

**POPULATIONS, RESOURCES AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN
SOUTHERN CHAD: THE CASE OF THE WESTERN LOGONE**

Ali WAIDOU

Teacher-Researcher at the University of Moundou,
Tel. 00235 66298347/99142085

PAHIMI PATRICE

University of Maroua (Cameroon)

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ABSTRACT

The conflict between indigenous farmers and transhumant herders is frequent and deadly in Chad. In the south, these conflicts generally take place between pastoralists from the north and centre of the country and indigenous farmers. The latter are often very deadly. This contribution shows that these conflicts are often the result of climate change causing the displacement of certain populations from the Sahelian zone to the Sudanese zone in search of better living conditions for their livestock. To achieve this result, we have used documents related to our topic, including reports and articles. We have also had recourse to certain actors in this conflict. We used direct observation on the ground. This enabled us to discover that this periodic descent of herds and breeders towards the south and the ascent towards the north at the beginning of the rainy season is often a source of conflict. The acquisition of livestock by the new actors from the north of the country, namely the commanders and agents of the defence and security forces, therefore exacerbates the conflict in that the latter does not hesitate to reinforce the nuisance capacity of the herdsmen responsible for the surveillance of their livestock.

Keywords: farmers, pastoralists, conflict, populations, resources, south, Chad.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Land tenure is a general problem and often a challenge in most countries, even in developing countries around the world and in Africa. In this wake, Chad cannot be an exception. Thus, because of its geographical situation characterized by a large desert area (two-thirds of the country) and a Sudanese zone that represents about 10% of the national territory, Chad has been experiencing a resurgence of farmer and rancher conflicts, often deadly, for several decades.

Repeated droughts throughout the Sahel, population growth and land scarcity have forced the pastoralist peoples of northern and central Chad to put in place coping strategies. In many cases, the 'chosen', or rather forced, the solution has been to migrate to the south, to areas

with higher rainfall and greater fodder resources. In the meantime, grazing areas are shrinking or even disappearing under the pressure of agricultural clearing. This creates tensions over resources.

The mechanisms put in place to resolve them have proven ineffective. This is due to the lack of political will and the negative and self-serving involvement of certain political and military authorities, who constantly exploit these conflicts for their own ends or even to accumulate them.

The Western Logone Province, the subject of this study, is the smallest but most populated territorial entity in the country. The population density is estimated at 100 inhabitants per square kilometre. The plains of the Logone River that crosses Moundou, the capital of the Province, as well as those of the various tributaries, are an attraction for transhumant herders. This causes conflicts with farmers, because, for the latter, these plains remain areas of food and cash crops. These recurrent conflicts have become more widespread in the region and a workshop under the auspices of the Minister of the Interior and Security was organized in Laoukassi to curb this crisis. This led to agreements between the conflicting actors. Those so-called Laoukassi agreements immediately showed their ineffectiveness on the ground, because the recommendations were not translated into reality.

This contribution attempts to identify the intricacies of these ongoing conflicts. It poses the problem of resource management and the conflicts that this generates between village communities. It is thus a question of presenting the typology of the conflicts generated, characterizing them and assessing their impact on social and economic relations, but also ultimately assessing the political management of the various related conflicts, before drawing up perspectives for a solution.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

In order to make this contribution, we conducted a literature search by consulting certain specific and general works on our subject. As a result, certain reports from authorities and non-governmental organizations were consulted. In addition to this, direct observation was made on the ground, since we are witnesses to the conflicts that Chad has experienced. Using oral sources, interviews and discussions were conducted with a few actors and witnesses. We also made use of the oral and written press consisting of newspapers, periodicals and listening to the various radio stations in the area.

The collected data were analysed according to the combinatorial method, taking into account diachrony, synchrony and systematicity. This allows us to achieve the expected results regarding the decisive role that Darfur has played in the tumultuous history of Chad.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Southern Chad: resource mapping and geostrategic issues

From the north to the south of Chad, we observe three strongly contrasting geographical zones that follow one another.

Firstly, the Saharan zone, which is a vast, sandy desert covering about 600,000 km², or nearly half the country's surface area. This zone receives relatively low rainfall (less than 200mm/year) and even irregular rainfall. As a result, vegetation changes from savannah to the steppe.

Then comes the Sahalian zone which receives more rain (between 250 and 700 mm/year) in the southern parts which are covered with forests (mainly thorny with acacia). A little further north, we have a landscape of sand dunes, palm trees, wadis and oases. These first two areas are experiencing rather difficult dry periods and especially with climate change, which is forcing herders to seek grazing towards the south, in the Sudanian zone.

However, the Sudanian zone in the south enjoys a tropical climate but unfortunately only covers about 1/9th of Chadian territory. It is the most populated entity of the country. The rainy season is important and lasts from May to October. Its vegetation, ranging from shrubby savannah to clear the forest, provides it with the resources that are indispensable to the herds coming from the Saharan and Sahelian zones during the winter. This region benefits from a hot and humid tropical climate with an average rainfall of between 800 and 1,200 mm per year (Lieugomg and Sama, 2003), a Sudanian plant formation and a lowland relief.

The Province of Western Logone, the object of this contribution, is situated in this very Sudanese area. It has four (4) departments, namely, the department of Lac-Wey (chief town of the Province), the department of Ngourkosso, the department of Doudje and that of Guéni. Two large agro-pastoral areas, namely:

-A saturated area, characterized by a very high population density, with more than 100 inhabitants per square kilometre. This can be observed in the Ngourkosso and Lake Wey departments where the arable land is completely saturated and even very short fallow periods are no longer possible. This situation is leading to a massive migration of young people and even entire communities to the south-west. Soil fertility is poor and the fields are devoid of perennial trees and grasses. These movements can also be observed along the Logone River where the plains offer opportunities for off-season crops, but also fresh fodder and water for livestock.

-Another pioneer front where land reserves are relatively large. This zone concerns the Doudje department and part of the Guéni department. These two departments constitute an asylum zone that is still increasingly popular nowadays. For a long time inaccessible to transhumant herders because of trypanosomiasis and humidity, these two departments are now frequented and inhabited by migrants of all kinds.

This means that this area is favourable for farmer and rancher activities. Indeed, agriculture is easily practised there, with high production of cereals (millet, sorghum, maize), cassava, various vegetables, cotton and groundnuts. As such, this environment attracts nomadic herders from the Sahalian and Saharan zones who are in need of grazing for their livestock. A coveted region because of the resources it contains, it is now one of the areas of conflict between farmers and herders.

3.2 Factors, typology and manifestations of conflict

Located in the extreme south of Chad, the Western Logone region enjoys natural conditions (climate and vegetation) favourable to farmer and rancher activities. As such, this natural space attracts nomadic herders from most of the Sahalian and Saharan regions in the north and/or east of the country, whose livestock is threatened by poor living conditions. This is evidenced by recurrent droughts, particularly those of 1973-1975 and 1983-1985, and political and military instability. All this has forced many populations to converge towards the South, which is more favourable to agro-pastoral activities. Thus, the arrival of nomadic pastoralists in this region has caused social tensions, particularly with indigenous farmers. Most of these are land conflicts resulting from the pressure on the farmer and rancher space in a region of Western Logone, which has the highest population density in the country with more than 100 inhabitants per km². To this extent, there is no doubt that population growth is a major factor in this saturation of space in agricultural areas. This saturation obliges farmers to extend their activities to areas reserved for livestock farming (grazing areas), i.e. the edges of shallows and ponds, transhumance corridors, roadsides and tracks, etc.

However, according to the surveys we conducted among the populations of this region, nomadic farmers and pastoralists were not in perpetual conflict. It should be noted, however, that this conflict is due more to a situation that requires clarification, otherwise we risk falling into a simplistic and erroneous explanation of the phenomenon, as is the case in previous work on this subject. Indeed, livestock breeders and farmers have always lived together in the area. They peacefully settled the few rare cases of damage that arose between them.

Barter, which consisted of exchanging food products for milk and vice versa, was in effect in both communities. These exchanges were carried out in full confidence between the latter two communities. Wives and their children were in contact with each other. In other words, in the past, these communities were not fundamentally antagonistic. What has been observed recently in the region is a new form of change in the actors involved in the phenomenon. These new actors are integrating the region and behaving towards the indigenous population as if they were on conquered land. It is none other than some of the administrative authorities of all ranks, as well as some defence and security service officials, who, while failing to secure the population, are themselves creating insecurity. They are also some traders and also some people of bad faith. Thus, the conflict is being fuelled and is taking a new turn, presenting itself more as a perpetuation of the North-South dialectic observed throughout Chad's recent political history, given that these new actors are mostly from communities in the 'North' of the country.

3.3 From the manifestation of the north-south dialectic to the politicisation of the conflict

Beyond the observation that generally aims to present conflicts between farmers and herders in the Sahel as a consequence of climate change, conflicts between farmers and herders are mentioned in Chad in a more or less worrying way. Indeed, the internal political situation, which was characterized by multiple politico-military crises, has particularly influenced and aggravated the agro-pastoral conflict in southern Chad. They can be analysed both in terms of "resource management" and "North-South political opposition". In other words, these permanent conflicts lead to the bipolarisation of Chad into North and South, Muslim and Christian, without taking into account all the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country.

These politico-military conflicts have inculcated indelible after-effects in the minds of social groups, leading to the rapid deterioration of relations between farmers and herders. However, it should be quickly pointed out that many farmers are not located in the south and that not all Muslims are only in the north. Thus, these conflicts raise the problem of the integration of herding communities from the North into the indigenous agricultural context, which is moreover made up of agrarian systems in which herding is very present. Further investigations seem necessary to better assess the importance, causes and management methods of these conflicts.

The agro-pastoral conflicts in southern Chad are clearly one of the many aspects of what has always been referred to in Chad as North-South antagonism. However, this situation manifests itself in a specific way and is the result of the economic, social and political history of the country in the 20th century (Arditi, 2009).

In fact, those who are rightly or wrongly called "Arab herders", settled in the Sudanese zone, are in reality part of a larger human group of traders, craftsmen, soldiers, customs officers, etc., who, although they have in common that they belong to Islam, are characterised by important differences that can occasionally turn into oppositions. The first of these, the Arabs, Kanuri and Hausa, were encouraged to settle there from the beginning of the century by the colonial authorities (Arditi, 1993). The others, "groaned" from the BET and Kanem, have only arrived in the south since the 1980s after Hissène Habré took power. This presence of the Muslim population in the southern zone is increasingly poorly perceived by the indigenous people; hence the recurrence of conflicts between northerners and southerners, which have often degenerated into violence. Violence is nowadays multiplying in daily reports, in schools, markets, bus stations and other public places. During these clashes, it is not uncommon for Muslims to call their opponents kids! ("pagan" in Arabic) or abid! ("slave"). The southerners, for their part, have only the term doum to name Muslims in Sara and use French terms such as Arabic-speaking or illiterate to designate them.

Another phenomenon, and not the least, is the involvement of the administrative and military authorities in this conflict. Coming mostly from the pastoral regions, the latter do not hesitate to become directly or indirectly involved. Indeed, due to unfavourable climatic conditions, many herders have lost their livestock and have almost become mere shepherds or even cowherds in the service of these authorities who have the means to reconstitute a herd. Having this status as shepherds and dependent on the by-products of livestock farming, they have no other solution than to accept the offer of a "benefactor" of pastoral origin who is also a pastoralist. The shepherds and/or former livestock owners have simply become employees of these new owners, most of whom are either demobilized military personnel or soldiers stationed in the gendarmeries or in the territorial command. These employees benefit from impunity; they are immune from prosecution, as one traditional chief of the region points out: "the shepherd of a brigade commander is also a brigade commander among the shepherds". These shepherds are protected by their employers and are characterized by their arrogance and aggressiveness. This aggravates the already tense situation between traditional herders and farmers who are unable to make up their minds. The farmers, for their part, accuse the herders of possessing weapons of war and of corrupting the civilian and military administrators for whom they otherwise work. Now the poor farmers are really only dealing with these "masters" of the region whose power is beyond question. The latter often do not

hesitate to arm the shepherds who are able to let their herds destroy with impunity the fields of the food farmers, the orchards and gardens of the latter who have only their eyes to see the destruction of their fields, the only source of their subsistence.

Another factor exacerbating the conflict in the region is above all the instrumentalization of the conflict by political actors. Indeed, the support of certain local elected officials for farmers, who are in the majority in the region, is likely to guarantee the maximum number of votes in the elections. Thus, the farmer and rancher conflict is becoming a battle horse for the demands of political leaders. Each local elected official who wants to see his or her mandate renewed is obliged to deal with the opinion of the majority group. In this context, elections are henceforth a blocking factor and constitute a strong factor of influence on conflicts.

As the conflict is becoming recurrent in the region, the government, under the impetus of civil society associations, is looking for ways out of this crisis, which is only continuing. Not least among the attempts to resolve the conflict are the Laoukassi assizes as an attempt to resolve this crisis.

3.4 Attempts at conflict resolution and forward-looking measures

In an attempt to find solutions for the management and peaceful resolution of farmer-pastoralists conflicts, the Government of the Republic of Chad, on the initiative of the Governor of Logone Occidental, organized a forum in Laoukassi. This forum, held from 14 to 16 May

2010 under the auspices of the Minister of the Interior and Public Security, brought together representatives of farmers, breeders and civil society associations, including religious leaders. The organization of this forum follows the bloody, more deadly events that took place in the region between these two now antagonistic communities. These are particularly those of Kana and Deli, which caused the deaths of men on both sides. This forum is organized in order to allow the actors involved in the tragedy to exchange and propose measures and solutions opposable to all, likely to bring lasting peace between the two communities.

Indeed, Laoukassi is the capital of the sub-prefecture that bears his name. It is located in the department of La Dodje. The choice of this modest town is based on the observation that it is often the scene of recurrent conflicts between farmers and herders and that the mere mention of the name of this locality brings back some of the recent painful memories.

The organization of this forum comes after a diagnosis of the situation where it is obvious that, faced with the increasing scarcity of natural resources, which are subject to ever-increasing pressure from users and in a context of lack and/or inexistence of any form of regulation and prevention. As pointed out above, too many men and cattle now live in the Western Logone in total promiscuity. The region is one of the smallest administrative units in the country. At this level, there is a real problem of living space, both for people and animals and for the various related activities. It covers an area of 8,933km² and has a population of 723,652 inhabitants, i.e. a density of 81 inhabitants per square kilometre, the highest in Chad. The number of livestock living there is estimated at 300,000 heads.

The Laoukassi forum is an opportunity for participants to freely discuss the ins and outs of this conflict. The objective sought through the organisation of the forum is to:

- identify the obstacles that hinder the peaceful and consensual settlement and management of farmer-pastoralists conflicts in Western Logone;
- inform, sensitize and raise awareness among the different strata of society and civil administrative authorities, defence and security forces to adopt new responsible behaviours likely to bring lasting peace between the different communities;
- put in place more appropriate legal and institutional mechanisms for the consensual and sustainable management of natural resources and the peaceful resolution of conflicts between farmers and livestock farmers in order to open up new prospects for the development of the local agricultural economy.

After three days of work, the participants, representatives of the different protagonists, signed a document entitled the "Convention on the management of natural resources and the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts between farmers and herders". The participants in the workshop (representatives of farmers and herders in the region) now claim to be aware of their complementarity and that they are victims of cyclical parameters such as the exploitation of their differences by politicians, civil and military commanders and others. That this artificial conditioning based on interests foreign to their own cannot allow for the peaceful coexistence and harmonious development of two complementary sectors. The convention, which includes rights and duties contained in its 34 articles, was signed by representatives of breeders and farmers in Laoukassi on 16 May 2010 and must now apply to all farmers and breeders in the Western Logone region. What about the actual translation of the said convention.

Although there has been an upsurge in violence between the two parties, the Laoukassi Convention has helped to ease the tension between the protagonists. Moreover, the Convention, which is only of local competence, has shortcomings and cannot guarantee peace between the parties in the long term. The following measures are to be recommended for lasting peace in the region:

There is an urgent need for the State to show political will by enforcing the law without complacency, particularly with regard to the prevention and management of agro-pastoral conflicts. This presupposes the adoption of official texts adapted to reality, as the texts that currently exist have fallen into disuse. However, sustainable social peace requires that adequate resources be mobilized by the State in its favour. These means must be mobilized in order to promote a climate of sustained peace through the establishment of dialogue and consensus in the establishment of rules for the use and/or occupation of space recognized as legitimate. This applies to the region concerned by this study, which is characterized by a high population density. Furthermore, the rehabilitation or creation of transhumance or cattle tracks and parking areas can often ease tensions provided that there is genuine negotiation between the parties.

There is an urgent need for the indigenous populations to become aware by recognizing nomadism as a complementary activity to agriculture; the by-products of livestock farming

being indispensable for the Logonese soil, which is already in an advanced state of degradation. It is in the interest of the local population to value the complementarities that livestock farming can bring to agriculture (manure, draught animals, transport, etc.). This implies a paradigm shift because the perception of the other must change. The new transformation of Chadian society requires that the other be accepted in a land where he or she was not living. However, livestock farmers, under the pretext of their social belonging to a different culture from that of the farmer, must not behave in the conquered land.

It is also time for the herdsmen employed to look after the livestock of certain pastoral administrative and military authorities to show responsibility by respecting the farmers.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

It was shown in this contribution that conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in southern Chad are often the result of climate change causing the displacement of Sahalian populations to Sudanese areas in search of better living conditions for their livestock. This periodic descent of herds and breeders towards the south and the ascent towards the north at the beginning of the rainy season is often conflictual. Added to this is a new phenomenon: the acquisition of livestock by new actors from the north of the country, namely certain commanders and agents of the defence and security forces. The latter do not hesitate to arm the herdsmen who commit abuses in the event of a confrontation. This farmer-breeder conflict is perceived in this southern part of Chad as a North-South, Muslim-Christian confrontation linked to the political history of the country.

This study, although not exhaustive given the limitation of our sample, is, in our opinion, an interesting contribution that can be used by leaders for the effective resolution of this type of conflict.

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