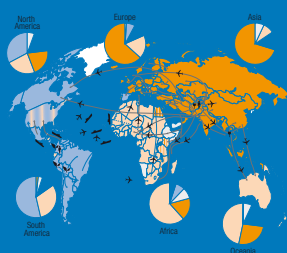


THE SECURITY-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS REGIONAL CHALLENGES

KEY LESSONS FROM THE COLLOQUIUM

Paris, 12 June 2012

by **LAURENT BOSSARD**
Director of the SWAC Secretariat



Local instabilities and global threats



Peace and security mechanisms



Geographical scale and time-frame



Northern Mali

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BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES, PROMOTING DIALOGUE

The most serious global threats we face today have become firmly entrenched in West Africa over the past ten years. Here they have found fertile soil that has been enriched by the co-existence of destitute countries, a mostly young population, widespread poverty, unmanageable urban agglomerations and vast areas where the rule of law is absent.

I believe we have reached a major turning point in the history of West Africa, where a huge growth potential exists alongside the worst imaginable threats. The underlying hybrid dynamics combine identity claims, religious extremism, with arms, drugs and human trafficking. They continue to develop while the region still suffers from structural weaknesses such as the competition for mineral and agro-pastoral resources, environmental degradation, unfinished demarcation of borders and the fragility of some democratic processes. This explains the need for co-ordinated analysis and action within the framework of a security-development nexus, even if the political and operational dimensions of this nexus are sometimes difficult to reconcile.

The current threats are likely to expand into the wider regional area. They can therefore only be tackled at the regional level. No country, no matter how big or powerful, can act alone. Imagine, for example, that Mali manages to get rid of all the armed groups with which it is currently plagued. These groups would then simply find refuge in neighbouring countries; hence, the problem would not have been solved, it would have been exported. The only possible option is concerted action at the regional level. Even if this may be difficult to achieve, there is no alternative.

The SWAC Colloquium on 12 June 2012 brought together some fifty experts from different backgrounds to contribute to policy dialogue on the security-development challenges. Free for a few hours from the constraints of their institutional or political responsibilities, participants (see page 15) accepted to talk openly within this informal space for dialogue. Without any doubt, this freedom of expression enriched the debate but does not allow us to synthesise these discussions in a detailed summary record. We would therefore like to present you some of the key lessons which we hope, will contribute to the ongoing debate. They are illustrated with a series of factual information and references placing the challenges into a larger context.



François-Xavier de Donnea
President, Sahel and West Africa Club



1 LOCAL INSTABILITIES AND GLOBAL THREATS

Shortcomings of social and territorial solidarity

The security crisis in the Sahel – and in Mali in particular – illustrates how it is structurally difficult for a state with few means to impose its presence and authority across vast and sparsely populated areas. The government's capacity to provide basic services to its citizens is critical. In these areas, access to public services (civil registry, human and animal health, security, post and telecommunications, education, etc.) is as fundamental as satisfying basic needs such as food and water. If the population feels abandoned by their state, they will respond all the more favourably to the types of strategies used by the Hizbollah, AQIM and Ansar Dine, which consist in providing social services and financing the development of the local economy.

The government's capacity to provide basic services to its citizens is critical.

It was long thought that investments in service provision should meet the same profitability criteria (based on a minimum number of users) as those applied to more densely populated areas. This is a conceptual error that overlooks the importance of social and territorial equity, which form the backbone of a nation's solidarity and unity. This equity comes with a cost which must naturally be included in economic calculations. But the amount of financing required is negligible in comparison to the huge sums that will be needed for the reconquest and reconstruction of northern Mali.

Food security is obviously a key concern. In the Sahel region, the great droughts of 1973 and 1984 most severely devastated populations and herds. These disasters have contributed to the successive Touareg rebellions. Cyclical food and nutrition crises have now become recurrent and more complex. The market economy has contributed to create a new form of vulnerability. Food may be available on the market yet inaccessible because of its price. Herdsmen and agro-pastoralists are particularly affected, as was shown by the 2005 food crisis in Niger.

West Africa and their development partners must draw lessons from the current situation which led to the marginalisation of Sahelian populations and territories. In the short-term, they must support development and settlement strategies for Chad, Mauritania and Niger in the Sahara-Sahelian areas. In the medium- and long term, they should support the implementation of ambitious policies to invest in the agricultural sector – including taking a fresh look at the pastoral and agro-pastoral economies. Finally, they must compare the cost of these investments to the cost of inactivity.

AQIM: VIEWPOINT BY A MAYOR OF A TOWN IN THE TIMBUKTU AREA

"Here AQIM is not a jackal that is about to devour the nomads' herds. AQIM does not pose a threat to the population and it has become a major force in the region. Its people have means. They get involved on behalf of the population in projects such as building wells and providing health care for nomads in the region. Many nomads think that AQIM and fraud are legal activities."

Naffet Keita, "From ethnic Touareg power to the sancturisation of AQIM and statements from the State in the Saharan-Sahelian Malian space", 2011 (French).

The financial resources in Sahelian countries are growing substantially thanks to their abundant deposits of oil, uranium and gas. In Chad, oil initially triggered insurgency movements, and the government has channelled resources into strengthening its military capabilities; development efforts were thus mostly left to donors. More recently, with a lull in the fighting, it seems that oil revenues are being directed more towards funding development.

The financial needs are great and require the massive mobilisation of the international community in a harsh global economic climate. However, Europe, aware of the threats it faces from massive instability on its southern border, is likely to maintain or increase its aid to the countries of the Sahel.

AGRO-PASTORAL FOOD CRISIS IN NIGER (2005)

A locust invasion, plus a substantial lack of rainfall in July, affected key pastoral areas. Pastures were partly destroyed. The economy, largely non-monetised, is based on bartering animals and cereals. Cereal prices rose significantly, while the price for animals dropped sharply. The food situation worsened, particularly for children. A similar scenario may occur in northern Mali in 2012.

Collusion between terrorism and international crime

Following a long process begun in the wake of 11 September 2001, the Sahara-Sahelian region now falls within “the arc of Salafist terrorism” which includes Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, the Mashrek and the Maghreb, in particular Algeria, the birthplace of AQIM.

Terrorist groups’ sought to isolate this region from the rest of the world. The goal of kidnapping is to force all representatives of the international community to leave the region. The military campaign launched in January 2012 expelled all Malian government representatives from northern Mali. Now, AQIM and its affiliates run a quasi-state in the otherwise non-radical African Sunni Muslim region of northern Mali. This quasi-state is a breeding ground for threats to the region and the world. Every day represents a new opportunity for it to consolidate its strength. Is Africa condemned to become the new centre for global terrorism?

The Libyan crisis has also contributed to transform internal instabilities into destructive forces. For example, in late 2011, the influx of arms and combatants helped transform the National Movement for Azawad (MNA), which advocated for the peaceful recognition of Touareg interests, into the armed National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). Furthermore, most of the local Touareg movement leaders have been replaced by returnees from Libya.

Trafficking operated by international criminal networks thrives in the State’s absence, also contributing to instability and conflict. For a decade, West Africa has transformed into a major hub for smuggling Latin American cocaine into Europe. This type of trafficking is much more profitable than kidnapping, and it is more than likely that terrorist groups are already involved. The informal economy “naturally” includes the promising sectors such as trafficking in cigarettes, arms, counterfeit medicines, etc.

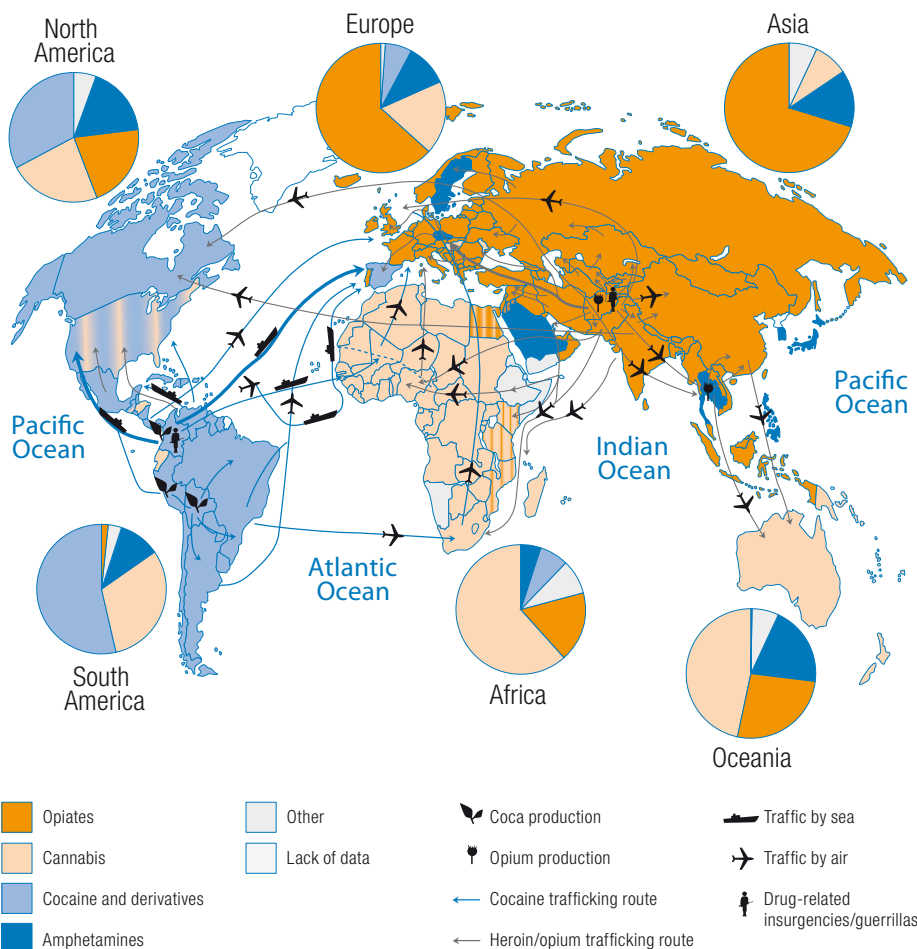
PROSPERING ILLEGAL ECONOMY

Between the Atlantic coast and North Africa, other networks sustain trade in vehicles, fake medicines, cigarettes, weapons (including counterfeit Kalashnikovs for example). Many of these goods are manufactured in or exported from the countries of the Gulf of Guinea. There is also human trafficking of illegal migrants, some of whom pay for their passage by acting as drug carriers (also known as mules).

West Africa also serves as a very flourishing transit zone for cigarette smuggling towards North Africa. It is a “trouble-free” trade since the relevant legal frameworks are inadequate or non-existent. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) says this is “real goldmine, worth around USD 750 million a year”. Lastly, there is the arms trade: some 80 000 Kalashnikovs are believed to be in circulation in the Sahel, available at EUR 200 to 300 per weapon. In northern Mali, guns are sold, resold and repaired just like any other commonly used items.

Lacking virtually all state control since March 2012, northern Mali enjoys exceptional competitive advantages which allow it to build a prosperous economy around all kinds of trafficking. These advantages include an absence of law or reasonable taxes and the existence of airports and efficient export networks.

Drug consumption and supply routes



Source: French Centre for Intelligence Studies (CF2R)

Facing this unprecedented combination of threats, the African and international communities need to develop and implement multifaceted policies that combine action that is purely security-oriented (against extremist groups) and police-based (against traffickers) with the fight against money laundering and corruption.

The cross-border areas in the Sahel region share common identities. This is why regional policy governance is crucial.

The cross-border areas in the Sahel region share common identities. This is why regional policy governance is crucial and must involve the greatest possible number of partners. From this standpoint, the creation of the Joint Military Staff Committee for the countries (Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) is a useful initiative which should help each state better address the issues

at stake, share resources and foster co-operation. However, the initiative is still at a very initial stage and has not gone far in its implementation. It is essential for the countries concerned to share the same analysis and understanding of the threats they face. But their failure to do so explains why there are misunderstandings and difficulties in co-operation. It also explains difficulties in establishing a common framework for action and sharing roles and responsibilities. Nonetheless, it is equally important to elaborate a common development project.

Development, democracy, security

There is no doubt that the failures of democracy in Mali have helped lead the country to the situation it is in today. After 20 years of democratic rule, Mali still does not have a widely trusted voter registration system, corruption and clientelism are endemic, and the separation of powers is far from being achieved. The division between civil society and the political sphere following the military coup d'état on 22 March is a sign of the weakness of the social contract.

Questions may arise on the possible links between the weak structure of social networks through which a society can express its claims and dissent (political parties, trade unions and professional organisations) and the rise in religious proselytism and its ability to speak to a large, mostly poor, young population. The crisis in Mali perfectly illustrates the link between democracy, development and security.

DISCONTENT IN THE MALIAN ARMY

The widespread discontent among Mali's defence and security forces did not begin with the loss of lives and defeats inflicted on government forces since the beginning of the insurgency in the North. In 2009-2010, Bamako was already awash with rumours of dangerous links between political and military top brass and notorious drug traffickers and hostage-takers [...]. Among the causes of frustration were promotions to the rank of general which were seen by many as being too numerous, overly hasty and unjustified, [...] and the perception, correct or exaggerated, of an unprecedented degree of corruption and cronyism in President Amadou Toumani Touré's entourage.

International Crisis Group
Mali: Avoiding Escalation;
Africa Report No. 189, July 2012.

Similarly, the situation in Chad highlights the link between insecurity, underdevelopment and the difficulties in fulfilling the social contract. Successive conflicts involving armed groups drawn up along ethnic and regional lines have punctuated the country's history with numerous episodes of violence and fighting for over forty years. These conflicts have firmly entrenched a climate of distrust between citizens and the state and among ethnic groups. They have also long delayed the development of oil resources. Indeed, before the launch of oil production, Chad was less developed than other Sahelian countries such as Mali and Niger.

Democracy was introduced in the paradigm for development after the end of the Cold War. Symbolically associated with President Mitterrand's speech at *La Baule* in 1990, this new paradigm was summarised by Roland Dumas, France's foreign minister at

**Democracy was introduced
in the paradigm for development
after the end of the Cold War.**

the time, "The wind of freedom that has blown in the East will inevitably blow one day to the South (...) There can be no development without democracy, no democracy without development." National stakeholder conferences, free elections and

the involvement of civil society thus became the benchmarks and conditions for international development co-operation.

But democratic transitions underway in a great number of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are far from the hoped-for results. In many cases, they have been derailed and have degenerated into internal conflicts marked by coups d'état and other forms of political violence. This mainly explains why, from the second half of the 1990s, security integrated a new paradigm: security and democracy are necessary conditions for development. The notions of conflict prevention and management are gradually being entrenched into development thinking, as witnessed by the inclusion of these challenges in the Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000 by the European Union and the ACP countries.

Nevertheless, peacekeeping operations (or, in the case of Mali, operations to restore peace or recapture territory) remain the sole responsibility of African countries, which, for the

Peacekeeping operations remain the sole responsibility of African countries.

most part, lack financial resources to assume this responsibility. The best option is the regional pooling of resources. West Africa is a pioneer in this field, when it set-up a regional military force (ECOMOG) in 1990, to supervise ceasefires in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. ECOMOG is the military branch of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, and is part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), established in 2002. Although important, peacekeeping is not eligible for international development co-operation funding, except for specific initiatives to strengthen capacity and non-military logistics such as the EU Africa Peace Facility (to support peacekeeping operations) and the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership (to support the APSA). The finding of solutions is therefore particularly difficult for very poor countries such as Mali which are facing a situation in which peace can probably be restored only through armed conflict.

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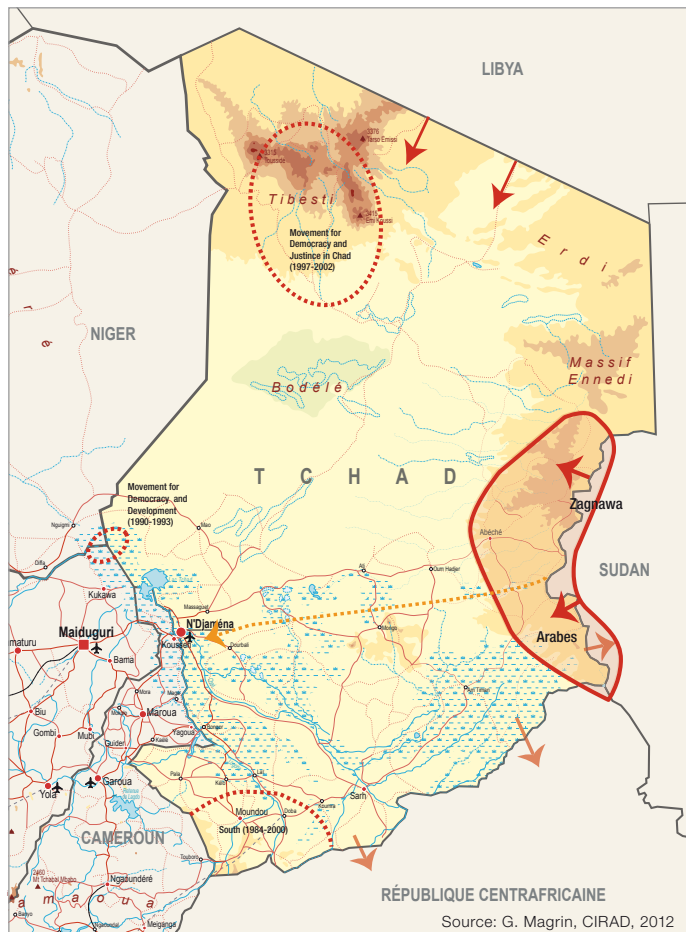
DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

“Democracy [...] is a consensus on the rules of living together, of consultation and decision-making within a given society [...]. It is tragic to see that in Africa, just as many countries were embarking on democratic transitions, others were crippled by grave crises, torn apart by appalling fratricidal wars. There is a great temptation to see a link of cause and effect in these correlating circumstances. It is true that the brutal enforcement of the majority principle without guarantees for minorities increases the potential for conflict in multi-ethnic societies. Democratisation may also have brought contradictions to light [...]. But it is dishonest to say that it created them. It is precisely because they have most often been systematically exploited in the struggle for power.”

OIF: 4th International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. Cotonou, December 2000.

The regional and international dimension of conflicts in Chad since the 1990s

The interlocking local, regional and international factors which today lie at the heart of the troubles in Mali can also be found in Chad's long history of conflicts. The only difference stems from the fact that until the 1990s, the scenario was being played out against the backdrop of the Cold War. On several occasions foreign interventions from Libya and Sudan supported the insurgencies in Chad.



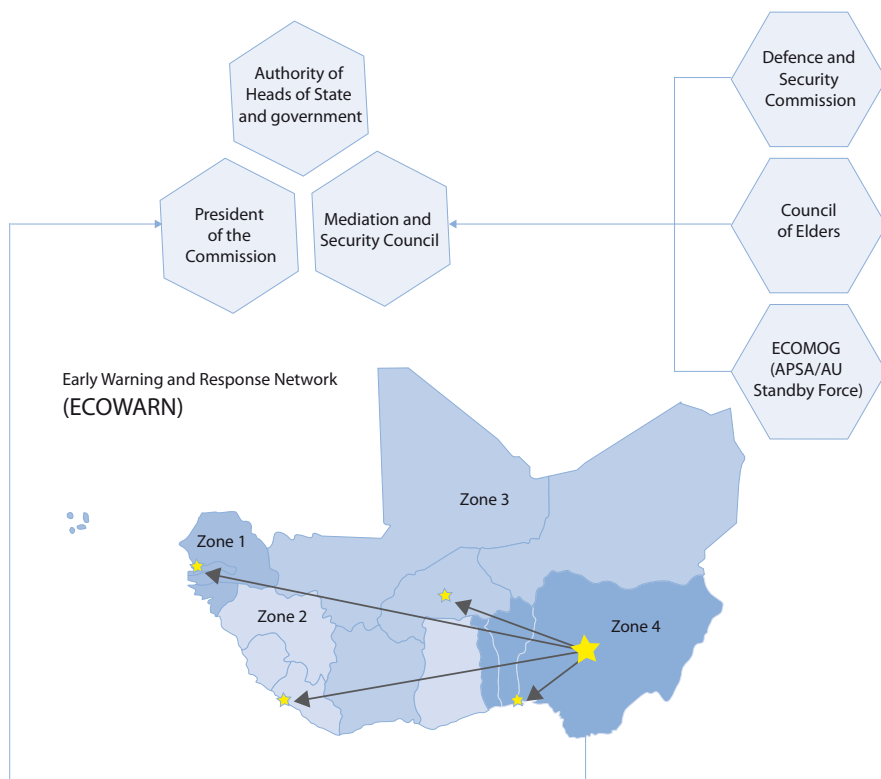
- Ongoing insurgencies
- ... Former insurgencies
- ... Main insurgencies route
- Support for insurgencies in Chad
- Effects of instability in Chad on neighbouring countries

2 WEST AFRICAN AND AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY MECHANISMS

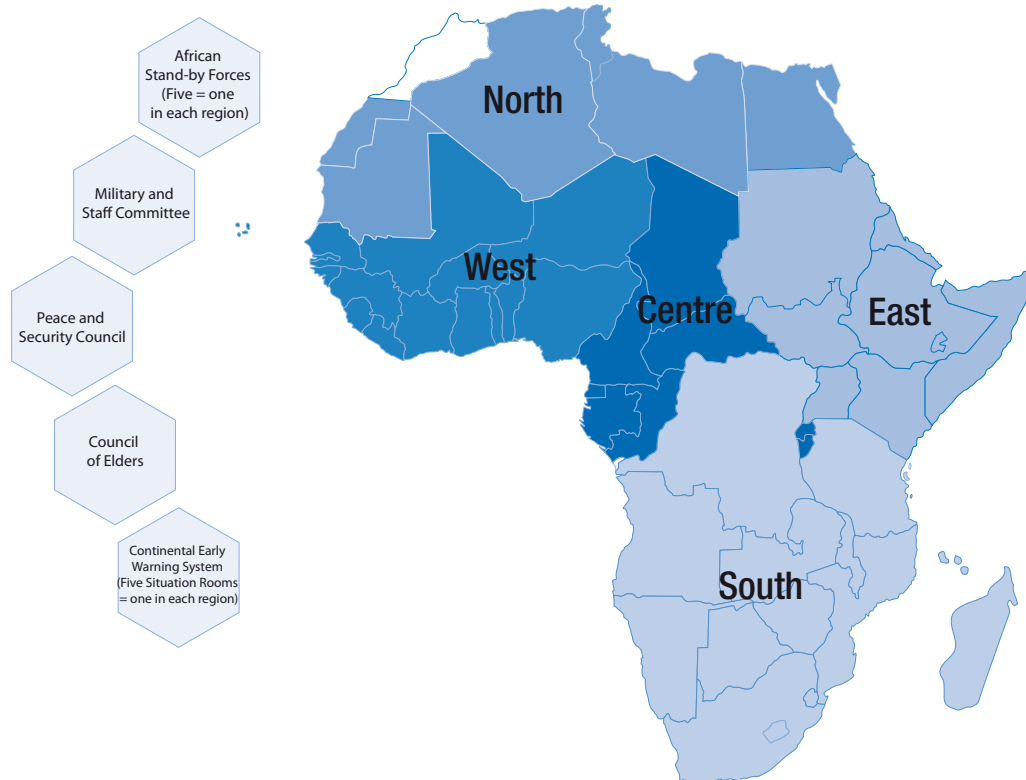
The ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council (MSC) is the main body of the mechanism. It is composed of nine member states: seven members are elected by the Authority of Heads of State and government, the other two being the country currently holding the ECOWAS presidency and the country which held the presidency previously. The MSC is assisted by the Defence and Security Commission (responsible for technical administrative issues and identifying logistics needs), the Council of Elders (mediator, conciliator and arbitrator) and the Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which is the Standby Force of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

The ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) is composed of two operational branches: an observation and monitoring centre in Abuja with a Situation Room staffed by analysts and experts, military officers and ECOWAS civil servants; and four regional offices (Banjul, Cotonou, Monrovia and Ouagadougou).

West African mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution of internal conflicts



African peace and security architecture



3 GEOGRAPHICAL SCALE AND TIME-FRAME

What precisely should a project that combines security and development goals entail? As yet, this question is unanswered. And it may remain so for as long as local situations and circumstances vary. However, discussions and experience on the regional dimension of conflicts and development allows for the formulation of several simple but essential principles.

1. First, in West Africa, internal conflicts, local crises, intra-national conflicts, civil wars and separatist insurgencies have always had regional causes and implications. Instability does not stop at the national border. Confining conflict prevention and management, as well as post-conflict programmes within national boundaries may be counter-productive.
2. Second, the scale of the quest for solutions must be equal to the scale of the problem; otherwise there is a risk of exporting instability to a neighbouring country. One of the difficulties encountered by the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes in Sierra Leone in the early 1980s stemmed from the fact that many combatants (including a great number of child soldiers) crossed the borders into the Guinean forest region and Liberia. The “civil war” in Sierra Leone, which was, in reality, the result of spill-over from Liberia, became in turn the vehicle for a de facto regional war.

From this viewpoint, lessons can be learned from the experience of the Mano River Union (MRU). The MRU engaged in a sub-regional process of stabilisation (involving the four concerned countries: Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) at the same scale which had previously plunged it into unrest and war. As soon as the conflicts ceased, common border patrols were set-up, along with joint operations (intelligence and enforcement) to combat trafficking in drugs, diamonds and precious metals. At the same time, common policies to foster development and regional trade were put into place. Admittedly, this experience has its limits and would benefit from being strengthened and improved but it has proven to be effective because it was conceived at the appropriate geographical scale. The same cannot be said for the Casamance conflict, which involves the areas stretching from The Gambia in the North to Guinea-Bissau in the South. This is the “southern Rivers” region, also known as “Sénégalie méridionale”. Opposing trends of unification and fragmentation have marked this area all through history. In Sénégalie méridionale as elsewhere, what brings people together, as much as economies and territories, is not always linked to their identity, but also linked to their differences.¹ The fact is that while reconciliation efforts between The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal come up against regularly recurring crises, economic and social development in the region is a reality. Drug trafficking, allegedly limited to Guinea-Bissau, has in fact spread to the entire region. The arms market in the region satisfies the demand of a large diversity of people, including in particular Senegalese rebels and traffickers working for Latin American cartels.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. **Instability does not stop at the national border.**
2. **The scale of the quest for solutions must be equal to the scale of the problem.**
3. **It is crucial to encourage and benefit from the large number of local cross-border initiatives in the field of security and development.**
4. **It is vital to restore confidence in long-term approaches. There is rarely a quick fix to a long-standing problem.**

¹ See: Sénégalie méridionale: dynamiques d’un espace d’intégration entre trois États; Enda Diapol in conjunction with OXFAM America; ENDA Diapol and SWAC/OECD, 2004.

Cross-border spread of conflicts in the Mano River Union

- ▶ **1989:** Charles Taylor entered Liberia from Côte d’Ivoire: civil war broke out.
- ▶ **1991:** He backed the Sierra Leonean rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), triggering civil war in Sierra Leone.
- ▶ **1999:** UN peacekeepers arrived in Sierra Leone and drove the rebels to the North.
- ▶ **2000/2001:** De facto regional war on the borders of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia.
- ▶ **2002:** Armed groups returned to Côte d’Ivoire and stirred up civil war.



This simplified graphic does not pretend to reflect the complexity of dynamics underway.

3. Third, it is crucial to encourage and benefit from the large number of local cross-border initiatives in the field of security and development. For example, in S n gambie m ridionale, the local population has taken steps – with the support of the NGO ENDA Diapol² and the Programme to Promote Economic and Social Development and Peace in Casamance³ (PROCAS) – to combat against insecurity and trafficking, set-up internal conflict prevention and management structures, develop the cross-border economy and strengthen solidarity beyond borders. The Research and Action Group for Rural Development (GRDR)⁴ has long supported initiatives of this kind in the Karakoro Basin between the borders of Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. Cross-border co-operation activities are supported within the ECOWAS Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (PIT) and the African Union Border Programme. They are also advocated by the UEMOA’s Regional Economic Programme and have always figured among the priorities of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). Nevertheless, cross-border co-operation activities still lack financial resources and stronger support from the international community. While border areas are only very rarely the causes of threats, they are the places where these dangers crystallise. An exclusively security-oriented approach to border issues can not resolve the problems. Borders are not lines along which gates simply open and close; they are fragile living areas that are under threat and can only be held together in the long-term by regional solidarity and development.
4. Fourth, it is vital to restore confidence in long-term approaches. This is not always the preferred time-frame for politicians, but its importance cannot be overlooked. This is particularly the case in northern Mali, which has been in a state of terrorist turmoil for almost a decade. There is rarely a quick fix to a long-standing problem.

It seems that northern Mali, today inaccessible and in the hands of armed groups, is now outside the scope of the security-development nexus. First and foremost it reveals the balance of power, expressed through dialogue, negotiation and/or military action. However, it does raise the issue of the security-development nexus within the long-term perspective on the reawakening or reinforcement of economic co-operation between North and West Africa. Whether it is viewed from the angle of crises or development, the Sahara-Sahelian region must be understood for what it is, namely a shared area whose risks and opportunities cannot be addressed without strengthened cross-border co-operation. No policy, whether for reconquest, security or development, is sustainable in the long term if all stakeholders remain on their own side of the border. The “North African challenge” and the “Sahelian challenge” can no longer be addressed separately.

Although the desert and its fringes are a cause of fear today, the area is also strategic because of their immense economic potential from oil, mining, tourism and pastoral resources. People living North of the Sahara are on average wealthier than those in Sub-Saharan Africa, but they have infinitely less water and less arable and pastoral land (Did not Gaddafi want to produce his rice stock in the fertile areas of the “Office du Niger” in Mali?). Morocco was the first to understand that there are plenty of economic opportunities for its entrepreneurs in West Africa and has thus concluded a trade agreement

with UEMOA. In the long-term, more ambitious trade agreements between the two sides of the Sahara are crucial in order to: attract more North African capital to West Africa; generate more trade in agricultural goods, textiles and manufactured products; create trans-regional pipelines; and most importantly, construct more roads. This is by no means a new idea; we can only hope that the concerned countries and their foreign partners show a renewed interest in such projects. A network of roads across the Sahara would revitalize the area and thus trigger an upward spiral of positive change, bringing in electricity and telecommunications, generating trade, allowing for the creation of cities at their intersections and promoting the development of the mining and tourism sectors, - all of which in turn spur economic activity and trade flows.

All of these goals involve long-term geo-strategic and economic policy choices. Once stable, will North Africa choose to invest in its African hinterland or will it pursue a purely Mediterranean strategy turned essentially towards Europe?



The trans-Saharan route would link Lagos, Bamako, Niamey and N'Djam na via Tamanrasset to Algiers (Algeria) and Gabes (Tunisia). Launched more than thirty years ago, the project is still not completed.

2 www.endadiapol.org
 3 www.procas.sn
 4 www.grdr.org

4 NORTHERN MALI

Speech by H.E. Mr. Boubacar Sidiki Touré, Ambassador of Mali to France (exerpt from the original French)



Mali is a great country with a centuries-old culture. Its diverse and varied peoples comprise several ethnic groups who have intermingled and intermarried down the ages. Each community has retained its identity, culture and traditions. In this regard, the policies pursued by the Malian authorities have always been based on open and constructive dialogue.

In the North of the country, commonly known as the “septentrion”, [...] the regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal are suffering from chronic insecurity in the form of armed banditry, intra- and inter-community armed conflicts, kidnapping, and mistrust among communities. All these factors combined create a poisonous climate which is inevitably hindering development. Long before the current insurgency, the region was already plagued by hostage-taking and blatant and repeated acts of aggression. This brought tourism – a major source of income – to a halt across the entire country. So how can we bring peace, security and development to a region suffering from recurrent crises such as in northern Mali?

Given such difficult circumstances, this is certainly a delicate and complex mission. However, despite Mali’s limited resources, the authorities have always been driven by an unwavering commitment to bringing security to the northern regions. They have clearly understood that the only solution lies in the development of these areas. It is worth recalling the policy of positive discrimination resulting from various agreements that were signed from 1991 and implemented in favour of the Touaregs. Many development projects have been set up with bilateral and multilateral partners. The entire nation has willingly accepted that almost all of its Official Development Assistance from the European Union is channelled into the northern region.

The only solution lies in the development of these areas. It is worth recalling the policy of positive discrimination resulting from various agreements that were signed from 1991 and implemented in favour of the Touaregs.

As a result, from 2006 to 2012, investment in this part of Mali totaled 120 million euros, together with contributions from the national budget and other sources of funding. One flagship project is the Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in northern Mali (PSPSDN), a result of the 2006 Algiers Agreement which encompasses several development projects. The first phase of the PSPSDN involves the setting up of around forty facilities to serve as barracks for the armed and security forces as well as public administration structures. It also includes the construction of twenty socio-economic facilities for the populations of the Kidal and Gao regions, including health centres, schools, modern wells, housing for officials, etc.

This ambitious programme has raised a great many hopes. Concrete results were expected in the short term. The Malian authorities were counting on the PSPSDN to curb insecurity, poverty, youth unemployment, hostage-taking and all forms of trafficking. Facing the widespread turmoil of the past and identity-based insurgencies, the authorities have always worked with a constructive vision. They resort to dialogue rather than arms. Despite difficulties, this approach has helped defuse tensions and preserve a degree of social cohesion and political stability in the country – the only way forward to sustainable development.

The PSPSDN had barely been launched when the war in Libya shattered an already fragile balance in northern Mali. Indeed, from September 2011, all experts agreed that the situation in the Sahel was extremely explosive. The direct consequences of the war in Libya brought new threats to the security of the region with the influx of armed groups such as former combatants from Libya and the circulation of weapons.

The security challenges in the Sahel-Saharan strip have varied implications for the neighbouring states and the countries of Western Europe alike. The Malian authorities have constantly alerted the international community about the return of hundreds of armed men from Libya. Their return sparked the resurgence of the rebellion that had ceased at the end of 2009 in the northern regions of Mali. This vast and hard-to-control quasi-desert area has been a safe haven for the AQIM combatants for several years. They use it as a base to launch operations into other countries along the Sahel-Saharan region, namely in Algeria, Mauritania and Niger.

It should be stressed that, alongside Mali, these countries had previously decided to set up a Joint Military Staff Committee of the Sahel Region (CEMOC), based at Tamanrasset (Algeria), with the aim of conducting an annual assessment of the security situation in the Sahel and establishing joint actions as part of a common strategy to combat terrorism and organised crime.

Through their repeated warnings, the Malian authorities sought to rally all countries and populations to the fight against the problem of insecurity in the Sahel-Saharan region and to pursue the ultimate goal of bringing about sustainable development and shared progress for society.

Unfortunately, these warnings have been in vain. The rest is history, and today the situation could hardly be more alarming. Mali is cut into two. The northern regions are occupied by heavily armed groups. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. Serious human rights violations are being perpetrated on the ground (rape, murder, etc.).

Mali is facing huge development challenges and cannot afford an armed conflict which has incalculable consequences on national cohesion and the stability of the country and the sub-region. History can serve to guide us and shed light on the present crisis. The balkanisation advocated by the armed groups is not a solution for socio-economic development. Balkanisation is the contrary of development. Balkanisation means war, economic decline and the violation of human rights. I would like to take this opportunity to say that the exact opposite of balkanisation is the unity, fraternity and solidarity between the communities in Mali. In other words, it is us all pulling together and respecting our diversity rather than applying an “every man for himself” approach.

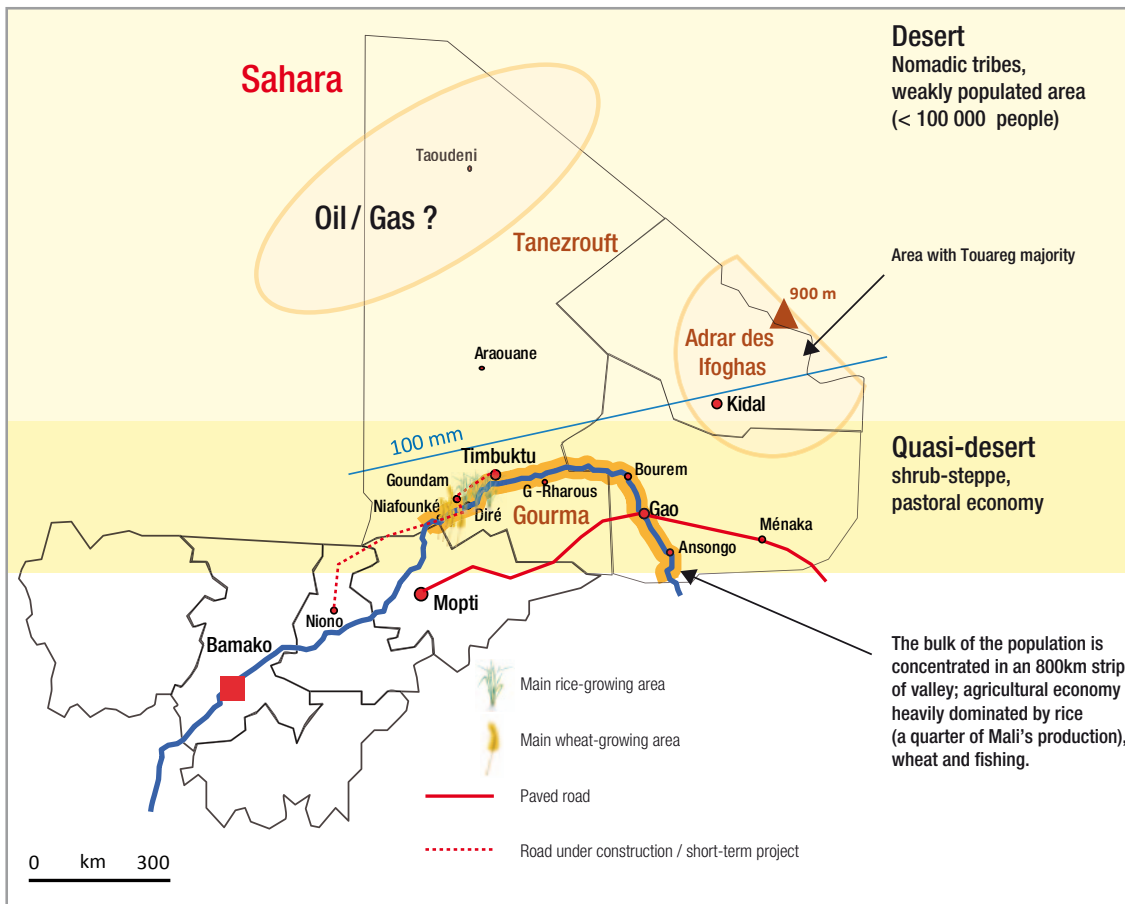
Claims must be put forward within the framework of democratic dialogue. They cannot be enforced by a gun, because peace and security remain the fundamental and necessary conditions for development. There can be no future for the Malian people and no chances for development without unity. As the

founding charter of UNESCO says so well, “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed.”

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It is our moral duty to continue working with determination and perseverance alongside our brothers who have taken up arms to persuade them to accept and share a culture of peace that allows people to flourish, while committing to a spirit of reconciliation and face up to the only combat that is worthy of the name: the fight for development. ■

Northern Mali at a glance



Land and people

Northern Mali covers 827 000 km², approximately 66% of the total national territory. With a population of 1.3 million in 2010, the region is home to about 8.6% of the country's total population, down from 17% in 1960 and 11.5% in 1990. Still, the population is not shrinking; rather population growth in the North is slower than in Mali's overall population growth rate. Between 1960 and 2010, Mali's population grew 3.2% while the northern population grew 1.9%. It is therefore a region of net emigration, linked as much to the harshness of the environment as to the chronic security problems.

The population is highly rural, with just 8% of inhabitants living in agglomerations of more than 10 000 residents. The two main cities – Gao (population 50 000) and Timbuktu (30 000) – are situated in the South of the region along the Niger River, as are some towns ranging in population from a few thousand to ten thousand: Niafouké, Diré, Gourdam, Bourem and Ansongo. Three hundred kilometres away from Gao, there are two similar towns: Kidal in the Northeast, Ménaka in the east. Close to the “towns” and water supply, most of the rural population lives in this narrow valley, bordered by desert. The area north of Timbuktu and Kidal receives no more than 100 millimetres of rain each year, and the average annual temperature is above 30 degrees (The world record is 34 degrees, held by northern Ethiopia). In 500 000 km², there are only a handful of small villages: Tessalit, Araouane, Taoudeni, separated by hundreds of kilometres of sand or rock desert, including the dreadful Tanezrouft. To the east, the Adrar des Ifoghas massif, roughly the size of Guinea, is a little less hostile; the moderately elevated but rugged terrain receives slightly more rainfall (150mm), nourishing wadis and pastures in July and August.

Transport infrastructure is reduced to the bare minimum beyond the main highway, the “Nationale 16”, which links Mopti to Gao in the far south of the region. Construction is under way on another road, which will connect Timbuktu to Bamako via Niono.

If northern Mali were to become a state, it would be twice the size of Germany but with 1.6 residents per km². It would share with Mongolia the title of the country with the lowest population density in the world.

Economy

The cumulative GDP of the regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal today can be estimated at less than USD 1 billion (PPP); a figure that would see northern Mali snatch the position of West Africa's smallest economy from Guinea-Bissau (1.9 billion in 2011). Some dream of seeing oil and gas flow from the cross-border sedimentary Taoudeni Basin. For now, the promises repeated for many years have not been fulfilled.

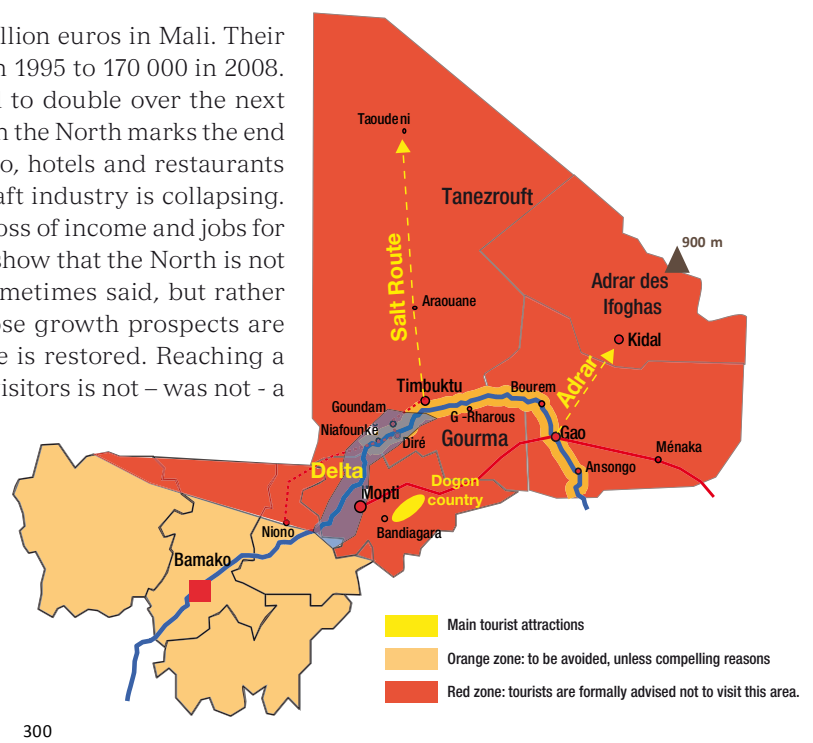
Livestock is present throughout the region and contributes to the livelihood of a large part of the population. Far from the traditional imagery, it is mostly sedentary, although the practice of season transhumance remains very common. Livestock raising is concentrated in the South of the region, close to the valley. At the end of the 1990s, the National Statistics Institute of Mali counted only 60 000 people practicing pure nomadism in the vast northern region. The rest of the agricultural economy, as with the population, is concentrated in the valley.

In recent years, rice production has been booming. By themselves alone, the irrigated perimeters of the Koriomé Daye and Amadia plains, south of Timbuktu, produced 360 000 tonnes of paddy in 2010, about 20% of Mali's total production. The nearby region of Diré-Gourdam produces 80% of the country's wheat, even if the production is rather marginal (20 000 tonnes). Further into the valley, there are also numerous irrigated village perimeters, of which more than half are equipped with pumps, employ proper inputs and regularly obtain yields of four to six tonnes per hectare. However, the region's potential is yet to be fully realised. The northern part of the Niger Valley could become a major agricultural centre in Mali and in West Africa. This entire economy is threatened today. Stocks of seeds and inputs are empty. Pumps are not working for lack of fuel.

The North is not an economic burden as is sometimes said, but rather the lungs of an industry whose growth prospects are dizzying, provided that peace is restored.

Tourism used to be one of the most promising sectors. In Mali, the regions most appreciated by tourists are the Niger Valley from Ségou to Gao, the inner Niger Delta, Dogon Country and the deserts of the North. They are all located in the red zone. In 2004, jobs directly and indirectly linked to tourism were estimated at 13 000 and without a doubt contributed to the livelihoods of more than 60 000 people, not to mention the informal sector. Between 2004 and 2010, Mali's tourism revenues doubled.

In 2010, tourists spent 240 million euros in Mali. Their numbers grew from 40 000 in 1995 to 170 000 in 2008. These figures were expected to double over the next 10 years. The end of tourism in the North marks the end of tourism in Mali. In Bamako, hotels and restaurants are empty, and the tourist craft industry is collapsing. It is therefore a considerable loss of income and jobs for the entire country. It goes to show that the North is not an economic burden as is sometimes said, but rather the lungs of an industry whose growth prospects are dizzying, provided that peace is restored. Reaching a figure of one million annual visitors is not – was not – a chimera.



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