



Building an Actionable Knowledge Base for Dealing with the Sahel Region and its Particular Challenges

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Summary

There is a clear and urgent need of building comprehensive knowledge with view to the broad variety of challenges in the Sahel region that provides full situational awareness with regard to the given complex interdependencies. Particularly the constant changes and the unpredictability of the involved violent actors, groups and organisations require much more careful and specific analysis than in the past. In order to design, develop and implement strategies likely to fundamentally improve the situation, there is a need to understand the full scale of the problems including their origins, trace their development and identify their dynamics. Integrated, comprehensive strategies are needed – in terms of a trans-border, regional approach on the one hand, and in terms of combining military, political and development cooperation on the other hand. Sharing information and knowledge provides for continuous situation awareness in order to gain a better understanding of the scope, scale and impact of changes on the overall situation. Within this process developing a knowledge base has become a particular relevant approach in which systems in the operations environment are analysed, knowledge about the different political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information domains of the respective environment need to be developed in order to understand the behaviour and capabilities of key actors and their interaction and to make informed decisions. Romani Prodi, the UN SecGen's Special Envoy for the region, has proposed to establish a „*Sahel Development Research Institute*“ in order to support the bottom up planning process. This could be well a center piece of a Knowledge Base Mosaic that looks in a comprehensive fashion at the broad set of challenges given in the Sahel region.

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ANALYSIS

1. Repercussions

Over the past decade, Europe has become increasingly focused on security in the Sahel – a vast strip of land abutting the southern Sahara desert from Mauritania on Africa’s west coast to Eritrea in the east, including some of the world’s poorest countries – particularly as the territory could become a new safe haven for extremist groups linked to al-Qaeda. Obviously, the risks and threats associated with geopolitical change, social and humanitarian challenges in the Sahel have repercussions for security and stability in the entire region and beyond.

For many years countries in the Sahel have been dealing with political and humanitarian crises. This has resulted in weak governance and weak state institutions that have been not capable to effectively deliver basic services such as policing, justice, access to water, affordable health care and education for their citizen. We can see widespread corruption, chronic political instability, and particularly challenging transnational activities, both criminal activities as well as activities of terrorist organizations and other militant groups. This situation has left the Sahelian countries increasingly vulnerable to insecurity.

The role of organized crime in northern Mali’s descent into conflict is particularly vivid, and it offers lessons not just for Mali’s donors but also for neighbouring states. Interesting to observe: organized criminal activity escalated in northern Mali during a period when the country was a major recipient of foreign assistance provided by the European Union (EU), individual EU member states and last but not least from the United States. A key reason may well be that external security-related aid was focused on counterterrorism and state capacity. Donors provided training and technical assistance. They have paid much less attention to the wider problem of state complicity with organized crime.

On top of these challenges comes a disastrous humanitarian situation including a food crisis. According to United Nations estimates, more than 10 million people in the Sahel region will be affected by food insecurity in 2013 including 1.5 million children. The greatest humanitarian need is to be found in the fields of water and food supplies and the provision of accommodation and medical care. Due to the crisis in Mali, the number of displaced persons is currently estimated at about 430,000. More than 170,000 people have fled the conflict in northern Mali heading to the neighbouring countries of Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Algeria. According to estimates, there are now 260,000 internally displaced persons in Mali.¹

In his report on the situation in the Sahel dated 14 June 2013 the Secretary General of the United Nations has stated the requirement “... to bring about long-term change through a comprehensive strategy.”² Obviously, there is a clear and urgent need of building comprehensive knowledge with view to the broad variety of challenges that provides full situational awareness with regard to the given complex interdependencies. In order to design, develop and implement strategies likely to fundamentally improve the situation, there is a need to understand the full scale of the problems including their origins, trace their development and identify their dynamics.

¹ Figures as of 6 March 2013; updates available at <http://unocha.org/mali/>

² Secretary General United Nations, Security Council, „Report of the Secretary General on the situation in the Sahel region“, S/2013/354, 14 June 2013, 4.



When I reflect upon the altering approaches to security within the four decades of my military career, the comprehensive approach to security has clearly become the most promising in order to build lasting stability. In most circumstances, no single agency, government or organization is able to act successfully without the support of the others. Continuously altering requirements and responsibilities and the need to cooperate closely with a plenitude of controlling authorities, involved organizations and even nations ask for synchronized, integrated solutions. Consequently, decision-making in NATO and the European Union recently has started building on actionable knowledge, derived from a holistic analysis of the challenges to be addressed.

2. Breeding ground for hybrid warriors?

Michel Reveyrand de Menthon, the European Union's representative for the Sahel region, mentioned recently at a media conference in Dakar that the French-led military intervention launched against Al Qaeda-linked militant groups in January had not eliminated the danger. For now, the rebels have fled Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, but the concern is whether the government can exert lasting control and provide security as the Islamists, experienced and highly motivated desert fighters, resort to hit-and-run tactics.

De Menthon stated: „*There has been a considerable weakening of these groups with Operation Serval but it is clear that they have the capacity for very fast reconstruction which shows that the threat remains high,*”³ to continue that suicide attacks in May claimed in part by the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa in which 20 people died proved that the threat remained ever-present. He also pointed out: „*The risk of terrorism and trafficking, particularly in drugs, is evolving in a vast space and with an ever-changing enemy. ... We have scored victories but we still have to act on the origins of (terror). The fight against terrorism requires many approaches. ... We need everyone to be aware of the danger of a fanaticism without limit.*”⁴

A key characteristic of the violent groups in the Sahel region is the fluidity of their leadership and organisational structures. Interpersonal relationships are holding these groups together. In the case of differences between individuals, the flexibility of the organisational structure suggests it is easy for a member who is in disagreement to withdraw and set up an own movement. Consequently, when it comes to resolving conflicts, the multiplicity of movements, the fluidity of structures and the weak mandate held by leaders limits the capacity of negotiators to reach inclusive, effective peace agreements.

Particular complex is the mixed pursuit of the key actors' political agenda with criminal activities. In Somalia, al-Shabaab derives a large part of its income from widespread extortion and commission on seizures affected by pirates. In Mauritania and Mali, the battalion led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar has largely financed its activities through cigarette, cocaine and weapons smuggling. In between, hostage taking has become the most lucrative activity, widespread among al-Shabaab, AQIM, MUJAO and Boko Haram.

Obviously, there is an urgent need for better knowledge, information sharing and comprehensive understanding. Particularly the constant changes and the unpredictability of the involved violent actors, groups and

³ New Straits Time, 21 June 2013, „Terror threat still high in Africa's Sahel: EU envoy“
<http://www.nst.com.my/latest/terror-threat-still-high-in-africa-s-sahel-eu-envoy-1.305011#ixzz2YFSao2l6> (accessed 8 July 2013).

⁴ New Straits Time, 21 June 2013, „Terror threat still high in Africa's Sahel: EU envoy“
<http://www.nst.com.my/latest/terror-threat-still-high-in-africa-s-sahel-eu-envoy-1.305011#ixzz2YFSao2l6> (accessed 8 July 2013).



organisations require much more careful and specific analysis than in the past. This includes historical analysis going to the roots of conflicts and problems. The majority of violent organisations in the Sahel-Sahara has its roots in conflict pitting them against their country of origin. What is happening presently is that violent groups are signing up to a transnational terrorist network as a further stage in their movement's development and this development is likely to proceed dynamically unless sufficient thought and action is being applied.

In fact, nobody should be surprised, if this development would move in direction of the present rise of asymmetric threats, especially in evolving forms of hybrid warfare as we have seen in Afghanistan, Lebanon and Syria and as we could expect in a conflict with Iran. The Sahel as breeding ground for hybrid warriors – this could be an ultimate threat to security.

Hybrid warfare is a potent, complex variation of warfare that blends conventional, irregular and cyber warfare. It describes attacks by nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, improvised explosive devices and information warfare. Hybrid warfare is a potent, complex variation of warfare, a multi-modal form of fighting through systematic and synergetic incorporation of a wide-array of military and paramilitary concepts. More than simply adding irregular to regular military capabilities on the same battleground, hybrid warfare integrates them in a systematically designed context.

Since 2006 Lebanon War experience, military analysts have discovered the rise of hybrid threats. Clearly, Hezbollah has mastered the art of light infantry tactics against heavy mechanized forces. Hezbollah even showed its abilities to threaten Israeli naval assets through hitting *INS Hanit*, an advanced class corvette from coastal launchers. Likewise, during the Operation *Cast Lead* and the *Operation Pillar of Defense* in 2008 and in 2012 respectively, we saw Gazan groups altering their concepts by adopting more of a hybrid warfare-type strategy. Currently, another hybrid warfare case, the Syrian Civil War, is ongoing. Furthermore, not only the armed opposition has been conducting hybrid concepts, but also the Baathist dictatorship has shaped its violent strategy by utilizing a wide-array of means ranging from indiscriminate shelling and air force bombardments in combination with Shabiha paramilitaries within operational integrity. The more non-state actors' access to game changer weapons increases, the more likely it is that hybrid conflicts will spread. Besides, weakening state capacity in several nations following the "Arab spring" would possibly augment this menacing development.

3. Organized crime in the Sahel

In order to understand the growing instability of the region it is necessary to go beyond the role of AQIM and other jihadist organizations. Rivalries over the control of smuggling and state officials' tolerance of criminal activity by political allies allowed extremist groups to flourish. The complicity and involvement of Malian officials, and the willingness of Western governments to pay ransoms, also caused the success story of the kidnapping industry to thrive. Moreover, these factors may well have driven the eruption of renewed conflict in northern Mali in 2012.

Organized criminal activity in the Sahel region has been fed by the fact that there are few alternative activities that produce similar profits. This particularly applies to

- smuggling of cannabis resin,



- cocaine smuggling, and
- kidnapping for ransom.

Individuals and networks involved in these activities have managed to convert their wealth into political influence and military power. Contraband trade in licit goods, which had developed across the region in previous decades, laid the institutional basis for the development of these high-profit activities. Long-standing commercial and social networks have been frequently based on families and communities specializing in trade. They are spread across trading hubs in different countries. The links that had survived the collapse of the long-distance caravan trade in the late nineteenth century began to expand, thriving on contraband of subsidized Algerian and Libyan goods travelling to northern Mali and Niger.⁵ These flows bypassed the official customs system in a process that led to the establishment of informal arrangements between traders and officials.

During the 1990s, cuts to Algeria's subsidy budget caused a partial economic slump, but the embargo imposed on Libya stimulated contraband from Mauritania, Algeria, and Libya. It continues today and has intensified with the conflict in northern Mali. Today, supplies in food and petrol overwhelmingly come from Algeria. In addition, regional trade in weapons has increased as a result of the conflict in Libya and growing demand from northern Mali since early 2012 and turned the region into a major arms trafficking hub.

Cigarette smuggling has greatly contributed to the emergence of the practices and networks that have allowed drug trafficking to grow. Like contraband of licit goods and cigarette smuggling, the migrant business also helped spawn the emergence of carriers in the region specializing in off-road transport or in establishing arrangements with corrupt officials. The rise of kidnapping for ransom in the region has been closely linked to – and a main driver of – AQIM's growing presence in the Sahel.

Nowhere in the region were state institutions more implicated in organized crime than in northern Mali. The former Malian leadership tried to use organized crime as a resource for the exercise of influence in the north by allowing its local allies to engage in criminal activity. It eventually lost control over the conflicts this generated, while the rule of law and the legitimacy of state institutions were eroded through complicity with organized crime.

4. Spill over from Mali

The EU's strategic objective, as expressed in its Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, remains the promotion of stability, connecting security, development and governance through the integrated and coordinated use of all relevant EU instruments in order to address the root causes of insecurity, underdevelopment and conflicts at local, national and regional levels. The CSDP mission in Mali has become a very significant part of this comprehensive approach to restore the state's authority throughout Mali and bring a durable solution to the current crisis.

According to the most recent data made available by the World Bank, 77.1% of Malians lived under the international poverty line in 2006 (earning less than \$2 per day). It is among the world's poorest 25 countries.⁶ Mali

⁵ Judith Scheele, "Tribus, Etats et Fraude: La Région Frontalière Algéro-Malienne," *Etudes Rurales* 184, July–December 2009, 79–94.

⁶ respectively 2009 and 2010



is cut into two with the emergence in the north of a base controlled by violent national and international terrorist groups and a fragile transition process under military threat in the south. Since fighting erupted in early 2012 in northern Mali, violence has forced approximately 500,000 Malians to flee their homes and further aggravated the food crisis that has affected more than 18 million people throughout the Sahel region in the past months. These crises have had a severe impact on the socio-economic situation of Mali. They also affect security and stability of its neighbours.

In the western Sahel, limited resources, institutional resistance, and little political will for security sector reform (SSR) exacerbates the threat of a regional conflict, as French and African military forces push Mali's Islamist rebels into surrounding countries. This is particularly true of Niger, where SSR is a relatively unknown concept and where there has been a long history of violence with the same groups that destabilized Mali.

The barren, sand-swept mountains of the Adrar des Ifoghas along the borders of Algeria and Niger in the far northeastern corner of Mali is familiar terrain for the Tuareg. But, it presents a formidable challenge for French and Chadian military forces as they keep searching for the Islamist fighters that have been pushed out of Gao and Kidal. The vast and inhospitable region makes it difficult to find and pursue the rebels, while the porous borders with Algeria and Niger make it nearly impossible to contain their movements. As the rebels are slowly forced from their mountain camps and hideouts, they could flee to Algeria or Niger and bring their conflict to these countries more directly.

All these developments have a spillover effect on neighbouring countries and compromise lasting peace and development throughout the Sahel. The west and Mali's neighbours are afraid that the Islamists, who took over northern Mali, will use the country to destabilise the rest of West Africa, including neighbouring Niger, France's main source of uranium for its nuclear industry. Nigeria already faces a growing Islamist threat in Boko Haram.

The "sanctuarisation" of a terrorist zone, development of criminal economy, gross violations of human rights and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation are not only making the population increasingly vulnerable. The situation increases the threat to the safety of EU citizens in the Sahel via hostage-taking and attacks as well as in Europe, particularly through the influence of extremists and terrorists networks over the diasporas, training, and logistical support from Al Qaida affiliates in the north of Mali. It also threatens the EU's strategic interests, including the security of energy supply and the fight against human and drugs trafficking.

5. Cui bono?

Who is profiting from this development and who is losing? The answer to this question is sadly linked to the fate of the Tuareg. Where the Sahara desert is of ultimate inhospitality over a million Tuareg people spend their lives. As within that very environment they can only survive in small groups, they have formed nomadic family associations. The families are belonging to clans. Their culture differs significantly from all Neighbours. Vagrancy, light skin colour, a matrilineal family structure in which women choose their life partner, an own Alphabet, veils for men – but not for women – constitute despite common commitment to Islam distinct differences.

In the decolonization of West Africa the focus was on the preservation of the economic structures. To this end



the Tuareg had no importance. Consequently, their territory was divided among the states in Niger, Mali, Algeria, Libya and Burkina Faso. For a long time the Tuareg were not too much concerned because nobody competed with them for their habitat. Only if people invaded – usually to exploit mineral resources – it came to armed conflict between Tuareg and government security forces and because of ongoing discrimination and political exclusion because of their nomadic lifestyle. This has led to repeated rebellions 1916/17, 1962/64, 1990/95 and 2007/09. It has also created a sense of disillusionment with the central governments, and a loyalty to tribal counterparts, which supersedes national considerations.

With the fall of Gaddafi the Tuareg – comprising a considerable part of the Islamic Legion – had to meet the challenge travelling approximately 2,000 km through the desert to their homes. Several Tuareg clans had to cooperate closely to ensure successful return. They took weapons and vehicles from the arsenals of the Libyan army, on the one hand to compensate for outstanding pay, on the other hand, to protect themselves against attacks on the way.

Upon arrival at their families they found remarkably deteriorated circumstances. One reason for this was the prolonged drought, which threatened to become a new famine throughout the Sahel. On top – without their salaries from the Gaddafi regime – there was no money available to buy tools and other industrial products for their families. The breeding of camels and goats usually covers only their own needs, while the traditional source of income – the transport of goods in caravans through the desert – on the one hand by globalized logistics on the other hand through the collection of taxes the increasingly assertive active African states gradually dried up. In this situation desert people without own urban settlements attempted to establish a nation-state. They ultimately failed – again.

Cui bono? All states with Tuareg minorities have in the future to expect less resistance from them. They can exploit their natural resources with less challenges. The biggest winner is Algeria state energy group Sonatrach:

- The safety of the gas pipeline from Nigeria to Algeria, to be operational by 2015, will certainly benefit from weakened Tuareg.
- Since 2006, oil deposits in the Taoudenni- Basins have been explored. The area is located in the deserted Azawad near the Mauritanian border. Sonatrach shares the Mali awarded mining rights with Italy's ENI.
- Also in the running for suspected gold, uranium and manganese deposits in northeastern Mali Algeria is expected to be in a frontrunner position.

The Saudi financiers of Ansar al-Dine – a group of local Ifoghas, Tuaregs, Berabiche Arabs and other local ethnic groups who want Sharia law implemented everywhere in Mali and across the Muslim world – have increased their influence in West Africa. But also China hopes that the fall of the Touré regime provides the country with an improved access to raw materials.

Losers are the refugees who have fled from fighting. Loser is the Republic Mali, once considered as a democratic island of stability in a generally insecure region. Loser is the U.S. having invested annually a triple-digit millions of euros to support Mali as a stabilizer in West Africa. Biggest losers are the Tuareg. As they have not managed to strengthen their weak position, a large part of them unnoticed of the public and inaccessible for humanitarian aid is deemed to starve in the desert.



6. Recommendations

The aftermath of the 2011 Libya war has seen a flood of weapons and militants across the Sahel, fuelling the rise of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Mali's conflict will not end when France leaves. The resilience of rebel groups, like AQIM and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), is well known. They will undoubtedly be routed by the current combination of Western and African forces, but keeping them from regrouping and launching further attacks will be difficult without ongoing western support. American drone policing, combined with ECOWAS efforts on the ground, will be helpful. Yet these efforts are unlikely to permanently "solve" the problem without dramatic reforms not just of the security sectors in western African nations, but even more with regard to enable them for better governance.

The short-term intervention we have witnessed needs to be transformed into longer-term stability for Mali and the entire Sahel region. Immediate humanitarian aid, the resumption of development cooperation and the establishment of a credible, broad-based and focused political process will be crucial for achieving this objective. Clearly, there should be greater regional and international co-operation in tackling security challenges.

As the states of the Sahel are too weak to address their problems alone, in order to consolidate their development and security, they will require the support of the international community, particularly of Europe. Integrated, comprehensive strategies are needed – in terms of a trans-border, regional approach on the one hand, and in terms of combining military, political and development cooperation on the other hand. In this context, the work of the EU Training Mission to Mali is particularly beneficial as well as greater cooperation on border security.

The region's porous borders necessitate that the Sahel states work together to confront their problems. It might prove useful considering consolidating existing border programs into a single one – a kind of "Sahel Border Security Initiative." This would reduce costs and promote greater efficiency. This initiative should involve all Sahel states, the EU and relevant organizations with experience in border control and counter-trafficking assistance activities, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Customs Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee, and INTERPOL and also include the US. It should focus on training and implementation of new technologies for border control. To support this, agents from Western border control agencies should be sent to states currently threatened by destabilization, to provide expertise, training, and consultation. The entry of drugs into West Africa should be countered by shifting some of the European Union's maritime forces deployed off the coast of Somalia to West African waters. The political framework for regional cooperation exists, through organizations such as ECOWAS. Moreover, the African response to events in Mali demonstrates a collective willingness to confront regional crises. Collective action, however, will require support and guidance.

Up to now, the distrust between the former Malian leadership and Mauritania, as well as Algeria, has been a major obstacle to security cooperation in the region, including on organized crime. Further, Algeria has been split between its desire to assert its pivotal role in tackling the issue and its reluctance to take the lead. It should be encouraged to play a greater role in the region. NATO's 'Building Integrity Programme' could be extended to the Sahel region, to reduce the risk of corruption in the security and defense sectors. The demise of the regime of Amadou Toumani Toure represents an opportunity for improved regional security cooperation, including on organized crime.



In fact, particular focus should be given to the risks of state collusion with organized crime. Increased focus on the drug and weapons trade in Mauritania and Niger for example clearly would impact on the situation in Mali, given that most flows transiting the country also pass through these two neighbours. Donors should place greater emphasis on action against corruption and organized crime. Across the region, donors could also support initiatives to promote public debate and the dissemination of information on criminal activity through media outlets, in order to undermine the political backing criminal networks receive from the state or community.

The whole region needs greater co-ordination by international donors and financial institutions to find long-term development solutions and the promotion of economic development. Western governments should seize the opportunity by supporting regional initiatives to improve cooperation, rather than try to play a leading role themselves. Both, EU and NATO could have a key role. Support could build on the practical and logistical support already provided by the EU in Mali, as well as the EU military mission for the training of the Malian military, to encourage region-wide engagement with issues concerning national and international security.

The inability of weak governments to govern effectively and democratically is a root cause of many problems in the Sahel. Organizations, such as the OSCE/ODIHR, should be given greater funds to increase their ability to consult and train governments in-situ. Foreign aid should be used to provide for greater literacy at the elementary level, as a means by which to fight extremism on an ideological level. This is not just a case of allocating the aid, but also of helping governments to use it effectively. The EU and North America should help to design a secular curriculum, which focuses on the preservation of local culture, language, and history. Government provision for education should also be linked to civil and community groups, capable of supporting these initiatives on a regional level.

Obviously there is a broad scope for action. The UN approach to bring about long-term change via a comprehensive strategy rings well in my ears and reminds me that building actionable knowledge is at the very core of NATO's "Comprehensive Approach" that Heads of State and Government endorsed at the 2008 Bucharest Summit and that is clearly guiding security policy in NATO and EU.

Valid processes and information often already exist within given support decision-making structures. The problem is that this "information" or isolated knowledge often resides in the heads and offices of subject matter experts across and external to the organisation. It is not fused, deconflicted, or shared, at least not in a well-established manner nor is it often available in an electronically retrievable format. Therefore, there is a need to "connect" or fuse existing information, and the processes that are used to develop it, so that the decision-maker is presented with a clear holistic understanding, as early as possible in the decision making process. This is the purpose of Knowledge Development.

Sharing information and knowledge provides for continuous situation awareness in order to gain a better understanding of the scope, scale and impact of changes on the overall situation. Within this process developing a knowledge base has become a particular relevant approach in which systems in the operations environment are analysed, knowledge about the different political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information domains of the respective environment need to be developed in order to understand the behaviour and capabilities of key actors and their interaction and to make informed decisions. This kind of systems analysis also needs to be applied to the Sahel region – a continuous, iterative and collaborative process, conducted in close co-operation with internal/external think tanks, experts, (GOs, NGOs) as required.



The primary purpose of Knowledge Development is to support subsequent decision-making in response to indications and warning of an emerging difficult situation. The challenge is to make the relevant information available in a form that can be analysed and distributed in near real time and to develop a level of shared understanding that supports timely and effective decision-making. Consequently two parts to any knowledge development solution are:

- The adaptation of processes and staff structures to break down traditional barriers and stovepipe organisations.
- Technical solutions that support a collaborative exchange and ease of access of information.

Once knowledge has been developed it must be “transferred” to decision makers and users in a timely manner. This will require tools and procedures to either ‘push’ knowledge to the user, or allow the user to ‘pull’ knowledge depending on the situation and operational requirement to ensure appropriate knowledge transfer. Knowledge development needs to be underpinned by Information Management, as it is critical to making knowledge accessible and to share knowledge across those involved in comprehensive action and decision-making. Knowledge development relies on both human expertise and the exploitation of information technology to enhance common situation awareness and understanding. It concentrates on collaboration and sharing of information to provide a common understanding of a complex situation respectively environment. It envisages one pool into which different staffs “dip” as required to suit their information and intelligence requirements.

In looking at the already existing and envisaged cooperation and analysis in the Sahel region the importance of building a valid knowledge base appears to me as a striking requirement. Romani Prodi, the UN SecGen’s Special Envoy for the region, has proposed to establish a „*Sahel Development Research Institute*“ in order to support the bottom up planning process. This could be well a centre piece of a Knowledge Base Mosaic that looks in a comprehensive fashion at the broad set of challenges given in the Sahel region. Other national and international institutes could and should share their respective information and knowledge. In looking at the intelligence part of the knowledge base, already in 2010 the UFL - Unité de Fusion et de Liaison – had been created in order to facilitate the fight against terrorism in the Sahel. Participating countries are Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad.

The UN Secretary General states in his observations and recommendations of his report: „*The security environment in the Sahel remains fragile. The threat of terrorism, trafficking and organized crime requires a comprehensive response. Our collective focus needs to be simultaneously on security, diplomacy and development, taking subregional and regional threats and opportunities into consideration, including relations with West Africa and the Mahgreb. Business as usual is not an option.*“⁷

I am convinced, the development of an actionable knowledge base for the Sahel region has the potential to significantly contribute to improving the status quo.

⁷ Secretary General United Nations, Security Council, „Report of the Secretary General on the situation in the Sahel region“, S/2013/354, 14 June 2013, 11.



Remarks:

Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

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