



Economic Community of West African States

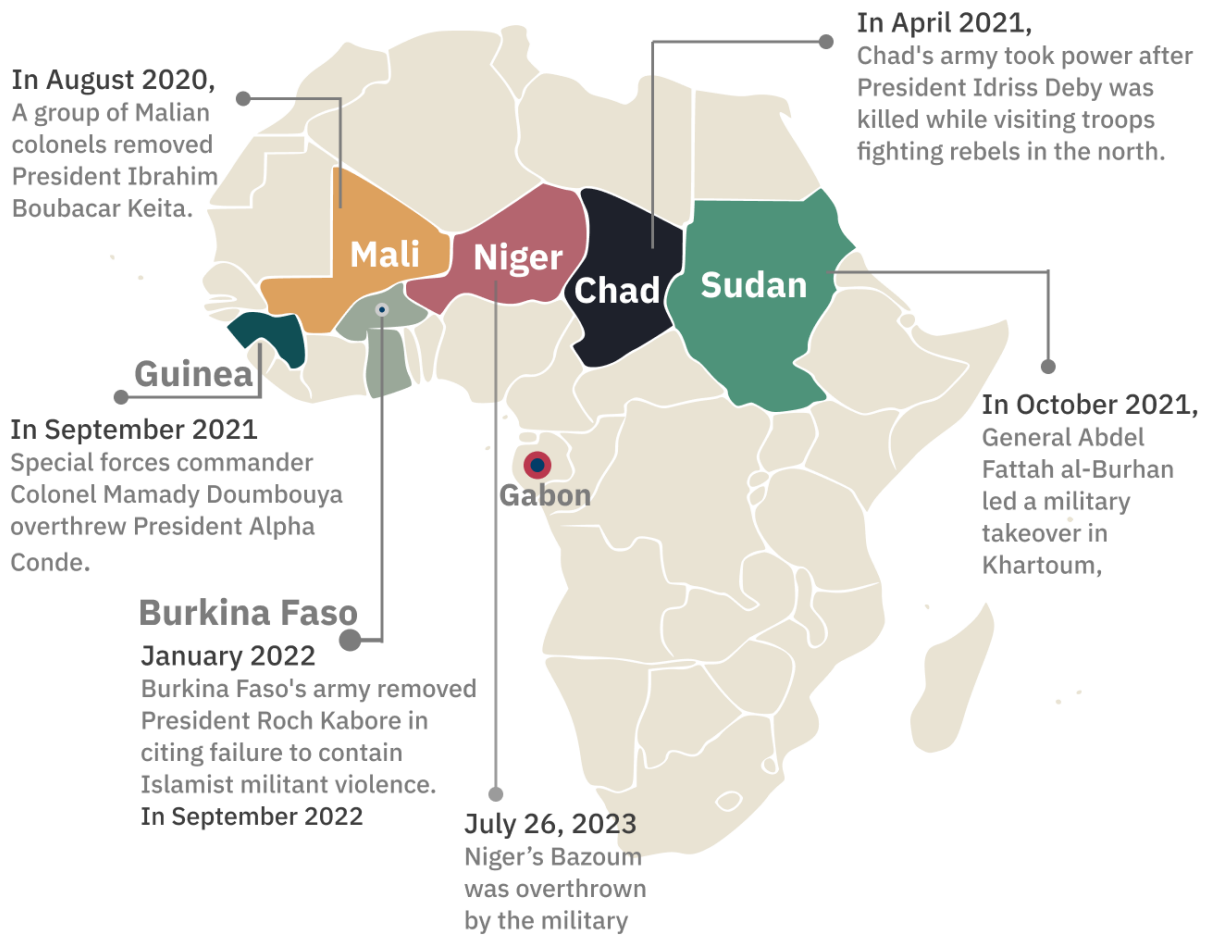
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Why in News?

- Recently, the military regimes in [Burkina Faso](#), [Mali](#) and [Niger](#) announced their immediate withdrawal from the **West African bloc** [Economic Community of West African States \(ECOWAS\)](#).

What is ECOWAS?

- **About:** ECOWAS is a regional grouping aimed to promote economic integration and shared development of the **West African sub-region**.
 - It was established in May 1975 by 15 West African countries in **Lagos, Nigeria**.
- **Founding members:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sénégal, and Togo.
- **Headquarters:** Abuja, Nigeria.
- **Major Initiatives:** ECOWAS established its [free trade area in 1990](#) and adopted a common external tariff in January 2015.
 - It has also worked to address some security issues by developing a [peacekeeping force for conflicts](#) in the region.
 - Troops were initially sent to **Liberia in 1990** during its civil war and to **Sierra Leone in 1997** following the overthrow of a democratically elected government.
- **India-ECOWAS Relation:**
 - India has a long-standing relationship with ECOWAS and was given the **status of observer to the body in 2004**.
 - In 2006, India gave the grouping a line of credit (LoC) worth **USD 250 million**.
 - ECOWAS has also supported India's bid for a permanent seat in the **United Nations Security Council**.



Note

Recently the **French military pullout from the Sahel region** has raised concerns about the potential spread of conflicts to [Gulf of Guinea states](#) such as Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Ivory Coast

Key Points About Sahel Region:

- **Sahel** is a **semiarid region** of western and north-central Africa extending from **Senegal eastward to Sudan**.
- It forms a transitional zone between the **arid Sahara (desert) to the north and the belt of humid savannas to the south**.
- It is one of the world's richest, gifted with vast energy and mineral resources such as **oil, gold and uranium**.
 - However, political instability hinder development progress.
- **United Nations (UN)** limits the Sahel to ten (10) countries: **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Chad**.

Boundaries of the Sahel within the context of the United Nations



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Prelims

Q. In recent years Chad, Guinea, Mali and Sudan caught international attention for which one of the following reasons is common to all of them? (2023)

- (a) Discovery of rich deposits of rare earth elements
- (b) Establishment of Chinese military bases
- (c) Southward expansion of Sahara Desert
- (d) Successful coups

Ans: (d)

Mains:

Q. "Africa was chopped into states artificially created by accident of European competition". Analyze. (2013)