

**Forum:** Security Council  
**Issue:** The Situation in the Sahel Region  
**Student Officer:** Natasha Panagiotou  
**Position:** President

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Natasha Panagiotou and I am an 11th grader at Model Lyceum of Anavryta. This year I will have the utmost honor of serving as the President of the Security Council (SC) of the 13th PS MUN conference. This conference will be my 21<sup>st</sup> and last MUN conference.

I need to congratulate you for your decision to get involved in the MUN world and I hope you enjoy it as much as I do. In this study guide, we will focus on the third topic of the agenda of the SC, namely “The Situation in the Sahel Region”. The examination of this topic is necessary due to the significance of the issue today. This study guide will provide you with some basic knowledge and information upon the issue and explain the important aspects of the matter. However, you are advised to do further research on your country’s policy and action, as well as the topic holistically, so as to be fully prepared for the conference.

My email address is [natpanag07@gmail.com](mailto:natpanag07@gmail.com) . Do not hesitate to contact me about anything regarding our committee. I am looking forward to meeting you!

Best regards,

Natasha Panagiotou

## INTRODUCTION

The Sahel region is a part of Africa that mainly consists of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon and Chad. The central Sahel region is currently suffering a humanitarian crisis and severe economic, political and security instability which have all led to the displacement of millions of people from their homes. Humanitarian rights violations and the security risks in the region will only increase while armed conflicts are still ongoing. As a result of the impoverishment of these nations, violence has begun to rise and multiple terrorist organizations have found an opportunity to seize power in parts of the area. The last ten years have especially been characterized by political instability caused by the numerous jihadist threats, military coups and the rise of ethnic violence.<sup>1 2</sup>



Figure 1 Map of the Sahel Region <sup>1</sup>

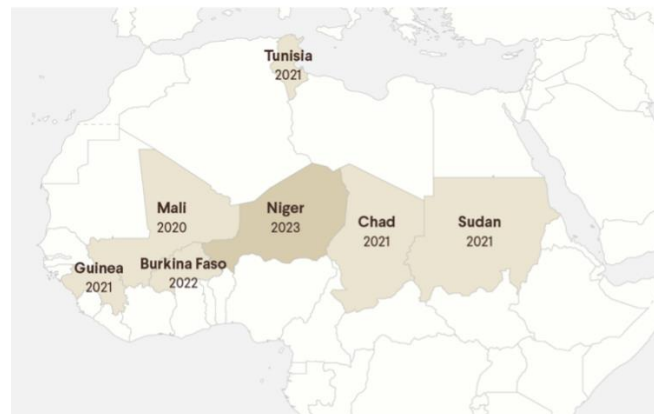


Figure 2 The year when the last coup happened in each nation of the Sahel region <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Suleiman, Muhammad D. "Sahel Region, Africa." The Conversation, 27 Feb. 2017, theconversation.com/sahel-region-africa-72569.

<sup>2</sup> "The Sahel Crisis - What is Happening in Niger? A First Look." LinkedIn, 25 Oct. 2023, [www.linkedin.com/pulse/sahel-crisis-what-happening-niger-qhrwe#:~:text=Today,inter%2Dcommunal%20and%20ethnic%20violence.](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/sahel-crisis-what-happening-niger-qhrwe#:~:text=Today,inter%2Dcommunal%20and%20ethnic%20violence.)

The current crises are caused by some distinct and persistent problems plaguing the region alongside its geography and history. Desertification is causing agriculture to become an unviable occupation for locals resulting in poverty. In addition, following the independence of the area in the 1960's, a series of weak governments have risen to power and corruption has reached an all-time high. Food insecurity linked with the fact that most Sahel nations are made up of different and even historically competing ethnic groups makes intra and extranational conflicts more likely. Another factor that contributes to the crisis is the population which is growing rapidly compared to other regions globally. These matters in addition to the increased extremism that was always present in the region and the existence of military equipment in the area and in neighboring states due to ethnic conflicts, formed the perfect conditions for terrorist insurgencies to occur leading to instability in Sahel. Each nation has faced similar problems but at different extents due to the differences in terrain and ethnic groups that they consist of. It is important to examine how each country has tried to face these issues as well as to analyze the causes that led to these problems for each nation of the Sahel.

The effect of this multifaceted crisis on the welfare of the citizens is detrimental. Food is scarce due to the inability to safely import goods as well as the crisis in agriculture. People are fleeing their homes often reaching countries that are not much safer than their own. All the numbers are pointing to the direction of a growing crisis that is slinging out of control and is causing devastation to millions of people. The situation in Sahel has alerted foreign forces and international bodies as the instability of the region and the constant increase of violence has been considered a threat to international security as it can easily spread to neighboring nations and disturb the peace of other countries.

As the theme of this conference, namely the "Paradox of Progress", states that the more the world and technology progress, the more issues occur, that has been the case in Sahel, too. This issue needs a holistic approach so as to tackle all aspects of the crisis and in order to do that we need to evaluate each aspect separately and find the strengths and the weaknesses. For instance, the development of technology improved the craftsmanship of weaponry but also increased their number making it easier for terrorists to have them and use them for no good. Thus, weapons created for the security of Sahel ended up being the cause of harm for the region due to their misuse. So, we are called upon to take action and stop the ongoing conflict that has been harming the African region for years.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Sahel

Sahel is a region of western and north-central Africa extending from Senegal to Sudan. It forms a transitional zone between the desert of Sahara to the north and the belt of humid savannas to the south. The Sahel stretches from the Atlantic Ocean eastward through northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, the great bend of the Niger River in Mali, Burkina Faso, southern Niger, northeastern Nigeria, south-central Chad, and into Sudan.<sup>3</sup>

### Desertification

The gradual deterioration of the quality of the soil in a specific region, leading to the decrease and eventual disappearance of vegetation.<sup>4</sup>

### Decolonization

The process of a colony or colonies becoming independent.<sup>5</sup>

### Statelessness

The condition of not officially being a citizen of any country.<sup>6</sup>

### Wagner Group

The Wagner Group, officially known as PMC Wagner, is a Russian state-funded private military company controlled until 2023 by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a former close ally of Russia's president Vladimir Putin. The Wagner Group has been using infrastructure of the Russian Armed Forces and it has been implied that Wagner is used as a proxy by the Russian government, allowing it to carry out military operations abroad in order to hide the true casualties of Russia's foreign interventions.<sup>7</sup>

### Power Grab

An attempt by a person or group to take more authority for themselves, usually by taking it from another person or group.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Sahel." Encyclopedia Britannica, [www.britannica.com/place/Sahel](http://www.britannica.com/place/Sahel).

<sup>4</sup> "ESS Topic 5.3: Soil Degradation and Conservation." AMAZING WORLD OF SCIENCE WITH MR. GREEN, [www.mrgscience.com/ess-topic-53-soil-degradation-and-conservation.html](http://www.mrgscience.com/ess-topic-53-soil-degradation-and-conservation.html).

<sup>5</sup> "Decolonization." Oxford Learner's Dictionaries | Find Definitions, Translations, and Grammar Explanations at Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, [www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/decolonization?q=decolonization](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/decolonization?q=decolonization).

<sup>6</sup> "Statelessness." Oxford Learner's Dictionaries | Find Definitions, Translations, and Grammar Explanations at Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, [www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/statelessness?q=statelessness](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/statelessness?q=statelessness).

<sup>7</sup> <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CTC-SENTINEL-062022.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> "Power-grab Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com." Oxford Learner's Dictionaries | Find Definitions, Translations, and Grammar Explanations at Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/power-grab#:~:text=%E2%80%8Ban%20attempt%20by%20a,as%20an%20undemocratic%20power%20grab>.

## Military Junta

A military group that rules a country after taking power by force.<sup>9</sup>

## Coup d'état

A coup d'état, or simply a coup, is an illegal and overt attempt by the military or other government elites to unseat the incumbent leader.<sup>10</sup>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Historical Background

#### Independence and early years of the Sahel Region

On 1 September 1939, the German invasion of Poland started, essentially declaring the initiation of World War II. Throughout this devastating large-scale conflict, multiple parts of Africa were to be constituted of strategic importance, including the Sahel region which was one of them. Through their contribution to the war, mainly as French colonies fighting for Free France, they became largely self-aware and conscious of their rights to sovereignty and independence. Thus began a more than decade-long campaign for the independence of what was known as “L’ Afrique Noire”.

Multiple alliances were formed to support the self-governance of the French colonies in Africa and many legal frameworks were passed, gradually making that a realistic possibility. With the contribution of many domestic and foreign political figures, in April 1961 with the cooperation agreements between Dahomey, Upper Volta, Niger and France, the decolonization of the Sahel region had been achieved. However, almost none of the newly born states were adequately prepared for independence.

Economic viability was nonexistent in all nations due to high dependence on French funds while many were landlocked and covered almost entirely by thinly populated desert. To tend to the needs of their former colonies, the French, who kept close ties with the nations of the Sahel, sent support, which reinforced their influence in the region. This in turn supported widespread corruption and embezzlement as countries were run by elite groups that were accustomed to collaborating with the French. The regimes that arose were characterized by corruption that gradually left the region with control of almost none of the limited resources available to it. Multiple coup d’ états have taken place in all countries in the region and even when democracy is restored it is short-lived and mostly illegitimate. Weapon, human and drug trafficking is uncontrollable, with criminals often cooperating with corrupt authorities. The conditions were perfect for violence to occur.

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<sup>9</sup> "Oxford Languages and Google - English | Oxford Languages." Oxford Languages | The Home of Language Data, 20 May 2020, [languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/](https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/)

<sup>10</sup> “Coup d’etat.”, Britannica Dictionary, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat>

### The Tuareg people and the eruption of violence in Sahel

One of the main outbreaks was the Tuareg rebellion of 2012 in Mali, which marked the initiation of religious conflict in the Sahel. The Tuareg people have had a history of rebellion, mainly in Mali and Niger. With the downfall of the Gadaffi regime in Libya in 2011 an influx of trained and armed military personnel of Tuareg people fled to Mali. Their existence in the region reignited the conflict, giving a religious spirit to the revolution by aligning themselves with multiple jihadist organizations including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Dine.<sup>11</sup>

The inability of the governmental forces to suppress the rebellion resulted in a military coup which was relatively unsuccessful in tackling the crisis. The institutions in the northern parts of Mali experienced a collapse, following the overthrow of the former government, opening a window for the Tuareg, who had planned for the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), to take over the region. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad is a self-declared Islamic caliphate, maintaining control of the northern parts of Mali.

A short period of peace took place until violence erupted once again in January 2013. In August 2013, democracy was restored in Mali which, in 2015, signed a peace agreement with the Tuareg people. This ceasefire, however, did not include organizations apart from the MNLA and other Tuareg groups, which rushed to increase their influence locally and in neighboring states. Following that, violence has been at an all-time high in the region.

The next major escalating step was taken with the formation of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) in Burkina Faso in 2016 and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) in Mali in 2017. The two groups have organized into local al-Qaeda affiliated organizations.

Parallel to the conflict in Liptako an epicenter for violence has emerged around lake Chad where Boko Haram focused its activity. Since its foundation in 2002, it has strived to attain power in the intersection between Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. In 2015, Boko Haram was renamed to Islamic State in the West African Province (ISWAP). ISWAP is currently in control of northern Nigeria and parts of Niger.

Another factor is international involvement, which began with the French forces in 2013. Operation Barkhane based in Chad with the support of local forces, had the aim of tackling terrorist action in the extended region and cracking down on Boko Haram. Other states and organizations shortly followed

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<sup>11</sup> "Violent Extremism in the Sahel." Global Conflict Tracker, [www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel](http://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel).

with the UN-led Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Task Force Takuba by the European Union.

### Root Causes of the Conflict in Sahel

In order to approach the issue correctly, the different factors that contribute to the crisis need to be examined, such as the geographical position of Sahel, sociopolitical issues as well as cultural and economic ones.

#### Sahel's Climate

The Sahel region covers a large area of dangerous and unpredictable terrain characterized by extreme weather conditions. The geographical Sahel is a very flat, semi-arid region where there are usually high temperatures and a small period, for about two months yearly, that it is rainy. Thus, droughts are an eminent danger as they can last even for years. The part of Sahel closer to the Sahara desert is more affected. During those times, famine is an occurring issue as even dry resistant plants found commonly in Sahel cannot survive those conditions, so there is a lack of crops. This weather adds to the already existing food crisis in the region. The issue is that with climate change, these extreme weather events will only worsen. That, as well as deforestation, causes further land degradation.

Even when droughts are not the main issue, there is an ongoing food crisis in the region due to desertification and farming related land degradation which makes the growing of crops a constant battle. In 2018, more than 1.3 million children across the Sahel countries and Senegal required treatment for severe acute malnutrition, according to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).<sup>12</sup> Malnutrition makes the population more vulnerable to other diseases in the area, such as water borne diseases. All the matters above lead to an ongoing health and humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region.

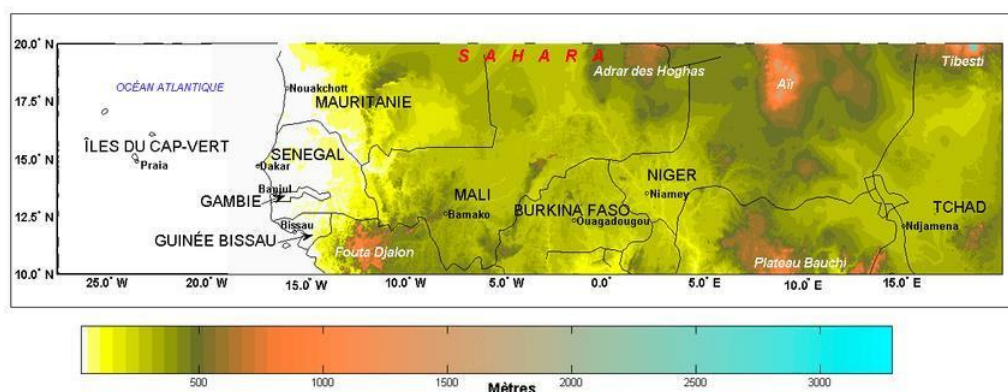


Figure 3 Topographical map of the Sahel<sup>13</sup>

### Geographical Position of Sahel

<sup>12</sup> "Why the Sahel Crisis Matters Geography." Issuu, 7 July 2022, [issuu.com/habsboys/docs/dawson\\_booklet\\_2022/s/16304458](https://issuu.com/habsboys/docs/dawson_booklet_2022/s/16304458).



The geographical position of the Sahel region is a significant factor contributing to the region's international importance. More specifically, Sahel connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Red Sea as well as North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, making the region a very good and practical route for groups involved in illicit drug trafficking and trafficking of other illegal substances and goods, for smuggling them all across the world.

The region consists greatly of rural areas that are difficult to be controlled by the governments, causing Sahel to be perceived as a potent security threat internationally, taking into consideration the fact that these unprotected areas are home to many dangerous organizations. Furthermore, international borders in the region span immense distances and so can be easily trespassed by traffickers.

#### Instability of the Northern Sahel Region

The northern parts of Sahel are considered difficult to inhabit and travel through considering the fact that they are characterized by instability and lack of security, a situation even recognized by international organs. These parts also border other nations which have been unstable over the years, making northern Sahel a suitable area for terrorist organizations to settle and use as means of attacking other countries nearby or by obtaining more land from the Sahel nations in order to gain power. The great difference between the northern and southern part of Sahel; namely that the north is unstable and difficult to manage while the south is more easily habitable and economically advanced, causes great inequalities across the region and creates divides between central governments and the northern areas, potentially making them an easier target of attacks.

#### The Recent Decolonization of the Region

The Sahel was recently decolonized by the French. As a result, the region hosts a variety of cultures and religions. The majority of the people are Muslim, Tuareg in the north, the Soninke in the west, the Malinke in Mali and Senegal, the Songhai in the south and the Fulani and Hausa in Niger and Nigeria.<sup>13</sup> The number of different ethnic groups often causes tension between them and regional conflicts begin.

Moreover, due to the rapid and unorganized way that the Sahel was decolonized, the borders of the nations do not necessarily reflect the way that the different cultural and ethnic groups are allocated in the region and the way they have been living in them for the past centuries. This has created nations that are consisted of large minorities which often have historical conflicts

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<sup>13</sup> "Why the Sahel Crisis Matters Geography." Issuu, 7 July 2022, [issuu.com/habsboys/docs/dawson\\_booklet\\_2022/s/16304458](https://issuu.com/habsboys/docs/dawson_booklet_2022/s/16304458).



among them and their beliefs may also not align, making the spark of new conflicts inevitable.

#### Denial of Cooperation with International/non-local Forces

The situation in Sahel is a very fragile one with constant violence and attacks by terrorist groups which cause security instability and threaten the safety of civilians. The national governments have tried to intervene but without any success as the methods they follow are extreme violence and attacks to those involved in the conflict. Also, due to the different ethnic groups that the region consists of, there have been cases of favoritism by the governments that leads to corruption and puts some minorities in a disadvantaged position.

So, the situation calls for international involvement. Historically different governments and people have accepted international aid, but many communities and now governments are untrusting towards foreign and especially western affiliated organizations. This inability to receive non-regional aid is what continues to fuel the conflict and there has not been an end put to this crisis that has been ongoing for more than a decade. Furthermore, the fact that this region was colonized by Europeans for a long time, has caused the hate-centered sentiment of those populations towards international organizations and other nations. Both France and the US as well as the United Nations have sent forces to Sahel but without any success. The Sahel region was colonized by the French and, as previously mentioned, the decolonization of the region was rapid and messy, the civilians in Sahel have developed an anti-French and generally feelings of hatred towards foreign forces. Concluding, we realize that there needs to be another type of aid to stop the spread of more violence in the region that does not involve direct foreign interference.

### The Situation Nowadays

Across the region of Sahel, around 5.4 million people are experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity. At least 22,500 people face daily risk due to starvation or disease. A long political legacy has left peripheral areas in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger economically and politically marginalized.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the initiation of international efforts to put an end to the conflict in the Sahel region, violence and tension only seemed to increase, while specifically targeting foreign military campaigns and UN peacekeeping operations' officers. This resulted in the withdrawal of both operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba in 2021 and 2022 respectively. Their absence from the area has resulted in a drastic increase in violence. It additionally attracted the Wagner Group, a Russian private military contractor which is widely critiqued for human rights violations and attacks against civilians.

At the same time, the third coup recorded in the past decade took place in Mali with vice president Assimi Goïta forcibly seizing power. The rise of his military regime was matched with increased violence against the local population. In May 2022 all connections to French Defense programs were cut, when Mali withdrew from the Sahel G5, a regional cooperative framework focused on defense from terrorist action, bringing a noticeable decrease in the capabilities of the organization. Major terrorist events have taken place since the success of the coup with a notable one being the killing of 132 villagers in central Mali in June 2022 and the Moura massacre in March 2022. The massacre is attributed to the Malian forces in conjunction with the Wagner Group.

Burkina Faso experienced a coup on the 24th of January 2022, following protests for the failure to find a solution to the crisis. Niger is currently experiencing an attempted overthrow over the democratically elected government by military personnel with the detention of President Mohamed Bazoum by the Presidential Guards in his palace in the capital.

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<sup>14</sup> "The Central Sahel: How Conflict and Climate Change Drive Crisis." The IRC, 17 Aug. 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/article/central-sahel-how-conflict-and-climate-change-drive-crisis#:~:text=Across%20the%20Central%20Sahel%2C%20around,Niger%20economically%20and%20politically%20marginalized.>

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has suffered from many insurgencies in the last decade, especially after Blaise Compaore the country's long reigning head of state fled his post and the country in the face of mounting popular pressure in November 2014. Since then, successive governments have faced coups d'état, leaving the country without effective political leadership for years. The initial power vacuum allowed the JNIM and other ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist organisations to establish a foothold in the country. The inability of governments to eradicate the terrorist threats has often been used by military leaders as an excuse to stage coups d'état even against already established military governments, which however have only managed to worsen the security situation. According to a recent UN report, almost one in every four people in Burkina Faso, a country of 20 million people, need urgent humanitarian assistance. An estimated 1.7 million people have also been displaced due to the insecurity.<sup>15</sup> All of the above coupled with the fact that terrorist activity in Burkina Faso seems to be steadily increasing make it the current epicenter of the Sahel's broader crisis.<sup>16</sup>

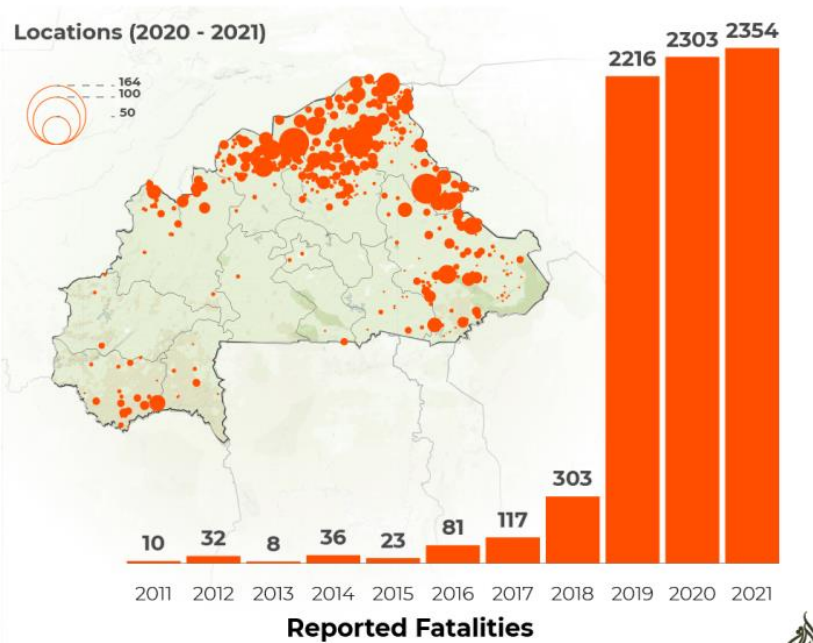


Figure 4 Indications of violence in Burkina Faso <sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Durmaz, Mucahid. "Burkina Faso Replaces Mali As Epicentre of Conflict in the Sahel." Breaking News, World News and Video from Al Jazeera, 11 Mar. 2022, [www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/3/11/how-burkina-faso-became-the-new-epicentre-of-sahelian](http://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/3/11/how-burkina-faso-became-the-new-epicentre-of-sahelian).

<sup>16</sup> Durmaz, Mucahid. "Burkina Faso Replaces Mali As Epicentre of Conflict in the Sahel." Breaking News, World News and Video from Al Jazeera, 11 Mar. 2022, [www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/3/11/how-burkina-faso-became-the-new-epicentre-of-sahelian](http://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/3/11/how-burkina-faso-became-the-new-epicentre-of-sahelian).

## France

France has historically influenced and ruled over enormous parts of the African continent and even after official decolonization, it maintained significant influence over many of the newly established African states namely; Mali, Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad.<sup>17</sup> Despite previously collaborating with the French state in many ways, over the past two years most states of the Sahel have been increasingly opposed to French involvement in the region's matters with expressly anti French movements rising in popularity throughout. The swift and complete withdrawal of French forces from Niger marked the end of any significant standing French military presence in the Sahel, emphasizing the rapid deterioration of relations between most current Sahel governments and France. While there still remain, other international forces aiding with counterterrorist operations, France was by far the largest contributor of forces to these programs. Overall, the P5 member remains open to reestablishing connections with the region as the development of the Sahel and the combatting of terrorism in the region is still in its interest, yet it does not as of now have a concrete policy on how to proceed.

## Mali

The Tuareg rebellion in Mali which embroiled over half of the state in 2012, is considered to be the starting point of the renewed cycle of violence in the Sahel region. Between then and now there have been 3 successful coup attempts one in 2012 and two between 2020 and 2021 happening only 9 months apart. Despite chronic political instability, up until 2021 Mali successfully cooperated with the international community to accomplish significant military victories against IS and Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups which occupied much of its west and northern land.<sup>18</sup> However, these efforts were not enough to prevent terrorist campaigns from extending across its borders. Mali also reached a political settlement in 2015 with the secessionist Tuareg movements which however has now been officially abandoned by all parties. Since the fall of political rule in 2021 there has been a resurgence of violence and state forces have been accused of committing international crimes in cooperation with the Wagner Group by several human rights organizations. The current military government has indefinitely postponed legislative elections which were expected to be held in February 2024 and the new constitution that it has enforced would allow it to hold power indefinitely. The military government is broadly set on opposing UN and western intervention in its campaign to push back secessionist and terrorist forces.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/al-ahsan/in-retreat-french-influence-in-the-sahel-region/#:~:text=Though%20France%20officially%20left%20the,Nigeria%2C%20Cameroon%2C%20and%20Chad.>

<sup>18</sup> "Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger)." Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 1 Dec. 2023, [www.globalr2p.org/countries/mali/](http://www.globalr2p.org/countries/mali/).

## Niger

Niger is one of the poorest African countries despite its significant uranium reserves. Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad are its three neighboring countries in the Sahel region and the first three have been under most pressure by terrorist activity in the region and thus terrorist activity and fighting has spilled over into the country's borders frequently. Niger has had fairly stable political rule from 2010 up until July 2023 when a military coup removed a newly popularly elected President Mohamed Bazoum from power. The coup came at a time of worsening environmental and economic conditions for the country which in combination with a resurgence of IS related terrorist activity in the north is severely shocking civil order across the country. The current military government along with the juntas of Mali and Burkina Faso, is not in contact with neither the regional ECOWAS organization nor the UN. Many western states including France have evacuated their embassies and urged their nationals to follow.

## Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is a Sunni pan-Islamic jihadist militant organization taking terrorist action worldwide with the ultimate goal of forming a supra-national Islamic state comprised of all the Islamic world, a global scale Caliphate. It has historically been active in the Sahel region, whose population is majority Muslim, through official and unofficial branches including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine, JNIM and Boko Haram. According to Amnesty International, al-Qaeda affiliated Ansaroul Islam and other armed groups are enforcing sieges in at least 46 localities and committing war crimes.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger)." Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 1 Dec. 2023, <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/mali/#:~:text=Despite%20this%2C%20more%20than%201%2C700,localities%20and%20committing%20war%20crimes.>

## Sahel G5

Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Chad are the five nations that constitute the members of the cooperation Sahel G5, formed on 19 December 2014. It is responsible for the organization of governmental counter-terrorism action in the region, with the Sahel G5 Joint Task Force being the most important one. The main aim of G5 Sahel was to strengthen cooperation between states and promote financial growth and security in the region by combatting the threat of jihadist organizations operating in the region such as AQIM and Boko Haram.<sup>20</sup> Its impact was greatly decreased with the withdrawal of Mali in 2022, which was followed by the withdrawal of Niger and Burkina Faso by December 2023.

## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR is monitoring the number of asylum seekers and refugees as well as the number of internally displaced people (IDP) across all states of the Sahel. Its multifaceted regional strategy is updated yearly so that it most effectively allocates resources to areas that most need them. Regarding its goals for 2024 the UNCHR states that it “will work to ensure that 60% of IDPs in Burkina Faso live in habitable and affordable housing, while in Niger 100% of refugees and asylum-seekers will be registered, and 70% of refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs will have access to available gender-based violence services.”<sup>21</sup>

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1960's	French colonial rule gradually withdraws and independent states form in the Sahel region.
2002	Mohammed Yusuf establishes the Islamist militant group Boko Haram.
2011	NATO forces along with national rebel militias topple Muammar Gaddafi's regime.
2012	Tuareg separatists and armed Islamist groups occupy territory by force in northern Mali.

<sup>20</sup> "Communiqué Final Du Sommet Des Chefs D'Etat Du G5 Du Sahel : Création D'un Cadre Institutionnel De Coordination Et De Suivi De La Coopération Régionale Dénommé G5 Du Sahel." Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20171210074214/http://www.lesahel.org/index.php/component/k2/item/5054-communic%C3%A9-final-du-sommet-des-chefs-detat-du-g5-du-sahel--cr%C3%A9ation-dun-cadre-institutionnel-de-coordination-et-de-suivi-de-la-coop%C3%A9ration-r%C3%A9gionale-d%C3%A9nomm%C3%A9-g5-du-sahel>

<sup>21</sup> "Sahel Situation." Global Focus, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/sahel-situation#:~:text=UNHCR%20will%20intervene%20at%20the,are%20often%20the%20first%20responders.>

20 December 2012	The UNSC adopts Resolution 2085 and authorizes troops to be deployed in Mali as part of the AFISMA mission.
January 2013	The ECOWAS leads an international support mission to Mali named AFISMA.
2014	The governance of Blaise Campaore in Burkina Faso ends.
May 2015	Mali negotiates with Tuareg rebel groups and ultimately signs the Mali-MNLA Peace Accord, also known as the “Algiers Accord”.
2016	Many small Jihadist movements gradually coordinate into and form the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).
2017	Four major Mali based extremist groups merge to form the Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM).
2021	The French government terminates Operation Barkhane.
2022	Mali withdraws from the G5 Sahel alliance.
2022	The European Union in following the French government withdraw Task Force Takuba.
March 2023	IS Sahel’s focus shifts to Niger after they defeat JNIM.
16 June 2023	Mali requests the immediate withdrawal of the MINUSMA.
30 June 2023	The UNSC adopts Resolution 2690, ordering the cessation of the MINUSMA.
July 2023	A military coup forces Niger’s recently elected President Mohamed Bazoum to step down.
30 July 2023	Unknown non state actors, attempt a bombing attack against the French embassy in Niger.
December 2023	Burkina Faso and Niger both withdraw from the G5 Sahel alliance.
31 December 2023	MINUSMA completely withdraws from Mali in accordance with UNSC Resolution 2690.



## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

### UNSC Resolution 2085

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2012, the Security Council authorized the use of force by an international coalition of forces to address the deteriorating security situation in Mali. The troops formed part of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) which was organized by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and launched in January 2013. Deployed forces were tasked to support the local security forces in their reorganization and attempt to secure Malian sovereignty and protect civilians, as well as to take counter-terrorist action. The mission was deemed a success after its combined forces, which consisted of almost 7,500 troops, managed to regain control of Northern parts of Mali but a counter-campaign by Jihadist groups called for more drastic and organized action.<sup>22</sup>

### Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba

Operation Barkhane was the evolution of a premature French supportive operation in Mali which then undertook a broader role as an anti-terrorist force, seeking the complete uprooting of jihadist groups from local societies. It was finally terminated in 2021 mainly as a result of its limited success and high casualties. Following the initiation of Operation Barkhane, the European Union adopted a joint policy on the matter with the launch of Task Force Takuba. Similar to its predecessor, it was an anti-terrorist campaign but with a stronger peacekeeping role and adjacent humanitarian aid operations.<sup>23</sup> It reached an end in 2022 following the announcement of the termination of operation Barkhane as its main proponent, France had withdrawn.

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<sup>22</sup> African-led International Support Mission to Mali - Wikipedia. (2013, January 17). African-led International Support Mission to Mali - Wikipedia.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-led\\_International\\_Support\\_Mission\\_to\\_Mali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-led_International_Support_Mission_to_Mali)

<sup>23</sup>“At Least 32 Peacekeeping, Associated Personnel Killed in Malicious Attacks during 2022, United Nations Staff Union President Says | UN Press.” United Nations, [press.un.org/en/2023/org1730.doc.html](https://press.un.org/en/2023/org1730.doc.html)

### 2015 Mali- MNLA Peace Accord

In May 2015 a peace agreement was negotiated between state parties in Mali including the sovereign Malian government and self-declared Islamic states MNLA, HCUA and MAA. The terms of the agreement call for the decentralization of state institutions, greater representation of peripheral areas in national institutions, the integration of combatants from the signatory armed groups into the national army, and the creation of a Northern Region Development Zone to support economic growth in northern Mali.<sup>24</sup> Although the terms were respected by the signatory parties, the settlement did not include al-Qaeda affiliated organizations, which continued to claim territory and spread their influence with alleged covert support by the MNLA. The accord resulted in a temporary ceasefire but failed to establish long-lived peace and put an end to the crisis as the Accord's signatories, namely the Malian government, northern separatist groups, northern armed groups that favor Malian territorial unity lack the political will required to implement essential pillars of the Accord, which include political decentralization and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants.<sup>25</sup>

### The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)

MINUSMA was a UN peacekeeping operation which has greatly contributed to the safety and protection of civilians the past decade of its operation. On 16 June 2023, the Malian transitional authorities called for the immediate withdrawal of MINUSMA. The Malian government expressed its displeasure at the lack of the UN's willingness to reform the mission to meet some criteria set by them. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that the request was made by a military government which has since failed to bring a transition to civilian rule and has used anti-western sentiment to rally support. In keeping with the request of the host country, on 30 June 2023, the UNSC unanimously voted to end MINUSMA by 31 December in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2690.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> PA-X: Peace Agreements Database.

[www.peaceagreements.org/wview/1365/Accord%20Pour%20la%20Paix%20et%20la%20Reconciliation%20au%20Mali%20-%20Issu%20du%20Processus%20d%27Alger](http://www.peaceagreements.org/wview/1365/Accord%20Pour%20la%20Paix%20et%20la%20Reconciliation%20au%20Mali%20-%20Issu%20du%20Processus%20d%27Alger).

<sup>25</sup> "Why Mali Needs a New Peace Deal." CSIS | Center for Strategic and International Studies,

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<sup>26</sup> "MINUSMA." MINUSMA, [https://minusma.unmissions.org/en#:~:text=from%20northern%20bases-,The%20United%20Nations%20Multidimensional%20Integrated%20Stabilization%20Mission%20in%20Mali%20\(MINUSMA,1](https://minusma.unmissions.org/en#:~:text=from%20northern%20bases-,The%20United%20Nations%20Multidimensional%20Integrated%20Stabilization%20Mission%20in%20Mali%20(MINUSMA,1)

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### Creating Safe Pathways for Food and Medication Transportation

The UNSC can play an important role in ensuring that all people in need have adequate shelter food and medication, along with access to key health services, as these will further aid it in its aim to reestablish peace and security in the region. As some states have reduced their cooperation with the international community while continuing to engage in different conflicts, it is more important now than ever for the UNSC to find ways of establishing safe zones and humanitarian corridors for the safe and unimpeded movement of civilians and international humanitarian aid. There are multiple challenges associated with that however. Firstly, it is vital to maintain the consent of involved governments and especially that of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali to allow for the unimpeded movement of humanitarian aid, even across their borders. There is also a need to protect aid convoys and civilians from the criminal behavior of the terrorist organizations involved in conflicts all over the region. This only becomes more challenging when considering the difficult terrain and frequent extreme weather events, something that delegates should also keep in mind when proposing a solution.

### Responding to the Needs of the Region and of the People

A main cause of the region's troubling state is the lack of development. The people lack education and there are limited sources and programs available for them to take advantage of. Contributing to the development of youth programs and other institutions can help prevent people from joining terrorist groups, as it is thought that only them can provide them safety and a peaceful future. These programs can be funded by the World Bank and overseen by the UN Development Program. These programs should focus on job creation and education and more particularly should aim to get a better understanding of different regions' needs and address them. Delegates should consider how exactly this can be achieved.

### Developing a New Technological Response for Tracking Terrorist Attacks

Technology is evolving and so are the techniques used by terrorists to trace their victims and hide themselves from the state forces in the area. The launch of an organized campaign with modern equipment and information services from across the world could be an important step towards locating terrorist hideouts. The UN Counter Terrorism Office (UNOCT) can provide advisors to interested states, in order to inform them on how they can better track and anticipate terrorist activity. The program can use data collected by relevant UN agencies and other organizations operating in the area so as to have valid data to track the terrorist groups. However, such a project requires not only the consent but willing cooperation of the afflicted states of the Sahel, something that may prove challenging without the offer of assurances and incentives, to address their concerns about foreign involvement.

### Stronger Coordination with ECOWAS

Despite three Sahel states leaving the bloc recently, ECOWAS remains the preeminent international political body, especially in the western and central parts of the Sahel. The UNSC could benefit from establishing more regular communication with ECOWAS regarding security in the Sahel and even aiming to build humanitarian and perhaps security programs with it. Perhaps some delegations that find it difficult to materially cooperate with ECOWAS might urge the council to consider reestablishing better relations with different states of the Sahel one by one, guided by previous failures that have been listed in the previous attempts section.

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