

Forum: Security Council (SC)
Issue: The situation in Burkina Faso
Student Officer: Melina-Eleni Alexiou
Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates of the Security Council,

My name is Melina Alexiou and I am a sixteen years old student attending the 11th grade at the German School of Athens (DSA). In this year's PSMUN conference, I have the utmost honor to serve as one of the Deputy Presidents of the Security Council. I started MUN in 8th grade and have participated in 11 conferences until now. MUN has become a passion for me since I - along with many other teenagers - get the chance to find solutions for some of the world's most important issues, a world that in a few years will be ours to deal with.

MUN is a way for teenagers to become global citizens, meaning that one has not only the responsibility to protect and preserve their national society but their wider global one as well. It is for this reason that the situation in Burkina Faso needs to be addressed. This security crisis is not only affecting one population: it is affecting our own world, our quality of life, and our future. Civilians are dying due to violent attacks and human rights are constantly being overstepped. If we, as a generation, want to create a better world for ourselves, we need to start taking action and working collectively rather than individually.

It goes without saying that the Security Council is one - if not the - most challenging and advanced committee a delegate can attend. Therefore, I want to remind you that this study guide only serves as an introduction to the situation in Burkina Faso. You are expected to conduct your own research as a means of understanding the issue in depth and being able to provide feasible and fruitful solutions to the security crisis in Burkina Faso, as well as on your country's policy and stance on the issue. Should you have any questions concerning the topic or the procedure, you are more than welcome to contact me by sending an email to melinaalexioou@gmail.com.

Yours sincerely,

Melina Alexiou

INTRODUCTION

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country located in West Africa. After being a French colony for almost one century, Burkina Faso gained its independence in 1960 but has been facing challenges toward stability ever since.¹ In 1957, the French parliament approved the revision in the organization of French Overseas Territories.² More specifically, this revision began with the Basic Law, otherwise named, Loi Cadre, of July 1956.² By reorganizing and approving the said act, France ensured that a significant part of the self-government will belong to the overseas territories, which resulted in more independence. In 1960, Burkina Faso managed to receive, after the reconsideration of the organization, full independence from France. Nowadays, the country's market economy is fragile due to the non-existent access to the sea, which would promote trade with other nations. Apart from the struggling economy, the nation is suffering from a security crisis.

This security crisis escalated in 2022, because two coup d'états have taken place, more specifically one in January and one in September.³ The military ousted President Cabore, who was the first president elected after a pattern of coups in the history of Burkina Faso. Not only is the nation now suffering from unstable governments, but it also has to deal with Islamist extremist groups which attack villages in the northern region of the State, namely the Sahel region. Nevertheless, a question regarding the causes behind political instability arises.

The main reason behind the political instability witnessed in the region is the unsettlement caused by Islamist extremist groups and the inability of the country to deal with them effectively. It is worth mentioning that this crisis is a common pattern in other West African countries that deal with the chaos caused by Islamist insurgencies, which are funded by organizations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS).⁴

The ongoing situation in the country has led to many injustices, aside from the atrocities committed by said Islamist groups. Many activists and political opponents have been arrested without any explanation and brought to court without the legal representation they deserve, according to their human rights. The violent attacks also have had numerous victims and limited the access of many villages to humanitarian

¹ Britannica. "Burkina Faso - Independence|Burkina Faso", *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Burkina-Faso/Independence#ref516561>.

² African American Registry. "Burkina Faso Gains Independence From France", *African American Registry (AAREG)*, <https://aaregistry.org/story/burkina-faso-gains-independence-from-france/>.

³ World Report 2022. "Burkina Faso", *Human Rights Watch, 2021*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/burkina-faso>.

⁴ World Report 2022. "Burkina Faso", *Human Rights Watch, 2021*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/burkina-faso>.

aid.⁵ As a result, food insecurity has become even bigger after the increase in cereal prices due to the ongoing war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

It is clear that violence is not an effective means of settling disputes, and therefore, it should be prevented at all costs. This opinion actually represents the ideology of pacifism, which along with injustices constitutes our conference theme. The violence in Burkina Faso should be strongly condemned and other solutions to the insurgencies must be brought to fruition. If political stability in Burkina Faso is to be achieved, it is a necessity to implement democratic elections in the country, so as to grant the population its voice concerning their own government.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Pacifism

The ideology that opposes the use of violence and war as a means of dispute settlement.⁶

Landlocked country

The term refers to an independent State with no direct access to the ocean.⁷

Coup d'état

A group's sudden and violent overthrow of the government currently in power. The prerequisite for a coup d'état is the complete control of at least a part of the national armed forces, e.g., the police or the army. The sudden seizure of power by Captain Traore in Burkina Faso is considered a coup d'état.⁸

Insurgency

A State in which a group of people makes attempts to obtain the leadership of a country by force. However, in comparison with an uprising, insurgencies lack organization. The group conducting them usually tries to gain strength and security in the region by “winning over” the rural population living there. In the Sahel region,

⁵ Relief Web. “Coup d'état in Burkina Faso: What future for the already fragile population?”, *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*, 17 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/coup-detat-burkina-faso-what-future-already-fragile-population>.

⁶ Britannica. “Pacifism: political philosophy”, *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pacifism>.

⁷ Daniel Costa. “Landlocked country”, *Britannica*, 15 November 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/landlocked-country>.

⁸ Britannica. “Coup d'état: political intervention”, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat>.

many villages are experiencing constant attacks and insurgencies in order for Islamist organizations to claim the territory.⁹

The Sahel region

The term refers to a vast region, which is extremely underpopulated, expanding in West Africa. Part of this region is also in Burkina Faso and it is the main target of the Islamist extremist groups, due to its underpopulation and complete exposure.¹⁰

Social mobilization

Social mobilization as a term is used to describe a process whereby people and generally States are organized in such a way that enables them to think and act collectively upon their own development.¹¹

Modernization

The transformation progress of a State from a traditional, agricultural society to an urban and industrial one. Many countries which gained their independence as a colony tried to modernize their country immediately, an action that destabilized the State as a whole.¹²

Extremist

A person whose beliefs are deemed unacceptable and unreasonable by the majority of society. The Islamist groups in the Sahel region are considered extremists due to the implementation of their beliefs through violence.¹³

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

A person who has been forced to flee from their home – their residence – and seeks shelter in another part of the country. Usually, internally displaced people leave their homes due to an armed conflict, generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural disasters. In this case, citizens leave their villages due to an armed conflict, the attacks of the Islamist groups. Since they flee to another region of Burkina Faso, they are considered internally displaced people (IDPs).¹⁴

⁹ Merriam-Webster. “Insurgency Definition & Meaning”, *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/insurgency>.

¹⁰ United Nations (UN) News Service. “Sahel should be seen as a region of “opportunity” despite “multiple crises””, *Reliefweb*, 28 May 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/sahel-should-be-seen-region-opportunity-despite-multiple-crises>.

¹¹ Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN). “Social mobilisation”, *Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN)*, <https://www.rspn.org/index.php/work/social-mobilisation/>.

¹² Kumar, Krishan. “Modernization”, *Britannica*, 5 December 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/modernization>.

¹³ Cambridge Online Dictionary. “Extremist”, *Cambridge University Online Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/extremist>.

¹⁴ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR). “About internally displaced persons: Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons”, *United*

Wagner Group

The name of a Russian paramilitary organization. It also refers to a network of mercenaries of Vladimir Putin, the president of the Russian Federation. The troops of this paramilitary organization have assisted Burkina Faso in dealing with Islamist insurgencies.¹⁵

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Background

Burkina Faso, located in the West African region, was formerly known as Upper Volta. Its first settlers were the Mossi people, who migrated from the 11th to the 13th century¹⁶ and created powerful, influential kingdoms. However, these kingdoms were eventually united as a French Colony during the European Scramble of Africa in 1896.¹⁹ In this conference, thirteen European countries, along with the United States of America (USA) divided the African continent into various colonies in order to gain overseas territories.



Figure 1: A map of the West African region, in which the location of Burkina Faso is highlighted

About a century later, Upper Volta regained its independence through the revision of the organization “French Overseas Territories” and made the decision to hold democratic elections. As a result, the first president of Upper Volta, Maurice Yameogo, was elected. He, however, was overthrown by Sangoule Lamizana six years later, an

Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons>.

¹⁵ Victoria Kim. “What is the Wagner Group?”, *The New York Times*, 31 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/31/world/europe/wagner-group-russia-ukraine.html>.

¹⁶ British Broadcasting Corporation. “Burkina Faso country profile”, *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, 25 October 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13072774>.

incident that started the pattern of coups in the country. President Lamizana remained in power for 14 years and was then ousted by Saye Zerbo. The coup took place after intense protests by workers, teachers, and other public servants. Even though the country had been independent for only twenty years, it had already witnessed two coups, illustrating an absence of democratic fundamentals and political experience.

Saye Zerbo remained in power only for a short period of time, more specifically a period of three years. In November 1982 lower-rank officers rebelled against his government and thus, a man named Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo seized power in 1982.¹⁷ Correspondingly, Saye Zerbo was forced to resign. However, a split between two factions in the new government was evident: the political parties were divided into radical and conservative ones. The same year, the radical faction under Thomas Sankara seized power.

During his time in office, the National Revolutionary Council (NRC) was founded, and Thomas Sankara was installed as head of State. As the president, he renamed the country to “Burkina Faso” in 1984, which translated into “the land of incorruptible people.” Considering the meaning of the said name, Sankara also ordered government officials – including himself – to open their bank accounts, in order to establish transparency with the citizens. Moreover, many achievements were managed during his rule: vaccination, promotion of human rights, and tree planting in the northern Sahel region of the country.

Sankara was later overthrown and murdered by Blaise Compaore in 1987, with his rule lasting only three years. President Compaore remained in power for 27 years, becoming the most long-lasting ruler of Burkina Faso. Yet, even though President Compaore had as a goal to economically liberalize the country in the beginning, he soon started to undermine democratic ideals, which was the regime the country was supposedly under.

Compaore limited the democratic reform by eliminating any members of his regime who disagreed with his ideals and continued pursuing his own agenda. For instance, the president was responsible for the execution of two substantial members of his regime due to disputes concerning the economy of Burkina Faso. Consequently, an atmosphere of fear spread all over the country. Considering that the country was not able to uphold democratic standards due to the consecutive coup d’états, Compaore took the political inexperience of the citizens to his advantage and managed to remain in power through an absolute regime.

¹⁷ Britannica. “Burkina Faso - Independence|Burkina Faso”, *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Burkina-Faso/Independence#ref516561>.

It is worth mentioning that Compaore was challenged with a bad reputation in the African continent, due to his involvement in Sankara’s murder. Still, he assisted as a mediator in disputes between other west African countries and therefore, became a respected leader. The president, however, kept exploiting his power by ignoring the unrest that had arisen in his community due to his lack of transparency. The economic and political developments of Burkina Faso were unknown to the public, and even when Compaore was not eligible to run again as president, he did and was re-elected.

After the announcement in October 2014 that the presidential term limits would be abolished due to amendments in the constitution of Burkina Faso, the citizens reacted with massive protests against the extension of his rule.¹⁸ Public buildings were set on fire, mass demonstrations were held and the protests became even more violent, to the point where the borders of Burkina Faso were closed. As a result, president Compaore declared a state of emergency, and his government was dissolved, marking the success of the protests.

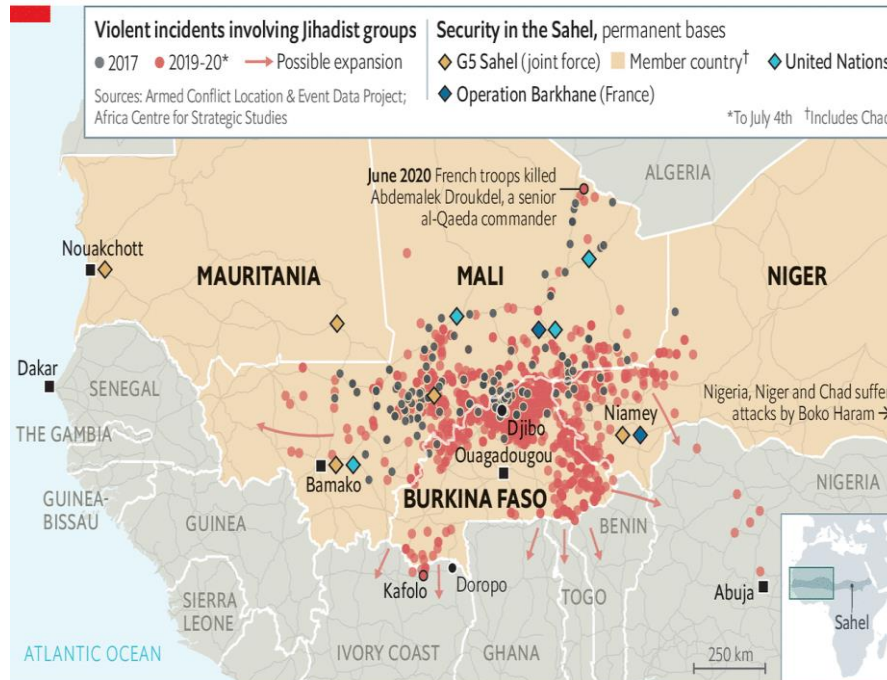
After many years, democratic elections were finally held in the country, in order for a transitional government to be chosen. President Cabore was elected. It is worth mentioning that Cabore was one of the many people who actively spoke against Compaore’s rule and therefore, held a special place in the heart of Burkina’s Faso population. In 2015, an increase in Islamist extremist groups’ activity was noticed. The crisis evident all over the Sahel region stems from Mali, a neighboring country of Burkina Faso.

The conflict between the Fulani and the Dogon, two tribes present in Mali, intensified after Fulani leaders joined Islamist groups. As a result, the attacks became armed, while the violence spread to central and western areas of the region. Since Islamist groups were now present and had managed to establish a base in Mali, they had the opportunity to gain territories in neighboring countries, such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Chad. Considering the fact that the Sahel region of Burkina Faso was completely exposed to violence, the Islamist groups, funded by ISIS and Al Qaeda, made use of this opportunity by attacking villages and severing supply convoys.

Public trust in Cabore started to decrease due to the growing dissatisfaction concerning the support the president provided to the military troops in conflict zones. In other words, the national military expressed the opinion that insufficient support was provided, a situation that led to an increase in attacks. This dissatisfaction escalated in June 2021 with an attack on the northern region of Burkina Faso. The massacre of Solhan led to the death of 135 civilians; this attack is the deadliest attack

¹⁸ McKenna, Amy. “Blaise Compaore”, *Britannica*, July 7 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Blaise-Compaore>.

in the history of the country after the increase of armed attacks in 2016.¹⁹ The dissatisfaction became even more intense in November 2021, after the death of over 50 security members.



The Economist

Figure 2: A map highlighting the activity of Islamist groups in the Sahel region from 2017 to 2020

The 2022 coups in Burkina Faso

In order to fully understand the security crisis in Burkina Faso, it is essential to observe the political scene of Burkina Faso after President Cabore's election. In the next 17 months, public dissatisfaction against Cabore was expressed. Four coups took place, and with the exception of one, all were unsuccessful. On January 22, 2022, the protests concerning public dissatisfaction reached their peak, since violent demonstrations spread all over the country.²⁰ The goal was to emphasize the inability of the current government to deal with the Islamist insurgencies. The following day, the government denied any seizure of power and ordered all citizens to abide by the curfew. However, on January 24, the army announced it had ousted President Cabore and Lieutenant-Colonel Damiba was installed as head of State.

¹⁹ World Report 2022. "Burkina Faso", *Human Rights Watch*, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/burkina-faso>.

²⁰ Agence France Presse. "A timeline of the coup in Burkina Faso since the army seized power in January 2022", *The Hindu Digital*, 4 October 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/a-timeline-of-burkina-faso-since-the-army-seized-power-in-january-2022/article65967044.ece>.

The local community celebrated the ousting of President Cabore, while the international community condemned the military overtake. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) suspended Burkina Faso and sent a delegation to negotiate with the new coup leaders. ECOWAS provided the self-declared government with a timetable concerning the transition period during which Burkina Faso was obliged to return to democratic procedures. The transition period was set at three years, meaning that Damiba's government was now considered a transitional one, just like President Cabore's term in office after the resignation of Compaore. However, in March, Islamist attacks reemerged, this time in a more brutal manner, resulting in the death of hundreds of civilians.

As the security crisis worsened, Damiba's government proved unable to suppress the Islamist insurgencies. On September 12th, Damiba took on the defense minister position and dismissed a member of his government. After the death of at least 11 soldiers during September, a coup was formed with Captain Ibrahim Traore as its leader. On September 30th 2022, the coup was successful; Damiba was ousted by Captain Ibrahim Traore. The former president fled to Togo. During December 2022, President Traore still served as the leader of Burkina Faso and allegedly, the protests in the country, fueled from the crisis, stopped during his rule.

From 1966 to 2022, the country witnessed more than four coups. It is clear that a pattern of coups has been prevalent throughout Burkina Faso's history, due to the political instability and the slow economic development the country is facing. It is important to mention that such a pattern has been prominent in other countries of West Africa like Mali, a country that also experienced the rise of coups after 2015. In the following section of the study guide, the two coups of 2022 will be analyzed according to the factors leading to their occurrence.

[The coup d'état of January 2022](#)

Since 2015, Islamist extremist groups have become more active in the West African region. Burkina Faso has become a constant target of Islamist extremist insurgencies and is unable to deal with the violent attacks, due to the supply and funding of these groups by major terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. As a result, thousands of people have died since 2016, while many others were forced to leave their hometowns and flee to other parts of the country. This means that the number of internally displaced people has dramatically increased in the last few years. Along with internally displaced people came public dissatisfaction, a factor that further destabilized the country. Therefore, IDPs, along with a handful of other factors, led to the social unrest that coup leaders used in order to seize power.

Another problematic factor was that almost half of Burkina Faso's territory is still completely exposed, thus allowing such groups to easily attack near

villages. The army has tried to deal with the situation but cannot do so efficiently due to the insufficient support soldiers receive at the front. The army protested and demanded more support, but no change was evident, therefore, adding to the general feeling of unrest. As a result, many residents of villages in the Sahel region do not have any access to humanitarian aid.

Due to the unchanging security crisis, the army conducted a coup that successfully overthrew President Cabore from the government, even though he was elected in 2020¹⁹ through the democratic process of elections. It is clear that the coup leader made use of the social unrest and the inability of the government and managed to seize power through violence. As a result, the democratic regime has been, of course, substituted by an authoritarian one.

The coup d'état of September 2022

As mentioned in the introduction of this study guide, another coup d'état took place in September 2022. According to the party that conducted the coup, more specifically, the one that organized the military operation, the government could not deal with the ongoing security crisis. As a result, the crisis started to worsen in the country, and more and more lives were lost. This dissatisfaction was intensively voiced after the death of eleven soldiers during an attack on a supply convoy. The protesters expressed the opinion that the military was not provided with sufficient support. Thus, a coup was formed, with the leader being Captain Traore. Meanwhile, the public also expressed its dissatisfaction and supported the military coup. The coup was deemed successful in October 20th since Damiba resigned and fled to Togo. Before Traore seized power, he accepted the condition of no further violence, a condition offered to him by the previous self-declared leader of Burkina Faso, Damiba.

According to other religious leaders of the region, Traore agreed on further conditions, whereas the previous president left the country. When asked about the reasons behind his seizure of power, Traore gave an answer similar to Damiba after his installment as president: the citizens wanted more security and safety, while the government could not guarantee the resolution of the crisis. From his statements, it became clear that the people of Burkina Faso wish for the regain of control in Burkina Faso's territories and for more safety. The new coup seemed promising for said changes and thus, it gained the support and trust of the population.

Since Traore came to power, order has allegedly been restored. The protests in front of the French embassy stopped, while the disputes in the political sector decreased. Nevertheless, Traore dismissed the transitional government and concentrated all the power on himself and the other members of the coup.

However, a split in the army has been noticed, considering that many soldiers now support the Russian Federation. The Russian government has sent a paramilitary organization named Wagner Group in order to assist the local military troops in dealing with Islamist attacks. Allegedly, the Russian Federation has supported the coup and its government, aiming at an alliance with Burkina Faso after the crisis in its relations with Europe. Therefore, the Wagner Group serves as a means of assisting the local troops and “winning over” the government of Burkina Faso.

The reasons behind the pattern of coup d'états in West Africa

It is evident that this political instability and the significant number of coups is a pattern throughout the whole West African region. Before trying to find the reasons behind this pattern, it is important to mention that all of the countries in the region were former colonies and thus, are newly formed nations with limited political experience.

After gaining independence, many of the States tried to quickly modernize their country by achieving cultural pluralism and adapting to the political system of the western world. Imposing such a westernized democratic political system on countries with almost no political experience was highly unrealistic. Assimilating and integrating into western society seemed like the main priority to a handful of those countries, which unfortunately did not realize that such quick actions had a destabilizing effect on their countries. The reason behind this is that there was not enough time for the country to develop fundamental aspects, such as an identity, a mentality, a sufficient economy, and most importantly, political parties that would represent the whole nation. Of course, the economic status of a country contributes to its stability, since a stable economy would also ensure a better quality of life for the people of the State.

An important factor to further note is that many African States struggled to create a sufficient political system in their country. Consequently, forming foundations for a democratic structure was destabilizing the whole country in the process. The regimes which regardless established a democracy faced political instability in the first years, which of course was impacted by the weak economy as well. Due to this insecurity, many countries followed stricter and absolute regimes, which restricted one's human rights and freedoms. However, the economy during such authoritarian regimes seemed to flourish, whereas during a democracy it was destabilized.

According to an analysis of Johnson, Slater, and McGowan in 1984,²¹ countries that had a stronger and more stable economy and managed to maintain a sort of political pluralism before gaining their independence had fewer military coups than other

²¹ Johnson, Thomas H., Slater, Robert O., and McGowan, Pat (1984). “Explaining African Military Coups d'état, 1960-1982.” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, pp. 622-640.

African nations, meaning that preserving characteristics from the period before the independence was a stabilizing factor, at least for the beginning of a newly formed nation. Furthermore, this analysis clearly showed that a dynamic economy can serve as a stabilizing factor for many States. Unfortunately, most of the West African region lacks such an economy, and therefore, political stability has become more difficult. Without a strong economy, the quality of life worsens, which leads to dissatisfaction in the population as a whole.

Considering another analysis written by Collier and Hoeffler in 2007,²² it was observed that countries that spent less on their military had fewer military coups, due to the lack of qualitative equipment. Of course, many countries focused on their military as a means of ensuring the security of the country. However, in many such cases, it has been demonstrated that such an advantage was misused by the armed forces, who ousted the person in power –the president of Burkina Faso in this case– in order to take matters into their own hands.

In conclusion, there were specific factors that contributed to the political instability, and by extension to the security crisis in West Africa as a whole. The slow socio-economic development after the independence, the weak and unstable economy as well as the struggle to adapt to a democratic political system contributed significantly to the re-emerge of the coup d'état in the Western African region.

The reasons behind the pattern of coup d'état in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso, being a French colony, had found itself in a crisis. Due to the fact that political pluralism was not guaranteed before its independence, no fundamentals of democracy were evident in the country. As a result, the democratic regime served as a destabilizing factor, which had a further negative impact on the economy. This regression led to political instability and fueled public dissatisfaction, which resulted in political instability. The constant changes in Burkina Faso's government did not contribute effectively to the country's development, since there was insufficient time to fully develop democratic fundamentals.

It is important to mention that such coups implemented authoritarian States and limited democracy in Burkina Faso. At the same time, the State's budget deficit was and is still increasing. Therefore, the irregular changes of Burkina's Faso leader after its independence further destabilized the State. As a result, the economy is fragile and the market of the country remains unstable, especially due to the fact that Burkina Faso is landlocked. The security crisis caused by the Islamist attacks has also led to the reemergence of coups, not only in the country but in the whole West African region. The said security has become one of the main reasons such sudden changes in

²² Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke (2007). "Military Spending and the Risks of Coups d'Etat." Centre for the Study of African Economies. Oxford: Oxford University. October

government have been noticed. Of course, the two coups that occurred in 2022 had a destabilizing impact on Burkina Faso since the security crisis worsened.

The impact of the current political instability on the country

Impact on the population

Taking into consideration the current political instability as well as the security crisis the country is met with, the population has, of course, been severely affected. The citizens of Burkina Faso were already struggling due to the economic crisis the country is going through and is currently dealing with global food insecurity due to the ongoing war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. It is clear that the population has become a victim of all of these issues while fleeing from Islamist insurgencies as well. For example, the blockades in the Sahel region have cut off the citizens' access to humanitarian aid.

Consequently, fulfilling one's needs has become extremely challenging in the region. Furthermore, a significant number of citizens were forced to flee from their homes in order to protect their own lives. This situation resulted in an increase in internally displaced people in the country, which causes dissatisfaction among the general public. Unfortunately, the violent attacks conducted by Islamist extremist groups caused the deaths of many civilians. However, the human rights of the population were disregarded by the national government as well. During massive protests, activists and political opponents were detained with no further explanation. Therefore, the population is suffering due to the limitation of their own human rights and the instability that has ruled over Burkina Faso for the last few years.

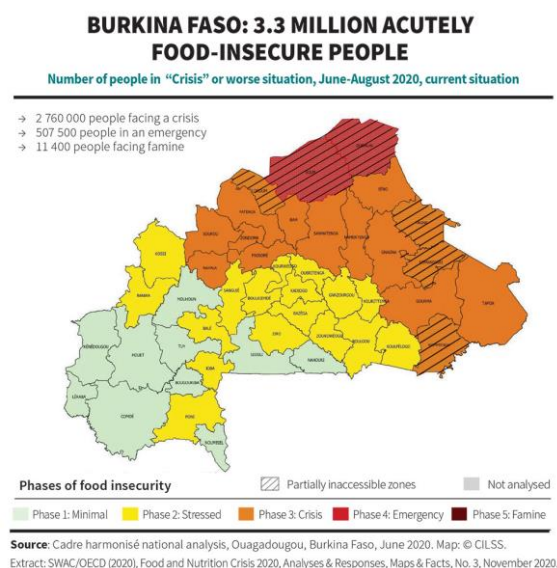


Figure 3: A map depicting the regions of Burkina Faso suffering from food insecurity.

Impact on the economy

As previously mentioned, Burkina Faso is a low-income country that is negatively affected by its zero access to seas. Due to the political instability evident in the country, further economic growth is likely hindered. However, the economy of the State is also influenced by the Russian-Ukrainian war. The higher cereal prices have contributed to the increase in the inflation rate of Burkina Faso. As a result, food insecurity has spread all over the country as discussed above, revealing a connection between economic and social impacts in the country. Considering all of the above, the budget deficit the country is facing will remain high during the year 2022. In 2021, even without the impact of food insecurity, the GDP of Burkina Faso had already experienced a 6% decrease from the year before and is now expected to worsen.

Furthermore, Burkina Faso is heavily dependent on agriculture. Even though the country experienced a strong recovery in 2021, the agricultural sector witnessed a decline due to low rainfall during the year. Consequently, economic output declined at a rate of 4.1%.²³ The economic recession did not stop there, however, as the State's inflation rate is currently at 3.9%, the highest it has ever been in the past 10 years.²⁴ In addition, the country was obliged to invest more in its military and defense in order to efficiently deal with the Islamist insurgencies and attacks. Accordingly, the public debt now makes up half of the country's GDP, whereas the domestic debt, meaning the debt Burkina Faso is owing to its creditors, has officially become a majority of 54%.

The current state of Burkina Faso

As of November 2022, the security crisis in Burkina Faso still prevails. Captain Traore, who was the leader of the country's second coup, is still in power. There have been, however, some speculations concerning the relationship between the nation and the Russian Federation. Allegedly, the Russian Federation supported the illegal seizure of power through the Wagner Group, a paramilitary organization of the State. However, it is worth mentioning that the Russian government has denied involvement in Burkina's Faso political instability. The fear of an alliance between Burkina Faso and the Russian Federation has, of course, developed and thus, organizations such as the EU have decided to send humanitarian funds to the nation as a means of assisting them, while limiting any chances of an alliance between the two.

²³ World Bank. "Burkina Faso Overview: Development news, research, data", *World Bank*, 21 September 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso/overview>.

²⁴ African Economic Outlook (AEO) 2022. "Burkina Faso Economic Outlook", *African Development Bank Group (AFDB)*, 2022, <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-economic-outlook>.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso, being the country currently in conflict, has witnessed contradicting stances from its population. On the one hand, citizens express dissatisfaction against France, considering the fact that they protested in front of the French embassy because they hold France, the country that colonized Burkina Faso, accountable for the State's problems and security crisis.²⁵ Such protesters favor an alliance of the country with Russia and wish for severing any relation with France. Briefly, such people support the Russian Federation, which has supposedly helped the military government and assisted it through the Wagner Group.

On the other hand, a significant part of the population still supports France. The political instability caused by the Islamist attacks and the split in society has led to negative effects on the population. The number of internally displaced people has increased, more and more lives are lost, and the security crisis is worsening even after the coups took place. Additionally, the State currently controls only 60% of Burkina Faso's territory, meaning that countless villages are exposed to Islamist insurgencies. It is clear that Burkina Faso needs help in dealing with such attacks, so as to regain the control of its territories.

United States of America (USA)

The US has provided Burkina Faso with \$69 million in order to provide a stimulus for economic development and also to serve as a means of achieving the country's security. These funds were also provided for humanitarian aid and the preservation of health and peace. The United States of America funded \$5 million to enable more investigations concerning the terrorist cases in the region. The country even provided Burkina Faso with a further \$2 million for training programs, in order for the soldiers to be aware of what they need to do during an Islamist attack. It is important to mention that the US and Human Rights Watch have accused the Russian troops of exploiting natural resources and being responsible for atrocities in neighboring States.

It is clear that the US is attempting to distance Burkina Faso from Russia without any success since the country was absent in the annual training the US organizes. Therefore, even if the US expresses its concern for the coups taking place, it is aiming at severing any relation of Burkina Faso with the Russian Federation and has made a

²⁵ Tasamba, James. "Angry protesters try to storm French Embassy in Burkina Faso: Report", *Anadolu Agency*, 18 November 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/angry-protesters-try-to-storm-french-embassy-in-burkina-faso-report/2742451>.

public statement through its UN ambassador stating that “it was a heavy price for Africa to pay”.²⁶

France

Burkina Faso was a colony of France until 1960 when the country managed to gain its independence. Therefore, France is the leading bilateral donor of Burkina Faso and has assisted the nation throughout the years.²⁷ It provides military training to the armed forces of Burkina Faso and also supports military operations in the northern region of the country, the Sahel region. France even founded the initiative “Operation Barkhane” as a means of training the local military groups.²⁸ However, during the coups, the French embassy in Burkina Faso was targeted, since protesters tried to storm into the building. The reason behind the attack was the demand of multiple protesters to expel the French ambassador due to the fact that the youth holds France, the colonizer of the State, accountable for Burkina Faso’s insecurity. The protesters wish for an alliance between the Russian Federation and the country. At the same time, they firmly believe that the military government should sever any partnership with France. However, the police quickly stepped in to calm down the protestors.

It is clear that many protesters hold France accountable for the political instability Burkina Faso is facing. Regardless of such statements, France has funded, along with the European Union, the nation with over €100 million.

Russian Federation

As mentioned in the background information, a paramilitary organization named Wagner Group is currently assisting Burkina Faso and other Sahel nations in tackling the Islamist attacks. During the protests concerning the second coup of September 2022, many young citizens were seen waving Russian flags.^{31m} Therefore, the allegation that the Russian Federation has supported the military government was expressed. Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian oligarch and the founder of Wagner Group, made a public statement and referred to the negative impact caused by the colonial power in the region, more specifically France. Considering the military support Russia provided, Burkina Faso has started, like other nations, distancing itself from any cooperation with France and focusing on establishing an alliance with the Russian Federation. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Russia’s proactivity in the situation has led to speculations concerning its role in the seizure of power.

²⁶ Jones, Mayeni. “Why Russia is cheering on the Burkina Faso Coup”, *British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC)*, 10 October 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63171771>.

²⁷ British Broadcasting Corporation. “Burkina Faso country profile”, *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, 25 October 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13072774>.

²⁸ European Council on Foreign Relations. “Operation Barkhane - Mapping armed groups in Mali and the Sahel”, *European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)*, 2014, https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/operation_barkhane.

Consequently, it is clear that the Russian Federation, through paramilitary organizations, is trying to approach West African nations. By establishing an alliance with such politically unstable nations, it is highly likely that Russia will benefit from any causes of the attacks.

Islamic State (IS)

The Islamic State is already linked to some terrorist organizations in the Sahel region and has allied with Islamist groups in the West African region. Along with Al Qaeda, IS has even funded terrorist groups, thus further allowing insurgencies and attacks to take place. It is important to mention that many jihadist attacks in Burkina Faso and other Sahel region States are connected to the Islamic State. These occurrences resulted in the loss of life for many civilians. Most active in the region is the Islamic State of Great Sahara (ISGS), which has been held accountable for the death of 12 Burkina Faso soldiers officially. Said organization has started operating in the Burkina Faso-Niger border, therefore being also responsible for some attacks on the country's territories.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an organization defending and advocating for human rights worldwide. It specifically establishes an annual report of countries' profiles. In the Burkina Faso report of 2021, the organization spread awareness about the current security and economic crisis in Burkina Faso.²⁹ Not only did it spread awareness, but it also shed light on the humanitarian aspect of this crisis. The report focused on the violations and murders conducted by the Islamist insurgencies and the government. Additionally, HRW elaborated on the restriction of democracy in the country and consequently, the limited human rights to which the citizens of Burkina Faso have access. The HRW publishes an objective profile about countries, aiming to inform people all across the globe, and explains the factors which led to Burkina's Faso political instability.

European Union (EU)

The European Union, following the initiative of one of its Member States, France, has also funded Burkina Faso. More specifically, the organization has provided over €4 billion in order to support the G5 joint counterterrorism forces in the Sahel region. The G5 consists of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, the five countries which find themselves in the Sahel region. In order to tackle the Islamist insurgencies, the five countries united their forces and created the G5 Sahel in 2014.³⁰ Furthermore, Burkina Faso was funded with €188.6 million for humanitarian assistance by the EU, in order to ensure that all citizens have the ability to fulfill their needs. In addition to

²⁹ World Report 2022. "Burkina Faso", *Human Rights Watch, 2021*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/burkina-faso>.

³⁰ Interpol. "G5 Sahel", *Interpol*, <https://www.interpol.int/es/Delitos/Terrorismo/Proyectos-de-lucha-contra-el-terrorismo/G5-Sahel>.

funding, the EU has passed a joint motion to reconsider the first resolution concerning the coup in January.³¹ In the resolution, the coup of September was condemned, while the return to democratic elections until 1 July 2024 was demanded.³⁶ It has tried to find new solutions so as to ensure that Burkina Faso will hold democratic elections over a short period of time.

Therefore, it is clear that the European Union has taken an active role not only in resolving the political instability in Burkina Faso but also in supporting the military operations to combat the Islamist insurgencies.

African Union (AU)

The African Union is an organization for African States. The mandate of the Union focuses on the promotion and preservation of democracy not only in its Member States, but in the African region as a whole. The union has established several frameworks, including the African Charter on Democracy, Election, and Governance. In the charter, a coup d'état is recognized as a threat to a democratically elected government and thus, sanctions should be imposed accordingly.³² However, the implementation of said frameworks has been extremely challenging for the organization. During the security crisis in West Africa, the African Union has not taken an active role in resolving the issue. Therefore, it is clear that the organization hasn't followed its mandate to promote democracy and ensure international peace and security in the continent, taking into consideration the political instability in the Sahel region.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
11th-13th century	The first settlers of Burkina Faso, the Mossi people, arrive at its territory.
1896	The kingdoms of the Mossi people are united as a French colony after the European Scramble of Africa.
1957	The French parliament approved the revision in the organization of French Overseas Territories. The revision begins with the "Basic Law[s]" reevaluation of July 23, 1956.

³¹ European Parliament. "Joint motion for a resolution", *European Parliament*, 19 October 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2022-0464_EN.html.

³² Inter-Parliamentary Union. "African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance", *African Union*, 30 January 2007, http://archive.ipu.org/idd-E/afr_charter.pdf.

5 August 1960	The independence of Burkina Faso is proclaimed. The first president, Maurice Yameogo, is elected.
3 January 1966	A coup takes place, resulting in Yameogo being overthrown by Sangoule Lamizana.
25 November 1980	Saye Zerbo seizes power.
7 November 1982	Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo leads a coup that ousts Saye Zerbo. The government is split into two fractions, the conservative and the radical.
4 August 1983	Thomas Sankara, the leader of the radical fraction, seizes power.
4 August 1984	Upper Volta is renamed to Burkina Faso.
1984	The analysis of Johnson, Slater, and McGowan regarding destabilizing factors leading to coups is published.
15 October 1987	Blaise Compaore murders Thomas Sankara and becomes Burkina Faso's self-declared president.
2007	The analysis of Hoeffler and Collier concerning the impact of coups is published.
30 January 2007	The African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance is published.
16 February 2014	The G5 Sahel – consisting of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger – is founded.
1 August 2014	The initiative "Operation Barkhane" is established.
October 2014	President Compaore announces that presidential terms would be abolished due to amendments in the constitution of Burkina Faso. The public expresses its dissatisfaction through violent protests.
31 October 2014	After protests against the extension of Compaore's rule, the current government is dissolved.
29 November 2015	A transitional government with Kabore as its leader is elected.
22 November 2020	President Cabore is reelected.

2015	An increase in the activity of Islamist extremist groups, funded by Al-Qaeda and ISIS, is noticed.
4-5 June 2021	An attack in the northern region of Burkina Faso takes place, which leads to the death of many citizens. The attack is called massacre of Solhan and has 135 casualties.
14 November 2021	After a violent attack, over 50 security members are killed.
2021-2022	Burkina Faso's GDP experiences a 6% decrease, resulting in the increase of the country's budget deficit.
2022	Burkina Faso witnesses the highest inflation rate it has had in the past 10 years.
22 January 2022	Protests against the current government reach their peak, spreading all over Burkina Faso.
23 January 2022	The government denies any seizure of power and implements a curfew.
24 January 2022	The first coup is deemed successful after the announcement of the army. Lieutenant-Colonel Damiba is installed as president.
Mid-March 2022	The Islamist attacks become even more violent and deadlier, resulting in the death of hundreds of civilians.
12 September 2022	Damiba dismisses his minister of defense and overtakes his role.
27 September 2022	After the death of at least 11 soldiers during a supply convoy attack, the army expresses its dissatisfaction with the current government.
30 September 2022	The second coup is deemed successful.
2 October 2022	President Damiba officially resigns and leaves the country, fleeing to Togo. Captain Traore is declared head of State.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Operation Barkhane³³

In August 2014, France established and led an initiative named "Operation Barkhane". "Operation Barkhane" is responsible for mapping any armed Islamist groups in the region by gathering intelligence. The initiative has remained active and engages mostly in combat along with West African forces. Except for supporting military forces, the operation aims at gathering intelligence and training the local military department on how to react during Islamist insurgencies. One of its main actions that come along with gathering intelligence is the formulation of maps, which focus on the armed groups of Jihadi and other extremist groups in Mali and generally, in the Sahel region. The goal of the initiative is to fill the hole of the missing government since the current

³³ European Council on Foreign Relations. "Operation Barkhane - Mapping armed groups in Mali and the Sahel", *European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)*, 2014, https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/operation_barkhane.

regime does not represent a democratic one. Considering the fact that Operation Barkhane aims at promoting and supporting counterterrorism, it can be deemed successful. It has helped by educating the locals and also provided the region with advanced technology, thus enabling easier tracking of said Islamist groups.

[African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance](#)³⁴

The African Union established the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance on 30 January 2007. The main objective of this framework is to regulate and preserve democracy in African States more effectively. Yet, even though a coup d' état is identified as a threat to democracy in the Charter, its power is little to none. The reason behind this lack of power is the fact that only 30 Member States have ratified the charter of the African Union. Therefore, the attempt was unsuccessful; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance does not apply to all African States, and consequently, it does not contribute effectively to the protection of democratic elections.

[Sanctions and suspensions by the Economic Community of West African States \(ECOWAS\)](#)³⁵

During the coups, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to impose sanctions on the military government as a means of destabilizing such an oppressive regime that was forcefully put in place. However, ECOWAS can only have a limited reaction to the change of the government, as it cannot actively participate in the prevention of a coup. Furthermore, the Economic Community of West African States has failed to stop opportunists of the military from gaining power through coups, a phenomenon evident not only in Burkina Faso but also in its neighboring countries. Even if the organization promotes a peaceful strategy and imposes sanctions in order to condemn the undemocratic regimes in the region, it has not managed to prevent any coup in West African States and moreover, has failed in keeping the political situation stable. Therefore, ECOWAS's actions can be deemed unsuccessful as far as the protection of the West African region is concerned.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Ensuring humanitarian aid

³⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union. "African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance", *African Union*, 30 January 2007, http://archive.ipu.org/idd-E/afr_charter.pdf.

³⁵ Maluleke, Leleti. "Coups in West Africa - a critical analysis of AU and ECOWAS responses", *Good Governance Africa (GGA)*, 14 March 2022, <https://gga.org/coups-in-west-africa-a-critical-analysis-of-au-and-ecowas-responses/>.

As mentioned above, humanitarian aid has been extremely challenging to provide in Burkina Faso. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to ensure that humanitarian organizations have full access to citizens in different regions of the country. By supporting such organizations, aid can be easily assisted to those in need, such as the elderly or citizens suffering from autoimmune diseases. Furthermore, villages that find themselves in blockages due to the Islamist attacks will be given supplies in order to endure the situation, an action that will make their survival less stressful and complicated. However, humanitarian aid will not only be limited to blocked villages. Taking into consideration the increased number of internally displaced people, humanitarian organizations can assist such people to find safe shelters, where they can live until the security crisis is resolved. However, it is important to consider that the Security Council's mandate focuses on the preservation of international peace and security rather than on humanitarian issues like the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3) or the Human Rights Council (HRC). Therefore, humanitarian aid in this case only serves as a means of protecting international peace, meaning that its functioning and mandate should be determined by a humanitarian committee and not the Security Council.

Re-examining the security plan to the Islamist insurgencies

The inability of the government to deal with the Islamist insurgencies has been the main reason causing the political instability. Therefore, a redefinition of the country's security plan should be examined. Such an action could take place by encouraging Burkina Faso's government to make use of the willingness of international stakeholders to cooperate. By being more open and accepting of such cooperation, the government will be able to adapt to different strategies to sufficiently respond to the attacks of Islamist extremist groups. However, prerequisites need to be met in order for strategies to be developed; those strategies are obliged to comply with international law. Redefining the security plan by adapting to different strategies and cooperating with other countries could help military troops deal with Islamist attacks and insurgencies more efficiently.

Ensuring greater cooperation between the ECOWAS and international organizations

A pressing factor that contributes to the security crisis is the inability to effectively deal with Islamist insurgencies. Therefore, cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) could be established, since the organization provides insight into the West African community as a whole. However, ECOWAS needs assistance to promote peace and security, considering the fact that it has limited ability to intervene. Taking this into consideration, further cooperation with international organizations, such as the European Union (EU) and the Human Rights Watch (HRW) could be initiated. This cooperation would benefit ECOWAS and

consequently Burkina Faso, since the financial support and the investment in more advanced security methods could be ensured.

Establishing a committee for the reintegration of Burkina Faso into democratic procedures

After the events of 2022, ECOWAS suspended Burkina Faso and demanded that the country return to democratic procedures in July 2023 at the latest. However, no solution has been introduced in order for such procedures to be reintegrated in the country. Therefore, a specialized commission could be formed, after negotiations with Burkina Faso's government. The members of such a committee would be representatives of international organizations aiming at the preservation of democracy. As far as its mandate is concerned, the committee would be responsible for monitoring the political instability in the country and its steady reintegration into the democratic regime. Thus, the democratic regime would not work as a destabilizer, but rather as a stimulus for further social and economic development.

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