

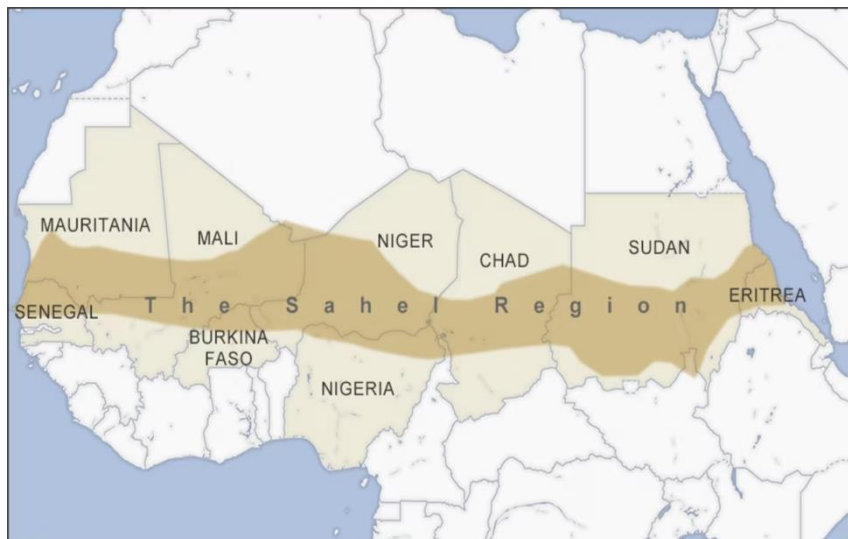


## Security Council

**Issue: The question of addressing escalating security challenges, specifically regarding the proliferation of military coups within the Sahel Region**

### Geographic Context

The Sahel encompasses 12 nations and has a population of nearly 150 million. The region spans 5 and a half thousand kilometers and is around a thousand in width bisecting the African continent in two.<sup>1</sup> The Sahel represents a transitional zone between the more tropical environment of central Africa and the Sahara. The region's precarious position on the edge of the habitable zone of Africa and the largest desert in the world has made it extremely susceptible to climate disruptions, with a historically fairly consistent schedule of drought approximately every 30-60 years and the severity of these reaches' extremes with them on average claiming at least a hundred thousand lives. The Sahel's position puts it at the forefront of the effects of global warming, with the region facing severe desertification in recent years.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wionews.com/world/explained-where-is-sahel-region-exactly-and-whats-the-trouble-there-621348#>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn16967-africa-trapped-in-mega-drought-cycle/>

The people of the Sahel have too been uniquely shaped by their environment with many ethnic groups in the region having historically adopted nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralist lifestyles.<sup>3 4 5</sup> However, with growing populations within the Sahel the governments there have had to allocate more significant portions of land to farmers. This has led to disruptions in the migrations of these ethnic groups which led to increased inter-ethnic tensions with clashes erupting.<sup>6 7</sup> These clashes further incite conflict between these ethnic groups which goes to help with recruiting into the militant jihadist groups which exploit these tensions to recruit members. Jihadist groups have also disrupted farming, notably within northeastern Nigeria where Boko-Haram militants have raided and pillaged local expenditures. Conflict throughout the Sahel increases food insecurity which is already a significant issue in the region.

The Sahel is uniquely favorable for Jihadist groups to operate in since the Sahara Desert to the North offers refuge and a base from which to direct operations from and with the region. The Sahel region is majority Muslim and often poorly governed due to corruption, government weakness, and or inefficiency which allows jihadists to push from South Algeria as far South as Benin. With the situation seeing little improvement in the region more radical alternatives become attractive for military Juntas and Islamic Jihadism.<sup>8</sup>

The Sahel is also vital on an international stage due to its wealth in national resources. France gets most of its uranium and thorium ore which are key to powering its nuclear energy plants. With the region being hydrocarbon rich too, especially Niger, China is also taking interest in the region sponsoring a major pipeline connecting oil and gas production in East Niger to ports in Benin.<sup>9 10 11 12</sup>

## Historic Background

Throughout the medieval period, and before European explorers such as the Portuguese colonized African colonies, especially along the West Coast, civilizations formed, developed and prospered in the Sahel. Between 500 AD–1250 AD, the Ancient Ghana Empire gained strength in the Sahel region. It had a

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<sup>3</sup> [https://journals.ametsoc.org/view/journals/eint/8/23/1087-3562\\_2004\\_8\\_1\\_ciwaag\\_2.0.co\\_2.xml](https://journals.ametsoc.org/view/journals/eint/8/23/1087-3562_2004_8_1_ciwaag_2.0.co_2.xml)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sei.org/features/pastoralism-farming-climate-in-sahel/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://mondediplo.com/maps/saharasahel#&gid=1&pid=1>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/3/9/dozens-killed-in-attacks-on-burkina-faso-villages>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.jurist.org/news/2023/01/un-human-rights-chief-urges-burkina-faso-to-expediate-massacre-inquiry/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2019/06/conflicts-in-mali/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.africaintelligence.com/west-africa/2019/06/25/future-agadem-exports-why-cnpc-prefers-patrice-talon-over-idriss-deby,108362817-eve>

<sup>10</sup> <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/uranium-and-thorium-ore/reporter/fra>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2021/laws-of-attraction/4-is-northern-benin-at-risk-of-violent-extremist-spillover/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20221013-africa-s-longest-oil-pipeline-takes-shape-in-niger>

civil service, strong monarchy based on a matrilineal system of inheritance, a cabinet, an army, an effective justice system and a regular source of income from trade as well as tribute from vassal kings<sup>13</sup> The Ghana Empire faced a decline in the 200 years following this prosperous era and thus the Mali Empire gained some greater importance in the region, encompassing an even larger territory than Ghana. Agriculture was well developed, as were fishing and trade and the biggest commercial centres included Niani, Timbuktu, and Gao<sup>14</sup>.

Mansa Musa was the wealthiest monarch of the Malian Empire, where there were 14 provinces governed by their own sheiks. The government established diplomatic relations with other African states like Morocco. Musa is best known however for being the leader who firmly implemented Islam in this region, setting up a custom that would be prolonged for centuries to come, alongside peace, order and commerce.

One of the provinces, Gao, broke away from the State and originated the Songhai Empire, where both the Hausa and Fulani people lived, cultures that still exist today. When the first European explorers, such as Portuguese and Spanish expeditioners reached the region, the Sankore University in Timbuktu<sup>15</sup> was already a fully established project and described by many as one of the greatest educational premises in the Islamic world. Several accounts from the time, such as that by Leo Africanus', provided Europeans with most of their knowledge on medieval Africa's progress.

The colonization period in the Sahel region can be pointed to begin with French rule in the West Sahel from 1895 which was not guided by a humanitarian mission but by calculated exploitation of the regions they held. The French extensively employed Sahelian subjects as soldiers at times of conflict, during both World Wars, and then in Madagascar in 1947 to suppress an anti-colonial revolt, and later in Indochina making up 16% of the forces used in the First Indochina war.<sup>16</sup> When demands for decolonization grew internally, and global pressure for decolonization grew, de Gaulle, then the French President, issued a referendum across French Africa asking for which path of decolonization was to be preferred by each colony. One of the option was complete and immediate secession which would entail a withdrawal of all French material and financial aid. This was too high a price and so all but Guinea picked the alternative - joining the French Community - an organization that was established to ensure persistent French influence over policy and decision making in the region. This led to all former French colonies, except Guinea, coming into the CFA Franc zone (Franc

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13 General history of Africa, VII: Africa under colonial domination, 1880-1935, Boahen, 1985

14 <https://fscj.pressbooks.pub/africanamericanhistory/chapter/medieval-west-africa/> (Accessed 9 January 2024)

15 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/119/#:~:text=Home%20of%20the%20prestigious%20Koranic,Yahia%2C%20recall%20Timbuktu's%20golden%20age> (Accessed 11 January 2024)

16 <https://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/en/history-senegalese-tirailleurs>

of the *Financial Community of Africa*) which effectively ensured French economic dominance and superiority throughout their former colonies.<sup>17 18</sup>

The following decades saw continued French influence in the regions with a significant quantity of accords being established covering politics, military, culture, and economy.<sup>1920</sup> This practice was seen under successive French leaders however a gradual shift of French politics further into socialism, with Mitterrand 1981-95 adopting policies aimed at promoting regional democracy. However, little practical change was achieved.<sup>21</sup> Later, in 2007-2012 & 2012-2017, in Sarkozy's and Hollande's administration attempts to end the *Françafrique* but ultimately growing conflict led Holland to bring French troops into the Sahel.

In 2012, the Tuareg, a Berber group which had long desired independence from Mali, following an influx of weapons from Libya after the overthrow of Gaddafi in 2011 the MNLA (Secular Tuareg Liberation Movement)<sup>22 23 24</sup> allied with Ansar Dine (local Al-Qaeda affiliated Jihadist group) and led an uprising which decisively expelled the Malian government from the North.<sup>25 26</sup> This vacuum failed to be filled by the MNLA and Ansar Dine led a series of offensives in North Mali securing their control over key cities including Timbuktu and Gao.<sup>27</sup> However, as Ansar Dine forces continued to move South<sup>28</sup> the French were forced to intervene to prevent the fall of the Malian government.<sup>29</sup> The French interventions was at first successful recapturing many key cities however a long-term failure to suppress the insurgency.<sup>30</sup> The initial French objective was to put Mali in a position from which it could negotiate a peace with the insurgents.<sup>31</sup>

The conflict went on and Al-Qaeda affiliated Jihadist groups consolidated into JNIM and IS-GS emerged (ISIL-Sahel Region)<sup>32</sup> they quickly began expanding their area of operations with the conflict spilling over in Niger and Burkina Faso. This all coincided with the rise of Boko-Haram<sup>33 34</sup> and ISWP (ISIL-West Africa Region) in the Lake Chad area.<sup>35</sup>

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17 <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/guinee-la-souverainete-monetaire-une-histoire-mouvementee-32676>

18 [https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E\\_AFCO\\_238\\_0043--fifty-years-of-french-cooperation-with.htm](https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_AFCO_238_0043--fifty-years-of-french-cooperation-with.htm)

19 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42897073>

20 <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-the-france-backed-african-cfa-franc-works-as-an-enabler-and-barrier-to-development/>

21 <https://information.tv5monde.com/international/francois-mitterrand-et-lafrique-il-toujours-eu-une-forme-de-paternalisme-autoritaire>

22 [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/11/29/ban-ki-moon-met-en-garde-contre-une-intervention-au-mali\\_1797305\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/11/29/ban-ki-moon-met-en-garde-contre-une-intervention-au-mali_1797305_3212.html)

23 <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2012/3/20/malis-tuareg-rebellion-what-next/>

24 <https://thinkafricapress.com/causes-uprising-northern-mali-tuareg/>

25 <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-xpm-2012-apr-04-la-fg-mali-tuaregs-20120404-story.html>

26 <https://www.news24.com/News24/Malian-forces-battle-Tuareg-rebels-20120304>

27 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-18610618>

28 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/mali/9365390/Trouble-in-Timbuktu-as-Islamists-extend-control.html>

29 <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/12/world/africa/mali-islamist-rebels-france.html>

30 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-20991723>

31 <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2022/09/security-in-the-sahel-and-the-end-of-operation-barkhane/>

32 <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/the-state-of-al-qaeda-and-isis-around-the-world>

33 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/08/12/boko-haram-nigeria-niger-chad-cameroon/>

34 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-violence-bokoharam-idUSKBN0LA2J120150206/>

35 <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2018/04/counterterrorism-west-africa-and-sahel/>

In 2020 the first of the most recent coups occurred in Mali. A coalition of government issues, notably corruption and the mismanagement of the COVID-19 response led to a series of riots and strikes calling for the removal of the then president Keïta.<sup>36</sup> The military also upset of the ongoing corruption and military management mutinied and decided to execute a coup arresting Keïta and refused negotiations with the prime minister. When news reached the citizens of Mali of the coup many went to the streets demanding Keïta resign. Following this an interim government was established with former Minister of Defense Bah N'Daw being made president with colonel Goïta being made vice president<sup>37</sup>. The coup was mostly peaceful. However, following this coup Mali's membership in ECOWAS was suspended. The junta promised a transition period of 18 months before elections would be held. However, as the deadline approached tensions within the Junta reached a boiling point and Goïta had N'Daw arrested and forced to resign, and the transition period was extended by two years. Both coups occurred due to general discontent amongst the people and/or military and an erosion of trust of government institutions. The coups in Mali were quickly met with sanctions from ECOWAS who closed borders with Mali.<sup>38 39</sup>

Guinea, having completed its transition to democracy, came under the rule of President Condé. However, Condé began implanting policies that become increasing authoritarian and, despite protests, he oversaw a constitutional referendum which was to grant him a possibility of a third term. Meanwhile, he began the process of arresting opposition leaders.<sup>40</sup> This all while living conditions for the average Guinean saw no improvement and Condé attempted to increase national taxes whilst cutting the military budget and subsidizing the presidency. Condé then allegedly engaged in ballot stuffing during the referendum and subsequent elections and had security forces fire live rounds at protestors. Furthermore, even though Guinea saw fair amounts of GDP growth under Condé conditions worsened especially during covid with a surge in gas and food prices.<sup>41</sup>

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September the national armed forces encircled the presidential district and engaged pro-government forces. Following the taking of Condé hostage, Colonel Mamady Doumbouya annulled the constitution and dissolved the government proclaiming himself interim president.<sup>42</sup> The coup faced significant support domestically. The coup however led to Guinea being suspended from ECOWAS and the African Union.<sup>43</sup>

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36 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/world/africa/mali-protesters-killed-keita.html>

37 <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/malis-president-premier-arrested-by-mutinying-soldiers/1945667>

38 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/19/world/africa/Whats-happening-Mali-coup.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>

39 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53830348>

40 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/14/timeline-a-year-of-bloody-protests-in-guinea>

41 <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/heavy-gunfire-heard-guinea-capital-conakry-reuters-witness-2021-09-05/>

42 <https://news.sky.com/story/guinea-soldiers-claim-to-have-seized-power-and-dissolved-government-as-president-detained-12400084>

43 <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ghanas-akufo-addo-meet-guineas-sanction-hit-junta-2021-09-17/>

In a mirroring of events in Guinea the two coups in Burkina Faso followed a similar set of events. President Compaoré having ruled for 27 years attempted in 2014 to abolish term limits for the office of president.<sup>44</sup> However, this backfired and sparked nation-wide protest and the military intervened and after an ECOWAS negotiated settlement democracy was restored and Kaboré was elected president of Burkina Faso. However, by 2018 the spillover of the Islamic insurgency from Mali led him to declare a state of emergency and subsequently he attempted to have a constitutional referendum, a policy central to his campaign.<sup>45</sup> and it was an attempt to limit future presidential power and establish a fifth-Burkinabe Republic. The referendum was set for 2018 but was postponed due to terror attacks in Ouagadougou carried out by JNIM.<sup>46 47</sup> However, the ousting of Compaoré led to deterioration in the security situation in Burkina Faso as security forces were partially dismantled and Kaboré failed to effectively unite the government. Kaboré's presidency led to a shift in policy regarding Jihadist groups, where Compaoré negotiated for logistical support for the militias in return for security guarantees and actively began combating insurgents. He began increasing participation in MINUSMA (Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) and the G5 Sahel Force which led to Jihadist militias targeting Burkina Faso more. Kaboré's government faced a multifaceted assortment of issues those being: development, corruption, security and the 10,000+ dead and 2 million displaced. Concurrently a spike in ethnic tensions led to a campaign of Mossi pogroms against the Fulani<sup>48</sup> (a semi-nomadic ethnic group) with several massacres occurring. Kaboré was overthrown due to a claimed failure to suppress the insurgency and Lieutenant Colonel Damiba<sup>49 50</sup> assumed the presidency which at first was a very popular move but when it was clear he was unable to control the insurgency his popularity collapsed, and he was overthrown by Captain Traoré.<sup>51 52</sup>

Around this time Ansur-ul Islam emerged as a Burkinabe counterpart of the Malian JNIM (Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin). Even though lacking in numbers Ansur-ul Islam has become extremely dangerous within Burkina Faso. They co-operated with ISGS to bomb the military base at Nassoubou and over the next four months they executed 80 attacks: kidnappings, assaults, and assassinations. Recruiting significantly aided by their exploitation of local resentments and issues.<sup>53</sup>

The September 2022 coup which established Captain Traoré as president was led by young officers from the frontlines upset with their conditions and the military failures. The coup is allegedly supported by

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44 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29831262>

45 <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/highlights-africa-2020-elections/>

46 <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/burkina-faso-leader-pledges-fight-jihadists-attacks/>

47 <https://web.archive.org/web/20180303004935/http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43257453>

48 <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200422-killing-of-31-fulani-in-burkina-faso-could-be-war-crime-according-to-hrw>

49 <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200422-killing-of-31-fulani-in-burkina-faso-could-be-war-crime-according-to-hrw>

50 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/25/burkina-faso-military-coup-how-the-world-reacted>

51 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/30/burkina-faso-military-leader-damiba-deposed-coup-army>

52 <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/ansaroul-islam>

53 <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20170210-groupe-jihadiste-Ansaroul-Islam-Ibrahim-Malam-Dicko-burkina-faso>

Wagner forces, Russian mercenary paramilitary forces employed to spread Russian influence, and possibly aided by both Russia directly and Turkey.<sup>54 55 56 57 58</sup>

To ensure and boost popularity the coup and spread anti-French sentiment the junta employed help of Russian social media troll farms. Anti-French sentiment aided by these troll farms swept the Sahel, with significant anti-French demonstrations occurring in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger. This wave has also been linked to expulsions of French forces from nations that being Burkina Faso, and Mali and within those two countries the French forces were substituted by Wagner forces.<sup>59 60 61</sup>

The most recent coup within the Sahel and the most notable one is Niger, where president Bazoum was overthrown by a military Junta which led to a crisis due to the ECOWAS opposition to the coup. Niger constitutently is ranked as one of the least developed nations in development indexes and was one of the front lines of the battle with the Islamic insurgency. Following the expulsion of French troops from Mali the troops and the HQ for French counter insurgency was moved to Niger. Furthermore, the US since 2016 has invested over a hundred million dollars into building Agadez airbase (Niger Air Base 201).

Just as the wave of Anti-French sentiment was sweeping the region general Tchiani, the head of the Nigerien presidential guard, with around 30,000 soldiers executed a coup in Niger, putting Bazoum under house arrest (where he currently remains). The trigger for the coup was most likely a combination of the poor economic state of the country and Bazoum's plans to replace Tchiani as head of the presidential guard. Following the announcement of the coup. Niamey witnessed demonstrations in favor of the coup with Russian flags seen at the demonstration. This was immediately met with extreme consequences from ECOWAS who gave a deadline to restore Bazoum or face military intervention, at the same time Burkina Faso and Mali expressed that an intervention in Niger would mean region wide war.<sup>62 63 64 65 66 67</sup>

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54 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/03/burkina-faso-coup-fears-growing-russian-mercenary-presence-sahel-north-africa>

55 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/burkina-faso-coup-putin-mercenaries-back-latest-push-to-tighten-grip-on-africa-q6rgv2r6l>

56 <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-burkina-faso-coup-russia/>

57 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/03/burkina-faso-coup-fears-growing-russian-mercenary-presence-sahel-north-africa>

58 <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2023/03/16/Mali-s-junta-gets-warplanes-drones-from-Russia-Turkey>

59 <https://www.mei.edu/publications/shifting-sentiments-sahel-anti-france-or-pro-russia>

60 [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/05/how-france-was-driven-out-of-the-sahel\\_6124522\\_7.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/05/how-france-was-driven-out-of-the-sahel_6124522_7.html)

61 <https://english.iswnews.com/22384/russian-forces-deployed-at-former-french-base-in-mali/>

62 <https://apnews.com/article/niger-coup-west-africa-bfd1ddcf075379289475d3f72d85fa16>

63 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66312011>

64 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1139272>

65 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/27/niger-situation-remains-fluid-as-army-backs-coup-plotters>

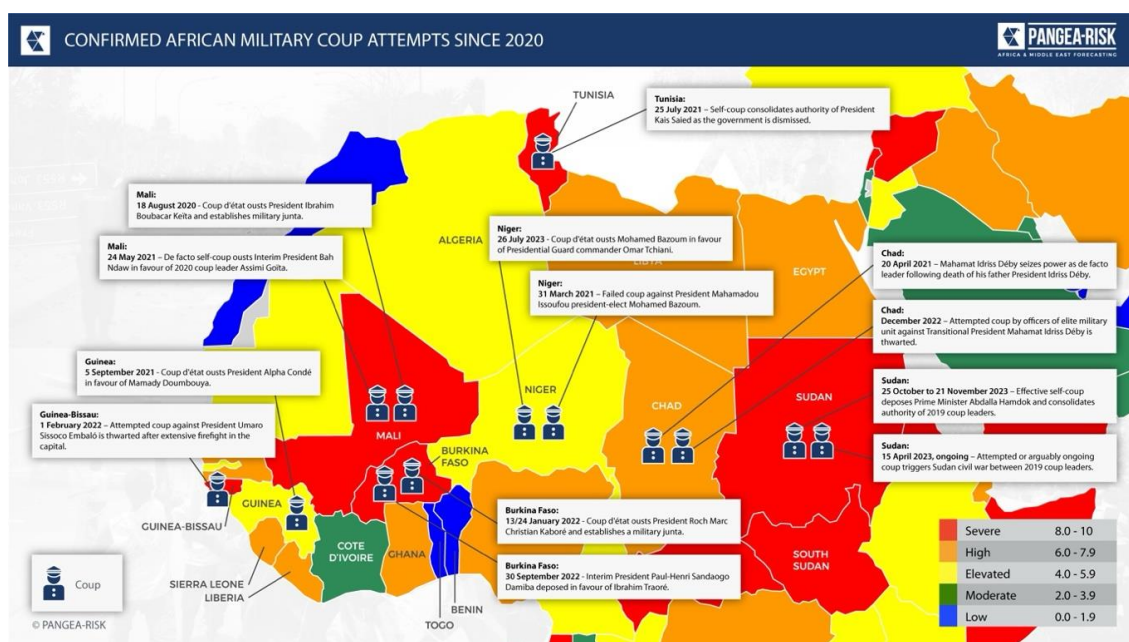
66 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/27/timeline-a-history-of-coups-in-niger>

67 <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20230726-african-union-ecowas-condemn-attempted-coup-in-niger>

# Why is security and the proliferation of coups in the Sahel an issue?

## 1. COUPS

Since 2010 the broader Sahel has experienced about *thirty* coups and or coup attempts, with the success rate increasing exponentially in recent years. Since 2019 the West-Sahel has *six* successful military coups: Mali in 2020 and 2021, Guinea 2021, Burkina Faso January 2022 & September 2022, and, most notably Niger 2023. With colonialism having ripped apart ethnic groups, impoverished millions and set up governments in the image of their colonial administrations, which were inherently by design prone to despotic rule, the colonizing powers dealt the region an awful hand. This has led to repeated cycle of coups and instability all throughout Africa and especially the region. These factors have led to coups, corruption, despotism, and ineffective regimes being the rule not the exception. This cycle of factors leading to coups and authoritarianism which in turn leads to worsening in conditions and violence and more coups which further destabilizes the region, with the violence leading to families torn apart, livelihoods ruined, and much more. The problem however is not localized to the region, the instability and chaos affords armed groups and extremists a way to gain influence. Furthermore, coups undermine the democratic institutions that are supposed to be the bedrock of any government, denying people to choose their will and forcing them to live under the will of other. This includes Islamic extremists which has become a key issue to the West, with the West focusing significant resources to prevent Jihadist takeovers within throughout the region. However, the coups in the region holding a distinctly anti-western sentiment have proven a challenge to the West's battle on terror as they been forced out of several of the countries replaced with forces with questionable efficacy, notably even including Russian mercenaries in the form of the Wagner group.



Map Showing coups and coup attempts in North Africa since 2020 | PANGEA-RISK



## 2. COMPETING INTERESTS, STRATEGIES, AND MOTIVATIONS

The debate will undoubtedly require global powers to align their foreign policy to further their own strategic interests. Western nations might seek solutions that reflect a return to the old status quo but, having to reconcile the old approaches and strategies found in their foreign policy to the region, may not be ideal. Nations like Russia and China, in a neo-cold-war spirit, will seek to undermine western interests and support their own whether that being through combating anything that could strengthen the west's hand and further their own.

However, it is also key to mention regional interests and key players. The African Union, in a desire to prevent spread of conflict and ensure a return to secure governance in the region has established notably, "the Nouakchott Process" and MISAHÉL (Mission for Mali and the Sahel). ECOWAS (The Economic Community of West African States) has also played a vital role in the region, including in the AU initiatives. However, it had faced difficulties in many aspects to effectively aid the missions, its efforts not aided by the withdrawal of the states that recently from the organization. Furthermore, currently in the process of dissolution, the G5 Sahel played a key role in the Sahel, itself having been a multilateral framework for co-operation among the Sahel nations, however it fell apart following the coups.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, it should be noted that this 21<sup>st</sup> century multi-polar '*Great Game*<sup>69</sup>' doesn't see all players with a distinctly symmetrical strategy, since on the ground, all current players involved act in vastly different ways. Russia seeks influence via mercenary work and mass-scale disinformation campaigns. China, with their signature strategy, seeks to construct ambitious projects under the guise of altruism but luring states into so-called 'debt-traps' with a distinct ambivalence to the nature of the country's government for as long as it helps them further their economic influence and interests. Then within the western-bloc there is France, placed squarely at the forefront of the issue, the historic colonial empire had never truly left Africa, to this day the Sahel is scattered with French bases, though their amount has slightly fallen with the wave of coups strong on anti-French sentiment. French influence in the region has held strong since decolonization this is best exemplified with the West & Central African CFA Francs, that have since 1945 been directly pegged to the French Franc and the Euro which significantly even though providing a stable currency to the nations it had string attached which allowed France to retain its influence in the region which holds vital imports for France. Finally, there is the USA's policy in the region, which faced a stark increase in focus and interest in the region following Sep. 11, 2001, with the prominence of Islamic Jihadist groups notably mostly Al-

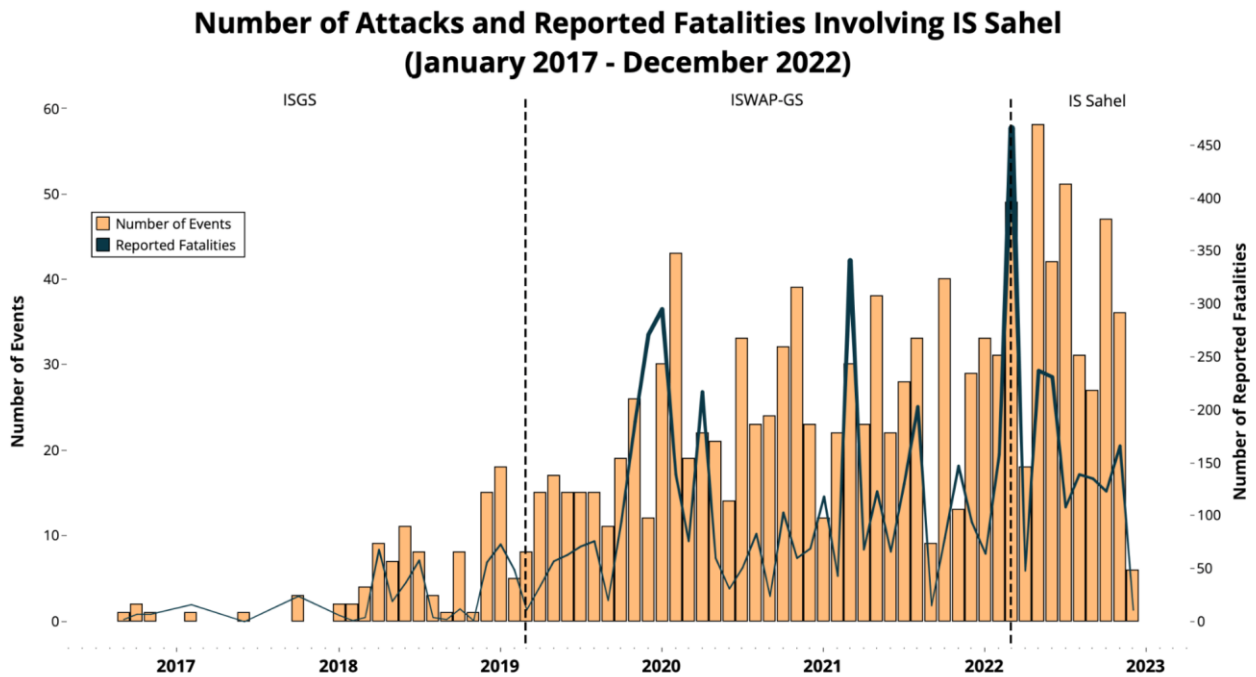
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68 NATO Parliamentary Assembly Report on Development and Security Challenges in the Sahel Region

69 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Great-Game>

Qaeda and ISIL off-shoots and affiliated groups. US policy in the region is defined by its counter-terrorism goals however a more holistic approach was gradually adopted with a diversion of extra resources to humanitarian goals such as for example via 'the Global Fragility Act.'

### 3. ISLAMIC JIHADISM



*Reported Fatalities Involving IS-Sahel | ACLED*

Secondary to the issue of the coups is the issue of Islamic Jihadism. Conflict with Jihadist groups has ravaged the Sahel for the last twenty years and has led to millions to be displaced with many of the coups happening due to perceived military failures against these groups in these countries. Islamic Jihadism and over-all conflict with non-state armed groups has led to significant disturbances across the region, these groups are notable for being ever-shifting and changing, with even alliances and alliances, i.e. allegiances to more significant groups (ISIS, Al-Qaida, etc.) are more tactical decisions rather than a reflection of ideological stance or sectarian leanings. The limited common unifier across these groups is the concept of Jihad with on a lower level them all possessing alternate strategies and strategic/tactical goals.

It is also important to mention that these groups are to a significant extent a reaction to the political state of the region, even though nominally they are groups fighting for Islamic Jihad, on a recruitment scale they exploit the ineffectiveness of local governance, offering an alternative to national leadership and providing an idea that these groups provide stable governance and security, often playing on social divides in the

region to exploit ethnic tensions. However, since these groups are often extremely decentralized and unorganized, many of them have manifested in the form of fanatical militias with little regard for civilian populations, leading to rape, murder, theft, and pillaging.

#### **4. IMPACT ON CIVILIAN POPULATIONS**

The coups have led to significant human rights abuses and coupled with the abuses committed by extremist groups have put a significant strain on the local populations. The violence has led to the displacement of millions, and deaths of tens of thousands. The countries that recently experienced coups have seen suppression of freedom of speech, suspension of *Habeas Corpus*, and extra-judicial executions perpetrated by Juntas. Countries like Burkina Faso, or Mali have seen political opponents imprisoned.

This all has led to extremely significant food scarcity regionally. Some areas, having up to over 85% of the population living with significant food scarcity.

#### **Relevant Past UN Resolutions & Reports**

- 2690 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/189/36/PDF/N2318936.pdf?OpenElement>  
Terminating MINUSMA Mandate
- 2649 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/476/44/PDF/N2247644.pdf?OpenElement>  
Commending MINUSMA, Restating need for peace in Mali, and Restating Aspects of Resolution 2374 regarding sanctions
- 2590 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/238/25/PDF/N2123825.pdf?OpenElement>  
Restating aspects of Previous Resolutions
- 2584 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/171/61/PDF/N2117161.pdf?OpenElement>
- <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/222/89/PDF/N2222289.pdf?OpenElement>

## Focus of Debate

The debate will focus on the prevention of further coups and what possible shift in regional policy can be adopted. countries will certainly provide clauses that express condemnation of the coups and express the dangers of democratic backsliding. Likely attempts will be made to see what can be done to limit the influence of the juntas. Questions will be debated such as: How can misinformation be combated within environments? What kind of aid and what nature of support and nation-building should provide to prevent other countries from following in this direction?

## Bloc Positions

### United States:

The US naturally condemns all the coups in the Sahel and is staunch against democratic backsliding. The US believes the coups in the region undermine much of the counter-terrorist effort that's been put into the region. The US condemns the coup in Niger, and it is of the highest significance to the US out of all so far as it is the epicenter of American power projection in the region due to the significant Air base at Agadez, which is the reason throughout the debate the US cannot directly state that there was a coup in Niger as it would legally necessitate a withdrawal from Agadez. Alternate terminology is to be used such as "attempted coup," or "unconstitutional change of government" are acceptable, however. The US is invested in promoting democracy in the region. The US would act in accordance with the GFA (Global Fragility Act) however would be reluctant to support initiatives that would be extremely costly as US Republicans are becoming wearier and more skeptical of large foreign policy spending with the possibility that going forth, if the 2024 election leads to a significant victory for the Republicans, regional aid might be seriously decreased. The US would likely focus on humanitarian and economic opportunities to provide aid to strengthen remaining democracies in the region and the US would likely support strengthened sanctions of governments that have experienced coups.<sup>70 71 72</sup>

### UK:

The UK would likely promote similar initiatives to those of the US. Providing economic, and or humanitarian aid to democracies in the region to help strengthen them whilst again supporting sanctions on military juntas. The UK will reinforce commitment and desire to combat extremism in the region with the

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70 <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2018/04/counterterrorism-west-africa-and-sahel/>

71 <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/06/world/africa/niger-us-air-base.html>

72 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Global-Fragility-Act-Report-508.pdf>

help of partner nations and organizations, like ECOWAS for example. The UK has so far been an active participant of MINUSMA up to until it was dissolved.<sup>73</sup>

### **France:**

France would certainly condemn the coups in the strongest terms. It will condemn the coups in the harshest terms would support humanitarian aid to local populations in need. France would take care to prevent potential conflict with the juntas. France has been notably passive however, though condemning the coups the French haven't taken any actions against them and complied with troop removals from the countries. France however has publicly pushed for greater involvement of other countries in the region and has contributed to EUCAP Sahel-Niger (European Union Capacity Building Mission in Niger). All while, while France's troops have withdrawn from the countries French companies haven't ceased extraction of resources from them, the continuance of this would be a key point for France.<sup>74</sup>

### **China:**

China will condemn the coups as they are illegal changes of power and China will stress the importance of security and law and order in the regions. The Chinese position will be that of wishing for the transitional governments to have an orderly transition of power. They will also stress the need for eventual regional economic integration to promote economic growth in the region and that conflict and global integration. With China having invested billions into Petroleum extraction and Lithium mining in the region have a key interest in ensuring the continuation of extraction of resources.<sup>75</sup>

### **Russia:**

Russia will condemn the coups to an extent, however, certainly won't be quick to push for sanctions on the governments, may mention the countries relative poverty and lack of food security as reasons not to impose harsh sanctions, during debate may even blame the west for them, mention ideas like the region being exploited by the West or that the coups are a natural response to that. May make claims about effectiveness of western interventions.<sup>76 77 78 79</sup>

### **African Nations:**

Both ECOWAS and the AU have condemned the coups and suspended the couped nations from both organizations, issuing condemnations of the coups. Both organizations believe that the coups undermine the

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73 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9634/CBP-9634.pdf>

74 <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/chinas-oil-uranium-business-niger-2023-07-31/>

75 <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/chinas-oil-uranium-business-niger-2023-07-31/>

76 <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/08/russian-disinformation-in-africa-no-door-on-this-barn/>

77 <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/07/wagner-mutiny-ex-post-facto-whats-next-in-russia-and-africa/>

78 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/post-prigozhin-russia-africa-regaining-or-losing-control>

79 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-still-progressing-africa-whats-limit>

pre-existing security structures in the region that so much has been invested in to. Both organizations have invested significantly in peacekeeping in the region and the coups could potentially undermine their efforts, furthermore there is concern throughout of further coups in nations that are still democratic which is of great concern to both organizations.<sup>80</sup>

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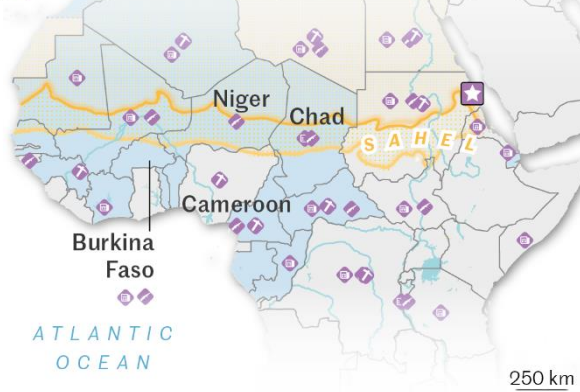
<sup>80</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly Report on Development and Security Challenges in the Sahel Region

## Supplementary Graphics Pg. 1

All Maps on This Page are From the Newspaper Le Monde

### Russia sets up a military presence in economically strategic areas

- Russian media broadcast: Russia Today and Sputnik
- Agreement of military cooperation with Russia
- Presence of private military group Wagner
- Mining or hydrocarbon agreement
- Planned Russian military base, revived in 2022



- Coup d'état after 2020
- Anti-French protests after 2020
- Country that has asked French army to leave
- Former French military base



### China's infrastructure investments

- Investment in mining and hydrocarbons
- Port projects
- Infrastructure projects, special economic zones or industrial parks
- China's first overseas military base, opened in 2017

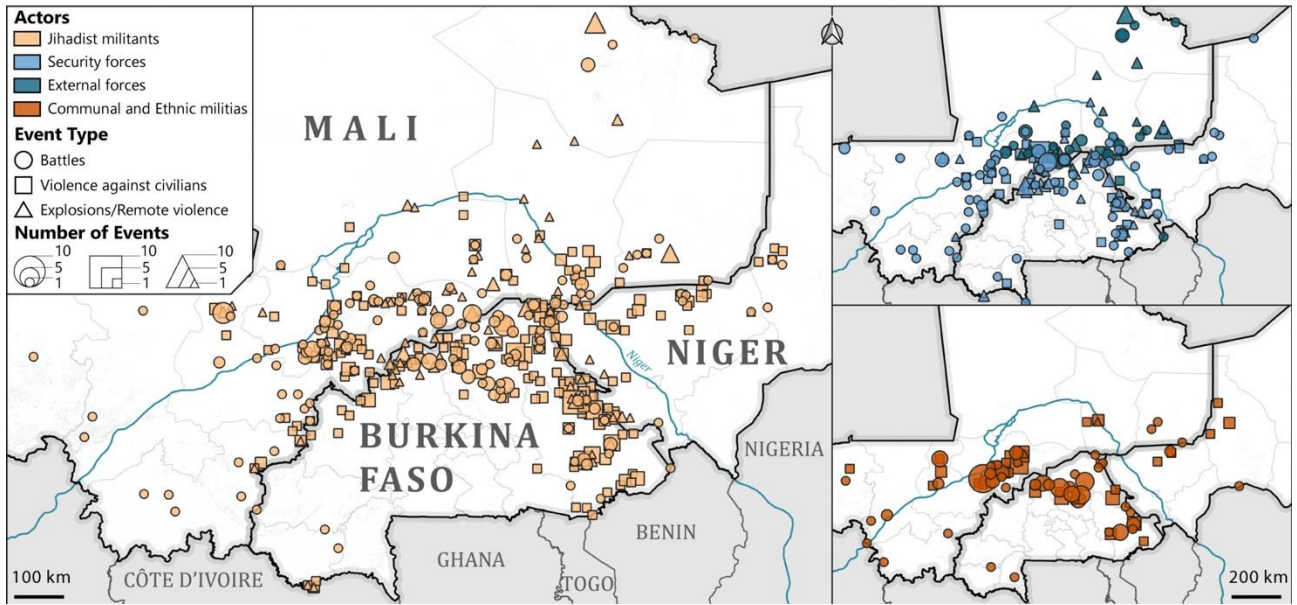


### A lasting colonial legacy after independence

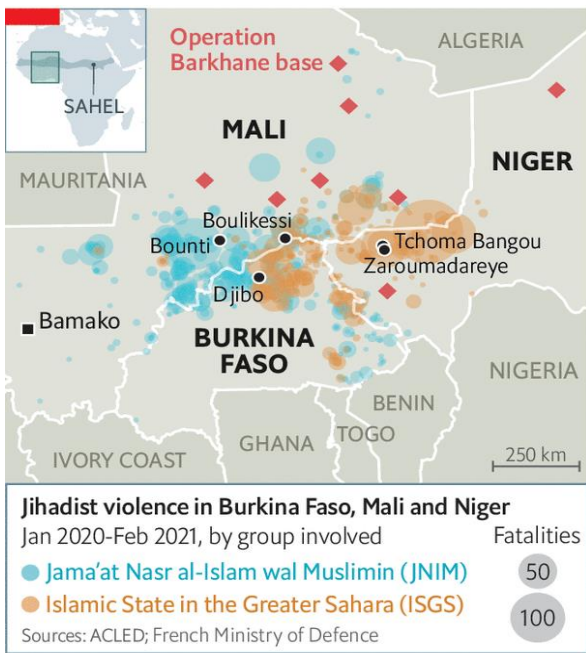
- French colonial territory between 1830 and 1977
- Area where CFA franc is used, a common currency pegged to the franc (nowadays to the euro), considered a symbol of French "economic imperialism"



Organized Political Violence in Central Sahel (1 January 2021 - 11 June 2021)



Map 5. (ACLED)



The Economist

Map 6. (The Economist)



Photo 1. US Airbase at Agadez (NY Times)



## *Recommended Reading*

- <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep50720>
- <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2023/the-coup-in-niger/>
- [https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication\\_series/project\\_papers/cascades/climate\\_change\\_development\\_and\\_security\\_in\\_the\\_central\\_sahel](https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/project_papers/cascades/climate_change_development_and_security_in_the_central_sahel)
- [https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication\\_series/opinion/2020/mali\\_a\\_coup\\_against\\_france](https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/opinion/2020/mali_a_coup_against_france)
- <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2019/11/csdp-curtailing-migration-niger/>
- <https://ecfr.eu/publication/mapping-african-regional-cooperation-how-to-navigate-africas-institutional-landscape/>
- <https://www.iiss.org/events/2020/07/instability-in-the-sahel/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3uFF2Zes8c>
- <https://www.iiss.org/events/2019/06/mali-conflict-briefing/>
- <https://www.csis.org/analysis/post-prigozhin-russia-africa-regaining-or-losing-control>
- <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-still-progressing-africa-whats-limit>
- <https://www.cigionline.org/publications/new-directions-mining-governance-and-sustainable-development-goals-africa/>
- <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react/did-the-niger-coup-just-succeed-and-other-questions-answered-about-whats-next-in-the-sahel/>
- [https://ecfr.eu/publication/disorder\\_from\\_chaos\\_why\\_europeans\\_fail\\_to\\_promote\\_stability\\_in\\_the\\_sahel/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/disorder_from_chaos_why_europeans_fail_to_promote_stability_in_the_sahel/)