of the African Sahel Before European Colonization in the 19th Century

The Sahel-Sahara region has long held a central position in the interactions between Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, as well as between Africa and both the Arab East and the Mediterranean Basin. In this transitional zone, several factors have contributed to fragility and instability. Chief among them is the vast, open nature of the territory. It lacks natural geographic boundaries. Most borders in the region are artificial, the result of arbitrary colonial-era demarcations. These borders are expansive and difficult to control.

The region has also witnessed increasing competition over natural resources, including oil, gas, and various minerals. This has made it a vital area for the security and stability of its surroundings, especially the Middle East and the Mediterranean space. Any strategy that fails to take this into account is likely to falter or fail.

Before colonization, the African Sahel experienced violent ethnic conflicts. These stemmed largely from the tribal nature of its societies at the time. The region also suffered from weak security and defense capacities. In addition, it faced deep economic and social underdevelopment. This underdevelopment was tied to a lack of awareness or use of its surface and underground resources. As a result, the region became a target for imperial competition.

At that time, Africa was seen as a continent of peripheries. Its coastal areas were somewhat accessible, but its interior remained largely isolated. This led to its designation as the "Dark Continent," a name reflecting how little was known about its inland regions. The only exception was the northeastern part of the continent, which had been home to advanced civilizations since ancient times. The limited knowledge of inland areas to the south was due, in part, to natural barriers. For a long period, the geographic orientation of exploration and city-building remained directed east to west, leaving the southern interior largely unexplored¹.

¹ Elikia M. Bokolo, *The Coveted Continent: Africa in the 20th Century*, National Library, Paris, 1980, pp. 49–50.

Most people in the Sahel region are semi-nomadic. They raise livestock through a system of seasonal movement. This form of pastoralism may be the most sustainable practice for the region. Herders take advantage of the difference between the dry northern areas, which contain higher soil nutrients, and the more humid southern areas, which have greater vegetation cover. During the rainy season, herds graze in the nutrient-rich northern pastures. In the dry season, they migrate several hundred kilometers southward to graze on more abundant but less nutritious forage.

Before French colonization, the Sahel region experienced relative stability. The land was rich in both surface and underground resources. This allowed the Tuareg to form a distinct community in the area. Though their lifestyle was simple, they played a significant role in shaping the social and political life of what was then known as the Greater Sudan. They established educational institutions that attracted students from across the Islamic world. These centers produced a large number of prominent scholars. This indicates that the people of the region had a rich history and made important contributions in various fields. They were not isolated or cut off from the wider world.

In addition to livestock herding as a main economic activity, the Tuareg were also active in trade. They served as intermediaries between North Africa—especially Algeria—and the Kingdom of Ghana and other lands of the Sudan south of the Sahara. They became well known for their trade in salt, a highly valued commodity at the time. In return, they brought textiles and raisins from the north. They also acted as caravan guides and guards, helping traders navigate safe routes through the vast desert. Their presence granted the city of Timbuktu, located in present-day Mali, not only its intellectual reputation but also a prominent commercial status.

Politically, the Tuareg and the broader population of the region at that time were organized along strict social hierarchies. Political power operated within a tribal system, similar to that found in many other African societies. Leadership was structured and maintained according to well-established tribal customs.² The African Sahel and the greater Sahara region were historically divided into a number of kingdoms. The size and influence of each kingdom varied depending on its strength and ability to control trade routes. Among the most prominent were the Kingdom of Ghana and the Kingdom of Mali. The latter was eventually crushed by the Almoravid armies. This political landscape remained largely unchanged until the European colonization of Algeria and the rest of the region.³

B. Colonization and Its Impact on State-Building in the African Sahel

In the nineteenth century, European colonial powers shifted their focus toward the African continent. This included the Sahel region, which forms an important part of Africa. Previously, colonial expansion had been directed mainly toward the Americas, Canada, and the East Indies. In the modern era, European colonization of Africa turned into a system of full control and exploitation. Colonial powers used the resources and labor of the colonized peoples for their own benefit. This came at the expense of state formation and regional development.

Although European colonial interest in Africa began as early as the fifteenth century, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that strong motivations emerged to drive colonial expansion in the region. In the first half of the nineteenth century, these motives were not yet fully developed. The intense scramble for Africa only appeared later, toward the end of the century.

The western part of the Sahel fell under French control in the late nineteenth century and became part of French West Africa. Chad was added in 1900 as part of French Equatorial Africa. French colonial rule ended in 1960.

² Elham Mohamed Ali Dhahabi, *Studies on the History of Africa*, 1st edition, Cairo, Anglo-Egyptian Library, 2010, p. 20.

³ Boubiya, *Security in the Greater Sahara Region: Between the Algerian Approach and Foreign Projects*, Master's thesis, Cairo; League of Arab States, Cairo, 2009, p. 30

The eastern Sahel, which includes present-day Sudan, did not fall into the hands of European powers at first. Instead, it was annexed by Muhammad Ali of Egypt in 1820. It later came under British administration in 1914 as part of the Egyptian Sultanate. Sudan gained independence in 1956, and South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011.

Looking at a map of Africa in 1815, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one would see only limited European presence along the continent's coastal areas. European powers had established footholds to serve narrow objectives. Portugal held posts in Portuguese Ghana, Angola, and Mozambique. Spain controlled Ceuta, Melilla, and the Canary Islands. The Dutch had only a small area on the Gold Coast. France had control over Senegal, much of North Africa, and parts of the Sahel.

Britain controlled the Gold Coast, Guinea, parts of Sierra Leone, and later the Cape Verde region in the south. It is clear that by the early nineteenth century, European control extended only to small coastal segments of the continent.⁴

The main factors that drove European powers to colonize the region—and which significantly affected its state formation and structure, preventing it from keeping pace with the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution in Europe—can be summarized as follows:

1. Economic Motives Linked to the Industrial Revolution The Industrial Revolution in Europe created strong incentives that accelerated colonial expansion. Industrial development led to mass production, which quickly exceeded the consumption capacity of domestic markets. This created an urgent need to find new outlets for surplus goods. At the same time, industrial economies required a steady supply of raw materials. Africa, with its abundance of agricultural, mineral, and underground resources, became a highly attractive area for European powers—especially Britain, Germany, and France. The continent also offered a vast market for European manufactured products.

2. Strategic Motives There were strategic considerations behind European colonization of specific parts of Africa. France's occupation of Algeria, for example, was one of the first instances of modern colonial expansion on the continent. One of the main reasons was Algeria's geographic position, directly facing the southern coast of France across the Mediterranean. Its location held significant value in the context of Franco-British rivalry. In addition, the occupation served to distract the French public from domestic problems. Just as Algeria was important to France for strategic reasons, the same logic applied to the rest of the African Sahel states.⁵

The colonial powers implemented their strategies through several methods:

- **They persuaded tribal leaders** in Africa to sign documents agreeing to colonial "protection." In many cases, these leaders did not fully understand the true meaning of the term. An example of this approach is seen in the actions of the German Carl Peters, who secured such agreements with tribal leaders in East Africa and the African Sahel. Similar treaties were signed between French representatives and tribal leaders along the Guinean coast.
- **They used humanitarian justifications** to achieve colonial expansion. Britain, for instance, established its rule over Zanzibar in East Africa under the pretext of fighting the slave trade. Both France and Britain also used missionary activities to expand their influence in parts of Asia and Africa.

French colonialism did not significantly change the customs or social life of the peoples in the Sahel. Despite six decades of French presence during the twentieth century, colonial authorities struggled to establish full control over the region's communities and tribes. The people resisted with determination. Had it not been for their limited defensive capabilities, the French colonial project might have ended in failure.

⁴ Elham Mohamed Ali Dhahabi, *Studies on the History of Africa*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁵ Elham Mohamed Ali Dhahabi, *Studies on the History of Africa*, op. cit., p. 23.

Historical accounts suggest that the first French military campaigns in the Sahara began in 1890. At first, the French authorities granted a degree of self-rule to the regions of Azawad and Aïr. However, this autonomy was part of a broader colonial strategy to gain influence. By 1932, France had brought the entire area under its control⁶

However, this does not mean that France had full control over the entire desert. In reality, its authority did not extend much beyond the urban centers. The desert remained a stronghold for resistance movements. Among the revolts that broke out against French colonial rule in the Sahel region was the **Aménokal Uprising**, led by Sheikh Mohamed Ali Aménouka. He began his resistance in 1894. French sources recorded seven battles under his leadership, all of which ended in his favor.

Yet, the colonial strategy of division and inciting conflict among desert tribes eventually isolated Sheikh Aménouka in the Algerian city of Tamanrasset. He was captured under the condition that he would be taken to Timbuktu in exchange for his release. However, as soon as they reached the outskirts of the city, he was shot.

When France failed to assert full control over the desert, it sought other means to contain the Algerian revolution and neutralize the Tuareg population to retain influence over the region. France was willing to make concessions, even if it meant granting independence to neighboring countries, in order to protect its interests in resource-rich Algeria.

In 1956, France introduced a form of limited self-governance to the Tuareg regions in the south under the **Law of June 23, 1956**. This was an attempt to separate them politically. However, the effort failed. The Tuareg stood with the Algerian revolution. Leaders of tribal groups in Algeria, Niger, and Mali also rejected the proposal known as the **Joint Organization of the Saharan Regions**, which aimed to create an ethnic-based state. This rejection was a clear stance against all forms of colonial dominance. After independence, relations between Tuareg tribes and their respective states, such as in Niger and Mali, remained strained. Tensions led to several conflicts between the Tuareg regions and national governments. These disputes became a threat to Algeria's national security. The most significant example was in early 2012, when the Azawad region in northern Mali declared independence from the central government in Bamako. This move reflects the strong spirit of self-determination in the region and a longstanding rejection of external control.⁷

Second: Obstacles to State-Building After Independence

The Sahel region and most of its countries suffer from fragile economies and widespread underdevelopment across various sectors. These structural weaknesses have been worsened by waves of terrorism, such as the kidnapping of Western tourists and other security incidents. The region continues to experience crises driven by competition over its natural resources and the political use of the Tuareg population within broader regional conflicts.

Since the presidency of François Mitterrand in France and through the terms of his successors, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, and in parallel with the transition from U.S. President George H. W. Bush to Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, the Sahel has witnessed ongoing strategic rivalry between Washington and Paris. The focus has been on access to key natural resources, especially uranium. This competition has been marked by direct and open rivalry. France has sought to maintain its influence in its former colonies through various forms of pressure and by supporting certain factions over others to serve its own interests. The United States has followed a similar path, viewing the region as a vital strategic zone.

⁶ Boubiya, *Security in the Greater Sahara Region*, op. cit., p. 31

⁷ Boubiya, *Security in the Greater Sahara Region*, op. cit., p. 32.

A. Limited Economic Capacity and Weak Social Fabric

The Sahel states are newly independent and have faced complex challenges that often exceed their domestic capabilities. The region is surrounded on all sides—east, west, and south—by zones of instability. This geographic position places it at the center of regional crises and exposes it to spillover effects, particularly due to the mismatch between colonial-era borders and the ethnic or religious distribution of the population. These dynamics have been further complicated by the rise of terrorism, including the emergence of the so-called “Sahara Emirate,” affiliated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Conflicting interests among key actors—local, regional, and international—have also intensified instability.

Following independence, especially in countries such as Niger and Mali, the Tuareg population faced growing pressure. In June 1960, they opposed central government decisions aimed at restricting cross-border movement. These restrictions directly impacted the Tuareg, whose livelihoods depended on moving livestock across national borders. Many of them also protested what they saw as repression under the government of Malian President Modibo Keita, particularly after their uprisings in response to harsh social and economic conditions. These challenges stemmed primarily from a lack of essential resources needed to meet basic economic and social needs.

In Niger, the situation was not much different. Under President Hamani Diori, the country experienced ethnic and military tensions. Early Tuareg revolts took place in Kidal during 1962 and 1963, led by Prince Aladi, who had previously taken part in the Algerian revolution. These events coincided with a severe drought, which deepened internal divisions and intensified inter-tribal conflict among citizens of the same nation.

B. The Absence of Democracy and Political Instability

The concept of democracy is arguably one of the most appealing ideas worldwide today. Political discourse in almost every country includes some reference to democracy, whether realistically reflecting the political situation or as a rhetorical device that does not correspond to reality in many states.

Among the obstacles to democratic transition in the African Sahel region, democracy itself is one of the most discussed topics among researchers in the area. For some scholars, this focus has a missionary quality, emphasizing the necessity of democratic governance as a means to overcome the various crises that afflict the region's states, especially those related to governance practices.

This group of researchers tends to study democracy within a comparative framework. They analyze public policies in countries with established democratic systems and contrast these with the political realities in Sahelian states. Their conclusion often promotes a prescriptive message advocating for democratic governance as essential for modern state-building, which is widely seen as the fundamental demand of all social groups.

Conversely, another group of scholars focuses on probing the deeper causes and dimensions that hinder genuine democratic transformation in Arab countries. They observe the continued isolation and resistance of these states to the global wave of democratization. This group does not offer a single unified explanation but instead proposes a range of interpretations. These interpretations span multiple levels and vary in their relative importance as obstacles to democratic transition, differing from one scholar to another and from one Arab country to another.

In general, these dimensions can be summarized as follows.

1. **The Social Dimension:** This dimension concerns the social structure of the region's societies. Many researchers who have studied this aspect view it as an obstacle to democratic transition in the Sahel. Their argument revolves around a divisive logic, where loyalty to tribe, clan, or sect dominates. In contrast, democratic governance aligns with the logic of the modern state, which is fundamentally integrative and unifying rather than divisive. While social divisions have been largely

overcome in democratic countries through the establishment of the principle of citizenship, the dominance of tribal, clan-based, and sectarian loyalties among individuals in the region is seen by these researchers as preventing the widespread adoption of liberal values. These liberal values form the ideological foundation of democratic governance. The persistence of these loyalties, they argue, fosters conflict within the state and provides strong ideological grounds to justify continued authoritarian tendencies.

2. **The Economic Dimension:** This dimension relates to two main issues. First, the relationship between the monopoly of power and the monopoly of wealth. Specifically, it explains the overlap between the ruling family and the wealthy elite in some countries, or the alignment between the ruling class and the wealthy class in others. A true democratic transition, therefore, would imply a fairer distribution of wealth—a core liberal value—which necessarily means breaking this connection between political power and economic privilege.
3. **The Cultural Dimension:** Researchers who focus on cultural barriers to democratic transition in the Arab region argue that there is a fundamental incompatibility between the dominant Arab-Islamic culture and democratic values. They claim that such values are difficult to accept within a cultural fabric that is either entirely different or even contradictory. This group of scholars examines Islamic political heritage and the cultural foundations that have emerged from it. In their view, this heritage does not offer any level of acceptance or compatibility with democratic systems.⁸
4. **The Political Dimension:** At this level, the obstacles to democratic transition, as identified in both Arab and international studies, can be summarized into three main factors:

The first concerns the relationship between authority and opposition. Opposition has remained a pillar of the state. However, the roles of both the opposition and the ruling authority are not competitive in the sense of allowing power alternation. Rather, they share a complementary relationship where each plays a specific role within the governing system. This arrangement ensures the stability of power in its position and the continuation of the opposition in its place.

The second factor is the priority given to state-building over democratic practice. This dates back to the immediate period following the independence of Arab and African states. During this time, the strength of the state was closely linked to the success of its construction process. The strength of the state was interpreted as the need to extend dominance over all social institutions and to enforce a singular ideology in the management of both state and society.

The third factor relates to the fear of the impact on the secular nature of the state. Specifically, there is concern that Islamic movements might exploit democratic mechanisms to gain power and then undermine the system due to their rejection of its foundational principles, especially secularism. Secularism, for these researchers, serves as the general framework within which democratic governance operates. Thus, the fear lies in the possibility that the secular character of Arab and African states might be replaced by a religious identity, leading to a revolutionary change in the governance of society and the state.

Accordingly, since independence and up to the present, Sahelian states have been dominated by a set of challenges and obstacles that have hindered the proper progress of state-building. Among the most prominent of these challenges are:⁹

- The strong emergence of ethnic and cultural particularities: The Sahel and Sahara regions are characterized by great ethnic and cultural diversity. Often, specific ethnic groups dominate wealth

⁸ Hussein Belkhirat, *The Equilibrium Structure of Power as an Obstacle to Democratic Transition: An Approach to Understanding the Specificity of the Algerian Political Case—The Period of President Bouteflika as a Model*, Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2010, p. 14.

⁹ Saadeddine El Othmani, "The Sahel and Sahara Region: Challenges and Future Prospects," available at aljazeera.net, January 31, 2014; accessed June 6, 2023, 21:45.

and power. Meanwhile, other groups—despite their numerical strength, historical presence, or political significance—are subjected to marginalization and deprivation.

Many countries in the region have experienced this situation since gaining independence. This is largely due to attempts at cultural integration that aim to unify national cultures into the culture of the dominant authority.

As economic conditions have become more complicated and awareness has increased, feelings of political and cultural exclusion, social injustice, and economic inequality have grown. This has led to a rise in attachment to local identities and cultures.

Because of the slow recognition of these particularities, most countries in the region have faced numerous internal problems. These problems appear in the form of conflicts and civil wars, ethnic disputes—sometimes adopting separatist agendas—or military coups and rebellions. Such issues have caused significant harm to security and stability within these countries. They have also weakened the sense of identity and belonging to the state, resulting in diminished national integration in favor of regional, tribal, or ethnic affiliations. This has negatively affected social structures and economic activity.

An example of this can be found in Darfur, western Sudan, where nearly 195 tribes live, broadly divided into Arabs and Zaghawa. The unequal relationship between the periphery and the center, combined with other factors, led to the outbreak of violent conflicts, widespread suffering, and loss of life. At the core of this problem lies the early failure to recognize ethnic and cultural particularities, alongside the absence of democracy and balanced development.

In Mali and Niger, similar factors have driven the Tuareg to take up arms repeatedly over decades against their central governments. The most recent case was in January 2012, when the "National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad" demanded the independence of northern Mali and launched a "liberation war."

Although regional and international actors with vested interests in this resource-rich area have been involved, the repeated rebellions indicate that genuine cultural, social, or political needs remain unmet. Furthermore, internal problems persist without effective solutions.

Multiple Security Threats: Historically, the Sahel and Sahara regions have served as transit routes for trade caravans in various directions. This role has continued into the modern era, relying on traditional social networks, tribes, and extended families, as well as informal arrangements with security forces and customs officials. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the region faced significant economic difficulties. This was accompanied by ongoing political unrest and clear shortcomings in several states' ability to secure their borders and fulfill sovereign duties. Consequently, illicit trafficking in drugs, arms, and humans increased steadily. This rise paralleled the growing activities of smuggling networks and various armed groups.

Poor Political and Economic Governance: The developments in the region cannot be fully understood without recognizing the failure to establish modern democratic states and implement effective political and economic governance that serves both the nation and its citizens.

Scholars identify governance deficiencies as a primary cause for the spread of organized crime in all its forms. These deficiencies also explain the widespread corruption and dominance of powerful "lobbies" that monopolize power and wealth. The vast majority of countries in the region rank near the bottom on global corruption indexes, with their citizens suffering the most from bribery worldwide.

One consequence is the illicit outflow of capital from thirty African countries, amounting to \$187 billion over twenty years—exceeding the combined debt of these nations.

Another consequence is the infiltration of state institutions by organized crime groups. This infiltration has further crippled governments' ability to combat such crime and respond to even the most basic needs of their populations.

The failure of governance systems in the region has exacerbated internal conflicts and encouraged frequent military coups. These, in turn, weaken state authority, impair security and stability, and hinder the provision of essential services such as healthcare, education, water, electricity, and sanitation.

Growing Social Problems: The vicious cycle of these challenges is compounded by deteriorating social conditions. These result from the combination of security issues and poor management policies, alongside environmental factors such as recurring droughts, environmental degradation, and floods.

Today, the region faces rapid population growth amid terrorism, conflicts, instability, coups, and trafficking in humans and drugs. It also suffers from the effects of climate change, which causes increased droughts, floods, and soil erosion in rural areas. These conditions threaten agricultural livelihoods and contribute to forced displacement and migration.

These risks are intensified by demographic trends. Currently, the population of the five Sahel countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger—exceeds 80 million. Projections estimate this number will reach 200 million by the mid-2050s¹⁰.

Conclusion:

The Sahel countries of Africa lack a culture of dialogue, mutual concessions, and consensus, whether among leaders or the general population. These values are largely absent due to the legacy of oppression, tyranny, and enslavement imposed by the brutal French colonial regime in the Sahel region. Given the internal conditions, the countries in this region harbor numerous and diverse crises. Poverty and deprivation reflect weakness and incapacity. They also signify underlying contradictions that, if left unchecked, are bound to erupt.

Thus, poverty, a vacuum of authority, the lure of easy profit, and weak oversight combine to generate new crises and threats. Once the situation deteriorates, controlling it becomes difficult and costly. This is due to weak governing systems and the limited resources allocated to address these issues. This reality supports the hypothesis of increased foreign intervention in the region.

Findings:

- The weakness of state institutions and the scarcity of resources to meet citizens' needs open the door for various illicit activities. Many people, due to their natural knowledge and experience of the desert environment, engage in illegal operations. In such conditions, profit becomes the sole criterion, and the region falls under the rule of organized crime networks allied with terrorist groups. These areas become effectively liberated zones, disconnected from the authority of ruling regimes except in political maps.
- The spread of terrorism, organized crime, weapons, migration, and internal conflicts is facilitated by several factors. A key factor is the availability of weapons at low prices in the region. This has attracted terrorist groups to join the area, allowing them to globalize their activities there.
- The threat of terrorism must be taken more seriously at the regional level due to its escalation. Recently, terrorist groups managed to control vast territories in Mali, benefiting from ease of movement, access to weapons, weak oversight systems, and the extensive empty spaces that

¹⁰ The Crisis in the Sahel Region: Causes, Consequences, and the Way Forward,” 2022, available at <https://mecouncil.org>; accessed June 6, 2023, 22:00.

facilitate illegal trafficking of weapons, drugs, and other goods. These areas operate outside both the domestic laws of these states and international law.

- The lack of integration and cohesion among the Tuareg in Mali and Niger raises issues of marginalization and desire for connection. Their cause affects all countries in the region, either directly or indirectly. This complicates the crisis further, especially given the conflicting interests of major and minor actors who exploit the situation for political and economic gains, undermining the stability of the region's states.

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