

Conflict Analysis in the Northern Sahel Region
The case of Tuareg pastoralists vs. non-Tuareg farmers

By Hamid Lellou

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I. Abstract

This research paper consists of looking at the socio-economic dynamics, through the lens of land use management in ungoverned spaces, that may have triggered conflicts between Tuareg people, non-Tuareg farmers, and the central governments of Niger and Mali since the 1960s.

The region is already instable and has seen several violent conflicts. The Tuareg case is of great importance to the conflict resolution community; without a resolution, the conflict may spread to the entire Sahel region. The goal of this research is to determine the most important variables governing the relationship between Tuareg pastoralists, non-Tuareg farmers, and the central governments; and the relevance of each variable in the context of defining the scope of the problem from the perspective of all involved parties.

This research analyzed the environmental, social, and political aspects of the conflict in the Sahel region. Peoples' lives revolve around their social status and consequently inherit their locations and occupations, pastoralists versus farmers. The environment plays a big role, due to repeated droughts and water scarcity in the region. This research looked at the different communities and their involvement in, community-based conflicts, mitigation and/or resolution. According to Turner (2010), the community resource management approach has shown its

limitations. However, this proposed solution may have been heavily influenced by the humanitarian aid approach; as they say, “give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” However, the situation has changed since 2010. The Sahel society is more dynamic than many people anticipate. A Business approach is one of the many tactics that can be combined with other approaches as a possible solution for preventing or resolving the Sahel conflict. Another approach that has been tried and failed is decentralization and the empowerment of local decision makers. The promoters of this solution have omitted to consider some socio-cultural realities. When central governments accept decentralization, it means that the region becomes marginalized, lacking resources; basically, local people are on their own while resources and taxes go to the capital city.

II. Background

The northern Sahel region, home to ethnic Tuareg people, has continued to escape the control of centralized power including that in Bamako, Mali and in Niamey, Niger. Historically, Tuaregs strongly resisted French invasion and continue to fight against, what they perceive to be, the central government’s injustice. Both the governments of Niger and Mali have vainly tried to resolve ongoing conflicts with their Tuaregs populations. The area is vast, remote, arid, and potentially rich in, yet to be tapped, underground mineral resources. It is also theater to many unlawful activities instigated by malign groups including drug traffickers, trans border smugglers, and terrorists. Tuareg pastoralists and Songhai farmers, in the region, have been battling over limited water for years, particularly during drought times. Hussein, K., Sumberg, J., & Seddon, D. (1999) suggested that Herders and farmers in the Sahel have always had a bitter-sweet relationship, at times symbiotic and mutually beneficial, while often competitive and violent. The central governments in Bamako and Niamey, with the help of international

development organizations, have developed new agropastoral activities, which may have favored farmers by increasing competition with the pastoralists Tuareg over grasslands and water.

Some scholars continue to suggest that civil violence in the Sahel region is due to environmental stress caused by a growing population, despite evidence that the environment in the region is dominated by climate fluctuation. Benjaminsen, T. A., Alinton, K., Buhang, H., & Buseth, J. T. (2012) argued that this approach is flawed and superficial. They suggested that climate change gives little evidence that climate variability is an important driver for conflict. Conflicts are not caused by land misuse; they are rather shaped by political and economic context. Causes for conflict are structural, and agricultural policy favoring farmers at the expense of herders. Tuareg's marginalization led them to revolt and drought may have helped reinforce this trend. The authors looked at what the government of Mali did with the drought relief funding and other related corruption, which added to the anger and dissatisfaction of the youth population. The authors gave a brief historical background of the rebellion going back to 1893. Benjaminsen et al. (2012) suggested that this region has been paying for its way of life and refusal to cooperate with the central government, whether the historic French occupation or the current Malian and Nigerien governments.

Raleigh (2010 & 2013), Thebaut (2000), and Turner (1999, 2004, & 2008) have separately conducted qualitative research related to the complexity of the relationship between pastoralists and farmers in the region. They have looked at the socioeconomics that may be the main reason behind these conflicts, instead of focusing on ethnic differences. This research showed that the root causes may be solely economic, however, the social dynamics may appear or even evolve into causes that can exacerbate conflicts between the communities. Niamir-Full

and Turner (2000) developed another concept, the mobility paradigm, to explain their argument about pastoral mobility.

III. Literature Review

1. Introduction

Land Use Management in Poor Governed Space has been identified as the main theme in which to analyze the body of research conducted on the conflict between Tuareg Pastoralist and non-Tuareg farmers in the Sahel region. Although, there are numerous ways to approach this research, the literature review consisted of four subthemes; beginning with a review of land use management, followed by the physical and political characteristics of resource scarcity. Once these elements have been reviewed, an analysis of the identity and categorization of land users' rights and traditional conflict resolution tools followed, concluding with the impact that military intervention and security instability have on the region. Connecting the sub-themes assisted in identifying dependency and causality between the variables that have led to the current relationships and conflict between Tuareg pastoralists and non-Tuareg farmers. Additional contributing factors from internal and external entities including: the central government, military, international organizations, and criminal organizations and their contributing implications on each variable were introduced to analyze the forces at play on the opponents of the conflict in the Sahel region.

2. Herd Composition and Land Use Management

The initial phase of researching the conflict in the Sahel began with analysis of evolving land use management which includes herd size, composition and grazing patterns for pastoralists, and field size, crop type and the addition of agropastoralism for farmers. To better identify the

land use management trends, human and territorial mapping of the region has been done in varying capacities according to human and animal occupation, and land variables.

Research shows that the region's land use is dynamic; however, there are factors that negatively affect grazing in the region and harmful interference of non-specialists in the field. Turner, M. D., & Hiernaux, P. (2008) reported that the access to livestock, pastures, water, and labor has dramatically changed. The authors conducted a study in a 500 km² area of western Niger using a combination of qualitative interviews of herders and herd managers, household composition surveys, herd composition monitoring, grazing management monitoring and georeferenced vegetation and livestock grazing itinerary data. Statistical analyses were performed using a two-staged approach; a. analysis of the factors affecting the allocation of labor to herding at the level of the managing household; b. analysis of the effect of herd characteristics, season, micro geography and herders' social position on herders' effort and the nutritional and ecological impacts of these efforts. They explored how the broader ecological and social contexts have affected the quantity and quality of labor investments into livestock herding. And how this affected the ecological labor investments into herding. The study focused on understanding how physical and social factors may affect local grazing management. Turner et al. (2008) reported that there are five major regional trends on local grazing including growing shortage of pasture, reduction in the availability of herding labor, the increased prevalence of grazing management by non-specialist, decline in the fraction of herds owned by the managers, and decline in number of cattle in herds. These factors, as suggested by the authors have led to the extensification of local graze management. Finally, the authors concluded that, the changing regional context of livestock husbandry leads to a reduction in labor (quantity and quality) investment or an

“extentification” of herding with significant implications for livestock productivity and the environment.

There is difference between local and regional usage of land including regional actors’ failure to consider local factors. Turner, M. D. (1999) refuted the idea of dividing the analysis of land use change by experts in local vs. regional views. The author argued that this approach excluded other important factors that affected this trend including ecological, sociocultural, and political factors. Using demographic and transaction histories (1984- 1994) of livestock owned by members of fifty-four households in western Niger to analyze this change, the author explored the causes behind the regionwide shift toward small stock (sheep and goats) in the Sahel. He also looked at some specifics and noticed that the shift in the species composition of regional herds is not due only to adaptation to changing environment, but it follows a complex pathway. The author mentioned wealth distribution as the best predictor of livestock species composition than species changing location or prices. The author rightly argued that livestock is not only a commodity, but a sign of wealth. He then concluded that the shift in species composition is not driven by changes in price or livestock productivity. The distribution of livestock ownership has changed with small holders and women controlling a larger fraction of aggregate livestock wealth. Finally, Turner recommended that local social processes mediate global forces to better understand the path that leads to regional land use change.

According to Raynaut, C. (2001), stakeholders competing for access to natural resources should do it through facilitation and negotiation. The issues related to local socio-economic and environmental factors should be seen in a broader context. Local problems need local solutions, but the state should remain unbiased and involved as a facilitator and regulator. Based on the review of secondary source research, the author looked at the factors that may determine the

intensity of the stresses that the Sahel society exerts on its environment. He mentioned three major factors that led to the current settlement and peoples' relationships to the territory they occupy including long scale geographical specialization (poles for commerce against agriculture and labor), the structure of the transport network, and massive acceleration in urban growth and rural exodus. Raynaut (2001) concluded his research by asserting that there is necessity to abandon the dominant conceptions of development as an intervention intended to introduce change into societies trapped in traditions that are responsible for their economic and material stagnation. Natural resource occurs within a shared space, which is subject to diverse strategies of control and appreciation. Within each country, and even more so at the level of the Sahelian region, contrasts among local situations are extreme. The role of the state in arbitration of conflicting interests.

3. Physical and Political characteristics of resource scarcity

The following section summarizes research conducted on the physical characteristics of resources scarcity including droughts, climate change and increasing demand; and how these physical changes impact herder/farmer relationships in the Sahel. It also provides counter evidence indicating that the perception of resource scarcity is driven by historic conflict, fear of future resource scarcity, and political involvement.

Violence in the Sahel is based on the evolution of herder-farmer relationships. Hussein, K., Sumberg, J., & Seddon, D. (1999) claimed that herders and farmers in the Sahel have always had a bitter-sweet relationship, at times symbiotic and mutually beneficial, while often competitive and violent. The authors provided evidence of violence occurring when the two communities competed for crucially needed scarce resources, particularly after the two dramatic droughts that hit the region in the 1970s and 1980s. However, Hussein et al. (1999) argued that

there is no strong evidence that indicates a substantial increase in violence. Nevertheless, violence in the area cannot be denied or ignored and the authors addressed a table of long-term trends and proximate causes for conflicts between farmers and herders. Hussain et al. (1999) investigated violent conflict between herders and farmers in Africa and suggested that it is generally on the increase. Other researchers suggested that increasing violence among the two communities is largely due to two factors: the first being changing patterns of resource use with increasing competition over resources, and the second being the breakdown of traditional mechanisms. Based on review and analysis of the research literature from both the francophone and anglophone areas of semi-arid Africa and through a postal survey of researchers and development workers, the authors concluded that the causes include the scarcity of natural resources as well as deeper structural factors in the relationship between them. The conflict is not a dangerous new phenomenon as believed by current analysts. Violent conflict over use of scarce resources is inconclusive. Pressure on resources intensifies competition over them increases.

When evaluating the root causes of conflicts in the Sahel a prevailing question arises, “Are these conflicts, while superficially around competing land use, actually conflict around different sets of material or nonmaterial issues?” Turner, M. D. (2004) researched this issue by analyzing the case study of herder-farmer conflict in the resource poor Sahel based on Peluso & Watts study. The author questioned if herders and farmers were simply involved in a here-and now struggle over a small pool of common natural resources, or if these conflicts were best seen as materially-motivated strategic acts with disputants more focused on previous issues and maintaining access to productive resources into the future. Turner 2004) pointed out that there were two schools of thought: environmental security and common propriety management. In this case, the author argued that, causes are scarcity driven. He also argued that causes are

multidimensional. The author suggested that there are two moral dimensions of resource conflict: farmer vs. herders' competition over dwindling resources, and the ethics of how to portray resource conflict. The author pointed out that resource mismanagement reduces resources availability, which leads to conflict. He also suggested that conflict may result from political manipulation. Turner concluded that resources-related conflicts are not simple struggles over resources. Conflicts may result from political gain or be orchestrated actions for higher political purposes.

Studies have shown that, in many cases, bad governance is root cause of conflict and the environmental stress as a perpetuator, not an instigator. Some scholars continue to argue that civil violence in the Sahel region is due to environmental stress caused by a growing population, despite evidence that the environment in the region is dominated by climate fluctuation. The authors argued that this approach is flawed and superficial. Benjaminsen, T. A., Alinton, K., Buhang, H., and Buseth, J. T. (2012) suggested that climate change gives little evidence that climate variability is an important driver for conflict. Conflicts are not caused by land misuse; they are rather shaped by political and economic context. Causes for conflict are structural, and agricultural policy favoring farmers at the expense of herders. Tuareg's marginalization led them to revolt and drought may have helped reinforce this trend. The authors looked at what the government of Mali did with the drought relief funding and other related corruption, which added to the anger and dissatisfaction of the youth population. The authors gave a brief historical background of the rebellion going back to 1893. They suggested that this region has been paying for its way of life and refusal to cooperate with the central government, whether the historic French occupation or the current Malian government.

Conflict risks can be categorized in different levels, based on different issues. Raleigh, C. (2010) suggested that in general conflicts occur due to political vulnerability to climate change. However, he contended that the critical factors in conflict are political and economic marginalization. Evidence has shown that long term ecological distress can't cause unrest, because overtime people adapt to this new situation. The author built his case on three main points: 1) the explanation of Africa's political landscape based on ethno-arithmetic studies (majority ethnic group leadership), 2) political marginalization of minority groups who may use violence on other nonstate groups - violence over access to resources in politically irrelevant areas is often chronic, and finally 3) the ability to predict political instability due to environmental conditions is done through various approaches. The author suggested that if we assume that violence is about access to water and land, then violence may occur within communities that are politically marginalized. Therefore, the author proposed, four questions to structure the framework for research on political and physical vulnerabilities including the extent of marginalization, specific political violence, fluctuation in pastoral labor migration due to variation in climate, and finally relationship between the functionality of local market and risk for conflict.

Overtime, experts on African affairs, particularly those interested in climate change, have shifted their views and used different tools to analyze the environmental aspect of the region. Rasmussen, K., S'haen, S., Fensholt, R., Fog, B., Horion, S., Nielsen, J. O., Vang Rasmussen, L., Reeberg, A. (2016) analyzed the African interest after the 1970s drought including environment change, land degradation, land cover change, and climate change. Rasmussen et al. tried to give complementary insights rather than differences between varying interpretations of the factors mentioned above. Rasmussen et al. questioned why the scientific community disagrees on the

environmental changes taking place in the Sahel region. The authors looked at some contrasting evidence and discussed whether it was accurately depicted or to be considered as complementary data to better understand environmental change in the area. They suggested that the divergence in interpretations emerges from conceptualization, definitions and choice of indicators; biases in choosing sites, method of research, measurement accuracy and others. The authors concluded that differences and inconsistencies in concepts and their names, methodology, and interpretation of results may have led to those discrepancies. These are all factors to consider in the field research.

4. Identity, Land users' Rights, and Traditional conflict resolution tools

With an understanding of the historic and current state of resources in the Sahel region, the research analyzed the historic and current land use relationship between pastoralist and farmers, their traditional mechanism for resolving conflict and the issues that arise when outside forces intervene and impose new land use rights rules.

When root causes are identified, and opponent parties agree on the same framework to resolving their conflict, the solution becomes obvious. Cousins, B. (1996) argued that pastoralists and farmers historically resolved their issues and solved problems using traditional conflict resolution methods and tools. However, their previous framework for conflict resolution has fallen under more and more pressure due to the changing social, ethnic, and political landscape. The author investigated the implications of policies and programs that promote decentralization and the empowerment of local decision makers for conflict management. The author identified the different parties involved as well as the multiple resources necessary including categories of uses, users of different status, and uses with different sets of rights. In addition, the author identified five territorial units. He finally proposed theoretical frameworks for conflict analysis

and recommended applying an approach according to the status and stages of each issue. Cousins confirmed that there was need to use training and capacity building in conflict management at local level, in community organizations and producers' associations, local administrative structures, and development agencies. He also suggested that care was needed in designing, intervention, and the diagnosis of the cause of the conflict. Based on his cultural observation, the author asserted that conflict is locally viewed as potentially constructive, and as serving useful social functions at time; what conflict resolution practitioners may call positive conflict.

Studies have shown how central governments may be biased in favor of farmers, when dealing with herder vs. farmer issues. Herders are nomadic, perceived “uneducated” people, who usually do not directly contribute financially to one country. They do not pay taxes and tend to travel across borders. Thébaud, B., and Battebury, S. (2000) shed light on the pastoral livelihoods by showing that life chances are linked to: the complexity and difficulties they must engage in to ensure necessary resources, cooperation and/or conflicts taking place between different ethnic groups, inconsistent role played by the state favoring the farmers. Thébaud et al. suggested that the situation is already dire for pastoralists and yet the other communities of farmers and the central government continue to ignore this community. It has been noticed that there is a growing threat of agro-pastoralists on pastoralists over shared interest for specific resource such as grazing and animals.

Based on the review of secondary source research, the authors explored the changing mode of access to water and pasture and if it culminates in tensions and conflict between pastoral groups. They also explored if the state development efforts to provide secure watering points for pastoral herds initiate social conflicts and violence, rather than creating security. The authors reminded us that these different communities, pastoralists and farmers, used to coordinate their

effort in sharing land and water by instituting rules and law until the 1960s. One of the factors that widen the divide between the two communities is the fact that some farmers have evolved to agropastoralists. This new situation has created a new paradigm, where agropastoralists compete for more resources and do not need pastoralists to mow their land anymore. They also started to compete with pastoralists over land deemed to be too dry for farming. Thebaud et al. concluded that, the adaptation to environmental conditions have changed since the Sahelian droughts of the 1970s, and particularly since the additional dry years of 1983-85. The conditions experienced by pastoral communities are strongly linked to the complexity of the activities they must do to insure access to resources; to conflicts and cooperation between ethnic groups; to the inconsistent role of the state in assisting or constraining pastoral livelihoods; and to the negative discourse surrounding pastoralism that still circulates in some government and development policy circles.

Previous studies have shown the dichotomy between farmers and pastoralists and their historical relationship in which farmers have always been the winners. Van Den Brink, R., Bromley, D., W., Chavas, J., P. (1995) emphasized on the vital difference between sedentary farming production and nomadic livestock production, their flexibility, and their different ability to react to changing factors. Van Den Brink et al. used the model of dual economy based on the comparative advantages of two different production techniques with respect to environmental uncertainty to find out if private-individualized- and exclusive title to land in Africa is the condition sine qua non of improved economic performance. The authors looked at the property regime to help develop adequate policies considering the dynamism of the region and its people. They asserted that exclusive private property in land are not necessarily ideal. The authors continued their argument by presenting another framework based on historical and biblical case

of Cain, the farmer, and Abel, the nomad. They suggested that this model simulates a dual economy based on the comparative advantages of two types of production. The authors postulated that nomadic non-exclusive property rights will secure the profit of the livestock production but insisted that this model of non-exclusive doesn't necessarily mean open access. The authors finally recommended that policy makers acknowledge that the two activities are structurally different, which will lead to institutional solutions considering the advantages and disadvantages of each sector, pastoral and farming. The authors concluded that property regimes are instrumental variables in development policy and showed that highly diverse and variable agricultural eco-systems demand property regimes, which allow quick human response to new exigencies. They finally established the micro-economic relationship between environmental variability, choice of technique, and property rights in a dynamic, partial equilibrium context.

5. Military Intervention and Security Instability

When parties with other interest become involved in solving the land use rights conflict, additional conflicts arise, and the original dispute and desired result becomes skewed. The evolving impact of the conflict has multiple layers. Intervention by the military, international organizations, peace keeping missions, and organized crime cannot be dismissed in this conflict, and neither can the locally perceived intentions of these groups. In conflict situations perceptions may become realities. Frowd, P. M. (2018) defined militarism, militarization, and security and how these terms are perceived differently by locals and their westerner supporters. The author argued that militarism and security are linked, suggesting the local governments emphasize on military solutions to prevent insecurity, usually for internal political reasons. The author, thus, demonstrated that this approach may exacerbate the situation.

Sabrow, S. (2017) tried to give a voice to the local populace by looking at their perspective about foreign intervention in their area, on behalf of peace keeping operations or humanitarian aid. She argued that locals make a clear distinction about the intervening forces, categorized as U.N. representatives, regional forces, or individual states. The author asserted that local perceive the legitimacy of each intervention based on ideological and pragmatic considerations. She noticed that while French intervention is seen military efficient, it lacks ideological legitimacy or consideration due to its historical past (former colonial ruler). On the other hand, African and U.N. forces presence may be welcomed and justified, but they lack military efficacy.

The continued violence and insecurity in the region are of two natures: historic and current. De Hann, C., Dubern, E., Garancher, B., and Quitero, C. (2016) suggested two main historic factors including governance crisis, or poor governance, and the legacy of the Tuareg rebellion against the postcolonial state authority since the 1960s. Given the rough topography of the area and the weakness of the central authority, the authors presented different types of violence and criminality in four categories: 1) localized conflict between farmers and pastoralists over scarce resources such as water, grazing, and land use, 2) ethnic nationalist Tuareg rebellion, 3) transnational traffickers and criminals, and 4) religious extremists such as AQIM and other groups. The authors argued that these criminal elements may have different drivers; nevertheless, one type of conflict may escalate into another. The authors concluded their research by proposing the following: locals and central government should be associated in any solution, mobility and resources access for pastoralists should be maintained, provide basic human needs and services must be provided, socio-economic opportunities, including those for youth should be enhanced.

Zyck, S., & Muggah, R. (2013) argued that the Malian conflict has more than single cause. He; however, proposed to look at local level, suggesting that the conflict rather consists of vicious disputes within localities. The author refutes the idea that this conflict represents a threat to the U.S. or Europe. He suggested that this conflict may rather be a direct threat to the wider neighborhood. The author wondered if the conflict hasn't been imported and asked how much of it is local. Following this suggestion, the author reported that those imported criminal groups fight against the local government, but also against each other.

Boutellis, A., Mahmoud, Y. (2017) asked how many of the foreign fighters from other conflicts including Syria, Iraq, and Libya will return home to the Sahel. They asserted that militarized intervention may trigger unwanted outcomes and reviewed the U.N.'s short and long-term policies in the region. The authors gave an overview of the involvement of local states in regional and sub-regional coordination structures aimed at tackling instability including the G5 Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), and the A.U. (African Union). The authors insisted on international coordination in a multi-factor and multi-disciplinary regional and national plan to tackle causes of the conflict. The authors suggested that it is time to change failed tactics and promote the winning ones.

Although the conflict in the Sahel is not Libya's instability spill over, Shaw, S. (2013) questioned whether the war in Libya has helped precipitate Tuareg returnees' insurgency. Security experts may look at conflict in north Mali as a continuation or spread of conflict in Libya by using the escalation and diffusion/contagion theory. This situation in Libya can't by itself explain the conflict in Mali, although Tuareg rebels seized an opportunity to retaliate against central government, who for long time has forgotten and ignored the region and its people. Shaw, S. (2013) asserted that widespread poverty and incapacity of the state to control

large space had created a favorable area for all trafficking and criminal activities. North Mali has become a fertile and an attractive area to stage secessionist rebellion. The author asserted that the conflict is internal but was presented as a regional issue.

Local people may perceive those who are believed to be criminal groups as good people, because of political, economic, and security vacuum left by the central government. Sandor, A. (2017) looked at dynamics of security, rather than root causes, and the response of armed groups who control the region, rather than to the state who is absent. The author suggested that the area has become a no-man's land. Different portions of the territory are controlled by different armed groups who have different interests including rebels and criminal groups. Sandor noticed that local people miss the Islamist rule for the security they used to provide. It has been noticed that the last peace accord between rebel groups and the government of Mali has short-lived. The author admitted that the issue is more complex than it appears and looked at three inter-woven and mutually reinforcing dynamics to explain those dynamics. The dynamics, the author asserted, are the development of a generalized insecurity due to competition of different groups to control the different areas, the reconstitution of Islamic armed groups, who act as sovereign entities on Malian territory, and the return of local people to tribalized armed movements. As expected, these dynamics have led to degradation of social cohesion and trust among different communities.

The term of ungoverned space has been abused to justify conflict, because of the failure of local governments and international powers to take responsibility for the geopolitical and economic process within these spaces. Raleigh, C., and Dowd, C. (2013) suggested that this term has been used to justify terrorist safe heaven theory. Before some terrorist elements plugged to the region, problems were local. Groups claiming share resources challenging local, national, and

regional governance, but the emphasize is on few foreign destabilizing elements serves local governments and international agenda in fighting global terrorism. Finally, the authors argued that connecting Africa's poverty, large Muslim population, and weak government to terrorism is misleading.

Liberal peace is another term that has been used as justification, in terms of intervention. Liberal peace was first known as a theoretical and philosophical concept, but later recognized as a political concept in 1993. For years, Mali was perceived as a role model for a democratic system in Africa, and yet its northern population easily fell into the hands of Tuareg rebels associated with radical groups. On behalf of liberal peace, France intervened militarily. Charbonneau, B. and Sears, J., M. (2014) suggested that the intervention exposed the threat of terrorists and other bandits and criminal groups in the Sahel. The author's interest is not primarily in the concept of liberal peace, but in how the liberal peace ideology may help us understand the social reality that is keen for constructive relationships. The author suggested that the French intervention is not only relevant to what preceded it in 2012, but also everything related to the post-colonial Malian era up to today. The author concluded that liberal peace is impossible in Mali, due to its contested political narrative, as well as the fact that this concept of liberal peace has been abused and used as a catchall concept and its proponents see it as the permanent solution to war and colonial dominance.

Francis, D. J. (2013) insisted on the importance of this conflict and its international implications, particularly for neighboring countries and France's national security interests, as well as the rest of Africa. The author continued analyzing the situation by assessing and identifying the nature of the conflict's causes and the key actors. In the short term, France has achieved its goal, which was primarily to prevent terrorist groups from taking over Bamako.

However, the author suggested, that the French military intervention runs the risk of the Afghanization of Mali in the long term. As asserted by other experts, military intervention alone does not solve any conflict. Division over the northerners' identity, lack of government commitment to deal with the issue, lack of resources, and a timid international intervention, keep Mali from entering a post war situation that would lead to peace building. The author concluded by making some recommendation to the Malian, French, and Norwegian governments as well as to neighboring governments.

This paper was written after the peace settlement that followed the second Tuareg insurgency and the last insurgency that led to the French military intervention. Keita, K. (2007) described the Tuareg rebellion from the eyes of a Malian military officer. He delved into the trauma of the northern Malian society and the hard political and economic choices to be made by the leadership. The author admitted that the issue is an intra-state conflict between the Malian government and the minority Tuareg population. He suggested that this conflict requires great efforts to make sure that there is real and genuine cooperation between local communities, the military and civil representative of Bamako. The author, then, questioned the sustainability of this peace. Events later indicated that the peace lasting from 1995 - 2012, ended when Tuareg rebels combined their forces with radical group to try to march on Bamako. The author made two other critical points regarding Tuareg fighters' integration in the national military and Tuaregs' adaptation to rapid economic, political, ecological, and regional changes. Again, the current situation shows that Tuaregs are not necessarily better off today than they were decade ago.

To ensure that progress and peace can be achieved in the future there is hope through two focus areas: civil military projects and youth. One way that the military could have a positive impact is through civil military affairs projects. Stinson, C. (2015) suggested that water security

is one of the main issues threatening security and stability in the Sahel region. She recommended that innovative approaches to be implemented to tackle these issues. African militaries can be part of the equation, which interpret water resources policy with development. Long term solution may be inter-government partnership with defense forces from donor countries (western countries including Europe and the U.S.), which include finance and technical expertise that can be part of civil military operation support.

Youth in the Sahel region are like youth in other parts of the world, aspiring for a better life. Agbibo, D. E. (2015) regretted that youth in undeveloped countries, including the Sahel region, are looked at as, “*enfants terribles*” or bad boys. He asserts that the only difference is that youth in this region deal with great adversity and everyday struggles. Sahelian youth must come up with ingenious and creative way to overcome these challenges. The author started by identifying youth age in a cultural context. Among other factors, young people in the Sahel are considered adults if they can sustain a marriage and become contributing members of society. Youth is an element of the social fabric or equation that may contribute to peacebuilding if they are not excluded from the decision-making process. The author suggested that this category of the population is so important that they can go either way, becoming agents of trouble, insecurity and violence if marginalized, or agents of development and peace if well integrated into society in participatory way.

IV. Analysis

At the current time, the only completed research step is the literature review, which consisted of looking for the most important variables governing the relationship between Tuareg pastoralists, non-Tuareg farmers, and the central government. Four themes including Herd Composition and Land Use Management; Physical and Political Characteristics of Resource

Scarcity; Identity, Land Users' Right, and Traditional Conflict Resolution Tools; Military Intervention and Security Instability, have been identified to assess the Tuaregs Pastoralist and non-Tuareg Farmers conflict.

1. Theme 1 analysis: Herd Composition and Land Use Management

According to Turner et. al, access to resources mechanism has changed overtime, due to increase in demand and the arrival of new users including agro-pastoralists. The same authors suggested that, there is a difference between local and regional usage of land, thus creating a gap and misunderstanding between local users and their foreign supporters who try to impose their business practices. While outside help is needed and welcomed by locals, their vulnerability and weaknesses expose them to devastating unwanted outcome consequences.

2. Theme 2 analysis: Physical and Political Characteristics of Resource Scarcity

This review concluded that, violence has affected the herder-farmer relationships, which evolved from sharing resources when they are plentiful to punctual struggle in times of drought. Unlike what is speculated by some experts, this research concluded that, when there is conflict, it is more around different sets of material than nonmaterial issues, as suggested by Turner. (2004) another evidence confirming this conclusion is the claim by Benjaminsen (2012) that, climate change gives little evidence that climate variability is an important driver for conflict in the region. Moreover, another takeaway from this literature is that, in general conflicts occur due to political vulnerability to climate change (Raleigh, C., 2010). According to Rasmusen (2019), the divergence in interpretations between different research emerges from conceptualization, definitions, and choice of indicators; biases in choosing sites, method of research, measurement accuracy and others.

3. Theme 3 analysis: Identity, Land Users' Right, and Traditional Conflict Resolution Tools

Tuareg pastoralists and non-Tuareg farmers have been sharing resources including water and land for centuries. This relationship has naturally been punctuated by some conflicts. These two groups have developed some historical conflict resolution tools as suggested by Cousins. (1996) Using some of Thibaut's (2001) work, this literature concluded that, the central government may have some biases against nomads because they do not pay taxes. If left alone both communities will, as they have done it for centuries, manage their differences.

4. Theme 4 analysis: Military Intervention and Security Instability

The Sahel region has always attracted outsiders, whether it be merchants, travelers, bandits and other malign groups, or invaders. The independence of Mali and Niger in the early 1960s did not change the dynamics. The area is still remote, undeveloped, ill controlled and ungoverned by central governments of Mali and Niger. The most important lesson learned is that, the continued foreign military intervention, as suggested by Frowd (2018) and the absence of strong legitimate government as noted by De Hann (2016), continue to drive insecurity and instability in the region. Notwithstanding that locals' perception vis, a vis local, regional, and international interventions are worth analyzing. Sabrow (2017) argued that while French military intervention helped oust terrorists from the main cities in the area, their tactical win cannot mask their strategic failure. Terrorists continue to rage and as s for other transnational traffickers and smugglers, life is business as usual. Finally, the local population would like to see an international military force temporarily help local governments establish security and safety and leave as soon as order is established.

The analysis of this literature review shows that 1) ethnic divide is not the main issue, 2) there is a heavy handed centralized Governance & its biases, 3) there is a change in scarce resources access, 4) the vacuum created by this issue was filled by outsiders, including transnational smugglers and traffickers, and terrorists, 5) the historical local concepts and way of life are challenged, 6) the international interventions and their militarization have always been tactical successes, but strategic failures.

V. Conclusion

For centuries Tuareg and non-Tuareg populations in the region have lived harmoniously. Nevertheless, conflicts between the communities have occurred, particularly during some long-lasting droughts. Although ethnic divide is an apparent factor to consider when investigating this dispute, the most important element that made this conflict protracted is the central government's mis-management of the region, known for its immensity, aridity, and incapacity to be controlled. This situation thus has created a vacuum' filled first by transnational traffickers and smugglers and later by international terrorists. Realizing that the central government was not able or willing to better manage this region, the international community provided material support including developmental programs led by international NGOs and military trainings provided by France and the USA. These "interventions" were seen by some as a neocolonialistic approach, which kept the region impoverished and completely dependent on international aid. This situation further weakened the central government, which is heavily controlled by non-Tuareg elements and exacerbated the competition between the communities who used to have their own mechanism of collaboratively sharing resources and using their own traditional conflict resolution tools when needed.

Field research is needed to better understand the dynamics between all the actors involved in this dispute. The findings from next phase of this research will allow the development of a conflict resolution proposal. There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the research thus far: 1) this conflict is not primarily an ethnic or religious strife, 2) in times of peace there is a positive collaboration between local communities, 3) during droughts there is competition over scarce resources, 4) there is evidence that central governments' policies, in Mali and Niger, favor farmers over nomads, 5) there is also evidence of the international community, particularly international NGOs, biases toward nomads.

VI. Recommendations

After analyzing the factors that led to this protracted conflict in the region and identifying all the actors that are, directly or indirectly, involved in this situation, this qualitative research, despite its limitations, makes the following recommendations

Recommendation 1: Policy of Decentralization

The central government should review its policy of decentralization. To insure a fair and plausible policy, the central government should associate all local actors including politicians, civil society, and communities in the drafting of the policy and its implementation

Recommendation 2: Local Good Governance

The decentralization policy should promote local good governance including the possibility for local communities to jointly manage their region (i.e. elect an independent body of local representatives with large authority allowing it to work with the central government).

Recommendation 3: Synchronized International Support

For profit or for non-profit international organizations will continue to work in the region, but under close collaboration and supervision of local organizations. International aid and investment should be vetted by the elected body to ensure viability of those funds.

Recommendation 4: Revival of Local Way of Life

Local people are proud people. The Northern Sahel is still an untouched ecosystem. It is difficult for people, who chose to live in a remote area, to enjoy their life when they are constantly “invaded” by outsiders in the name of globalization. UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) should declare this area as world heritage site, and Tuareg as protected indigenous people.

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