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About the author

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

IGAs	Income-generating activities
SALWs	Small arms and light weapons
ANSIPRJ	Alliance nationale pour la sauvegarde de l'identité peule et la restauration de la justice (National alliance for the protection of the Fulani identity and the restoration of justice)
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ECOWAS/CEDEAO	Economic Community of West African States
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DSFs	Defence and security forces
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
GSIM	Group to Support Islam and Muslims
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MUJWA	Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PO	Producer organization
ORM	Mopti region rice office
GDP	Gross domestic product
TFPs	Technical and financial partners
HDI	Human development index
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union

SUMMARY

In Sub-Saharan Africa, peace and security are threatened due to multiple causes, which are increasingly complex, arising from interactions between a variety of circumstances and influences. Competition over resources, ethnic tensions, violent (cross-border) conflicts, crime, Islamist terrorism and drug smugglers have all contributed to the destabilization of the Sahel region and the weakening of peace and security in Mali and Burkina Faso. However, these threats should not overshadow the importance of ancient conflicts in this region of Africa, such as conflicts between farmers and herders, land disputes that gravitate around natural resource use.

The juxtaposition of so many different conflicts makes their resolution more complex, since several different dynamics coexist in the same space and communities develop resistance or survival strategies that States, local authorities and the international community fail to take into account in their attempts at crisis resolution. Tensions between communities are aggravated by this situation because, in a context of scarce local resources, each individual community develops its own strategies to control and capture resources, thereby accentuating community conflicts such as conflicts between herders and farmers, in a context of environmental deterioration and dwindling arable lands and pasturelands. Several areas in the Sahel are therefore becoming spaces of confrontation between communities over control of local resources.

In this context, Jihadist groups also flourish and totally or partially control certain major cross-border roads. There is thus a real interweaving of issues, actors, and networks in the Sahel over control of local resources in areas where the State's representation in terms of administration and defence and security forces is low or virtually inexistent.

To better understand these conflict situations, it is important, first of all, to grasp their operating dynamics, but also how communities play on them according to their economic, political and social interests against a backdrop of asymmetric threats.

This study focuses both on the causes and the political and economic aspects of conflicts between farmers and herders in a context of exploitation of increasingly scarce natural resources, against a backdrop of growing extremist movements in the Sahel. Concretely, the analyses aim to achieve a better understanding of the links between the dynamics of local community appropriation of natural resources and land and the development of terrorist groups in certain areas of Mali and Burkina Faso, through a political economy approach.

The study is based on an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach which, in the light of numerous interdependencies, recommends avoiding the separation of the political dimension, along with its institutional, legal and geographic aspects, from the socio-economic dimension and its security, economic and social aspects. It also takes account of cultural, ethnic, religious and gender aspects.

Finally, specific, concrete and feasible recommendations for action are formulated with a view to promoting the development of New Approaches to Collective Security.

INTRODUCTION

In a number of areas of the Sahel, the coexistence of farmers and herders in the same spaces has led to and continues to lead to almost constant conflicts between these competitors for the control of the land. Such low-level conflicts are either neglected by the authorities or, when resolutions are found, they are not sustainable. This leads to violence, which grows from year to year, leaving a wake of property destruction, score-settling, attacks and even deaths.

The areas affected by this violence live in insecurity, since defence and security forces (DSFs) are generally unable to maintain order and security in the territories concerned or safeguard the conduct of economic and social activities in a climate of appeasement. Since the years of drought in the 1970s, these conflicts and tensions have taken place against a backdrop of continuous environmental deterioration and climate change, which has negatively impacted the two main production systems in the Sahel, namely agriculture and pastoralism, with the shrinkage of arable land and pastureland.

The security environment has deteriorated in several countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso with the expansion of terrorism in the Sahel and the circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), and a heightening of tensions can be observed between farmers and herders in areas where attacks are perpetrated by armed groups. Access to natural resources is increasingly difficult in these areas, as is cohabitation between communities, since both traditional and modern regulatory systems are increasingly inoperative, and the State can no longer ensure security. The security vacuum has seen the emergence of new actors and a radical rethinking of the balances between and within communities. What, then, is the impact of such changes on the dynamics of conflicts between herders and farmers in the Niger River Delta in Mali and in Soum Province in northern Burkina Faso?

To answer this question, we have opted for a multidisciplinary approach to grasp the full complexity of the issues to be addressed and to understand the relationships between the different factors interacting in conflict dynamics between farmers and herders against a backdrop of asymmetric threats.

This study is structured around three points: an analysis of the context in its historical, political, economic and social dimensions; the actors and the relationships they build with each other in order to access natural resources; and the interactions between the environment and the actors. At the end of the study, proposals are made to the key actors to halt the dynamics of escalation between the agro-pastoral communities in a context of rising asymmetric threats and proliferation of armed groups. A qualitative methodological approach was used, based on documentary research and interviews with actors living in the areas or involved in conflict resolution between farmers and herders.

I. ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS IN MALI AND BURKINA FASO

1.1. Historical origins of conflicts between farmers and herders in the Niger Delta and Soum Province

In the Sahel, conflicts between farmers and herders are recurrent and are becoming increasingly complex in line with the historical, economic and political contexts in which they take place. Farming and herding are practiced in the same spaces and on the same territories. These activities are complementary and, together, they have formed the basis of the economy in this part of the continent for many centuries. Farmers need livestock products (milk, meat, etc.) to survive and herders need produce (millet, vegetables, fodder, etc.) for themselves and their livestock. However, these two activities use different methods of land tenure. Farming is generally intensive and is carried out in clearly determined spaces on a seasonal basis, while herding is practiced extensively across pasturelands and transhumance areas. This occasionally gives rise to conflicts between the actors. If those conflicts are not settled, they can lead to violence, destruction of property and loss of human lives.

The situation is hardly new; it can be seen throughout the history of both communities and has always been a source of concern for the successive political leaders that have governed this part of the continent, particularly in the Niger Delta in Mali. Indeed, due to recurring violent conflicts between farmers and herders, which undermined the safety of his empire, Seku Amadu, founder of the Dina, a theocratic 19th-century Fulani empire in Massina, worked with representatives of the principal social groups of the day to establish a land tenure mechanism that guaranteed the interests of farmers and herders in the Niger Delta. Space was historically structured around *leyde*, a set of interlocking territorial and agricultural units. *Leyde* were governed by *jowros* or masters of the land and pastures. This system created areas for pasture, set the timing of transhumance over the year and established land allocation methods. It created a climate of appeasement between the various communities coexisting in Massina: Bambara, Dogon, Somono, Bozo, Fulani, Arab, Tamasheq, etc. This compromise between the different communities allowed the Delta to be stabilized from 1821 to 1853 and created the conditions for the emergence of a flourishing economy based on complementary relationships between agriculture, herding and fishing.

The legacy of the Dina was not preserved after the fall of the Fulani empire, with the founding of El Hajj Umar Tall's Toucouleur empire, followed by the arrival of French colonization at the end of the 19th century and the birth of the Malian State in 1960. However, it remains strongly anchored in the historical and cultural imagination of the Fulani people of the Niger Delta, who feel dispossessed of the right to manage land handed down to them by their ancestors. A feeling subsists among many Fulani herders that they were dispossessed of their historical rights by the Malian State following the country's independence. The State was accused of partiality towards farmers. A similar feeling of dispossession can also be found among the Fulani of Burkina Faso, particularly in the Province of Soum, who consider that the political changes that have taken place since colonization have not upheld their rights to transhumance and to live in accordance with their traditional lifestyle.

1.2. Institutional and economic context

To right these historical injustices, a number of political initiatives have been undertaken in Mali and Burkina Faso with a view to sustainably ending conflicts between farmers and herders. In their wake, a number of laws have been adopted, including the land tenure code of 2000. This law defined rules and standards for the exercise of customary land rights in Mali. However, in practice, the enforcement of these laws has been flawed, particularly where the protection of herders' interests was concerned. According to the herders, the laws favour farmers and reinforce their powers in terms of land management at the community level. However, the chief limitation of the laws is that they are not understood by the majority of the actors concerned, since they are written in French and in technical language that is beyond the grasp of either herders or farmers. There is therefore a gap between modern legal standards and social realities.

Land tenure laws were adopted in a context where the Malian and Burkinabe governments had set a goal of achieving food self-sufficiency. In both countries, imports of high quantities of foodstuffs such as rice and wheat flour constantly disrupt the balance of public finances and aggravate the trade deficit. The Niger River Delta area is regarded as a key area for meeting this target in Mali, due to its fertile soil and the availability of water. Indeed, 80% of the fish consumed in Mali comes from this area, which is also home to 32% of the country's livestock and produces 32% of local rice. Major irrigation projects and programs have been implemented to fully capitalize on the potential of the Delta area with a view to helping Mali achieve food self-sufficiency. One example is the Mopti region rice office (ORM). However, these projects have failed to place enough emphasis on the development of pastoralism, and this has further re-

inforced the frustration of the herders. As a result, the Malian government adopted a pastoral charter in 2001, followed in 2004 by a new policy on the development of livestock production. These two laws aimed to correct the insufficiencies observed in the application of previous laws on land tenure and herding. They are a reflection of the strong will of the Malian government to sustainably resolve land management crises and conflicts in the Niger Delta.

However, the impact of climate change and strong population growth in the Delta have complicated the relationships between herders and farmers, and this has been an aggravating factor in the conflicts between them over land tenure, and particularly over the issue of transhumance tracks, which are very often turned into growing areas by farmers. This can cause cattle to wander and do damage to farmers' fields. In Burkina Faso, due to the consequences of climate change caused by droughts, migratory movements have begun among the Fulani, who have left the North of the country for the Center and especially the South, particularly the Province of Sissilli, which boasts fertile pasturelands. The arrival of herders in these areas generally dedicated to agriculture has generated conflicts between herders and farmers. These conflicts focus on the destruction of fields by herds of cattle and the delineation of transhumance areas.

Cohabitation between herders and farmers is increasingly tense, since each community feels that it has been injured by the actions of the other in the absence of consistent land management systems. Indeed, there is a mosaic of customary laws and contradictory interpretations on major issues, such as the confusion between rights of use and property rights. Disputes that are not settled amicably are rarely definitively resolved through customary law and are dealt with by the modern justice system.

However, very often, such disputes degenerate into violence, leading to a cycle of retaliation and destruction of property or even deaths. There is a sort of inability of the State and the customary authorities to put an end to this recurring violence. A similar situation exists in most areas of Burkina Faso in terms of relationships between herders and farmers in particular.

The persistence of these disputes raises the issue of the relevance of centralized governance in multi-polarized countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso, with their social, cultural and historical diversities. The Malian and Burkinabe governments have set up decentralization policies to deal with this diversity more effectively and meet citizens' needs for an administration that is closer to their needs. This was the case in Mali, particularly after the return of the rule of law, with the adoption of a number of laws, such as the law of October 16, 1996, on free administration of local authorities. In 1993, in Burkina Faso, a law was adopted on territorial organization and administration.

Decentralization policies are characterized by the broad devolution of powers by the central government to local authorities, particularly in the areas of the environment and land tenure. Local authorities therefore become responsible for several transferred powers. Decentralization is intended to bring the government closer to the people by laying down the foundations for local governance. The rationale is that authorities elected by universal suffrage at local levels and decentralized authorities will have the legitimacy and legality to promote endogenous, equitable and inclusive local development, focusing on the development of the tremendous resources of the Delta in the areas of herding, fishing and agriculture. In Burkina Faso, decentralization is also perceived by the government as a driver to accelerate the country's development, particularly in

remote and landlocked provinces such as Soum, with a poverty rate above the national average. Despite its isolation, this province has enormous agricultural and mining potential.

However, beyond its undeniable progress, decentralization has presented a certain number of shortcomings, particularly with regard to the land tenure issue. Decentralized elected authorities in several locations in the Delta have been criticized for a lack of transparency in land management and specifically of speculation on land grants to people not originally from the area, to the detriment of herders and people from lower social classes and strata. The territorial division created under decentralization has also been criticized for not upholding the configurations of the leyde, homogeneous entities within which herders could find pastures and circulate freely within their territories. One example is the leydi of Kounary, which covers the territory of 7 rural communes in Mopti Cercle. The situation has led certain herding officials to call for a reform of the current system of decentralization in order to take herders' interests into account and return the leyde to their central role in land management in a decentralized context. In Burkina Faso, decentralization has also been criticized for favouring farmers over herders and allowing the Fulani nobility in the province of Soum to maintain its privileges to the detriment of other social groups. Overall, the political will manifested by decentralization has been unable to resolve the issue of equal access to natural resources between herders and farmers. On the contrary, the number of conflicts has grown, despite attempts to resolve them.

1.3. Socio-cultural context

The increasingly difficult coexistence between herders and farmers and recurring conflicts over land tenure provide an opportunity to question the quality of both older and newer conflict-resolution mechanisms. Over the centuries, the communities living in the Delta have produced successful conflict-resolution mechanisms that are grounded in the area's culture and history. They call on family relationships, ancestral beliefs and popular wisdom through mechanisms including: joking kinships, joking cousins, the palaver tree, pacts of alliance between communities, the word of the elders, etc. Such mechanisms have been deployed in cases of conflicts over the years, allowing a number of conflicts to be resolved without the intervention of the State or the justice system, resulting in conflict management within and between communities through social regulation accepted by all of the actors.

However, these conflict-resolution mechanisms are currently losing ground for two main reasons. Firstly, there is the collapse of the power of customary authorities who, throughout history, have gradually lost their legitimacy with the arrival of modern administration in the area, which has imposed new rules of governance with standards that do not often fit with the traditions and customs of the native population. The legitimacy of customary chiefs has also been contested by the younger generations and the classes and castes that have been subject to domination by the nobility since the days of the Dina in the Delta and the Province of Soum. Young people and dominated groups accuse customary chiefs of complicity in land grabbing by the local authorities on behalf of speculators or agribusiness. This phenomenon is among the factors that have aggravated tensions between herders and farmers, since the shrinkage of pasturelands due to this situation is experienced by herders

as an obstruction of their work. The arrival of new actors (speculators and agribusiness) is perceived by some observers as one of the reasons for the widespread corruption found in areas of conflict between farmers and herders in Mali and Burkina Faso. Decentralized State departments, local authorities and customary chiefs are rightly or wrongly accused of organizing and benefiting from a vast ring of corruption involving the sale and granting of land in areas affected by conflicts between farmers and herders. Due to demographic pressures, elected officials take over pastoral lands and use them for residential purposes, but also for illicit, personal enrichment; land grabbing for the benefit of the political class has become a veritable industry.

This situation generates discredit around political institutions, challenging their legitimacy in the eyes of the people. They are accordingly less and less able to resolve conflicts and impose State authority. A two-fold phenomenon can be observed: the authority of customary chiefs is discredited as is the authority of representatives of the State and local government. The crisis affecting conflict-resolution mechanisms promotes individual or collective attempts to resolve disputes, often involving the use of violence. Because traditional systems of regulation and those of the modern State are increasingly challenged, each community tries to protect its own "interests" to the detriment of the others', leading to the deterioration of the security situation.

1.4. Security context

The security situation in Mali has been experiencing disruptions since 2012, with attacks on the northern part of the country by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and Jihadist groups. The defeat of the DSFs at the hands of the MNLA and terrorists plunged

the country into a threefold security, political and humanitarian crisis.

In terms of security, two thirds of the country are mainly occupied by terrorist groups: MUJWA, AQIM and Ansar Dine, which have managed to marginalize the MNLA. The regions of Timbuktu and Gao are under their control and so is part of the center, the Niger Delta region.

In political terms, the defeat of the army at the hands of armed groups has led to mutinies within the troops. These mutinies culminated in a coup d'état led by Captain Sanogo against the regime of President Amadou Toumani Touré, which brought the democratic institutions of the country to their knees. The coup further disorganized and weakened the DSFs, with clashes between "green berets" and "red berets". Two competing powers faced off: in the North with Jihadists and the MNLA and in the South with the military putschists.

In humanitarian terms, the twofold crisis led to a third, humanitarian crisis. The occupation of two-thirds of the country by armed groups caused a substantial displacement of the population towards the interior of Mali and neighbouring countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania, where Mbéra, the largest camp for Malian refugees, is located. This humanitarian crisis has been difficult to deal given the disorganization of the administrative departments and the deterioration of the security situation, especially in the Center of the country.

The threefold crisis has created a highly instable situation in Mali and reinforced the influence of armed groups in most of the country. There is also a security vacuum and a perceived absence of the State in areas controlled by Tuareg and Jihadist rebels. The people no longer feel like they are protected by the State and they no longer receive

basic social services. Civil servants have retreated to Bamako, as their safety is no longer ensured.

In several communities in the Delta, the presence of the State has decreased significantly, and the security of the people is no longer guaranteed, leaving people and communities vulnerable to Jihadist attacks. Basic social services such as education, health and access to drinking water are no longer provided for the population. In several communities in the Delta, such as Bandiagara, the economy has collapsed with an increase in livestock theft.

The absence of the State in all of its dimensions has enabled the development of various armed groups with a range of different motivations in the Niger Delta in particular, but also the resurgence of old conflicts between and within communities. The occupation of part of the Delta by MUJWA, which has supplanted the MNLA in that area, was perceived by some groups as a sort of "liberation" from the Tuareg and the Malian State. MUJWA took advantage of the void to establish itself in the Delta and recruit members among young Fulani nomads. There has also been a proliferation of groups of bandits and drug smugglers who have developed networks to build up their businesses. Communities victimized by the exactions of MUJWA and criminal groups have also defended themselves by forming self-defence groups. All this has led to multiple conflicts within the Delta, including conflicts between herders and farmers. In this framework, it is very difficult to discern precisely where terrorism ends, and banditry begins, to the extent that the same players may appear in each category.

These conflicts have grown increasingly violent and deadly due to the actors' use of SALWs. They no longer fight with machetes or hunting rifles, but with Kalashnikovs. The circulation of SALWs

in the Sahel dates back to the 1990s, following the toppling of the Berlin Wall, with the arrival of huge quantities of arms from the former Eastern Bloc countries, brought in by smuggling rings and widely disseminated in West and Central Africa. Smugglers supplied the civil wars that broke out on that part of the continent. With the fall of Gaddafi in 2011, the circulation of SALWs in the Sahel reached new heights. It contributed to the escalation of conflicts between farmers and herders and particularly to their militarization. These confrontations have left a growing number of dead and injured, which has promoted the destabilization of much of the Sahel, with the development of terrorist groups that continue to exercise strong asymmetric threats on the States and communities in certain Sahelian countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso.

With the launching of Operation Serval in 2013, terrorist groups were driven out of the Delta. The DSFs in Mali were gradually deployed in the center with the support of Operation Barkhane, which replaced Serval, and United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) forces. These forces have also weakened terrorist groups in the North of the country. Since then, changes have been observed in the strategies of these groups, such as Ansar Dine, which has sought to establish itself in Central Mali. A number of attacks by these groups have been observed since that time, with operating methods focused on the destruction of symbols of the Malian State: schools, police and army barracks, administrative buildings and courts of justice. They have also attacked people accused of collaborating with the authorities. These attacks have contributed to the deterioration of the security situation in the Delta, since the DSFs have been unable to contain them and they have even retreated from those groups. The actions of the various armed groups operating in the Delta have led to rising insecurity. Because the State is

no longer able to keep the peace and maintain security in the villages and towns of the Delta, each community develops its own strategies to reinforce its security and defend itself from attacks. The State is increasingly losing its monopoly on legitimate violence, reinforcing the privatization of violence through self-defence groups that ensure the security of their communities.

Based on the foregoing analysis of the overall context of conflicts between farmers and herders in Burkina Faso and Mali, the following observations can be made:

• The gap between the visions of the different players in terms of land management continues to widen;

• The insecurity caused by the threefold crisis in 2012 has aggravated tensions between farmers and herders;

• Traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms and policies initiated by the State have not brought a solution to these conflicts;

• Insecurity in the Delta has further weakened Mali, since the crisis in the North of the country is far from being resolved. There is a social, economic and historical continuum between the Delta and the northern part of the country. The North is affected by destabilization in the Delta and vice versa.

In the light of the foregoing, it therefore appears that the causes of conflicts between farmers and herders are profoundly anchored in society, as they are rooted in the history, politics and economic, institutional and environmental changes affecting Mali and Burkina Faso. However, the deterioration of the security situation in the Niger Delta and northern Burkina Faso has further complicated

relations between farmers and herders. These relations are not just binary, they are multiple, as a number of different actors are involved in the conflict dynamics between the two communities. Who are these actors and what are the relationships between them?

II. ANALYSIS OF THE ACTORS AND THEIR INTERNAL DYNAMICS

The actors can be divided into four main groups: herders, farmers, civil society and State actors.

2.1. Herders

Herders are generally assimilated with the Fulani and have been practicing herding for centuries. In most of the communities affected by conflicts between farmers and herders in Mali and Burkina Faso, herders have great difficulty gaining access to the land resources they need (land, pasturelands, etc.) to carry out their animal husbandry work. This is a prevailing trend throughout the Sahel.

Herding is a family practice. Families own herds, which generally belong to the head of the family, and herders, who are generally his children or other relatives, are responsible for caring for the livestock and leading them on transhumance through pastures in their area and often in very distant areas, which can nowadays be located in neighbouring countries such as Mauritania in the case of Mali or Côte D'Ivoire for Burkinabe herders. The extension of pasture areas beyond the borders of the national territory is due to the scarcity of resources following the repeated droughts experienced in the Sahel since the 1970s. Countries such as Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana and Benin take in growing numbers of transhumants from Sahelian countries where the environment is deteriorating more rapidly. While transhumance means herders travel most of the year with their livestock, families are increasingly settling around villages in areas with fertile pasturelands and in larger communities in the Delta and Soum Province.

Fulani societies are highly stratified in social terms, with both a social and a political hierarchy. Historically, the nobility has ruled the different Fulani kingdoms and political entities in Mali and Burkina Faso and maintained customary powers throughout colonization and after the independence of the two countries in 1960. This class is called the Rimbe. At the bottom of the social ladder are former slaves and their descendants, the *Rimaibe*. Between the two are the commoners. The division of labour is based on social stratification. This social hierarchy, as noted above, is strongly opposed nowadays by youths and descendants of former slaves. They call for greater social equality and the abolition of the privileges granted to nobles since the days of the Dina. These groups feel oppressed and seek to take revenge on their former masters. In the Province of Soum, the *Rimaibe* make up the majority of the population. This fortifies them in their calls to change the centuries-old, established social order and particularly the relationships between the dominant and dominated, masters and subjects, and the young and the old.

Thus, it can be seen that the group of herders is far from homogeneous. It is riddled with cleavages, which are exacerbated by political and social crises such as those currently being experienced in the Delta and northern Burkina Faso.

2.2. Farmers

Farmers make up a very important group of actors involved in land management. In the Niger Delta, they are often described as Bambara, although other ethnic groups such as the Dogon, the Somono, etc., practice subsistence farming of millet, sorghum, vegetables, legumes, groundnuts, etc. It should also be noted that many herders are also farmers. There is no clear dividing line between the two types of activities. In Burkina

Faso, the Mossi, the Dyula, etc., have also worked in agriculture for centuries. The majority live in the Center and South of the country. For centuries, the Niger River Delta was home to several caravan routes linking Black Africa with the Maghreb in the days of the Mali and Songhai Empires. Alongside agriculture, flourishing trade developed over the centuries through multi-ethnic networks including Tamasheq, Bambara, Dogon, Fulani, Sarakole and other peoples. The Niger Delta has been and remains an ethnic and economic hub. In addition, the rich supplies of fodder and water in this part of Mali have enabled the development of herding, particularly of zebus, thus promoting the prosperity of the Fulani community.

Complementariness between farming and herding is the cornerstone of prosperity in the Delta and is strategic in supplying Mali and its neighbouring countries with foodstuffs. Fishing is the third essential source of nourishment. However, since the droughts of the 1970s, the Delta economy has experienced problems, with lower rainfall and a drop in the levels of fodder, transhumance tracks and arable land. This situation is also the main source of conflicts between farmers and herders. Currently, a number of communities are facing food insecurity. Low investments by the Malian State in the economic regeneration of the Delta and the deterioration of the security situation in the area have accentuated the fragility of a zone that is highly strategic for the future of Mali and the sub-region as a whole. The Niger Delta is currently experiencing an economic downturn, with the development of poverty and the ongoing deterioration of social indicators such as health and basic education. The isolation of the Delta, especially during the rainy season, constitutes an obstacle to the development of trade and agricultural activities. Agriculture is in decline, which accentuates the vulnerability of the most disadvantaged strata of society, namely small landowners and women.

As among herders, there is social stratification in the group of farmers. Some landowners possess vast stretches of land, acquired through the traditional mode of land occupation handed down historically, based on the pre-eminence of dominant classes and groups over other groups and classes of inferior rank and the virtual exclusion of women from land ownership in the Delta. Women experience discrimination because they are deprived of the right to own land by customary law, although this runs counter to the principles of equality among citizens contained in all of the laws on land tenure voted since Mali's independence.

In Burkina Faso, on the other hand, land belongs to the "masters of the land". They can lend the land, but it remains the property of the natives. In Mali, traditional modes of land acquisition and ownership contradict the 2017 laws on agricultural land tenure, according to which the State is the principal owner of the land; in Burkina Faso, they contradict the law on agrarian and land reform of 2012, which makes the State the default owner of national lands. In both countries, the coexistence of customary laws and modern laws on land tenure is frequently a source of conflict, since it creates legal uncertainty and clashes between two legitimacies.

Alongside this dominant group are small landowners, who hold small tracts of land or are employed by large landowners. The agriculture practiced in these areas is traditional, and rudimentary tools are used, such as the daba, the hoe, etc.

However, there is an increasing mechanization of agriculture, particularly on irrigated land and in certain agricultural fields with the arrival of agri-business and certain city people wishing to invest in the sector. It should be noted that the governments of Mali and Burkina Faso strongly encourage investments in the agricultural sector, since both countries aim to achieve food self-sufficiency in the coming years.

However, the arrival of new players (agri-business and city-dwelling investors) in these areas has led to the development of speculative practices, as well as significant corruption in local administration and decentralized State departments. In some cases, land is granted to the detriment of smallholders and herders, who very often denounce the shrinking of their pasturelands and transhumance areas and the scarcity of fodder. This situation places them in a situation of inferiority in their relationships with farmers in terms of access to land in Mali and Burkina Faso, since public policies in both countries grant higher priority to agriculture than animal husbandry.

2.3. Civil society

Competition between actors to gain access to natural resources, especially land, has prompted many to professionalize in order to better protect their interests. This professionalization represents a major change in Mali and Burkina Faso.

A number of producers' organizations (POs) made up of farmers and herders have been created to present the demands of their members with respect to land management and access to basic services. With decentralization, these associations are increasingly involved in the management of powers transferred to local authorities and participate in the drawing up of local development plans. They design and execute community projects in the areas of herding, agriculture and income-generating activities (IGAs) with support from political authorities, technical and financial partners (TFPs) and large non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the Delta, there are a number of civil society associations in the farming

and herding sectors. They play a significant social role in certain areas where the absence of the State is felt.

These associations advocate non-violence and intercommunity dialogue to resolve conflicts, either through traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms or modern mechanisms implemented by the government. They act as relays between the communities and the State and play an important role in the pacification of the Delta and Soum Province communes affected by insecurity.

2.4. State actors

They can be divided into three categories: local administration, decentralized departments and DSFs.

Local administration provides services to the population and answers directly to the ministries. It is managed at the local level by governors, prefects and sub-prefects. Services include: the land register, animal husbandry, taxes and State property, justice, etc. These services are involved in land management and especially in conflicts between farmers and herders. Decentralized departments depend on local authorities (mayor's offices, cercles, regions). Local authorities in Mali and Burkina Faso manage powers transferred to them by the State such as primary education, health, etc., in the framework of the decentralization policy. They draw their legitimacy from universal suffrage. This is why they are called upon to play a central role in land management with a view to defending the interests of all groups equitably. However, they have been subject to numerous criticisms on the part of the population, like all decentralized departments. They have notably been criticized for their lack of skills to manage the powers transferred to them by the State. They are ill-equipped in terms of

expertise and resources to handle those powers and to provide quality, proximity services to the people. They have also been accused of partisan involvement in intercommunity conflicts and the corruption of certain employees. Herders have also complained that the administration plays into the hands of the elites and deprives them of their rights.

Customary chiefs, heads of land departments, mayors and new farmers (agri-business and city dwellers) are most often incriminated in practices of speculation and corruption. Today, they are the most influential actors in the Delta and they draw criticism from herders and small farmers, who aspire to change with a view to gaining access to land. They are not satisfied with either the old or modern land management systems, whereas the dominant actors are proponents of the status quo.

DSFs, including the police, the gendarmerie, the armed forces, customs and the water and forestry department, are in charge of keeping the peace and maintaining the security of people and property as well as national border surveillance against a backdrop of asymmetric threats and the proliferation of criminal groups, drug smugglers and SALWs. In areas affected by conflicts between farmers and herders, their presence can contain violence through interventions in the field. In Mali and Burkina Faso, the DSFs have not been equal to the task of containing the advancing armed Jihadist groups, in particular, and this is due to a number of reasons, among which the following can be cited:

• their unpreparedness to deal with new types of threats, such as asymmetric threats;

• their lack of suitable equipment to track down armed groups and drug dealers, such as helicopters, drones and fighter aircraft;

- the lack of training for troops on protection of human rights;

- the failure of the national defence policy, as in Mali in 2011;

- the slow pace of reorganization of the army after political change as in Burkina Faso after the fall of Compaoré with the disbanding of the presidential guard regiment (RSP); and

- the failure of focusing solely on security to effectively fight terrorism.

The foregoing reasons explain why the armies of these two countries have difficulty winning victories over armed groups, since they are not used to combating a highly volatile enemy that uses operating methods contrary to the laws of war, namely: civilian massacres, destruction of public utilities, massive human rights violations, etc. As long as the DSFs have not overcome their weaknesses, Jihadist groups and criminal networks will continue to flourish in the Sahel and the security vacuum observed in the Niger Delta and northern Burkina Faso, especially Soum Province, will persist.

2.5. Criminal groups and terrorist networks

The multifaceted actions perpetrated by armed groups against the people and DSFs have strongly contributed to the deterioration of the security context in these two areas where DSFs have difficulty maintaining the security of people and property. These groups are highly knowledgeable about the communities they operate in and often benefit from strong complicity within the population. The various criminal groups (livestock thieves, SALW smugglers, etc.) operating

there conduct illegal activities through their own networks. Thus, in the Delta, livestock theft is increasingly practiced by armed groups, and the same applies in the Province of Soum. The rise in robberies and armed robberies has strongly progressed along with targeted murders of notables and State officials. These murders are generally attributed to terrorist groups operating in the Delta, such as Katibat Macina and Ansarul Islam in Soum Province. However, under the circumstances, it is very difficult to say which actions are due to terrorism or banditry, since the armed groups that proliferate in these areas all obey logics of crime and interdependence.

An analysis of the dynamics between the actors shows that they are not homogeneous groups with identical interests. Some would like to maintain the status quo to preserve their privileges and domination, while others aspire to change to inclusive and fair land management. This heterogeneity is heightened in the context of crisis and the security vacuum, where the lack of regulation promotes disruption and the formation of cyclical alliances with political platforms.

III. CHANGES IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE ACTORS IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEXTUAL CHANGES

The profound mutations underway in the environment, demonstrated in part one of this paper, cause changes in the actions of the players as they seek to conquer resources and power. Three trends have developed simultaneously: the reinforcement of terrorist groups, the development of banditry and the development of self-defence groups.

3.1. Strengthening of the foothold of terrorist groups in the Delta and Soum Province

The absence or limited presence of the State in those areas has created a security vacuum combined with social and economic disorganization, enabling armed groups to take root, spread their propaganda and recruit young people. A number of endogenous factors have also promoted their establishment and may explain why certain youths, particularly among the Fulani ethnic group, are drawn to the discourse of Jihadist groups and their plans to destroy the Malian State and set up a caliphate.

The history of the Delta is intrinsically linked to the spread of Islam in the Sahel and in Mali. Places such as Hamdallah, Djenné, Bandiagara, etc. have been important centers of dissemination and promotion of Islamic culture since the 15th century. These centers maintained cooperative relationships with Timbuktu and Gao as well as several North African cities such as Fez, Tlemcen, Kairouan and Cordoba, Andalusia, under Arab domination. It was in this part of the country that the first Fulani theocratic empire was created in the 19th century. The Dina empire

codified land management and management of transhumance, granting Fulani people rights and power, which they lost when the empire fell. History recalls that the greatest strength of the Dina was its quest for social liberation and equality inspired by the Koran. The Fulani were able to free themselves from their former Bambara masters, farmers who managed the land for their own profit. A similar historical disruption can be observed beginning in the 17th century in today's Soum Province, when the Fulani aristocracy defeated the local royalty.

These social and political events are deeply anchored in the mentality and imagination of many Fulani. Their feeling of historical pride is linked to a frustration arising from the dispossession of their rights which is at the heart of the Fulani identity in Mali and Burkina Faso. It feeds their imagination and explains their distrust of the States that have governed Mali and Burkina Faso since the 19th century and their quest for justice and "liberation". Given the failure of the Malian and Burkinabe governments to sustainably resolve recurring conflicts between farmers and herders and especially the exactions committed by the DSFs, some young people have been quick to adhere to the "liberating" discourse of Jihadist groups, particularly those of the Macina Liberation Front, which some also call Katibat Macina, and of Ansarul Islam. It should be noted that these movements have distinguished themselves with their virulent homilies against the Malian and Burkinabe governments, marabouts and customary authorities, which they accuse of favouring dominant classes and groups over the descendants of oppressed classes and youths.

This propaganda has contributed to the radicalization of many young people and has strongly encouraged them to join the ranks of these two Jihadist movements. A number of young people from the Delta attend Koranic schools

accused of dispensing radical Islamic teachings. These schools teach the precepts of Salafism, which professes a very strict interpretation of the Koran and the use of violence to justify murder and taking up of arms against impious Muslims and those they consider to be the enemies of Islam, namely the Malian State and its divisions, MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane, NGOs, etc. Salafism is spreading in Mali, Burkina Faso and throughout the Sahel, with significant financial resources from the Gulf countries and Pakistan. In Mali and Burkina Faso, this school is opposed to the tolerant and non-violent Sufi majority represented by religious brotherhoods such as the Khadriya and the Tidjaniya.

The security vacuum in certain areas of Soum Province, particularly in communes such as Djibo, Nassoumbou and Tougomayel, has enabled Ansarul Islam to establish itself and preach with a view to radicalizing a large proportion of the young people to use them in violent attacks on the DSFs and the population. It should be noted that Soum Province is very isolated, with few practicable roads, a high poverty rate, and a low literacy rate (53% compared to a national average of 86%). Isolation, poverty and lack of education have provided fertile ground for the spread of terrorism in the province. Ansarul Islam has exploited the frustrations arising from this situation of social and economic fragility to recruit young people within the Fulani community, particularly among the *Rimaibe*, descendants of former slaves of Fulani nobles since the 17th century. They are drawn in by the egalitarian discourse of Malam Dicko (who has been declared dead according to some sources), which places *Rimaibe* and Fulani nobles on equal footing. This attitude partially accounts for their local anchoring in a context of extreme poverty, with a relatively low State presence in the areas where these groups operate, as well as a lack of willingness among locals to denounce the groups or collaborate with the State in its fight against

them in the Niger River Delta and the Province of Soum. "The Jihadists are our children, we cannot denounce our children!", exclaimed one inhabitant of the Delta.

The establishment and activism of armed groups in the communities has resulted in a growing "militarization" of politics. Each group aims to change the balance of power in its own favour, either alone or in alliance with others to neutralize their adversaries. In this framework, Jihadists, criminal groups and rebels of all stripes can have converging interests in challenging the State and DSFs and, especially, controlling part of the local economy.

3.2. Development of a criminal economy

The absence or limited presence of the State has also contributed to economic disorganization. Armed groups control several economic circuits and smuggling networks involved in contraband, drug dealing and especially proliferation of SALWs. The arms smuggling network has allowed a number of local armed groups to procure weapons. A criminal economy is emerging and developing in this part of Mali, and the areas where it flourishes are spreading. They now cover the Center and the North of the country, where a number of criminal networks have been operating for several years in complicity with rebel movements or terrorist groups such as AQIM.

An increase in livestock theft has been observed in the Delta. Although this is an ancient practice in the Sahel, cattle rustling has intensified in areas affected by insecurity and a security vacuum. It is generally perpetrated by bandits. Stolen livestock is sold in neighbouring countries such as Mauritania with the complicity of certain terrorist groups such as Katibat Macina and the former

Ntéréré, who are known for their extortion of herders. Illicit livestock trafficking networks are established in border areas where insecurity is high. The meat industry is currently disrupted in Mali, particularly in the Delta, due to the upsurge in the theft of cattle, which is traded for smuggled arms. The Tuareg are also involved in cattle trafficking, especially since the creation of the MNLA in 2011. Their military superiority has enabled them to dispossess Fulani herders of thousands of heads of cattle. This explains the profound resentment of Fulani herders towards the Tuareg movement and their sympathy towards MUJWA, which defeated the MNLA in Gao and Central Mali prior to the launching of Operation Serval. The State is often accused by certain herders of failing to defend them and allowing banditry and militia hostile to their community to flourish. They claim that the State is complicit in those crimes.

In northern Burkina Faso, the development of insecurity has led to an increase in crimes such as robbery and cattle theft. The limited presence of DSFs in these areas has heightened insecurity following attacks by Ansarul Islam in Soum Province. This is the reason for the creation of Ruga, groups of armed Fulani herders fighting cattle theft, in Soum Province.

3.3. Formation of self-defence groups

The development of the criminal economy, the exactions perpetrated by the DSFs and the presence of several armed groups in the Delta have led to the creation or reinforcement of self-defence groups. Communities that feel the State offers them little or no protection take charge of their own security by combating the different forms of violence thriving in Central Mali. They develop self-defence groups which, in contrast to the weakness of the DSFs, ensure security

in several villages. Some of these groups work with the DSFs to track down Jihadists, such as Bambara self-defence groups, while others are accused of collusion or sympathizing with terrorist groups, such as Fulani groups. Among these groups, which advocate the use of violence, we can cite the example of the National Alliance for the Protection of the Fulani Identity and the Restoration of Justice (ANSIPRJ), led by Oumar Aldiana. This movement, which defines itself as neither Jihadist nor separatist, claims to fight the services of "repression". The group denounces the exactions committed against Fulani by the DSFs, as well as the actions of professional livestock thieves. Their chief claims to have 700 combatants ready to take action to protect the Fulani community against the DSFs and any armed groups. This new platform places more emphasis on security matters, but it is losing ground in the Fulani community due the leadership crisis it has been experiencing. Other communities criticize Fulani self-defence groups, accusing them of collusion with Jihadist groups. For the time being, there is no conclusive evidence confirming that allegation. A similar trend towards militarization can also be seen in other communities, such as the Bambara. In the Delta, Bambara self-defence groups have been created to defend farmers against "exactions by herders" and armed groups. These groups operate in conjunction with the DSFs in many areas in the Delta. They also act as informants for the army in tracking down armed groups. The Dozo, traditional Bambara hunters, are known for conducting punitive actions against Fulani herders, whom they accuse of destroying fields belonging to Bambara farmers.

This tendency towards the militarization of self-defence groups makes inter-community confrontations more violent and deadly, such as those that recently opposed Fulani herders from Nawodié and Dogon farmers from Gondo Ogourou in the Mopti region, leaving some thirty dead and

many wounded in June 2017. The proliferation of SALWs in the Niger Delta and northern Mali further reinforces this tendency and increases the number of victims in each clash. The security vacuum is one of the factors that promote this tendency towards community militarization.

In Burkina Faso, on the other hand, the formation of rural self-defence groups and militia dates back to the early 2000s, with the creation of Koglweogo. These self-defence groups were created to protect the environment and combat illegal trafficking of wood. Subsequently, *Koglweogo* defence groups extended their scope of action to combating livestock theft, robbery, and tracking of bandits in rural and even urban areas. Although they are tolerated by the Burkinabe government, *Koglweogo* are increasingly criticized for being a militia that does not respect human rights. Their arbitrary arrests and tortures have been denounced by several NGOs and citizens. The groups increasingly defy State authority, so that the latter is losing its monopoly on legitimate violence, particularly in the context of conflict resolution between farmers and herders, and the keeping of peace.

It should be pointed out, however, that in the rural areas where cattle theft and robbery take place, their actions are generally appreciated by farmers and herders, who even call on them to ensure the security of their herds during transhumance. For the time being, according to the information at our disposal, there is nothing to indicate links between the *Koglweogo* and armed groups, especially Jihadists in northern Burkina Faso, but confrontations have been reported between an unidentified armed group and the *Koglweogo* in the village of Kérébouré in the commune of Djibo. State intervention has been unable to eradicate these armed groups. The DSFs lack sufficient response capacity and personnel to secure the whole Province of Soum, which borders on Mali. The porousness of the borders in this part of

Africa promotes the mobility of criminal groups and partially explains the great difficulty the continent's armies have in successfully combating them. Soum Province and part of the Delta are located in the "three borders" area (Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso), which is one of the priority areas the G5 Sahel force is attempting to stabilize in order to avoid the propagation of the terrorist threat towards the South of the Sahel and the development of cross-border criminal networks.

3.4. Development of identitarian closure and communitarianism

The deterioration of the security situation and the weakness of State and traditional institutions in charge of social and political regulation have generated a great deal of mistrust between communities. Stigmatization flourishes, reinforcing prejudice and communitarianism between social groups that have been living together in the Delta for centuries.

The actions of Katibat Macina, led by Ahmadou Kouffa, a Fulani, against the population and DSFs, and those of Ansarul Islam in Soum Province, have convinced some that the Fulani community as a whole supports terrorism. Thus, the community is stigmatized, and divisions between the Fulani and other communities are reinforced. Identitarian closure and communitarianism are growing as the different groups in the Delta lose confidence in each other regarding the resolution of old conflicts and the fight against terrorism.

Within the communities, a strong sense of internal solidarity develops every time a community feels that it has been attacked by an external force. For example, the Bambara of Ségou demonstrate strong solidarity towards their "relatives" in Mopti, who are victims of "exactions" by Fulani and armed groups. If this tendency continues,

the scope of inter-community confrontations may extend well beyond the limits of the Niger Delta. This prospect should be taken seriously by the public authorities and the main actors involved in conflict resolution between herders and farmers in Mali.

3.5. Diverse actors with opposing platforms

The threefold security, political and humanitarian crisis Mali has been experiencing since 2012 has complicated the resolution of traditional conflicts such as those between farmers and herders. It has deepened the obsolescence of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms and weakened the capacities of national and local institutions to regulate relations between and within communities. As a consequence, actors appear with opposing or even contradictory agendas within the communities and outside them. The multiplication of the actors further complicates conflict resolution. Even within the same communities, different voices can be heard and often the objectives of the different platforms within them can be contradictory.

This is the case between ANSIPRJ and Dewral Pullaku. The former advocates the use of force to resolve the problems faced by the herding community, while the latter advocates dialogue and negotiation. There is a similar fault line between the elites and the lower classes, who accuse the former of colluding with the State to preserve their interests and maintain their domination in terms of access to natural resources. A similar situation prevails in farming communities. Young people have very different demands from older people in terms of equal chances and social emancipation. They often want to change the social order, both in the Delta and Soum Province. Young nomads also contest the domination of

the elite, whom they accuse of collusion with the DSFs in their repression of MUJWA collaborators or sympathizers. The elite accuse some nomads of being behind attacks and score settling within the Fulani community. The social equilibrium is therefore disrupted within the communities, further complicating conflict resolution between farmers and herders in Burkina Faso and Mali. To achieve this, several challenges must be met.

IV. CHALLENGES TO MEET AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SEIZE TO BUILD LASTING PEACE BET- WEEN HERDERS AND FARMERS

4.1. Challenges to meet

Conflicts between farmers and herders in the Niger Delta and northern Burkina Faso are deeply rooted and continue to worsen over time. Lasting conflict resolution should be part of dynamics built by the actors using an inclusive approach. In the context of a security vacuum, peace-building between highly divided communities with often contradictory interests will take place in several stages. However, it should provide an opportunity to resolve old and new contradictions running through these societies in the Delta and Soum Province. Priority issues to be resolved include correcting old and new injustices with regard to social discrimination and access to natural resources. The issue of community reconciliation should be addressed as a priority with a view to repairing the torn and disfigured social fabric, especially in a context of asymmetric threats. It is urgent to reopen dialogue between and within communities.

To achieve this, a number of challenges must be met, including:

- **the security challenge:** The ongoing deterioration of the security situation must be ended, to create a pacified climate that promotes the resolution of longstanding conflicts between communities, such as the conflicts between farmers and herders. In this framework, the deployment of well-equipped DSFs in the field is a prerequisite for restoring the authority of the State, which has been seriously undermined, and above all for protecting the population. However, until the DSFs of Mali recover their full operational capacities, MINUSMA support is fundamental for restoring security in the Delta. The deployment of MINUSMA troops in the Delta, which was decided by the United Nations Security Council, was a step in the right direction. The same goes for the project of creating a G5 force in the Sahel. Every effort must be made to curtail the factors contributing to the spread of violence in the Delta. Rigorous controls should also be established over SALWs and security should be reinforced in border areas. All militia and self-defence groups should be disarmed without delay. A disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program should be developed to encourage young people who have joined armed groups or are involved in self-defence groups to lay down arms. However, it is important not to focus solely on security, since, in this region, the causes of conflicts such as those between farmers and herders are multifaceted and run deep. Above all, a strong political vision is required to resolve conflict over the short, medium and long term.

- **the social challenge:** Putting an end to "the culture of conflict" that characterizes the identity and experience of the communities. The persistence of this culture aggravates conflicts and does not promote a federating leadership that could sustainably resolve conflicts between farmers and herders. Instead, it reinforces identitarian closure and pushes the most radical elements of each community to prefer violent solutions over dialogue, concertation and compromise. The State must create the conditions for communities to be able to communicate with each other in order to resolve their conflicts. The spirit of the palaver tree must prevail over the Kalashnikov.

- **the political challenge:** Ending the marginalization of herders. This can only be achieved by taking account of their claims and demands at all levels of the State, namely at national, regional and local levels, especially as pertains to transhumance areas and access to pasturelands. In this spirit, herding should be promoted as a core industry, and the rights and status of herders should be recognized. Avoiding increasing their marginalization is the best way not to push a good part of this community of herders, most of whom are Fulani, into the ranks of criminal networks and terrorist groups. In this framework, corruption needs to be eradicated from land management and particularly from the sale and granting of land. Corruption discredits the State and its departments as well as customary chiefs. In addition to creating financial losses for the State, the practice of corruption also threatens the proper running of its institutions.

Every aspect of "the herder issue" needs to be addressed, including its political, institutional, economic, social and environmental dimensions. The State is the only actor that can handle this strategic issue in Mali and Burkina Faso in collaboration with all of the other national actors involved in natural resource management.

4.2. Opportunities to seize to build peace

In order to meet these challenges, it is important to take advantage of the opportunities arising in the dynamics of conflict resolution between farmers and herders. These opportunities are increasingly rare in a context of identitarian tension and distrust of the State, with persistent asymmetric threats. However, platforms are being created that advocate dialogue and non-violence to resolve community conflicts. Such platforms have been created by both herders and farmers, and their ideas are worthy of study by national and local authorities alike. These platforms for peace should be federated to create dynamics of community and national reconciliation in Mali and Burkina Faso. "Peace builders" should be encouraged, while extremists of all stripes should be isolated. If the platforms are unsuccessful, partisans of violence may triumph, further destabilizing the Niger Delta and northern Burkina Faso. The resulting chaos would boost advocates of Mali's secession, whereby the country would be divided into several entities and the Delta would become a "terrorist factory". Thus, beyond the security issue, there is a major political issue at stake in the stabilization of the Delta. In a way, the very future of Mali as a nation-state is at stake. Every effort should be made to avoid the worst-case scenario in the Delta and Soum Province.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing, it appears that conflicts between farmers and herders are rooted in both the past and the present of the communities living in the Niger Delta and the Soum Province of Burkina Faso. The recurrence of these conflicts is a strong trend that the States find hard to reverse with a view to building peaceful relationships between herders and farmers. The nature of these conflicts is changing with the transformations underway in the security situation in the Sahel, due to the persistence of asymmetric threats and the militarization of local conflicts promoted by the circulation of SALWs. Their resolution is increasingly complicated, since conflict zones must first be stabilized in order to attack the deeper roots of the conflicts. The security vacuum observed in these conflict-ridden zones reinforces antagonisms between and within communities over access to natural resources such as land.

A number of challenges should be met to rebuild peace in these areas, but also to change the paradigms based on which such community conflicts have been resolved. A holistic approach is required to find lasting solutions to the longstanding conflicts that contribute to the current deterioration of the security climate in the Sahel. Local governance needs to be reformed by giving grassroots communities the means to develop their potential with the help of an impartial State, respectful of the sociocultural diversity that has long contributed to the richness of African societies.

The recommendations below are designed with this in mind. They are aimed at the principal actors involved in conflict resolution between herders and farmers and the stabilization of the Delta and northern Burkina Faso. Once they are put into practice, they can help ease tensions between farmers and herders, but the definitive resolution of these tensions will take time. To achieve that goal, visionary States are required, that are capable of moving beyond the status quo, and that is another challenge to be met.

5.2. Recommendations

To the Malian and Burkinabe governments

1. Reinforce DSFs presence in the Niger Delta and Soum Province

   This will help combat armed groups and create security for the population while upholding human rights. The security vacuum that prevails in this part of Mali must be ended and the full authority of the State must be restored. This is a prerequisite for resolving both old and new conflicts in the region.

2. Attack the root causes of conflicts and not focus solely on security as a means of conflict resolution in the national space. Social inequalities and discrimination are the principal causes of conflict in these countries. They must be corrected gradually and inclusively through actions that concretely improve the situation of farmers and herders. In this framework, serious steps should be taken to fight corruption, particularly as pertains to land tenure in communes and villages where problems exist, and solutions are sought to resolve them.

To the Malian and Burkinabe governments and TFPs

3. Rebuild public utilities that have been destroyed and restore the authority of the State. Armed groups, particularly Katibat Macina and MUJWA in the Delta and Ansarul Islam in Soum Province, have destroyed a number of administrative buildings and schools. The people no longer receive basic social services, and this increases their vulnerability. Rebuilding infrastructure and returning civil servants to these areas will help restore the population's peace of mind. TFPs should support efforts by both States to reopen basic social services in both regions.

4. Invest in development in the Delta and remote areas of Mali and Burkina Faso. The social and economic fragility and the remoteness of the Delta and Soum Province have been aggravating factors in inter-community conflicts such as those between farmers and herders. Structural investments should be made to build roads, agricultural tracks, bridges, social infrastructure and, above all, production units to process local products. A real local economy needs to be promoted, and the area's production systems, namely agriculture, herding and fisheries, should be modernized. The revitalization of the Delta will boost the Malian economy, as the region is the breadbasket of the country and a trading area bordering on several neighbouring countries. The fragility of remote areas of the Sahel promotes the development of criminal networks and terrorist groups.

5. Promote IGAs for women to help them overcome their social and economic marginalization and vulnerability. Women and youths are the principal victims of the deterioration of the security situation in the Niger Delta and Soum Province. Women, in particular, are victims of social discrimination in terms of access to land, and their activities have suffered from insecurity. Once conflict areas are secured, IGA programs focusing mainly on women should be developed. Activities that could be eligible for these programs include those linked to processing and marketing of local products. The Delta and remote areas must be revitalized to promote the emergence of a real local economy based on fishing, farming and herding.

To local authorities and decentralized State departments of Mali and Burkina Faso

6. Build transhumance tracks and ensure that they are not taken over by farmers. The continuous shrinkage of pasturelands and transhumance areas is among the triggers of conflicts between farmers and herders in Mali and Burkina Faso. In most of the communes in these two countries, the expansion of agricultural plots has taken place at the expense of the herders. Due to strong population growth in certain areas, farmlands are used for housing. To break out of the vicious circle of conflicts over encroachment on pasturelands and transhumance areas, each commune should set aside dedicated areas for pastoral activities and ensure that they are not taken over for other purposes. In this framework, it is important to provide capacity building for local authorities and decentralized State departments and ensure that these initiatives are effectively implemented. Where transhumance tracks already exist, decentralized State departments should work with local actors to ensure that

they are operational, since their routes are often contested by a portion of the actors. However, it is not enough to delineate areas devoted to herding; food must also be produced for livestock. Thus, the production of bourgou *(Echinocloa stagnina)* should be encouraged. Communes should take steps to encourage fodder production to stabilize herds so that they do not destroy farmers' fields.

To the Malian and Burkinabe governments, TFPs and MINUSMA

7. Fight youth radicalization. Young people who join or sympathize with armed terrorist groups are initially drawn in by their propaganda. This propaganda is based on a biased reading of the Koran and glorification of crime, violence and hatred. Such extremist discourse contributes to youth radicalization in the Delta and Soum Province. The two main groups that are active in these areas, namely Katibat Macina and Ansarul Islam, began with violent preaching before they started recruiting young people. In order to effectively combat religious extremism, youth radicalization must be tackled first. Every effort should be made to ensure that young herders do not join terrorist movements. To that end, proponents of a peaceful Islam should be encouraged to develop a counter-discourse and above all to review curricula in Koranic schools. The role of governments is crucial, since they must unify and harmonize the education systems in Mali and Burkina Faso by building bridges between education in French and education in Arabic.

To the signatories of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and MINUSMA

8. Extend the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali to Central Mali with respect to DDR. The Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali signed between the government of Mali and rebel groups in the North includes a DDR component aimed at integrating former combatants into Malian society by providing them with a variety of perspectives for reintegration. The attractiveness of DDR for combatants should enable them to give up armed struggle. This opportunity for reintegration should be extended to young people in the Delta who have joined armed groups, particularly those that are active in that part of Mali. Indeed, there is a continuum between the crisis in northern Mali and the crisis in the Delta. By extending the DDR program to young people in Central Mali, they can be offered opportunities that will draw them away from armed groups. For the time being, most of them have few alternatives and are taken in by the "liberating" discourse of Jihadist groups. Any measure that could keep Central Mali from becoming a center for the expansion of terrorism should be encouraged.

To the Malian and Burkinabe governments, civil society and TFPs

9. Emphasize conflict prevention, resolution and mediation. Conflicts between farmers and herders persist and become rooted in society because both ancient and modern conflict-resolution mechanisms have reached their limits. Modern law written in French to settle these conflicts is not understood by most of the actors, who are not literate in the language. On the one hand, conflict prevention should be reformed by setting

up lightweight early warning structures and, on the other hand, by training new community mediators with the skills to draw on both customary law and modern law in resolving local conflicts, especially conflicts between farmers and herders. Civil society has a fundamental role to play, since it has a solid grasp of the issues at stake in local conflicts and very often participates in their resolution. In this framework, the focus should be on training paralegals and disseminating them in conflict areas. The principal laws governing land tenure should be translated into the national languages of each country. The governments of Mali and Burkina Faso and TFPs should encourage initiatives of this kind.

To local authorities, civil society and TFPs

10. Promote literacy and citizenship education with a view to building a culture of peace. Ignorance and communitarianism are among the factors that aggravate tensions and conflicts between and within communities. To deconstruct these errors, the population must be educated so that it can understand the real issues at stake in development and nation-building, especially in multi-polarized countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso, where several communities coexist. Literacy campaigns should be carried out in areas subject to tensions once they have been stabilized. In a similar vein, particular attention should be focused on citizenship education. It is imperative to put an end to the "culture of violence' that can be found in almost every community. Only citizens who are aware and educated can meet the challenges of development and democracy. Women and young people should be the main targets of these literacy and citizenship education programs, which should be conducted in local languages.

To the Malian and Burkinabe governments and local authorities

11. Promote intercommunal cooperation. Routing of transhumance tracks very often affects a number of communes, as does the development and implementation of agricultural and herding development projects and programs. The complementary relationship between communes in land management within a region or province should be an opportunity to strengthen intercommunal cooperation. Together, the communes can enhance the consistency of many of the decisions made to ensure concerted management of issues relating to movements of livestock and compliance with land tenure laws and regulations. Intercommunal cooperation also promotes pooling of tools and resources to deal with transfers of powers. This study has shown that individual communes have relatively limited capacities to handle these powers and especially to impartially manage environmental resources. Finally, intercommunal cooperation can help to meet the needs of communities that overlap between two or more communes, given that the delineation of the communes in Mali, for instance, has disrupted certain communities.

NOTES

1. Among the most recent conflicts between farmers and herders in Burkina Faso, we can cite those occurring in the following locations: Oubritenga, Plateau Central, in April 2015; Kompienga, Est, in January 2015; Tiébélé, Centre-Sud, in July 2014, etc.

2. Both in Mali and Burkina Faso, decentralization policies have undergone significant changes with the passing of several laws and institutional changes in the steering of public policies on the implementation of powers transferred to local authorities.

3. IMRAP. *Autoportrait du Mali, les obstacles à la paix.* Bamako, 2015.

4. The following is a list of conflicts that have broken out between farmers and herders in the Delta over the last two years according to Boubacar Ba in a forum on the contributions of Koranic teachers and traditional notables to the return to peace in the Central Delta and the Niger Belt, held on September 9-10, 2017, at the Palais de la Culture, in Bamako:

    • A confrontation between Bambara farmers and Fulani herders in Male-mana (Kaeri Commune, Tenenkou Cercle) left some twenty dead and dozens wounded in April and May 2016;

    • A confrontation between farmers from the villages of Koyssouma and Mougna (Kafo Badeya Commune, Djenné Cercle) left eighteen dead and several wounded in June 2016;

    • A confrontation between Bambara farmers and Fulani herders in Diawar-ebougou (Kemacina Cercle) left over twenty dead and dozens wounded in February 2017;

    • A confrontation between Dogon farmers from Gondo Ogourou (Diakabou Commune) and Fulani from Nawodié (Dioungani Commune) left approximately thirty dead and many wounded in June 2017.

5. Ansarul Islam: This organization is a member of the Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (Group to Support Islam and Muslims), led by Iyad Ag Ghaly, which includes several other Jihadist groups operating in Mali and elsewhere in the Sahel.

6. Interview carried out in Bamako, on September 27, 2017.

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About the publication

In Sub-Saharan Africa, peace and security are threatened by multiple causes arising from the interaction of a variety of circumstances that contribute to the destabilization of the Sahel region and the weakening of peace and security in Mali and Burkina Faso. However, these threats should not overshadow the importance of older conflicts, such as those between farmers and herders. In a context of scarce resources, each group develops its own strategies to control and capture resources, sometimes in collusion with the local administration. This logic accentuates community conflicts against a backdrop of environmental deterioration and dwindling arable lands and pasturelands. In this context, Jihadist groups also flourish, controlling all or part of certain cross-border roads. Actors and issues in the Sahel interweave in attempts to control local resources in areas where State representation in terms of administration and defence and security forces is low or virtually inexistent.

Through a multidisciplinary approach taking account of socio-political and economic aspects, this study provides a concrete analysis of the links between the dynamics of natural resource appropriation by local communities and the development of terrorist groups in Mali and Burkina Faso, from a political economy perspective. It thereby helps us better understand these conflict situations and, above all, how the different actors play on them according to their interests and in the light of the context in which they take place.

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