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**STUDY GUIDE**

- Question of Sahel: Coup Belt Countries vs. France

**Yiğit Bilir**

Under Secretary General

**Doğukan Berke Aşık**

Academic Assistant

**Onur Dere**

Academic Assistant

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# 1. Focused Overview

## 1.1 The Sahel

The Sahel is a complex conceptual bundle defined by more than geography or colonial history. "The Sahel" is an old concept derived from Arabic and used in the region's other languages that compares the Sahara to a sea surrounded by a "shore" (sahil). It is also a relatively new idea, most notably the Comité permanent interétats de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS), which was established in 1977 and re-defined the "Sahel" as particularly the southern boundary of the desert. Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal are the CILSS's key members.

## 1.2 Diplomatic Tensions Between France and Sahel Countries

This tension reached an extreme level when French President Emmanuel Macron invited the leaders of these five Sahelian countries to a summit in Pau, south-western France, in January 2020. President Macron asked his Sahelian counterparts (Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mauritania) at the conference to 'clarify' their position on the French military engagement in the region since 2013 to combat Islamist movements. In addition, the French president stated that 'all alternatives, including the withdrawal of the 4,500-strong force, are on the table.' This public display of diplomatic dissent was unprecedented, reflecting exasperation after six years of a French-led international military mobilization that had failed to stop the degradation of regional stability. The tensions crystallized around specific events and decisions, indicating a widening gulf between France's strategic and operational choices and vocal parts of public opinion and political elites in the Sahelian countries where France has deployed its troops.



## 2. History of Events

### 2.1 French Colonialism in the Sahel Region Before 1960

In the early nineteenth century, France began colonizing the Sahel region. The French colonized Mali in 1899, Burkina Faso in 1906, Niger in 1911, Chad in 1920, and Mauritania in 1924. French colonialism had a significant impact on traditional Sahelian civilizations. The colonists took advantage of the region's resources and subjected the locals to colonial control. Colonialism substantially altered the region's social, economic, and political structures. French colonialism also fueled independence movements in the Sahel region. All of the Sahel region's countries attained independence in the 1960s. However, the region's governments suffered political instability and internal disputes following independence.

### 2.2 France and Sahel Region Relationship Between 1960-2015

Even after the Sahel Countries gained independence, France retained its influence in the region. France maintained its military presence in the region in order to assure security and stability. This influence had military, economic, and political dimensions.

#### 2.2.1 Military Dimension

Since the 1960s, France has maintained a military presence in the Sahel region. This presence is largely intended to ensure the region's security and stability. However, France's military actions have occasionally been greeted with local opposition. Terrorism, which began in Mali in 2012, prompted France to boost its military engagement in the region. In 2013, France began the Serval Operation to battle Islamist militants in Mali. Following this mission, France began to provide support to the G5 Sahel Force, a regional military force. Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania comprise the G5 Sahel Force. France contributes the G5 Sahel Force with military, financial, and technological assistance.

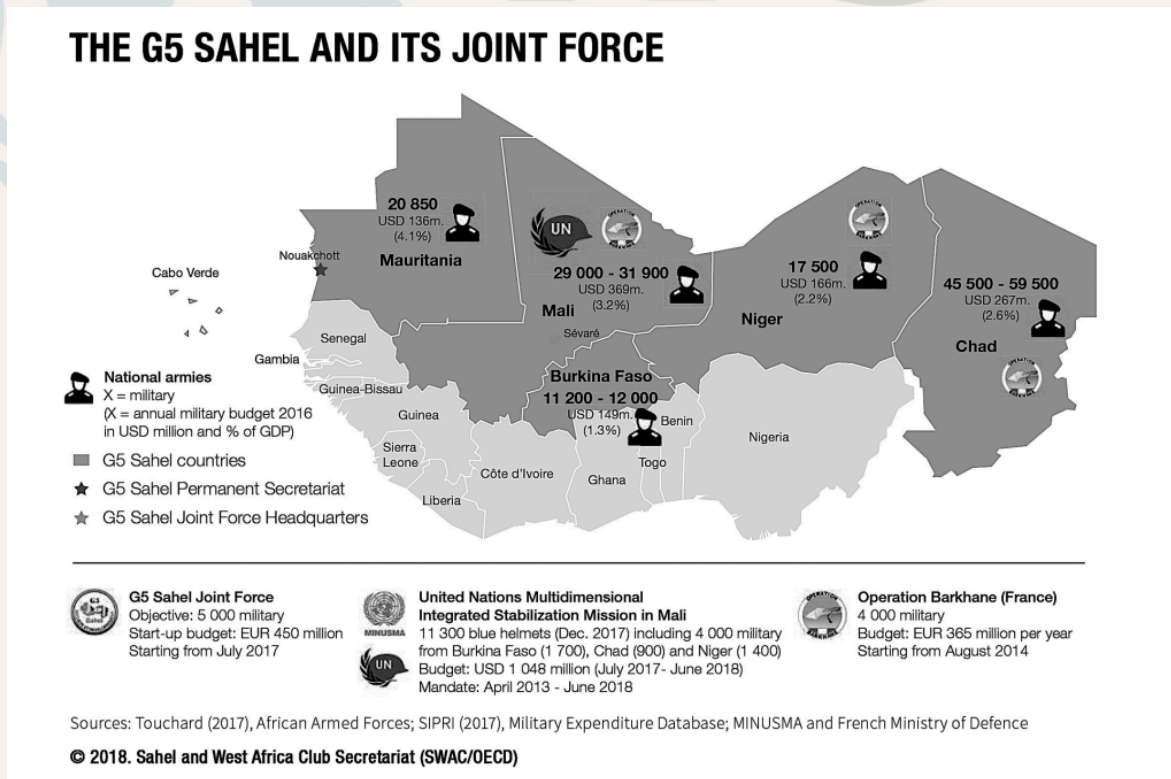
#### *Serval Operation*

From January to July 2013, Operation Serval was a French military action in Mali. The operation was started in reaction to the 2012 Malian coup and subsequent Islamist militant control of Northern Mali. The origins of Operation Serval can be traced back to the 2012 coup in Mali. Captain Amadou Sanogo spearheaded the coup that deposed President Amadou Toumani Touré's democratically elected administration. The coup triggered a political crisis in Mali, as well as the disintegration of the Malian army. Following the coup, Islamist militant groups such as Ansar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) took over northern Mali. The extremist groups implemented strict Sharia

law in the area and threatened to spread their control throughout Mali. On January 11, 2013, France initiated Operation Serval in response to the threat posed by Islamist extremists. The operation was started with 4,000 French troops, but this number was eventually boosted to 10,000. France won the operation quickly and decisively. The French forces soon drove the Islamist extremists out of northern Mali, restoring control to the Malian government.

### G5 Sahel Force

The force was established in 2014 by five African Sahel countries: Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania. The force was established in order to tackle terrorism and insecurity in the region. From the start, the force was plagued by a variety of issues. The countries comprising the force have varying political and military capacities. The force also had difficulty raising the requisite funds. Mali experienced a military coup in 2022. The coup leaders announced Mali's withdrawal from the G5 Sahel Force. Burkina Faso and Niger followed suit, announcing their withdrawal from the force in November 2022. With the withdrawal of three of its five members, the G5 Sahel Force was effectively dissolved. The force's headquarters in Nouakchott, Mauritania, was closed in December 2022. The dissolution of the G5 Sahel Force is a major setback for the fight against terrorism in the Sahel region. The force was the only regional force dedicated to combating terrorism in the region.



## 2.2.2 Political dimension

France also intervenes in the political process in the Sahel region. Most of the governments in the region have come to power with the support of France. This situation leads to backlash against France among the local people.

## 2.2.3 Economical Dimension

Among the distinctive effects of French colonialism in the Sahel region are:

- Introduction of modern agricultural, educational, and healthcare technology and systems
- Infrastructure development, such as roads, trains, and ports
- The emergence of a new class of well-educated elites
- Internal disputes and the formation of new political and social forces.

# 3. Status of Sahel Countries

## 3.1 Mali

### 3.1.1 Basic History of Mali

The Kingdom of Ghana, emerging from the 11th-century shadows, prepared an environment for Mali's future. This stronghold, which was built around the profitable trans-Saharan gold trade, made the area an important center for trade and cross-cultural interaction. The famous Mali Empire, established by the warrior-king Sundiata Keita, had taken up the mantle by the thirteenth century. Mali achieved its peak during his rule, with its influence extending from the Niger River to the Atlantic Ocean. The storied "City of 333 Saints," Timbuktu, rose to prominence as a hub of Islamic learning and education, drawing the attention of academics and merchants from all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

Mali's hegemony began to erode in the 16th century due to internal disputes and the development of the Songhai Empire. European colonial pressures accelerated the decline of the empire. France annexed Mali as a colony in the 19th century, taking advantage of its riches and establishing its dominance. The nation was freed in 1960 as a result of the successful independence movement, which was headed by prominent leaders like Modibo Keita. Liberated from colonialism's bonds, Mali started a new era. At first, the country was governed by socialist principles, but internal conflicts and a failing economy resulted in political unrest and military takeovers. The discovery of large gold and diamond reserves in the 21st century gave rise to fresh optimism for

<sup>1</sup> <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/mali-empire/>

advancement. Nonetheless, there are still issues with allocating these resources fairly, which feeds worries about social injustice and corruption.

### 3.1.2 2012 Malian coup d'état

On March 21, 2012, mutinying Malian troops who were unhappy with the way the Tuareg insurgency was being handled launched an attack on the presidential palace, state television, and military barracks in the capital city of Bamako, which marked the start of the 2012 Malian coup d'état. The next day, the soldiers stated they had deposed Amadou Toumani Touré's administration and forced him into hiding. They claimed to have founded the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State. Reuters referred to the coup as "a spectacular own-goal" because of the "unanimous" international condemnation that followed it, the severe sanctions imposed by Mali's neighbors, and the fast fall of northern Mali to Tuareg rebels.

### 3.1.3 2020 Malian coup d'état and the protests before

Since June 5th 2020, there have been continuous protests in Mali, with protesters demanding President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta's resignation. The government's handling of the continuing conflict, allegations of official corruption, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a faltering economy angered the protestors. During the protests, 124 injuries and 11 deaths were reported.

A coup d'état occurred by units of the Malian Armed Forces on August 18, 2020, following the start of a mutiny. After pick-up trucks carrying soldiers overran the Soundiata military base in Kati, there was an exchange of gunfire before weapons were taken out of the armory and top officials were taken into custody. On the streets of the town, military trucks and tanks were visible, traveling towards Bamako, the capital. A number of government officials, including President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, who resigned and dissolved the government, were detained by the military. Following the coup d'état in 2012, this was the nation's second coup in less than ten years.

### 3.1.4 2021 Malian coup d'état

In a "coup within a coup," military officers arrested Mali's prime minister, Moctar Ouane, and transitional president, Bah Ndaw, on May 24, 2021. Vice-president and leader of the 2020 coup, Assimi Goïta, published the decision after a cabinet reorganization was announced. Goïta claimed that Ndaw and Ouane had broken the transition charter by not consulting with him. Interestingly, the vice-president is not granted the authority to remove the prime minister and president under the terms of the transition charter. "The absolute power of the August 2020 junta, which has run the country despite the façade of a civilian transition," according to observers, is revealed by the most recent coup.

Goodluck Jonathan, the former president of Nigeria, lead ECOWAS mediation efforts with the Mali military on May 25. On May 26, both N'Daw and Ouane tendered their resignations to Goïta while still in custody. On May 27, the military freed the leaders who had been removed. According to certain reports, N'Daw's resignation raises the possibility of more unrest in the country.<sup>2</sup>

## 3.2 Guinea

### 3.2.1 Basic History of Guinea

Based on Africa's western coast, Guinea has a lengthy and rich history that matches its varied landscape. Its voyage spans millennia, weaving stories of colonial conflicts, ancient kingdoms, and the search for modern identity.

Guinea filled with life long before European eyes ever set eyes on its shores. For more than three millennia, prosperous farming groups carved independent kingdoms such as the Susu in the south and the Malinke in the north. Trade routes connected the region to the salt and gold empires of West Africa, winding across the beautiful savannas. The powerful Mali Empire rose to prominence in the 13th century, influencing Guinea and leaving a legacy of magnificent architecture and cross-cultural interaction.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>

<https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/malis-military-coup-within-coup-no-elections-february-2021-journalist-abducted/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/guinea>



The Fulani people moved south over the course of centuries, drawn by the rich highlands of Futa Jallon as well as Islamic fervor. They founded the Imamate of Futa Jallon by the eighteenth century, an exceptional Islamic nation with a rotating system of rulers and a codified constitution. The Imamate's influence grew, influencing the religious landscape of the area. Unwelcome European colonialism arrived in the 19th century. France started dividing up its colonial empire after being attracted to Guinea's abundant mineral resources and advantageous position. The following decades were characterized by severe mistreatment, forced labor, and the slow destruction of customary lifestyles. But there was also a glimmer of resistance in the Guinean soul. Leaders such as Samory Touré rose to oppose French domination, organizing heroic but ultimately fruitless uprisings.

Guinea was not an exception to the winds of change that swept across Africa in the middle of the 20th century. Sékou Touré headed the country in 1958 when it proclaimed its independence from France. Driven by socialist principles, Touré initiated a comprehensive plan of modernization and nationalization. But his one-party system and poor economic decisions quickly brought political repression and economic stagnation. Guinea had a difficult time navigating after Touré. The terrain was shaped by military takeovers, democratic reforms, and economic conflicts. With the discovery of enormous mineral wealth in the twenty-first century, hope was restored. But long-lasting worries about resource management, corruption, and political instability still exist.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2.2 2021 Guinean coup d'état

The world was awakened to the news of a military coup in Guinea on September 5, 2021. President Alpha Condé's 11-year regime came to a sudden end when Special Forces Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, with a handful of elite soldiers, assaulted the presidential mansion and captured the president. This event triggered shockwaves not only through Guinea but the entire continent, entwined in a complicated web of grudges and ambitions.<sup>5</sup>

The coup didn't happen alone. Years of building tension were caused by a number of circumstances, which eventually burst into violence. Condé significantly changed the constitution in 2020 to allow himself to serve a third term in government, which sparked intense demonstrations and charges of dictatorship. Despite Guinea's enormous mineral wealth, most of the population continued to live in poverty due to problems like increased inequality,

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guinea/overview>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2021/09/09/alpha-conde-the-president-of-guinea-is-ousted-in-a-coup?>

unemployment, and corruption. The military, especially the younger officers, felt underfunded and marginalized, which fueled their animosity toward the government even more.

That fateful day, highly armed soldiers stormed the presidential residence, engaging gunfire for a short while before taking Condé into custody. Doumbouya announced the dissolution of the national assembly, government, and constitution while flying the national flag on state television. He pledged a three-year democratic transition, emphasizing the need to fight corruption and enhance Guineans' quality of life. The world community demanded Condé's release and denounced the coup, particularly the African Union and the ECOWAS regional grouping. In Guinea, the coup also provoked demonstrations and bloodshed, with junta loyalists and opponents fighting in the streets.

## 3.3 Burkina Faso

### 3.3.1 The Rise of Ibrahim Traore

Traore, who was born in Bondokuy, in the western part of Burkina Faso, studied geology at Ouagadougou before joining the army in 2010.

After graduating from Georges Namonao Military School, a lower-class institution than the prestigious Kadiogo Military Academy (PMK), which Damiba and other prominent individuals had attended, he became an officer. In an interview with AFP, a contemporary said that Traore finished second in his class and was called "disciplined and brave."

After graduating, he had years of expertise in combating the jihadists.

In 2018 he worked in the badly devastated north and center of the country before going to serve as part of the UN's MINUSMA peacekeeping operation in neighboring Mali. He was appointed captain in 2020.



Speaking under anonymity, a former superior officer described an event that happened in 2020 just as the jihadists were about to take control of the central Burkinawese town of Barsalogo. Traore led his soldiers on a "commando trek" over the countryside since it was thought that the roadway into Barsalogo had been mined. He said that they arrived in time to liberate the town.

Following the overthrow of elected president Roch Marc Christian Kabore by Damiba in January, Traore joined what the junta called the Patriotic Movement for Preservation and Restoration (MPSR).<sup>6</sup>

### 3.3.2 2015 Burkina Faso Coup Attempt

On September 16, 2015, members of the contentious autonomous military group known as the Regiment of Presidential Security (RSP), which was founded under President Blaise Compaoré, attempted a failed coup in Burkina Faso by imprisoning the country's government. Those incarcerated were temporary president Michel Kafando, prime minister Yacouba Isaac Zida (a former deputy commander of the RSP), and several cabinet members. This transitional administration was put in place after the 2014 Burkinabé revolt, which saw the long-serving



president Compaoré, who had himself taken power in a 1987 coup against the left-wing leader Thomas Sankara, be toppled by a popular movement. On October 11, 2015, it was resolved to hold new general elections.

Following their successful takeover of Ouagadougou, the RSP said that General

Gilbert Diendéré would head a new junta that would oversee the transition to new elections. The coup leaders denounced the transitional government's electoral regulations, which barred Compaoré's followers from running in the elections, and promised to allow all qualified candidates to run. However, the junta faced protests, intense pressure from local authorities to restore the transitional government, and eventually from the regular army since it could not consolidate its authority across the country. Ultimately, after the regular army invaded Ouagadougou to fight the RSP, Kafando was re-elected president on September 23, 2015.

During the coup, over 250 people were injured and eleven people killed. The post of chairman of the president's military council was eliminated and the Minister of Security was fired in the first cabinet meeting that followed on September 25. Thirty days were granted to a commission tasked with identifying individuals implicated in the coup to submit their findings. Alpha Condé, the president of Guinea, referred to it as the "stupidest coup in the world". As suggested just prior to the coup, the administration dissolved the Presidential Security Regiment on September 25. The

<sup>6</sup>

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20221015-burkina-faso-coup-leader-ibrahim-traore-named-transitional-president>

state prosecutor froze Diendéré's assets and those of individuals connected to the coup on September 26. On September 28, the army chief of staff accused the RSP of disobeying the government's disarmament order. Both parties accused each other of acting belligerently throughout the process. Diendéré played down the tensions, saying that the process will continue. However, he said that the RSP members needed their guns for personal safety because the government had betrayed their trust by failing to protect them.<sup>789</sup>

### 3.3.3 January 2022 Burkina Faso Coup D'état

On January 23, 2022, a coup d'état was initiated in Burkina Faso. In Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, gunfire broke out in front of the presidential mansion and in front of multiple military facilities. It was stated that the military facility in the capital had been taken over by soldiers. The leadership, however, denied that a coup was taking place in the nation. It was claimed a few hours later that President Roch



Marc Christian Kaboré had been taken into custody by the troops at the capital's military base. The military said on television on January 24 that Kaboré had been removed from office as president. The military proclaimed the dissolution of the government, parliament, and constitution following the announcement. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, a military commander, spearheaded the coup.

Marc Roch While calling for the opposing soldiers to lay down their weapons and promoting dialogue, Christian Kaboré omitted any mention of his possible imprisonment. It was alleged that soldiers had encircled RTB, the state news channel, in the meanwhile. According to AFP News, the president and several senior officials have been taken into custody. At the Sangoulé Lamizana barracks in the city, two security officers declared, "President Kaboré, the head of parliament, and the ministers are effectively in the hands of the soldiers." "The Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration" has decided to assume its responsibilities before history," according to military commander Sidsoré Kader Ouedraogo. In an appearance, he said that since

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26664033>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/25/burkina-faso-foiled-military-coup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34277045>

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/09/16/military-detains-burkina-faso-leaders-weeks-before-vote>

the president was unable to address the issue and the security situation was becoming worse due to the rising Islamic insurgency, the military were taking over Kaboré's government. The new military leaders, he stated without elaboration, would work to arrange new elections on a timeline that would be acceptable to everyone. Both the African Union and ECOWAS suspended Burkina Faso's membership after the coup. On January 31st, the military takeover restored the constitution and appointed Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba<sup>10</sup> as the acting president.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.3.4 4 September 2022 Burkina Faso Coup D'état



The coup took place following the coup d'état that occurred in Burkina Faso in January 2022. Because the Burkinabe administration was unable to put an end to the jihadist insurgency in Burkina Faso, there was a coup in January. Following the overthrow of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré by a group of army officers, Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba led the Patriotic Movement for

Safeguard and Restoration, a military junta. The previous administration had grown incredibly unpopular in Burkina Faso as a result of its inability to quell the insurgency, therefore many people there first applauded the coup.

However, the new administration failed to put an end to the uprising and lost even more land to terrorists and jihadists. By September 2022, non-state entities controlled about 40% of Burkina Faso. Meanwhile, Damiba replaced his defense minister after he was ousted. Some of the officers who had supported the coup in January were unhappy with Damiba's handling of the situation and said that he had put his own goals ahead of putting an end to the rebels. The majority of these disgruntled commanders were youthful and possessed direct exposure to the front lines. Damiba's standing declined as well. As a result, the aggrieved groups planned their own coup under the direction of Captain Ibrahim Traoré. Traoré was in charge of an army in the town of Kaya in northern Burkina Faso. The exact composition of the unit is disputed; some reports attribute Jeune Afrique's leadership to an artillery regiment, while other stories place him in command of the "Cobra" special forces stationed in Kaya. Not only were the "Cobra" troops upset with the military government's poor performance against the rebels, but they were also upset about the payment delays and Damiba's refusal to free their previous top commander, Emmanuel

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/25/burkina-faso-coup-leader-paul-henri-sandaogo-damiba>

<sup>11</sup>

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220125-burkina-faso-s-writer-colonel-coup-leader-starts-a-new-chapter-in-country-s-history>

Zoungrana, who had been detained by Kaboré's government. Terrorists killed eleven Burkinabe troops and took fifty people hostage on September 26, attacking a supply truck en route to the besieged hamlet of Djibo in the north. This act severely undermined public confidence in Damiba's government, which perhaps contributed to his final demise.

Furthermore, the coup aligns with previous initiatives by Russia and Turkey to enlarge their domains of influence in the Sahel. Some of the efforts are being led by the Wagner Group, whose founder, Yevgeny Prigozhin, was close to Russian President Vladimir Putin until the Wagner Group mutinied in June 2023. There has also been growing discontent in recent years with France, the main ally of the Sahel countries in their struggle against terrorism in the region, especially in Burkina Faso. There are many in the country who would want to see Russia replace France. Using troll farms, Prigozhin has tried to sway anti-French opinion in the Sahel. The military was split before the coup on whether or not to replace France with other foreign allies, particularly Russia. But Damiba had made up his mind not to.<sup>12</sup>

Early in the morning, there were several reports of loud gunfire and explosions around Ouagadougou, the capital, particularly in the Ouaga 2000 area, which houses the presidential and military junta offices. This signaled the start of the coup. In the center of the capital, disguised

troops set up blockades; the majority of the pro-coup forces appeared to be from the "Cobra" squad. Damiba's main base was a military post called Camp Baba Sy, where conflicts took place.

Additionally, gunshots were reported at Kosyam Palace. State TV ceased broadcasting.

A few hours later, the interim administration acknowledged that there was an army internal crisis and said that negotiations to find a solution were in progress. A "change in mood among certain elements of the national armed forces" has occurred, Interim President Damiba acknowledged on Facebook. The administration and the rebelling troops were unable to come to an agreement. Groups assembled in the capital as soon as the public realized a coup was happening, either to obtain intelligence or to show support for the coup plotters.<sup>13</sup>



Later that night, Captain Traoré declared that Interim President Damiba was to be removed by him and a group of officers because he was unable to handle the Islamist insurgency that was

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-burkina-faso-coup-russia/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220930->

becoming more and more severe throughout the nation. He shut down all air and land borders, suspended the Burkina Faso Constitution, instituted a curfew from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., and stopped all political and civil society activity. Declaring himself the new leader of the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration, Traoré made his announcement. In addition, he disbanded the interim legislative assembly and the government. After the coup, Damiba's whereabouts were first a mystery. Later, Damiba was charged by the newly formed junta led by Traoré of attempting to escape in the direction of Camp Kamboinsin, a French military facility, in order to stage a counter coup. Damiba, meanwhile, denied the accusation. According to Traoré, France is not assisting in a counteroffensive. The French embassy in Ouagadougou and a French cultural institution in Bobo-Dioulasso were attacked the next day by Burkinabe supporters of the coup. France denounced the assaults and denied any role in the coup in September 2022. Religious and community organizations announced on October 2 that Damiba had agreed to resign from his position following mediation between himself and Traoré. In return, Damiba demanded seven guarantees, including that his friends be protected, that his safety and rights be upheld, and that he fulfill his promise to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to hand over power to civilians within two years. Damiba submitted his resignation with Traoré's blessing, and with a few army leaders' help, he managed to go into exile in Togo. A military junta known as the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration gave the order for French soldiers to withdraw from Burkina Faso within a month in January 2023. In February 2023, the French Army formally ceased operations within the country. Later that month, the junta also pulled out of a 1961 military aid pact with France. Terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso resumed in 2023 despite the coup.<sup>14</sup>

## 4. Views

### 4.1 Potential Implications That Sahel Countries Might Face as a Result of This Tension

- **Security and Stability:** Political instability or coups in these countries could lead to increased security challenges and instability in the region. This could impact efforts to combat jihadist movements and other security threats, potentially creating a vacuum that could be exploited by militant groups.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** A shift in the political stance of these countries away from the French point of view could strain diplomatic relations between these nations and France.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/30/burkina-faso-military-leader-damiba-deposed-coup-army>

It may lead to a reevaluation of security partnerships and cooperation, potentially impacting joint military operations and counterterrorism efforts.

- **Regional Geopolitics:** Political shifts in these countries could have broader implications for regional geopolitics. It could lead to changes in alliances and power dynamics within the Sahel region, potentially impacting the balance of influence among regional actors.
- **International Involvement:** A change in the political position of these countries could prompt a reassessment of international involvement in the Sahel. Other international actors may need to adjust their strategies and engagements in response to the evolving political dynamics in the region.
- **Economic and Development Impact:** Political instability and shifts in position could impact economic and development initiatives in the Sahel, potentially affecting international aid and investment in these countries.

## 4.2 Factors could potentially contribute to decreasing the tension between the Sahel and French sides

- **Improved Communication and Diplomacy:** Improved communication and diplomatic efforts between France and Sahelian countries could aid in the resolution of misunderstandings and conflicts. Mutual understanding and collaboration can be facilitated by open and productive conversation at both the political and public levels.
- **Respect for Sovereignty and Domestic Political Landscapes:** France could demonstrate a greater understanding and respect for the sovereignty and domestic political landscapes of the Sahelian countries. This may entail acknowledging and addressing Sahelian publics' and political leaders' worries about the impact of French interference on national sovereignty.
- **Clarity and Transparency in French Intervention:** Greater clarity and transparency about the objectives, strategies, and outcomes of the French intervention in the Sahel might assist develop trust and reduce tensions. This may entail clear communication regarding the nature of security concerns, the rationale for military activities, and the intervention's long-term goals.



- **Collaboration and Partnership:** In addressing security concerns, emphasizing collaborative and partnership-based approaches between France and Sahelian countries helps develop a sense of shared responsibility and mutual benefit. This could entail cooperation on security, development, and governance projects.

### 4.3 Strong Sides of French Cabinet

- **Military Intervention:** France has a significant military presence and intervention in the Sahel region, particularly through its Operation Barkhane, which is focused on counterterrorism activities in these countries. This military presence gives France a strong position in addressing security threats and shaping the security landscape in the region.
- **Diplomatic Influence:** France holds significant diplomatic power in the Sahel, as indicated by its participation in multinational projects such as the G5 Sahel and its leadership in coordinating international responses to the region's security concerns. This clout allows France to influence the diplomatic and political agendas of these countries.
- **Historical Ties:** Due to its colonial past and post-independence contacts, France has historical relationships with these countries. These historical ties have led to France's lasting influence and engagement in the Sahel region's political, economic, and security dynamics.
- **Economic and Development Assistance:** France has been involved in economic and development assistance in the Sahel, providing aid, investment, and support for various development initiatives. This economic engagement contributes to France's influence and presence in the region.

### 4.4 Strong Sides of Sahel Cabinet

- **Public Opinion and Political Elite Resistance:** Anti-French sentiment is developing in the Sahel region, particularly in Mali, and has been publicly articulated by political elites and popular personalities. This opposition reflects a perception of French participation as an infringement on national sovereignty and interests, resulting in challenges and barriers in France's relationship with these countries.
- **Allegations and Criticisms:** Allegations and objections have been leveled at the French military deployment in the Sahel, including reports of civilian casualties, human rights

violations, and suspicions of ulterior objectives. These charges have contributed to a bad perception of France's participation, resulting in public and parliamentary opposition.

## 5.Beginning of The Committee

25.07.2023 a day after the Cabinet Meeting of Niger Government



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