

Sahel Research Group /International Crisis Group

Second Annual Scholars/Practitioners forum on the Sahel

17 April 2023

The University of Florida, Gainesville

Participant Bios

Leonardo Villalón is Professor of African Politics and founder and coordinator of the Sahel Research Group at the University of Florida. He is a former director of the UF Center for African Studies and former dean of the International Center. Villalón is a specialist on politics in the Francophone countries of the African Sahel, where he has lived, traveled and lectured extensively.

Alioune Sow is the interim director of the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida. He holds a joint appointment in French and African Studies at the University of Florida. His research interests include democratic transition and cultural forms in francophone West Africa, focusing especially on memoirs, theater and films in Mali, as well as migration and theater practices in France

Andrew Lebovich is a Research Fellow with Clingendael's Conflict Research Unit. His research focuses on security and political issues in the Sahel (and North Africa) with a particular emphasis on religious mobilization, armed conflict, and sources of local political and religious legitimacy.

Olivier Walther is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Florida. Using social network analysis, his research and teaching has focused on cross-border trade, cross-border cooperation and terrorism in West Africa. His work combines geographic information systems, social network analysis, statistical analysis, and qualitative interviews.

Jean-Hervé Jezequel is the Project Director for the Sahel at the International Crisis Group based in Dakar, Senegal. His role requires extensive research and advocacy on the prevailing political and security issues in the central Sahel region. He has authored numerous reports and publications on violent conflicts in the central Sahel region.

Ibrahim Yahya Ibrahim is Senior Analyst Sahel based in Dakar for the International Crisis Group. His work covers Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. His research interests include Islam and politics, defense and security, political contestations, and international development.

Ibrahim Maïga is a Senior Sahel Analyst at the International Crisis Group. His research focuses on governance, peace and security issues in the Sahel region and Mali in particular.

Mathieu Pellerin is Senior Sahel Consulting Analyst at the International Crisis Group.

Rhoumour Ahmet Tchilouta is a visiting scholar at the Sahel Research Group. He is a PhD student at PACTE Research Center/University of Grenoble Alpes. His doctoral research focuses on the externalization of EU migration policies in Niger. In particular, he investigates the impact of these on Niger's national border management policies in the light of the "migration crisis" of 2015.

Tatiana Smirnova is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center FrancoPaix (Université de Québec à Montréal). Her work focuses on different forms of violence in the Sahel. She worked on the dynamics of the student movement in Niger, the insurrectionary logics in the Sahel and the “responses” provided by international organizations and foreign forces.

Michel Liégeois is a Professor at the Université catholique de Louvain where he teaches International Relations and Security Studies. He also served as the president of the Institute of Political Science Louvain-Europe (ISPOLE). His research focuses on peace operations and Belgian foreign policy, particularly its action in the Security Council.

Sarah McKune is an Associate Professor in the UF Center for African Studies and in the Department of Environmental and Global Health in the College of Public Health and Health Professions. Her research seeks to explain the complex, system dynamics that affect child growth and nutritional outcomes, including factors such as household hygiene and sanitation, livestock ownership, climate change, and gender dynamics within the household.

Renata Serra is Senior Lecturer in the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida, core faculty member in the Master in Sustainable Development Practice program at UF. Her expertise focuses, among other things, on agricultural and livestock policies, the political economy of reforms, gender issues, and household decision-making.

Azizou Garba is Deputy Director of Niger's National Center for Strategic and Security Studies (CNESS). He is currently a Ph.D. candidate with the Centre for International Crisis and Conflict Studies (CECRI) at UC Louvain. His research focuses on the effects of terrorism on state building in the Sahel. Azizou was a Technical Advisor to Niger's Ministry of Affairs from 2013 to 2016 and an independent consultant on issues of political governance and civil society participation in state management.

Adib Bencherif is an Assistant Professor in political science at the University of Sherbrooke. He served as a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Sahel Research Group (SRG) at the University of

Florida. His research focuses on security issues and political violence in the Sahel and North Africa, with a focus on Tuareg political elites in Mali and Niger.

Ibrahim Garba Birmaka is the director of Niger's National Coordination Centre for the Early Warning and Response mechanism (CNAP), in the Office of the Prime Minister.