



**Symposium Report**

**Bamako, Mali**

**4th-5th of May 2018**

**Day 1**

The first day of the conference was dedicated to the presentation of the findings of the Centre FrancoPaix's 'Projet Mali'. Delegates were welcomed by Dr Issa Sidibé, director of the Centre de recherche at the Ecole de Maintien de la Paix and by Dr. Bruno Charbonneau, director of the Mali project at the Centre FrancoPaix (UQAM).

**Round Table 1**

Jon Sears presented on 'Espoirs de gouvernance déçus et crise persistante au Mali', arguing that there is no point in changing governments if there is in practice no real change as this does nothing to promote accountability or reconciliation and breeds cynicism. Adam Sandor presented on 'Insécurité et la gouvernance des acteurs armés dans le nord et le centre du Mali'. He showed that insecurity is increasing in the north and centre of country where, in the absence of the state, jihadist groups have become protectors of the population. People thus turn to them to solve their problems, even though they do not share their beliefs, resulting in what he called a kind of transnational security clientelism'. The third speaker was Niagalé Bagayoko, who spoke on 'La réforme du secteur de la sécurité'. Her central argument was the security sector reform is a long term project that cannot be completed quickly. She focused in particular on the various blockages to reform, in particular actors who have no vested interest in supporting the process of reform, and the problem of human rights, especially when those who are responsible for protecting human rights are precisely those who are responsible for abusing them. The final speaker Bruno Charbonneau, who argued for the importance of keeping in view the wider international context that shapes external intervention in Mali. He particularly underlined the consequences of attaching central importance to the war on terror at the expense of neglecting or ignoring other causes of the conflict. He argued that the militarisation of the Sahel would have long-term consequences and that the problems of MINUSMA had underscored a wider crisis of peacekeeping at the level of the United Nations.

**Round Table 2**

The theme of this round table was 'Dynamiques maliennes conflictuelles'. The first speaker was Maître Saran Keïta Diakite, who spoke about how the international community is disconnected from realities on the ground. She also showed that, while the importance of the

role of women has increased in conflict resolution, their roles often remains marginal. The second speaker, Kalilou Sidibe explored the historical origins of insecurity in Mali, which go back to independence in 1960, when national unity was a slogan but not realised in practice. This had a long-term impact on the governance of the country. The return of Malians from Libya to the north of the country was not therefore the main problem which, in his view, was the failure of successive governments over many years to ensure an equal sharing out of the nation's wealth. The final speaker, Lucie Bello, explored the ways in which competition for access to resources, in particular access to land, was fundamental to understanding the dynamics of conflict in Mali. She also pointed to the importance of demographic and socio-economic changes as factors of conflict.

### **Round Table 3**

The theme of this round table was again 'Dynamiques maliennes conflictuelles'. The first speaker was Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra, who spoke about the young people who joined MUJAO in the north of the country. He argued that they were not in favour of independence for the north, but rather joined the movement often as a means of supporting their families. Any process of 'deradicalisation' therefore has to be local in nature. The second speaker, Mohamed T.F MAIGA, explored problems of governance and corruption in the north, and how criminality (in particular drug trafficking) had impacted local equilibria, in particular through its employment of youngsters. He was followed by Mohamed Ould Mahmoud, who spoke about how the state's absence in many domains in the north and centre of Mali, where it fails even to provide basic services, including the 'services régaliens', is a factor of conflict. The final speaker, Philippe Prévost from MINUSMA, showed how terrorist attacks had increased in Mali since 2013. There were 17 such attacks in 2013, rising to 227 in 2017. During this same period, MINUSMA has lost 102 soldiers, with a further 402 injured.

### **Day 2**

The second day of the Symposium was dedicated to a research seminar on the theme '**Space, borders, conflicts and insecurity in West Africa**'. The seminar was introduced by Professor Tony Chafer and Dr Elisa Lopez Lucia. Tony Chafer first presented the purpose and objectives of the West African Peace and Security Network (WAPSN), followed by Elisa Lopez Lucia who introduced the theme of the research seminar. She pointed out that this theme was particularly appropriate for the Symposium as issues relating to space and borders are often found at the centres of researchers' analyses of insecurity dynamics in West Africa. Furthermore, national, regional and international policies that aim to manage security issues and conflicts in West Africa are increasingly taking into account their spatial and border dimensions. The creation of the G5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) illustrate well this trend.

The first panel of the day on '**Security practices and (re)definition of the Sahel**' was chaired by Dr Kalilou Sidibé. It started with Katharina Döring's presentation which drew on the 'spatial turn' in International Relations to analyse security politics in West Africa through a spatial lens. By tracing the establishment of the G5 Sahel and the Nouakchott Process, she showed how actors use space to pursue and legitimise their political goals, as well as to marginalise some actors, in this case ECOWAS. The panel continued with Dr Edoardo Baldaro's contribution which focused on how various actors promote competing projects for the Sahel, including international actors and transnational criminal and terrorist groups. He showed that these actors have a different definition of, and project different identities and ideas on, the Sahel, thereby informing four main regional projects: Sahel as a security strategy, Sahel as a *terra nullus*, Sahel as potential prey, and Sahel as an archipelago of micro-regions. To finish, he argued that the interaction between these competing projects partly explains the instability of the region. Dr Nathaniel Powell was the next presenter. His paper provided an overview of the logic driving French military interventionism in Africa since the 1960s. His argument was that the ideological and geopolitical drivers of French interventions have changed little since the early independence years, and that there is still a tendency to confound French security interest with the interests of the African political elite. He concluded by stating that this interventionism fosters an instability that it was meant to solve in the first place. The last presenter of the panel, Dr Moda Dieng, also examined the role of France in shaping the G5 Sahel's dynamics of cooperation in the fight against terrorism. He asked why the G5 Sahel was created while other regional organisations could have coordinated the fight against terrorisms such as ECOWAS and ECCAS. His response was that one of the reasons is the role of France and the competition between France and Nigeria.

The second panel, chaired by Professor Tony Chafer, was dedicated to the issue of '**The interconnections between interventions, regional space and borders**'. Jens Herpolsheimer was the first presenter. His paper looked at how different actors such as the AU, ECOWAS and Angola have framed conflict and interventions in Guinea-Bissau, focusing in particular on the framing power of 'space'. He argued that different spatial imaginations have intersected, relating to different political projects that seek to construct, consolidate and order regional space(s) in West Africa. The next presenter was Ambroise Dakouo who spoke about the links between human mobility and transnational security issues in West Africa, and the resulting challenges. According to him, analysing the dynamics of mobility would help us understand better the limits of security policies in the region. He also emphasised the need for a strong ownership of security sector reform in the Sahel. The last presenter of the panel was Dr Giulia Prelz Oltramonti who started by acknowledging that borders in the Sahara-Sahel are very weak but that they still exist. She raised the question: how are borders produced in the Sahel and who produces them? Her contribution then focused on how international institutions and NGOs shape borders, produce and maintain them.

**'The Implications of regional security dynamics'** was the subject of the third panel of the day, chaired by Dr Isaline Bergamaschi. The panel started with Dr Papa Samba Ndiaye's contribution on the conflict in Casamance. He argued that the persistence of the conflict can partly be explained by its regionalisation. The proliferation of weapons originating from Guinea-Bissau, and the circulation of mercenaries from the Liberian and Sierra Leone conflicts all fuelled the Casamance conflict. The next contributor was Dr Abosede Rashidat Omowumi Babatunde who presented her analysis of the dynamics and challenges of combatting trafficking in women and children in Nigeria. She argued that while Nigerian groups dominate human trafficking networks, it is also a major security challenge for neighbouring West African countries because of the transnational dimension of the challenge and porous borders within West Africa. The panel continued with Dr Daniel Olisa Izewe's presentation on the implication of the insurgency in Nigeria's Northeast region on inter-state and trans-border mobility. He showed how Boko Haram's terrorist activities have disrupted free flow of traffic between Nigeria and Niger, Cameroon and Chad, thereby affecting social and economic activities. The last presenter was Jessica Moody who raised the question: are ex-combatants in Côte d'Ivoire turning to Jihad in Mali? She explained why, except for three or four cases, the answer to this question remains negative.

Finally, the last panel, chaired by Dr Elisa Lopez Lucia, was dedicated to '**Regional security governance**'. Babatunde Felix Obamamoye started with a paper analysing transnational security threats in West Africa through the concept of regional security complex. He concluded by saying that West Africa is not just a security region but that its security dimension is important at the moment; and that ECOWAS will be important depending on the geographies of the transnational security threats and the function it can fulfil. The next presenter Azeez Olaniyan engaged with the creation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to deal with Boko Haram. He analysed the creation, the action and the challenges of the MNJTF. Dr Jo-Ansie Van Wyk was the third presenter of this panel. Her paper concerned ECOWAS' panel of the wise which was the first one of its kind, created in 1999. While information on the council remains very scarce, she was able to show that the Panel of the Wise has had some impact. This impact appears more clearly in the field of electoral assistance and in terms of the development of a normative model for other African organisations. The last presenter of the day was Dr Isaline Bergamaschi who spoke about the role of African professionals in UN peacebuilding. She presented an exploratory sociology of the Malian staff of the MINUSMA. Her first impressions are the following: the youth of this staff; a strong presence of Malians originating from the North of the country due to a need of expertise and access; its middle-class origin. She finished by highlighting some tensions including a tension between expertise and neutrality, and a tension related to differences in treatment of Malian and international staff.