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THE CHARTER OF KURUKAN FUGA: AN INDIGENOUS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PEACE (I4P) IN THE PREVENTION AND SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICTS IN MALI AND THE SAHEL REGION

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Résumé

Ce travail s'articule autour d'un outil médiéval de prévention et de résolution de conflit institutionnalisé dans la Charte Kurukan fuga. Il part du principe que la paix est la pierre angulaire de toute idée de prospérité et de quiétude sociale. Sans elle, les objectifs de développement, en général, et la sécurité humaine, en particulier, seraient une utopie. Cette réalité est consonante avec la crise qui sévit au Mali et au Sahel qui, depuis une décennie, sont proie aux exactions de groupes rebelles Touaregs et des Jihadistes. Dans un tel contexte d'insécurité, il devient indispensable de réimaginer une alternative, une nouvelle infrastructure pour la paix (I4P). Cette dernière, ancrée dans les valeurs sociétales et civilisationnelles africaines, se doit d'être épurée de toute conception occidentale. Notre approche est descriptive et qualitative. L'objectif de l'étude est d'analyser et de réhabiliter la Charte du Mandé/Charte de Kurukan Fuga, sur la base de la théorie de l'Afrocentricité, en vue de l'élaboration d'un nouveau mécanisme de prévention et de résolution des conflits au Mali et par extension en Afrique..

Mot clés : Afrocentricité, infrastructure pour la paix, Kurukan Fuga, Mali, prévention de conflits.

Abstract

This paper tackles a medieval tool for peace prevention and conflict resolution known as the Charter of Kurukan Fuga. It is premised on the idea that sustainable peace is the corner stone of human development and security. This speaks volumes to the havoc Jihadist and rebel groups have brought to Mali and the Sahel over the last decade thus significantly endangering human security in this region. From this perspective, there was need to re-imagine a new infrastructure for peace (I4P) which departs from orthodox western notions and takes its roots in African culture, reality and civilization. Our approach is descriptive and qualitative. This paper posits that the rehabilitation of the Mandé Charter/the Charter of Kurukan Fuga, taken within an Afrocentric conception, can help set a mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution in Mali and by extension in Africa.

Keywords: Afrocentricity, conflict prevention, infrastructure for peace, Kurukan Fuga, Mali.

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Introduction

Since its independence in the 1960s, Mali has faced recurrent Tuareg rebellion movements, in its northern portion, the latest of which, launched by the National Movement of Liberation of Azawad (NMLA) in 2012, brought hordes of terrorist groups such as ANSAR DINE, the Movement for the Uniqueness and Jihad in West Africa, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, thus fundamentally changing the country's security landscape. This new paradigm took insecurity to a new threshold as the conflict, historically confined in the North, reached the center of the country with a much larger scope i.e., the triggering of violence between Dogon and Fulani communities (USAID, 2004). From the classic Tuareg rebellions, the nature of crisis evolved progressively toward worldwide terrorism with the incremental implication of organizations such as the Islamic States and Al-Qaeda. These consecutive developments resulted in the ousting of two elected presidents: Amadou Toumani Touré and Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. Despite the signing of consecutive peace treaties—Tamarasset (1991) and the two successive Algiers Accords respectively in 2006 and 2015 (Boutellis and Zahar, 2017), it has been

noticed that the conflict seems endless and cyclical.

Decades after their continental independence movements which broke up the chains of colonialism and apartheid, African states in general as it is the case in Mali (sub-Saharan Africa/Sahel region), plagued by war and conflicts, fail to live up to the ideals of the “African renaissance” as prophesized in Thabo Mbeki's “I am an African” seminal speech (Nadubere, 2011). By 1996, Africa accounted for more than 50% of all war-related deaths hampering the continent's internal stability (Annan. 2004).

As a result of the resurgence of instability and violence, African and international organizations, through the United Nations (UN), shifted gears as they approached conflicts primarily from a preventionist angle rather than resolution as a peace building mechanism (Sarigiannidis, 2007). In the same vein, the adoption of the 2006 Saint Boniface Declaration (Boniface, 2006) along with the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) made of prevention and the reinforcement of human security norms the core of the regional peace architecture (Bryden & Olonisakin, 1989).

Despite these joint efforts, Africa in general, the Sahel and Mali in particular still remains a conflict-ridden region (Amnesty, 2012). Resultantly, this paper seeks to determine why decades of international peace schemes fail to contain the spread of violence and the specter war in Mali? Why, despite the signature of successive peace treaties Mali is still subject to secessionist movements? This research, built on a hybrid methodological structure sustained by both descriptive and qualitative perspectives, as to answer to the above questions, posits that conventional conflict resolution apparatus is not adapted to local African realities. These different mechanisms, inspired by western intelligentsia, from a top-down itinerary, designed to tackle ethnic strife, secessionist movements, post electoral violence, religious tensions and terrorism in an African context, lack one critical dimension i.e., local cultural and civilizational dimensions.

This work, as to successfully combat this resurgence of insecurity and violence, stresses the need to build and implement a new approach to conflict management and peace building. This paradigm shift centers around African indigenous values of conflict prevention and resolution i.e., theorized in Afrocentricity. It is from this perspective that this study investigates the Mandé Charter, as a local indigenous peace framework to conflict prevention and

resolution. After establishing an Afrocentric theoretical framework, this research explores the Mandé Charter and updates its provisions to meet current Malian security needs.

1. Conceptualizing Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity, coined by Molefi Kete Asante, by the late 1970s, is a cultural, political and artistic movement that takes its inspiration from Negritude, African personality, Marcus Garvey, Cheikh Anta Diop and the philosophy of ancient Egypt (Mazama, 2003). It is broadly defined as “placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior.” (Modupe, 2003, pp.1-15). It posits that Africa should imagine the terms of its own development.

The importance of Afrocentricity, in contemporary African context, lays in the fact that it resurrects indigenous cultural discourse on knowledge. It is important to recall this civilizational heritage has long time been marginalized (Weiler, 2006) by colonial, hegemonic and Eurocentric narrative (Wane, Kampf, and Simons). Afrocentricity puts local African expertise, experience, knowledge production, culture at the center of local problem-solving mechanisms.

Most contemporary African states stand on the ruins of multicultural, multiethnic, prosperous ancient empires which were

able to develop sophisticated social values and modes of governance as to assure harmony and social cohesion among their populations. Such cultural values and systems of governance were lost with African encounters with the West. It becomes then self-evident that the large variety of tensions and problems Africans are facing, nowadays, stem from the aftermath of colonialism. In this respect, Akilagpa Sawyerr and Beban Sammy Chumbow respectively believe that the path for sustainable development (Chumbow, 2005) passes by an African integration of its indigenous knowledge with modern global knowledge and apply it in all areas of social life (Sawyer, 2008).

In the same vein, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, goes beyond the indigenous rhetoric. He proposes an endogenous development theory (Ki-Zerbo, 1992) which perfectly blends tradition with modernity. According to him, such scheme remains the best alternative to the Keynesian and neo-classical conception of development which has caused the collapse of African economy and social structures (Jørgensen, 2001). This new agenda, according to Ali Mazrui, should be centered around the imperatives of ancestry and broader humanity as to keep the best values of both worlds (Mazrui, 1986). This approach stands on the fact that certain indigenous practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation, do not fit modern context and

shall be abandoned (Gilroy, 1993). However, cutting ties with the past is outrooting ourselves (Asante, 1998). Such an approach, according to Djibril Tamsir Niane, is the perfect recipe for failure on the path for development and peace (Niane, 2005). In short, African renaissance is intrinsically linked to its capacity and to remember itself as to break the chains of obscurantism it was plunged into by European Renaissance, Enlightenment, and modernity (Thiong'o, 2009).

To remember Africa also means to unearth the treasures of its oral sources. The Mande Charter also called the Charter of Kurukan Fuga is a living testimony of this oral legacy. It embodies the remembering vision necessary for the rebirth of the continent and the recovery of its peace. If well used and updated, it can be an important lever for peace and human development in the Sahel in so far as it is an endogenous mechanism rooted in the African culture.

Defining Afrocentricity as the “most complete philosophical totalization of the African being-at-the-center of his or her existence,” Asante, marks the difference between his concept and a mere “individual or collective quest for authenticity” as he posits: “the Afrocentric idea reaches beyond decolonizing the mind.” (Asante, 1998, p.137). To a large degree, it connects with Africology/africology as both notions celebrate Africa-centeredness and cultural

rootedness i.e., study of African phenomena (Asante, 1990). As a liberating discipline, *Africalogy* or *Africology* fosters the renewal of intellectual enterprise by encouraging scholars to tear themselves away from the imposition of European domination and by proposing concrete actions that lead to the improvement of African condition (Asante,1990). Dani Nadubere puts Africology within a holistic perspective as it roots in African cosmology (2011). The heuristic value of *Afrikology* is that it “seeks to build on the achievements of African people and the rest of humanity in order to emancipate themselves” from western imposed dehumanization (Nadubere, 2011, p.159).

In the light of the framework developed so far, it becomes critical for Malians to build on the Mandé Charter, an Afrocentric text, and its emancipatory discourse as a path for solving internal tensions as to restore peace and harmony. As an Afrocentric text stressing the need to put Africa under spotlight, it brings Malian expertise from the margin to the centre of World History by granting to it the paramount role in the resolution of crises.

2. Exploring the Mandé Charter

By 1998, traditionalists—Siriman Kouyate and S. Kouyaté—translated the Jelis’s (guardians of oral tradition) account on the meeting Sundiata Keita, King of

Mandé, had with the kingdom’s notabilities in 1236. They set a charter, Kurukan Fuga, aimed at establishing peace and social cohesion within the Mandé society. (Niang, 2006, p.74.). The final document comprises 44 provisions dealing with issues related to social organization, property rights, the protection of the environment, human rights, the prevention and mediation of conflicts and personal responsibilities.

As for many African scholars in orature, the document suffers from western criticism as Africa was labelled ahistorical (Kéïta, 2003). Moreover, the document has usually been confused with a text popularized by Youssouf Tata, called equally the Mandé Charter, which Djibril Tamsir Niane called *The Hunters’ Oath*. Solomana Kanté brought out another version of the charter as well. A prequel to the unique Mandé Charter, the Hunter’ Oath deals as well with the institution of social norms consecrating the sacrality of human life thus putting all men on equal ground (Cisse, 2003) as it sets the basis for a peaceful society within a multi-ethnic atmosphere. This echoes in notions such as “*Sanankunya* and *Tanamanyöya* as developed in the Mandé Charter.

2.1. *Sanankunya* and *Tanamanyöya*: an inter-ethnic and conflict prevention apparatus

N'Diaye defines, *Sanankuya*, the pleasant kinship as: “a set of friendly, preferential bonds established by the Ancestor, in a renewed, personal approach that works on the basis of humour and polite derision” (Cissé, 2003). It creates bonding and harmony between different ethnic groups. In like manner, jokes and mockery exist between grand-parents and grandchildren; between cousins; and between in-laws.

Tanamanyöya refers to a blood pact. It is a sort of social covenant established between certain groups by their ancestors i.e., totemism. For instance, it forbids marriage between certain groups as it may lead to conflict which opposes the spirit of totemism altogether. *Sanankuya* and *Tanamanyöya* formally bans tension of any sort between the ethnic groups they encapsulate as explained by Niang (2005) the “sanankunya” and the “tanamanyöya “ or joking relationship which is the object in the statement 7 of the Charter has been established among the Mandenkas user friendly relationships more or less strong according to the case, but which all contribute to the culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The joking relationship, as Mr. Raphaël N'Diaye names it so eloquently, was not an invention of the Kurukan Fuga, but the Charter has institutionalized it (2005, p.80). As the

Kurukan Fuga charter transcription of Siriman Kouyate (1998) puts it:

It has been established among the Mandenkas, the sanankunya (joking relationship) and the tanamannyonya (blood pact). Consequently, any contention that occurs among these groups should not degenerate, the respect for one another being the rule. Between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, between grandparents and grandchildren, tolerance and respect should be the principle. (p.2)

The Kurukan Fuga Charter preaches communalism, solidarity, peace and justice. It lines with the United Nations International Decade for a Culture of Peace's values (Sebastian, 2013) which is believed to be the crux of a new humanity (United Nations, 2010). Accordingly, the Mande text bears universal concerns such as good neighborliness. It goes from the understanding that most conflicts start with neighbors before gaining ground. Therefore,

preserving a good neighborliness prevents the eruption of conflicts that might reach inter-ethnic dimensions. This concern for peaceful co-existence between neighbors and communities at large is provided for in article 21. It says, “Do not follow up with your constant attentions the wives of the chief, of the neighbor, of the marabout, of the priest, of the friend and of the partner” (Niang, 2006, p.82.). We find a similar idea in article 39 which makes provision for the way domestic animals should be handled in order to avoid conflicts between cattle-breeders and farmers. It stipulates: “domestic animals should be tied up during cultivation and can be let loose after the harvest. The dog, the cat, the duck and the poultry are not bound by the measure” (Niang, 2006, p. 77).

2.2. Designing a Democratic and Functional Social Order/Hierarchy

The Mandé Charter has a bottom-up structure as it promotes a grass-roots conflict prevention approach imbedded in the system of governance and the social organization. First, it divides the society into 4 distinct but inter-related classes of people made of “sixteen clans of quiver carriers, five clans of marabouts, four groups of 'nyamakalas' and one group of slaves (Niang, 2006, p.78.).” Each of these groups plays important roles in the society. Quiver carriers, warriors, are requested in time of

conflict. The marabouts, religious leaders, are in charge of the education of children in religious matters. The Charter entrusts the *Nyamakala*, traditional communicators, with the task of peaceful conflict mediation. As intermediaries between the rulers and the masses, they preserve social cohesion by telling the truth to the king and curb any thought of rebellion. Hence, to the King, they are counselors, entertainers and the medium through which democratic ruling takes place.

The *Jeli* (griots), from the *Nyamakala* class, the memory of the past, regulates, mediates between both the populations and the King and between individual citizens as well. Masters of the word, they are experts in soothing tensions. In short, the *Nyamakala* are professionally trained peace makers.

2.3. Kurukan Fuga as a Holistic Indigenous Infrastructure for Peace

The notion of infrastructure for peace, from local expertise and experience, aims at creating a framework including all stakeholders in a given society as to prevent and solve conflicts on the ground of negotiation and non-violence (Tongeren, 2011). This helps consolidate, in post-conflict situations with risks of violence resurgence, the peace building process.

Kurukan Fuga's spirit is consonant with both the I4P and human security notions. It considers individual fulfillment and human rights as the sole path social cohesion (Niang, 2006, pp.71-83). Relatively new, human security takes the emphasis from the State. It focuses on the individual and makes sure every single person fulfils his/her full potential (Annan, 2000).

It is interesting to recall that some articles of the Charter of Kurukan Fuga make provision, ranging from humanly treating slaves (slaves right), respecting ambassadors (privileging mediation), protecting strangers even war prisoners (Geneva Convention) to kindly hosting foreigners (foreigners' rights), for the respect and preservation of human rights and security (Niang, 2006, p.72.). This gives credit to Cheikh Anta Diop's belief, especially, when he revealed that nothing is alien to Africa as it is the cradle of humanity and the origin of everything (Diop, 1981).

More importantly, the Mandé Charter makes a provision for the full respect of women's rights and their participation in public matters. The following statements spotlight these ideas: "Women, apart from their everyday occupations, should be associated with all our managements;" in article 14 it says, "Do never offend women, our mothers" (Niang, 2006, p.75.). These statements show that in the past, contrary to

a deep-rooted belief, African women were neither discriminated nor relegated in the background. They were allowed to take part in the management of social affairs in addition of accomplishing their household chores. It would be interesting if today's leaders could effectively implement these provisions in order to establish equality.

Furthermore, the Mande Charter fosters humanistic values that we find in most African culture like *Ubuntu*, *Djatiguiya*, etc. It promotes communalism, sharing, bonding justice freedom and a culture of peace based on the respect of the rights of individuals as emphasized in articles 31, 18, and 10 which respectively claim, "We should help those who are in need," "We should respect the law of primogeniture;" "We should offer condolences mutually (Niang, 2006, p.76).

Ultimately, the Kurukan Fuga highlights the supremacy of the group over the individual, an idea deeply rooted in many African cultures. It is the cornerstone of the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* as conveyed by Tutu when he says "a person is a person through other people", hence, "I am human because I belong" and "I am because we are, and because we are, therefore, I am" (1999, p.35). Tutu adds, "A person with *Ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others

are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are” (1999, p.35).

Hence, *Ubuntu* refers to our sense of humanness, our ability to do good and great things for others. It is also our capacity for love, freedom, justice and generosity. Ubuntu, according to Archbishop Tutu, fosters restorative justice which is not based on retribution or punishment, but rather on “the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships (Tutu,1999). Ubuntu, to a large degree echoes a provision of the Charter called *Djatiguiya/Jàtigiyà*. This notion calls for hospitality and by extension grants immunity to foreigners living in Mandé. Much like in the 29th article of the 1961 Vienna Convention, *Djatiguiya* “protects the diplomats against penal actions in the States they are accredited” (Niang, p.81). These values constitute the cornerstone of the Afrocentric theory and the Mandé Charter. The Afrocentric paradigm asserts that “human identity is a collective identity (Schiele, 1989) as confirmed by Achebe when he asserts: “No man, however great was greater than his people; no one ever won a judgment against his clan (1964).

Moreover, Babacar Sidikh Diouf said that this primacy of the group over the individual has its origin in African’s tendency to matrilineage or matriarchy (Diouf, 2005). Article 14 of the Charter lays emphasis on the necessity of preserving

women’s rights. This idea not only illustrates the matriarchal legacy mentioned by Diouf, but it also reflects the philosophy of Maat presents in most African cultures. African tradition fosters collectivity, sharing, love ethic and social responsibility as the core elements of social balance and harmony. These ideas constitute the kernel of the philosophy of Maat. As the cosmic principle of harmony, Maat disrupts chaos and restores peace and justice. Maat is believed to be “the fundamental reality, without it there is no understanding, no harmony, and no possible restoration of balance” (Asante, 1990, p.95).

Peace and harmony seem to be the core elements of Maat. In acknowledging the interdependence of the individual on the community, the Mandé Charter dwells on maatic philosophy. It strives to restore peace and social balance through a good social organization and a traditional mechanism of a conflict prevention and mediation.

The Charter not only gives preeminence to the community, it also entrusts the latter with the huge task of educating the children. Hence, children’s education, as conceived by the Charter, “behoves the entire society. The paternal authority in consequence falls to everyone.” Therefore, ““To win the battle of prosperity, the Kön’gbèn Wölo (the general system of supervision) has been established in order to

fight against laziness and idleness” (Niang, 2006, p75).

The Charter seems cognizant of the fact that human security starts with ensuring a good education to children. Education, whether formal or informal, traditional or modern, raises humans from the bottom pit of ignorance and obscurantism to the light of knowledge, dignity and humanity. It prevents them from endorsing meaningless ideas and accomplishes deeds that ennoble humanity as a whole. Therefore, a lack of good and sustainable education leads to all forms of violence and violations. The invasion of northern Mali by terrorist groups springs from the failure of children’s education. It results mainly from the non-implementation of a sound and appropriate educational system as well as a lack of employment. If the youth is deprived of these two things, they become easy preys to fanatics and all forms of terrorism. Therefore, ensuring human security entails also ensuring a good education to the youth and fight against idleness. Two articles of the Kurukan Fuga Charter make provision for the aforementioned ideas:

Sundjata Keïta was fully aware that “the devil finds work for idle hands.” The Malian authorities should implement these provisions of the Charter in order to resolve current problems such as conflicts, youth unemployment, the brain drain, corruption, drug trafficking and terrorism.

Last, but not least, the Mandé Charter stresses the importance of the protection of nature which is fully consistent with today’s idea of sustainable development based on the “green label.” It is provided in article 38 as follows: “Before setting fire to the bush, don’t look at the ground, rise your head in the direction of the top of the trees to see if they don’t bear fruits or flowers.” (Niang, 2006, p.82). The legislator of this provision seems to be aware that human security and development is linked to a good management of the environment. Bush-fires cause deforestation and the destruction of the ecosystem. Therefore, the protection of the environment behoves to the entire community. It is part of the personal responsibilities listed in the Charter. Any failure to abide by the provisions of the text entails a punishment. The last article testifies to the legal status of the text: “44. *All those who will transgress these rules will be punished. Everyone is bound to make effective their implementation.*” (Niang, 2006, p.77).

3. Rehabilitating the Mandé Charter: the Need for a New Infrastructure for Peace

As mentioned earlier, Africa and Mali, for decades have been the battlefield of never-ending cyclical conflicts ranging from inter-ethnic tensions to terrorism. The observation we have made so far, in this work, revolves around the international

community along with regional and state-level institutions' failure to successfully mitigate the recurrent rise of zones of tensions.

First, at the international level, conflict resolution tools, at the decision-making organs, follow a decreasing pattern without prior mastery of local people's reality—the people on behalf of whom the decisions are taken. For instance, the latest Algiers Accords, between Mali and the Tuareg rebellion, along with the advent of MUNISMA are based on well-known, readymade formulas and general notions of western conflict resolution mechanisms the UN has been putting in place in different African regions without any tangible achievement. Built on the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), the Algiers Accords negatively impacts the social make up in Mali as it legalizes the dictatorship of a minority group within a minority ethnic group on the large majority of people. Through the DDR process, former rebels will be given the right to integrate the public service without the required degrees for example. Additionally, they will integrate the regular army with lesser education and higher ranks in comparison to those who fought them on the battlefield. These measures are not meant to foster reconciliation as justice is marginalized in the name of peace. Such developments create more frustrations among the

populations who will perceive in rebellions an easy path to richness. What we aim to point at here is that local communities are not associated with the decisions affecting their lives which in itself strengthen the likelihood of future conflicts and the failure of peace building. A large dialogue, in northern Mali or in the south, involving the civil society as to establish a joint security mechanism was never given a chance. Seeking peace has always been the realm of political actors at the expense of the victims of the atrocities which lead inexorably to resolutions detached from local realities making peace an impossible notion. The UN's approach should be accompanying local initiatives to resolve local conflicts not to impose resolutions that are detached from local realities. The UN's way of solving African conflicts is deeply politicized as it solely focuses on comforting rebels' demands instead of considering the broader picture which takes into account the larger community and general well-being. This is the complete opposite of the principles put forward in the notions of human security, indigenous infrastructure for peace and Afrocentricity all together.

At state level, we have the same dissociation of local people from the measures regulating their lives. Kurukan Fuga was established within a totally different context before the advent of colonialism and its acculturation process

that derailed many African nations and communities from what created peace and harmony in their societies. To some extent, the reason for endless resurgence of conflicts derives from this civilizational reality which compelled Africans to operate within an African context with European worldviews. However, given the recognized need to return to Afrocentricity, africology and to develop an authentic local infrastructure for peace, it is critical not to establish a parallel model to what we already possess but to integrate an updated version into the current system of complementary mechanisms driven from the Mandé Charter. We should be able to codify the role and the contribution of actors detaining traditional legitimacy in the peaceful resolution of conflicts. For instance, the griots' input in solving problems can become mandatory in judicial proceedings as to compel people to pass through a griot led mediation before bringing the case to a judge's appreciation in final resort. In this way, the *Jelis* shall be integrated within the legal judicial apparatus. Such an approach can be institutionalized at town, district, and region levels which shall hugely help the state prevent many local conflicts as it is understood that strife reaches state level only when it is gone out of hand. In case we don't have the *Jeli* in a given locality, we can call on religious actors or any people with

cultural and traditional legitimacy to fulfill their role.

Ultimately, the same approach shall be undertaken to integrate traditional chieftaincies within city's and regions' chain of command beside mayors, prefects and governors who are accountable to the political power not a given village or town. Such measures would bring a piece of local contribution into a well politicized and detached decision-making apparatus.

Within a larger context, mechanisms such as *Sinankuya*, for a broader African integration scheme, might be extended as to include the multitude of Africa's ethnic groups. For instance, there are pleasantry between Zulu and Wolof, Shona and Peulh, Dogon and Touareg, Akan and Sonraïs. That is likely to bridge the barriers among them and foster peaceful coexistence and harmony. Besides, it can be a stepping-stone to the African cultural unity. Disunity and ethnic discrimination constitute the main causes of many conflicts in Africa. Nevertheless, Achebe warns: "When two brothers fight to death a stranger inherits their father's estate" 1964, specific page). This statement perfectly illustrates what happens in Mali. While Touareg groups attack their brothers and sisters, heavily armed bandits invade the main northern cities and impose the Sharia upon the population. This situation could have been prevented if a culture of peace and tolerance

has been promoted at a national, district and local level.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the Charter of Kurukan Fuga as an alternative I4P in the prevention and settlement of conflicts in the Sahel against the backdrop of the Malian conflict. It is premised on the theoretical framework of Afrocentric and indigenous discourse on knowledge and their roles in the development of Africa. In addition, the paper is steeped in contemporary discourse on human security and sustainable development. Therefore, it makes a case for the appropriation and implementation of the Charter of Mandé as an Afrocentric framework for peace and intercultural dialogue as well as an I4P promoting human security and development.

Consequently, it has been shown that the Charter of Kurukan Fuga is an indigenous/ Afrocentric text which is based on African age-old traditions. The charter encapsulates the values of human security and communalism that are present in many African cultures such as *Ubuntu* and *Djatiguiya*. Hence, we recommend its dissemination and translation into many languages in order to make it available. It should also be taught as part of the teaching curricula so that it can fully play its role as both an important historical document as well as an African-centered I4P for the

prevention and non-violent resolution of conflicts.

The Mandé Charter recognizes that human security and development is predicated upon the respect of human rights and the eradication of injustice, inequality and discrimination of all kinds. It is also grounded on the idea of tolerance and the end of impunity and gross violation of human rights. By promoting women rights, the basic human rights and freedoms, the importance of community, kinship, marriage, children's education, the protection of the environment, democracy, and the establishment of *Sanankunya* and *Tanamanyöya* through its core provisions, the Charter of Mandé places African ideals and values at the center. It brings a new humanity and subjectivity in the discourse of human security and peace by making Africans the key agents of their development. Through the expressions 'do', 'don't', 'never', Africans are entrusted with the task of regulating their society by enhancing social cohesion, harmony and communal well-being and by assuming full responsibility of their acts.

As a mechanism of regulation, good governance and democracy, the Charter invites Africans to trust themselves and their capacities to cure their social ills. It shows that the worst form of poverty and insecurity is not material, but mental. Poverty of the mind is a pathway to all kind of evils.

Consequently, security and development do not refer only to the absence of wars, threat and want. They refer also to our ability to think, to imagine and devise alternatives routes for change and development. Proclaimed after a bloody and long war, the Charter of Kururkan Fuga highlights the belief that there is no “great men without imagination (Machiavel, 2002)” as there are no great people without imagination. Africans can find solutions to their crises by imagining and by acknowledging their indigenous values and past heritage.

Yet, the effective implementation of the Mandé Charter remains daunting and challenging. Firstly, the text is not well-known; secondly, it is still controversial because of its orality; and thirdly its name refers to a particular people, the Manding and their history. Other groups may regard the text as a celebration of the past of the Manding people and their supremacy. Finally, the text needs to be updated, reinterpreted in the light of contemporary political, social and economic realities. The aim of this paper is to contribute to this task.

If the challenge of the 21th century is to make the world safer, habitable and more peaceful for its inhabitants, Africans must raise up to this challenge by tapping from the wellspring of the past. In order to implement the spirit of the Charter and its *raison d'être*, Africans must transcend their legendary division by acknowledging one another, and

by believing firmly that what unites us is much stronger than what separates us.

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