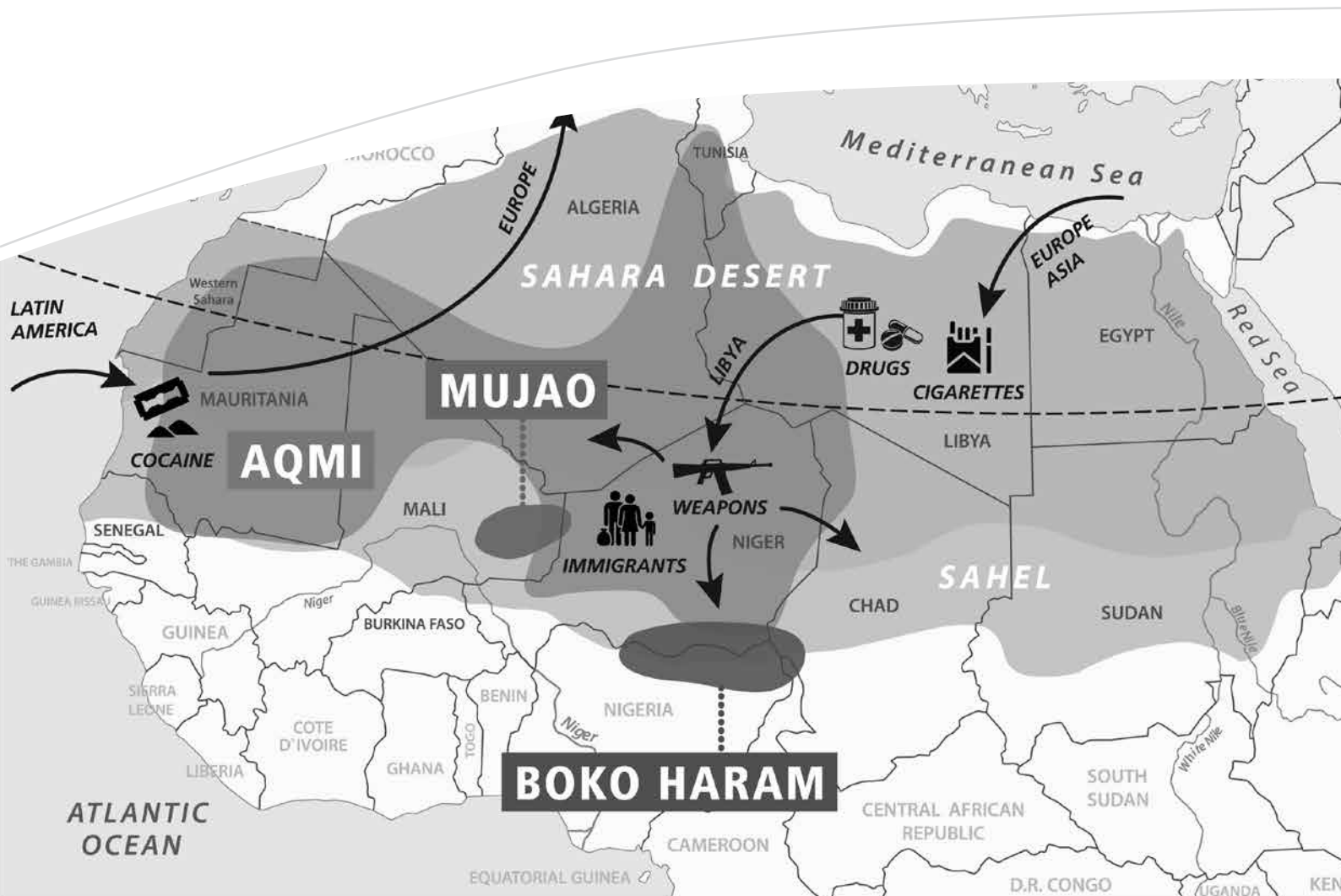


Serigne Bamba Gaye

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Mr. Holger Grimm
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Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

LIST OF ACRONYMS

IGAs	Income-generating activities
SALWs	Small arms and light weapons
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ECOWAS/CEDEAO	Economic Community of West African States
COC	Cross-border organized crime
IS	Islamic State
FAMA	Armed Forces of Mali
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
GIABA	Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering
DSF	Defence and security forces
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
HACP	High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
TCO	Transnational Criminal Organization
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
LDCs	Least developed countries
MUJWA	Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
AU	African Union
EU	European Union
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

SUMMARY

For a number of years, the Sahel has been faced with a series of threats, the most emblematic of which are Islamist terrorism, illegal trafficking and organized crime. These threats have contributed to the destabilization of the region and, in some countries, accentuated the fragility of the State. Often, the establishment of modernized security organizations is hindered by the weakness of democratic institutions, the partially dysfunctional role of security forces, the lack of security strategies at the national level, insufficient financial resources and the contradictory interests of the various actors. This situation aggravates the climate of insecurity and further accentuates the risks of instability, which hardly promotes the socio-economic development of Sahelian countries. It is also an environment that allows drug trafficking rings to flourish, and they abound in this part of the continent. They use a number of cross-border routes, contributing to the destabilization of the Sahel region and undermining peace and security in the area.

Intrinsic links exist between terrorist groups and organized crime rings, which work together to maximize their businesses. These networks develop with the complicity or participation of local actors, who profit from these illicit dealings. Drug traffickers also have connections with Jihadist groups that totally or partially control certain major cross-border roads. There is therefore a real interweaving of issues, actors, and networks in the Sahel to control local resources and drug trafficking in areas where State representation in terms of administration and defence and security forces is limited or virtually inexistent. This combination of interests makes it more complicated to find peace and lasting security, since several different dynamics cohabit in the same space with interconnecting interests.

To better understand the interactions between the various Jihadist and criminal groups in the Sahel, it is important to grasp their dynamics and modes of operation and how they interact according to their circumstantial interests.

The present study analyses the causes as well as the political and economic aspects of the connections between smuggling and trafficking rings in a context where extremist movements continue to grow in the Sahel. These analyses form part of the “political economy” approach. The study is based on an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach which, in light of the numerous interdependencies, recommends avoiding the separation of the political dimension, with its institutional or legal and geographic aspects, from the socio-economic dimension, with its security, economic and social aspects. It also takes account of cultural, ethnic, religious and gender aspects. The formulation of specific, concrete and feasible recommendations for action should promote the development of New Approaches to Collective Security.

INTRODUCTION

Due to its geographic position, the Sahel has been and remains a hub of transit and trade between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. Several communities coexist within the States, which have some difficulty controlling their borders. The Sahel also contains vast areas that escape State control entirely. Within these spaces, Jihadist groups flourish and multifaceted illicit trafficking rings, with connections to transnational crime in Europe, Asia and Latin America, develop. The Sahel-Sahara continuum is a central hub in the geopolitics of organized crime.

Indeed, the rise of Jihadist groups and the development of illicit trafficking have destabilized the region and accentuated the vulnerability of several States and the communities living in them, since these two phenomena have dismantled the economy and weakened the authority of the States, particularly in their regulatory capacities and their monopoly on legitimate violence. This context has largely promoted the multiple connections between terrorist groups and illicit trafficking rings through dynamics of cooperation and interdependence. Converging interests can also be seen between these different actors over the control of strategic routes and spaces. The geopolitical upheavals that took place in Libya and in the Sahel after the fall of Gaddafi in 2011 have accentuated the fragility of the region and reinforced the establishment of criminal networks across very vast spaces swarming with interconnected local relays. These relays control the local environment and smuggling systems, and they are increasingly connected to Jihadist groups operating in the Sahel-Saharan strip.

But how do these connections work, who are the actors involved in these criminal undertakings

and, above all, how do these activities impact States and local communities? The answers to these questions will make it possible to clarify the profound nature of relationships between organized crime and terrorism in a context of major political and social upheaval in the Sahel.

This study focuses on the Western portion of the Sahel and devotes very limited attention to the Eastern portion of the region, where interconnections also exist between organized crime and terrorism. It essentially addresses drug trafficking, cigarette smuggling and SALW smuggling networks in the Sahel. With this in mind, a variety of documents, books and articles were consulted. They were complemented by interviews with actors involved in the fight against security threats in the Sahel.

I. BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

1.1. The Sahel, a region with multiple trafficking networks

Throughout history, the Sahel and the Sahara have been hubs of trade and communication between North Africa and Western Africa. Caravan routes and cities were the foundation for these multifaceted transactions, which contributed to the development of the great empires such as the Mali and Songhai empires and later to that of cities such as Timbuktu, Gao and Agadez... Trade focused on local products: gold, salt, dates, cereals, livestock, handcrafts, books, etc. There has been genuine complementarity between the economies of North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. To this should be added the cultural and religious intermingling between these two banks of the Sahara with the expansion of Islam in Africa. Caravan routes also promoted the spread of Islam. This economic and cultural influence declined with the development of maritime trade in the 19th century and the colonization of Africa by Western powers at that time. Thenceforth, the coastal areas located on the Atlantic seaboard became the principal economic, political and cultural centers; the Sahel was increasingly connected to the new, expanding Atlantic world-economy.

This historical and economic discontinuity had a lasting impact on relations between these two parts of Africa. Trade was reduced and caravan routes lost their strategic position. After independence, the new States developed their coastal regions, thereby reinforcing the decline of Sahelian regions and landlocked countries such as Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso or Chad continued to connect their economy with the Atlantic by road or railway with the ports of Dakar, Abidjan, Cotonou, Douala, etc. The extroversion of West African economies was accompanied by the con-

tinual impoverishment of remote areas, limited State presence and low access for local populations to basic social services such as health and education. An opposition between central areas and remote areas developed and persisted in all of the countries of the Sahel.

Limited State presence and extreme poverty are fertile ground for the development of smuggling and trafficking, which have long been tolerated or ignored by local authorities. Illicit activities are carried out by populations in border areas through community-based networks on both sides of the border. For instance, products from Algeria, such as wheat flour, sugar and gasoline are fraudulently sold in neighbouring countries such as Mali or Niger. This has allowed the population to access staple items, at low prices, that the States are unable to provide for them. Gradually, the economies of border areas have become detached from national economic circuits and integrated with transnational circuits dominated by traffickers and smugglers. This trade is controlled by merchants linked to local aristocracies, Tuareg and Arab in particular. It expanded with the use of all-terrain vehicles. Gradually, the 4x4 pick-up replaced the camel and the old, abandoned caravan routes came back into use with the widespread dissemination of contraband products in areas where State presence is very limited.

Thus, the porosity of borders between Sahelian countries has allowed various trafficking and smuggling networks to establish and develop across vast areas including several countries through local community relays and actors. These illicit activities have contributed to the regeneration of local economies with virtually no regulation on the part of the States. No-go areas then developed at the edges of the Sahel and the Sahara for a number of years, under the control of non-State groups with strong community anchoring. A transnational criminal economy was

emerging with the complicity of certain local and customary authorities with the more or less tacit support of the population. Following the droughts of the 1970s and '80s, many nomads turned to criminal activities to survive. "A real market was created and the inhabitants of these areas changed their professions. They preferred to abandon their careers as herders, farmers, etc. and engaged in illicit trafficking. Traffickers come from families with longstanding roots in the region. They know the supply circuits very well and just wanted to lead better lives."

1.2. The Sahel, a zone of rebellions

The inaccessibility of remote areas also fuelled the frustrations of the population and contributed to the emergence of several "generations" of rebellions against national governments, especially in Mali in the 1960s, 1990s and 2000s. These rebellions were stirred up by Tuareg leaders. This was also the case in Niger. In Chad, during the first 30 years of independence, a number of rebellions emerged, driven by warlords from communities in the northern part of the country (Tubu, Goran, Arab, etc.). The common denominator among all of those rebellions was their denunciation of the inequalities in development between the southern and northern regions in the countries concerned and the inability of the States to implement inclusive public policies able to meet the basic needs of the population, especially those living in remote areas. Thus, in most remote areas of Mali, for instance, there is a glaring lack of basic social services and young people have limited opportunities in terms of employment and self-employment. One local actor said: "Given the abject poverty in Timbuktu and in the North, I can understand why the rebellions attracted young people." Indeed, these movements fought for greater autonomy. Ultimately, they contested the polarization between the

center and remote areas that had been established since the colonial era and the post-colonial State model. These rebellions also took advantage of communities' strong resentment against State centralism and the virtual exclusion of local elites from the political and economic life of the country. Remote areas neglected by the central government gradually become unstable territories strongly influenced by political upheaval in neighbouring countries and often fallback areas for groups that fight against their own government. Ties form between groups with diverse motivations aiming to control these regions, which resist all forms of political or social regulation.

These rebellions were also economically motivated, since they fought to control economic circuits and strategic routes in the Sahel, where significant amounts of contraband products transit. There was a convergence of strategic interests between the various rebellions in the Sahel at that time and trafficking networks. In all, smugglers and rebels coexisted and collaborated for four decades in the Sahel in areas that nearly escaped State control. However, the nature of illicit activities and organized crime changed radically beginning in the 2000s with two major geopolitical events.

1.3. Geopolitical upheaval in the Sahel and its consequences

Beginning in the 2000s, the Sahel experienced two geopolitical changes that profoundly disrupted its political and social equilibriums and accentuated its fragility in terms of security. The events in question were a change in the routing of cocaine from Latin America to Europe and the establishment of Salafist-inspired terrorism in several Sahelian countries after its failure in Algeria. These two phenomena make up the two main threats currently faced by all countries in West Africa and particularly in the Sahel.

The increase in cocaine consumption in the United States and Europe in the 1980s and '90s led to a hardening of repression against the production, transportation and sale of this drug produced by extremely powerful cartels in South America, particularly in Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. The hardening of the legislation was complemented by the adoption of several measures aimed at dismantling air and sea networks transporting the drug between Latin America and Europe. These measures obliged South American traffickers to change the way they supplied Europe with cocaine. Beginning in the 2000s, a major change took place in the routes used to ship the drug to Europe. West Africa became a zone of transit to Western countries. The drug was shipped by boat or plane to coastal countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria, etc. before being shipped on to Europe. Local relays gradually developed to receive, package and ship the drug to the old continent. Initially, air shipment was the preferred method, but after major seizures took place in the airports of a number of countries in the sub-region and also at sea, land transportation ended up becoming the primary method of transport. A number of different routes were adopted to evade detection by defence and security forces (DSFs) and particularly the police and customs. However, they all converged towards the Sahel and the Sahara, then travelled to Europe via Morocco, Algeria or Libya. Before the intervention of Operation Serval, Tessalit and Bourem in northern Mali were drug trafficking real hubs in the Sahel. From there, traffickers could go on to Morocco or Niger or even Algeria or Mauritania.

Local networks that had long operated in the zone and controlled trans-Saharan trade turned to drug trafficking, which was a highly lucrative business. It is estimated that the price of a kg of cocaine unloaded in West Africa is 15,000 euros. According to a UNODC report, the value of the

cocaine that transited through West Africa in 2013 is estimated at nearly 1.5 billion US dollars. West Africa and the Sahel have also become areas where cocaine is consumed; with their youthful population and the establishment of Latin American cartels in a number of countries, the hard drug market is growing every year. Organized crime has established a lasting presence, spending millions of dollars and infiltrating all strata of society and gangrening whole sectors of State authorities with corruption. The introduction of large amounts of drugs from Latin America and Asia and the dissemination of networks of traffickers as well as laundering of "dirty" money in economic circuits and the corruption of the elites and DSFs in all West African countries constitutes a major security threat for the region. "Dirty" money is laundered in the economy, especially through trade and real estate and is also used to finance political parties and the media. This distorts democracy in a number of countries and constitutes a serious threat to their stability and that of the sub-region as a whole. In this regard, the case of Guinea-Bissau is emblematic. The country, which has become a "narco-state", has collapsed into chaos due to the active involvement of drug cartels in its politics and economy.

The other geopolitical event was a result of the rise of terrorism, first in Mali and then in several Sahelian countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Nigeria with Boko Haram. Indeed, the failure of the attempt of armed Salafist movements in Algeria to violently overthrow the established political order in power in the country since 1962 incited a number of Jihadist groups to withdraw to the South of the Sahara. This particularly applied to the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which became Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and retreated into northern Mali and Niger to set up fighting units (katibats) and try to mobilize local communities to join its cause.

As of 2004, AQIM moved into these desert areas where State presence was very limited, to prepare for its criminal activities (abductions, attacks on DSFs, protection of drug shipments, etc.). This terrorist movement imported from Algeria destabilized several Sahelian countries and became one of the principal threats they faced for a number of years. To realize its political project, AQIM needed to control its “territories”, impose its societal model, recruit young people with no prospects for social success and control the lucrative traffic of contraband and drugs. Endemic poverty in the Sahel pushed several young people into the arms of Jihadist movements. It should be recalled that among the world’s least developed countries (LDCs), 12 are located in West Africa. As of 2006, northern Mali began to become an AQIM sanctuary and, subsequently, other Jihadist movements such as the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) also established themselves in the area.

The security situation in the North of Mali further deteriorated with the beginning of the Tuareg rebellion in 2006, with deadly attacks on the DSFs in the Kidal Region, when a number of the routes used by smugglers fell under the control of the rebellion and AQIM. However, the occupation of northern Mali by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and terrorist groups such as AQIM, MUJWA and Ansar Dine in 2012, following the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, marked a decisive watershed in the expansion of Jihadism in the Sahel. There was therefore an expansion of the scope of intervention of these terrorist groups within Mali and in neighbouring countries such as Niger, Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire. These countries, like all Sahelian countries, were thenceforth facing asymmetric threats. The terrorist threat became a regional menace. In Nigeria, on the other hand, the expansion of terrorism was due above all to endogenous factors. In the North of the country, extreme

impoverishment of the population and limited DSFs presence enabled Boko Haram to establish itself beginning in the first decade of the 2000s, initially through charitable actions and preaching, particularly aimed at young people with no prospects. Boko Haram took advantage of the frustrations of the population in northern Nigeria, who felt that they had been abandoned by the federal government to the benefit of the communities in the South, where most of the country’s economic activities were concentrated. The polarization between the central area and the remote interior of the Nigerian Federation is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the emergence and expansion of this terrorist group. The violence unleashed by this movement after the death of its leader, Mohamed Yusuf, killed in 2009, plunged several States such as Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, etc. Attacks on neighbouring countries such as Niger, Chad and Cameroon contributed significantly to the destabilization of the Lake Chad Basin, disorganizing the local economy, which was increasingly controlled by smuggling networks that served to finance the movement’s criminal activities.

The broadening of Boko Haram’s scope of action beyond the Nigerian territory was a factor of destabilization for all of the countries in the Lake Chad Basin. It was also an example of the shift from local Jihadism to international Jihadism, especially after the movement’s allegiance to Islamic State (IS). The military success of Boko Haram also reflected the failures of the DSFs of Nigeria, which were unable to block the movement’s expansion in the North and East of the country and could not reconquer the areas controlled by the movement. It also demonstrated the lack of an overarching vision to defeat the Jihadist group and a focus on security alone, leaving out religious and social factors, which partially explained the success of this movement in Nigeria and the sub-region.

In parallel to this context of extreme violence,

cross-border smuggling and illicit trafficking networks developed across the areas controlled by terrorist groups. They operated between ports on the Atlantic coast, such as Lagos, Cotonou and Nouadhibou, and the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The chaos in Libya in terms of security has contributed significantly to the development of these illicit activities. The context of insecurity has allowed illicit activities to grow in the Sahel and helped criminal networks adapt readily to internal and sub-regional geopolitical upheaval. As an example, it is estimated that 75% of the cigarettes consumed in Libya entered the country illegally through the Sahel. Cigarette trafficking in North Africa is worth over a billion dollars. Heroine trafficking has also increased. Transported in containers from Iran and Pakistan to ports in the Gulf of Guinea, heroine is shipped to Europe over complex routes stretching from the Atlantic coast to the shores of the Mediterranean through the Sahel and the Sahara. The circulation of cannabis resin made in Morocco follows a similar pattern. It travels across the Sahel from West to East, through numerous countries such as Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, etc., to Egypt and the Middle East. This lucrative traffic is managed by transcontinental networks in collusion with terrorist groups and rebels operating in the zone.

Generally speaking, this area, which is unstable in security terms, has become an epicenter for the deployment of illicit and terrorist activities through criminal groups and rebellions. There is a convergence of interests between organized crime, rebellions and terrorism. They need security instability to develop and maintain their presence in these zones. Terrorist groups and criminal trafficking networks now share the same spaces and follow similar patterns of confrontation with governments to control roads and economic hubs spread out across huge transnational spaces and connected to the globalization of organized crime or traffics.

In his study on *"Security management"* carried out in 2012, Dr. Kalidou Sidibé observed that: "There is a strategic alliance between these networks and terrorist groups which emanates from convergent interests: criminal networks benefit from violent actions perpetrated by terrorist and/or rebel groups, while the latter take advantage of the funds generated by criminal activities. AQIM terrorist groups use drug traffickers to obtain weapons, ammunition, and other related equipment such as 4x4 vehicles, communication tools (GPS and satellite phones) to carry out their activities." Thus, customer/supplier relationships are developed between terrorists and drug smugglers. However, journalist and author Serge Daniel noted that there was a certain division of labour: "Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) cooperate with AQIM in drug trafficking. But each has its own priorities. While, for example, AQIM may take a "commission" on drugs passing through its "territory" or AQIM fighters may be paid to form a protected convoy for drug shipments, much closer relationships can be observed between Colombian cartels (cartel del Norte, cartel de la Costa, etc.) and movements such as the FARC. For example, drug cartels and the FARC work together to buy coca, process it to make cocaine and transport the finished product. While to this day, AQIM has not directly touched the white powder."

Generally speaking, the principal terrorist groups in the Sahel form relationships of collaboration, cooperation and alliance with networks that control whole segments of the criminal economy in this part of the continent. The connection between organized crime rings and Jihadist groups is one of the consequences of the two major geopolitical events experienced by the Sahel and West Africa beginning in the 2000s. Who are the main actors involved in the destabilization of the Sahel and how have the DSFs reacted to this two-pronged threat?

II. ANALYSIS OF THE ACTORS

In the light of the foregoing, it therefore appears that the link between terrorism and illicit activities in the Sahel is the outcome of a lengthy process that has seen the emergence and development of networks to control various resources (drugs, SALWs, cigarettes, etc.) over very large areas. How are these networks organized and what types of connections exist between them?

2.1. Local and transnational smuggling rings and organized crime networks

Local networks

Since the 1960s, contraband has grown by leaps and bounds in the Sahel. Due to the isolation of remote areas, a parallel economy has gradually developed through contraband smuggling rings (cement, medications, gasoline, etc.). These fraudulent activities have allowed local actors to enrich themselves but have also spawned illegal trade networks with several types of participants: carriers, guides, wholesalers, retailers, and government officials or members of the DSFs. These networks operate with the complicity of the local authorities, who are often participants, but also with the complicity of communities living on both sides of the borders. These networks have been able to expand in Niger and Mali due to the presence of Tuareg and Arab communities living in the Sahelian strip and in the Sahara, who thoroughly master the various transportation routes and the places where contraband can be stored or hidden.

They take advantage of these criminal activities and often form alliances with Jihadist groups to control part of the routes used to smuggle drugs to Europe. Competition has developed between communities, often leading to confrontations. In

2010, Kounta leader Bouba Ould Sidi El Moctar was abducted in Anéfis by Arab drug traffickers from Tilemsi belonging to the Reguibat tribe to avenge the seizure of their drug shipment by Tuareg, Ifogas and Kounta. Such intercommunity rivalries are growing in zones where large quantities of drugs are in circulation. Controlling “dirty” money in these communities has become a focus of power struggles both within and between them.

A number of Tuareg groups seek to protect their control over trafficking to Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Niger. The same can be said of Kounta Arabs, who have long controlled a significant proportion of trans-Saharan trade. In order to ensure their collaboration and cooperation, criminal entrepreneurs are willing to strike up temporary alliances to secure smuggling and trafficking routes. Similarly, a number of Algerian AQIM leaders, such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar, have married into the Arab or Tuareg communities of northern Mali. He married a Malian woman from the Berabiche ethnic group. These matrimonial ties have helped strengthen the local anchoring of organized crime and terrorism in the Sahel. Through these marriages, alliances have been woven between Jihadist leaders and tribal leaders, facilitating transactions in the community areas. These business dealings offer advantages for all sides.

Local networks are involved in cigarette trafficking. In Niger, for several years, cigarette smuggling has been a lucrative business for a number of criminals, white collar workers, members of Nigerien organized crime rings, local traffickers, etc. Cigarettes were shipped from ports in the Gulf of Guinea to the Libyan border. As early as 2006, Alain Antil observed that the value of exports of cigarettes from Niger in the 2000s was 40 times higher than the value of cattle exports. These local networks controlled whole swaths of several

regions and were involved in various traffics such as the sale of fuel from Libya and Algeria in Sahelian countries such as Mali, Mauritania, etc. They have also been involved in migrant smuggling and have distinguished themselves by their adaptability and their local anchoring. The existing local networks are also part of the cross-border chain of actors involved in criminal activities. They are intermediaries working under the orders of patrons of international organized crime based in Asia, America and Europe.

International networks

These international crime networks need local anchoring to develop and thrive. In the Sahel, they work with local actors to control burgeoning markets such as cigarette and drug smuggling. Trafficking is impossible without the involvement of locally anchored tribal groups, and smuggling ring participants are also from these communities.

The members of the networks that contribute to drug trafficking and contraband in the Sahel include: Latin American cartels (cocaine), Asian cartels (heroin), local mafias, the African diaspora living in the West, North African organized crime, members of local communities and corrupt officials from the local authorities. The criminal economy is therefore not solely made up of foreign actors; it could not thrive without local collusion at every level of society.

The most obvious example of the collusion between national and local networks is undoubtedly that of "Air Cocaine" in 2009, a Boeing 727 from Venezuela that was loaded with 10 tonnes of cocaine, with an estimated value of 300 million euros, which landed in Sinkrèbaka in the Gao region of Mali. The Colombian cartels that shipped the drug to Mali benefited from the complicity of Malian civil aviation officials, DSFs (who secured the runway and the cargo), and local and West African traffickers who trans-

ported the cargo over four different routes: southern Mali, Algeria, Niger and the Malian desert. According to several analysts, AQIM played a decisive role in shipping part of this load of cocaine to Europe. Serge Daniel noted that, through its networks in Mauritania, Algeria and Morocco, the Jihadist group managed to export large quantities of cocaine from Mali to Europe on behalf of Colombian, African, Spanish and other drug traffickers.

These traffics generated substantial resources in Sahelian countries. "Dirty money" used to fund political parties and corrupt administrative officials threatens the anchoring of the political and economic reforms adopted by most Sahelian countries to democratize their institutions and boost their economies. These criminal activities are a serious threat to the stability of the sub-region, undermining the foundations of States and societies. However, their persistence over the long term is ultimately a reflection of the fragility of the countries in the region and their structural vulnerability to such threats.

2.2. Jihadist crime networks

Since 2000, criminal and Jihadist networks have been operating on territories overlapping on the Sahara and the Sahel. These zones, which run across several countries, are vast and unstable and most often marked by violent conflicts, intercommunity tensions and asymmetric threats. Since independence, controlling these areas has been a major challenge for DSFs that are either short of resources or unprepared to deal with threats of this kind. To take one example, Mali shares 5000 km of border with Niger, Algeria and Mauritania. It has limited human resources to watch over this extensive border and lacks suitable, modern materiel and equipment. A similar trend can be seen in all major Sahelian

countries. The immense size of their territories is a structural factor of vulnerability, since porous borders and corruption promote the development of illicit activities and collusion between criminal networks.

The case of AQIM is emblematic of such collusion. The Jihadist group moved into northern Mali in 2004 to try to restart its plans of Jihad after the failure of Islamists in Algeria. In order to survive, AQIM took up two types of activities: kidnapping Westerners and providing protection and security for drug convoys against a percentage.

Thus, a number of abductions of Westerners were perpetrated by the terrorist organization between 2004 and 2016 in Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Algeria. In most of these cases, the hostages were freed for a ransom. Between 2006 and 2012 alone, AQIM received 60 million euros in ransoms paid by the native countries of the hostages. AQIM was later imitated by MUJWA, Ansar Dine and Al-Mourabitoun, Jihadist groups that began operating in northern Mali in 2012, which followed in its footsteps. A "hostage-taking industry" was born in the Sahel, which would become the main source of funding for Jihadist groups.

The operating method used by AQIM to carry out these abductions was relatively simple, but effective. It consisted of using paid local accomplices to obtain information and follow the victims before capturing them or simply paying armed local groups to carry out the abduction. Once the hostages were captured, AQIM transferred them to its refuges in northern Mali. It was then that began the long process of negotiations for the liberation of the hostages, often involving African governments (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger), local nobles and even rebel chiefs. Since 2015, a sort of pooling has been observed in the hostage-taking industry in the Sahel; several terrorist groups organize kidnappings together

through their local units in the countries concerned. This was the case in the hostage taking in northern Burkina Faso in 2015, which was carried out jointly by AQIM and Al-Mourabitoun.

The money generated by the abductions provides terrorist groups with the resources they need to finance their preaching and recruitment activities, but above all to purchase arms, medications, food, vehicles and satellite phones. These purchases are made through traffickers, who abound in the Sahara. Without them, AQIM would be deprived of the logistics it needs to commit its crimes in West Africa. Boko Haram also abducts hostages. A number of French and Chinese hostages have been taken by the movement in northern Cameroon and Nigeria, however, it has not been officially proven that France and China have paid ransoms to free those hostages.

Another source of income for Jihadist groups comes from the money they earn by protecting convoys crossing areas they control. Shipments of illicit products (drugs, cigarettes, SALWs, etc.) are protected by elements from Jihadist groups over clearly specified distances within the Sahel-Saharan strip and, in return, traffickers pay a percentage of the value of the convoy. Collusion between terrorism and organized crime is very clear. It shows the links and connections between these two types of criminal players.

AQIM is also involved in the growing phenomenon of arms trafficking in the Sahel. It is estimated that over 80,000 Kalashnikovs are in circulation in the zone. They come from a number of sources, such as the Mano River region, Chad, Darfur and Sudan. However, a high proportion of the SALWs circulating in the Sahel comes from Gaddafi's Libyan arsenal. The routes followed by these arms therefore have a strategic value for criminal and terrorist groups. AQIM, MUJWA and the MNLA controlled the main routes of this illicit

trade in northern Mali up until the Operation Serval intervention in 2013. Large numbers of arms coming from the Mano River region, Chad and Darfur were used to supply local and Algerian terrorist groups and the Polisario Front. This proliferation of SALWs was an aggravating factor in livestock thefts and intercommunity confrontations, particularly between herders and farmers in the Sahel but also in the proliferation of armed groups operating in this region, which form a threat to the security of States and individuals.

Like most terrorist groups operating in the Sahel, Boko Haram works in connection and collaboration with criminal groups to control whole trafficking areas around the Lake Chad Basin through community support. Although it has been weakened somewhat, the movement still controls a significant proportion of the routes travelled by heroine from Asia and used for trafficking of SALWs from Libya thanks to its allegiance with Islamic State (IS). To achieve this, Boko Haram relies very much on the support of local populations, especially young people, to control various trafficking routes in the Lake Chad Basin. It provides them with motorcycles and often with "wives". These poor people are given responsibility for monitoring the positions of the DSFs, allowing the movement to plan attacks or change the routing of the contraband shipments it is in charge of conveying as needed. For these young people, the Jihadist group offers them real social advancement that the State is unable to provide.

Thus, Boko Haram has the resources it needs to survive and purchase the arms, provisions and equipment it requires to deploy around the Lake Chad Basin area. These items are purchased from traffickers operating in the zone. Recent information reveals connections between the terrorist group and organized crime rings in the ports of Calabar, Port Harcourt and Lagos in southern Nigeria.

2.3. State actors: defence and security forces

Jihadist groups and the development of organized crime have destabilized most Sahelian countries and surprised the DSFs, which were either not well prepared to deal with them or lacked the necessary resources to strike back at criminals and terrorists. It should also be pointed out that these threats are of a transnational nature and that the areas where these criminal networks are established or in transit, are extensive. The example of Mali clearly shows that the country does not have sufficient troops to protect its borders, particularly in the regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, which make up two thirds of its territory. Army presence is estimated at a force of 2,000 in the Gao Region (Gao and Menaka), 1,500 in the Kidal Region (Kidal and Tessalit) and 1,700 in the Timbuktu Region (Timbuktu and Goundam).

The other weak link in most DSFs in Sahelian and West African countries is corruption. Criminal networks have managed to corrupt certain elements of the police, the army, customs, etc. Worse yet, most drug-related scandals, such as the Air Cocaine scandal in Mali, have involved top DSFs officials. The lack of materiel, especially for air and sea, explains in part why coastal countries in West Africa have become zones of transit for cocaine shipped from South America. The reinforcement of their surveillance capacities as of 2007 explains the reduction in the amount of cocaine that has transited through this part of the continent to Europe or Asia. In addition, the States have made efforts to collaborate in the fight against organized crime and terrorism under the aegis of sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS and GIABA, as well as United Nations agencies such as UNODC.

However, despite these attempts, the Sahel remains a zone of instability and the DSFs of

the countries subjected to these threats lack the capacity required to secure the area. Ongoing initiatives such as the G5 Sahel reflect a real awareness in the States of the need to set up collective Strategies to combat the threats they face, and of the need to join forces to develop viable methods to combat those threats. Sahelian countries have a major challenge to meet if they hope to effectively combat terrorism and criminal groups. They need operational forces that are well trained and equipped with projection capacities to secure vast stretches such as the Sahel-Saharan strip.

III. RESPONSES AND STRATEGIES OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTORS FACED WITH THE DETERIORATION OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE SAHEL

The extent of the security threats faced by the Sahel has prompted the States, organizations and TFPs to gradually develop a series of initiatives aimed at sustainably countering these dominant trends.

3.1. National and regional responses to organized crime and terrorism

National responses

In order to combat organized crime and Jihadist networks and reduce the structural vulnerability of the Sahel, the States and the sub-region have developed several responses such as adopting laws and standards and implementing public policies to support the resilience of the population and the communities. Initially, where legislation is concerned, most West African countries, including Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, etc., adopted laws to fight organized crime and terrorism. These laws were intended to correct the loopholes in existing legislation on organized crime and to mete out severe punishments for acts of terrorism. A similar trend applied to laundering of “dirty” money. More fundamentally, an effort was made in several ECOWAS countries to harmonize national legislation with the legal instruments in force at community level for an effective and coordinated fight against drug trafficking and money laundering.

Regional responses and the contribution of Technical and Financial Partners

These measures adopted at the State level made it possible to reinforce judicial coopera-

tion between the countries of the sub-region, track down traffickers and dismantle criminal networks. Pooling intelligence allowed two results to be achieved: the dismantlement of AQIM and MUJWA cells in several countries in the Sahel and improved knowledge of their connections with other terrorist organizations around the world. These actions allowed a number of attacks to be thwarted, attacks that would have enabled terrorist groups to spread terror in several countries in the sub-region, especially after the occupation of northern Mali by these groups and the Tuareg rebellion. A number of presumed Jihadists have been arrested in countries in the sub-region thanks to the adoption of very stringent laws punishing terrorism-related offences. However, human rights organizations have denounced the highly repressive nature of certain provisions of said laws, which they claim reinforce the authoritarianism of certain States.

Cooperation between countries in the sub-region has yielded very positive results, with seizures of enormous quantities of drugs in most of the airports in the region and certain border areas. These encouraging outcomes were made also possible thanks to Interpol's support for national police forces. Between 2005 and 2012, nearly 20 tonnes of drugs (cocaine and heroine) were seized, mostly at sea, in West Africa. Sub-regional cooperation has made it possible to better control illegal flows and better enforce the law, however, corruption in the upper ranks of national administrations remains rife. ECOWAS has opted for a holistic approach to fight against these evils through its new Regional Action Plan to Address Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa. This plan has received support from technical and financial partners (TFPs) for its implementation, especially from UNODC, through its Regional Programme (RP) for West Africa (2016-2020). It defines strategic priorities to be achieved in the areas of combat-

ing money laundering and terrorism, reinforcing criminal justice systems, preventing and combating transnational organized crime and illicit traffics, preventing and combating corruption, etc. The RP also proposes operational responses to deal with security threats in the Sahel and in other ECOWAS member countries. It includes key initiatives, such as the "West African Coast Initiative" (WACI), the Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP) and the Container Control Programme (CCP).

Regarding the fight against money laundering and financing of terrorism, specific measures have been implemented at the sub-regional level to guarantee the origin and traceability of financial flows entering West Africa under the aegis of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering (GIABA) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF / GAFI). These measures have enabled local administrations and financial institutions to reinforce their capacity to prevent recycling of "dirty" money into the economic circuits of a number of countries, especially in the real estate sectors. Despite this progress, much remains to be done, since the phenomenon of laundering "dirty" money is far from being eradicated in the Sahel and drug trafficking and contraband continue to flourish in certain countries in the sub-region.

On the continental scale, the African Union (AU) has equipped itself with legal instruments aimed at combating terrorism and organized crime. Increasingly, a political will can be observed at the sub-regional and continental levels to combat these two threats. However, the plethora of different national and continental instruments, as well as the lack of clear strategies constitute major handicaps to driving an African dynamic aimed at effectively dealing with the terrorist threat and organized crime. Technical and financial partners (TFPs) and the United Nations have

adopted this focus with a view to providing sustainable solutions to fight insecurity in the Sahel. They have prepared “Sahel strategies” in various areas, particularly with regard to the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

The globalization of organized crime requires international cooperation, since all of the States are concerned and only a holistic approach can allow it to be eradicated at regional and global levels. However, this burgeoning of “Sahel strategies” raises a number of questions as to their relevance and their real effectiveness in the field. According to an expert involved in the fight against terrorism: “Their effectiveness is at issue, since, with more than 15 Sahel strategies, it would be difficult to coordinate them effectively; there is a sort of competition between these partners claiming to aid the Sahel. A similar tendency can be seen in the United Nations system agencies. There is a scattering of efforts to support the Sahel. And, more fundamentally, the different “Sahel strategies” run the risk of weakening sub-regional organizations and initiatives. In order to combat terrorism and organized crime, local leadership needs to be strengthened, not weakened. And TFPs should reinforce the States and not replace them.”

In all, these various initiatives illustrate a clear awareness among African countries and the international community of the need to effectively fight organized crime and terrorism in the Sahel and West Africa. However, the effectiveness of the initiatives depends in part on the ability of the States to properly implement them in the field. The presence of weak States in the region is an obstacle to the fight against these two evils, since these countries’ instability allows terrorist groups to operate unencumbered over vast territories and criminal networks to develop with the protection and collaboration of Jihadist groups as in northern Mali.

3.2. The militarization of the Sahel to deal with the new security threats

Operation Serval was launched in January 2013, marking the beginning of a series of military responses aimed at stopping the spread of Jihadism in the Sahel. The international mobilization initiated following this operation allowed African and foreign intervention forces to be set up to oust Jihadists from northern Mali. This allowed Jihadists to be routed in most of the northern regions, although they still control certain safe havens. This military offensive also made it possible to largely disorganize the routes used by drug traffickers and contraband smugglers. They no longer benefited from the full cooperation of AQIM and MUJWA to protect their convoys and carry on their criminal activities unhindered. These two organizations focused more on abducting hostages and targeted attacks aimed at killing a maximum number of civilians, and Westerners in general, in central Mali and neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Niger).

The militarization of this zone, with the presence of MINUSMA, Barkhane, American troops and armed forces from countries in the sub-region (G5 Sahel) has made it possible to militarily weaken terrorist groups and destroy certain of their bases. They are subjected to strong military pressure. They no longer totally control vast territories, as was the case during the occupation of northern Mali in 2012. Bourem and Tessalit are no longer under their control. They increasingly fall back to the South to carry out their criminal actions, while conducting sporadic operations in the North with targeted attacks against MINUSMA, the armed forces of Mali (FAMA) and the troops in Operation Barkhane. Thus, AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJWA have decided to extend their area of intervention to central Mali and especially to the Niger River Delta. Since 2015, attacks by Ansar Dine and its local branch, Katibat Macina

or the Macina Liberation Front, have been led by Amadou Kouffa against the FAMA, notables, religious leaders and the civilian population. These attacks have contributed to the destabilization of central Mali, an unstable zone marked by recurring community conflicts, particularly between herders and farmers, reflecting old antagonisms between communities. These antagonisms have been crystallized by the arrival of new actors such as Jihadists and the penetration of “dirty” money from drug trafficking and other illicit traffics across all levels of Malian society. In the view of some, Jihad is the royal road to resolving these issues.

However, the most important geopolitical event since the eviction of Jihadist groups from northern Mali has incontestably been the expansion of violent radicalism into neighbouring countries with the creation of Ansarul Islam led by Malam Diko in the Province of Soum in Burkina Faso. Regions of Burkina Faso bordering on Mali became operating areas for Jihadist movements. These actions have culminated in attacks on defence and security forces but also abductions, as in the case of the Australian couple abducted in Djibo in January 2016 by Ansar Dine. The attacks on Ouagadougou in 2016 and the attack on Grand Bassam perpetrated by AQIM and its allies and the attack on Ouagadougou in 2017 (for which responsibility has yet to be claimed) show that terrorist groups seek to operate, not only in the Sahel but also throughout West Africa with a series of attacks and hostage takings aimed at terrorizing the population and undermining national defense capabilities. This is likely to accentuate the militarization of responses to terrorism.

A similar trend has been seen with Boko Haram, which, after its military defeats in its strongholds in northern Nigeria, has sought to regroup in States bordering on Lake Chad, especially after the offensive launched in 2015, after the election of President Buhari and the creation of

the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) considerably reduced the military presence of Boko Haram on the ground. Through the MNJTF, the Lake Chad Basin countries, having learned lessons from their repeated failures in the fight against Boko Haram in their respective countries, decided to set up a sub-regional force 8,700 men strong, made up of military, police, gendarme and civilian personnel. This force, led by a Staff based in N’Djamena, Chad, is intended as an effective regional response to secure the border areas and destroy Boko Haram’s fallback bases in 4 countries (Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad). In addition, provisions have been made for hot pursuit, making it possible to pursue terrorist groups without official authorization from the country concerned. As we can see, the fight against Boko Haram has become a sub-regional issue and, in order to be sustainable, any solutions proposed should take that tack. The creation of the G5 Sahel including Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, is an example of this. However, the absence of Algeria raises many questions as to that country’s will to fight terrorism beyond its borders as well as the appropriateness of its leadership in the Sahel. Can this country, which obtained tangible results in the fight against terrorism in the 1990s, guarantee regional security in a context marked by a deteriorating security situation in the Sahel?

Overall, the States and the international community focus mainly on military responses to secure the Sahel and combat its terrorist groups. While it is true that significant results have been achieved with the weakening of several Jihadist groups, especially AQIM, they are far from being defeated, since their operating methods change constantly thanks to their survival and adaptation strategies. The militarization underway in the Sahel raises a number of questions, particularly in terms of effectiveness in the eradication of terrorism in this part of Africa. Indeed, the persistence

of the threat, the regrouping of Jihadist groups and their strategies of adaptation to strategic changes prove that militarization is far from successful for the moment.

3.3. Survival and adaptation strategies of criminal groups and their impact on the security and economic situation in the Sahel

Boko Haram has adapted its survival strategy in the light of the rise in power of the MNJTF. Rather than sending hundreds of combatants to attack the DSFs, it has sent small and very mobile groups to the front. The terrorist group seems to have opted for the decentralization of its operations across the Lake Chad Basin in order to disperse the MNJTF, but also to carry out more spectacular operations, since it still has the capacity to carry out actions, particularly suicide attacks, due to the dissemination of active networks and highly motivated activists around the Lake Chad Basin, ready to commit crimes. The movement is fighting for its survival and the same applies to the other Jihadist movements operating in the Sahel since the liberation of northern Mali by the international forces. The recent fusion between AQIM and Al-Mourabitoun took place in that framework. These rival movements aim to reinforce their capacity for resistance and action throughout the Sahel. According to certain specialists, their fusion is also a response to IS, following the allegiance of Boko Haram and certain Libyan terrorist groups to Islamic State. Al-Qaeda wants to keep the Sahel in its operating zone and would like to contain the expansion of IS in Africa after its setbacks in Syria and Iraq. The Sahel runs the risk of becoming a field of battle between these Jihadist groups over the next few years.

The militarization of northern Mali and the retreat of Jihadist groups in this zone have also resulted in a reorientation of drug and contraband routes in

the Sahel. Other routes are being opened or consolidated. These include routes running through Libya. The country, which has been unstable since the fall of Gaddafi in 2011, has become a hub for a number of traffics. The militia operating there control whole swaths of the national territory and profit from these illicit traffics. For example, the country has become the principal zone of transit for clandestine immigrants to Europe. Criminal networks pass thousands of Sub-Saharanans through the country. In 2016, 180,000 immigrants landed on the Italian territory, mostly from Libya. These potential immigrants mainly originated in Sahelian and West African countries. They pay smugglers thousands of euros to cross the Sahara and the Mediterranean and some are taken prisoner during the crossing of the desert by armed groups that reduce them to slavery and demand ransoms for their liberation. The routes used by these networks are also controlled by armed groups, some of which are part of the Jihadist movement.

In 2010, international migrant trafficking (IMT) from Africa to Europe brought in 150 million dollars for organized crime. These networks also ship drugs to Europe, Egypt and the Middle East and smuggle counterfeit products to Sub-Saharan Africa. The chaos in Libya has allowed terrorist groups linked to IS and Al-Qaeda to become established, and they have contributed not only to the destabilization of the Sahel, but also to the development of a criminal economy connected to several international organized crime rings. Fighting organized crime and terrorism in the Sahel and West Africa without bringing the Libyan issue into the equation would be counterproductive. In order to eradicate the regional threats facing the Sahel, it is imperative to put an end to the chaos in this country and establish lasting stability, otherwise, all of the neighbouring countries, especially Niger and Chad, will be permanent victims of this chaos and the stabilization of the Sahel will be a Sisyphean task, an endless cycle.

IV. CHALLENGES TO MEET AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SEIZE TO SUSTAINABLY COMBAT ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM IN THE SAHEL

Eradicating the security threats in the Sahel is therefore not an easy undertaking. To achieve this, a number of challenges must be met.

4.1. Challenges to meet

The Sahel experienced two major geopolitical upheavals beginning in the 2000s, taking the form of two exogenous shocks: the violence of drug trafficking and the violence of terrorism. These shocks have contributed to the destabilization of a region marked by structural weaknesses and recurring armed conflicts. Organized crime and terrorism have put down strong roots and their eradication poses multiple challenges for States, international organizations and the international community, but also for society, which is the main victim of the violence generated by the shocks. While these challenges are numerous, they are mainly linked to three dimensions:

Security

The stabilization of the Sahel is the principal challenge that the countries of the region need to meet in order to simultaneously combat organized crime and terrorism. Their spread has revealed either the weakness of the countries' defence and security systems or their unsuitability for dealing with asymmetric threats. Sub-regional initiatives such as the MNJTF and foreign interventions have weakened Jihadist groups, but they are still able to do harm in a context of asymmetric threats. The militarization of the region has revealed its limitations, as have purely security-oriented responses. A consensus

is growing, in the light of lessons learned around the world, that to win the fight against terrorism, we need to attack its roots by combating social and development inequalities within the country. Militarization is not a panacea. In Afghanistan, for instance, drug trafficking has continued despite very strong American and NATO presence, and the Taliban have returned.

Social and cultural

In order to overcome terrorist groups, a good military strategy is required, but the most lasting strategy, which strikes at the root of the issue, is to fight against youth radicalization by combating erroneous interpretations of the Koran that promote violence and hatred and to provide training for imams and preachers who profess an open, tolerant Islam. These measures should form a complement to the design and implementation of inclusive public policies to fight regional disparities and social inequality. Poverty remains fertile ground for the development of extremist groups and criminal networks in the Sahel. Efforts should also be made to find consensus-building frameworks such as the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP) in Niger. This framework, which includes most of the local leaders in the North of the country, makes it possible to detect tensions and alert the authorities to risks of conflict. Its main aim has been to include local leaders in the peace process in the North following the end of the rebellion in the 1990s. In a context of upheaval in the Sahel, such consensus-building frameworks are more necessary than ever.

Political

Effectively fighting corruption. If organized crime has been able to grow rapidly in Africa and gangrene every sphere of society, it is due to corruption. It is illusory to think that organized crime can be totally eradicated in West Africa and the Sahel. However, it can be contained and

effectively fought if there is a strong political will in each individual State. Otherwise, criminal networks will continue to operate in the vast West African and Sahelian space and the criminal economy will undermine the very foundations of its States and societies. In time, some States will become narco-states and this will accentuate the weakness of several countries and the destabilization of the region. Connections between organized crime and terrorism will continue to grow despite the militarization of the Sahel.

4.2. Opportunities to seize to sustainably combat organized crime and terrorism in the Sahel

Despite the seriousness of the dominant trends referred to above, namely organized crime and terrorism, there are real opportunities to reverse them sustainably and build peace in the Sahel. These two exogenous shocks have certainly contributed to destabilizing the region, but there are seeds of change that can be seized on and exploited. Indeed, there is a growing awareness among most actors in the Sahel (governments, civil society, employers, DSFs, young people, etc.) of the need to seriously combat these two threats. After the attacks in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, awareness grew rapidly. This is reflected in concrete actions ranging from intelligence sharing to greater cooperation between departments in charge of tracking down terrorists. Decision-makers and ordinary citizens are now aware that all countries in West Africa are vulnerable and terrorism is not just limited to a few Sahelian countries. People are taking this threat more seriously.

A rising awareness of the need to combat organized crime in all national and sub-regional structures has also been noted, thanks to the efforts

of bodies such as GIABA and UNODC, which use various methods to build sub-regional capacity to contain organized crime and tailor national responses to individual situations. Here again, to effectively combat this evil, a regional approach is required on judicial, political, security and social levels. This is an opportunity to be reinforced to sustainably combat these two threats, since national responses in this regard have largely demonstrated their shortcomings. No State in the sub-region can overcome these two threats acting alone, since terrorism and organized crime take place in transnational spaces, through networks and units that transcend national borders.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

For nearly two decades, the Sahel, which is a hub and a link between Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, has been faced with exogenous shocks that reinforce its structural vulnerability and weaknesses. The spread of organized crime and terrorism have upset the region's social balances. It has become a key link in the geopolitics of organized crime. The trade routes that used to be the foundation of its prosperity have become the main foundations that allow the criminal economy to take root in this part of the continent, which has found room to grow in the border areas where State presence is limited if not to say inexistent. The major consequence of several years of neglect of Sahelian areas by newly independent countries has been the impoverishment of the population and their disconnection from the formal economy, dominated by the major urban centers. Traffics, banditry and organized crime have flourished in these zones, which have become the main haunts and deployment areas of transnational criminal networks. The deployment of drug trafficking networks in the Sahel has made this region a hub for the global drug trade.

In addition to this shift, the Sahel became a field for the spread of Jihadism following the failure of violent Salafism in Algeria in the late 1990s. Over the years, this second exogenous shock has become a strong security threat to the countries of the region and West Africa as a whole, especially after the geopolitical upheavals in the wake of the overthrow of Gaddafi in 2011. The connections between terrorist groups and organized crime networks were strengthened by support from community groups and the devastating impact of corruption on the elite and certain elements of the DSFs. The militarization taking

place in the Sahel may well have weakened these connections, however, new adaptation strategies are emerging and new routes are being used to continue illegal and criminal trafficking.

The persistence of these strong trends has made it possible to set up regional strategies to deal with organized crime and terrorism, however, much remains to be done in terms of the adaptation of Sahelian countries' DSFs to dealing with asymmetric threats. In this framework, it is important to avoid falling into the trap of focusing on security alone. In order to win this combat, major challenges need to be met. Firstly, it is important to fight the corruption that often gangrenes decision-making spheres and tackle the underlying causes that promote the emergence of religious radicalism and terrorism, namely poverty and the lack of social integration. This will be a long-term undertaking, to be conducted through consensual and feasible strategies over the short, medium and long term. The recommendations below may prove useful with a view to the development or reinforcement of such strategies.

5.2. Recommendations

To the governments of the sub-region, TFPs and sub-regional economic integration organizations

1. Build DSFs intervention capacity to secure border zones, which are virtual sieves and development zones for illicit traffics of all kinds. Programs devoted to securing border areas need to be developed. TFPs should finance these programs, which will contribute to the stabilization of these zones. These programs should include an income-generating activity (IGA) component for youth.

To the governments of the sub-region and ECOWAS

2. Harmonize ECOWAS country legislation pertaining to the fight against illicit traffics and organized crime. The legal standards applied should be identical in all Sahelian and ECOWAS countries.
3. Build DSFs capacity, particularly in customs and police departments, to dismantle illicit trafficking networks in terms of equipment to detect illicit products and surveillance of areas at risk. In addition to capacity building, sub-regional cooperation between such departments should be reinforced.
4. Apply the sanctions laid down by the national laws of the different countries with regard to corruption, money laundering and financing of terrorism. Impunity promotes the development of organized crime in Africa.
5. Adopt consensual laws on the financing of political parties in all Sahelian and ECOWAS countries, with specific enforcing decrees, particularly in terms of sanctions against guilty parties. The democratization process underway in West Africa and the Sahel runs the risk of being compromised due to the financing of certain political actors by criminal organizations.
6. Build the defensive capabilities of Sahelian countries bordering on Libya in order to keep groups affiliated with IS and Al-Qaeda from retreating to the South in the event the Libyan crisis is settled.
7. Initiate development planning in all Sahelian countries to correct the development disparities between remote regions and so-called “privileged” areas. Such programs should be

accompanied by implementation plans and scheduled activities over the short, medium and long term to fight poverty and exploit the economic, social and cultural potential of remote regions. Particular attention should be focused on northern Mali and Niger, which are bastions of rebel movements since those countries acceded to independence in 1960.

8. Set up IGAs for the population so that they do not cooperate with criminals, and encourage community leaders not to cooperate with illicit trafficking networks.
9. Encourage dialogue and concertation with local people to dissuade them from participating in criminal activities. Avoid systematic repression, which can often have counter-productive social and political impacts.
10. Encourage dialogue and cooperation between Sahelian States by setting up a cross-border security mechanism.

To the TFPs and sub-regional economic integration organizations

11. Harmonize the TFPs’ different “Sahel initiative strategies” in order to avoid duplication in the fight against terrorism and organized crime in the Sahel. These strategies should support regional initiatives and not replace them.

NOTES

1. The Sahel is the part of Africa located between the Sahara and the tropical part of the continent. It stretches from Mauritania to Somalia. In this study, we have focused only on its western portion, which runs from Mauritania to Chad.
2. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime, signed in 2003, stipulates that an offence is transnational if it is committed in more than one State.
3. There are several definitions of terrorism and there are 18 legal instruments to fight terrorism worldwide. Terrorism can be defined as acts of terror committed against civilian populations and government representatives for political or religious reasons by an organization aiming to overthrow the established political order without the consent of the citizens.
4. In 2016, Mali adopted the Uniform Act on the Fight against Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism. That same year, Burkina Faso adopted the Act on the Fight against Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism.
5. Among the multiple Sahel strategies, we can notably cite: the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the European Union Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy, etc.

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FES Peace and Security Series No. 29

About the FES Africa Peace and Security Series

The lack of security is one of the key impediments to development and democracy in Africa. The existence of protracted violent conflicts as well as a lack of accountability of the security sector in many countries are challenging cooperation in the field of security policy. The emerging African Peace and Security Architecture provides the institutional framework to promote peace and security.

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About the publication

For a number of years, the Sahel has been faced with a series of threats, the most emblematic of which are Islamist terrorism, illegal trafficking and organized crime. These threats have contributed to the destabilization of the region and accentuated the weakness of certain States. This situation aggravates the climate of insecurity and further accentuates the risks of instability, which hardly promotes the socio-economic development of Sahelian countries. In this environment, Jihadist groups and organized crime networks flourish. These networks develop with the complicity or participation of local actors, who profit from illicit traffics in these areas where State presence is limited and States have difficulty controlling their

own borders. Converging interests and intrinsic links have grown up between these different actors in their quest to ensure that their businesses thrive and gain control of strategic routes and spaces. This combination of interests makes it more complicated to find peace and lasting security, since several dynamics cohabit in the same space and their interests interconnect.

Through a multidisciplinary approach taking account of socio-political and economic aspects, this study seeks to clarify the nature of the relationships between organized crime and terrorism and to analyse the impact of their activities on States and local communities in a context of major political and social upheaval in the Sahel.

