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Birgambouane camp, W National Park (Niger). Omar MAHAMADOU ALPHA

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Editorial



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THE WEIGHT OF RESPONSIBILITY

For decades, armed conflict around the world have created great challenges for human societies and the environment.

Beside the current war in Ukraine, most armed conflict have taken place in South Asia and Africa. Protected areas and wider conservation areas have not been spared. In fact, in Sub-Saharan Africa, protected and conserved areas are seen as sites that attract armed groups as they offer a refuge and ample space for criminal operations. A study from 2018 showed that between 1946 and 2010, armed conflict took place in a total of 71 large African protected areas. More recently, a study showed that in West Africa, around 60 protected and conservation areas have been the stage for at least one armed conflict. Whether the reasons are political, religious, or simply out of competition for natural resources, it is clear that these conflicts have grave consequences for the communities, for governance and for the management of protected areas and biodiversity conservation.

The sad reality is this cycle of violence leads to abductions, deaths, destruction of public goods, massive population displacements etc. Armed terrorist groups attack administrations, government agencies, they threaten other protected area management actors, they take control of resources and space. In most cases, the military response in conservation areas leads to increased use of firearms, which in turns increases the risk of failed species conservation.

In response to this situation, in 2019, the international community through the United Nations General Assembly

adopted the “principles on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts”. But in many conservation areas, this response doesn’t seem sufficient to halt the rise in power of terrorist armed groups, with devastating effects on the environment, biodiversity, and protected areas.

Another aspect of the issue is that the presence of terrorist groups tends to open the door to illicit economies that often involve people from rural communities. Several analyses have also reported that these illicit economies finance criminal activity, thereby promoting their expansion to other African regions. This constitutes a great threat for biodiversity and national economies that are already under a lot of pressure from global changes.

It is important to note that acotrs and governments receive different pieces of information and perceptions on these conflicts. As a result, they take individualised actions , but this phenomenon is growing and is taking on the form of organised transnational crime. It is clear to all of us today, that without cooperation and mutualised efforts with neighbouring States, the success of the struggle will remain a pipe dream.

Today, while protected areas are known as aiming to meet international goals and commitments, the question of instability in these territories remains as we try to understand their results and impacts. Thus, different regional meetings were organised on the matter of instability around conservation areas. They gathered researchers, agencies in charge of protected areas, research institutes focusing on security in Africa... They created a lot of expectation within the African conservation community. This NAPA briefly introduces the results of a meeting held in Benin in late 2022, as well as recommendations to take strides on this difficult question. Have a good read! ●

PAPACO ONLINE

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[MOOC FB Group \(English\)](https://www.facebook.com/mooocconservation)

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[IUCN Protected and Conserved Areas newsletter](#)



MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG

SELF-PACED MOOCS

Webinars. Each session we organise webinars for our learners. The Zoom link is sent to enrolled learners a couple of days before the event, here are the dates for English-speaking webinars:

- 18 April 2023 at 8:00 UTC ;
- 25 May 2023 at 8:00 UTC.

Current session runs until 18 June 2023

Enrol: mooc-conservation.org

ONLINE CERTIFICATE

Good news! The online certificate will be open to English speakers later this year. It is open to students who completed all seven MOOCs on mooc-conservation.org and passed an extra exam at a set date. The Online Certificate is a diploma given by Senghor University.

We will communicate on this matter in the coming weeks, make sure you follow us and complete the MOOCs you need be able to sit the additional exam.

ESSENTIALS

What are they? They are short courses geared to a specific profile of protected area conservation actors.

Four options are possible: Rangers, Managers (involved in Research R or in Law enforcement L) and Leaders.

The Essentials are open throughout the year. All exams were reset on December 14th 2022. You can therefore try to pass them again if you failed in the past.



RANGER ESSENTIAL

For protected area (PA) professionals who apply decisions and ensure the implementation of activities inside the PA.

MANAGER ESSENTIAL

For protected area professionals who need to plan, manage and assess the work carried out by field agents.

➔ **MANAGER LAW** focuses on law enforcement and the valorisation of the PA and its natural resources.

➔ **MANAGER RESEARCH** focuses on research activities, monitoring-evaluation and ecological monitoring.

LEADER ESSENTIAL

For actors who are influencing the protected area context at a larger scale, without necessarily working directly inside a protected area.

AMBASSADORS: MEETING IN TOGO

M Ali Y. Georges, MOOC Conservation ambassador in Togo, tells us about his meeting organised at the Kara University

The primary mission was to support MOOC students in the registration and validation procedures, until obtaining the certificate.

The purpose of this communication mission was also to bring a greater number of students, especially those in environmental science, to take a greater interest in IUCN-Papaco MOOCs, which offer an interesting range of tools for nature conservation.

This activity took place at the University of Kara in the amphitheater on 21 January, during a lesson on Biogeography. At the request of the Ambassador, Professor Soussou Tantoguéba, a biogeography teacher at the said university, made this activity possible by granting an hour of exchanges with more than 300 students.

The theme of the communication was "IUCN – PAPACO MOOCs: an opportunity for students to better equip themselves and contribute to the protection of the environment".

After a brief introduction, a few basic concepts were defined, in particular the acronym MOOC, IUCN-PAPACO and the notion of nature conservation. The presentation plan was then fully rolled out. Then came a time for questions and answers. Most of the questions were related to the conditions of registration on the platform and the way in which the courses are organized. Finally a group Whatsapp was created, and support exchanges continue to this day.



MOOC CONSERVATION HUBS

If you'd like to join a MOOC Conservation hub in your city, have a look at the full list of ambassadors [here](#) and contact the ambassador in charge. If you don't see your city or country represented, [click here](#) to submit your application to become ambassador.



Birgambou Camp, W National Park (Niger), by Omar MAHAMADOU ALPHA ISSIFOU

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL PARKS IN ILLICIT ECONOMIES AND CONFLICT DYNAMICS

REPORT PRODUCED BY GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME -
[HTTPS://GLOBALINITIATIVE.NET](https://globalinitiative.net)

INTRODUCTION

The Illicit Economies and Instability Dialogues are integral to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC - <https://globalinitiative.net>)'s work in West Africa. The Dialogues are an opportunity for experts in illicit economies, civil society organizations, regional government representatives, foreign policy and development officials, external experts and stakeholders to discuss contemporary, policy-relevant themes on the intersections between illicit economies, conflict and instability in West and central Africa. The Dialogues are supported by and co-hosted with the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

This Dialogue, the second in the series in the region, focused on protected areas in West and central Africa as geographic spaces of growing concern given the increasing encroachment of violent extremist groups, and the illicit economies transiting and based within these

biospheres. In particular, the conference focused on the role of national parks in the potential southward movement of violent extremist groups from Sahelian states into coastal countries. Participants discussed how these armed groups engage with illicit economies in these areas.

A particular focus was the presence of elements of Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), and to a lesser extent of Islamic State of the Great Sahara (ISGS), in the W-Arly-Pendjari biosphere, otherwise known as the WAP complex, in the tri-border area between Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger. These armed groups – particularly JNIM – have integrated themselves not only into the parks, but also into local societies and illicit economies. As such, there has been increasing concern about how these armed groups are taking advantage of illicit economies to fund and supply their efforts but also to enhance their attempts at local governance.

The presence of armed groups has turned some of the region's national parks into no-go areas for state and civil society actors, with the exception in some areas of military forces and park rangers. The WAP complex is especially challenging since it stretches through border zones of Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin. However, other national parks in West Africa are of similar concern, including Comoé National Park (Côte d'Ivoire), Boubou Ndiaye National Park (Cameroon) and Sambisa and Dansadua forests (Nigeria). In addition to armed clashes, tensions between state actors and communities have also been a driver of support for violent extremist groups and illicit activity.

The Dialogue built on research conducted by the GI-TOC's Observatory of Illicit Economies in West Africa into illicit flows and armed groups in the WAP complex and Comoé National Park. A discussion paper laying out preliminary findings of the research into the WAP complex – conducted in partnership with the Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local, a social science research centre based in Benin – was shared with all participants and discussed.

The Dialogues aim to enhance the links between the research and policymaking communities, strengthen civil society coalitions, and reinforce policymaking and the interventions of the development community. This report provides an overview of the discussions, addresses key themes and draws out the potential implications for regional and international actors seeking to engage in programming in these contexts. The Dialogue was hosted under the Chatham House Rule, where comments cannot be attributed.

WHAT MAKES NATIONAL PARKS SO VULNERABLE?

There are a number of reasons why national parks tend to become hotspots for illicit activity and why armed groups, including violent extremist groups, congregate there. The first is that these are remote, often wooded or forested areas that provide numerous sites for armed groups, smugglers or traffickers to hide. As a result, the parks can serve as a refuge for groups with few options for places to

base themselves or store their goods.

This use of national parks as a refuge and storage site has been seen in several parts of West Africa. Katiba Macina, a JNIM subgroup, established a presence within the Boucle du Baoulé National Park in Mali, near the Mauritanian border. The Sambisa Forest in north-east Nigeria is a well-known refuge and operational zone for Islamic State's West Africa Province, and forests across the north-west of Nigeria – including Kamuku, Dansadua and Sububu – operate as bases for a large number of bandit groups, and areas for holding hostages and stolen cattle. Similarly, the Burkinabe portion of W national park in the WAP complex has been used to keep hostages kidnapped by JNIM, as the area is out of reach for state forces and hostages can easily be concealed from aerial patrols.

Such rear bases can be essential when armed groups are under increased pressure from military offensives in front-line areas of operation. For example, in 2022, the Niokolo-Koba National Park in south-eastern Senegal was fingered as a potential refuge for separatist fighters from the Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance, MFDC) who have lost ground to Senegalese military troops since early 2021. The park is only 400 kilometres from the Casamance region, which has been rocked by insurgency since the early 1980s, sustained in part by finances flowing to MFDC rebels from cannabis and timber trafficking.

National parks tend to have limited state presence even when fully operational. In these remote areas, small state posts that can easily be overpowered are the norm since much of the work of guarding protected areas is left to rangers. For example, the relatively well-resourced Niokolo-Koba National Park, which stretches over 913 000 hectares, is patrolled by 164 rangers. Rangers, although armed, also typically operate in small bands and with limited firepower, and, on occasion, they have been successfully chased out of national parks by armed groups. This is the case on the Burkinabe side of Parc W, whereas on the Nigerien side, rangers are increasingly limited in what they can do.

Rangers, state officials and others aiming to restrict residents' access to national parks are often enormously unpopular locally. The colonial origins of national parks and the continued efforts to exclude people living on their outskirts from accessing their natural resources mean that many residents are unsupportive of how the parks are managed. This resentment is especially acute when important cultural or ritual sites, or sites of historical memory, are within the park's boundaries but people are kept away from them. This is the case in the Burkina Faso part of the WAP complex, where the predominantly Gourmantché residents have been prevented from accessing historical and ritual sites inside the park, which has negatively affected their social cohesion and their view of national parks as an endeavour.

As a result, communities around national parks may be more susceptible to offers from alternative governance actors, including violent extremist armed groups. These offers are especially attractive if they allow people to engage in illicit but profitable economies freely. JNIM has been known to put forward this offer in the Est region in southern Burkina Faso, telling residents that if they cooperate with them and obey their rules, JNIM will expel state officials and rangers from the area, leaving them free to use the national park and its resources. Often this is framed in religious terms, with JNIM saying that the park is God's creation, so residents cannot be excluded from it legitimately.

Similarly, many economic activities producing revenue for violent extremist groups are illegal under national laws. However, rural communities across swathes of West Africa often depend on informal or illicit practices. Communities often do not perceive informal economies as illicit and welcome the opportunity to operate with fewer restrictions in areas under armed group influence and diminished state control. Further, communities do not necessarily resent paying taxes to armed groups, including violent extremist groups, that allow them to pursue such activities.

A case in point is fuel trafficking in the areas surrounding the WAP complex, which is seen as greatly benefitting communities since usually there aren't any petrol stations near villages and towns around the biosphere, and

petrol in the available stations is sold at a far higher price than the more abundant smuggled fuel. There is no single discernible taxation system between armed groups and fuel traffickers; rather, the formality of taxation appears to vary between time and place. In the early stages of JNIM's establishment in the Burkina Faso portion of the WAP complex, they seemed to have an informal relationship with fuel traffickers, asking for fuel contributions in exchange for protection or for their efforts keeping state officials and rangers out of the park. More recent evidence suggests that JNIM instituted a series of checkpoints on the road between Koualou/Kourou, Nadiagou and Pama, along which numerous smugglers – and particularly fuel smugglers – are known to travel, and demanded contributions. It is not clear whether these checkpoints have endured, although usage of this road has declined.

A final reason that national parks are attractive sites for armed groups and criminal actors is the abundance of natural resources, either for profit or subsistence. Although it often appears that the lack of securitization is the primary driver for armed groups to establish bases in biospheres, the longer they continue to operate in the parks, the more likely they will start exploiting the natural resources available. This is in line with evidenced trends in the intersection between conflict actors and illicit economies, where lengthy geographic overlays encourage the increased entrenchment of the former into the latter.

Artisanal gold mining is a sector where residents have often tried to profit from inside national parks given the limited state presence, for instance in the Niokolo-Koba National Park. Whether conflict actors are drawing resources from gold mining in national areas remains contested in some contexts, including in the Comoé National Park and in north-west Nigeria, where the bandits' relationship with gold mining is unclear.

In other contexts, including Burkina Faso, violent extremist groups try to win local support by easing access to artisanal mines for residents. By pushing out private actors or self-defence groups that have prevented or monopolized artisanal mine access, they allow residents to access the site in an unrestricted, risk-free fashion. These approaches

tend to gain these groups substantial sympathy. This was the case in the Dida Forest protected area in Burkina Faso, near the Ivorian border, where Dozo hunters who had been controlling access to the mine were pushed out with force and threats from JNIM, leaving residents free to exploit mining sites unrestricted.⁶ However, given the lack of state presence, even residents who do not sympathize with the armed groups have little choice but to comply

with their rules.

Similarly drawing on biosphere resources, JNIM is known to hunt animals for meat consumption in the WAP complex, and poaching is itself an economic opportunity. The Bouba Ndjida National Park, close to the borders with Chad and Sudan in north-eastern Cameroon, has long experienced a high incidence of poaching by armed groups, predominantly by the Sudanese Janjaweed



National parks, reserves and forests in West Africa identified as illicit hubs - NOTE: Although not included in this map, several other broader crime zones also incorporate one or more national parks, reserves or forests that may be sites of illicit activity.

SOURCE: Lucia Bird and Lyes Tagziria, Organized crime and instability dynamics: Mapping illicit hubs in West Africa, GI-TOC, September 2022, <https://wea.globalinitiative.net/illc-it-hub-mapping/map>

launching cross-border incursions. The elephant population has significantly diminished following acts of poaching orchestrated by cross-border criminal groups. Although data on elephant poaching across the country is hard to come by, according to park officials, approximately 480 elephants were killed in Bouba Ndjida between 2003 and 2021. Criminal networks can also operate independently of armed groups: valuable substances such as ebony wood are exploited by transnational criminal actors. In Bounkani, Côte d'Ivoire, mostly foreign networks have worked in conjunction with corrupt park officials to illegally cut ebony wood and export it, mainly to China.

The vulnerability of national parks in becoming hubs of illicit economies was highlighted by the GI-TOC's hotspot mapping initiative, which mapped 280 illicit hubs across West Africa, Cameroon and the Central African Republic. This initiative identified 14 national parks across the region that operated as hubs of illicit economies.

In half of the identified national parks, illicit economies were determined not to play a significant role in fueling regional instability – ranking 'low' on the Illicit Economies and Instability Monitor (IEIM), a quantitative metric that assesses the relationship between illicit economies and instability in each hub. Among these national parks, flora crimes were the most commonly detected illicit economy, featuring in parks in Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Ghana.

Illicit economies in the remaining seven national parks were identified to play significant roles as vectors of conflict and instability (scoring medium or, in three cases, high on the IEIM). These included a number of forests in Nigeria, the Comoé National Park and the WAP complex. The illicit gold trade, kidnapping for ransom and arms trafficking were commonly detected illicit economies in national parks in West Africa. This is noteworthy given the strong links identified between these illicit economies, and conflict and instability.

HOW DO VIOLENT EXTREMISTS WORK WITH ILLICIT ECONOMIES IN NATIONAL PARKS?

Illicit economies were a phenomenon that pre-existed

instability and the presence of violent extremist groups in West African national parks. Although the overarching structure of most illicit economies remained unchanged following the arrival of armed groups into national parks, their involvement at different points in the supply chain can drive an amplification of the illicit ecosystem. Armed groups and violent extremist groups engage with illicit economies in a number of ways. In some cases, they attempt to gain local support by facilitating peoples' participation in illicit economies. In others, they will seek to gain revenue by taxing illicit activities. Finally, they may be direct participants, either buying illicit products or stealing and dealing in them.

Where armed groups become consumers in the illicit supply chain, the spike in demand can drive up profits, making some illicit economies more lucrative. This has reportedly occurred with fuel trafficking in northern Benin in the areas surrounding the WAP complex, where swelling demand has increased black-market prices.

In a smaller number of cases, the involvement of armed groups in the criminal ecosystem appears to have driven the market's evolution into more harmful manifestations. Cattle rustling has been a longstanding phenomenon in the areas surrounding the Comoé National Park. However, the theft of entire herds of cattle, which poses an existential threat to livelihoods, has been a dynamic observed only since the reportedly growing influence of armed groups in the area in recent years. While it remains unclear whether armed groups are behind this shift, a number of close observers of dynamics in the region believed this to be the case. The insertion of armed groups into pre-existing cattle-rustling dynamics has driven a drastic escalation of the illicit economy and associated violence in northern and central Mali, and north-west Nigeria from the early 2010s.

Many national parks are bisected by well-established trafficking routes, particularly when positioned on or across national borders, presenting porous opportunities for cross-border smuggling. For example, the WAP complex straddles borders dividing the landlocked Sahelian states from the coastal states.⁸ In the latter, goods are significantly cheaper due to a combination of port infrastructure and

subsidies on essential commodities such as fuel. This has led to a long, well-established smuggling ecosystem in which the WAP complex serves as a comparatively safe route for small bands of smugglers to pass through on motorcycles.⁹

These pre-existing illicit economies were effectively exploited by violent extremist groups wishing to establish a presence in the WAP complex and became an instrument to advance their governance agenda. For example, JNIM works as a facilitator of illicit economies, including smuggling a wide range of commodities. JNIM has reportedly built a relationship of mutual assistance with small-scale smugglers operating throughout the WAP complex, moving licit and illicit goods from coastal countries into Burkina Faso, where prices are higher. The key service that JNIM offers smugglers is protection and access. This can be done directly, for instance, by escorting convoys through the park or informing their combatants that these individuals will be making the journey and should be let through, or indirectly, by helping to keep state officials and security forces out of the complex. While JNIM benefits by gaining supplies from smugglers, most critically fuel, the smugglers enjoy greater freedom and lower risk to their operations, due to the diminished state presence across the WAP complex, particularly in Parc W and Arly.

More broadly, JNIM operates directly in some illicit economies, particularly in kidnap for ransom, cattle theft and vehicle theft. JNIM has also used the WAP complex as a storage site for weapons stolen during raids on the military. These activities have surged in Burkina Faso with JNIM's growing territorial influence.

Kidnapping for ransom should not be confused with the rise in abductions by JNIM, which spiked fourfold between 2020 and 2021 in Burkina Faso. These abductions were particularly common in areas where *Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie* (VDP) units clashed with JNIM, indicating that the creation and expansion of VDP were key drivers of this surge in abductions. These abductions are typically focused on information extraction and intimidation rather than profit generation. However, both types of hostages have been kept inside the WAP complex to prevent them from being discovered by the

state or others who may report them. Notably, reports of abductions by armed groups in northern Benin have been growing through 2022.

In many incidents of kidnap for ransom and vehicle theft, a degree of strategic restraint towards residents is also often exercised by JNIM in Burkina Faso. JNIM will typically target foreigners for kidnap for ransom and will tend to steal high-value cars belonging to NGOs or ambulances belonging to state health centres rather than the ordinary vehicles of civilians. This is largely because of a need for 4x4 vehicles, particularly in complex territories. However, when they seize vehicles from residents, such as truck drivers transporting goods such as fuel or food, they will typically release the driver unharmed.

Cattle theft appears primarily done on JNIM's behalf by intermediaries, so JNIM does not obstruct its governance agenda by engaging in crimes that the residents would disapprove of. JNIM in Burkina Faso should therefore be assessed as a strategic participant in crime: its engagements with illicit economies are driven not only by profit but also as part of governance agendas.

One of the most significant revenue streams for armed groups seems to be the acquisition of cattle through herders' payment of *zakat*, or almsgiving, to use national parks for grazing and subsequent sale of cattle in urban markets. The payment of *zakat* in cattle is legitimated partly on religious grounds but also on the grounds that the herders can access the WAP complex for grazing their animals without the risk of being arrested or fined by rangers. Some actors reported a fee paid by cattle grazers to JNIM elements to access grazing within the WAP complex (calculated at CFA2 000, or approximately €3, per cattle head).

THE CHALLENGES OF A RESPONSE

Government responses to violent extremists and illicit actors in national parks are exceptionally difficult to get right. This is especially so in the WAP biosphere, given the need to work across multiple national borders and to harmonize countries' approaches to ensure an effective response. Counterinsurgency efforts in the Est region of Burkina Faso,

including the WAP complex, in 2022 have not made a substantial difference. There are myriad reasons for the failures, but key is that populations are unconvinced that government forces are willing or able to protect them. This substantially impacts stabilization efforts.

At present, governments not only suffer from a lack of legitimacy among many of their citizens, but they are also unable to offer security to those willing to comply with state authority. Although governments in the region recognize the importance of collaboration with communities around protected areas, the latter will only be willing to cooperate if they feel protected. This is because many villages and towns around the parks are threatened by extremist groups with violent consequences if they cooperate with government agents.

Likewise, in many areas, there is little buy-in at the local level for conservation efforts in the form of national parks that restrict people's movements or economic opportunities. By extension, there is little appetite for taking risks in supporting the return of state authority. Some efforts to ensure that financing derived from tourism and hunting concessions in national parks, as is the case with Pendjari National Park in Benin, have enjoyed a degree of success in aligning the interests of surrounding communities more closely with that of park conservation. Securitization of parks, as in the case of Bouba Njida in Cameroon, has experienced a degree of success in stopping incursions by armed groups – particularly the Sudanese Janjaweed – and affiliated criminal networks. However, new armed actors may be challenging that securitization. The Mouvement Pour La Libération du Cameroun (MLC) is a relatively new armed group active in Cameroon's north-east. There is evidence to suggest that the MLC has resorted to poaching and wildlife trafficking as a source of funds. Therefore, purely securitized approaches may not be sustainable where they fail to engage with the communities living in the outskirts of the park, who have repeatedly served as guides for armed groups poaching in the biosphere.

A common approach to illicit activities in national parks by governments has been banning certain activities or closing sites where they take place, such as artisanal mining sites. However, this approach has caused significant damage

to civilian lives and has increased discontent with the government. For example, attempts to close artisanal gold mines around the Sahel region in Burkina Faso damaged the livelihoods of people who depend on the activity. Bans tend to harm local economies the most while failing to win sympathy for state presence or conservation efforts.

Widespread corruption among state representatives tasked with protecting the national parks, including park rangers, has further eroded their legitimacy and undermined the response to illicit economies. For example, a 2019 investigation into illegal gold mining in the Niokolo-Koba National Park resulted in the arrest of Ghanaian and Chinese nationals, the director and deputy director of the park, and other regional government officials for their involvement in the activity. The challenges facing state representatives posted to areas in and around national parks in resisting established networks of corruption enable these to become further entrenched.

Illicit supply chains that move through national parks provide food, motorcycles, fuel and other supplies to the war economy across the Sahel region, as well as, increasingly, the northern areas of coastal states. However, efforts to cut such supply chains have proven unproductive in other regions of West Africa, as clandestine activities have displaced themselves around restrictions and bypassed bans imposed by governments. In some cases, actions taken to enforce such bans have resulted in the marginalization of some communities, including in Burkina Faso, which has, in turn, operated as a driving force for recruitment. In the Lake Chad region, the ban on producing some foodstuffs to prevent flows to Boko Haram resulted in significant deprivation among communities, which in turn worked as a driver for recruitment into the group.

The other factor that is a persistent challenge to policymakers is the livestock economy present around national parks. As climate change puts greater pressure on tensions between pastoralists and agricultural livelihoods, pasture land is increasingly scarce and national parks become an attractive option. A generalized suspicion by the security services towards Fulani and pastoralist communities, and a history of discrimination against them, has the unfortunate potential to exacerbate tensions as the military is drawn in

to respond to violent extremism. Attempts to regulate the cattle market could be seen by herders as further evidence of discrimination, particularly if it is accompanied by unjust or violent behaviour towards them from the security services. This could have several different consequences, including pushing herders further towards illicit or informal economies to avoid regulation, or to increase narratives of discrimination that violent extremist groups often exploit.

This raises the question of what can be done to balance the need to respond to insecurity, maintain conservation and biodiversity in the region's national parks, meet the needs of local populations and win their trust.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Refer to the full report available in French and English: [click here](#)

- Read also, a study by Papaco: [PROTECTED AREAS, CONFLICT AND INSECURITY: UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION AND DEFINING THE RULES](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS



[youth-conservation.org](#) is a website is dedicated to raising awareness on conservation matters among the youth ages 10 to 17 years old. We want to see them realise how important it is to act for the planet. If you are using the website in your class or need any information about it, please contact us. We are planning on translating the platform to English in the near future.



Call for expressions of interest to be a member of the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Expert Review Panel in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

[TdR l'appel à manifestation d'intérêt pour le recrutement des EAGL en RDC](#)

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