



Guide to Risk Factors for Elections in the G5 Sahel Region

Factors External to the Electoral Process



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Sead Alihodzic, Maurice Mboula Jean-Claude Didier Enguélégué,
Idayat Hassan and Robin Watts

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International IDEA

Strömsborg

SE-103 34 Stockholm

Sweden

Telephone: +46 8 698 37 00

Email: info@idea.int

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Introduction

In addition to their long-standing development problems, the G5 Sahel states—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger—face increasing insecurity. The main security challenges are terrorism, transnational organized crime and the resurgence of armed rebellions and intercommunal conflict. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in G5 Sahel Countries amplifies the cumulated effects of these challenges and portends serious risks of intra-communal and internally displaced person (IDP) infections. The COVID-19 surveillance by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) updated 19 April 2020 reported 565 cases in Burkina Faso, 639 in Niger, 216 in Mali, 30 in Chad and 7 in Mauritania (Africa CDC 2020). The pre-electoral context in which most of these states find themselves adds another dimension. As important electoral deadlines approach in these states in 2020 and 2021, national policymakers and the international community are increasingly devoting their energies to designing strategies to prevent and mitigate the risks of electoral violence in these specific contexts. An independent study by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), submitted to the United Nations Security Council in November 2019, recommends that UNOWAS and its international partners should intensify their efforts to prevent and mitigate election-related tensions in the G5 Sahel states (United Nations Security Council 2019; UNOWAS 2017). The International Crisis Group (ICG) has called on the African Union (AU) and the European Union to prioritize the organization of sincere, free and transparent elections in the G5 Sahel states in 2020, particularly in Burkina Faso which has become the new epicentre of terrorist violence in the region (ICG 2020a, 2020b).

By the end of 2020, Burkina Faso and Niger will have held presidential and legislative elections. Burkina Faso is also due to hold a referendum on a new constitution at the same time, followed by municipal elections in 2021. Mali has called legislative elections. The first round was held on 29 March 2020 and the second round took place on 19 April 2020. Chad will hold legislative elections in December 2020 and presidential elections early in 2021. Mauritians, who elected their president in 2019, are not expected to return to the polls until the next scheduled municipal and legislative elections in 2023. While it is understood that elections are fundamental to democracy, they are critical moments for fragile political regimes such as those in Africa in general and the Sahel states in particular. Elections in the G5 Sahel region are often a catalyst for or accelerator of violence, however, rather than its root cause (UNOWAS 2017). They can escalate deep-rooted tensions in society, intensify political debates and foment pre-existing antagonisms, especially if the election is not considered to be free and fair (United Nations Ghana 2019; Gorman 2019).

This Guide has been developed within the framework of the project Support to Structural Preventive Diplomacy in Areas of Democratic Governance in Africa, funded by the British

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and which is being implemented by International IDEA with the Department of Political Affairs at the AU Commission.¹ It provides an overview of the risk factors external to electoral processes that could threaten the integrity and security of elections in the G5 Sahel states in 2020 and 2021. The Guide draws on the methodology used by International IDEA in its publication *Electoral Risk Management Tool: External Factors Guide* (Alihodzic and Uribe Bircher 2018), which provides an overview of 10 clusters of context-related risk factors that can trigger or contribute to triggering election-related violence globally.

This Guide, which is adapted to the G5 Sahel context, lists seven of these:²

1. Changing power dynamics.
2. Non-state armed actors.
3. Organized crime.
4. Socio-economic conditions.
5. Human rights violations.
6. Social and political exclusion.
7. Farmers, herders and climate change

Each of the external risk factors identified in this Guide is addressed in four sections.

1. Introduction: provides a general explanation of the context in relation to a given factor.
2. Empirical cases: illustrates particular states and electoral contexts in which the given factor has been identified as a trigger or a factor that has contributed to triggering election-related violence.
3. Observable indicators: highlights the observable properties of the different factors.
4. Methods of data collection and analysis: suggests data sources, collection techniques and analysis methods.

This Guide complements the *Guide to Risk Factors for Elections in the G5 Sahel Region: Factors Internal to the Electoral Processes* (Alihodzic, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). It will help users navigate a broad checklist that will be useful in identifying risks of election-related violence in any electoral context.³

Endnotes

1. The Guide has been developed in response to a request by the G5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat and the states in the region during the Joint Horizon Scanning Mission deployed by International IDEA and the Department of Political Affairs at the AU Commission in Ouagadougou on 13–17 September 2019.
2. The list of factors presented in this guide is not exhaustive. By using International IDEA's Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERMTTool) software, the user will be able to modify the existing list by renaming, deleting or adding new risk factors and their descriptions.
3. The ERMTTool's Geographic Information System (GIS) also allows the user to collect and process data. See the sections on observable indicators and methods of data collection and analysis.

1. Changing power dynamics

Introduction

Any change in political dynamics is likely to affect electoral processes, particularly because of its impact on future electoral campaigns, electoral operations, the announcement of results and electoral disputes. Over the past decade, politics in the Sahel states has fluctuated dramatically between democratic setbacks and advances. Mali, for instance, which had distinguished itself by its experience of democratization born on a wave of national conferences in the 1990s, experienced a political setback in 2012 in the form of a military coup d'état. Burkina Faso, which had remained outside that wave, saw its political transformation begin with a political insurrection on 30–31 October 2014, followed by a failed coup. As a result of these upheavals, Mali and Burkina Faso embarked on a process of rebuilding democratic governance in the context of an exacerbated security crisis. In the case of Mauritania, it was not until the 2019 presidential election that the state experienced its first democratic transition of power since its independence in 1960 (BBC News 2019). In Niger, there is a move towards political alternation linked to the fact that President Mahamadou Issoufou is currently serving his second term and will not, according to the constitution, be able to compete in the next presidential election. The first round, coupled with the legislative elections, is scheduled for 27 December 2020, and the second round for 21 February 2021. There is likely to be a very open electoral competition for his successor (ICG 2020c). The upcoming electoral deadlines in each of these states will therefore be a litmus test for the state of democratic consolidation in the region within a context of security, humanitarian and sanitary emergencies. Each could be a decisive moment for state-building or a potential source of conflict with consequences for political unity, resilience and regional stability (United Nations 2019; Lewis 2019; Gorman 2019).

Empirical cases

Burkina Faso: 2015 presidential, legislative and municipal elections

Following the overthrow of Burkinabe President Blaise Compaoré in 2014, the transitional government set up on 23 November 2014 led Burkina Faso to presidential elections coupled with legislative elections on 29 November 2015. The presidential election was won by Roch Marc Kaboré, whose People's Movement for Progress (PMP) also won the legislative elections. This same party won the municipal elections of 22 May 2015, winning 11,208 of the nearly 20,000 municipal council seats. In several regions of the country, however, political differences within the presidential party turned into ethnic rivalries over the choice

of mayor, leading to clashes between party activists that left three people dead and many injured in Karangasso and Kantchari (US Department of State 2017). Only recently elected, the PMP was reluctant to use force against its own supporters and therefore failed to prevent violence (Alihodzic, Matatu and Raffoul 2019). In general, the PMP lacked the mechanisms required to promote a culture of dialogue among political parties and faced a weakening of its state authority linked to the unstable political context of the past five years. This weakening of state authority has favoured the emergence of non-conventional actors, such as ethnic-based self-defence militias and traditional hunting groups, that claim the right to use force and influence the vote. Outbreaks of violence during the 2016 elections and the establishment of local authorities meant that elections had to be rerun in 19 municipalities in 2017 (IFES 2017).

Mali: 2016 communal elections

After four successive postponements, the communal elections of 20 November 2016 were the first to be held in Mali since the Algiers Peace Agreement of 2015, which ended the conflict between the Malian Government and the Coordination of the Movements of Azawad (CMA). The CMA was the main rebel coalition that had been fighting for an independent state in the northern region of the country since 2012. The CMA did not support the holding of elections, which it considered to be in violation of the Peace Agreement (Nyirabikali 2015; Drange 2019).¹ Therefore, no elections were held in the CMA strongholds—the three regions of Kidal, Ménaka and Taoudéni. In addition, only 688 of the 703 eligible communes were able to vote in the elections. The remaining 15 communes were automatically excluded for security reasons. The regions worst affected by the disruption were Timbuktu (where 22 communes could not vote) and Mopti (16 communes unable to vote). Against a background of low voter turnout, the elections led to the deaths of five military personnel and one civilian. One candidate was abducted and the five soldiers were killed while transporting ballot boxes in the central regions. Numerous cases were reported of the intimidation of voters and the burning of election materials (Tobie et al. 2016; Marending et al. 2018).

Observable indicators

1. The extent to which a weak transitional framework, such as a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme, a peace agreement or a new constitution, changes the relative power of key political actors.
2. The level of civic support for or resentment towards a political decision or actor.
3. The existence and efficiency of mechanisms to promote a culture of political party dialogue.
4. The level of media freedom.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Undertake a thorough review and analyse the effects of transitional justice mechanisms, DDR processes or peace agreements more generally on the constitution and other relevant legal frameworks. Observe any tendencies in the DDR process towards relapse or to go into reverse. Map critical regions.
- Examine the quality of dispute resolution mechanisms within and between political parties. Measure and compare successes in reaching and complying with agreements

within and between political parties. Produce risk maps and graphs to illustrate trends.

- Collect data on the level of support for decisions by political actors or on the resentment in civic groups towards them. Map the intensity of public demonstrations and place static markers where such events occur. Chart data to show trends.
- Investigate the links between military forces and particular political groups. Map and place markers.
- Collect data on the number of incidents involving the suppression of media freedom, including cases of harassment and attacks on journalists, and of prosecutions. Map and chart data, including high-risk regions, victims and perpetrators.
- Disaggregate data based on gender and assess the impact on women.

Endnotes

1. In particular, it denounced the government's failure to take account of certain political aspects enshrined in the agreement, such as the operationalization of the Interim Authorities, organization of the return of refugees/internally displaced persons (IDPs), revision of the electoral rolls, and revision of the Law on Free Administration and the Code of Local Authorities, as well as many other related aspects.

2. Non-state armed actors

Introduction

Domestic and international discourse on the Sahel region has been dominated by the theme of insecurity and the proliferation of non-state armed actors that have taken advantage of the weakness and/or absence of the state to extend their control over entire swathes of territory and their population. This will inevitably affect different elements of the electoral cycle during the upcoming elections in these states: the delimitation of electoral districts, voter registration, the ability of candidates to campaign freely, civic education, the training of local observers, the security of electoral operations on election day, the proclamation and verification of results, and the resolution of electoral disputes. It is therefore understandable that the Head of UNOWAS told the United Nations Security Council in January 2020 that the rise of non-state armed actors represents an ‘unprecedented’ threat to the credibility of electoral processes in the G5 Sahel states, while the UN Secretary-General warned in September 2019 that ‘the risk of postponement of several elections in the Sahel countries due to the presence of non-state armed actors is real’ (Devermont 2019). The G5 Sahel Joint Alliance was formed in 2014 by the region’s leaders to coordinate military efforts to combat terrorism and to support development in the region. It was supplemented in 2017 by the G5 Sahel Alliance (Devermont 2019). However, the effectiveness of these regional mechanisms in dealing with non-state armed actors has been limited, in particular because of their operational and financial limitations. To address these shortcomings, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has committed USD1 billion to a counterterrorism plan for the period 2020–2024 (ECOWAS 2019).

Of particular concern is that extremist Islamist groups in the Sahel, reportedly numbering around 4,000 fighters, have targeted traditional forms of state authority such as civil servants, the security forces, health centres and schools (Makhetha 2019; Siegle and Cook 2020). These groups have also carried out targeted assassinations of community leaders involved in government initiatives and attacks on international aid workers (Le Roux 2019; United Nations Security Council 2019). This strategy, which undermines efforts to re-establish state authority in the areas concerned, has a highly negative effect on elections by depriving them of the human resources that are essential to their organization and management. Paradoxically, however, some non-state armed groups collaborate with the state on the organization of elections.

Empirical cases

Mali: 2018 presidential election

The presence of armed Islamist groups in Mali had a major influence on the presidential elections of 29 July and 12 August 2018. Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), a terrorist group linked to al-Qaeda, issued a statement ahead of the elections warning the population not to go to the polls. This contributed to a reduced rate of voter card collection at local polling stations (BBC News 2018; Marending et al. 2018). Insecurity and threats of violence in the northern and central regions prevented the opening of more than 800 polling stations, about 3 per cent of the total number (Radio France Internationale 2018; Freedom House 2019). On election day, extremists set fire to polling stations and election materials, killing at least three election officials, including the presiding officer at the Timbuktu polling station (Human Rights Watch 2019a). The exceptionally low turnout—less than 28 per cent—was largely attributed in the international media to the fear of violence (Diallo 2018; France24 2018). In the first round, voting could not take place in more than 871 polling stations, including more than 700 in the region of Mopti. The regions of Segou and Timbuktu were also badly affected. In the second round, 493 polling stations—including 444 in the Mopti region—could not be opened. According to official figures provided by the authorities, 200,000 potential voters were unable to go to the polls in the first round (Maïga and Maïga 2018). Finally, and curiously enough, there was collaboration between the state and armed groups to ensure the smooth conduct of the election in some constituencies. For example, a senior member of Dan Na Ambassagou, the Malian militia, claimed that his group worked with the government at its request to provide security at polling stations for the 2018 presidential election: ‘We helped secure the presidential election in the areas of Bandiagara, Bankass, Douentza and Koro. . . . If it was not for the hunters who secured this, there would have been no votes in these areas. We played the role of the state and protected our people who had to travel to vote. . . . The polling stations were fairly clustered. It was easy to take care of them, by putting two or three men in front’ (Le Cam 2019 (Unofficial translation by the authors)).

Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali

Insecurity has influenced electoral cycles in the Sahel states, where it is becoming increasingly difficult to hold elections within the timeframes imposed by the constitution or legislation. With regard to the 2020 election deadlines, electoral stakeholders in Burkina Faso are already concerned that the necessary conditions are not in place to allow inclusive, free and fair elections. The question of how to guarantee these conditions in a fragile and insecure environment where much of the national territory is beyond the control of central government remains unanswered. Many stakeholders question the relevance of Burkina Faso’s 2020 electoral calendar. For these actors, hastily organized elections that fail to address the existence and proliferation of non-state armed actors throughout the state are likely to be both technically disorganized and potentially destabilizing (Brancati and Snyder 2012).

Chad also faces the disruption of its electoral cycles due to the lack of security. The Chadian Government is threatened by the rebel group Union des forces de résistance (UFR), which is based in Libya. Its advance into the north of the country in February 2019 was halted by French airstrikes (ICG 2019). The Chadian legislative elections scheduled for 2020 have been postponed by the government several times since 2015, due to the deteriorating security situation and the terrorist threat throughout the country (ACLED 2019).

In Mali, where the mandate of parliamentarians expired in 2018, legislative elections have been postponed several times due to the general level of insecurity in the country—particularly in the central and the northern regions where non-state armed groups dominate

(Daniel 2020). Elections were constitutionally scheduled for December 2018 but could not be held for security reasons. The Constitutional Court was obliged to ratify an initial extension of the mandate of deputies by six months and then a second one until 2 May 2020. Parliamentary elections finally took place on 29 March and 19 April 2020.

Observable indicators

1. The presence of non-state armed actors based in the state or infiltrating it from a neighbouring state, their current locations and the number of cases of interference by them.
2. The existence and location of territories outside of the effective control of central government.
3. The security situation in neighbouring states.
4. The geographical coverage of national territory by state institutions (the army, police, gendarmerie and public administration).
5. The capacity of the security sector agencies (SSAs) to secure state borders and suppress illegal trafficking/smuggling activities.
6. The degree of corruption within the armed and security forces.
7. The capacity of the SSAs to effectively neutralize non-state armed actors.
8. The level of circulation of and ease of access to small arms and light weapons.
9. The existence and type of clandestine links between state institutions, officials or political candidates on the one hand, and non-state armed actors, on the other.
10. The number of incidents involving violence committed by non-state actors.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Gather relevant historical and current data on the presence and activities of non-state armed actors. Collect statistics, reports, maps and other relevant data from SSAs and other organizations with specific knowledge of and data on the presence and actions of non-state actors. Analyse historical data and compare it with the current situation. Map data to observe trends; create geographic risk maps indicating the areas where non-state armed actors operate. Use static markers to map incidents involving non-state armed actors.
- Undertake a thorough review of the legal framework for the security sector, available resources and the quality of training programmes to understand the capacity of SSAs to effectively engage and neutralize non-state actors. Create geographic risk maps that identify regions based on the capacity of SSAs to effectively control the situation.
- Collect data on incidents involving non-state armed actors and on the flow of and access to small arms. Create graphs to observe trends and correlations. Create risk maps and place static markers where appropriate.
- Collect data on the degree of involvement of senior military or security officials in corruption cases.
- Disaggregate data based on gender and assess the impact on women.

3. Organized crime

Introduction

Terrorism and intercommunal violence in the Sahel have close links with organized crime (Chambas 2020: 2). Armed groups in the Sahel region are generally financed by a range of illicit activities, such as trafficking in human beings, arms smuggling and the illegal supply of drugs, motorcycles and fuel, as well as gold mining and poaching (Koné 2020; Assanvo et al. 2019; UNODC 2018). In his report to the Security Council, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel drew attention to the highly destabilizing impact of organized crime on elections in the states of the sub-region (Chambas 2020: 4). Money from organized crime can influence the choice of candidates for elections within political parties, the conduct of electoral campaigns and, to a large extent, the vote of voters—particularly in the rural areas, as well as women and unemployed youth. This money can also subvert the declaration of results and the settlement of electoral disputes, further weakening the precarious political configurations of such states.

Empirical cases

Mali: 2009 communal elections

In Mali, illicit trafficking networks linked to different ethnic groups contributed to the financing of some political parties during the 2009 communal elections (Briscoe and Goff 2016). This was made possible by the existence of weak regulations on the private financing of political parties and the total lack of regulation of the financing of electoral campaigns. In particular, money from criminal groups was used to finance the campaigns of the three competing lists in the north of the state, representing the Idnan Tuareg, Kounta and Tilemsi Arabs. Many observers also witnessed vote buying on election day itself (Briscoe and Goff 2016). Some believe that the violence before and after the 2009 communal elections was fuelled by this ‘dirty money’ and foreshadowed the outbreak of conflict in 2012 (Briscoe 2014).

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

International partners and electoral stakeholders in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are concerned about the role that money from organized crime could play in the cross-border region of the three states. Local criminal networks, which have long operated in the area and control trans-Saharan trade, are trying to extend their influence on legal political institutions by sponsoring/funding various candidates in the upcoming local elections, and also by

influencing the content of political parties' electoral programmes. The resulting political tensions are fuelling intercommunal violence. This situation further weakens the tri-border region, especially as it is fostered by the ineffectiveness of the national candidate validation bodies, the tribalization of local politics in the region and the corruption of many security sector officials, as well as the weakness of the criminal justice systems and cooperation at the sub-regional level (United Nations Security Council 2019).

Observable indicators

1. The existence of adequate legal mechanisms and policies to combat organized crime in the state.
2. The existence of accountability mechanisms for the actions of the security sector.
3. The presence of organized criminal groups in the state, their number and location.
4. The presence of organized criminal groups in neighbouring states, their number and location.
5. The existence and type of clandestine links between organized criminal groups, on the one hand, and state institutions, including SSAs, officials and political candidates, on the other.
6. The number of violent incidents involving organized crime actors.
7. The number of recorded cases of breaches of the integrity of electoral processes by organized criminal groups.
8. The ability of the economic interests of organized crime actors to influence political agendas.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Compile a list and analyse the quality of the legal instruments and policies created to address the problem of organized crime in the state, as well as the legal mechanisms for holding the security forces accountable. Map areas where laws are not harmonized or implemented.
- Carry out an in-depth review of the legal instruments on the sources of financing for political parties and election campaigns.
- Gather relevant historical and current data on the presence and activities of organized crime actors. Collect statistics, reports, maps and other relevant data from the SSAs and other organizations with specific knowledge and data on the presence and actions of organized crime entities. Analyse historical data and compare it with the current situation. Map data to observe trends and establish geographical risk maps to indicate the regions where organized crime actors operate. Use static markers to map incidents involving non-state armed actors.
- Undertake a thorough review of the legal framework for the security sector, the resources available and the quality of training programmes to understand the capacity of SSAs to effectively engage and neutralize organized crime actors. Create geographic risk maps that distinguish regions based on the extent to which SSAs have the capacity to deal effectively with the problem.

- Collect data on incidents involving organized crime actors. Chart data to observe trends and correlations. Create risk maps and place static markers where appropriate.
- Collect data and provide expertise on the economic interests of organized crime actors and the tactics they use to influence the political agenda. Map the regions that are most influenced by organized crime actors, whether through the use of violent means or through state capture.
- Disaggregate data based on gender and assess the impact on women.

4. Socio-economic conditions

Introduction

There is strong evidence of linkages between poverty, inequality and political violence, particularly with respect to election-related violence (Krug et al. 2002: 37). In the G5 Sahel states, as in Africa more generally, elections are at the heart of access to the resources provided by the state apparatus. It is this that makes elections a critical moment for fragile political regimes. Poverty increases tensions over less serious disputes, such as over electoral procedures, which can then lead to violence. Moreover, people with little to lose are easier to mobilize for a violent cause (Laakso 2007: 228–30). Poverty also creates fertile ground for contesting election results or accepting corrupt electoral practices, both during campaigns and on election day (United Nations Security Council 2019). The lack of comprehensive policies and legal instruments for combating social inequalities and the very low level of access to basic public services further fuel these dynamics.

Empirical cases

Chad: 2016 presidential election

The AU Electoral Observation Mission reported continuing political protests and social unrest, mainly linked to the deterioration in socio-economic conditions, in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election in Chad (African Union 2016). The election took place against the backdrop of an acute financial crisis and recession, exacerbated by a costly war against the terrorist group Boko Haram on the western border (Freland 2019) and a decline in the price of oil, on which the Chadian economy is heavily dependent (World Bank 2019). Deteriorating socio-economic conditions also fuelled contestation of the results proclaimed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). The vice-president of the Electoral Commission resigned, while losing candidates challenged the credibility of the declared turnout (76.11 per cent) and the integrity of the counting operation (Duhem 2016b). For these actors, the explosion of poverty, inequality and youth unemployment, corruption among the ruling elites and the absence of national policies to address these challenges reduced interest in the presidential election and fostered the belief that the announced results were fraudulent.

Mali

An analysis of the various elections in Mali since 1992 reveals that the state of widespread poverty is a vector for valuing money in elections. An electoral campaign is won not by the

quality of the programme, the number of rallies or the number of leaflets distributed, but by the cash that is raised for the benefit of the voters. People do not vote according to the programmes of political parties and candidates, but rather in order to have access to financial means to meet their needs (ODYSSE-Mali 2019). A recent headline in an online newspaper argued that in Mali, the democratic system responds to the need for ‘one meal, one vote’ rather than to the principle of ‘one man, one vote’. People are easily manipulated and reduced to electoral objects for the many political parties to exploit their misery for electoral purposes. Women and youth are most affected by this situation (Cissé 2018). The permissiveness and shortcomings of legislation on the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns reinforce this problem.

Observable indicators

1. The degree of comprehensiveness of policies and legal instruments for combating social inequality.
2. The existence of legislation regulating the sources of funding for political parties and election campaign expenses.
3. The level of provision of basic social services to disadvantaged populations in rural areas.
4. The limitations on access to land, food, resources and other commodities for the general population, or for the population of specific regions or disenfranchised groups.
5. High or rising levels of unemployment, especially among young people.
6. The existence of resources and institutional capacity to deal with social security and implement poverty reduction strategies, especially among disenfranchised groups and in marginalized areas of the state.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Undertake a thorough review of the legal instruments dealing with social inequalities. Examine their impact on different social groups (including youth and women) and map areas where these groups may pose a risk to elections.
- Compile a list of and analyse the different social programmes implemented.
- Compile historic and current statistical data on poverty, inequality and high/rising unemployment, and consider how these conditions can trigger or contribute to election-related violence. Produce and analyse risk maps and trend tables.
- Compile press reports about the economic situation and analyse the language used to address the economic situation of disadvantaged groups, such as whether there are indications of inflammatory or bullying language. Distinguish between the different media outlets, their geographic coverage, the owners of the publications and the victims. Map and monitor trends and the extent of the problem.
- Disaggregate data based on gender and assess the impact on women.

5. Human rights violations

Introduction

Violations of citizens' civil and political rights present a major external risk of violence in all electoral processes. Such violence can take three main forms in the Sahel states. First, the suppression of political life in the run-up to elections, which involves the arrest and detention of opponents, especially the most prominent ones, under various pretexts. This feeds the recurrent criticisms by opposition candidates of the abuse of the justice system by the incumbent authorities. Second, the compartmentalization of the spaces for public expression and the restrictions on citizens' freedom of association. In the same vein, there is also the control and shutting down of the Internet and social networks during elections and immediately afterwards, which seeks to prevent the opposition from organizing (Association for Progressive Communications 2019). Finally, there is the trend for there to be a declaration of a state of emergency or the adoption of emergency legislation to deal with emergency situations, such as terrorist threats or outbreaks of infection or disease. Such declarations or emergency legislation before elections usually overlap with violence or fragile political conditions, such as weak institutions, community tensions, lack of confidence in leaders and intra-state rivalries, that could trigger a new crisis or exacerbate existing ones.

Empirical cases

Chad: 2016 presidential election

In the run-up to the 2016 Chadian elections, the government of President Idriss Déby closed down space for opposition expression in response to the constant protests and demonstrations throughout the election campaign. Four civil society leaders were arrested for planning demonstrations against the ruling president's candidacy. Each was sentenced to four months in prison. In response, civil society representatives withdrew from the CENI and the capital began a general strike in protest. Chad's embassy in Paris was also peacefully occupied (Jeune Afrique 2016b, 2016c). An opposition leader claimed to have been detained for 10 days ahead of the election, after which he fled to France in fear of his safety (Duhem 2016c). The election was also marked by controversy over the disappearance of several members of the security and defence forces. According to press reports, 40 members of the police and army disappeared on election day (9 April), allegedly after having voted against Déby (Amnesty International 2016). The government claimed that these soldiers had been sent on a mission but according to the main opposition candidate and a number of other sources, the

defence and security forces were denied a secret ballot and those who did not follow instructions to vote for Déby were imprisoned (Duhem 2016a).

Niger: 2016 presidential elections

In Niger, the government of President Mahamadou Issoufou was widely accused of authoritarianism and repression of the opposition in the run-up to the 2016 presidential elections, in particular following the imprisonment of the main opposition candidate, Hama Amadou. Amadou's party and the Coalition for Alternation which supported him decided to boycott the second round of the election, which it described as 'electoral tinkering'. The coalition announced that it would not recognize the results of the poll and called for new elections to be held. The government, for its part, hoped to mobilize its supporters in order to consolidate the victory of the incumbent president (Institute for Security Studies 2016). The election campaign had also been marked by numerous arrests of demonstrators as well as violence by the security forces against opposition party activists. Opposition leaders described the situation as an 'electoral travesty' and refused to sign the Electoral Code of Conduct.

Mauritania: 2019 presidential elections

The Union pour la République (UPR) has long experience of suppressing dissent during and after election campaigns. Internet connections were suspended the day after the 2019 presidential election and not restored for 10 days (Human Rights Watch 2020; Reporters Without Borders 2019). The opposition organized a demonstration the same day to contest the official result. This demonstration was violently repressed and around 100 demonstrators were arrested, 13 of whom were imprisoned on grounds such as 'disturbing public order'. The campaign headquarters of three opposition candidates were forcibly closed and one activist told Human Rights Watch that his phone and computer were confiscated and he was forced to sign a pledge to cease activities that promoted violence and extreme views (BBC Africa 2019; Human Rights Watch 2019c). The Mauritanian Government had been accused of using similar tactics regarding the repression of demonstrations and the arrest of opposition activists and journalists during the 2018 municipal elections and the 2017 constitutional referendum (Amnesty International 2018; Amnesty International n.d.; OHCHR 2017).

Mali: 2018 presidential election

When the results of the 2018 presidential election in Mali were made public, a peaceful rally organized by the Front de Sauvegarde de la Démocratie (FSD) and the Coalition des forces Patriotiques (COFOP) was violently repressed by security forces, which deliberately threw tear gas grenades at opposition leaders. In reaction to the repression, the UN Secretary-General deplored the government's ban on demonstrations by opposition parties and recalled the importance of an inclusive political dialogue in Mali. He called on the Malian Government to ensure the protection of fundamental human rights, such as freedom of expression and peaceful demonstration, including under the state of emergency in force at the time (MINUSMA 2018). The period between the first and second round of voting was marked by the closure of the opposition radio station, *Renouveau FM*, by the Governor of the District of Bamako, without any intervention from the High Authority for Communication (HAC). This period was also marked by a slowing down of Internet connection speeds, which made social networking almost impossible. A case of alleged torture and ill-treatment of an employee of the Smart Media company was reported by the campaign team of candidate Soumaila Cissé. The National Human Rights Commission investigated and confirmed that these acts constituted a serious violation of human rights. It called on the competent authorities to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice (European Union Election Observation Mission 2018).

Observable indicators

1. The number of historical and recent cases of human rights violations related to electoral processes and going beyond the electoral context, in particular those associated with political interests and involving political actors as victims or perpetrators, as well as those involving journalists, civil society activists, intellectuals and others.
2. The existence of an adequate legal framework, procedures and training to ensure control and accountability mechanisms for the actions of the security sector.
3. The extent to which perpetrators of human rights violations are prosecuted, including under the ordinary and military criminal justice system.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Collect historical and current data on the situation, including statistics, reports, maps and other relevant information from multiple sources such as government, civil society and academic sources. If data is incomplete, organize data collection through surveys and interviews with different social groups. Ensure equal gender representation. Distinguish between human rights violations that have political, ethnic, religious, gender or other connotations. Create maps to show the extent of human rights violations. Place static markers to indicate the geographical location of incidents. Draw and compare trend lines. Present the data in columns for the respective categories (e.g. victims/perpetrators).
- Collect and analyse the legal provisions and procedures for defining the rules of engagement for SSAs. Analyse the training of SSAs on understanding and respecting human rights, in particular the rights and obligations related to electoral processes.
- Conduct national and regional population surveys to measure the level of confidence in the SSAs and the government. Map areas where confidence in SSAs is low and where insufficient measures are being put in place to ensure that they have the capacity and knowledge to prevent human rights violations.
- Collect data on the prosecution of human rights violations by the ordinary and military criminal justice system. Chart data on cases and court decisions. Map the areas where the most legal proceedings are taking place. Include data on the lack of prosecutions for human rights violations.
- Carry out an in-depth review of legal instruments and policies adopted during state of emergency to address the COVID-19 pandemic and of their impact on electoral process in the country.
- Disaggregate data based on gender and assess the impact on women.

6. Social and political exclusion

Introduction

The exclusion of minority or marginalized groups from political processes often constitutes a strong incentive for violence (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2017: 13–16). In addition, the characteristics associated with these groups—be they ethnicity, religious belief, language, age, geographic location or sexual preference—have often been used to further stigmatize and alienate them before, during and after elections (Laakso 2007: 224–52). The mobilization of inter-ethnic hatred by political elites is a common example (Marmot and Wilkinson 2005: 1–2). The social and political exclusion suffered by youth, women and various minorities has a considerable impact on the socio-political stability of the states in the Sahel region. The shortcomings of the political, social and economic space in Sahelian communities represent risk factors that have the potential to generate conflict during electoral cycles (Lewis 2019; Drange 2019). The level of disillusionment among the general public is high, linked to the inability of Sahelian governments to protect their citizens or deliver justice.

Empirical cases

Mauritania

Mauritania was the last remaining state to abolish slavery (in 1981) but tens of thousands of people—mainly the Haratine minority, the Afro-Mauritanian ethnic group—continue to live in slavery without the possibility of freedom, education or pay (Kousmate 2018; Marlin and Matthewson 2015). The Global Slavery Index, which measures forced labour and forced marriage, estimates that 90,000 people are currently living in a state of ‘modern slavery’ in Mauritania, or 2.4 per cent of the population (Human Rights Watch 2020). During the most recent elections in Mauritania in 2019, slavery was a major campaign issue, especially in the camp of anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid, one of the favourites for the 2014 presidential election. The ruling Union for the Republic (UPR) imposed measures that banned a group of 15,000 Haratine slaves from voting and repeatedly blocked the registration of the Biram-led Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA) party (Gorman 2019). Anti-slavery activists are frequently arrested and imprisoned during and after election campaigns (Amnesty International 2018). Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, who was elected President in 2019, is trying to mitigate social and political exclusion of the Haratine minority by involving Biram, who came second in the 2019 election, and his party in ongoing political

consultations on state reforms (Sidiya 2019). Restoring trust between the government and the Haratine group, however, is likely to be highly problematic.

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have each faced a series of conflict-generating events related to social and political exclusion in recent years. These conflict triggers include political violence and the problem of assessing the reparations due to victims of massive human rights violations—for instance, to the victims of the March 1991 Revolution in Mali and following the political transition of 2014 in Burkina Faso. The social and political marginalization of women and young people, particularly in rural areas, also falls into the category of conflict triggers affecting social cohesion. Finally, social and political exclusion affects certain community groups—such as the Fulani—who consider themselves victims of strategies of marginalization by other communities and insufficiently defended by the Sahel states. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have established specific institutions responsible for developing and implementing programmes aimed at restoring or promoting social cohesion and community security—including by establishing transitional justice systems. However, it is difficult for these institutions to carry out their mission in a context of a worsening security situation and widespread mistrust of the state. Several participants at the Third Conference on Confidence Building between the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) and the Population in the G5 Sahel Zone, organized by the Permanent Secretariat of the G5 Sahel in Ouagadougou on 20 January 2020, recognized that these conflict triggers constitute serious threats to the holding of inclusive, free, fair and transparent elections in the states of the region in 2020 and 2021 (Permanent Secretariat of the G5 Sahel 2020).

Observable indicators

1. The extent to which minorities are excluded from the citizenship, constitutional and legal rights enjoyed by dominant community groups.
2. The degree of impunity, in particular with regard to political violence and human rights violations and criminal acts targeting minority groups.
3. The existence of adequate and effective institutions or legal instruments for social integration.
4. The existence of long-standing rivalries between different ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural groups that have escalated in the past and taken violent forms during election periods.
5. The use of inflammatory language by political and other officials and the media towards minority/marginalized groups.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of cases of violations of the constitutional citizenship rights of minority and marginalized groups. Identify particular groups that face different types of social and political exclusion. Map the geographical areas affected.
- Analyse the resources and capacity of state institutions to prevent and punish violations of the constitutional rights of minority and marginalized groups.

- Analyse the resources and capacity of state institutions to promote a programme to restore social cohesion and improve the conditions of minorities and marginalized groups. Map the areas in which efforts are concentrated and indicate the results.
- Collect statistics, reports, maps and other relevant information from recognized organizations (e.g. human rights NGOs, media outlets) on violent and non-violent actions targeted at minorities and marginalized groups. Collect data on court proceedings and the results. Conduct interviews and surveys with target groups (e.g. ethnic, religious or indigenous communities). Map risk areas and incident locations and create trend charts to better understand critical areas and trends.
- Examine the historical and current record of conflict, disputes and tensions between the different ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural groups, as well as their links with non-state armed actors. Use media reports and information, and conduct interviews with experts. Map risk areas and incident locations and create trend charts to better understand critical areas and trends.
- Analyse the language used in the press to determine the extent to which minorities or marginalized groups are blamed by political leaders and others for the current political or economic challenges facing the state. Map the regions, media and other entities that use such language and the frequency of incidents.
- Disaggregate data based on gender and assess the impact on women.

7. Farmers, herders and climate change

Introduction

Much of the increase in intercommunal violence is a result of conflict over land, water and resources between farmers and herders. This conflict is worsening, in part due to the impacts of climate change and rapid population growth. The population of the Sahel region is projected to almost double by 2040 (Kwasi et al. 2019). The Sahel region has the largest number of people disproportionately affected by global warming, partly because 70 per cent of West Africans are dependent on agriculture and livestock rearing for their livelihoods (United Nations 2019, Chambas 2020). Temperatures in this region are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average, leading to longer droughts, erratic rainfall and soil erosion—the United Nations estimates that 80 per cent of the region’s arable land has been degraded (USAID 2017; Muggah and Luengo Cabrera 2019). Combined with drought, increased water withdrawals for irrigation have led to a 90 per cent decrease in the area of Lake Chad, a source of income and nutrition for millions of people (Krampe 2017). The effects of climate change are exacerbating intercommunity conflicts in both Mali and Niger, leading to increased poverty, weakened public services and the disruption of traditional livelihoods. The traditional tensions between pastoralist communities and farmers are intensifying as a result of climate change, which is linked to reduced availability of arable land and increasingly unreliable water supplies (ICRC 2019). Increased pressure on land linked to climate-related and demographic trends, combined with armed conflicts that effectively create ‘no-go zones’, has worsened relations between farmers and the pastoralists who have traditionally shared land in the Sahel, leading to episodes of intercommunal violence (Tall 2018; United Nations Security Council 2019). Such violence has led to the internal displacement of people, which has in several cases altered the rationale for electoral boundaries, voter registration, campaigning, electoral operations and monitoring the fairness of votes (Bathily 2019).

Empirical cases

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, the effects of climate change are exacerbating the violence and conflict between communities due to resource scarcity, shrinking supplies of arable land and unpredictable water supplies. Mali recorded 1,686 community-related deaths in 2018, compared to 949 in 2017 and 320 in 2016, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). Competition for land and natural resources has become increasingly fierce, especially between different communities in northern and eastern Burkina

Faso where population growth has created increased demand for land, while climate change has degraded the quality of the land available. The competition for land in Burkina Faso is particularly expressed in the conflict between the Fulani, who are herders, and the Mossi, who are mostly farmers. Extremist Islamist groups have exacerbated local tensions by committing violence that subsequently triggers a chain reaction of reprisals, in order to boost recruitment and position themselves as local security and service providers. Violence has also extended from the north to central Mali and along the borders between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso (ACLEDD 2020). This violent conflict has led to increased urban migration and a high number of IDPs and even refugees, affecting key elements of the electoral cycle in these states, such as electoral boundaries, voter registration, voter training and civic education, and election campaigns. There is also an impact on conditions for exercising the right to vote on polling day and for verification of the results (Chambas 2020; Cooper and Price 2019). Urgent proactive action is needed to address these issues.

Observable indicators

1. The extent to which regions of a state are exposed or subject to environmental risks caused by climate change, such as drought or floods.
2. The number of IDPs and refugees.
3. The number and nature of the consequences of climate change, such as political destabilization, humanitarian crises, increased crime, economic losses and the destruction of infrastructure.
4. The existence and quality of local, national and regional systems for early warning, risk reduction and response to environmental and natural disasters.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Collect historical data, including statistics, reports, maps and other relevant information on climate change and environmental and natural disasters. Disaggregate data to identify disaster cycles, seasonal/calendar patterns and affected regions. Create geographic hazard maps. Create trend graphs to demonstrate seasonal risks.
- Collect historical data, including statistics, reports, maps and other relevant information on intercommunity conflicts between pastoralists and farmers.
- Collect historical data on the consequences of environmental or natural disasters. In particular, analyse cases where a disaster has triggered some form of political instability. Collect data and analyse other effects of disasters on electoral processes, such as the inability to hold elections in a particular constituency or location because of a disaster; and the negative impact of a disaster on citizen participation, especially if certain groups have been affected. Map areas where disasters can derail or undermine electoral processes.
- Analyse the capacity and preparedness of states in the region and the region as a whole to respond to current environmental and natural threats and disasters. Map the areas concerned.
- Disaggregate data based on gender and assess the impact on women.

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About the authors

Sead Alihodzic is a Senior Programme Manager with International IDEA's Electoral Processes Programme. Prior to joining International IDEA in 2008, Alihodžić gained extensive experience in dealing with elections, post-conflict democratization and security issues through 11 years with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. His professional focus is on elections and conflict, with a special interest in prevention and mitigation of election-related violence, and risk management in elections.

Maurice Enguélégué is a Senior Programme Officer with International IDEA's Africa and West Asia Programme. He was previously a Professor of Political Science and taught for 20 years in French universities and in Cameroon at the International Relations Institute. He also worked for the French Government as a Technical Advisor at the Office of the Prime Minister and as Head of Project for the Foreign Ministry's 'Promoting Democratic Governance in Africa'.

Enguélégué was the Programme Coordinator of the Africa Governance Institute (AGI) from May 2008 to July 2013. He was Executive Director of the AGI from July 2013 to September 2015. He has been a member of the Advisory Council of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation since 2012.

Idayat Hassan is the Director for the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), an Abuja-based policy advocacy and research organization with a focus on deepening democracy and development in West Africa. Her core interests include democracy, peace and security, and transitional justice in West Africa. She is a lawyer by profession and has held fellowship in several universities across Europe and America.

Robin Watts is a consultant at International IDEA and contributes to its research on elections and security. He has an academic background in the history of sub-Saharan Africa, which he studied as part of a joint undergraduate degree in history and economics. Watts is also involved in International IDEA's work in electoral financing, disinformation and COVID-19.

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

What do we do?

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work.

International IDEA provides analyses of global and regional democratic trends; produces comparative knowledge on democratic practices; offers technical assistance and capacity-building on reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convenes dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

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Our headquarters are located in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

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The G5 Sahel countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger—will organize elections in 2020 and 2021. These elections will take place in a context in which all are facing serious humanitarian and securities challenges, aggravated by the fragility of their institutions. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts worsen the situation and even raise questions about the possibility to organize elections in so volatile an environment.

This Guide has been developed to assist decision-makers and practitioners in this context.



International IDEA

Strömsborg

SE-103 34 Stockholm

Sweden

Telephone: +46 8 698 37 00

Email: info@idea.int

Website: <http://www.idea.int>

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