



RESEARCH REPORT

Forum: Security Council
Issue: Overcoming ethnic division and alleviating the struggle for resources in the Sahel-Zone
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I. Introduction

The Sahel Zone is known to be one of the least developed regions of the world. The reason for this lies not at last in the various conflicts going on in the region. Traditionally, there always were conflicts between the nomads traveling across the desert, and farmers trying to cultivate a specific piece of land. This conflict has been tightened by longer and longer droughts and desertification following them. Both limit the space on which people can live.

The Sahel zone was colonized by France. In their reign, they cared little about the different indigeneous ethnicities in Africa and exploited them. But even after the French left in 1960, they left chaos behind. Current borders hardly represent the location of ethnic groups. This results in multiple conflicts between these ethnicities over their territories. Governments often see themselves helpless trying to solve these conflicts, as they are hardly recognized by most people.

The combination of low levels of education and poverty is also exploited by islamistic organizations. Islamists use the desperation and uneducation of the people to recruit soldiers. Often terroristic attacks are performed. The war on this terrorism is one of the mayor challenges of the region.

In order to tackle these challenges, the nations of the Sahel Zone created the G5 Sahel. This is a union in which the governments of the Sahel together discuss the mentioned problems. However, this council has not been successful yet, and it is therefore now the UN's turn to find ways to improve the situation in the Sahel.

II. Definition of Key Terms

A. Violent Extremism

Violent extremism exploits preexisting grievances of groups or individuals. It provides a narrative for "righteous war", often combined with the promise of an alternative model of a just and morally superior society. The combination of ethnic victimization and supposed moral superiority is used to justify violence against the rest of society.

B. Ethnic Exclusion

Ethnic exclusion is one of the root causes for violent extremism in the Sahel region. The segregation of ethnic groups often leads to economic exclusion, thereby making specific ethnic groups vulnerable for extremist propaganda and recruitment by violent extremist groups. Common incentives for recruitment are economic benefit, social recognition or ethnic solidarity.

C. Social / Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is given when the members of a community feel that their best interest lies in supporting their society, irrespective of their social, ethnic or religious background. Members of a cohesive community will be willing to invest themselves in the preservation of their society against inside or outside threats. It is ideally supported by a functioning social contract with state authorities.



D. Economy of Conflict

Conflicts transform economic structures of communities. They create new income-generating opportunities and change the power structures of societies. The beneficiaries of a war economy tend to oppose peace deals that would harm their economic interest. Economies of conflict are therefore often war-prolonging factors.

III. General Overview:

Currently in the Sahel region, security challenges and humanitarian crises are quite prevalent i.e. violent conflicts, environmental degradation, natural resource depletion, human and drug trafficking, and other transnational activities.

The violent conflicts include: Militant Islamism and radicalisation; Terrorist insurgency which are directly and indirectly linked to illicit flow of arms and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs); Ethno-political cleavages, secessionist agitations; natural resource conflicts (pastoralist/farmers clashes).

Moreover, repeated and protracted drought in the Sahel has since the 1960s reduced the region's normally meager water supplies, shattered its agricultural economy, contributed to the starvation of the people, and forced the mass migration of many people southward.

About 3.5 million persons have been internally displaced with about 980,000 refugees and 1 million returnees scattered across the Sahel and beyond; 7 million are dependent on food aid, and half a million children are malnourished and about 14 million of them are going without schooling; a total of 4.5 million are expected to be displaced by conflicts; 23.5 million persons are expected to be food insecure; 30 million people will not have enough to eat of which 12 million will require emergency food assistance.

IV. Major Parties Involved

A. G5 Sahel

The G5 Sahel is an organization founded by the countries of Mali, Tschad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauretanie and Nouakchott. The organization aims to coordinate the fight against poverty, improving infrastructure, agriculture and security.

B. Islamistic Terror Organizations

The most powerful Islamistic organizations in the region is Boko Haram. The name literally translates to "Western education is forbidden". The group is mostly known for their attacks on schools, and became famous when kidnapping 276 school girls in 2014. Another important organization is "Islamic State- West Africa Province". It is mostly known as ISWAP and known for countless attacks in the region, as well as a violent rivalry with Boko Haram.

V. Timeline of Key Events



<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
1961-1964	First Tuareg rebellion in Mali and Niger
1990-1995	Second Tuareg rebellion in Mali and Niger
2009	Appearance of Boko Haram
19.03.2011	International military intervention in Libya, provokes weapons flow from Libya to insurgent groups in Sahel
2012	Tuareg rebellion in Mali - begin of French military intervention ("Opération Serval") to stop the advance of islamist groups as part of the rebellion
1.7.2013	Start of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to stabilize the security in the north of Mali
1.8.2014	Start of French "Opération Barkhan" to fight terrorist groups in the Sahel
March of 2017	Creation of the islamist terrorist group "JNIM"

VI. Previous and Possible Solutions:

Regional organizations within the Sahel such as: Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), should forge collaborative engagements in peacebuilding interventions in the region.

Some successes in regional peacebuilding have been recorded; ECOWAS in Liberia, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire; AU in Somali, Darfur; AFISMA in Mali; MNJF in the Lake Chad River Basin region.

VII. Conclusion

The violence in the Sahel is the result of a multifaceted conflict that includes strong ethnic and confessional elements, preying on a century-old struggle over resources that is aggravated by climate change and demographic pressure.

In peripheral areas of the affected states, minority tribes - often herders - have felt culturally and economically excluded and have therefore decided to join forces with ideologically motivated extremist forces.

A military led government reaction to the rebellions in many cases has led to further ethnic solidarity and ideological radicalisation, alienating populations that had still been loyal to theory governments.



Today, the extremist violent groups in the Sahel are as strong as ever, millions of citizens have been internally displaced, and the governments of Mali and Burkina Faso have been overthrown by military coups, due to their failure to control the insurgencies.

International military interventions have achieved some successes in fighting the insurgency and securing a relative stability for the most populated areas of affected countries, but they have not been able to decisively push back on the terrorist groups.

Only an approach that would degrade the terrorist groups while at the same time restoring trust and social cohesion among conflict affected communities could contribute to controlling the violent insurgencies.

It therefore seems indispensable to develop approaches that combine military pressure with a civilian offer of reintegration and inclusion of those communities that have felt disenfranchised by their governments and had therefore chosen the path of rebellion and violent extremism.

Any successful approach would also have to include resource management solutions that overcome ethnic divides (herder - farmer) and offer livelihoods to the traditional herder tribes (Peukh, Foulani) as well as to the farmers.

VIII. Questions to Consider

1. How has your country been involved in the last 20 years?
2. How has your country been affected by the ethnic tensions and depletion of resources?
3. How does your country cope with different ethnic groups and short resources?
4. How is your country involved in regional peace building commissions?