



Indian Council
of World Affairs

SAHELIAN POLITICS AT CROSSROADS

GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY CHALLENGES AHEAD

An ICWA Conversation



INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS
SAPRU HOUSE, NEW DELHI

2024



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CONCEPT NOTE

The Sahel region in Africa has been the focus of attention of the international community, as it has been witnessing increasing political instability and violence since the last couple of years. The region has experienced a series of military coups, inter-ethnic tensions, rising terrorism, climate change and food security challenges. Since 2020, eight military coups have occurred in countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Gabon and Chad. Currently, the military rulers of these countries have officially committed to organize elections and hand over power to the democratically elected government. In Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the new military regimes have gained significant support of the people in part by turning their back on French influence, yet their capacity to address the security challenges is far from certain. The popular support for these military regimes has created new challenges for the neighbouring democratic states. Besides, the presence of terrorist groups and their ability to seize territories has grown manifold in last few years. Terrorism has spread to the coastal states of West Africa like Benin, Togo with the spillover in Ghana and Cote d' Ivoire. The inter-jihadist rivalries particularly between Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS) also presents a major challenge. The counter insurgency strategies and the negotiations between states and the terrorist groups have not yielded substantial results. As far as the stabilization efforts are concerned, the French-led stabilization efforts are falling apart as the region is witnessing a wave of anti-French sentiment leading to the withdrawal of the French forces from Mali and Burkina Faso. The Sahelian states are turning towards Russia's Wagner Group as the new security partner. The G5 Sahel alliance is headed for dissolution with the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Regional groupings like ECOWAS and African Union are largely struggling to make headway against the rising political and security challenges. This is marked by the rise of Sahel Security Alliance comprising Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

This panel discussion will focus upon the key challenges for the countries in the Sahel region, the responses so far and the wider security implications as below:

- What are the factors that shape the evolution of military regimes in the Sahelian states?
- Why these military regimes are enjoying popular support?

- What are the dynamics shaping the further rise and spread of terrorism in the region and why the counter terrorism mechanisms have not yielded results?
- What are the prospects for the future stabilization measures in the Sahel region?

Is there a need for the regional organizations to change their strategy in order to address the challenges? What should be the future strategy of the regional organizations?

Sapru House
New Delhi

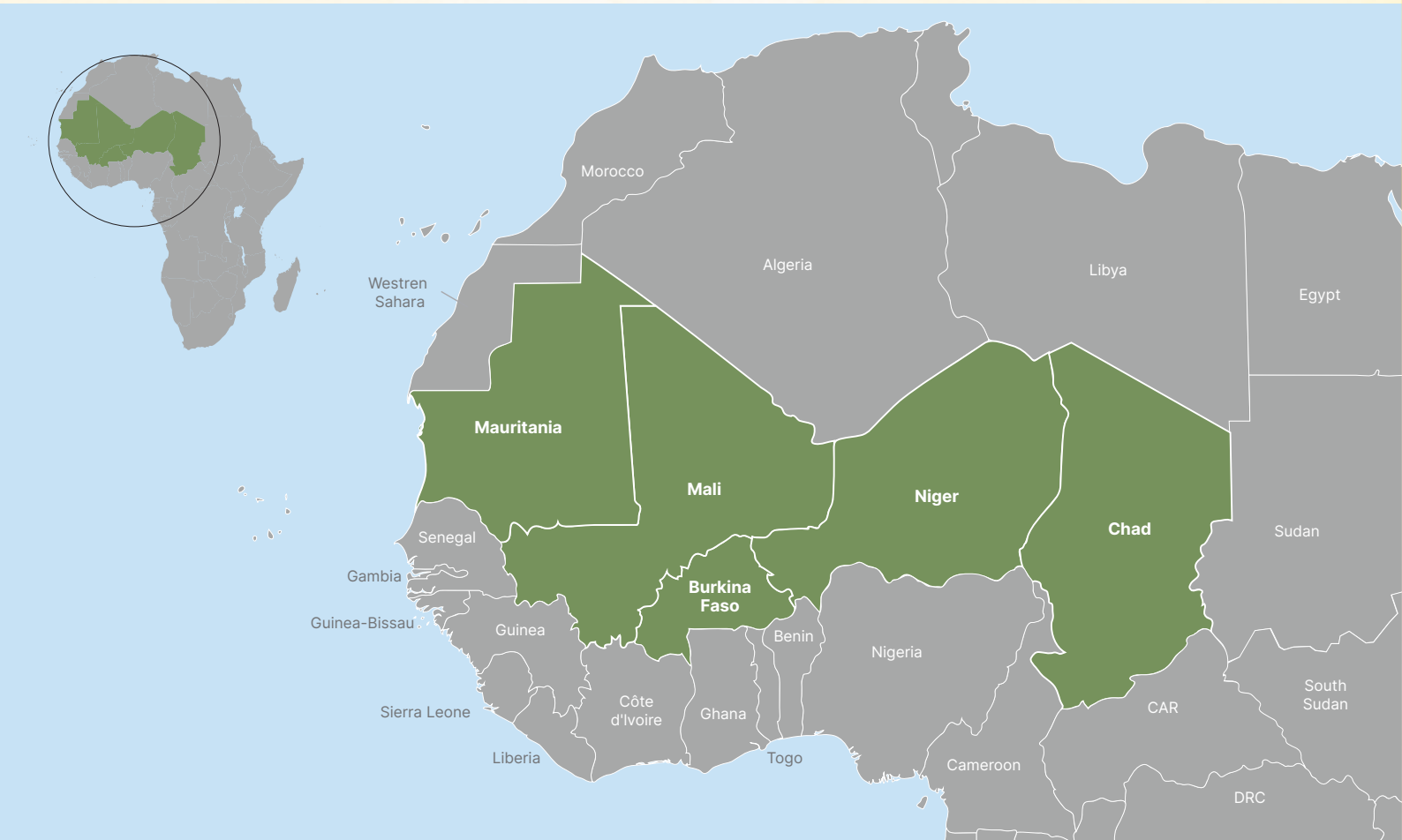
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Western Sahel.

Source: <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/war-25-1.pdf>

DR. GAURI NARAIN MATHUR

A very good afternoon everyone. Thank you for joining us today for the Panel Discussion on the theme – Sahelian Politics at Crossroads: Governance and Security Challenges Ahead. We have with us Dr. S. Shaji, Assistant Professor-University of Hyderabad, who is joining us online, we have Dr. Moushumi Basu, Associate Professor-School of International Studies JNU, and Dr. Nivedita Ray, Director Research, ICWA.

I would now request the Chair, Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh, Director-General, ICWA to deliver her opening remarks.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH

Good afternoon, and a very warm welcome. I thank all the Panellists, Dr. Shaji, Dr. Moushumi Basu, and Dr. Nivedita Ray, who are here with us for this panel discussion on Sahel. The reason why we have chosen Sahel is due to its geographical expanse, it extends from one end of Africa to the other, overlooking water bodies on both sides, the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Red Sea on the other; and according to the United Nations' Secretary General Antonio Guterres, "Sahel is a microcosm of cascading global risks converging in one region." Now that is a very apt description as there are so many factors in the Sahel region that need to be looked at from a critical perspective. One, of course, is the political uncertainty and the military coups. The other is the civil strife. Then there is a growing presence of terrorist groups. This is marked by lack of development with widespread poverty and hunger in the region. The region is witnessing the devastating impact of climate change. There is also a growing sentiment among the Sahelian people that there has been an exploitation of their natural resources by other countries.

The three landlocked countries of the region – Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger – all rich in natural resources, including gold and uranium, have seen military coups. Now this triad is driving a narrative. The first step it took is that, it has set up

its own alliance, Association of Sahel States. It is a kind of a security arrangement, that if one of them is attacked, all three would respond.

The second is, their exit from ECOWAS. I mean, ECOWAS had put some sanctions on them, but they exited from ECOWAS, bringing into the fore the question of these regional platforms and how would they shape up. So that is again something one needs to look at, and its impact. Is it being felt only in that particular region or could it affect the other regional, the sub-regional bodies in Africa? So that is one other aspect I would hope that the panellists will look at. And then of course, considering the possibility of these three states moving out from the Monetary Union and moving out from the CFA, which is the Western African franc. If they do move out of currency options, you're looking at a totally new situation developing there, and this would have huge implications.

Coming on to terrorism, some of the reports mention that, Sahel is really the hotspot of terrorism, where you have extremist groups, Islamic Jihadists, associated with local organized criminal gangs, and that is distressing because it impacts the day to day lives of the people of these countries. The region is also witnessing droughts and according to a report – Lake Chad is the lifeline of the Sahel region and 90% of its surface has dried up. This will have an adverse impact on the region.

Another narrative is about the Triad's fight against neocolonialism. So far, the region is witnessing the Western countries and France being pushed back and their influence is declining. However, the Western states also find it important to engage with the region to try and retrieve the situation. We did have in ICWA, just last week, the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel here. The region is witnessing the rise of the influence of Russia through the Wagner Group which is very much present

there. We cannot ignore China either because China has been looking at that region for its strategic resources, and also for access points particularly in Mauritania.

Today, we would be looking at the Sahelian Politics at Crossroads and not only the governance and security challenges ahead for these countries but also the impact beyond the region.

With these remarks, it is my pleasure to invite Dr. Shaji Sadasivan, Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at Hyderabad University, to make his remarks. I'll give about 10 to 12 minutes to each of the panellists and thereafter, we can pick up questions and have the panellists comment on other's presentations.

DR. SHAJI SADASIVAN

Honourable Chair, Director General of ICWA, Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh, fellow panellists, other participants. It's my honour and privilege to be part of a significant panel discussion on Sahel region. I would like to thank ICWA for the invitation to be part of this discussion.

I would like to highlight a few points pertaining to the politics of Sahel at this point in time. Sahel is definitely at the cross roads. The politics and economy of Sahel is one of the most debated topics within African politics and development in recent times. Most of the discussions about Sahel region point to the direction that there is a certain degree of crisis in the region; they are political, economic and environmental. Sahel is a vast region in Africa and according to the UN assessment, there are 10 countries in the region, starting from Senegal in the west region to South Sudan in the east. It is a region between the sub-Saharan states and the North Africa in the African continent.

Severe degree of migration is occurring today in the region due to multiple factors. That's one of the reasons why the region is widely noticed today. Perhaps the conflict, emanating out of multiple issues - such as ethnicity,

political rivalries, economic and environmental crises have triggered migration which contributes to enhanced global attention on the region. In fact, one of the recent studies suggests that 5.5 million people have been displaced in Sahel in the last few years.

In the political realm, there has been a certain degree of backsliding of democracy. For instance, the region has witnessed eight major successful military coups in the last three to four years. In the realm of non-traditional threats, there is also an increased degree of terrorism, which has actually affected almost all the prominent countries in the region. The violent extremist groups such as Jam'at Nusrat Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) have increased their activities. Data shows that in the last year, there has been a 50% increase in the fatality rate due to extremism related violence in the region. So, the situation in Sahel points to the direction that there are both traditional and non-traditional threats affecting the region. It has affected the lives of people, including their political freedom and definitely the economic aspects, livelihoods. Politically, the military coups and the leaderships that emerged out of it, which have happened in Sahel region, are actually getting entrenched within the system. May be, in certain cases, there is some popular support for such kind of military regimes which came to power in the recent times. That can be due to a variety of factors.

It is also to be noted that extremism, which is affecting almost all countries in the Sahel region, have a transnational character. In fact, cutting across national boundaries in the Sahel region, there are different kinds of coalitions involving terrorist groups. Perhaps it's a loose kind of coalition (of terrorists) unlike many other places in the Asia region. However, these loose coalitions are also having their own kind of internal coherence which is causing a lot

of problems for people and also for the Governments in the region. Another important aspect about these conflicts is, these conflicts, some of them are traditional kind of conflicts involving military and the state apparatus, while others are different kinds of non-traditional conflicts. Such as the issues pertaining to food distribution and livelihoods. If you look at some of the IMF data of recent times, it clearly shows that the Sahel region is one of the most affected regions in terms of food insecurity as around 6 million people are deeply affected by food insecurity in the region. This particular issue is actually compounded by the Ukraine-Russia war. Because large-scale food imports (especially cereals like Wheat) especially from Ukraine have been deeply affected. This has affected African countries in a big way and Sahel region is no exception to that. The G5 States in Sahel-Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger are exposed to high rate of food insecurity (around 10.2 million people). Similarly, Sahel region is described as a very ecologically fragile region. Most of the agriculture in the region depends on climate sensitive crops, and the drought in the recent times has deeply affected food production, which actually made people to migrate to other locations. In certain cases, lack of sufficient food resources has resulted in certain kinds of conflicts and violence.

In a way, the traditional conflicts are leading to non-traditional conflicts and non-traditional conflicts sometimes are leading to traditional conflicts. So, there is certain kind of nuanced dynamics between different forms of conflicts in the Sahel region. This is an interesting scenario because in most of the other African regions, this kind of intersectionality of issues may not be visible or this kind of inner dynamics may not be visible. In that sense, Sahel region, which is situated at a critical location in the continent, is definitely going to define the politics of Africa in a significant way in the coming years and decades.

Another important point that I would like to highlight is climate related crisis in the region. In fact, most of the conflicts in the region are surrounding two important sub-regions and out of these, Lake Chad Basin is the significant one. These are the two important sub-regions within the Sahel region that have become the hotspots of conflicts in the region. And there is a lot of importance being attached to the climate crisis of the region. In fact, there is a study which shows that there is an average increase of 1.5 degrees celsius temperature in the Sahel region which has deeply affected the crop patterns and the lives of people. So, the issues that we find in Sahel in that sense are quite unique.

Now, the most important point is that what could be the probable reasons for this kind of crisis? The traditional literature would point towards the involvement of the Western powers, for instance, the role of France. Some kind of scholarship would pinpoint on ethno-politics and issues like that. There are also other reasons which are connected with governance and public policy management in the region. For a very long period of time, many regional organizations and major powers have contributed immensely to supporting governance mechanisms in Sahel region. However, there is a certain kind of rolling back of the involvement of these organizations, as the Chair has rightly pointed out, with the withdrawal of ECOWAS from many countries, or many countries' withdrawal from the ECOWAS which has deeply affected the intergovernmental organizations' role in the region. Therefore, there's a certain degree of governance crisis, which is due to multiple factors which emanate from both external and internal fronts.

The external reasons could be the withdrawal of major powers and the intergovernmental organizations and the sub-regional organizations. Internal factors are definitely centering around people's perception and the capacity issues pertaining to the elected governments in the region.

Service delivery is a major problem that most of the Sahelian governments face in the region. There are also reasons which are connected with the role of non-state actors within these countries, for instance, extremist groups. Sometimes negotiations with these extremist groups are also becoming problems because of the lack of ideas/clarity as to what are the, you know, objectives that they want to achieve. This also creates a lot of issues because mediation becomes much more difficult in the case of organizations in the Sahelian context. And a lot of examples have been cited in recent times especially on the failure of interventions by African Union and ECOWAS.

So, the point that I'm trying to emphasize is both traditional and non-traditional security challenges are affecting the region in a significant manner. There are a lot of nuanced dynamics between these two categories of issues. The result is actually a creation of a unique situation of continued violence over a period of time without having any clear-cut solutions in the near future. I would like to stop here. Thank you so much.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ☞ Thank you very much, Professor Shaji Sadasivan. I will now give the floor to Dr. Moushumi Basu, to make a presentation.

DR. MOUSHUMI BASU ☞ I must thank the Indian Council of World Affairs because it's very rare for mainstream discourses on International Relations in India to reflect on developments in Africa. I think it is small steps like the organization of a talk on Sahelian politics that will help us gain a better understanding of the diversity of issues faced by countries of the Global South. When it comes to Africa, we have very little information about this huge continent that comprises of 54 countries. If you look at the map of Africa, the Sahel is the region which lies between the dry sandy Sahara in the north and the tropical wooded areas of coastal Africa in the South.

In my presentation today, I would like to touch upon two or three main aspects that are interrelated and then proceed to raise some questions that follow from that. I would like to begin the discussion by focusing first on this vast landmass called the Sahel. What does it look like, and what did it look 100 years back? The Sahel as an area has traditionally had sparse vegetation—it was mainly dry grasslands and thorny bushes. If you look at some of the studies which have been done, you can get a fair idea of the changing landscapes of Sahel over time. There's a very interesting source that I would like to share with you titled, Sahel: Atlas of Changing Landscapes brought out by the United Nations Environment Program in 2012. I would really recommend that you have a look at this (<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/sahel-atlas-changing-landscapes-tracing-trends-and-variations-vegetation-cover-and>), as the report uses remote sensing applications to provide a pictorial overview of the Sahel region at multiple scales across time. It shows what was the vegetation like, area under cultivation, rainfall and land degradation data etc. So, in Sahel, we have a crisis of sorts which begins with the question of land.

Now, this, unfortunately, is also the larger story of Africa. The straight lines drawn between countries on the map of Africa are a reminder of the negotiations which happened in Europe and the marking out of boundaries and borders, where local communities had no say. Though these countries attained independence, I think we can't shut our eyes to the colonial project still operating in Africa. So, neo-colonialism is very much rife. It's not just what grows above the soil, but also what lies underneath that attracts States from outside the region to come and exploit this opportunity. The Sahel region is an important storehouse of mineral deposits of oil, gold and uranium, but the economic benefits from these continue to elude the impoverished masses. The UNDP 2023 Report on Global Multidimensional

Poverty Index places poverty figures for Mali at 54%, Burkina Faso 86% and Niger at 90%.

So, in many ways, the Sahel region demonstrates that resource curse. I distinctly remember when we were growing up images that were coming in from this region were perpetually those of drought – and the fact is that even after so many decades things haven't improved. Some might say they have, but in the relative reckoning of things, the situation has only worsened. So, when we talk about the Global South, I think it is very important for us to internalize what this actually means. What does development mean for ordinary people? What does it mean for states who are seeking to leverage bargains with one another?

My next point is about the governance structures in Sahel. Of course, these states have the colonial past, which had its own governance structures. Majority of these countries became independent and went through a very checkered history of democracy, military coups, etc. In Africa's case, what is very interesting is the Pan-African thrust towards the formation of regional organizations. So, there was Organization of African Unity, now the African Union, at the continent level, but there was also a move to create sub-regional organizations of which ECOWAS is an important example.

In Africa, the governance structures are therefore more diversified. Apart from individual states, you have the AU and a vast number of sub-regional organizations that are playing an important part in matters of overall governance. This is very interesting, when you contrast with South Asia, you find that while South Asians are still agonizing about the SAARC not being functional, here is a continent which is relatively poor, but yet has managed to at least create a more diversified structures of governance.

If I look at the economic governance issues, then of course, the range increases. You have international organizations like IMF coming in. These are the main client states for the IMF. IMF credits are only given when countries face a balance of payment problem. I focus on Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger alone and the data reveals that all of them have had about 11 to 12 back-to-back lending operations from 1991 to 2023.

These lending credit programs are for a period of three years. So, you will have a credit program starting in 1991, which will finish probably in 1994 and some months later, in 1994, another credit for another three years is signed. So, these are loans which these governments will have to pay. So, the larger issue of debt also comes into the question on governance - How do these governments identify what is good for development?

It is a very fascinating field for study which looks into the issue about- who makes these decisions or who runs these states? Since the last couple of months, the region has witnessed number of military coups however, there is a scarcity of information from the ground. We are dependent on either the newspapers coming out from different sources, which seek to project that the military coups have a certain popular support with them. This is something which needs to be further investigated, that who are the people who are running these states? What explains the popular support for military dictatorships in this region? What about the growing anti-French sentiment, the historical involvement of France in this region and the sentiments that flow from that? So, I feel our dealing with the Sahelian problem, there are many little stories, that actually we should focus more upon because all these aspects are interconnected with what is happening in Sahel.

This brings me to another related issue. If you just look at the number of international organizations working

in the Sahel, and particularly, those working in conflict situations - the UN peacekeeping missions. Besides that, there is the ECOWAS, the African Union Sahel Strategy, G5 Sahel, the Joint Military Staff Committee of the Sahel, Fusion and Liaison Unit, and the Sahel Security Unit of the European Union. So many organizations working on just the security aspect. Now, the question comes, what is the nature of collaboration between all these organizations? What is the extent of duplication? Is there an element of competition between the agencies? This is another area which needs further study. More so, because now it's not just these intergovernmental organizations, but now there are mercenaries who are also coming in. They were probably there before, but now in a more organized form like the participation of the Russians in the present conflict. So, there is a lot which is happening in terms of even security. In addition to this, that are a number of armed Islamic terrorist groups like the Boko Haram, the ISIS, the Al-Qaeda wings. Now, sitting here, how do we know what the people actually want? Who do we rely on for getting information? Do we have enough years on the ground to actually give us these kinds of stories that I spoke about earlier.

I'm going to close with four questions. First, what is the future of Pan-Africanism - especially for institutions like the ECOWAS. All three states, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger were founding members of ECOWAS but today they have expressed a desire to walk out of the organization. So, what is going to happen to that Pan-African project?

Second, of course, the larger issue of neocolonialism, which really needs to be looked at in greater detail, whether it's a military or a democracy who decides how economies and decisions related to that will be made? Globalization gives foreign direct investors a certain legitimacy, so will resources including land continue to be handed out to

multinational companies in the name of development, needs to be looked at carefully.

Third, there is the aspect of multidimensionality in all these conflicts. What Shaji touched upon - how different sets of people get affected by these conflicts, how among others there are some who continue to be affected the most. Sahel as a region, which is undergoing conflict, how does it affect the others in that same region? Some states, like Togo, have emerged as a negotiator in Sahel politics. So, there are states which are claiming to act as mediators within this conflict but what about mediators from outside the region?

Finally, this whole question of regional solutions to regional problems, something which Africa stood for, how is that very concept being challenged today? Thank you.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH

Thank you so much, Professor Moushumi Basu, you've touched on some key areas. One is that, we need to do much more studies and as think tankers, as analysts, as scholars on Africa in India itself. We need to understand it much more, so I entirely agree with you. As I was listening to you, I kind of started thinking about Afghanistan. Some of the points you made are really the points which were made in the context of Afghanistan as well. Too many agencies are there and are they working together well? There is a mix of problems which the Sahel region is witnessing, traditional and non-traditional, as Dr. Shaji was mentioning. You raised a lot of significant questions which I hope our scholars will pick up and do some further studies. Now, I give the floor to Dr. Nivedita Ray, who is the Director of Research in the Indian Council of World Affairs.

DR. NIVEDITA RAY

Thank you, ma'am. I am going to focus on two key developments that have happened in the Western Sahel region after the coup in Niger in July 2023. I'll take it from where Dr Mousami left and what DG Ma'am, at the outset, started this whole conversation with i.e. the role

of regional groups and implications of the three Western Sahel countries leaving ECOWAS. I consider the Niger coup a very significant development in the region. Today, we are discussing this issue because this region is witnessing an unprecedented churn following the Niger coup, which has drawn international spotlight.

The first development I am going to discuss is on the announcement made by Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to leave the regional bloc Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The question is what does it mean for these three countries coming off the bloc? And what does it mean for ECOWAS and the regional integration process in Africa? The second development is the withdrawal of French and Western troops after being asked to leave the region and the dissolution of the French backed G5 Sahel alliance, the regional counterterrorism force, in December 2023. What does this development mean for the security situation, the geopolitics and also the economic aspect?

Before I go on to discuss the developments, I just want to contextualize this discussion by giving a background of these three countries- Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. These countries can be treated as a unit of analysis for their commonalities.

First is the geographical significance. They're all landlocked countries and very resource-rich because of uranium and gold deposits, which are produced and exported by these countries. Niger is the world's seventh-biggest producer of Uranium, Mali was the 11th biggest gold producer in 2022, while Burkina Faso was 12th and Niger 27th. Their economy is totally dependent on these minerals.

Second, politically these are extremely unstable countries, as these countries have a history of military coups. For example, Burkina Faso tops the list with eight military

coups since independence while Mali and now Niger have five military coups since its independence.

Third, all of these countries are, of course, French-speaking, they are Francophone African countries. They have been subjected to the French colonial rule and, unlike Britain, France has maintained strong links with its former colonies. So, there is considerable French influence from economy and security, to investment and politics. Economically, they're all tied to the CFA franc.

Fourth, on the security front they are all facing growing terrorism challenges. In all of these countries, you find a concentration of Islamic extremist forces. Niger, for instance, is bordering Nigeria that has presence of the Boko Haram terror group. Niger also borders Burkina Faso and Mali where there is presence of AQIM and the IS affiliates. So, these are the four aspects that bring these countries into a common framework.

Given this backdrop, let me come to the first development that I am going to discuss regarding these three countries. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have announced to leave the bloc ECOWAS. What does it mean for these three countries now? It will not be easy for these countries to leave ECOWAS. ECOWAS is a very developed and one of the strongest regional blocs in Africa. You may know that African Union has an Agenda 2063 which aspires for a an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena. To achieve this vision of an integrated peaceful and prosperous Africa, along with the member states, the regional communities play an important role to drive the integration agenda. It is interesting to note that they use the word Community for regional organizations. They don't use the word Organization or Group. By using the word Community, they mean people. The objective of the regional blocs is how to integrate people. ECOWAS has

progressed quite well in this front. They have been a very effective organization in terms of regional integration, if you compare with other regional organizations in Africa, whether it's East Africa Community (EAC) or Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). On the security and political front, ECOWAS has been able to solve many problems in the region. In the past it helped end civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and forged useful economic links between countries. In the case of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso it suspended their membership for military coups. Even the AU followed suit by suspending them from its activities, like they did in the case of Gabon, Guinea and Sudan for leading coups.

Now that three of these countries have announced to come out of ECOWAS; what does it mean for them? The decision to quit by the three countries has been apparently made out of frustration at the sanctions imposed on them by ECOWAS, which blocked trade, froze assets and cut off all communication with the outside world. The countries feel that ECOWAS had been reluctant to listen to their concerns. It also shows that the three countries are willing to lose any privileges they have gained in ECOWAS to be independent of the bloc. So the question is what will they then lose? First, they're going to lose access to ECOWAS passport regime, which guarantees visa-free travel and free movement within the bloc. Is that actually going to happen? Second, these are landlocked countries, which means further isolation. Do these countries have an alternative regional group to ECOWAS which they can be part of? They of course have formed an alliance, which is called as the Sahel Defense Pact. But that is more to protect themselves from the military interventions. And we know this is still a very fragile group. ECOWAS is a bloc of 15 countries.

If their decision to quit is accepted, it would disrupt their flow of trade and services. It would have domestic

implications and also implications for the relations that these countries have with their neighbours. The people of the northwest and some north-eastern states of Nigeria, for instance, have cultural, economic and political ties with the people of Niger, and Niger has been a major beneficiary of Nigeria's road, rail, logistics and security programmes. Niger will be adversely affected because it depends on Nigeria for electricity and trade. Mali is especially dependent on imports from ECOWAS, which accounted for 34.9% of Mali's merchandise imports in 2022. Would this lead to these three countries concentrating on forging deeper ties with the North African countries of Libya, Algeria and Morocco? Will they collaborate in fighting terrorism?

We see that in the bordering country Nigeria, which is presently the Chair of the ECOWAS, there is an internal debate happening, wherein some leaders are saying that the initial position of their country to support military intervention has actually not been the right step and that they should soften their stand. Nigeria's former Vice President Atiku Abubakar advised President Bola Tinubu, the current Chair of ECOWAS to deploy diplomacy with the AU and salvage the situation. He suggested that embargos against the masses have never worked and are simply cruel. A coalition of Civil Society Groups in Nigeria has urged the authorities in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso to rescind their decision.

Regarding the sanctions regime that ECOWAS has brought up, the question is who is actually going to benefit? Is it going to any way benefit ECOWAS? What ECOWAS has done is they have restricted trade; they have frozen their government assets. As a consequence, now these countries are not able to buy food; people are not able to also take out money from the banks. So, ultimately, it is people who are being affected. The food import bill has grown so high

and inflation has grown. This has been a key impact of the sanctions on the people.

Therefore, the question is whether ECOWAS approach of imposing sanctions is right to deal with the situation? Is it actually targeting the regime or the people? That is one issue that ECOWAS has to deal with. ECOWAS, of course, has now softened its stand and it is now telling these countries to come to a dialogue and reconciliation. In the past we have seen similar instances of member country leaving the group and joining back. For example, Mauritania decided to leave ECOWAS in December 2000, after giving one year's notice in December 1999. However, two decades later, in December 2019, Mauritania came back to sign a partnership agreement (covering trade and migration) with ECOWAS. We will see how this issue is handled.

Now coming to the second question about what does this mean for regional integration process? ECOWAS has moved quite a long path in terms of regional integration. And there is again a debate happening within Africa. What does it mean? Does it mean just a hiccup for the integration process in the continent? Or does it mean that this integration process is going to get derailed? We'll see how the situation unfolds. Someone has termed this as Africa Brexit. It's not easy because, if you look at the ECOWAS region, you find citizens of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso living in the rest of ECOWAS countries. Citizens of these three countries are even working at ECOWAS Headquarters. There is seasonal migration which takes place across the region and these are all things that you cannot just undo overnight in a region which has already been so integrated. So, you know, it takes more than pronouncements. ECOWAS needs to reflect upon how it is going to resolve this issue. While underlining the importance of the three nations as members of the community, ECOWAS has said that the bloc is committed

to finding a negotiated solution to the current political impasse. So we see how ECOWAS has softened its stand.

Now coming to the second development in the region, which is about the withdrawal of Western troops in Sahel. We saw how France and the Western powers were asked to leave the region by these three countries and they have withdrawn their troops. The French backed G5 Sahel alliance, the regional counterterrorism force which was established in 2017 included Mauritania, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger which was dissolved in December 2023. First it was Mali which left the organization in May 2022 followed by the withdrawal of the two other members Burkina Faso and Niger. So the question is what does it mean for France, and the impact that this will have on the region?

Historically, strategically, and culturally, France has been the most important player in the geopolitics of West Africa. The shifts in the regional geopolitics all relate to French actions or reactions to the developments within the region. France was the foremost colonial power in West Africa and its neocolonial presence was large in the region even after decolonization. In the last few years, though, there has been a growing backlash against the overwhelming presence of France in West Africa and Paris has been trying to reshape the terms of engagement with the region. The ejection of France is symbolic of the openly hostile attitude that it is facing in the region.

This pull-out provided a major setback to the French efforts to 'Europeanize' the anti-terror operations in Sahel. European countries had deployed 1,100 troops as part of the European Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali. Furthermore, under the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operation MINUSMA, 23 EU countries had deployed 1600 troops. Therefore, 'Operation Takuba' became known as 'an unprecedented coalition of European special forces whose

mission was to advise, assist, and accompany Malian armed forces in counterterrorism missions’.

On the other side, Burkina Faso and Niger justified their withdrawal from the alliance by claiming that it failed to achieve its objectives and was hampered by institutional constraints as violence continued to spread, causing the deaths of thousands of civilians and combatants, as well as the displacement of millions. It was felt that, as the anti-terrorism task force adopted a totally militarized approach, it did not yield the desired result; there was no thought given to the economic and development aspect. Moreover, on the question of why there was a backlash against France and support for Russians from the people. There has been a deep anti-French sentiment because of the casualties having increased due to the military operations instead of terrorism being curbed. Rather terrorism has increased. This has actually spurred public discontent against the government and legitimized the military takeover.

On the security front, what is the situation? Of course, there’s a security vacuum now. So, from September till now if you go just by the data, there are reports which state that the region witnessed a 70% increase in the violence linked to the Jihadist groups like JNIM and Islamic state. As I said, there are a number of terrorist outfits that are spread over the region. Organizations including Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Islamic State in the West African Province (ISWAP) have already taken advantage of that vacuum, using countries in the region as platforms to launch indiscriminate attacks on government forces and civilians alike. Do these countries have the capacity and infrastructure to deal with these terrorist attacks? Certainly, the three countries lack the capacity and the infrastructure needed to deal with the security situation in the Sahel region. The new alliance – Alliance of Sahel states – that has

been formed is more involved in seeking to protect the coup leaders and solidify their position amid threats from the regional bloc ECOWAS .

Given this situation what does this imply for their future security strategy? How will they address the security situation? Who will be the new partners? Of course, ECOWAS has responded on dealing with the security situation. ECOWAS continues to emphasize good governance, strengthening institutions, and in a recently held meeting in February 2024, one of the decisions taken was on the issue of the ECOWAS Standby Force to combat terrorism, wherein the need to activate it as quickly as possible was emphasized. But by when will it happen, we don't know. Because the Regional Standby Force of Africa, of the regional groups has been a long-term project. And it has not succeeded so far because there has not been much of convergence among the individual countries on issues related to finance and command and control. The main challenge remains from where would they draw the finance for this regional combat force, and who is going to command this? They're emphasizing that they will build a combat terrorism force but it will take time. ECOWAS however in spite of the sanctions has continued during the course of this period, to render support in different forms to these countries when it comes to the issue of fighting terrorism. The three countries could look for bilateral support. We have seen that the public resentment of the increased French military presence was a key reason for the Nigerien military backing the coup led by General Abdourahmane Tchiani rather than elected President Mohamed Bazoum.

Meanwhile, certainly this situation has actually expanded the window of opportunity for Russia to amplify its presence and legitimize their presence in this space. And we have seen that has happened. The Russian Wagner

mercenary group already operates in the region, helping to provide security support. Russia was invited by the military junta of Mali to send private military contractors (PMC) of the Wagner group to support the fight against the Islamist rebels. But we also know that Russian interest is just not about security. Its presence is in the domain of security as well as resource extraction. We know how Wagner group has been there to serve its economic interests related to the mineral resource extraction. There are an estimated 1,000 Russian troops in Mali – formerly Wagner, now it is state-run and re-branded as the Africa Corps – and the first 100 have arrived in Burkina Faso.

The question is why is Russia being accepted more compared to France? Russia does not come with any anti-colonial and exploitation baggage so is more acceptable as a partner. Russian engagement in West Africa is also regime neutral. It has no problems engaging with the military juntas or autocratic regimes. Russia's permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council suits these countries; and its technological as well as military capabilities also make Moscow attractive in Africa.

Clearly the trend now is that it has become easy for non-Western powers to get into the region, which was totally controlled by France so far. Even for India, if you look at our entire engagement with Africa, India's engagement with Anglophone Africa is much deeper and stronger, and with Francophone Africa, we have not moved the way we should have, because of not only language problem but due to French control. It used to be said that if you have to engage these countries, you have to engage through France. As of today, even though we have taken a lot of initiatives, for instance Team-9 initiatives, but our presence still has not been the way it should have.

Given the fact that the French are out, the non-Western powers will have more easier access to the region, whether

it's Russia, China or any other country The apparent geopolitical churn has given the West African countries more bargaining power. The stability as it existed for decades even after the decolonization from France has given way to an uncertain and volatile future. Does this imply that they have greater agency or have they become more dependent? As we see that from one power, they are now dependent on some other power.

Briefly I will touch on the economic aspect. As you all know that economically, all the three countries are a part of CFA Franc. These states gained independence in the 1960s and '70s, but they clung to the currency, which is now named "Communaute Financiere Africaine" (African Financial Community). The CFA, which was specially created in 1945 for the French colonies of Africa, is linked to the euro and its convertibility is guaranteed by France. For years, the CFA was trumpeted by government officials as a mechanism for promoting monetary stability, facilitating economic integration, and enhancing overall economic performance. This system provided France with significant economic and political influence over its African territories because it maintained control over the currency's convertibility and monetary policy. But now the debate has shifted, the debate is also about currency sovereignty.

Given that that these three countries have pulled out from ECOWAS, will that also lead to these countries pulling out from West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA or WAEMU) a subset organization of ECOWAS, which uses a common currency CFA. This Monetary Union has 8 nations and the current situation has left uncertain their future of this Union. Now there is a move to replace the CFA franc – the euro-linked currency used in 8 West and Central African countries – with new common West African currency, named Eco.

Even though these eight West African countries which include, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Niger and Guinea Bissau had gained independence years ago, they continued to vest their foreign exchange reserves with the French central bank. They have now decided to move their reserves to Senegal. According to the arrangement, described by analysts as a colonial relic, these African countries had to deposit half of their foreign currency reserves in the French central bank.

President of Benin has claimed that Paris has also agreed to release their reserves, which will now be vested with the Senegal-based Central Bank of West African States. So, all this churn that we see in different dimensions- security, geopolitics and economic – it remains to be seen whether it will lead to stability or more instability? But certainly, these countries are becoming more assertive and their bargaining power has increased. Will that lead to greater agency or dependency remains to be seen.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ☞ Thank you very much, Dr Nivedita Ray. You have touched upon the implications of the three countries moving out of ECOWAS and what it means for them and for ECOWAS. You've also spoken about the possibility of the recent developments being a phase of the fight against neocolonialism. This has created space for the other players who have come without the colonial baggage. You have also touched upon the whole desire for sovereignty including currency sovereignty. The capabilities and capacities of the three states to function independently of ECOWAS is still a question mark. How these three states will move ahead, and how will that new idea play?

I think we've had very fascinating presentations. I open the floor to comments and questions.

DR. ARNAB CHAKRABARTY ☞ Thank you, ma'am. I'm Arnab, Research Fellow at ICWA. There is a growing call for France to rethink its strategy for

the Sahel region, considering the discontentment of the people against France. In this context, what should be the strategy of France considering the Sahel region?

MS. AMBI ↪ Given the complex situation in Sahel, there is a mix of insecurity, poverty and misgovernance. The immediate effects are on both voluntary and forced migration in the region, towards Europe. Europe is very much concerned about this migration happening from the region. My question is, what has been the response of Europe towards this migration and what is your assessment of the issue? Thank you.

DR. SRIPATHI NARAYANAN ↪ Thank you. I'm Sripathi, a Research Fellow in the Council. My question is, given the fact that Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are going to walk out of ECOWAS, what kind of impact this will have upon the stability of the region? My second question to you is that, what is the action plan for ECOWAS in engaging with these countries?

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ↪ I'll take a few more questions, and then I'll give it to each of the panellists to respond collectively.

DR. ATHAR ZAFAR ↪ Thank you, ma'am. I have a question for each panel member. My first question is for Professor Shaji, since he referred to African Union and its failure. So, what would be the likely response of the African Union, especially in the Sahel region with regard to the coups and throwing of civilian governments in the region?

My next question is for Professor Basu. Ma'am, you referred to colonialism and neocolonialism. It seems that, Europe's influence will continue to wane in Africa. However, the decolonization of mind will continue. So, the challenge is more for Africa. What is your assessment of that?

My question to Dr. Ray is, you referred to security in the Sahel region and how France is trying to deal with it? Given that France tried to control Algeria, and ultimately it has to be freed. Is there any similarity in the France's

policy response about how it dealt with Algeria and the Sahel region?

MS. AVNI SABLOK ? Thank you, ma'am. My question is that according to the World Bank estimates, around 10.2 million people have faced food insecurity since July, August 2023 in these five countries of the Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger). In this context, what are the policies adopted by the military governments in these states to mitigate the food security crisis and what success they have attained so far? What is the UN's response in this regard?

MR. SHAKIB ? Thank you, ma'am. My question is that the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali has withdrawn from Mali and this has given rise to a security vacuum in the region. What strategy does the UN adopt to address the crisis in the Sahel region?

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ? Thank you. Now I give the floor to the virtual participant.

MS. ANU MARIA JOSEPH ? Thank you, ma'am. I'm Anu Maria Joseph. I am a Research Associate at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. I have a question for each panellist.

My first question is for Shaji sir. Sir, you talked about the loose coalition of insurgent groups. So, my question is how sophisticated are these groups? Is the uncertain character of these groups being one of the reasons why the fight against insurgency failed in the region? If you look at the northern Mali or the neighbouring countries, Niger or Burkina Faso, the entire region is isolated from governance and these insurgent groups act as a pseudo state kind of structure where they provide all the services. The ethnic communities in this region trust these insurgent groups as state structure provider. Did we fail in terms of understanding the character of these insurgent groups and is that the reason why we failed in fighting these insurgent groups?

My second question is to Basu ma'am. Ma'am, you spoke about the impact of colonialism and how it has affected the region for the past 30 to 40 years. My question is how long can we blame colonialism. Since, at one hand, Africa is talking about African solutions for African problems and, on the other hand, they demand reparations, aid, demand for answers to all the problems from the West.

My third question is for Nivedita ma'am. Ma'am, as we are discussing the Sahel alliance that Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali have formed. So, my question is, will it strengthen the other military regimes in the region? Thank you.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ? I will take two more questions and then I will return back to the panellists.

DR. ARSHAD ? Thank you, ma'am. Given that the coastal states of Western Africa like Togo, Benin, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire have been facing new cases of terrorism. So, my question to the panel is, what has led to the spread of terrorism in the coastal states and how the coastal states are responding to the spread of terrorism?

DR. FAZZUR RAHMAN SIDDIQUI ? Thank you. The Sahel region is fraught with different kind of challenges like poverty, desertification, drug trafficking and to address these issues, to enhance this productivity of land, the African Union launched a program, Great Green Wall. In that regard, they have collaborated with the international donors also. However, given the complex security situation, what are the future prospects of this program? Thank you.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ? Thank you. I'll start with Dr. Nivedita, then Dr. Moushumi, and finally Dr. Shaji. I'll give five to seven minutes to each panellist.

DR. NIVEDITA RAY ? On the question about how will the alliance be, whether it is going to strengthen the other military regimes? It all depends, because you need to be seeing how the other countries are dependent on the ECOWAS as a regional group. Because most of the regimes in Africa, a continent

which has a history of military coups, either have come to power sometimes through democratic process or have transferred power to civilian governments with constitutional order being restored. So, with these three countries forming an alliance, it remains to be seen whether this alliance will be effective in terms of dealing with the security situation. As I pointed out earlier, these three countries will be facing a lot of economic challenges if they come out of ECOWAS and also a lot of security challenges. So, any other regime joining the alliance will depend upon what their interests are. At the regional level I don't think so it is going to happen anytime soon.

On the second question, which is about European Union's response and engagement with the region? I think with regard to European Union when it comes to security, if you look at from the side of the Sahelian countries they have asked the European Union to actually move out. But when it comes to development, they have not been so hostile. They have tried to keep their communication channel open, as they are dependent on development aid from these countries.

So, it remains to be seen how European Union will be trying to engage the people on the ground and gain their confidence and trust. It depends upon how they will address the economic and developmental issues. What has been observed so far is that they had adopted a totally militarized approach, sidelining the economic and development issues which has created a problem. And there is now a rethinking happening in Europe itself. They're going to change their strategy and will try to look at this region in different way rather than abandoning this region. They may try to engage the military leaders. And of course, on the migration project, I think EU now has come up with a new pact on migration. When it comes to African migration, EU is looking at training and skilling African migrants. If that were to

happen, perhaps, it will be gainful for Africa in the context of migration.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ☞ Okay, Dr. Moushumi Basu.

DR. MOUSHUMI BASU ☞ Thank you for the questions. I'll take Anu, your question on colonialism first, it's not blaming colonialism alone. My focus is on the process whereby outside powers have greater agency than the local in decision making. That is the crux of it. So now who is allowing the outside to have greater leverage. So, it's not a one-way process – however at the same time it is also a fact that the Europeans need to say okay, we back off. I mean, the very fact that part of the currency reserve of these countries is stacked in France is blatantly problematic. I mean, would any other country do that? So, these are things which are now becoming more and more difficult to defend.

Now, when it comes to terrorism, some people asked, and here I would say, that terrorism can't be dealt with military solutions alone -you have to focus on development. If you focus on development, you will be able to get the people away. So, it can't be a militaristic solution.

And that learning, relearning is a fact that even the UN is coming to terms with. The UN peacekeeping operations have actually declined in number. And the operation in Mali, for example, 10 long years, where the UN itself became the target of attack requires a lot of lesson learning and actually internalizing those gaps in approach. This is a situation which is going to ensure that at least governments, international organizations take these lessons and reorganize and reschedule their coming together.

When you talk about development, or when I look at the World Bank aid, which is World Bank aid is loans. So usually what happens is after a balance of payment crisis, the World Bank steps in saying that these are the sectors which need to

be developed. Now, of course, those sectors invariably have a link with the outside world. Now, the point is that when everything's a mess, how do these development programs operate? Obviously, they are being cornered by the people who are powerful.

In Africa, there used to be an initiative for the highly indebted countries, which was run by the IMF and when research was done, it was found that this initiative was just being run not out of the funds that the states had contributed to but rather through the interest payments that were coming back on loans. So, it's a very roundabout circle.

Since the organizations want to be in business. Nobody wants to die out. So, they reinvent themselves and part of that reinventing has been very problematic. The Africa story tells it all and Sahel says that in particular. I mean, in terms of the green initiative. See, the green, like I've always mentioned. Green, various shades of green, okay, but you cannot look at the natural habitat and supplant it with another green looking initiative.

How is EU going to negotiate all that? These are the emerging problems of European Union; look at the refugee crisis. Of course, it is a humanitarian issue, but it's already become a securitization issue. Britain, the way they keep talking about the boats not coming in, I think, again, there is a problem. There are people who are fleeing and they're fleeing under duress, but how do we look at refugees are important concerns.

And what about the large displacement within Africa itself? It's not, that they're all going up to Europe. There's displacement happening elsewhere too. So, I think it's a very sad situation, which needs in-depth studies on different aspects and Africa definitely needs to be promoted in terms of research.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ? Thank you, Professor Moushumi Basu. I give the floor to Dr. Shaji.

DR. SHAJI SADASIVAN ? Thank you. All the questions were quite pertinent. Of course, a couple of questions were, those were part of my presentation, especially on African Union. What I was referring to failed attempts on the part of African Union in mediating between and among various conflicting parties was something related to getting an outcome acceptable to all the parties.

In fact, another fellow panellist, I think Professor Moushumi Basu has also spoken on regional solutions to regional problems. In fact, African Union and organizations like ECOWAS were trying to do this for quite some time. But in Sahel region, it could not find credible solutions or it could not make much progress. That's what I was referring to when I was referring to African Union and its difficulties or shortcomings or kind of failure in the region. That grim situation, I think, manifested because of the specific political scenario there. The interests of various actors sometimes are so diverging that the mediation becomes really difficult.

For instance, I also referred to a situation where extremists projecting different kinds of ideas which were outside of mediation capacities. Sometimes, you also have to have a certain kind of agendas which can be managed within the mediation and those were not there in the Sahel region because of the dynamic nature of the problem, because conflicts are still on and multiple conflicts are on. As I mentioned, there's an intersectionality of problems in the region, which is somewhat unique when we compare the problems with other African regions and regional problems.

The second question that was posed was on ECOWAS, i.e., whether disengaging with ECOWAS would be beneficial for those states who have decided to go out of this particular

regional arrangement. I completely agree with Dr. Nivedita Ray that there are a lot of nuanced governance issues which are going to affect the people in the region if the Sahel States go out of this particular arrangement all of a sudden. Yes, that is a governance problem which these states have to address at this point in time. Similarly, whether they will be able to create their own autonomous sphere of operations outside of ECOWAS, we need to see. I think it is too early to comment on what would happen or what sort of failure or success they would make in the near future.

Another important point that I was broadly talking about was on food insecurity. I thought this human security challenge has to be addressed in the context of Sahel region. Because this is a complex issue and which actually makes Sahelian region a unique one. In a way, the region is characterized by the traditional conflicts, non-traditional conflicts and the involvement and the intersectionality of traditional and non-traditional security challenges. The case in point is the food security problem. The food security problem is really acute. In fact, one of the recent studies of United Nations shows that there is no specific solution as such for this problem because of the unique nature of the violence and the conflicts which are going on at this point in time. Yes, all the important multilateral actors are contributing to resolve this problem in their own fashion, but there is a range of governance issues at the ground level which make such kind of involvement very difficult. That's one of the reasons why the recent UN report on the Sahelian region talks about the worsening of situation in the coming years and decades. I mean, that's something which is very fluid at this point in time when it comes to the solutions for food insecurity issues.

Another question was on the role of France. I think this is a very important point. I think Dr. Ray has also raised, has also pointed out this issue in a nuanced way that Sahel region

would be, or people and the governments in the region want many of European states to continue in the developmental and economic sphere, whereas the Sahel countries want to disengage with them on the security front. I think this duality is going to be there in the Sahel region. Even now, the European, North American involvement in Africa is significant. Their multilateral organizations, aid agencies, non-governmental organizations are very much there in Africa, so disengaging with them may not be that easy, but in the political and security realm, yes, it is going to be a tricky issue, because most of the military regimes and civil society organizations would be having a kind of negative position towards France continuing in many of these countries in the security realm. So, for the Sahel region, this duality has to be addressed at some point in time.

These are the broad points I would like to highlight as part of my responses. Thank you, ma'am.

AMB. VIJAY THAKUR SINGH ☞ Thank you. Well, I think all the panellists have made very interesting points and the fact that comes out is that the Sahelian politics is at crossroads and it needs to be watched carefully. Where will it be headed? What will be the outcomes? I think those are all issues which need to be taken up by the researchers, because it will have an impact and the new narratives will have to be studied. Each one of the panellists also raised a number of questions. So, we all need to be looking at the situation from different perspectives. Thank you, all the panellists. I think we'll continue our conversations on Africa.

PROGRAMME



ICWA Panel Discussion

on

Sahelian Politics at Crossroads Governance and Security Challenges Ahead

29 February 2024 | 1530 - 1615 hrs IST
Conference Room, Sapru House

Programme *

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| 1530-1535 hrs IST | Welcome Remarks by Chair
Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh
<i>Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi</i> |
| 1535-1545 hrs IST | Dr. Shaji Sadasivan
<i>Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Hyderabad University</i> |
| 1545-1555 hrs IST | Dr. Moushumi Basu
<i>Associate Professor, School of International Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi</i> |
| 1555-1605 hrs IST | Dr. Nivedita Ray
<i>Director Research, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi</i> |
| 1605-1615 hrs IST | Q & A Moderated by Chair |
| 1615 hrs IST | High Tea |

* The Panel Discussion was coordinated by Dr. Gauri Narain Mathur, Research Fellow, ICWA

BIO-PROFILES



DR. SHAJI SADASIVAN

Dr. Shaji Sadasivan is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad. Before joining the Department, he was an Assistant Professor with Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), an ICSSR Institute at Dharwad, Karnataka. In addition to this, he has been a consultant to UNICEF and Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), Hyderabad. Dr. Shaji was Guest Professor at the Institute of Political and Social Studies, University of Wurzburg, Germany (April-June, 2012 and November-December 2014). He was a US Foreign Policy Fellow at SUSI Programme at Bard College New York, US in June-August 2013. Dr. Shaji was Deputy Coordinator, Centre for Advanced Studies (CAS), Department of Political Science and the Academic Coordinator of Study in India Programme (SIP), University of Hyderabad. As part of his assignment at SIP, he designed and conducted customized courses on Contemporary India for participants from the Universities in the United States and Nordic countries. His areas of research interest include International Relations and Public Policy. Within these broad areas, he works and publishes on specific themes such as India's relations with developing states, especially from the Afro-Asian region, Technology Transfer, Foreign Policy of Developing States and Urban Water Governance and Regulation. He teaches courses such as India in World Affairs, Foreign Policies of Emerging Powers and Government and Politics of South Asia for post-graduate students at the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad. Dr. Shaji has completed research projects with the support of grants from organizations like ICSSR and UGC, New Delhi and is currently part of an International Project at University of Hyderabad on Internationalization and Virtual Exchange: Borderless between EU and Asian Countries, Erasmus+ CBHE, funded by European Union as well as a project, sanctioned by ICSSR, New Delhi on Energy Cooperation between India and Africa.



DR. MOUSHUMI BASU

Dr. Moushumi Basu is an Associate Professor at the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her area of Specialization includes work on International Organizations (both inter and non-governmental), Development and Human Rights. She has also been an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore and a visiting fellow at the School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, University of Sussex. She is also a recipient of the Charles Wallace India Trust Research Fellowship and Leverhulme Visiting Fellow at the School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, University of Sussex. She has been the co- director of International and Comparative Human Rights Law Practicum organized by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She has also collaborated on Migration Flows, Labour Market Policies and Social Friction, undertaken as part of a larger academic study, *“Transformation and Friction in Globalizing India”*, being funded by the Research Council of Norway and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.



DR. NIVEDITA RAY



Dr. Nivedita Ray is the Director Research at the Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House, New Delhi. She has undertaken research on foreign policy and security issues of Sub-Saharan Africa. Her area of Specialization includes African Affairs, Diaspora Studies, Gender and Conflict Resolution, Indian Foreign Policy, India-Africa Relations, BRICS, IBSA, South-South Development Cooperation, Indian Diaspora, Maritime Security, Political and Security Risk Analysis. She has presented research papers in various national and international seminars in India and abroad. She has contributed articles in journals, chapters in edited books, websites and magazines. She has edited the book *Africa and India: A Partnership for Development and Growth* and *Tagore the Eternal Seeker: Footprints of the World Traveller*, *India and Africa: The Road Ahead* and *India and Africa Looking Ahead: Contemporary Realities and Emerging Prospects*. She has authored the book *India's Engagement with East Africa: Opportunities and Challenges*. Her current research project is on 'African Asian Encounters'.

ABOUT ICWA

The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) was established in 1943 by a group of eminent intellectuals led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. H.N. Kunzru. Its principal objective was to create an Indian perspective on international relations and act as a repository of knowledge and thinking on foreign policy issues. The

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