

**EURO-MAGHREB CENTER FOR
STRATEGIC RESEARCHES
AND STUDIES**

Research 2019



**HOW TO SUPPORT THE
SAHEL COUNTRIES TO
FACE TERRORISM?
THE ECONOMIC,
SOCIAL AND
CULTURAL
APPROACHES**



MINISTERIO DE DEFENSA



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HOW TO SUPPORT THE SAHEL COUNTRIES TO FACE TERRORISM? THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL APPROACHES

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MINISTERIO DE DEFENSA

SPANISH OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS CATALOGUE
<https://cpage.mpr.gob.es>

Published by:



<https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/>

© Authors and Publisher, 2020

NIPO: 083-20-081-3 (print on demand)

Publication date: March 2020

NIPO: 083-20-082-9 (online edition)

ISBN: 978-84-9091-486-1 (online edition)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sahel is a land of multiple crises in which a dangerous mix of endogenous and external factors have created the conditions for the rise of security threats in the 5+5 space, particularly those related to violent extremism, illicit traffics and illegal migration. In view of our common concerns and given that it is necessary to develop a more inclusive approach that addresses social and economic aspects, the idea of considering Sahel societies as active subjects of security policies is more necessary than ever. The present research tries to provide an approach from the 5+5 space focused on the analysis of all those social, cultural and economic aspects that may increase the resilience of Sahelian societies to counter terrorism and insecurity. The objective is to share our insight on these societies and determine priority areas for action in order to find feasible and lasting solutions.

The research is carried out around three axes that provide elements to draw meaningful conclusions. The first axis focuses on the socio-economic factors that contribute to the expansion of radicalism and illegal activities. A wide range of issues is analyzed from demography-related problems to the failure of governance and leadership crisis, plus the external influence in the proliferation of radical groups. All these elements act as catalysts for violence and social unrest, especially among young people. The second axis analyses education, religion and civil society as crucial elements for fighting the spread of radical movements in the Sahel. Finally, the third axis studies new socio-economic models that could allow vulnerable individuals to reintegrate the labour market and improve their living standards. In this sense, examples like the Tunisian project of *Rjing Maatoug* are mentioned.

Key findings

- Security challenges in the Sahel require a comprehensive approach that is far beyond military operations, although these are essential to fight threats such as violent radicalism. The involvement of civil society and the establishment of economic models adapted to the specific needs of the Sahelian communities are badly needed.

- **Foreign actors** play an undeniable role in the proliferation of extremism and violence in the Sahel region. Apart from the direct support of radical groups, the main pathways used by this external influence are the grey economy and education:
 - Regarding the **grey economy**, the transnational organized crime continues to expand in the Sahel. Illicit trafficking of people, drugs and firearms take advantage of the vastness of the territory as well as the failure of the states in controlling border areas. Their influence redefine the balance of power in some areas, spread insecurity across-countries and hinders the economic development.
 - The external influence on **religious education** manifests in two aspects that are a clear risk factor for turning a traditionally tolerant communities into extremist ones. The first aspect is the increasing number of radical Salafi schools that offer free education and spread their doctrine among youth. The second aspect derives from the role played by some local schools generally run by marabouts (“head of leaders” who educates boys) in rural areas. The financing of these schools is not supervised by the State.
- **Inter-ethnic disputes** have proliferated in the last years. In a context of precarious socio-economic balance, the impact of climate change and illegal activities increase tensions between pastoralists and settled farmers competing for water and the rare available space in rural areas. These conflicts provoke displacements, casualties and increase the suffering of populations. They are also an additional chance for extremism to gain followers among those that complain of injustice and feel unprotected by the State.

Recommendations

In view of the absolute need to fight poverty and unemployment for increasing security in Sahel countries, this research names numerous socio-economic and cultural recommendations in areas like economy, governance, education among other. However, the support action on Sahelian societies with the purpose of increasing their resilience to terrorism should concentrate on three priority lines:

- **Religion** should be seen as a solution for countering extremism. It is necessary the protection of traditional Islamic practices in the Sahel together with the religious leaders that promote autochthonous spiritual models. In this regard, the control of imams and the funding of local schools is vital.
- Investment in **public education** should increase both in primary and secondary education as well as in vocational training.

- Support of **civil society and informal associations** in order to create spaces of socialization out of radicalism sphere of influence. Empowering women, young and traditional leaders could be the way for strengthening the social fabric and the resilience face to extremism. In this regard, local actors could play a central role in conflicts resolution through informal mechanisms that escape the central power. These stakeholders possess influence and information at local level unmatched by other powers. They could also act as mediators between the communities and the State and could be a key factor for increasing the trust of civilian in security forces.

What to do in the frame of the 5+5 Defence?

The challenges posed by the Sahel region to the 5+5 space are also a great opportunity to increase cooperation and develop new initiatives.

- Formulate a common 5+5 approach to reinforce the Sahelian states security capacities:
 - Support the security sector reform (SSR) in Sahel countries for improving governance and local accountability. The implementation of security-building measures for increasing the trust of civilian in security forces and avoiding additional source of grievances to the local populations.
 - Building up capacity of local forces is indispensable, especially if coupled with some access to technology for surveillance. In this regard, the establishment of early warning systems for prevention of all type of conflicts could be useful for a better civilian protection.
- Integrate the Sahelo-Saharan zone into a cooperative framework between the 5+5 initiative and other international mechanisms for better pooling of efforts and capacities.
- Sharing 5+5 countries' experiences through the organization of seminars in the 5+5 College for reinforcing capacities in the field of civil protection, conflict mediation and identification of local key stakeholders in the Sahel.

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INTRODUCTION

Sahel is an Arabic word that means “shore” in the sense of border or edge. The term Sahel region is commonly used to name a wide strip of arid land that extends, from west to east, between the Atlantic and the Red Sea, and which, from north to south, separates the Sahara desert from the savannah plains of southern Africa.

Geographical definitions of the Sahel region vary. For the purpose of this research, the Sahel encompasses a large part of the territory of Senegal, The Gambia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad, together with southern Mauritania, northern Nigeria and Cameroon as is showed in Figure 1. In this territory live about 150 million people. Other geographical definitions include countries like Ethiopia or South Sudan that show, in our view, specific features and are not included in this analysis. The contributors to this study sometimes mention the international organization G5 Sahel, created in 2014 by Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. In this case, authors specify that they refer to G5 Sahel group and not to the whole Sahel region.



Source: ReliefWeb, UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Looking for a wider approach to Sahel issue in the 5+5 Defence forum

Nowadays, the Sahel region represents one of the greatest threats to the stability and security of the 5+5 space. The fragility of most Sahelian states marked by the weakness of their public institutions, corruption and lack of good governance, multiplies the evils of an impoverished societies with great difficulties to access public services, health care and education.

In this context, result of both exogenous and endogenous factors, terrorist groups have proliferated, assembled today under the umbrella of *Wila-yat Gharb-alfriquiya* or *Jamaat Nusrat Al Islam wa Al Muslimin*. Some of the terrorist groups have been operating in the Sahel since almost two decades and are still a genuine threat to the common security of the 5+5 space. Despite the success of Serval operation in northern Mali to counter terrorism in the region, the activity of extremist groups is evolving from self-defense to attacking phase as The Munich Security Conference 2019 has revealed. As a result, a massive displacement of populations, around 4.2 million displaced according to the United Nations (UN), and an increasing number of fatalities linked to extremist activity that have doubled since 2017.

If the present of the Sahel region is a cause for major concern, it is even more so when its foreseeable evolution is considered. The future of the region is threatened by factors such as climate change, environmental degradation or demographic growth that have a strong impact and may amplify the economic and social problems of the Sahelian populations. The repercussion of these phenomena on illegal migration, illicit traffics and over the possibility of social and political conflicts should trigger alarms in the 5+5 space.

Scope and methodology of CEMRES research 2019

The present study tries to provide an approach from the 5+5 space focused on the analysis of all those social, cultural and economic aspects that may increase the resilience of Sahelian societies to counter terrorism. This is not an original proposal since various multilateral organizations have cast doubt on the validity of the mechanisms employed so far, for increasing the efficiency of the resources applied to secure the Sahel region. They concluded that it is necessary to develop a more inclusive approach that addresses social and economic aspects.

What could represent a novelty and an extra factor for cohesiveness in the 5+5 Defence space, is sharing our countries' insight on these societies as well as the solution of the matters that might have a great impact on our security. It is also an opportunity to share experiences and new approaches. In this sense, the experience and knowledge accumulated on the Sahel region and its populations, especially by the Maghreb countries, is a contribution of greatest interest for this research.

The ability to mobilize Sahel societies to counter terrorism and involve them in a sustainable development project for their territories has become vital to securing the future of the Sahel and the 5+5 space. It is time to realize that societies should not be the object but the active subject of security policies. That said the task is not easy or obvious because societies in the Sahel are complex, heterogeneous and sometimes follow particular dynamics that it is necessary to know. As a group comprising of military and civil researchers from different countries and expertise, we intend to contribute modestly to adopt a more open and human view on these vibrant and youthful Sahelian societies. Our purpose is eventually highlight the vital need of empowering these precious resources for securing both their future and ours.

The methodology adopted by the researchers is focus on the study of the reports made by the national institutions of the 5+5 countries and the international organizations in the field of demography, development, education, security, climate change and terrorism in Sahel countries. This qualitative approach together with some personal experiences on the ground, as well as the rich discussions in the frame of the two meetings held in Madrid are the main sources of this research.

This research is carried out around three elements of analysis. The first part is focus on the socio-economic driven factors that contributes to terrorism in the Sahel region. It is a general overview on demography, society, religion as well as the reasons of the states' weakness. Together with this endogenous issues, the external factors that contribute to terrorism are analyzed, especially the *takfiri* jihadi terrorism and the Salafist proselytism in the Sahel. Both issues provide keys for understanding the phenomenon of radical movements and how they are spreading across Sahelian societies, particularly among young people.

Once the general frame is set, the second and third parts are devoted to the analysis of the factors that may contribute to the resilience of Sahelian societies against terrorism. The second part focus on education, religion and civil society as crucial elements for fighting the spread of radical movements in the Sahel. The third part concentrates its analysis in new socio-economic models that allow vulnerable individuals to lead a life of dignity. In this regard, their integration or reintegration in the labor markets is studied. It is commonly accepted that without socio-economic development, security could not exist.



TERMINOLOGY

Regarding the definition of terrorism, there is not a universal definition, so that the definitions of terrorism and related terms used in this study are drawn from the terminology agreed in the CEMRES research 2015¹.

- **Terrorism** according to the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism²: any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize national resources.
- **Terrorist group** according to the European Union (EU)³: structured group of more than two persons, established for a period of time and acting in concert to commit terrorist offences; 'structured group' means a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure.
- **New insurrectional terrorism**: the intentional, calculated, rational and self-justified use of, or threat to use violence in order to attain political, religious and ideological purposes. There are eight important elements: the essence of the activity is the use of, or threat to use, violence; The aim of the activity is always political - namely, the goal is to attain political objectives; It is revolutionary, subversive and aimed to a proto-state model; it involves political, socio-economic, religious aspects; It is «stra-tactical»: the strategic nature is expressed through tactical actions not necessarily interconnected

¹ OUANNES, M. (dir.) (2015). Securing the borders of 5+5 space: Cooperation and implications, CEMRES.

² Adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice in Cairo (1998).

³ Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism, in <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2017/541/oj>.

to each other; Its nature is “glocal”⁴ and based on the “flex-adaptability”⁵; The battle-space could be threefold: real (conventional and asymmetric), virtual (info-ops, Web-propaganda), and cybernetic (cyber-attacks); Targets are both non-combatant and combatant: political, civil, military, religious, and symbolic.

- **Transnational organized crime:** a range of criminal activity perpetrated by groups whose operations across international borders.

The following terms have been taken from the Brookings Institution⁶:

- **Islamism:** phenomenon that incorporates a wide spectrum of behavior and belief. In the broadest sense, Islamist groups believe Islamic law or Islamic values should play a central role in public life. They feel Islam has things to say about how politics should be conducted, how the law should be applied, and how other people –not just themselves– should conduct themselves morally. To be or become an Islamist, however, is a conscious act of political affirmation.
- **Salafism:** the idea that the most authentic and true Islam is found in the lived example of the early, righteous generations of Muslims, known as the Salaf, who were closest in both time and proximity to the Prophet Muhammad. Salafis –often described as ultraconservatives– believe not just in the “spirit” but in the “letter” of the law, which is what sets them apart from their mainstream counterparts. In the Arab world today, Salafis are known for trying to imitate the particular habits of the first Muslims, such as dressing like the Prophet. Broadly-speaking, Salafists are less inclined towards active political engagement preferring instead a “quietest” approach of preaching, religious education, and avoiding confrontation with state authorities. A minority of Salafis are Salafi-jihadists.
- **Jihadism:** the idea that jihad (religiously-sanctioned warfare) is an individual obligation incumbent upon all Muslims, rather than a collective obligation carried out by legitimate representatives of the Muslim community. They argue that Muslim leaders today are illegitimate and do not command the authority to ordain justified violence. In the absence of such authority, every able-bodied Muslim should take up the mantle of jihad. Modern jihadist groups generally aim to incite their coreligionists to rise up and fight the enemy.

⁴ The conceptual term combines the words “global” and “local”, and describes the tempering effects of local conditions on global pressures.

⁵ Flexible capability of being adapted to changing situations.

⁶ SHADI, H. and DAR, R. (2016). “Islamism, Salafism, and jihadism: a Primer”, The Brookings Institution, July 16. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer/>.

- **Salafi-jihadism:** This is an approach to jihadism that is coupled with an adherence to Salafism. Salafi-jihadists tend to emphasize the military exploits of the Salaf to give their violence an even more immediate divine imperative. Most jihadist groups today can be classified as Salafi-jihadists

1. ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO TERRORISM IN THE SAHEL COUNTRIES

Introduction

Lack of knowledge of cultural and social dynamics can lead to misunderstanding of local dynamics and equilibria. In order to define and operate in different areas with specific and different identities, religion, uprootedness and ideological proselytism, it is fundamental to understand the cultural and social environment: in particular the social system and the sub-system structures and dynamics¹. Understanding human environment of “other” cultural areas² needs an approach oriented to local “systems” and “sub-systems” and not a simple and generic approach to “tribes”; in brief, the concept is «local instead of tribal». This is the aim of this section in which demographic, social, political and religious issues are analyzed, in order to reach a better understanding of those factors that have a major influence on the spread of terrorism in the Sahel region.

As mentioned in the introduction to the present report the Sahel region is a vast and heterogeneous region that shares common features. The Sahel is not only a geographical region but also a socio-cultural region. According to CASTIEN, J.I. et al. (2018) “this heterogeneity does not prevent the existence of a series of common features among the different populations present in the field. These shared elements allow us to speak of a Sahelian region, a Sahelian population and even a Sahelian society and culture”.

Desert and border haven been considered by some authors³ as the two key and common elements for the development of the Sahelian identity and culture. The Sahara desert has been at the same time a factor of isolation and the only (and incredible difficult) way out to contact other cultures from the North of Africa and from Mediterranean and Europe. On

¹ BERTOLOTTI, C. (2014, p. 61).

² The term “cultural area” as used here is meant to define a specific social group with common values, norms and traditions, but not confined by formal boundaries as well as country or regional borders, divisions, administrations.

³ CASTIEN, J.I. et al. (2018).

the other hand, the border has made the Sahel a space for the transit of populations and the exchange of goods fostering the cultural mix and the birth of new ethnical groups. Thus, a connected space is created through a series of economic, social and political networks that receive influences from outside while creating their own identity. In this context, Islamization has played a key role creating social and cultural practices (hierarchy; family relationship; law; clothing; music) and spreading common values (the sense of community; hospitality; solidarity)⁴.

It should be noted that even though the Sahel populations have assimilated the influence received from abroad, they have been able to create a genuine culture resulting of mixing cultural and social practices from different Sahelian ethnical groups from each other with external influence. In this regard, linguistic factors can influence the construction of an identity but are not a defining factor of it. Regarding languages, it is important to say that Arabization has not succeeded in the whole Sahelian territory even it is the mother tongue of some countries and is used in education religious practices. Arabic is also a means for connecting Sahelian territories with Maghreb countries. Other important African languages are Hausa, Bereber -spoken by tuaregs- (Hassania, Tamazigh); Tubu dialects; Zaghawa and Pular. Moreover, French and English are used as *lingua franca* especially in Administration and business.

In this complex ethnical and cultural context, “religion rarely has been at the origin of criminal violence”⁵. Most experts in the Sahel note that religion is not by itself the origin of violence and, usually is coupled by tribal or ethnical rivalries; economic motivations or the expression of social angriness⁶. Finally, external financing of radical fundamentalist through Wahhabi or Salafi religious schools, as well as the funding of radical groups is a factor that should not be ignored in the explanation of terrorism expansion in the Sahel region.

1.1. Demography and social structure in the Sahel countries

The International Peace Institute –IPI(2013) identifies three main challenges for the Sahel region, namely chronic underdevelopment due to a combination of demography, environment, and weak institutions; periodic humanitarian crises (such as the one related to current food insecurity); and political and security threats, such as terrorism and organized crime. Today, six years after this observation, the unprecedented demographic explosion, accentuates the tragedy of the Sahel countries. Sahelian po-

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ WILLIAMS, P. D (2012, p. 128).

⁶ CUNEO, P (2019) mentions as for examples the Tuareg revolt in Mali (2012) and Kanuri community integration in Boko Haram in Nigeria.

pulations are particularly affected by a multifaceted crisis related to unemployment, famine, poverty, migration, ethnic unrest and crime.

Since this section focuses on demography as the main vector of tension in this area, it will be limited to the G5 Sahel countries with a particular focus on Mali, which is the main source of security tension in the sub-region. Figure 1 shows some demographic characteristics of the above-mentioned countries.

Table 1. G5 Sahel countries demographic data

Country	Mauritania	Mali	Burkina Faso	Chad	Niger
Annual population growth rate	2.7%	3%	2.9%	3%	3.8%
Fertility rate (births per woman)	4.7	6.1	5.4	5.9	7.2
% of rural population	47%	58%	71%	77%	84%
Life expectancy	63	58	60	53	60

Source: UNESCO (2017).

Probably, the most striking feature is the high rate of population growth, especially in Niger, as well as the number of births *per* woman. Even if life expectancy is far below the global average, –71.5 years according United Nations World Population Prospects 2015– it is also true that it has improved over the period 2000-2016⁷. The final outcome, as a recent demographic study highlights, is that the Sahel region “is experiencing a phase marked by unprecedented population growth in no other region of the world. In the space of 20 years, the population of the G5 Sahel countries could double, which would make it go from 80 to 160 million of inhabitants in 2040”. In the case of Niger, the most populated country in Western Africa, it ranks as the world’s fastest growing country. Out of G5 Sahel sub-region, Nigeria ranks seven among the most populated countries in the world (over 200 million people in 2019). The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2050 its population will amount 402 million people.

Can anyone imagine that the Sahel will be responsible for one-third of the world’s population growth? Nowadays the Sahel is labelled “demographic bomb”. In order to focus on the consequences of this demographic boom, particularly with regard to the proliferation of extremism, terrorism and organized crime in this region, this section analyzes three issues:

⁷ According to the World Health Organization, life expectancy increased by 10.3 years in the African region, driven mainly by improvements in child survival, and expanded access to antiretrovirals for treatment of HIV.

- Socio-economic impact of urban population growth in a context featured by a predominance of rural population.
- Population growth impact on migration trends.
- Demography impact on inter-ethnic conflicts against the backdrop of terrorism and organized crime.

1.1.1. *Urban versus rural population*

The urbanization process over the past century has led to three major forms of differentiation in the Sahel, namely economic, social and political according to COHEN, M.A. (1979):

Economic differentiation occurred when some groups of population have introduced new production methods in rural areas together with the use of transport and communication means, that have generated surpluses and profits, which had been transformed into investment in commercial activities in towns.

Social differentiation boosted in towns that were developed mostly through migration. New social categories appeared between rural and urban, illiterate and literate, and traditional and modernizing.

Political differentiation arose after independence when the educated urban elites became the new political authorities. At that time, the urban elites were more concerned with the consolidation of political power in the national capitals than with extending economic development to the rural sector.

The Sahel region shows a wide disparity in population density. Some countries have low population density (less than 20 people per square kilometer) like Mali and Niger while other countries are more densely populated. That is the case of Nigeria with around 212 people per square kilometer. Even if urbanization process has increased since 1950 the urbanization rate is quite weak (7%) comparing with the rest of Africa (11%) and the world (31%) according to GARENNE, M. (2016). The pace of urbanization growth has been different from one country to another. For example, urbanization went faster between 1950 and 1980 in the case of Senegal, while in Mali and Burkina Faso occurred after the 2000s. Chad and Niger remain less urbanized than the rest of G5 Sahel countries.

Despite the increase in urbanization, Sahelian populations are predominantly rural as shows Table 1. That means that livelihood for most people relies on primary sector activities like agriculture and livestock husbandry. Mauritania is an exception and it is the only country in the Sahel with a majority of population living in towns. In this case, the urbanization is concentrated in the capital Nouakchott where almost live a quarter of the total population⁸. A part from political capitals, border towns are most

⁸ DUMONT, G.F. (2010).

populated. That is the case of Niger where after the capital, Niamey, the three most populated cities are Zinder, Maradi and Tahoua, placed in the borderlands with Nigeria and Burkina Faso⁹.

During the 21st century the internal and intraregional migration contribute to a rapid and unplanned urbanization in certain areas in which it is observed an increasing pressure on natural resources (water, energy, food) and infrastructures. The outcome is a non-inclusive urban growth with high levels of poverty, slum settlements and insecurity. The three differentiation above-mentioned resulted in an increasingly economic gap, social and political marginalization of large sections of population.

1.1.2. Population growth impact on migration trends

According to the Pew Research Center (2018), since 2010, eight of the top ten countries with the fastest growing international migration rates were in sub-Saharan Africa. Migration it is not a new phenomenon in the Sahel region but its present level as well as the prospects about its growth in the future point out that it will reach historically unprecedented levels. Studies on forecasts of migration from the Sahel to Europe reveal that between three and five million people have left the Sahel since independence. They will probably be around 40 million by the end of the century.

The growing migration to Europe in the last decade is relatively a new trend. Historically the Sahelian migration was internal or intraregional, and its nature was seasonal and informal. Since the 1990s this migration increasingly aims North African countries and BENSAD, A. (2016) estimates that around 1.5 million sub-Saharan migrants lived in Libya in the early 2000s¹⁰. In the past two decades, migration to the coastal parts of West Africa has decreased while flows to North Africa and Europe have experienced a sustained growth. Although 70% of African migration still takes place within the African continent, it is undeniable that the migration flows through more developed economies will increase. In this regard, The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects “a six-fold increase in migration from Africa to OECD countries, primarily Europe, in the coming decades”¹¹.

The fact that there are other destinations than Europe for African migrants reveals the importance of study this phenomenon. First to avoid these young people the risk of perishing on their way and, secondly, to prevent catastrophic effects that Europe and North Africa could suffer be-

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The same author estimates the number of sub-Saharan migrants in the same period of “about 300,000 in Mauritania, as many in Algeria, and a couple of tens of thousands in Tunisia and Morocco, while about a hundred thousand others would pass through Agadez in Niger each year as part of the seasonal pattern of labour migration”.

¹¹ DIIS -Danish Institute for International Studies (2018). Europe and Sahel-Maghreb Crises.

cause of the migratory flow over the next ten years due to the foreseeable demographic explosion in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

A survey published by OECD (2018)¹² found that the main motivation for migrating is by far getting economic benefits. Significantly security, freedom or access to better education, are not the driven factors, almost in the case of West African migrants. The poll also indicates that most of the Sahelian migrants would prefer remain in their countries of origin. The same report notes “economic development does not discourage migration until it reaches a high *per capita* income level”.

1.1.3. Social layers and ethnic groups: inter-ethnic conflicts against the backdrop of terrorism and organized crime

Historically, most of Sahelian societies have been strongly patriarchal with women and young people submission and with a predominance of paternal lineage. Age and gender are not the only elements that determine the social position of individuals; the colour of the skin and the ethnical origin are important factors too. An ethnic group is “a human community whose members share, in the first place, a series of cultural features, fundamentally a lifestyle” according to CASTIEN, J.I. et al. (2018). Together with this first feature, the members of the community must share the same identity and they are bound to be in solidarity with each other. Finally the community must be perpetuated throughout the generations.

The Sahelian societies show a diversity of social systems that could follow three major patterns following RAYNAUT, C. (2001):

- a. The major trading states (including the Hausa of Niger and Northern Nigeria) with a strong centralized and specialized political apparatus; some degree of individual mobility between hierarchical status; and open circulation and accumulation of wealth through trade.
- b. Warrior aristocracies (including the Songhai-Djerma [Zarma] societies of Niger and Mali) where the marking of social distances is the strongest organizing principle, and where the accumulation of wealth -mainly through warfare and raiding- was limited to those with higher status.
- c. Lineage-based peasantries (like the Serer of Senegal or the Senufo of Mali) whose social organization rests primarily on the coexistence of separate but equal lineage segments, where consensus is the dominant mechanism for decision making and where the accumulation of wealth is strictly controlled.

Finally, the complex relations between communities in the Sahel regions are strongly influenced by the way of exploiting natural resources.

¹² KIRWIN, M. and ANDERSON, J. (2018).

In this regard, the opposition between pastoralist communities (nomadic and semi-nomadic) and farmer communities is an important source of conflicts¹³. It is important to highlight that around 50 million people in the Sahel, most of them economically deprived, depend upon livestock husbandry for their livelihood¹⁴. Traditionally farmers welcomed herders from the desert areas during the dry season because cattle fertilised their lands.

Nowadays, climate change together with illegal trafficking, armed conflicts and terrorism push herders out of their traditional pasturage areas looking for new ones. Moreover, the natural phenomena are not without consequences on the socio-economic balances of the region too, since they annihilate the prospects of food self-sufficiency and cause tensions especially between the farmers and the nomadic herders, forced to dispute the rare agricultural and rural spaces available¹⁵. Furthermore, these long periods of drought are not without consequences on the mobility of the nomads of the region, who are also forced sometimes to cross national borders, in search of grazing spaces in the surrounding areas, resulting in conflicts with local farmers and herders, as was the case between Mauritanian Peul herdsman from and Senegalese Soninke farmers in 1989.

Inter-ethnic conflicts against the backdrop of terrorism and organized crime

The case of Mali could be particularly useful in order to describe the suffering of populations resulting from conflicts related to organized crime and terrorism together with demographic pressure and economic hardships. According to DUMONT, G.F. (2010), 23 ethnic groups live together in Mali. They can be divided into five main groups: Mandinka (Bambara, Soninke, Malinke, Bozo); Peul (Fulani, Toucouleur); Voltaic (Bobo, Senufo, Minianka); Saharan (Tuareg Moorish, Arabic) and Songhai.

Mandinka group is the largest (around 40% of population) and dominates the southwest of Mali. Senufo live in the south, while Peul ethnias live in the south-center near Burkina Faso and Dogon. The last one is an ethnias that lives in the central region of Mali, in the southeast of Niger and in Burkina Faso. Regarding the Tuareg, established in the Kidal region (north of Mali), DUMONT, G.F. (2010) points that “they nomadize and hardly accept the obligations that want to impose Mandinka populations. As a result, the Tuareg question periodically erupts during rebellions”.

The region of Mopti in Central Mali is a good example of the impact inter-ethnic conflicts on Sahelian populations. From April 1 to May 31,

¹³ More than 2,000 people were annually killed between 2011-2016 in Nigeria during clashes between herders and farmers, according to TALL, O. (2018).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See, on this point, the reflections developed by HIYA MAIDAWA, M., ANDRES (L.) et al (2016).

2018, inter-ethnic conflicts have led to the internal displacements of nearly 9,000 people (out of a total of 61,400 displaced in Mali). As an analyst reported “those deadly conflicts weaken the social fabric while a worrying agro-pastoral and nutritional crisis thrives on the bed of insecurity and agro-climatic conditions peculiar to the Sahel”. This is the most recent description of the multidimensional crisis that has been raging since 2012 in central Mali, characterized by a demographic boom that worsens the situation of populations already weakened by tensions of various kinds. The current crisis erupted on 1 April 2012 in Massina, a predominantly Fulani ethnic province, when cities in northern and central Mali were attacked by jihadist organizations that took advantage of the weakness of the existing defense system.

In the aftermath of the French military operation that led to the defeat of jihadist organizations, this region witnessed systematic retaliations by militias of the Bambara ethnic minority against Fulani residents of the provinces of Massina and Segou. This is what led the leader of Fulani youth organizations in the Mopti region to address a serious warning to the central authorities of Bamako. In his message, he stressed that “every day, we witness the exactions, extrajudicial executions, settling of accounts and massacres of customary chiefs, elected officials and notabilities of villages and even peaceful citizens, especially from the Fulani community”.

This reality is reflected in the ever-increasing social unrest in the central region, particularly within the Bambara and Fulani ethnic groups. It is necessary to understand is that this growing tension is becoming an incubator for extremist organizations seeking to gain a foothold in this region that complains of injustice and marginalization. These claims also concern the security permanently threatened by quarrels between Fulani and Bambara inspired by a “glorious past based on a model with ethnic dimension”. According to an analyst, this assertion has to do with the theocratic Fulani state of Massina. It is about to return to a past marked by a state that had succeeded, through the elaboration of administrative procedures complying with the Sharia law, to extend its authority over important territories during the first half of the 19th century. This is the Islamic State based on the model of jihad.

Such fears about a social incubator of extremism are also justified by the existence of sympathy and even “collusion” with extremists often evoked by local sources. Due to, many people know the jihadist, who is, most often, a friend, a family member or a youth who grew up in the village. They are the propagators of *Koufa*¹⁶ speech, whose number is growing more and more. A *propaganda* that gradually injects its venom.

¹⁶ Amadou Koufa, head of the Massina Liberation Movement and senior leader of the *Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam*.

These fanatic jihadists vouch for a certain moral and social justice in this region where people feel abandoned by the Central State". These concerns about a vicious circle of violence and counter-violence seem to be justified, particularly with the recent massacre of Fulani villagers that was perpetrated by dogon hunter militias and which would most likely cause relations¹⁷.

However, the ethnic scope of this dispute between Dogon, Sonrai, Fulani and Bambara goes beyond this stage to encompass the secular historical rivalries between the two largest components of the Tuareg community, the Imghatt and the Ifogha, who are constantly fueling the crisis in northern Mali. The divergences between these two major components constitute today, a real obstacle to any desire to restore peace in the region.

1.2. Leadership crisis and state weakness

It is important to understand political leadership and security crisis as the institutional weakness of the State, in particular, what regards to its regulation functions (territory control, maintenance of the military and security forces, protection of goods and people, and law enforcement). The Sahel countries seem to be confronted today, all things being equal, to a new time of leadership crisis, inherent to the political transition vicissitudes, in particular, the reform of security sector. The question of the leadership crisis will thus be examined in relation to its impact on the good security governance and according to the implementation of security sector reform (SSR).

1.2.1. *The leadership crisis and its impact on an adequate surveillance governance*

When talking about insecurity in the Sahel, terrorism, organized crime, light weapons' trafficking and massive migrant flows immediately come to mind. These should certainly not be minimized, but it is convenient to remember that insecurity in the Sahel is also tied to the political and security leadership crisis, born in the wake of the constitution of the post-colonial state. This old factor, still an issue, represents a barrier to the reliability and effectiveness of security governance. Three phenomena illustrate this point: the context of political transition, the endogenization of terrorism and the normality of the grey economy. The situation certainly varies from country to country, but the connectivity of the region increases the complexity of these three realities.

¹⁷ See, BABA, A. (2019). « Massacre de plus de 130 civils peuls à Ogossagou : le Mali sous le choc ». Jeune Afrique, March 26.

A political transition context full of uncertainties

Beyond the political game that has taken shape in the region, the challenge of the transition is the redefinition of the relationship between the three pillars of political identity: the civil and military powers and multiethnicity. However, this issue has been badly negotiated in the Malian case, for example, because of the inability of Malians to build a political system based on alternation and the integration of the different ethnic components of the country. The *status quo* has led to the gradual disintegration of the state powers, which is reflected in a very weak presence of security forces in the north of the country and in the intensity of Tuareg nationalism¹⁸.

Endogenization of terrorism in the Sahel

Terrorism, just like the radicalism in the Sahel, has moved from a logic of intrusion to a logic of local reproduction. Indeed, until the late 1990s, the Sahel was spared from any terrorist contagion. But over the years, the anchoring in the Sahelian band of some elements of the GIA (The Armed Islamic Group) then GSPC (The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat) as well as the AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) made them strong essentially in Mali. Meanwhile, the countries in the region remained indifferent to this intrusion, certainly by impotence and indecision. However, the Malian crisis would completely change the rules of the game, since the junction of multiple factors will promote the emergence of a Sahelian terrorist radicalism capable of reorganizing and projecting itself. The Group for the support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM), the main jihadist alliance of the Sahel¹⁹, is a product of the development process of radical terrorism in the Sahel.

The normality of the grey economy

The development of the grey economy, based on predatory, illegal and even criminal activities, has opened a breach in the security and economic system of the countries. This is the case, for example, of the smuggling and illicit trafficking of migrants, drugs and firearms. Despite of the efforts made by the states in the framework of international partnerships, the transnational organized crime continues to expand thanks to porous borders and the weakness of state institutions. In this context, the mobility of these infra-state actors and their deployment redefine the balance of power with the risk for the States that these networks turn into political actors, or at least, into providers of the present political forces. Moreover, it is not so much the vastness of the territory on which these networks

¹⁸ EL HOUDAIGUI, R. (2016).

¹⁹ The group is born on March 1, 2017 from the alliance between *Ansar Dine*, elements of AQIM in the Sahel, the *Katiba Macina* and the *Katiba al-Mourabitoune*.

expand that prevented their neutralization, as is their rooting in an environment conducive to illicit trafficking and the absence of hostility of a large part of the population towards them²⁰.

1.2.2. *The leadership crisis as an obstacle to security sector reform*

Security sector reform²¹ (SSR) is an important component of a broader process of democratization and reform. It is not just about reforming the army, police or justice separately, but about reforming the whole security sector and subjecting it to democratic control. In Africa, SSR approach was implemented during the 1990s. However, it is the African Union's adoption of the general policy framework for SSR (2013), followed by the launch by ECOWAS of the Regional Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform and Governance (2014) that constituted a major and real turning point in the institutionalization of good practices²².

It is in this context, that must be regarded the efforts of the Sahel countries in the fight against security problems, in particular, through the establishment of SSR. Yet, everything happening nowadays proves SSR in this region to be much more problematic than one might think. Indeed, the primacy of the state over the social order enshrines the predominance of the executive power over the reform process, even though one of the goals of SSR is the inclusion of the legislative power and society in the dynamics of the transformation. Ultimately, when leadership is strong and authoritarian, it is guiding; but when it is weak, the whole chain of political and military command is weakened or even shaken. In the Sahel, this equation reveals unavoidable constraints to SSR:

- The first restriction has a political nature. The monopoly by the central power of security affairs only leaves a small place for the traditional leaders and for the informal resolution mechanisms. This deprives the state from very important information relays and influence. This rupture explains the worrying tensions inside the community, as in the centre of Mali (July 2018), Niger (May 2018), North-East Burkina Faso (January 2019) and Chad (April 2019).
- Another consequence of the close control exerted by the government in a poor security context, is that SSR is unable to go beyond the operational part of the reforms in order to focus on governance aspects. A detailed analysis of the SSR in the Sahel shows that

²⁰ PLAGNOL, H. and LONCLE, F. (2012).

²¹ According to the United Nations, SSR "aims at improving safety through enhancing the effectiveness and accountability of security institutions controlled by civilians and operating according to human rights and the rule of law".

²² Annual Report of the Secretary-General, UN, New York, December, 2018; available on: <https://www.un.org/annualreport/>

strengthening military and security capabilities is not worth much in the absence of good governance measures.

- The lack of strong leadership is the major factor when it comes to the failure of SSR. In Mali, for example, the internal security forces seem unable to lead the DDR program (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration). Therefore, the success of SSR depends on the DDR process. Similarly, the inability to manage reform efforts in the military environment explains the significant security challenges faced by the security and defense forces in Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso borders.

1.3. Identities, religion, uprootedness and ideological proselytism

The Sahel is a land of multiple crises in which numerous drivers have created the conditions for the growth of new threats in the “5+5 space”. “5+5” countries are facing significant challenges from the Sahel countries, many of them linked to a nexus with the security dimension, the flow of migrants and violent extremist threats²³.

The development of a religious radical scene in the Sahel has been strongly shaped by a volatile local and regional context. Exploiting the permeability of the region’s borders, terror, radical and criminal groups filled the political vacuums, taking advantage of the deep resentment of local social groups and ethnicities (such as the Tuareg, Arab tribes, Moors, Peul, Songhai and Fulani communities in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso) towards central authorities²⁴.

These, terror, radical and criminal groups presented themselves as defenders of the local communities against alleged abuses by the central State. In order to reinforce the local communities’ confidence in them, some Jihadist-Salafist leaders have entered marriages and kinship affiliations, gaining trust and influence in local dynamics. The fragmentation of local and central political authorities has enabled armed militias to undermine local governments and seize power, thus gaining a significant territorial presence²⁵.

Moreover, terrorist groups took advantage of the inability of central governments to provide basic services and protection to local communities and to de-escalate local tensions and conflicts over access to natural resources, fueling resentment of local communities towards the central state and increasing recruitment among them²⁶.

²³ DENTICE, G. (2018).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

After the fall of Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, several armed groups emerged in the crisis scenario of the Sahara-Sahel region. Many of them proliferated in southern Algeria, eastern Mauritania, northern Mali, southwestern Niger and, in recent years, in the northern regions of Burkina Faso. These groups are showing a “gradual resurgence and the realignment of Jihadist armed groups that have extended their operational range further south – across northwest African borders, where they interfere in and interact with already existing conflicts – and increased the challenges for regional stability”. A multitude of actors operate in this complex and fragmented landscape, among which the Jihadist-Salafist groups continue to possess the lion’s share, most of them located in southern Algeria, northern Mali and southwestern Niger²⁷.

1.3.1. *Why is it important to know identities, religion, uprootedness and ideological proselytism in order to analyze the factors that contribute to terrorism in the Sahel countries?*

The term “social system” is a large classification and the elements that compose it can include family, cultural groups, religious organizations, ethnic organizations, and states, among others. The social system is a complex unity formed of many often diverse components subject to a common plan or serving a common purpose²⁸.

A society is a system of sub-systems and social changes are driven by internal dynamics of the parts (not excluding external influences) and by the coupling together of the parts into the whole; social actions are seen as consequence of the dynamic tendencies of each sub-system and of the interaction of the sub-systems.

A social system is a bounded set of interrelated activities that together constitute a single entity; it is based on individuals or groups of persons who interact and mutually influence each other’s behavior. These groups and organizations within the social system can be identified as “sub-systems” of the social system. If a part of a system is itself a system then that component is classified as the sub-system of the larger one. Thus, any organization or group can be classified as a sub-system of the society. Society contains various types of sub-systems because the society at large expects and gains some advantages from the existence of such sub-systems²⁹.

According to Talcott parsons, there are four primary constituents that are part of the more general system of social dynamics:

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ PARSONS, T. (1971).

1. Social systems,
2. Cultural systems,
3. Personality systems,
4. Behavioral organisms.

All four are abstractly defined relative to the concrete behavior of social interaction.³⁰

Sub-systems are social units created and maintained by the society in order to help the society itself accomplish tasks that are impossible to achieve if there are no such sub-systems:

- Provision of means to achieve common needs: sub-systems provide means to achieve group's various types of needs ranging from basic to advanced (Example: job opportunities, security and safety, collective support).
- Sub-Systems preserve knowledge, traditional norms, rules, and justice: most of the common rules are respected, applied and transmitted to new generations by the sub-systems.
- Sub-Systems make the entire society: conventionally, especially in sociology, it is believed that society is a collection of individuals and their families; in specific cultural groups, individuals are a subordinated part of the group (sub-system), which is located in a predominant position (individual needs are less important than group needs).³¹

Finally, because any society is a collection of various types of sub-systems, it is fundamental be aware of internal *equilibria* and external dynamics in order to interact and communicate with its elements. In brief, subsystems are the subject national governments need to communicate and cooperate with³².

1.4. Lack of economic development

In the Sahel region, the problems linked to economic underdevelopment, political and security instability and weak state resilience remain considerable. Thus, countries in the region are among the poorest and most fragile in terms of human development. Despite an economic growth of 4.9% in 2017 and 2018³³, the region as a whole faced a considerable number of challenges³⁴.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ BERTOLOTTI, C. (2014, p.62).

³² Ibid.

³³ Data retrieved from IMF (2019).

³⁴ The AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP (2019) concludes that in order to avoid serious social tensions, the economic growth of Africa's GDP should be 6%, maintained during two and a half decades.

Employment and labour market are a major challenge for the region, due to the long-lasting imbalance between the number of young people seeking employment and the absorptive capacity of national economies³⁵. Especially, since the public sector, the main provider of employment is no longer able to absorb the annual quota of young graduates. Another consequence of the population explosion is the trend towards uncontrolled urbanization. The flow of migrants from the countryside to the cities leads to the establishment in the big cities of reservoirs of labour that are scarcely used. It is important to note that the employment in the Sahel region is dominated by the informal sector³⁶. That means a poor working conditions and instability. They could be also a powerful argument for migration.

Another kind of the informal economy is dominated by the smuggling of foodstuffs, the trafficking of cigarettes, vehicles, archaeological items and narcotics, including cocaine from Latin America, through its penetration by West Africa. The zones of lawlessness within the Sahelian region are multiplying, being known as an actual hub for the illegal circulation of small arms. The desert vastness prevents any claim of territorial control and does not allow local governments to exercise their sovereign functions. Jihadist groups do not miss then the chance to exploit such a situation, granting protection to local mafia networks in exchange for financial rewards, which they use to finance their terrorist activities³⁷. This grey economy drains resources for investment and economic development and hinder legal economic activities like farming, herding and trade. Its links with terrorism are covered in section 1.2.1 of this report.

Table 2. G5 Sahel countries economic data

Country	Mauritania	Mali	Burkina Faso	Chad	Niger
GDP* per capita (USD, PPP)	3,950	2,214	1,862	1,941	1,017
Population living under the poverty line**	6%	49.7%	43.7%	38.4%	44.5%
Real GDP Growth (2017)	3.5%	5.3%	6.7%	-3%	4.9%
Real GDP Growth Prospects (2020)	5.8%	4.9%	6%	3.4%	6%
Share of agriculture in GDP	23.1%	38.3%	28.7%	49.1%	39.7%
HDI 2018***	159	182	183	186	189

Source: UNESCO (2017). Global Economic Prospects (2019). (*) Gross Domestic Product. (**) \$1.90 a day, 2006-2016. (***) Human Development Index of 189 countries.

³⁵ According to the World Bank the unemployment rates in the G5 Sahel are not amongst the highest in sub-Saharan Africa which exceeds 15%. Unemployment is higher for youth and women in all five Sahel countries according to QUAK, E.J. (2018).

³⁶ QUAK, E.J. (2018) mentions that in Burkina Faso only 10% of the estimated total employment in 2015 was formal, of which 22.6% is Public (IMF, 2018). In Niger 80% of the mining workforce works in the informal sector (US Department of State, 2013).

³⁷ Cf., on this point, the analysis developed by GAYE, S.B. (2018).

Table 2 shows some macroeconomic data for G5 Sahel countries in which is possible to appreciate that with the exception of Mauritania, the rest of the countries rank in the lowest positions of the Human Development Index. Another striking result is the percentage of people living under the poverty line, that is to say, with less than USD 1.9 a day in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. The GDP per capita is especially low in Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad but the gap, between the whole group and the world average GDP per capita, which was in 2017 of USD 17,300 (PPP), is enormous.

The demographic trends and the social features of the Sahel that have been explained in section 1.1 together with the unrelenting effects of climate change, further complicates the economic situation in this region. Even more so, where it is considered that most of the population is dependent on rain-fed agriculture and transhumant livestock farming. Agriculture in the Sahel is a major contributor to the GDP (see Table 2) and employs a majority of the region's work force (see Table 1). Unfortunately, according to ESSOUNGO, A.M (2013) "agriculture remains highly underdeveloped and is characterized by an almost total dependency on three to four months of rainfall per year, as well as by low use of external inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, the absence of mechanization and poor links to markets".

The irregular rainfalls, as well as the reduction of rainy seasons and the advance of the desert, especially in Mali and Niger, lead to the reduction of exploitable land, the unpredictable evolution of water resources, the scarcity of grazing land and the aggravation of poverty. The United Nations estimates that about 80% of the farming lands in the Sahel is degraded. This is not without consequences in all the food security dimensions (food availability, food accessibility, food utilization, food system stability). According to the ICRC (2019), 33 million people are food unstable in the Sahel. The Lake Chad whose size has decreased by 90% in 50 years impacting agricultural, pastoral and fishery resources is an example of the evil consequences of combining climate change and demographic explosion. In the absence of immediate action, the climate warming is exacerbating the poverty, further weakening the public services and reducing the economic resilience of some countries.

Agriculture is focus on food production and cotton is the main product for the non-food agriculture production (Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad) being export its main destination. Regarding the secondary sector, it is underdeveloped in the region. Manufacturing related to agro-food sector is the most important source of industry employment (50%). Finally, the extractive industry has experienced and important growth in some countries³⁸. Although it is a profitable activity, it does not employ many workers.

³⁸ According to QUAK, E.J. (2018), Chad mainly produces oil, Mauritania iron, Niger uranium, and Burkina Faso and Mali gold.

In the light of the above, the economic characteristics of the Sahel countries result in four major weaknesses:

1. The relative economic growth derived from the export of raw materials does not always benefit the majority of the populations and regions.
2. The agricultural sector, which is the main source of livelihood, faces its own productivity limits linked to land pressures resulting from rapid population growth, volatile food prices and climate hazards.
3. The industry has so far no place in the Sahelian economies. Malian industry, the most developed in the region, contributes only modestly to the growth.
4. The lack of social and economic infrastructures and the issue of accessing knowledge are holding back these countries' take-off.

Thus, in a context of structural insufficiency of national savings and the very low appeal for foreign direct investment, the upward trend in the demand for food and other basic social needs does not go without burden on fiscal balances, highly dependent on official development assistance. However, the international development aid for the Sahel does not seem to provide lasting solutions to the structural problems of the region. The punctual and first aid nature of the approaches adopted for decades, as well as the lack of coordination between the various international actors, explain the practical inefficiency of the aid policy. Moreover, the irresponsibility generated by the official development assistance' funds has indirectly created a situation of dependence that prevents the national and local ownership of the development process.

On the other hand, the fight against terrorism and insecurity is costly to the economies of the Sahel countries. In fact, the share of military spending on total public spending has increased overall since 2011 according to IMF (2019). If the military expenses in Chad had been stable, they would be 13.83% of the national budget. Other Sahelian countries have revised up their security spending to reach by 2018: Mali (22% of the national budget), Niger and Burkina Faso (15%). The macroeconomic and fiscal costs of security, in a volatile economic and security environment, will certainly continue to weigh on the ability of the authorities to achieve their sustainable development goals. These countries face the dilemma of the security-related obligations and the economic priorities needed to boost long-term growth. The pooling of efforts, actions and financial resources within the G5 Sahel framework could reduce the burden of security expenses in the members' national budgets.

In short, economic factors affect daily people's lives and promote the conditions for massive migration flows towards new economic opportunities to build a better life. This situation is causing security stress in the Sahel, North Africa and Europe. As a result, the already critical level of

poverty experienced by some countries in the region is likely to further worsen and bolster the feelings of frustration that poor populations will try to appease, for better or worse, either through the growth of flows of candidates for illegal emigration, or by their engagement in the activities of the informal economy.

1.5. External factors explaining terrorism in the Sahel region

Is terrorism in the Sahel driven primarily by internal or external factors? The importance of external factors is a matter of some controversy in the analysis of terrorism. There are those that deny any significant role for external factors in explaining terrorism claiming that all terrorism is local, that as MATFESS, H. (2019)³⁹. While it is important, of course, not to ignore local and national factors, to claim *a priori* external factors are always irrelevant in any one region of the globe is non-sense.

It is very clearly nonsensical when dealing with a transnational wave of *takfiri*⁴⁰ jihadi terrorist groups active across the Sahel region and beyond. These terrorist networks present in the Sahel often publicly declare their affiliation to ISIS or Al-Qaida thus both promoting theses global brands and using them as a recruitment tool. Also even more significantly, they have moved and conducted terrorist attacks, namely against Western targets, across State borders in the entire Sahel and beyond into North Africa and West Africa.

Before we go back to an attempt to consider how salient are external factors, and how best to try to counter them, it is important to enumerate them and briefly elaborate how they have impacted the phenomenon of terrorism in the Sahel. The most obvious and immediate external factor triggering this recent major wave of *takfiri jihadi* terrorism in the Sahel was the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, after an internal uprising led to a foreign intervention in 2011. That led to both a move back south of Tuareg militias that had previously fled Mali, and major inflows of modern weapons into the Sahel. This was a major factor in triggering the crisis that almost led to Mali take over by jihadists in 2011 and transformed the country into the epicentre of jihadist networks in the region. Of course, this was the case also because there have been recurrent structural internal problems regarding the full integration of the Tuareg communities in a number of states in the region, as well as an asymmetry of public investment and economic development disadvantaging northern Sahelian regions in relation to southern areas in countries like Mali.

³⁹ See also, GBERIE, L. (2016).

⁴⁰ The *takfir* doctrine promulgates the reduction of a Muslim by another Muslim to the unfaithful category, or worse, an apostate, a traitor to his religion and therefore resigned to capital punishment. The terrorist network Al Qaeda has used this doctrine to justify the killings of Muslims since its inception (Pérez Ventura, O. (2013).

Another major external factor is regional contagion. Threat in one country in the Sahel region spilling over to some of its neighbours triggering a *domino* effect, because of: long porous borders; overlapping ethnic groups across borders of recent design by colonial powers with little or no connection to realities on the ground; weak states with great difficulty effectively governing vast territories. This is particularly important in explaining the spread of the *takfiri jihadi* terrorist threat from Mali, to Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, etc.

Then there are a number of more diffuse external factors, some of them linked with topics discussed in other sections of this report. It is important to note, that these factors act less as a trigger but more cumulatively over time, helping to create or heighten structural conditions that facilitate recruitment by radicalized groups advocating or practicing violence against others seen as infidels or apostates (which most mainstream Muslims are to *takfiri* networks). Among these more diffuse or structural external factors with a more indirect impact in promoting *takfiri jihadi* terrorism three deserve to be highlighted.

- First, illegal transnational trafficking usually based on turning very old trading routes across the Sahara to extremely lucrative criminal trade networks in drugs, arms and migrants. This can be seen as a Sahelian instance of the darker side of globalization. While there is an externally driven strong demand for weapons, migrants and drugs (not least from Europe), this Sahelian corridor, between Latin America, across the Atlantic to West Africa and North Africa, will continue to be vulnerable to a very large illegal economic activity. In particular, given the absence of equally attractive legal economic alternatives this makes these transnational economic networks both a major source of revenue to terrorist networks and a major disincentive for locals involved in these illegal activities to cooperate with national authorities in fighting terrorist networks.
- Second, the impact of global climate change, primarily due to decisions made in the more developed parts of the world since the beginning of the Industrial Age. This is a global challenge, but especially acute for the Sahel region, a region that is literally defined by being the borderland between the biggest desert on Earth and the African savannah and is precariously governed by some of the poorest states in the world. Growing desertification and resource scarceness in rural regions are major drivers of economic and social stresses, grievances⁴¹, and therefore help create conditions that facilitate recruitment by radical violent networks of terrorists.
- Third, there is the crucial role of the external financing of fast expanding radical fundamentalist, Wahhabi or Salafi religious schools.

⁴¹ This issue is covered in section 1.4.

This has been a problem across the Muslim world and beyond, driven by the enormous resources of the oil rich Gulf countries (section 1.5.1 analyses in deep this topic).

All of these factors, in sum make violent radicalization more likely by making the cost-benefit analysis on whether or not to engage in terrorist networks more attractive.

1.5.1. Salafist proselytism, a proven catalyst for violent radicalism

Through a rhetoric that takes most of its foundations from the Muslim religion, *Salafist Islamism* carries the seeds of discord (the *fitna*) by applying a logic of confrontation not only against other religions followers, but also against large sections of Muslim societies criticized for their weak Islamization. From this perspective, it is not wrong to say that *Wahhabism* represents the most incisive carrier of Salafist proselytism, because it benefits from the logistical support of the Gulf monarchies.

Wahhabism, a devious incubator of Salafist proselytism in the Sahel

Wahhabism derives from the Hanbali spiritual school whose founder, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855) followed later by Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), is characterized by its fundamentalism, that is to say its attachment to the original Islam (*salafiyya*), embodied by the *Sunnah* (tradition) of the Prophet Muhammad and the actions of his companions. The original Wahhabism advocates the strict application of the sharia as a source of legislation and the jihad as a means of protecting Islam from the misinterpretations induced by the practices of Sufism. This strict view is also as a tool in the fight against the forces that aim at its confinement, acting as the spearhead for the struggle against Christians and Jews, the denunciation of Shiism and the worship of saints⁴².

In sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in the Sahel, the influence of Wahhabism comes as the result of what analysts call the religious diplomacy of certain Gulf monarchies⁴³. These theocracies actually rely on the precept of *da'wa wal irchad* (preaching and benevolence). They sponsor Wahhabi Islam by acting on two fronts: financing mosques and training imams. By placing the promotion of Wahhabi Islam at the heart of their foreign policy, these monarchies invest colossal amounts in the construction, renovation and operation of a multitude of African mosques, as the ones in Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan and Chad.

Specifically, the training of sub-Saharan imams according to the canons of Wahhabism, would pressure them to reduce the traditional Afri-

⁴² DELCAMBRE, A.M. (2010). Cf. also, BENZINE, R. (2008).

⁴³ AMMOUR, L.A. (2018).

can Islam (the Sufism of the *Tijaniyya* and *Qadiriyya* brotherhoods) to a by-product of the *djahiliyya* (pre-Islamic period assimilated to the reign of ignorance). The mobilization and movement of “Islamic fighters” to Afghanistan and Bosnia Herzegovina, respectively in the early 1980s and 1990s, would furthermore complete the shaping of what some people call the Salafist Internationale. This is a nebula of followers of many nationalities that Osama Bin Laden’s Al Qaeda unified first, and, more recently, are under the Jihadist organizations that have flourished in the Arab world and in the Sahel-Saharan region.

These Salafist organizations, strongly influenced by the Wahhabi dogma, would then undertake a plan of Islamic cleansing, by attacking local governing elites, accusing them of non-believing and being subject to the West, but also by devastating the ancestral vestiges of regions fallen under their *diktat*⁴⁴.

The Salafist Islam’s weight in the Sahel

The influence of the Salafist movement in the Sahel not only has manifested itself in the education sector, where the number of Koranic schools and madrassas has grown remarkably since the 1990s. It has also reached the associations, where many religious and para-religious organizations challenge the monopoly of the charitable works of the states. The Salafism also affects the socio-political field, like in Mali, where the pressures suffered by the authorities allowed the High Islamic Council of Mali (HCIM) led by Salafist Imam Mahmoud Dicko, to obtain the revision of the Family Code and the removal of its progressive resolutions, judged to be contrary to the Islamic foundations.

However, beyond the ideological competition in which the Salafist Islamic movement engages to conquer public spaces in the Sahel, in particular through sermons in the mosques, local actions within the framework of the associative movements, or through extremist speeches relayed by the written and audiovisual media. Salafist activism in the Sahel also manifests itself by a succession of violent clashes that Salafists execute against Sufi brotherhoods, such as those repeatedly reported between *Izalists* and supporters of the *Tijaniyya* brotherhood in Niger.

Moreover, Salafism’s signature was broadly displayed when the *Ansar Dine* jihadists linked to *Al-Qaeda* and led by *Iyad Ag Ghali* broke into Timbuktu in 2012 and sought to impose their model of society through the

⁴⁴ Demolition of tombs and historical monuments is a characteristic of the “purifying” work of the followers of Wahhabism. Some examples of this are the destruction of mosques and the evisceration of the tombs of the Saints of Islam in the Arabian peninsula (1803); the annihilation of Bamiyan Buddhas by the Afghan Taliban (2001); the demolition of Libyan Sufi shrines after the fall of Gaddafi; the attacks of Daesh against the ancient sites of Iraq; and the archaeological site of Palmyra in Syria (2015).

demolition of drinking establishments, the prohibition of cigarettes, music, cinema and the destruction of all the traditional statuettes considered “heretical”. Furthermore, their radicalism found its clearest expression in the terrorists’ relentlessness in the ravaging of the religious and cultural remains of the region, such as mausoleums and mosques regarded as symbols of “deviant practices”, contrary to the precepts of the Salafist Islam⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ The revelations made by Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, convicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for his war crimes, having led and executed the operation of destruction of ten monuments in Timbuktu in June and July 2012, confirm the link established between the *Wahhabi* doctrine and jihadism in the Sahel.

2. CULTURAL APPROACH TO SUPPORT RESILIENCE TO TERRORISM IN THE SAHEL REGION

The weakening and even in some cases the disintegration of the local traditional identity along with the national political identity in the Sahel countries is fuelling a sense of uprooting among the populations in the context of an unrelenting crisis in the relationship between states and societies. This should be considered as a powerful factor in the rise of violent extremism in the Sahel-Saharan region.

Many territories in this region are experiencing a breakdown of their economy and the traditional models of social organization, resulting in a deep political and cultural crisis in the Sahel-Saharan societies. The state and territorial crisis leads then to ethnic-political tensions between the public institutions, often regarded as deficient or discriminating, and the local communities, in need of identity, cultural and historical models, undergoing new standards of solidarity movements, all which can encourage the legitimization of jihadist violence.

From this observation, it would appear that apart from the security, military and strategic aspects of the fight against extremism and terrorism, the *soft power* dimension that takes into account the human factor is essential to better understand and fight these phenomena. In particular, the concept of “resilience” of the local populations in the support of the fight against terrorism would seem fundamental. This means that cultural (or socio-cultural) issues are therefore of central importance and imply multiple actions towards the civil societies of the Sahel countries concerned.

- The issue of education: it raises the problem of education policies, if they exist, in nation-states, which are recent and fragile constructions with poorly defined identity edges. It also exposes the risk caused by the existence of a dual education system, threatening national cohesion, which could partly elude supervision altogether and could actually end up encouraging extremism.
- The issue of religion, complementary with the previous one, is also very sensitive. Educational systems must not become branches of extremism, hence the need to rely on traditional religious agents and at the same time encourage the rising of new leaders and mo-

dels. It also involves the use of public speeches and media to promote non-extremist forms of religiosity.

- The role of “civil society” and the need for its mobilization. It is important to specify what this concept encompasses, and in some cases to take it with caution depending on the geographical area concerned. Civil society is a counterbalance to extremism, on the basis that the fight against this latter and against terrorism must be endorsed and accepted by citizens, not the other way around. The associative world, still scarcely mobilized, must be the intermediary between the people and the State. It is also necessary to value the traditions, the local and national culture, the conviviality, and to rely on already existing local dynamics and initiatives: the family, the cultural and artistic associations, but also more especially the women, priority targets of religious extremism.

2.1. Education: a crucial factor to support resilience in the Sahel

Education sector in Sahel is currently under a precarious situation as shows Table 3. According to UNESCO (2017), the lowest literacy rates in the world are observed in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan African countries. In the case of the Sahel, the high rate of illiteracy among young people is particularly worrying, because it prevents them from accessing the labour market as well as reaching an adequate standard of living. In this regard, Niger with 51.9% of people aged between 15 and 24 that are in neither the education system nor formal employment structures provides a clear example.

Table 3: G5 Sahel countries educational data

Country	Mauritania	Mali	Burkina Faso	Chad	Niger
Literacy rate*	56%	33%	38%	22%	19%
% Illiterate young population*	56%	67%	62.3%	67%	80%
Mean years of schooling (female)**	8.5	6.8	8.3	6.4	4.7
Mean years of schooling (male)**	8.6	8.6	8.8	9.5	6.0

Source: UNESCO (2017) (*) Data refer to 2015. (**) UNDP 2018.

Youth literacy rates remain low in Sahel countries, which suggest problems with low access to schooling, early school leaving or a poor quality of education. In addition, 55.4% of rural populations are outside the education system¹. On the other hand, UNESCO (2014) estimates that the rate of literacy of young girls in Sahel states will be over 97% between the

¹ See GHANEM-YAZBECK (ed.) et al. (2018).

years 2078 and 2130². According to the KANE E. (2004), gender inequality in education is one of the reasons for poor economic growth.

According to the Minister of Primary Education and Literacy of Niger, Daouda Mamadou Marthé³, the educational sector in the Sahel remains largely hampered by the high rate of population growth, poor educational management and customs and traditions. In his view access to education and completion of studies is even more difficult for girls in rural areas, children in nomadic areas and children with disabilities.

If the state of Education is very poor in the Sahel, its situation is getting worse due to violence and insecurity. In this regard, Marthé highlights that insecurity has resulted in the closure of about 2,000 schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, double the number of schools forced to close or shut down since 2017. The Minister estimates that more than 400,000 children in those three countries and 10,050 teachers were affected.

2.2.1. Relation between Education and Terrorism

Schools can contribute to the attraction of young people by violent extremist groups when they do not achieve their promise to include children in society and provide them with a sense of belonging to a learning community.

Education cannot prevent an individual from committing a violent act in the name of a violent extremist ideology, but giving a good quality education can help to create the conditions that make it difficult for violent extremist ideologies and acts to proliferate⁴. More specifically, education policies can ensure that places of learning do not become a breeding ground for violent extremism. They can also ensure that educational contents and teaching/ learning approaches develop learners' resilience to violent extremism. As DE SILVA, S. (2017) notes there is a consensus that education is one of the most important tools to reach young people and therefore can be used to address some of the driven factors that push them towards violent extremism.

Therefore, the role of education is not to intercept violent extremists or identify individuals who may become violent extremists, but to create the conditions that build the resilience of individuals against violent extremism and strengthen their commitment to peace.

In countries where non-state actors are key providers of education, the promotion of inclusion and respect for diversity through the curriculum

2 Ibid.

3 MARTHÉ, D.M. (2019). «Pour un plan d'urgence pour l'éducation au Sahel». Jeune Afrique, July 10. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/801363/politique/tribune-pour-un-plan-durgence-pour-leducation-au-sahel/>

4 UNESCO (2016).

and pedagogic practices is a hard mission, notably in the case of non-state regulated schools that run parallel to the state system. Unregulated schools can channel children into a separate value system, which may not promote civic values and may prevent learners from developing a broad perspective on the world and the society to which they belong.

2.1.2. How education can contribute to the resilience to terrorism in Sahel

In order to minimize the number of individuals that could be attracted by violent extremism, the governments in Sahel countries should strengthen the role of education in their countries. Religious schools (madrassas) are a prevalent cultural tradition across most Sahel countries where Islam is the dominant religion. According to LYAMMOURI, R. (2016) “two-thirds of 6-18 year olds, mainly Muslim males, are likely to leave home to attend one of these mostly independently run institutions”.

However, with little government or community oversight, there are concerns that students are at risk of radicalization by these schools. Some families send their children to these religious schools because they want them to get a religious education. Yet others enroll their children because they lack the resources to raise them. LYAMMOURI notes that traditionally the religious teachers in the Sahelian *madrassas*, called *marabouts*, run their schools independently with their own funds⁵. They play an important role in children education as well as within their communities, where they are well-respected. Lack of governmental supervision is a potential danger especially for preventing external funding of extremism.

In this context, Sahelian countries should undertake the following actions:

- Sahel countries should invest in education, in particular early childhood education between the ages of 3 and 8 to ensure that all children have access to inclusive, high quality education. This education should take into account the social and cultural diversity in those countries.
- Implementation of education policies that promote citizenship, soft skills, critical thinking methods and the use of digital technologies. In the same way, teaching media and information literacy is not just an option but also a responsibility in order to ward off violent extremist messaging that is increasingly uses sophisticated mechanisms of persuasion.
- Provide comprehensive primary through university education, including technical and vocational education, and mentoring for vulnerable people, including the displaced, by leveraging online and mobile technology.

⁵ Ibid.

- Invite the “former” violent extremists into schools to tell their personal stories about how they joined and left violent extremist groups and to warn of the dangers and disappointments in joining such groups. Those people can be credible and very effective resources in preventive education and disengagement, rehabilitation and re-integration activities.
- Schools should provide learners with accurate and relevant knowledge and with skills that encourage and facilitate intercultural dialogue. This includes teaching about cultural diversity within learners’ societies and giving facts about different religions and non-religious worldviews.
- Governments in Sahel countries should control and oversight the religious schools and their finance and close schools that teach extremist values of religion and encourage individuals to join the violent extremist groups. On the other hand, teaching the tolerant values of Islam should be included in the official education programs.

2.2. Religion in the strategy to support the Sahel countries to fight terrorism

Terrorism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, its containment cannot be limited only to *security* regulation, despite the success of ad hoc *military reduction* operations of terrorist groups, but commands a broader struggle with *all the factors* acting on its *rooting* and *development*, that is to say on the profound causes that fuel and ensure the *regeneration* of terrorism.

From this point of view, the religious dimension constitutes one of the most decisive battlegrounds of the fight against terrorism in the Sahel alongside with education and culture. Furthermore, it is a supplement to support the fight against the social impoverishment and political marginalization of large sections of the Sahel-Saharan community.

In fact, because it feeds on the fundamentalism of jihadist Salafism, terrorism appears in the Sahel as the expression of generally *religion-radicalized* groups, of which *Wahhabism* constitutes the ideological base not only in the Sahel-Saharan band, but also in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

Being a real catalyst for violent radicalism (see 1.5.1 section), the fight against *Salafist proselytism* therefore requires the support of regional and international partners of the Sahel-Saharan countries.

Consequently, the fight against terrorism needs to consider all measures aimed to undermine the foundations of its legitimizing, one of the most important doubtlessly being, in the Sahel-Saharan context, the speech of stigmatization of the local religious practices and the incitement to intolerance.

2.2.1. The record of adapted responses against the speech of stigmatization and incitement to intolerance

Violent radicalism is not a creation *ex nihilo*, that is to say, is not a phenomenon whose emergence and development take place independently of the favourable “objective conditions” for its establishment and deployment. Consequently, any effort for its eradication needs to attack both the structural weaknesses that reinforce its foundation and the arsenal of *propaganda* that secures its validation and at the same time the upkeep of its recruitment ground.

Since the socio-economic aspects are covered in section 1.4 of this report, the following analysis will be limited to the identification of the cultural and religious climate that has lodged the terrorism approach until now. Thus, it will focus on the definition of the strategic actions to contain violent radicalism *related to religion*, which are namely two: to restrain the spreading range of Salafist extremism; and to promote the real African traditional religious models.

Putting a limit to Salafist proselytism dissemination spaces

The promotion of “living together” cannot be reconciled with the extremist drifts that feed the strands of opinion, themselves influenced by *Wahhabism* and at the root of *Salafist proselytism*, which today constitutes a real threat to the security of the Sahel-Saharan countries. In fact, notwithstanding the widely acknowledged involvement of the *armada* of NGOs and Islamic “charity” associations in the financing of terrorism⁶, instability in the Sahel is fuelled, in particular, by the groundswell created by *Salafist proselytism*, which many analysts consider to be the new substitute for the global ideologies that have marked the cold war era.

Hence, whether it affects education, “humanitarian organizations” activities, the information and communication sectors or the mosques and higher institutions of Islamic education, *Salafist* Islam has gained widespread acceptance in the Sahel-Saharan space. In addition, the Salafist *propaganda* networks flood all broadcasting channels with the *Wahhabi* ideology: radio and television channels, audio-visual cassettes, literature, internet, etc., aided by the deficiencies of a state regulation completely out of step with the democratic opening initiated since the 1990s.

Consequently, the possibilities for correcting actions in this area are limited, since any pursuit to regulate the activity of the media or mosques carries the risk of being accused of attempting to undermine the rights of expression and freedom of worship. Moreover, in a context of extreme penury of the public budgets and lack of *resource substitution*, faced with the attraction of the *voluntary funding* of Koranic schools and mosques,

6 On this subject, see AMGHAR, S. (2011).

the Sahel-Saharan States cannot turn down the Gulf monarchies' assistance, which lightens the pressure on them, in the sensitive area of schooling and religious practice.

The fact remains that faced with the imperative of safeguarding social peace and protecting the rights and freedoms of the citizens, it is the duty of the states to ban the extremist discourses. Their control should include the media landscape and the places of cult preventing anathemas and other forms of exclusion, by means of an appropriate legal framework and the strengthening of the rule of law, but also and above all by a sustained support of local religious models, particularly Sufi Islam.

The promotion of local religious models

The prevention of religious radicalization, being inseparable from the dialogue of cultures and civilizations, demands the Sahelo-Saharan states to combine their efforts to act primarily in two directions. First, sanitizing the school programs in connection with religious education. Second and more broadly, affirming the role of those religious leaders whose promote the national spiritual models, in sync with local singularities and impervious to extremist ideologies.

It is first a question of revising religious education textbooks in the light of a "reference" guide approved by the League of Ulemas, Imams and Preachers of the Sahel countries⁷, which purpose is precisely to consolidate the values of citizenship and coexistence. The goal is essentially to shield the education sector from the influence of the Wahhabi extremist current.

Secondly, it is advisable to block the indoctrination operations linked to the Salafist proselytism, through the intervention of approved religious leaders known for their moderation and erudition. In this context, Sufi Islam, removed from *marabout* practices that alter its essence, can constitute the fundamental basis of communion for the Sahel-Saharan Muslim communities, with the brotherhoods of *Tijaniyya* and *Qadiriyya* which are particularly active in the sub-Saharan region.

7 The League of Ulemas, Imams and Preachers of the Sahel, with Algerian Youcef BELMEHDI as Secretary-General, was created in Algiers (2013) with the aim of fighting religious extremism in the Sahelo-Saharan region through the organization of regular reflection workshops on various themes related to Salafist proselytism and the strategies to confront it. Its president is Ahmed MURTALA (Nigeria), elected in 2017 for a three-year term, in succession to the Nigerian Daoud BOURIMA. This League includes, in addition to Algeria: Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Chad. Côte d'Ivoire, the Republic of Guinea and Senegal sit as observers under the Nouakchott Process, initiated in March 2013 by the African Union to "strengthen security cooperation and the exchange of information in the Sahelian band".

Nonetheless, beyond these facelifts, an in-depth reform of the education systems is required to make it possible to tie the Sahelo-Saharan countries to modernity. The regional and international partners of the Sahel countries should intensify their cooperation particularly, in the field of imam training, the provision of guides and the granting of funding to the institutions in charge of promoting African Islam, since it constitutes an important part of the strategy for the eradication of terrorism.

2.3. The role of civil society in the Sahel states

The role civil society can play to develop resilience to counteract the religious extremism and terrorist threat, particularly present in the Sahelian region, is of great significance. It deems necessary nevertheless to go back to the meaning of these concepts, when applied to the geo-cultural area under study.

The idea of civil society as an autonomous actor of public life was born in the Western world and can be considered as “(...) the withdrawal of the State and its bureaucratic apparatus from the economic and social spheres”⁸. On that same note, it is meant to be “(...) a constituent element of a globally democratic regime”⁹. Very popular in the definition of the relationship between state powers and citizens and seductive as it can be, this paradigm must be regarded from a certain distance, without fetishizing or idealizing it.

Broadly speaking, the space covered by civil society is not clearly defined, hence the perception of “grey areas”. Furthermore, its pertinence in the analysis of the realities outside the Western world has been often contested and even refuted. It certainly has not the same significance in Europe, the Maghreb and Sahelian Africa. In the latter, civil society does not always seem to have full autonomy from the State and there is often a mediator, which may be the community, between the individuals and the political and administrative apparatus. The duality of the structures composing the civil society in the countries of the Sahel is another parameter to take into account: along with the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), religious associations, brotherhoods and unions, it exists a more informal associative tissue imprinted with dynamics specific to the local societies.

The concept of resilience turns out to be quite complex too, even if we acknowledge a particular meaning in the current context. Resilience is in this way interpreted as the ability of a group or a community to resist a threat or destabilization (literally: to overcome an alteration of its environment) but also as its capacity to hold off extremist discourses intended to

⁸ PIROTTE, G. (2010).

⁹ Ibid.

gain support or new recruits. From then on, resilience is considered as the indispensable complement – via the commitment of the local communities to support the fight against extremism and terrorism – to counterinsurgency field operations' methods applied by the state forces.

2.3.1. *The connection required between civil society and the state apparatus*

Despite the disenchantment, mistrust or even resentment expressed by many sectors of the population, the role of the state apparatus in the Sahel countries should not be questioned in the benefit of local associations and structures separate from politics, understood as governance. This latter must be completely revised. Keeping in mind that state no longer controls part of the territories of the region under study and that the void¹⁰ thus created can encourage the jihadists to attack it, it is not a question of pulling back the state but on the contrary to bring it back¹¹. This entails the education of communities¹², the concern and commitment of public authorities towards the latter, the promotion of decentralization, etc.

Even if the Sahel states may sometimes be forced to delegate certain privileges to local actors, particularly in the periphery of their national territory, it must be ensured that local or tribal structures aiming to replace the sovereign State do not escape all control. They must be prevented from engaging in regular acts of violence against the communities, as was recently observed in Mali¹³ and Burkina Faso. The question is whether such associations can be considered as derivations of the civil society or, on the contrary, they participate, by their resemblance to militias, in the militarization of the society. Ultimately, the representatives of civil society must ensure their role in the intermediation between the state and the people they are supposed to represent, instead of functioning in a fully independent way.

2.3.2. *Developing national identity, encouraging local initiatives*

The fact that people no longer identify themselves with the state, or even with the nation, is an incentive factor that supports extremist groups.

10 The political void in the Sahel region stems from the voluntary or forced withdrawal of state authority and the dismantling of its bond with the citizens. The dismantling of the political, economic and security network on a part of the national territory, weakens the action of the State at the micro-local level.

11 Regarding the Sahelian countries, instead of State, we could rather speak of "public power", which is a generic term used to describe the means that a state provides to itself to ensure the security of its territory and its citizens, as well as the application of laws and regulations.

12 See section 2.2 of the present report.

13 The Dan Nan Ambassagou, a traditional hunters association, was created within the Dogon ethnic group as a self-defense group. It was actually responsible for the massacre of 130 people of the Peul ethnic group in March 2019.

Knowing that identity feelings and transnational communities often take precedence over the referent of the nation-state in the Sahel-Saharan space, should be privileged the sense of territorial rather than national identity, or try to reconcile both, as is the case in Mali?

In the face of this dilemma, it deems necessary to create a national narrative against the risk of collapse of the traditional rural order and the rise of identity antagonisms. Such an approach is the responsibility of the central state but must be spread with the help of associations and civil society. The main problem is that the latter are little if not badly backed (case of Niger). Moreover, in order to exist, they often cannot free themselves from the religious organizations' tutelage, with the risk of watching disappear all spaces of socialization outside the *Wahhabi-Salafist* obedience religious sphere of influence.

Hence, the need for an inclusive approach that involves all sectors of society, starting from the micro-local, and consolidates African cultural resources - including traditional cults, which are endogenous in terms of dialogue and conflict resolution-, while avoiding external grafts¹⁴.

2.3.3. The role of women

Women are a very important dynamic element in the Sahel countries, because of their role in the community life and education, and because they are the main victims of violent extremism¹⁵. The *Salafi jihadist* ideology claimed by extremist groups in the Sahel-Saharan area advocates, in a purifying logic, the antagonism and rupture with national, social, territorial, cultural and ultimately family models. Women are particularly targeted because they play a vital role in the family unit and in the education of children. The Timbuktu Institute report highlights the skills women have regarding resiliency to extremism, while emphasizing the poor credit given to this asset by government authorities¹⁶.

Among the established levers of action, particular emphasis will be placed on traditional cultural activities (singing, dancing, crafts, etc.) that can be promoted by women at the micro-local level, in an associative or non-associative framework. This is a powerful carrier of resilience against the *Wahhabi* and *Salafist* currents that advocate above all the eradication of the traditional cultural and historical heritage of the people of the Sahel.

14 See RAINIERI, L. (2018).

15 See SAMBE, B. (dir) (2017). Femmes, prevention et lutte contre l'extrémisme violent au Mali, Timbuktu Institute- African Center for Peace Studies.

16 Ibid. p.6.

3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC APPROACH TO SUPPORT RESILIENCE TO TERRORISM IN THE SAHEL REGION

According to Robert MacNamara¹, security means investment but not only in military equipment or military operations, even though they are a part of it, but especially in socio-economic development. Security is a minimum warranty of the system that cannot be accomplished without stability. The latter cannot be achieved in a context of extreme poverty and fragile states unable to provide an institutional framework in the whole country. Absence of institutional framework is a common feature among almost of the Sahel region countries, due to the complexity of Sahelian societies as illustrates Axis 1.

From the foregoing sections, it is clear that accomplishing any initiative concentrated on human security requires active public and private organizations. This way, actions could be concentrated on promoting confidence-building measures, educating people, maintaining their dignity and improving their awareness face to radicalism.

The Sahel has become a laboratory for the international organizations that try to develop new approaches to security and economic development. The deterioration of human conditions, affected by exogenous factors as climate change challenges, and the increasing violence in the region requires new socio-economic models. It is clear that Sahel countries impoverished with lack of infrastructures, technology and qualified people are not able to build a virtuous circle on their own that allow them to increase the economic and security levels.

The multiple stakeholders, regional and international, have provided huge funding to the region and they have alleviated periodic humanitarian crises, but the funds have been unable to solve structural problems linked to economic fragility and governance and provide with a lasting security. The final outcome is an increase in violence and insecurity of Sahelian populations and a proliferation of illegal activities including terrorism.

1 MACNAMARA, R. (1968). *The Essence of Security: Reflections in Office*.

In order to cope with this situation, the new international approaches contains two main elements. First, they are more focus on human related aspects (dialogue, mediation, education, confidence- building measures) and, second a further coordination between different stakeholders is achieved² to avoid duplication of activities and improve efficiency. Regarding regional stakeholders is important to note the increasing prominent role of African organizations like African Union and especially ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). The latter launched the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework in 2008 to create conditions for stability as a prerequisite to socio-economic development. This organization collaborate actively with the EU, UN and USAID as well as African partners. It is developing a new Sahel strategy (2020-25) together with other African organizations³.

3.1. Adapted economic models

In previous sections of this study, it is shown that terrorism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is growing in the shadow of extremist ideologies. It takes advantage of the governance deficits of the states, feeding on situations of insecurity and, in general, exploiting to its advantage all the socio-economic fragilities suffered by countries exposed to its influence, as is in the case in particular in the countries of the Sahel region

Youth unemployment is a major driver of terrorism. Unemployment among youth, an age group characterized by immense energy and unformed and malleable ideals, might serve to facilitate recruitment by terrorist groups. Poverty, ignorance, and unemployment can also act as catalysts for terrorism because of the hopelessness that they tend to generate. The 2006 U.N. Global Counter-terrorism Strategy and the 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism both acknowledge that poverty and youth unemployment make the spread of violent extremism easier. Without jobs, violent extremist organizations can be an attractive source of income, and countries that fail to create employment opportunities for young people witness more incidents perpetrated by these groups⁴. Besides,

2 A good example of international coordination is The Sahel Alliance, launched by France, Germany and the EU in July 2017. Then, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Denmark and Netherlands also joined the initiative.

3 West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Permanent Inter-state Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Liptako Gourma Authority (ALG) and Niger Basin Authority (NBA).

4 According to OFFEIBEA ANSAAKU, G.A. (2017), the two major groups operating in the Sahel, Boko Haram (which operates in northern Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger) and *Ansar Dine* (which is based in northern Mali), draw their strength from disaffected, unemployed, and destitute youth. For example, the median age of Boko Haram members is 30 years old.

jobless people especially youth in the border region might be attracted by smuggling groups in order to gain money, and therefore contributing in financing the terrorist groups because the exciting relation between the terrorism and the smuggling activities.

In order to reduce risk of attraction of unemployed people by the terrorist groups in the Sahel region because of the high rate of poverty and unemployment, governments should take an economic approach that aims to reduce the poverty and the employment rates in their countries. As some experts note, graduates in university do not have skills required by local companies in fields like technology or management. In this regard, school curricula should be adapted to business needs and business climate too⁵. Governments could also contribute creating jobs for the youth in the public ministries and administration.

The role of private sector will release pressure on the state on creating jobs and is vital for reducing the rate of unemployment, especially young graduated from the university, and former or potential terrorists. In this regard, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) could accelerate the transformation and inclusive development of the Sahel region as notes the UN (2018). This organization points that although FDI increased in the period 2000-2016 (from \$1.69 to \$8.64 billion) the extractive sector was the main recipient sector. For this reason, the UN recommends the FDI diversification in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and communication, which employ more people and could reinforce local business. The remittances from migrants can also be a source for financing productive activities and development programs⁶.

Moving on to other issues it is crucial to develop special projects in border areas. FERDI (2016)⁷ states that vast swaths of borderlands fall into “conflict traps”, with knock-on effects that make conflicts even more complex. This report highlights that these areas are a fragile “poverty traps”, with a lack of human capital (alarming education and health indicators), demographic and environmental pressures, and ineffective public institutions. For alleviating this situation, the governments of Sahel countries should create free trade zones in the border regions. In order to facilitate the movement of goods between the countries and reducing the smuggling activities in the region, which is a source of financing for the

5 OFFEIBEA ANSAAKU, G.A. (2017) suggests local entrepreneurship should be encouraged to hire young people through financing and tax cuts; as well as creating new institutions and legal frameworks to support ventures run by youths. She also suggest that developed countries could contribute to training African youths increasing educational scholarships and internships in companies

6 UN (2018) confirms that between 2010 and 2016 the Sahelian migrants remittances account for 65% of the global ones, reaching \$25 billion in 2015.

7 FERDI- Fondation pour les études et recherches sur le développement international.

terrorist groups. The free zones could also attract foreign investments and encourage employment.

Last, the Sahel governments should engage tribal leaders and local populations in the economic approaches by giving them the opportunity to come up with their own understanding and priorities for development, and cooperate with international organization like the United Nations, The European union, The African Union, etc. In addition, the armed forces can participate in fighting terrorism, in addition to their military role, by supporting economic projects, as it is illustrated in the coming sections.

3.1.1. *Rjim Maatoug* project

The development of the desert in the south of the country was a major concern of the Tunisian Government since the independence. The discovery in 1972, in the region of *Rjim Maatoug* (southwest Tunisia) of an important groundwater permitted the farming of date palms in order to undertake an experience of the development in the region. As a result, the Tunisian government has created in 1988 The Office for *Rjim Maatoug* Development (Office de Développement de *Rjim Maatoug*), a public establishment under the supervision of the Ministry of National Defense. The mission of this office is to manage and implement the project of *Rjim Maatoug*.

Presentation of the project

The enhancement of 2,500 ha of deserted zones through the farming of date palms in order to allocate them to local farmers (1.5 ha of date palms for each farmer) with a rural housing. The Tunisian armed forces has implemented this project by constructing more than 1,000 rural housing, three primary schools and two mosques as well as many others facilities (community center, high schools, dispensary, etc.). The total number of beneficiaries by this project is 6,000 people. The total cost of the project is 74 million TND (almost €22 million). The EU and Italy have financially contributed to the implementation of this project.

Objectives of the project: the settlement of nomad populations by the improvement of their living conditions; the fight against desertification; creating new jobs; and dates production increase.

The *Rjim Maatoug* project is a very successful example for the Tunisian armed forces in the economic and social efforts of the Tunisian governments. This example can be inspired and reproduced by the Sahel countries as a solution in fighting against terrorism in Sahel region⁸.

⁸ Further information available on the *Rjim Maatoug* Development Office, <http://www.cnct.defense.tn/index.php/fr/actualites/item/126-office-de-developpement-de-rjim-maatoug> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlpGN-LlrQU>.

3.2. Socio-economic reintegration

In spite of their importance, the security structures by themselves are not enough in the prevention and fight against violent extremism, they risk being useless if they are not accompanied by a mechanism against the socio-economic vulnerabilities of the Sahel- Saharan countries.

However, any measure to strengthen the resilience capacities of Sahelo-Saharan populations must necessarily integrate the socio-economic management of the social strata most exposed to terrorism, and this, in its triple dimension:

- By facilitating the access of rural populations to basic social services (schools, health centres, water and electricity, transport, etc.).
- By developing microcredit policies for the benefit of young people.
- By supporting the development of activity sectors able to generate permanent resources (agriculture, livestock, handicraft) as well as the SME (small and medium enterprises) and SMI (small and medium industries) activity.

3.2.1. *Facilitation the access to basic social services to the deprived populations*

Underdevelopment without being an absolute determinant of the radicalization of human societies, generates frustration, feelings of marginalization and exclusion that increase the receptivity of the deprived populations to extremist ideologies. In the Sahelian context, the social misery of large parts of societies, particularly in rural areas, is illustrated by the high level of unemployment particularly among young people, the prevalence of illiteracy among the adult population, particularly women, and in the low school enrolment rate of children and their health coverage.

The endemic underdevelopment of the countries of the region is also confirmed by the inconsistency of the road and rail infrastructures that accentuate the isolation of deprived areas, the derisory development of electrification programs outside urban areas and, above all, the embryonic state of industrialization in these countries, whose economy is still dominated by mining, livestock farming and export crops. Therefore, any desire to help strengthen the resilience capacity of the Sahelo-Saharan populations should, first of all aim to facilitate the access of the deprived populations, especially rural, to the basic social services, such as schools and health centres, drinking water supplies and electrification networks, as well as road and rail transport networks⁹.

9 Some of these needs, related to road and rail networks, may be difficult to meet, due to their extremely high costs. Nevertheless, some of them could, once completed, open up a part of these territories. This is the case of the Trans-Saharan Road that would link Algiers to Lagos with ramifications towards Tunis, Bamako, Niamey and N'Djamena through about 4,800 km.

3.2.2. *The development of microcredit policies for the benefit of young people*

Youth is the most vulnerable social category of Sahel-Saharan societies and, as such, requires the sustained attention of local governments, as well as that of their regional and international partners. Young people are the preferred target of terrorist groups as well as of rebel politico-military movements.

Sub-Saharan Africa youth suffer from being under the cross-influence of several dilemmas: become resigned to assume a social and economic reality that offers little prospects; or attempt an escape: migrating to the neighbouring countries of the Maghreb and Europe; or joining Jihadist groups or networks of organized crime.

On the basis of the foregoing, one of the ways of protecting Sahelian young people from the temptations of jihadism and organized crime would be to make available to them aid schemes for the creation of micro-enterprises; microcredit allocation; or setting up of business incubators. That is to say, support mechanisms that favour the emergence of start-ups and the development of entrepreneurship.

In this respect, one of the possible solutions would also be to provide students with training abroad and with adapted financing for their business creation projects, following their resettlement in their countries of origin.

3.2.3. *Support for the development of activity sectors able to generate permanent resources*

The grey economy is a source of income for the individuals involved. It ensures obvious social and political functions by providing a “safety valve” to government authorities who are unable to meet their people’s expectations. The informal economy and all the kinds of trafficking that feed it make up for all the shortcomings of local governance systems. However, the undeniable junction established between terrorist groups and organized crime networks poses a real threat to regional security in the Sahel, due to the fact that multiple actors are fighting over the influence and control this grey economy.

To cope with this systemic phenomenon of hybrid threat, the regional and international partners of the Sahel countries could mobilize resources towards several sectors. Three of them deserve particular consideration, namely the agricultural and livestock sector, the handicraft sector and the SME – SMI. In fact, in the absence of industrial clusters capable of propagating their structuring impact in the sub-regional environment, investment in the above-mentioned sectors could favour the start of a real dynamic of economic development and, at the very least, contribute to easing tensions and promoting political stability in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

A dangerous mix of endogenous and exogenous factors may turn the Sahel region into a fertile ground for the proliferation of extremism and radical groups. Among the endogenous factors, the rampant demography together with a complex social structure within a vast space with porous and often uncontrolled borders. The latter feature is strongly linked to governance and leadership, two lacking aspects in the socio-political landscape of Sahel countries.

Other endogenous factors are the structural socio-economic vulnerabilities, which have relegated a large number of the Sahel countries to the rank of the least developed countries of the planet. The deterioration of the already poor living conditions -affected by exogenous factors as climate change or drought-, is a major cause for massive displacement of populations and increase the likelihood of violence and multi-ethnic conflicts.

In this context, poverty and unemployment may also act among young people as catalysts for extremism and illegal activities. It is on this point where dangerous exogenous factors develop their pernicious influence and profit of local vulnerabilities. First, the so-called grey economy, based on illegal or criminal activities, often linked to transnational organized crime and specialized in illicit trafficking of migrants, drugs and firearms. The expansion of this activity that exploits the states weaknesses and the vast lawless borderlands is a major cause of insecurity across-countries and a hurdle to the economic development of these frontier areas.

Second, the emergence of a significant threat of armed groups engaged in terrorism and *guerrilla* as part of an armed insurgency. Even if it is impossible to determine *a priori* the relative relevance of internal and external factors in the spread of violent radicalism in the Sahel, it is undeniable the relevance of foreign actors. The external influence manifests itself in two fronts, salafisation of Sahel societies and the proliferation of violent *takfiri jihadi* groups. Apart from the direct support of radical groups in the Sahel, the external influence manifests itself in education. The fact that increasing numbers of young people are offered free education in transnational networks of well-equipped *Salafi* schools –when State schools are absent, distant or poorly equipped– is a major factor in turning a traditionally tolerant Islam to a much more fundamentalist version.

Finally, this study demonstrates that a lasting and satisfactory solution to the security challenges facing the Sahel requires a comprehensive approach that is far beyond military operations, although these are essential to fight threats such as violent radicalism. The involvement of civil society and the establishment of economic models adapted to the specific needs of the region is badly needed. The international support must be better designed and implemented in order to support the creation of a virtuous circle of economic development able to offer a dignified life to Sahelian populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section is a summary of the recommendations sent by the researchers involved in this study. The whole version of the recommendations by country is available in Annex II.

General recommendations

Support the Sahelian youth is crucial for fighting radicalism

- Deep reform and more investment in the educational system improving the schooling as well as the literacy rates among young people.
- School curricula should be adapted to private sector needs especially through vocational training.
- Sahelian public sector must create jobs for the graduates in the public ministries and administration.
- International programs for training young professionals and give them the opportunity to work with international institutions.
- Development of microcredit policies for the benefit of young people.
- Launch recreational programs for young people, such as the construction of stadiums and sports forums, and encourage the creation of cultural associations, especially in areas of tension.
- Special programs for preventing ethnic conflicts, one of the most important causes of extremism expansion in Sahel societies, based on:
- Explaining the importance of citizenship and the need for peaceful coexistence between all national components.
- Encouraging a culture of dialogue and compromise between different political actors, political parties, communities, etc.
- Application of socio-economic recovery measures:
- Promote the access of deprived populations to basic social services in order to crippling the legitimacy of terrorism speech.
- Support the development of sustainable resource-based activity sectors, especially the agriculture, increasing investment and technology transfer.
- Boost regional economic integration.
- Mobilize the civil society and giving local actors giving local actors, including religious, their traditional role.

Security-related recommendations

- Reforming the whole security sector and subjecting it to democratic control and good governance rules.
- The fight against violent radicalism should integrate the cultural and religious double dimension:
- Governmental control policies concerning religious activities (training imams and Koranic schools as well as local teaching models like maraboutism).
- Major investments in providing free public education that counters the appeal of radical fundamentalist religious schools.
- Improve border security as well as security in the vast rural hinterland for the population in these areas:
- Building up capacity of local forces is indispensable, especially if coupled with providing some access to technology for surveillance of these vast regions.
- Addressing issues of basic governance and local accountability making sure, these border forces and local militias do not themselves become an additional source of grievances and locals do not see them as a source of revenue and security.

Proposed actions in the 5+5 space

- A broad regional consensus on fighting terrorism should be built up, including vital regional security cooperation, particularly with the G5 Sahel.
- Integrate the Sahelo-Saharan zone into a cooperative framework between the 5+5 initiative and other international mechanisms for better pooling of efforts and capacities.
- Formulate a common 5+5 space approach to reinforce Sahelian States capacities and civil society resilience in specific areas especially in borderlands:
- Identification of some pilot areas for implementing this common approach.
- Establishment of early warning systems for early prevention of all type of conflicts (local disputes, terrorist attacks, insurgency, specific threats to populations, radical proselytism, etc.) and better civilian protection.
- Support international missions and programmes to identify communal and religious leaders.
- Proposing confidence and security-building measures for increasing the trust of civilian in security forces.
- Sharing 5+5 countries' experiences through the organization of seminars in the 5+5 College for reinforcing capacities in the field of civil protection and conflict mediation.

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ANNEX I. A YEAR IN TTIMBUKTU: THE FIELD EXPERIENCE OF A MAURITANIAN COLONEL

In the setting of the participation by my country in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), I was entrusted in 2016 with the task of managing the Military Public Information Office (MPIO), which is responsible for raising awareness and communicating with the local elites, personalities and leaders. After working for two months in Timbuktu, I was entrusted by the General in charge of the sector with chairing the Mixed Observation and Verification Team (Equipe Mixte d'Observation et de Vérification, EMOV), which is responsible for investigating incidents and complaints relating to the peace agreement, and which includes representatives of different former armed rebel movements, as well as an officer representing the Malian armed forces. These responsibilities have given me a better understanding of the situation with regard to security in northern Mali, the area where the United Nations multidimensional stabilization mission in Mali is currently operative.

According to the peace agreement signed between the Malian parties (the Government, Coordination of Azawad Movements and the pro-government movements) in 2015, the agreement will be implemented in two stages, beginning with the collection of arms from the former rebel movements, the installation of transition authorities and the launch of joint patrols.

Although a certain number of militants of these movements have already participated in the DDR programme, they have also participated in the performance of joint patrols led by the United Nations and the Mali government to preserve security in the north. However, four years after the signing of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, these movements have maintained all their equipment and heavy weaponry, and some persist in “occupying more land” by establishing new security posts in the north, for various reasons. This has led the Mali government to lodge permanent complaints according to which these actions contravene the spirit of the peace agreement.

In view of the fact that the first stage of the peace agreement, that is the collection and control of arms, is still underway, the discontentment persists, in particulier among the population who had hoped for a speedy and positive result from the peace agreement. Car thefts, robberies and aggressions against the MINUSMA and the Malian armed forces have aggravated the situation, which has angered large numbers of inhabitants in the north, who often express their discontent during the awareness campaigns and the explanations of the Information Bureau on the feasibility of the peace process.

Despite this, the parties concerned share a general sentiment, regarding the need for peace, and this is perfectly illustrated by the implication

of the MINUSMA, the government and the armed movements in applying the clauses of the peace agreement and maintaining security. The main obstacle to this common wish continues to be the position of the armed terrorist movements, which are not signatories to the peace agreement. The result of this has been several military operations aimed at the personnel of the MINUSMA as well as the Malian army, at a rate of around two operations every three days. Despite the apparent refraction in northern Mali, according to the typical military logic of jihadist organisations, after the Franco-African military operation of 2013, the current indicators on the ground give reason to think that this situation may not last. Especially taking into account the different views of the players on the Malian stage and the limitation of the financial resources of the joint force of the G5 Sahel, as well as the considerable financial and political costs for the United Nations Organization in the long term. These factors have enabled the extremist organisations to proliferate and to reappear on the scene, on account of their asymmetric nature within the local groups, to find new centres for rallying and provisioning, by stocking arms and recruiting new volunteers.

It is appropriate to mention that drug traffickers use the north of Mali, in particular the extreme north, as a transit area, where the ancient desert routes constitute a corridor for all types of trafficking towards Europe and the Middle East via the Sahel and the Sahara. Owing to the enormous financial returns of this trade, it is strongly suspected that everybody (local armed movements and terrorists with different allegiances) has been involved in this trade which has become part of the economic cycle of the Sahel. To give an idea of the economic advantages of this “illegal economic cycle”, the cost of delivery of a cargo of drugs by a young unemployed person from the north of Mali, on board a Toyota Land Cruiser, is this vehicle itself. In other words, a single trip made for drug trafficking provides this smuggler with some 30 million CFA francs.

The low level of education and the absence of schooling in northern Mali (in particular among Arab and Tuareg children) observed by the awareness campaigns led by the military information bureau of the MINUSMA, cast a shadow over the level of political awareness and over the positive engagement of the elites in the peace process. It is also one of the reasons that drives illiterate youths to undertake illegal economic activities and facilitates their allegiance to extremist groups.

All these reasons make the situation even more complicated, and the very nature of the “peacekeeping” mandate of the United Nations mission complicates it even further, even though this mandate has been agreed by virtue of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter authorising the use of military force. This mandate itself is defensive and not offensive, bearing in mind that the mission of attack, tracing and pursuit is entrusted by the

Security Council to the French forces of Barkhane, the Malian armed forces and the joint force of the G5 Sahel states.

All these factors lead one to think that to attack the roots of the conflict in the north of Mali, the origin of the multifaceted crisis in the Sahel region, a great deal of time, effort and patience is required. In view of these considerations, there is no choice but to accept that the multidimensional mission of the United Nations for the stabilisation of northern Mali will require decades of hard and continuous work to resolve a political and security situation at first sight inextricable and which hinders the stability of this region of the world.

To deal with this situation it will be necessary to fight against unemployment and to create jobs outside the “economic vicious circle”, to provide basic services to the citizens and to meet the economic and social challenges. This would dismantle the criminal networks and bring them to an end by drying up their revenue sources.

The peace process that is underway, the result of the peace and reconciliation agreement in Mali between the government and the non-jihadist armed movements, could be a gleam of hope for the populations of northern Mali and the Sahel region as a whole. This region is the cradle of the Sahel crisis, but hope grows very slowly in this arena of war and bloodshed, which is fed by criminal organisations, groups and networks, which have never sat at the negotiating table and which are not in the least concerned by the peace and reconciliation agreements or the warnings of the international community. These groups have already succeeded in pushing up the risk and instability indices by redoubling their operations in the northern and central regions of Mali and inside the borders of Burkina Faso and Niger.

Perhaps the sadistic “model” of destruction, rape, the sale of “slave” women and systematic killings perpetrated in the Middle East is not clearly transmitted to the countries of the Sahel, owing to their reticent geographic nature. However, the persistence of destabilising social, economic and political factors, and the inability to create a tangible alternative to the organised crime activities in the region, besides resorting to force brute, could lead to a violent and deadly return of jihadist organisations that have never left the Sahel.

The seriousness of the situation in the Sahel-Saharan region is such that, if the current actions do not bring good results, a long-term multifaceted crisis could become established, making the situation exportable and reproducible in Africa and in the world.

The solution, as mentioned above, consists of the creation of an economic alternative to the illegal activities (development of fast impact projects that create employment) as well as a strengthening of the education

system. Not forgetting that it is crucial to win the trust of young people, who currently represent the overwhelming majority in the north of Mali. Speaking from my own experience, the main social agents who can play a decisive role are the local leaders (tribal chiefs, politicians), imams and the leaders of youth associations.

ANNEX II. RECOMMENDATIONS BY COUNTRY

Algeria

Religion within the strategy of support to the Sahel states in the fight against terrorism.

In the international scope

- The fight against Salafist proselytism requires the support of the regional and international partners of the Sahel-Saharan states, since it constitutes a real catalyst of violent radicalism.
- Salafist proselytism should be considered, like the financing of terrorism, as a serious threat to international peace and security.
- The cooperation effort in favour of the Sahel countries should be centred particularly on the training of imams, the supply of documentation and the granting of subsidies to institutions responsible for the promotion of African Islam.

In the regional scope

- Reinforce the control by the Sahel-Saharan States over the activities of the organisations and associations created by foreign initiative or funded by foreign powers.
- -Forbid discourses that stigmatise local religious practices and preserve the places of worship, as well as public spaces of anathema, against all forms of exclusion and incitation to intolerance, in the appropriate legal setting and by reinforcement of the rule of law.
- Forbid the dissemination of Salafist extremism in the domains of education, the information and communication sectors, in mosques and Islamic institutions of higher education.
- Adapt the national legislation and regulations with regard to freedom of expression and the right to worship, by establishing limits that impose values of respect of the beliefs and convictions of citizens, of community and confessional groups.
- Promote dialogue between cultures and civilisations by improving educational programmes with regard to religious education, by expurgating them of all connotations that devalue women, other monotheist religions and non-Islamist cultures and civilisations.

- Promote inherently African religious and cultural references, notably Sufi Islam as a religion of peace, tolerance and conviviality, by enhancing their value in school textbooks with regard to religious education and, notably, by advocating the adoption of the “reference” guide supported by the League of Ulemas and Preachers of the Sahel countries.
- Favour the implementation of a culture of living-together, by opening up to the affirmation of the role of religious leaders suited to the promotion of national spiritual references, compatible with local specificities and resistant to extremist ideologies.
- Undertake an in-depth reform of the educational systems which will make it possible to tie the Sahel-Saharan countries to modernity.

France

- The enhancement of the role of civil society in the Sahel to better counter extremism and favour a stabilisation of the political-security situation should not be based only on a macro-global approach to the problems of culture and identity, and their players. It should also take into account the micro-local dimension, particularly important in this region, in order, in particular, to identify the local motivations for religious extremism and policies of radicalisation. This dimension is especially essential for any approach and engagement by the international partners.
- The identification and anticipation of structural vulnerabilities concerning the Sahel populations is a precondition for the understanding of the role to be played by civil society with regard to resilience against terrorism. It is also advisable to rely on existing communication tools, so as to encourage the pluralism of discourses at the level of associative and religious life, but also to explain to local populations the steps advocated and their aims.
- The mobilisation of civil society implies relying on non-state intermediaries, by giving back to local, including religious, players their traditional role. Cultural associations should be given a more prominent position than at present. At the same time, it is advisable to create new spaces for socialisation outside the strictly religious domain.

Italy

From a “5+5” countries perspective, the persistent weakness of North Africa’s governance system opened a highway for security threats from the Sahel region to easily reach North African and European countries. In order to defeat Jihadist-Salafist terrorism and to stabilize North Africa and the Sahel, it is necessary to further develop and implement a comprehensive strategy, involving different actors, with the objective of addressing the critical issues that have been affecting the Sahara-Sahel region.

Libya

Socio-economic recommendations

- Grant priority to and reconsidering social investment beginning from protecting all human rights, fighting against poverty and equitable distribution of opportunities and resource.
- Concentrate more on investment in people.
- Adapting some procedures as political, economic, social, environmental, lawful procedures.
- The most successful investment in economic and social fields is encouraging people use whole the available resource and opportunities.
- Symmetry of production framework in Sahel countries leads to integration and efforts solidarity for developing agriculture and grazing sector, food self-efficiency and supporting economic investment process.
- Adapting agriculture sector as a main sector for supporting other sectors.
- Focus more on science research and all aspects of education.
- Wheat is an essential crop, so sowing it in a huge space of land is very important.
- Improve population health through health system.

Institutional and cooperation recommendations

- To conduct a limited and conditioned security cooperation agreements and economic investments agreements that are binding on all parties so that all countries of the 5 + 5 region and the Sahel countries benefit from them.
- Strengthening, supporting and protecting civil society organizations, institutions and local authorities in the Sahel countries.
- Opening and activating channels of cooperation with international human rights and legal organizations and the International Criminal Court.
- Fighting extremist ideology with effective tools of thought such as education and the media and helping the religious institutions of the Sahel countries to fight the extremist ideology.

Mauritania

1. Modernization of the political life, a good government, a responsibility of the States and a global strategy of exit of crisis and take-off will make it possible to overcome these armed groups if not to reduce to the minimum their activities.

For this, the following proposals can be advanced:

- Thinking about how to reshape states on new bases and around new national contracts, the first having failed to meet the needs of different communities, some of which no longer recognize themselves as parts of these states.
 - Rethink state structures to better reflect the social, demographic and cultural realities of their national components.
 - Distinguish between nationalist movements that have identity and political vindications and criminal terrorists
 - Integrate the concept of State accountability and the primacy of peoples not the governments
 - Make good governance a pillar of any economic policy
 - Stop the ploy of resources in these troubled countries by corrupt elites backed by foreign
 - Consider the Sahel as a vital space for Europe or as an extension requiring a doubling of economic and social investments
 - As ethnic conflict has become one of the most important causes of extremism and terrorism, special programs should be supported to explain the importance of citizenship and the need for peaceful coexistence between all national components.
 - Encourage a culture of dialogue and compromise between different political actors, political parties, communities, etc.
 - Help the youth of these countries stay in their homes through a joint program that would benefit both these Sahelian countries and Western Europe.
 - Invest in youth education and training
 - Launch recreational programs for young people, such as the construction of stadiums and sports forums, and encourage the creation of cultural associations, especially in areas of tension.
2. The jihadist organizations in northern Mali succeeded in laying the foundations of what has become known as the “crime economy”, which is based on the proceeds of drugs, ransom money and the smuggling of people and goods. This has resulted in the availability of income, employment and profit for the population in the areas controlled by jihadi organizations and networks of organized crime. Therefore, any treatment of this situation requires seeking to combat unemployment, create jobs outside this “closed economic cycle”, and provide basic services to citizens. Which will eventually dismantle these criminal networks after failing to secure their sources of income in the region. This can be done through the following measures:
3. Diversifying the functions of the European Union Training Mission in Mali, by adding an economic dimension such as the financing of income-generating projects and the promotion of political partnership in the Sahel

- Support for the UN Multi-Dimensional Program in Mali MINUSMA, known as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, aimed at the reintegration of ex-combatants
 - Support MINUSMA's microfinance efforts in the North.
4. Initiate anti-money laundering measures, in line with UN Security Council resolutions, by enhancing the efficiency of national and state-level intelligence services in the area of inter-State relations through partnership with local intelligence agencies for training on money laundering
 5. Support the development programs of the joint Sahel force, which targets the poorest border areas between these countries
 6. To consider the Sahel as a vital area for Europe or as its extension, which requires doubling of economic and social investments
 7. Europe needs an active labour force; therefore, migration from the Sahel should be organized in order to obtain the required competencies, which will benefit both sides.
 8. Focus on spreading the culture of political participation, and encourage strategies that make the political absorption of influential players dependent on their disconnection with the illegal economy
 9. Support education, especially vocational training, among young people who make up the vast majority of the population
 10. Focus investments and development programs on available vocational training
 11. Launch of youth rehabilitation programs for future leaders in the Sahel countries on leadership, governance and political awareness
 12. Since ethnic conflicts have become one of the most important causes of extremism and terrorism, awareness programs should be supported to explain the importance of citizenship and the need for peaceful coexistence, especially in areas of ethnic tensions.
 13. Launch recreational programs aimed at young people, such as building stadiums and sports forums and encouraging the establishment of cultural associations, especially in areas of tension.
 14. Encourage talk shows through the local media.

Morocco

- Promote a more coherent, more coordinated approach, more focused on the action of the international programmes.
- Prioritise development programmes that enable a positive transformation of the economies, improve the living conditions of the populations and give back hope to young people.

- Integrate the Sahel-Saharan zone in a cooperative framework within the 5+5 initiative and the other international mechanisms for a better mutualisation of the efforts and capacities, especially with the G5 Sahel.
- Contemplate a seminar, within the setting of the 5+5 school on the strengthening of humanitarian capacities for development and protection of civilians within the management of the Sahel crisis.

Portugal

- First, any successful attempt to deal with an insurgency will have to ensure that the latter will be isolated from any significant sources of external support. For this, it is crucial to continue to build up a broad regional consensus on fighting terrorism, including vital regional security cooperation in which 5+5 countries should continue to play a significant enabling and capacity building role.
- Second, it is very important to improve not just border security but also security for the population in the vast rural hinterland. Major cities have been mostly secured, but takfiri jihadi terrorists have adapted by moving to vast rural hinterlands and border areas, from which they prepare terrorist attacks also in distant urban areas across state borders often focused on Western targets. Securing these vast regions is an impossible mission for any foreign expeditionary force. This makes building up capacity of local forces indispensable, especially if coupled with providing some access to technology for surveillance of these vast regions.
- No less crucial is addressing issues of basic governance and local accountability, making sure these border forces and local militias do not themselves become an additional source of grievances and they are not seen as a source of revenue and security by locals. They should be as much as possible locally recruited, and to some degree, locally accountable. It is no less crucial giving priority to development projects in affected or vulnerable regions. Also relevant in this respect will be projects that address and reduce the detrimental impact of climate change. Especially important will be major investments in providing free public education that counters the appeal of radical fundamentalist religious schools. Of course, development projects or schools will be useless if they are not, in turned, provided with their own adequate security. There is no stable security without sustainable development for all, but it also the case that there is no sustainable development for all without a modicum of security.

Spain

Formulate a common 5+5 space approach to reinforce Sahelian states capacities and civil society resilience in specific areas especially in borderlands:

- Identification of some pilot areas for implementing this common approach.
- Establishment of early warning systems for early prevention of all type of conflicts (local disputes, terrorist attacks, insurgency, specific threats to populations, radical proselytism, etc.) and better civilian protection.
- Support international missions and programmes to identify communal and religious leaders.
- Airlift capability of Sahelian states should be increased especially for tactical operations.
- Proposing confidence and security-building measures for increasing the trust of civilian in security forces.
- Training in conflict mediation using programmes implemented by international institutions like The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue with experience in the field.
- Sharing 5+5 countries' experiences in countering Salafist proselytism; deradicalization and integration programmes.

ANNEX III. SHORT BIOS OF CONTRIBUTORS

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PhD. in Sociology and Political Science, he received a B.A. in Contemporary History and he is specialised in Sociology of Islam. His research has focused on 'Terrorism', 'Jihadi Radicalism', contemporary small wars and asymmetric conflicts in the MENA area. As Military Officer, he served as NATO Counter-intelligence analyst and Section chief in Afghanistan. Since 2008, he has lectured Italian staff personnel teaching 'History, Societies, Cultures and Conflicts of Contemporary Afghanistan'. Since 2015, he is Senior Researcher at Centre Euromaghrébin de Recherches et d'Etudes Stratégiques (CEMRES) and Italian Representative at the '5+5 Defense Initiative' Research Working Group. Currently, he is Head of Research at 'START-Insight' (Security and Terrorism Analysis and Research Team-Ne-

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He is a researcher at the Institute for Strategic Research of the Ecole Militaire (IRSEM) for the North Africa - Middle East region. Geographer by training, he has been working for 30 years on the Arab world with a particular focus in the military-security fields. He specializes particularly in the Maghreb countries, where he made several long-term professional trips. He was head of the Middle East and Near East Maghreb office at the Ministry of Defense's Strategic Affairs Delegation, before joining IRSEM. He is a researcher at the Euromaghreb Center for Research and Strategic Studies (CEMRES) within the framework of the 5 + 5 defense initiative in the Western Mediterranean. He teaches contemporary Maghreb and Middle Eastern geopolitics at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO).

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PhD. in Applied Economics, Economist, she is specialised in Arab Economies and Economic relations between the EU and Arab countries. She is a professor in ESIC Marketing and Business School as well as in several masters and postgraduate courses like the Postgraduate Course on Economic Intelligence and Security organized by ICADE and Mas Consulting. In previous jobs, she has been in charge of the Business Program of Casa

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