



## CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT: ANALYSIS FROM THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND ISSUES OF GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY IN MALI

27/5/21, Casa África/online

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The field of security and climate change has evolved over the past 15 years from the margins of academic research and policy debate to become an important concern for state actors, international organizations and UN agencies. It seems that the Sahel has become a preferred space to discuss the effects of the climate crisis in light of the multidimensional crises in Mali since 2012. The production of various reports, analyses, and publications on the links between armed conflict and climate change in the Sahel has exploded in recent year[1]s.

Research centers such as SIPRI, the Planetary Security Initiative, and Adelphi have published a large number of analyses that have not yet convinced all Sahelian conflict specialists. Certainly, the emergence and consolidation of a climate security narrative and agenda in the Sahel requires an analysis of its effects, particularly as international policies focused on environmental protection can contribute to conflict.

This paper examines the proposed vision for climate security issues in the Sahel. And in Mali Despite the importance of explanatory models, analysis of the climate change-conflict nexus tends to highlight the importance of political ecology and governance as explanatory factors of the conflict environment in a changing world. The consequences are found both in the dynamics of conflict and in the management of conflict.



## I. Presentation of the Central Niger Delta in the Mopti region and the dynamics of climate change and conflict

The Central Niger Delta is a large wetland area in West Africa; the land tenure system is based on the DINA of MACINA in the 19th century. Four dominant production systems: pastoral, agricultural, fishing and forestry; The population of the Delta is dominated by the Fulani with a multi-ethnic mix (Bozos, Bambaras, Markas, etc.); The system remains a reference in terms of its organization. The customary and emerging management methods have evolved and changed over time. Over the course of history and under the pressure or conquests of empires and kingdoms, other groups have arrived and settled in the great flood plain of the Delta - or on its riparian zones (Brehima Kassibo 1994). Each of these groups has found its place by engaging in specific livelihood strategies (Claude Fay 1995).

There are various factors that trigger conflicts:

- The first is the policy of agricultural legislation that disadvantages pastoralism and the second is the continued marginalization of pastoralists;
- The second factor is poor governance, corruption and lack of trust in state institutions;
- The third factor is the transformation of bourgoutieres into rice fields and the blocking of animal passageways;
- The fourth factor is related to land conflicts. Farmers and pastoralists pay traditional chiefs, officials and judges to support their causes.

## II. The theory of climate change and conflict risks

Climate change is unquestionably among the most important global issues of the 21st century. Global climate change is causing drought and desertification, which in turn is causing resource scarcity. This scarcity of



resources pushes people to migrate, which generates new conflicts or fuels latent conflicts (Thomas Homer-Dixon). Conflicts are interactions between political, environmental and economic factors (Tor Arve Benjaminsen). It should be noted that Thomas Homer-Dixon's theory in the 1990s mentions overexploitation, degradation or scarcity of natural resources as a cause of conflict. This approach asserts that climate change would cause population movements, socio-economic tensions, pressure on socio-political systems of conflict resolution and, most importantly, lead to violent conflict.

Climate change scenarios for the Sahel vary and are uncertain, but the most common prediction is that there will be progressively drier conditions with more erratic rainfall. In Mali, previous years (1973 and 1984) have been marked by droughts. The years 2005 and 2012 were marked by floods. According to several sources, climate change is not a direct cause of conflict. The various conventional land conflicts have not disrupted society and fostered serious social antagonisms. According to some, an increase in violent conflicts over scarce resources is also to be expected.

In the study conducted by Tor Arve Benjaminsen et al[2] there are two complementary analytical approaches

The first is the collection and analysis of judicial data on land use conflicts, 1992-2009, from the regional court of appeal in Mopti. A comparison of the conflict data with statistics on climatic conditions contemporary land use conflicts lends little substance to claims that climate variability is an important factor in these conflicts. Second, we conducted a qualitative analysis of one of the many land use conflicts in the region. Again, we find that factors other than those directly related to environmental conditions and resource scarcity dominate. Plausible explanations for the violent conflict are underpinned by several structural factors, including: agricultural encroachment that has impeded the mobility of herders and livestock; opportunistic behavior of rural actors as a consequence of a growing policy vacuum; and corruption and rent-seeking among government officials.

Other studies conducted by Tor Benjaminsen and Boubacar BA[3] in the Seno (a flooded area in the Mopti region) have shown that jihadist groups have taken control of certain socio-ecological entities. The political ecology approach helps explain the current situation. By focusing on the micro-politics of two land-use



conflicts, we see how these conflicts are affected by jihadist expansion (the case of the conflict between the Peul and the Dogon in Sari (Dinangourou commune - Koro circle, Mopti region). The analysis allows us to explain the peasant (or pastoral) logic behind the jihadist expansion. Another example concerns the violent clashes between Fulani and Dogon that have recently intensified on the Seno plains in central Mali[4].

The climate-conflict nexus narrative permeates the strategies of technical and financial partners to address the root causes of insecurity and conflict in the Sahel. Yet false assumptions about this link can lead to poor approaches. In some cases, environmental protection programs can have a negative impact and contribute to the exacerbation, rather than the mitigation, of conflict and terrorism.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations:

It is important to enhance context sensitivity with qualitative studies that allow for the contextualization and socio-political nuances that are necessary to capture the complex interaction between climate variability and conflict escalation. Conditions for success stories need to be explored. Environmental protection programs must keep in mind that the priority is not availability but accessibility, distribution, and politics. There is also a need to improve governance frameworks governing access to natural resources that are essential to address environmental and societal factors. Violent entrepreneurs or armed groups in central Mali such as the AQIM-affiliated Katiba Macina or the Islamic State-affiliated Dawlatoul Islamia capitalize on the grievances of rural populations who feel mistreated, marginalized, dispossessed, and disenfranchised from decision-making regarding the use and allocation of natural resources.

[1] Bruno Charbonneau et Tatiana Smirnova : La sécurité climatique au Sahel : pour qui et pour quoi ? Bulletin Franco Paix Vol. 6, n°6 Juin 2021

[2] Tor A Benjaminsen, Koffi Alinon, Halvard Buhaug and Jill Tove Buseth: Does climate change drive land-use conflicts in the Sahel? Journal of Peace Research, 2012



[3] Why do pastoralists in Mali join jihadist groups? A political ecological explanation- The Journal of Peasant Studies, 2018

[4] Fulani-Dogon Killings in Mali: Farmer-Herder Con!icts as Insurgency and Counterinsurgency-African security 2021

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