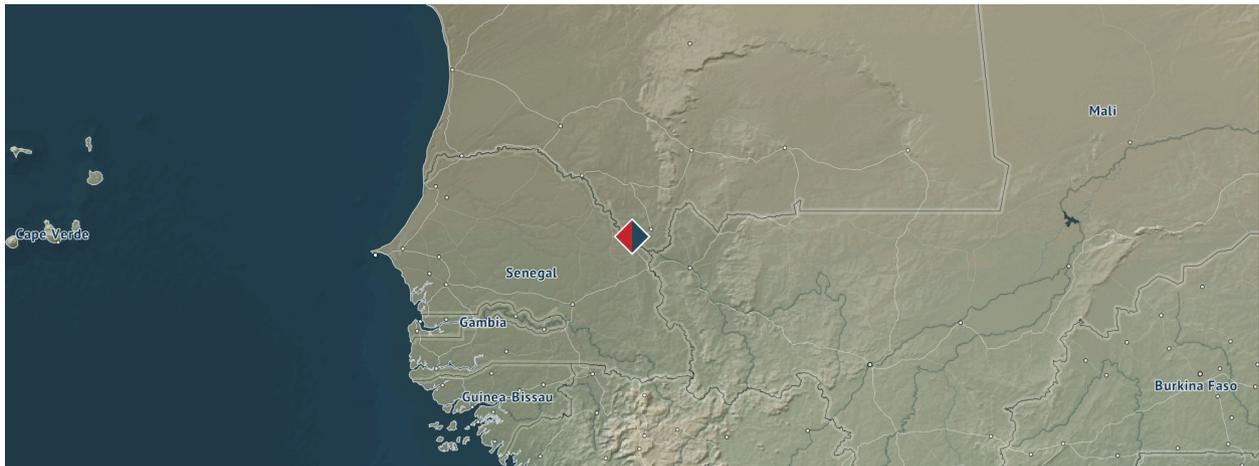




Conflict Factsheet

Communal Violence in Mauritania and Senegal 1989-1992

Type of conflict Sub	Intensity 3
Conflict Locality Western Africa	Time 1989– 1992
Countries Mauritania, Senegal	Resources Agricultural / Pastoral Land



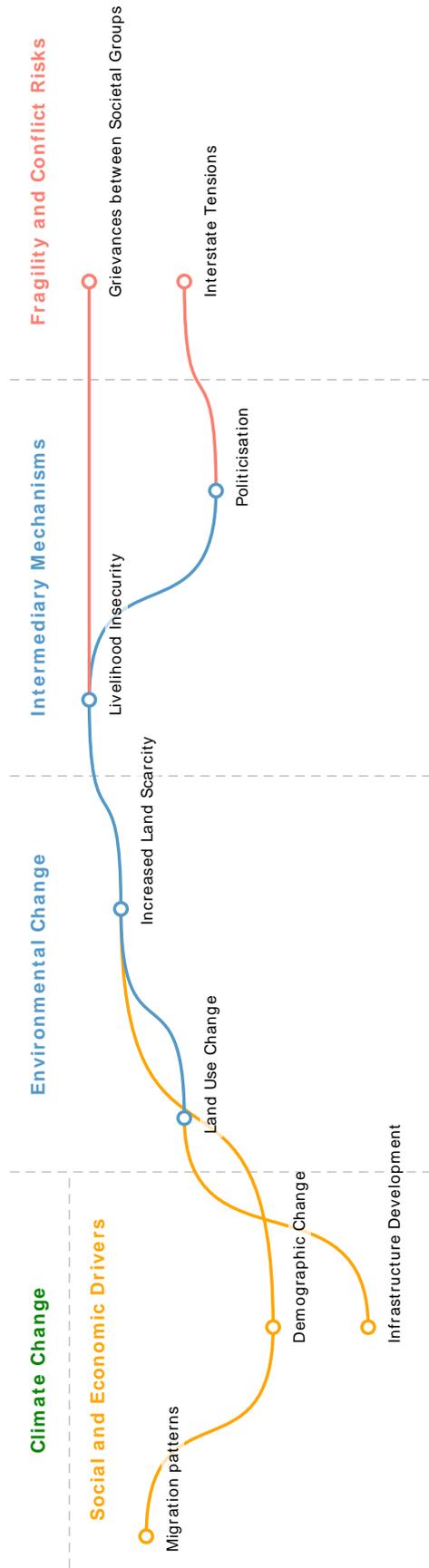
Local resource competition

Conflict Summary

A local farmer-herder conflict over grazing rights in the Mauritanian-Senegal border region has triggered a spiral of violence between Senegalese and Mauritians in the southern Senegal River bank and different Mauritanian cities. This escalation has to be understood against the background of persistent racism and discrimination of the 'black' population of Mauritania.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Agricultural / Pastoral Land

Insecure Land Tenure
Unequal Land Distribution
Water-stressed Area

Political Marginalization
Power Differential



Conflict History

In April 1989, Fulani herdsmen and Mauritanian Soninke farmers clashed over grazing rights in the Senegal River Valley, which demarcates the Mauritanian-Senegalese border. Mauritanian border guards intervened, killing two Senegalese peasants and taking several prisoners. As a result riots broke out in Senegal, targeting the Mauritanian immigrant population, which was quite numerous on the southern Senegal River bank. Subsequently, Senegalese immigrants were victims of reprisal attacks in Nouakchott and other Mauritanian cities. Both countries began expelling Mauritanian and Senegalese nationals and the Mauritanian-Senegalese border was closed. By the end of April several hundred were killed or injured and several thousand displaced (UCDP, 2014). Mauritanian-Senegalese diplomatic relationships remained strained until the reopening of the border in 1992.

While the incident that sparked the violence centred on a local land use conflict between farmers and herders, the wider conflict opposing Mauritians and Senegalese has to be understood against the background of on-going racism in Mauretania. There has been a significant north/south divide in the country, roughly corresponding to a divide between the 'black' and 'white' populations. Frequently, villages inhabited by 'black' Mauritians living close to the southern border to Senegal were evacuated, the inhabitants stripped of their identification and deported to Senegal or Mali. This discrimination of southern 'black' Mauritians created a tense situation not only in Mauretania but also in Senegal, where numerous 'white' Mauritanian immigrants had opened businesses (UCDP, 2014).

A further factor contributing to these tensions were plans to build two large dams on the Senegal River and the Bafing River tributary in Mali. The dams were supposed to regulate the river's flow, while producing hydropower and allowing the expansion of irrigated agriculture in response to droughts and food shortages, which had been particularly severe in the 1970's and 1980's. Speculations about the increased value of land where irrigated agriculture would become possible, however, encouraged the predominantly 'white' Mauritanian elite to alter land legislation in order to strip 'black' Mauritians in the river valley of their rights and expel them to Senegal. This contributed to grievances against white Mauritians in Senegal (Homer-Dixon, 1994).

Resolution Efforts

The Mauritanian-Senegalese border was closed and diplomatic relations between the two countries ceased on 21 August 1989. Mediation attempts by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1990 were not successful. Finally, Senegal's President Abdou Diouf managed to work out an agreement with his Mauritanian homologue Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya and a treaty was signed by the two countries on July 18, 1991. The border was reopened on 2 May 1992 and the repatriation of refugees began, albeit slowly (UCDP, 2014; Onwar project, 2014).



Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity

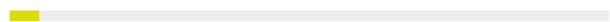


Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Diplomatic Crisis

Diplomatic crisis involving non-violent tools such as economic sanctions



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

National



Mass displacement

Less than 100.000 and less than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.



Cross Border Mass Displacement

Less than 100.000 and less than 10% of the population are displaced across borders.



Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

Violence has ceded completely.



Resolve of displacement problems

There is some success in accommodating the displaced.



Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.



Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.



Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

Decrease in conflict intensity at least partially the result of conflict resolution strategies.





Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Treaty/agreement

3

The border was reopened on 2 May 1992 after the president of Senegal, Abdou Diouf, and the President of Mauritania, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, reached an agreement resulting in a treaty signed by both countries. However, the repatriation of refugees has been slow.

Resources and Materials

References with URL

[Homer-Dixon, T. \(1994\). Environmental scarcities and violent conflict: Evidence from cases. *International Security*, 19\(1\), 5-40](#)

[Onwar project. Mauritanian-Senegalese Border War 1989-1991 Accessed Nov. 18, 2014 from \[onwar.com\]\(#\)](#)

[UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Accessed Nov. 18, 2014 from \[UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: Uppsala University\]\(#\)](#)

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/mauritaniens-vs-senegaleses>